



THE COMPUTER GUILD ZINE



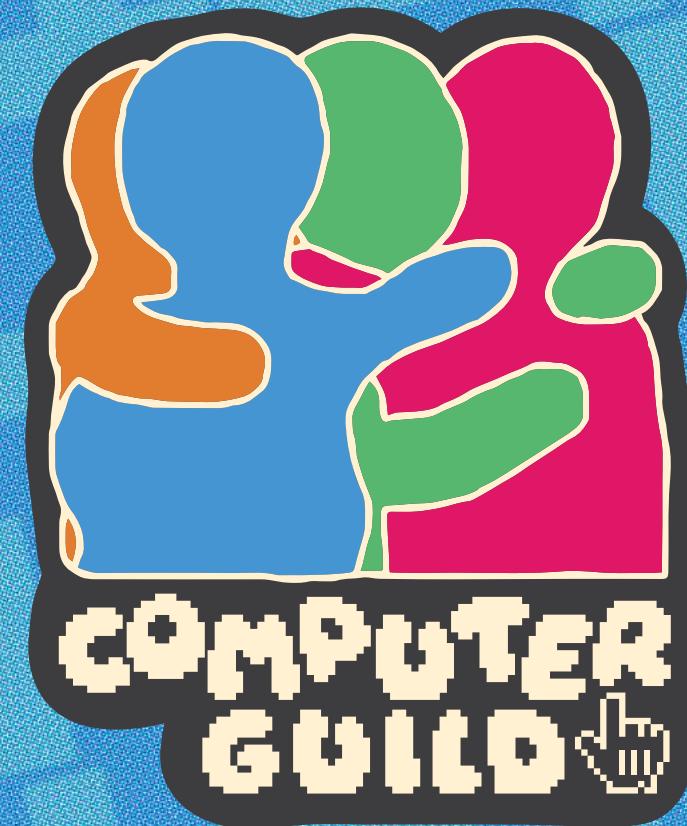
This is a zine created by a group of friends that references video games, movies, and tv shows. Our zine is not affiliated with the original creators of these works or anyone involved in the process of creating them.

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Fruitfly Supply



I would like to dedicate this zine to:

Friend

**They don't always know exactly what you're talking about
They don't ever show up on time**

**Some of them just never stop talking
Some of them just go a little too far**

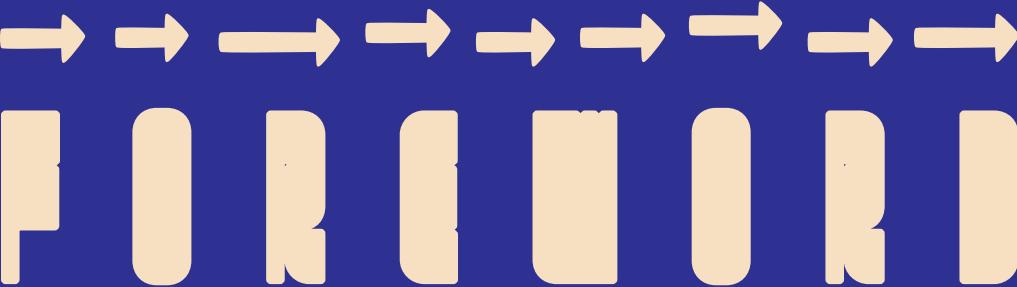
**They respond to texts months after they were received
They send you some of the worst music you've ever heard**

Regardless, I don't think life would be worth living without them.

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History

Hi – my name is Justin. I am an artist living and working in the Ann Arbor, Michigan area. In 2019, I started a Discord server with my friend Cullen in order to easily communicate while we played "Divinity: Original Sin 2" together. Since then, more friends have joined, the server has grown, and we named it "The Computer Guild".

The Computer Guild consists of four core members: Justin, Cullen, Patrick, and Brandon. We use the server to talk with each other, make jokes, and post pictures/videos. We were and are friends outside of the discord server, but we only get together a few times a year because we all live in different cities.

Life continued on for The Computer Guild and in 2023, I found that I had some extra free time on my hands and decided to make a website for the server. The domain "guild.computer" was available, so I bought it and quickly designed a few pages with details about us.

Shortly after the creation of The Computer Guild's website, we had the idea to begin a sort of 'book club', but for video games. And we called it... "The Computer Guild GameClub". With help from the guild, I created another section on our website just for the game club and I have been posting graphics and reviews there every time the club finishes playing a game together.

Explanation of my actions —

Now if you're reading this and thinking "This seems like an awful lot of effort for what is essentially a book club", you would be 100% correct. To me, there is something hilarious about doing all this work just to have our game club look cool. At the same time, I am finding gratification in creating things that my friends and I think are cool. I have also become a better writer, web developer, artist, and maybe some other things through all this work, so to me, this doesn't feel so much like a waste. On top of all of that, I really just LOVE 'retro' video games. The art, the music, and seeing how developers were working around limitations that simply don't exist anymore due to the evolution of technology. It's fascinating to me and I hope to share with you some of my favorite things about video games through this zine.

Thanks for reading!

Computer Guild & Friendship forever

Thank you, thank you, and thank you

mwah <3

- Jus



HAPPY CHILD DAY



COMPUTER GUILD GameClub CLUB

MISSION BRIEFING

The Computer Guild GameClub is a close-knit group of three members: **Justin**, **Cullen**, and **Patrick** (**Brandon** is also here, but he doesn't play the games -- he listens to and reviews each game's soundtrack). Every round, we pick two games to dive into and from the glorious pool of six, we select one to obsess over for the next month or so. (Sometimes, we can't resist and we end up playing two of the games (these rounds get a ".5" for extra flair.))

Once we've each spent enough time with the chosen game, we reconvene to share our thoughts — what we loved, what didn't resonate, what elements stood out as successful, and any intriguing insights we uncovered during our individual playthroughs. Then, we slap a star rating on it (no half points) and toss in a sentence or two about how we felt overall. After our highly intellectual discussions, Justin writes up an official review and posts it on www.guild.computer/gameclub, complete with images and graphics.

At its heart, GameClub is all about discovering games we've never played before, appreciating them as artistic masterpieces crafted through the sweat and tears of (usually) many talented people, and having a whole lot of fun in the process.

The following pages contain our collective findings on GameClub's first 'season' of games plus some art, jokes, and photographs we made/shared/snapped along the way. We hope you enjoy.

GAMECLUB



I am standing inside a cube-shaped building with an old-western facade in the middle of an amusement park. Around my neck is a red paisley bandana and in my hand rests a rifle with a plastic orange tip. I am age 8 and my family has decided to take a break from all of the fun and excitement of Cedar Point to have old-timey, wild west-style portraits shot of my sister and I. As the photographer lines up one of their (many) shots, my 8 year-old self dissociates from reality and begins dreaming about what life might have been like back in the days of the Wild West — Saloons and shootouts, broncos and bushwhackers, saddlebags and spurs. Whatever life really WAS like back then, I knew for sure it was NOT like "Wild Guns".



The first clue that the world of Wild Guns is slightly different than the U.S.'s Wild West is in the box art. The art depicts one of the main characters (Clint) throwing his lasso at a massive robot with a gatling gun for an arm (a technique that does NOT work in-game). The second clue I found was in the game's manual when it calls Clint a 'renown space bounty hunter'. Ah, a bounty hunter that only works in space.. Or is he just only renown in space? Doesn't matter. When you press the power button and Wild Guns boots up, you're greeted with the sounds of gun fire chipping away at a stoney surface to reveal the Natsume logo — badass. After this, you're given the bare essentials. A large logo on a clean, solid background, and three different choices: Game Start, VS. Start, and Options. Once you choose your game mode, you need to decide which of the two characters you will be playing: Clint or Annie (References to Eastwood & Oakley?). Both play exactly the same, it's just a matter of whether you want to look like a debutante or a dullard. From here, the player is taken to the stage select screen, but the first level is always Carson City.

Wild Guns is an arcade-style shooter. The name of the game is: move your character to dodge incoming projectiles/explosives/etc while also moving your crosshair over enemies and pressing the 'shoot' button. For a majority of each level, the player's greatest enemy is time. A countdown at the bottom of the screen indicates how much time is left until all enemies on the screen

spontaneously combust and a 'miniboss' enemy spawns in. The countdown for each level is between 60-80 units of time (roughly seconds, but not specified anywhere). You spend that time dodging and killing, racking up points and power-ups (guns). To make the level go quicker, every enemy you kill knocks the timer down a little.



Each stage of the game is split into three different sections: two timed areas where you kill enemies until a miniboss arrives and an untimed final section that consists of a boss fight. If the player manages to complete the boss fight in Carson City, they get to choose their next stage from the remaining four. If all five stages are completed, the player moves onto the final stage — a showdown with 'King Kid', the evil villain that kidnapped Annie's entire family and then killed them! A deed so dastardly, it drove Annie to hire a famous 'space' bounty hunter and seek revenge on the patriarch of the infamous Kid family.

*Note that purchase of this Game Pak comes with a 90-day limited warranty from Natsume. The warranty doesn't apply if the 'PAK' has been damaged, but if you feel your Game Pak is defective and you are within the warranty window for your Wild Guns Game Pak (released in U.S. Q3, 1994), I recommend notifying the 'NATSUME Consumer Service Department' by phone at 415.342.1712. Keep in mind, their hours of operation are M-F from 9a-5p PST.

Truthfully, this game... is a lot of fun. For almost no reason, I recommend choosing to play as Annie. I think her revolver in the artwork is more stylish than Clint's weird shotgun-rifle. Also, Annie Oakley is one of the coolest Americans to ever live. That aside, I am really astounded that there aren't more games like this. This game offers nigh on perfect arcade shooter gameplay. The game is difficult, but never seems unfair. If you are getting hit, you are making a mistake

that you can learn from. The artwork (concept and in-engine) is fantastic and in my opinion, never has a dull moment. Stages are creative and interesting — blending science fiction with Wild West may not be my favorite combination, but it certainly is a look.

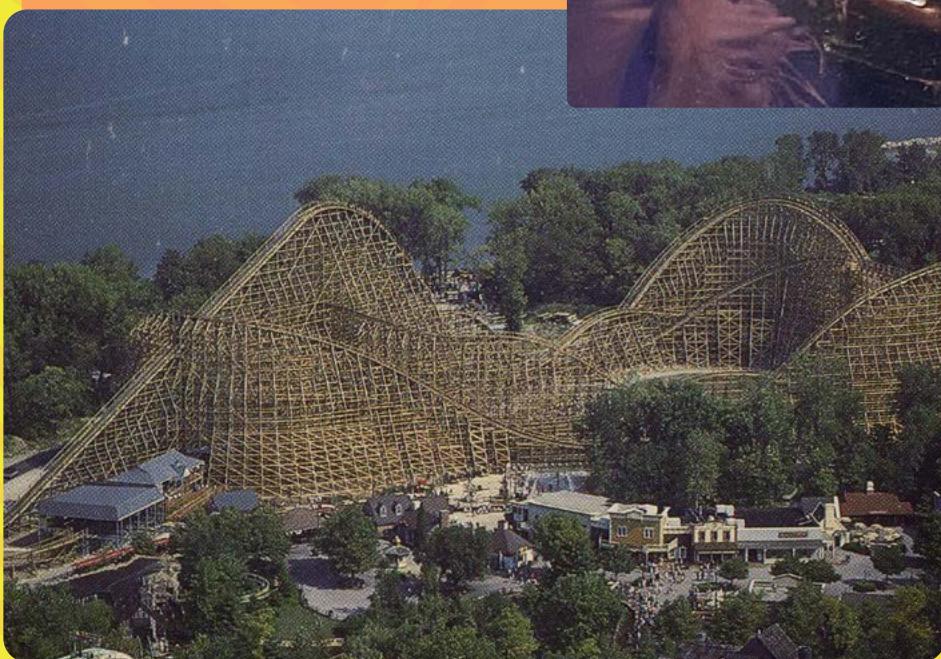
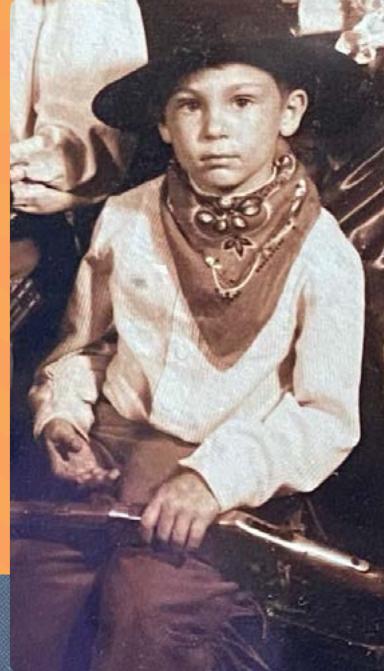
Moving and jumping feels good and you can easily dodge incoming bullets using your double jump. It can be a little difficult to get your character to do exactly what you want sometimes though, because the d-pad controls both your character's movement and their crosshair. That may be the biggest issue I have with the game, but I certainly cannot think of a better control scheme on a SNES controller. If only Natsume had the DualSense™ in 1994...

Levels never feel like they overstay their welcome and there is a really nice balance of shooting enemies, props, money, and power ups. Your focus will be on enemies for awhile and then a shiny shotgun might appear, so you change focus and move to shoot the power up and boom — Annie is holding a shotgun. You can also shoot enemy bullets to build up a gauge. When that gauge hits 100%, you are given the 'Vulcan Gun'. A really powerful machine gun that can destroy anything. You might need it for some of the bosses, because they can get a little tricky. Boss battles are typically with giant mechanical/sci-fi creatures that tower over you. They are super impressive and look amazing when you make it to them. To get past many of the bosses, you will need to memorize attacks and practice dodging when you see their telegraphs.



All these aspects of gameplay combine into a really solid arcade shooter that I would highly recommend trying out. Since the original game is around 30 years old (at the time of this review), it can be a little difficult to get your hands on. Thankfully, a remake was released in 2016. The remake is now on PS4, Windows, and Switch. Depending on the code of ethics you choose to live by, you may also be eligible to emulate this game using the plethora of software available on the internet.

The shutter snaps and quicker than my eight-year-old, dissociated brain can make it back to reality, the image of my blank stare has been captured and immortalized by a teenage amusement park employee. I may be speculating, but this photographer had no idea or concept of the vast differences between Wild West U.S. history and the world of 'Wild Guns'. I certainly wasn't going to be the one to explain it to them. Put down the camera and pick up a SNES controller for God's sake. Whatever — I changed back into my non-wild-west-attire as fast as I could and I was off to ride the 'Mean Streak' (RIP).



Wild GUNS



Justin



"Remove the Peashooter"



Patrick



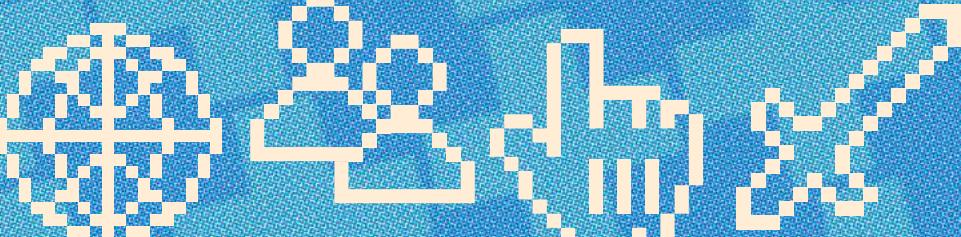
"Gimme more schmups"



Cullen



"Not for me"







"Patrick in Hot Tub" c.2023

Artist: Patrick



GAMECLUB

ROUND 15



For some reason, I could ask anyone around my age what the 'powerhouse of the cell' is and they would almost certainly respond with 'the mitochondria'. Some biologist somewhere wrote the phrase 'The mitochondria is the powerhouse of the cell' and it caused a staggering ripple effect that will outlive the biologist tenfold. I draw pictures and choose colors for a living, so I never had much of an interest in biology. I can remember what the powerhouse of the cell is, but I really don't know what that actually means and I would be willing to bet that most people who can recite that cursed phrase do not really know what it actually means either. Powerhouse.. Cell.. These are words I understand, but how is the power being generated? What is the mitochondria really doing? Again, I am not really THAT interested in biology, so to uncover this mystery, I turned to Parasite Eve.



Parasite Eve is a genetic smorgasbord of RPG elements, polygonal horror, biological chaos, and a dose of absurdity. The game follows NYPD officer Aya Brea over the course of six days as she accumulates enough guns, items, and biological powers to take down the police department's greatest enemy: Eve. Now this is where the mitochondria come in — follow along. Eve is a sentient, parasitic life form that evolved from the powerhouse of the cell. These powerful, ambitious mitochondria were passed down through a female line of descent and generated so much power, they were able to take over their host's body — In this case, an opera singer named Melissa. Is this making sense?

On Christmas Eve 1997, Aya Brea steps out of a limousine at Carnegie Hall wearing a sleek black dress with a slit on one side and platform heels. Aya is on a date and she is going to see the famous opera singer Melissa Pearce. In the middle of the Opera, everybody in Carnegie Hall begins to spontaneously combust except for Aya, her date, and Melissa. The opera singer, whose mitochondria just took over her body, now looks like a monster and is going by the name 'Eve'. Eve's goal is to 'give birth to the next stage of evolution'. She has begun her mission by making everyone in the opera house combust. Aya goes police-mode and confronts Eve, but Eve escapes into the sewers. Mitochondria - 1 | Police - 0



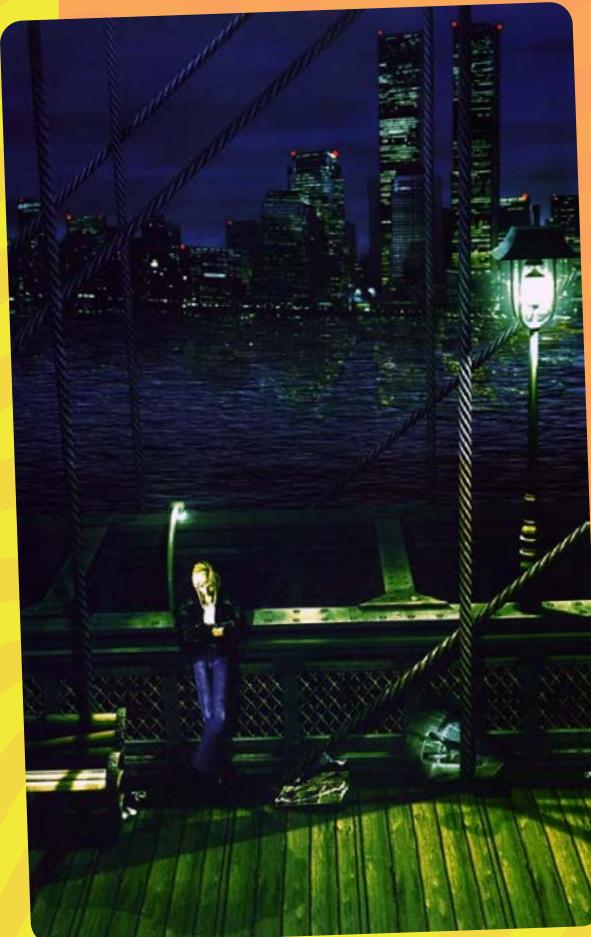
From this point on, Manhattan (metaphorically) goes up in flames. Eve begins terrorizing the city, citizens are evacuating, and Aya is learning everything she can about Eve while trying to stop her. Interestingly enough, the game is a continuation of the events that occurred in the book of the same title written by Hideaki Sena. In the book, a very similar event happened in Japan about 20ish years earlier and Aya & Melissa have a pretty strong connection to that event. If you are into the story of this game at all, I would actually recommend giving the book a read beforehand. I enjoyed reading the book and I think it is necessary to paint the full picture of what is really going on. The dialogue in the game does a decent job of filling you in on the story, but there are some relationships that you can't quite fully understand without giving the book a read.



The game is split up into six days. Each day is spent hopping around to different locations on this awesome-looking 3D map of Manhattan, usually with Aya and her police partner, Daniel. The player searches for information on what Eve actually is and how to defeat her as well as clues to where her next appearance might be. Then, once Aya knows where Eve is that night, she gears up at the police station and heads out to try and stop her. The meat of the game happens on these nightly hunts for Eve. As Aya, the player walks around notable

Manhattan locations such as Central Park and enters random encounters with mutated, mitochondria-crazed animals & bugs. The combat is turn-based, but it is an active time battle system. You need to move Aya around the battlefield and dodge enemy attacks while a meter fills. Once the meter is full, you need to position yourself and choose an action - attack or parasite skill. Attack will have Aya shoot the enemy while a parasite skill uses Aya's parasite energy in exchange for a special effect or attack. Parasite skills are essentially this game's magic system. While traversing these areas, Aya typically finds more clues about the mitochondria uprising and the nights ends with a battle against Eve or one of her creations.

Parasite Eve is a really amazing game. The story can be a little obtuse, but the gameplay and visuals more than make up for it. I don't think any other game developer in 1998 could have pulled this game off as well as Squaresoft did. Known for their turn-based RPG systems and their attention to detail in all



things graphical, Squaresoft hit a bullseye with Parasite Eve. There is some seriously gross body horror in this game, though — so if you are squeamish, you may want to skip some of the cutscenes.

Combat mechanics in this game are extremely unique, but not very in-depth. That said, the game takes around 9 hours to complete so the relatively shallow combat mechanics stay fun the entire way through. The mood and atmosphere of this game is incredible. At the time of writing, the game was released 25 years ago and even in 2023, very few games have been able to achieve the level of ~vibe synergy~ that Parasite Eve has. To give you a better idea of what I am talking

about, here are a few example of games I consider to have ~vibe synergy~: Bioshock, Dark Souls, Half Life, Hotline Miami. Hopefully you can see the connection.

One of the coolest things about this game in my opinion has got to be the spaces you are actually fighting in. When a random encounter starts, instead of transitioning to a standard battlefield area, you instead fight right on the screen the encounter started in. Meaning you might be in combat in the middle of a snow-covered maze of trees in Central Park or on a balcony on the third floor of the Museum of Natural History. It is a really unique piece of this game that I was thoroughly impressed with.

All in all, Parasite Eve is a perfect short-JRPG. If you are in the mood for a unique JRPG combat system, but don't want to dive into a 100-hour game. This might be the game for you. You have to be alright with a few things for the game to click

(horror, low poly graphics, turn based combat), but if you are at all interested in giving the game a shot, I would endorse it 100%. Coming in at under 10 hours, this game is pretty hard to walk away from as well. If you finish the game and still want more, there is a new game+ mode where you can play through the game with all your items and also climb the Chrysler Tower; where there are boss fights on every floor. The game also has a sequel on the PSX and then another sequel on PSP called 'The 3rd Birthday'.

Philip Siekevitz really wasn't kidding around when he called the mitochondria the 'powerhouse of the cell' in 1957. I guess if you let mitochondria evolve too much, they can really cause some destruction. Melissa Pearce's mitochondria just took over her whole body and basically destroyed Manhattan...

Okay, if I am being honest, I didn't really learn that much about mitochondria from Parasite Eve, but I'm sure all the pertinent information must be in the sequel.



Justin



"More games need maps like this"



Patrick



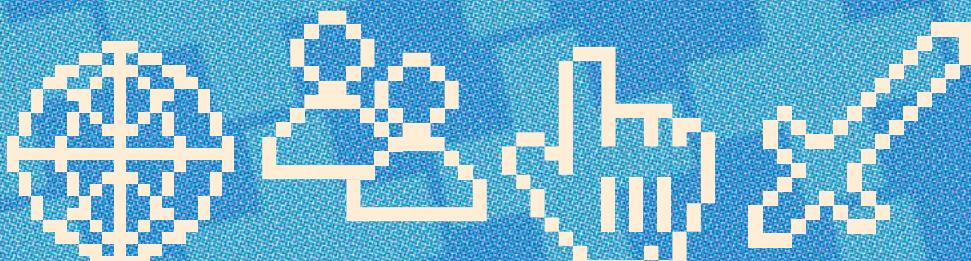
"The vibe is tangible"



Cullen



"The don't make 'em like this anymore"



Hanged Orthrus

LV **39** NEXT EXP **19392**



St	34
Ma	21
En	28
Ag	23
Lu	18



NEXT LV41

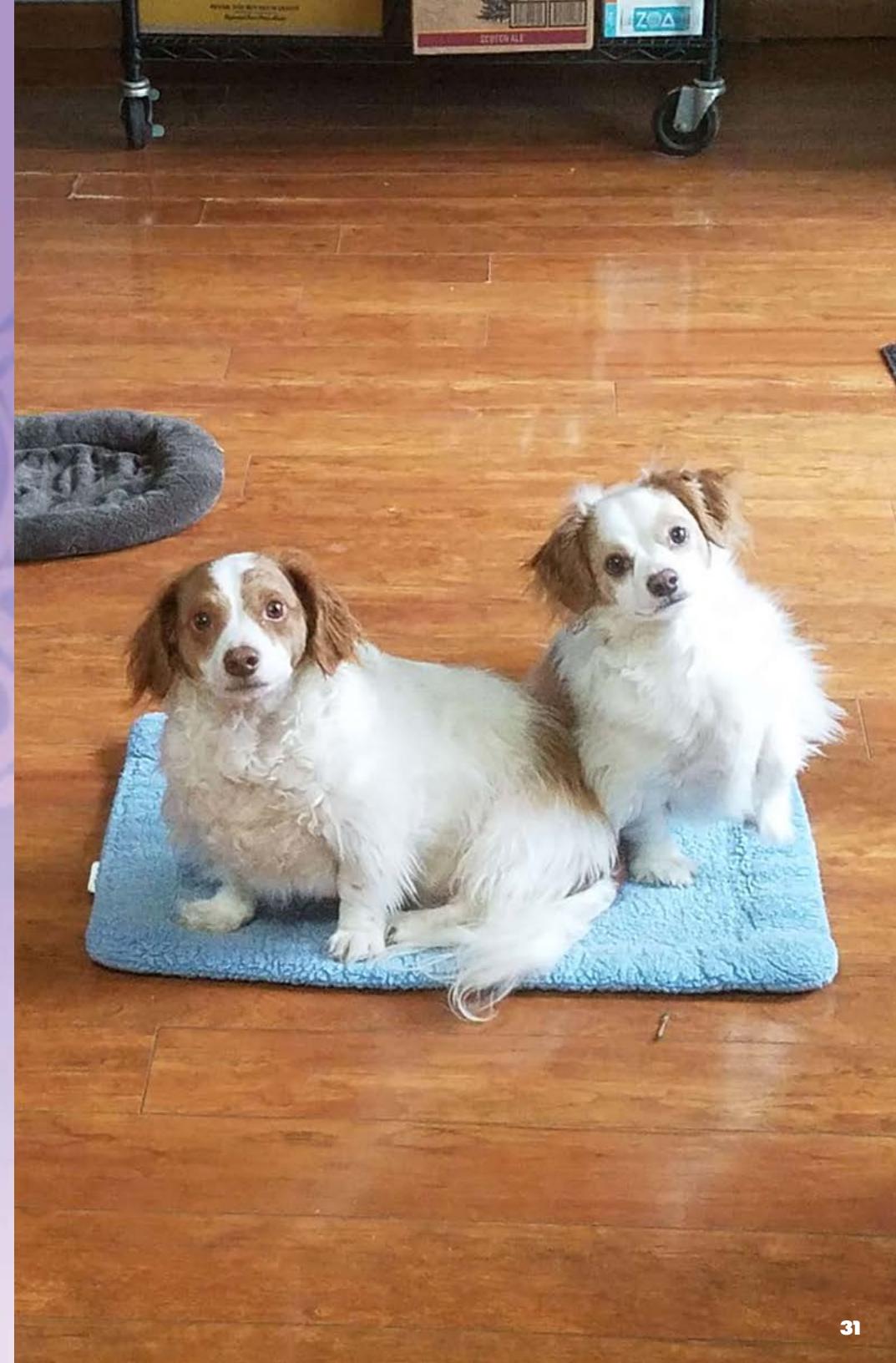
Marakuka ja



Skill Info

Summon

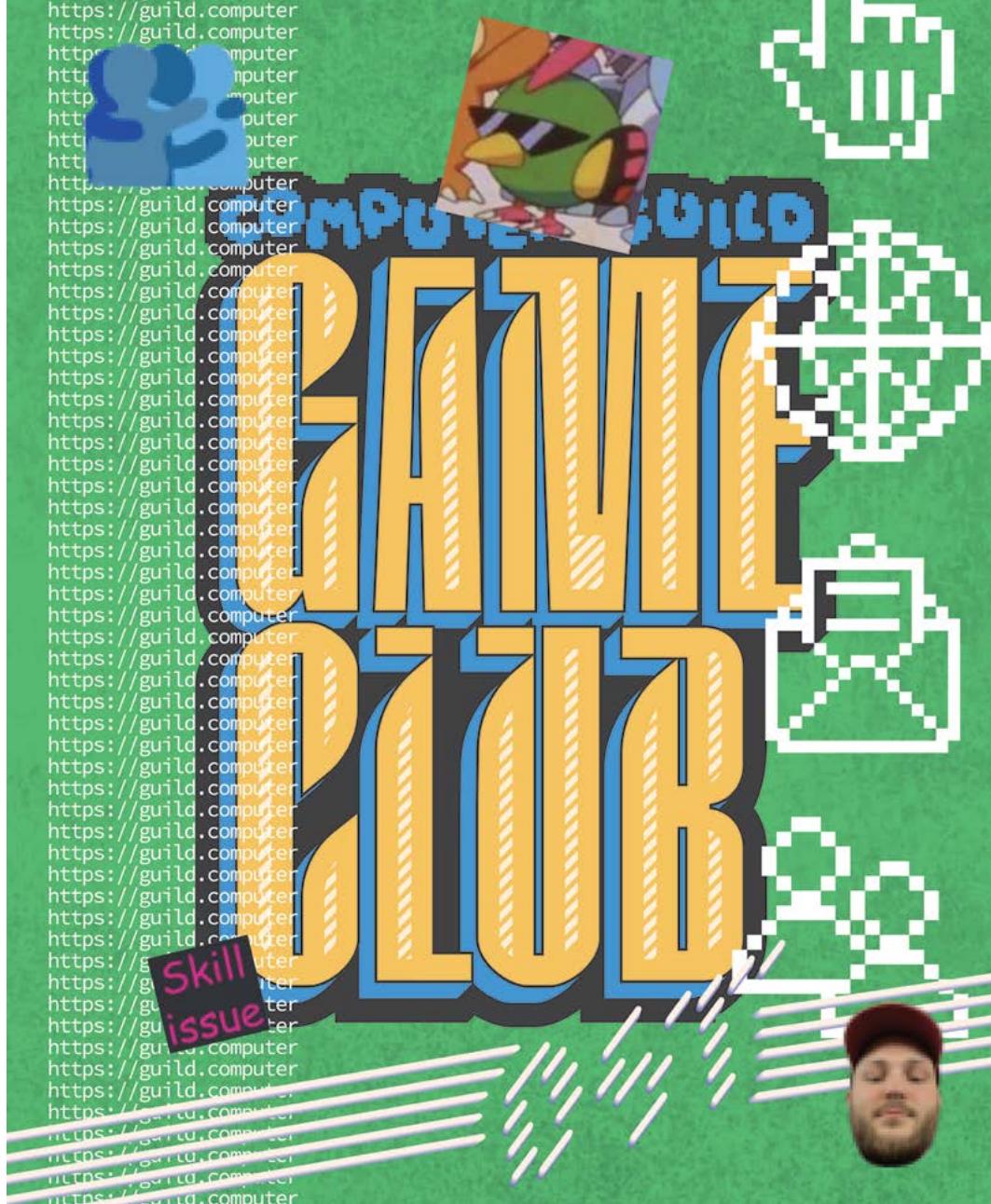
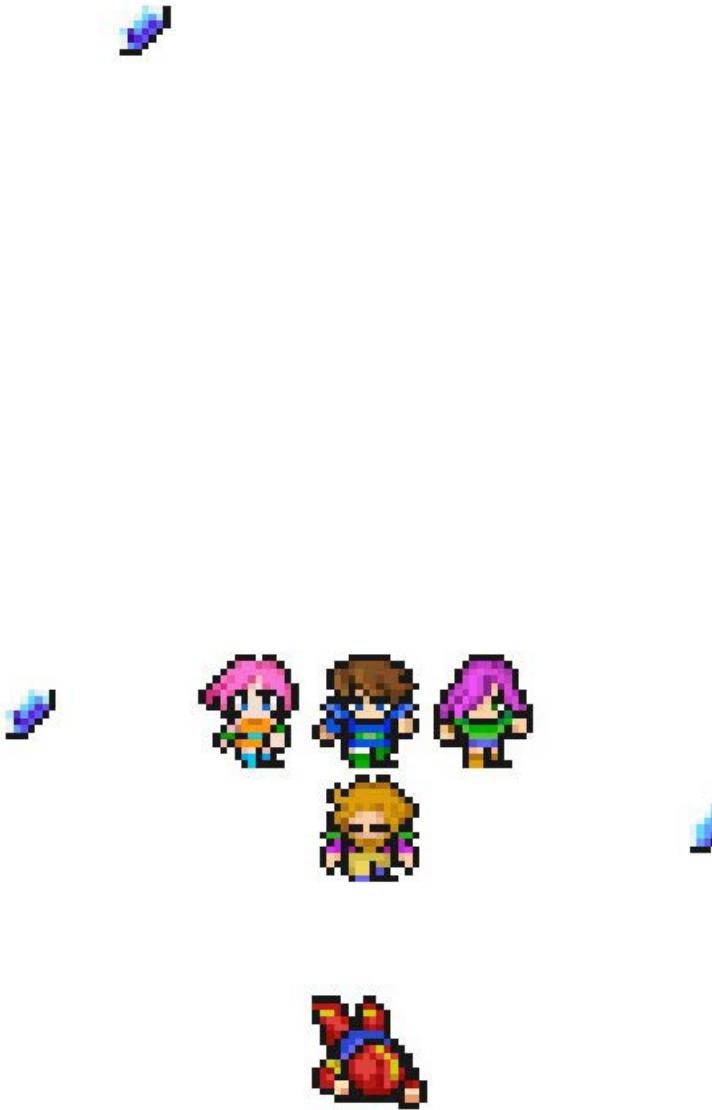
Back





dragon
quest v
ps2, 2004
artepiazza





Response time histogram:

0.125	[1]	
1.875	[149]	
3.625	[0]	
5.375	[0]	
7.125	[0]	
8.874	[0]	
10.624	[1]	
12.374	[0]	
14.124	[0]	
15.874	[10]	
17.624	[39]	

GAMECLUB

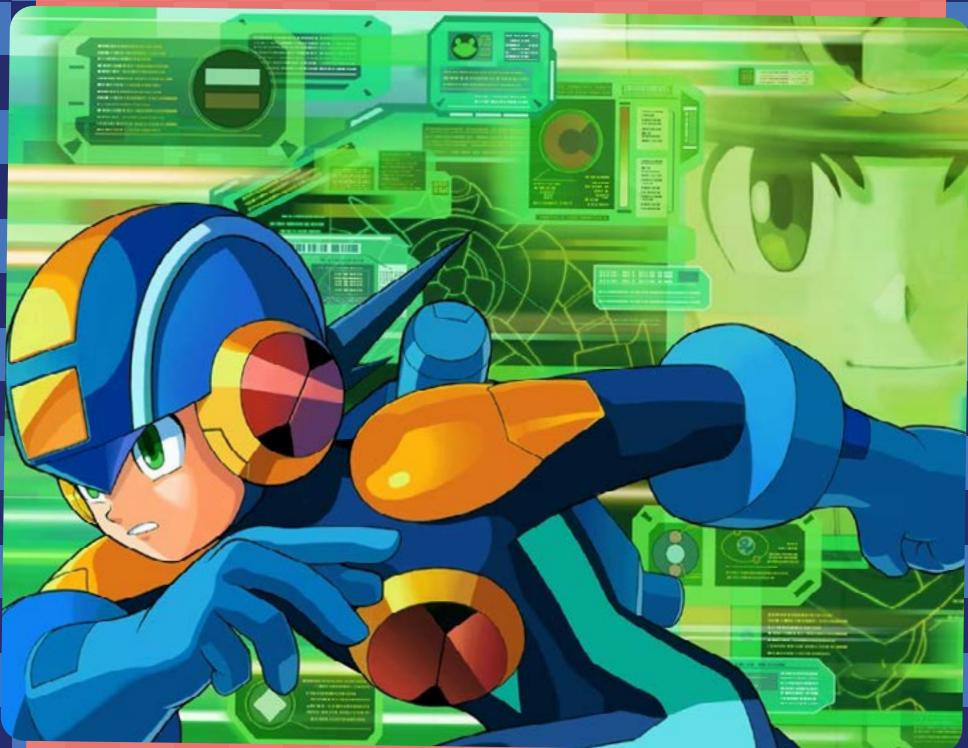
ROUND 2



Did you have that one friend growing up that was into some stuff you just couldn't get into? Maybe their clothing style was just a little too 'out there' or maybe their music taste was a little too hardcore. If you had that friend, you might have loved them regardless of all the shit they liked that you didn't. But what if that friend was obsessed with Mega Man? What then? Can you still love that friend? Are you even still friends with them? Do you hate this new bitter rival? Picture that day in middle school when they tell you they got a new GBA game last night and that you have to come over and check it out. After school, you hop off the bus and they continue to tell you about it as you walk over to their house. Sounds like it could be.. Chain of memories? Advance Wars? Fire Emblem?? Any of those choices would be amazing. Instead, they boot up their navy blue GameBoy Advance SP to reveal



Note: I will be using proper Mega Man Battle Network vocabulary in my review to highlight this game's colorful terms. If you need a definition for any of the words or phrases marked with an asterisk, please find the glossary section at the end of this review. Definitions will be listed in the order they appear.



The Blue Bomber* is back at it again with a sequel to his GBA spin-off series: *Mega Man Battle Network 2*. Instead of the level-based action platformers that everyone knows, the battle network games are 'card-based real-time tactical RPGs'. The games have you hopping back and forth between the physical world and 'The Net*'. In the physical world, you play as a boy named Lan in his home town of ACDC. As Lan, you cruise around town on your roller skates, talk to NPCs, check your email, and purchase items with your Zenny*. Before long, problems will start popping up and Lan decides it is his duty to solve these problems. The issues you are up against are shockingly more serious than I anticipated. For example, one of them has your friend from school trapped in a room with a gas leak — scary stuff. To resolve these issues, Lan sends Mega Man (his NetNAVI*) from his PET* into The Net to delete all the viruses that are causing the problem and ultimately take on a terrorist group that operates on The Net.

Jacking in* to The Net allows the player to control Mega Man himself. In The Net, Mega Man walks around maze-like hallways trying to find the root of the issue that Lan is facing. As the player walks around, they must endure random encounters with viruses. Battles in this game play out in a 3x6 grid. Mega Man spawns into the battle on the left side of the grid and the virus will spawn in on the right side. A menu pops up and displays a shuffled selection of chips* from your chip deck*. The player then chooses which chips they want to use on their first turn, and the battle begins. Each battle plays out in real time. Mega Man hops around the nine spaces on the left side of the grid and uses his blaster to pick away at the enemy's health. Chips can also be used whenever the player decides. While you are using your blaster and chips, the enemy viruses will be attacking you. Each virus has different behaviors and will target Mega Man with their own unique attacks.



I'll come out swinging and say I did not enjoy this game. I have no nostalgia for Mega Man and I never really liked the original games either. While playing Battle Network 2, I got lost walking around blindly in The Net more times than I care to admit. When you're inside The Net, everything looks like a technology-themed acid trip and while that may look cool, it is NOT helpful for navigating your NetNAVI through the labyrinth that is Lan's toaster.

I have been playing video games long enough to feel pretty confident with my abilities when it comes to reaction time and hand-eye coordination. I can recognize enemy patterns and understand telegraphs. Unfortunately, I had a terrible time dodging enemy attacks in Battle Network 2. I found the virus' attack telegraphs to be insanely quick in this game and some of them near-impossible to dodge. I know you aren't supposed to dodge everything, but I was really having a hard time with it.

Aside from those glaring, objective issues with the game, I also did not much care for the writing. I get it - the game is made for kids, but I couldn't help but cringe every time I read the phrase 'Jack In'. I think the writing could have aimed for a slightly older audience. Kids would still have understood what they needed to.



Moving away from the negatives, I do really enjoy the graphics in the battle network games. The character sprites are done very well and everything is vibrant and colorful. Walking around ACDC and The Net, the game has an isometric camera angle and in battle the camera is more of a straight on, flat angle. Many of the boss enemies have great designs as well. Bosses are not unlike boss enemies in the original Mega Man games (AirMan, QuickMan, etc.)

Interestingly enough, the story of all the Battle Network games revolves around some pretty serious topics (considering the youthful writing style). Lan is essentially going up against terrorist groups on The Net that are causing mayhem in the real world.

Honestly, I would not recommend anybody play this game unless you have pre-existing nostalgia specifically for the Battle Network games. If you think you might be interested in the battle system, it might be worth a shot. However, I say there are better games like this on the GBA that you could spend your time on: 'Kingdom Hearts: Chain of Memories', 'Advance Wars', or 'Fire Emblem'.



That navy blue GameBoy SP slams shut and your friend looks up at you with one eyebrow raised. What are you supposed to say? The game does not interest you and it certainly did not seem to justify its \$40 retail price tag.. You decide to humor them - tell them the game seems interesting and that maybe you will look for a used copy. Yeah, that's the perfect response. Now you can head home for dinner and hope your friend will finish Battle Network 2 and move on, forgetting about everything related to Mega Man.. But they won't.. You know deep down that this friend is lost. They have strayed from the path and their eyes are set on the blue bomber for good.

—Glossary—

The Blue Bomber - **Mega Man**

The Net - **The internet**

Zenny - **The game's currency**

NetNAVI - **Digital beings that humans use to interface with The Net**

PET - Short for 'Personal Terminal', these are small, portable devices that house a person's NetNAVI

Jacking In - **When a human sends their NetNAVI into The Net**

Chips - **Powerful moves for Mega Man to use during battle (attacks, healing, special)**

Chip Deck - **A deck containing a limited number of chips for Mega Man to use during battle**



Justin



"Just wanted more Roll"



Patrick



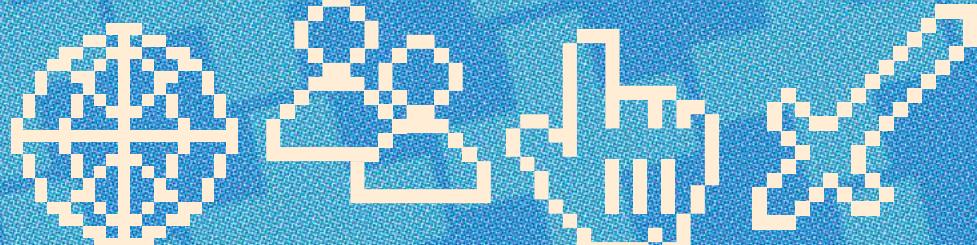
"I think I'm ready to jack OUT"

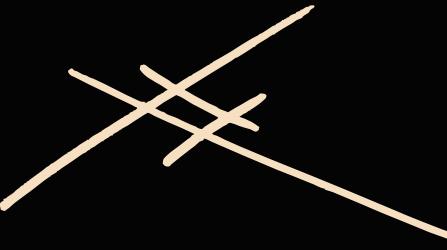


Cullen



"It's cute and fun"





absolute rot control into raw form hither scope bellows.

basic hunger fashions broad sickening entries paraded through lots wielding tooth, whereas decay comes gathered and put.

Forcibly quiet upon learned of bucking or breaking, a power so removed akin to.

quick were you two moments prior, tested and lapped was noticed in drew toward Spectre.

who faults a withered mouth when shapes to kill in order.

not boxed or effect, but kept inward for days as evening lay.

fired is a foot pushed in grain trade for Soil paper locked in contract.

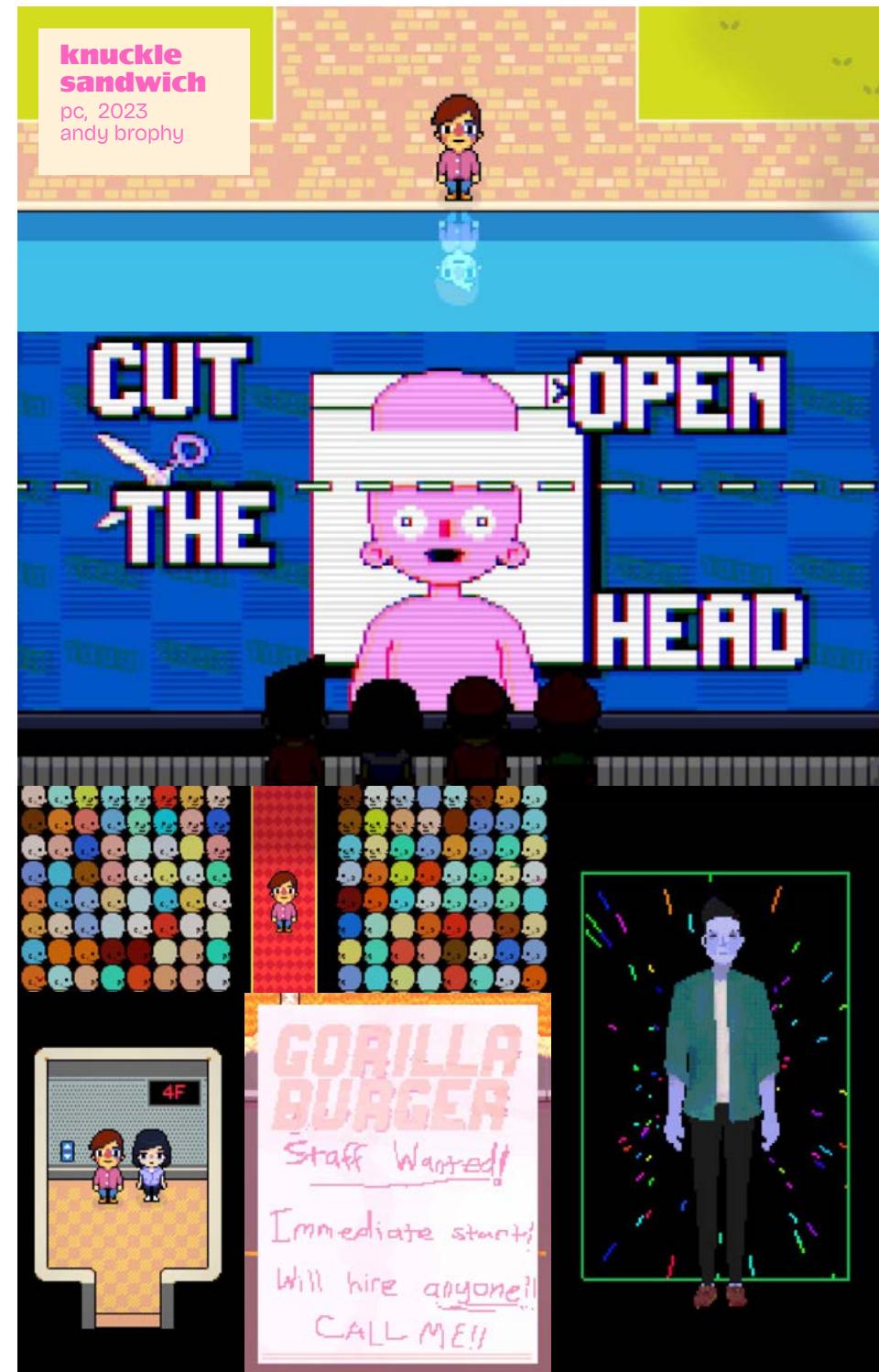
45

listen to "Signal to Dig" on numericproductions.com





44



45



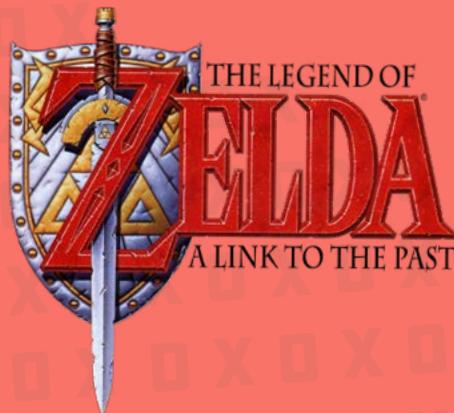
GAMECLUB



It's 1999. I am four years old and my aunt just gifted me an old Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) with two cartridges and a piece of plastic shaped like a gun. The two cartridges I received were the Super Mario Bros / Duck Hunt combo and the beautiful, shiny, golden *Zelda II: The Adventure of Link* cartridge. I was only four, but I had played other games on the NES at my babysitter's house, so I knew what's up. My Dad hooked up the console to the TV and I obviously chose to play the beautiful, shiny, golden cartridge rather than the dull gray one. Unfortunately, I don't think I have ever been more disappointed in my life. It was my understanding that the gold plastic cartridge meant that the game was going to be amazing. In reality, it was quite the opposite. The second *Zelda* game is extremely difficult and punishing. Many proficient video game players have trouble beating this in 2023 even with the help of emulators/save



states/etc, so it goes without saying that *Zelda 2* was not the best introduction to *Zelda* for four-year-old me. If I am being honest, it kind of ruined my perception of *Zelda*. So much so, that I never played another *Zelda* game until years later (with the exception of a little *Windwaker*). My life was almost entirely *Zelda* free up until college, where I ended up playing through *Link's Awakening*, loving it, and then completing every other *Zelda* game that was released after it. But even after playing like 12 *Zelda* games, there was a giant, gaping hole in my *Zelda* knowledge — A game by the name of



The game begins on a stormy night. Link is in bed and he receives a telepathic message from Princess Zelda. She tells Link that the evil Agahnim has her trapped in the dungeon of Hyrule Castle and asks him to help. Link wakes up and his uncle tells him he 'will be out for a while' and that Link shouldn't leave the house. After this, the player gets control over Link and... Probably leaves the house. Link sneaks his way into Hyrule castle where he finds (a little too early on) his injured uncle slumped against a wall. Link's uncle presumably dies right there, but not before giving Link his sword and shield. With weapon in hand, Link begins to cut his way through the dungeon of Hyrule Castle and manages to escape with Princess Zelda through a secret passage that leads to the sanctuary northwest of the castle. In the sanctuary, you meet a sage who offers to hide Princess Zelda from Agahnim while Link searches for the Master Sword (The only weapon that can destroy Agahnim). The sage sends Link off to find an elder who knows more about how to find the Master Sword. Once you find the elder, your REAL journey begins — he tells Link that he must find the three Pendants of Virtue if he wants to claim the Master Sword. The elder mentions the pendants are hidden in three palaces across Hyrule. With this information, Link is off to track down the pendants and retrieve the Master Sword.

If Gamers ever agree on a better term for 'metroidvania' games, Zelda games would probably be included in that category. The only reason I can see that they aren't in that category already is because the term 'metroidvania' is specifically referencing two games that are played from a side perspective while 2D Zelda games are played from a birds-eye view. As with all Zelda games, the reason why most people like A Link to the Past is not because of its story, but because of its gameplay. This game has the player delving deep into abandoned palaces, dank dungeons, and tall towers. Inside each area, you will fight monsters, open chests, solve puzzles, find new gear, and battle a boss. To get from area to area, the player traverses a wide-open map of Hyrule. Where they will inevitably stumble upon power ups, fairies, special items, and many, many more monsters. Delving into a dungeon, spending some time in the overworld, and the moving to the next dungeon makes for a flawless gameplay loop that is a large part of why players continue to talk about this game 30+ years after its release.



I had actually played bits and pieces of this game before, but never spent enough time to really get into it. I always thought the game was: Save Zelda, retrieve three pendants, get the master sword, defeat the bad guy. To my surprise, once you defeat Agahnim with the master sword, the game does not end. Instead, Link is sent to 'The Dark World' — an alternate version of Hyrule where everything sucks. Monsters are tougher, puzzles are harder, and there are way more dungeons. By the end of the game, you will be traveling through Hyrule and jumping back and forth between the light and dark worlds to solve puzzles and grab hidden items.



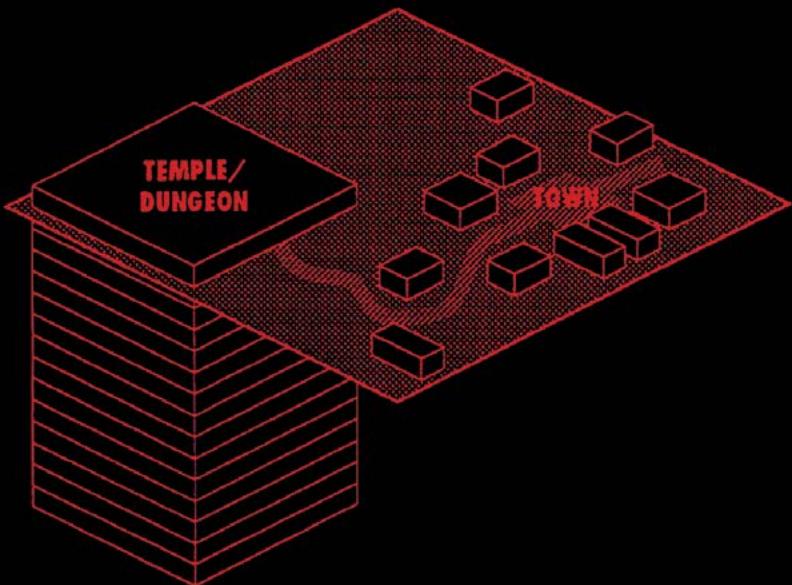
I can pretty confidently say A Link to the Past is the best 2D experience the Legend of Zelda series has to offer (even taking into account the 3DS sequel to ALttP). If you include 3D games in the ranking, it might be a different story. Everything about this game feels like the developers knew exactly how it needed to be. Games have done similar things better in the years since, but not with the limitations of the Super Nintendo. The movement feels great, weapons and items all have unique powers and the colors and environments are expertly done (Link has pink hair in this game). If I were to fault the game, I think I would really be nitpicking, so I will leave it at that.

With A Link to the Past in the rear view, the only holes in my Zelda knowledge are the latest Switch releases. It is really interesting to see how far the Zelda series has come and how different the games are now. The new Zelda games for Switch have an almost completely different formula and allow the player to do just about anything they can think of in the world of Hyrule.





PEAK GAME DESIGN



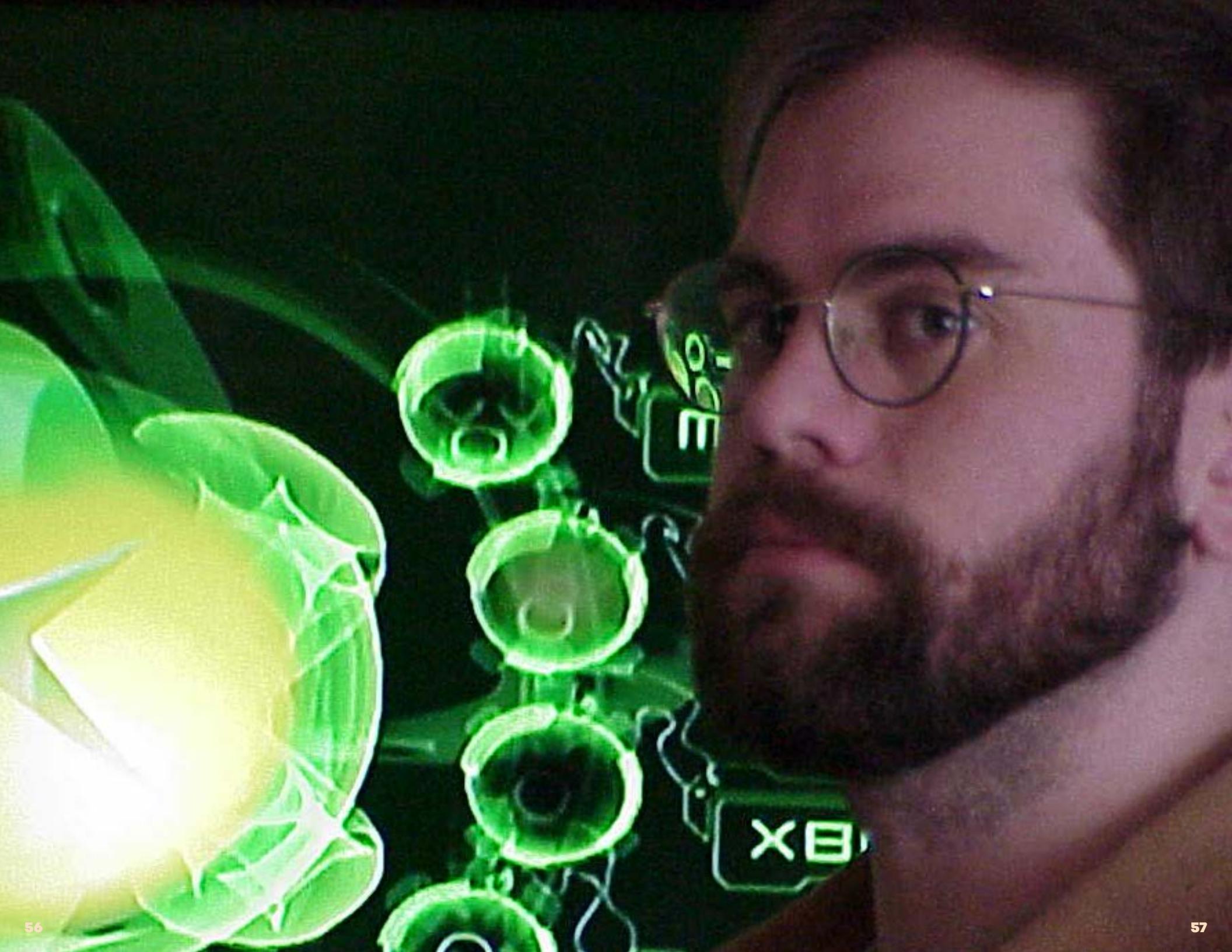
Look at the image to the left.

Now look at it again.

What you're looking at is a drawing from the Diablo 1 design document. The drawing shows a simple hub area "town" and next to it is the "dungeon" where all the action happens. That's all you need! I don't hear enough people giving Diablo 1 its flowers. This is peak game design and unfortunately the games industry has not yet come to this realization.

Diablo 1 is a perfect game - It does exactly what it needs to and doesn't get too into the weeds on upgrades and skill trees and all that nonsense. If you added anything to the game, you'd probably make it worse.

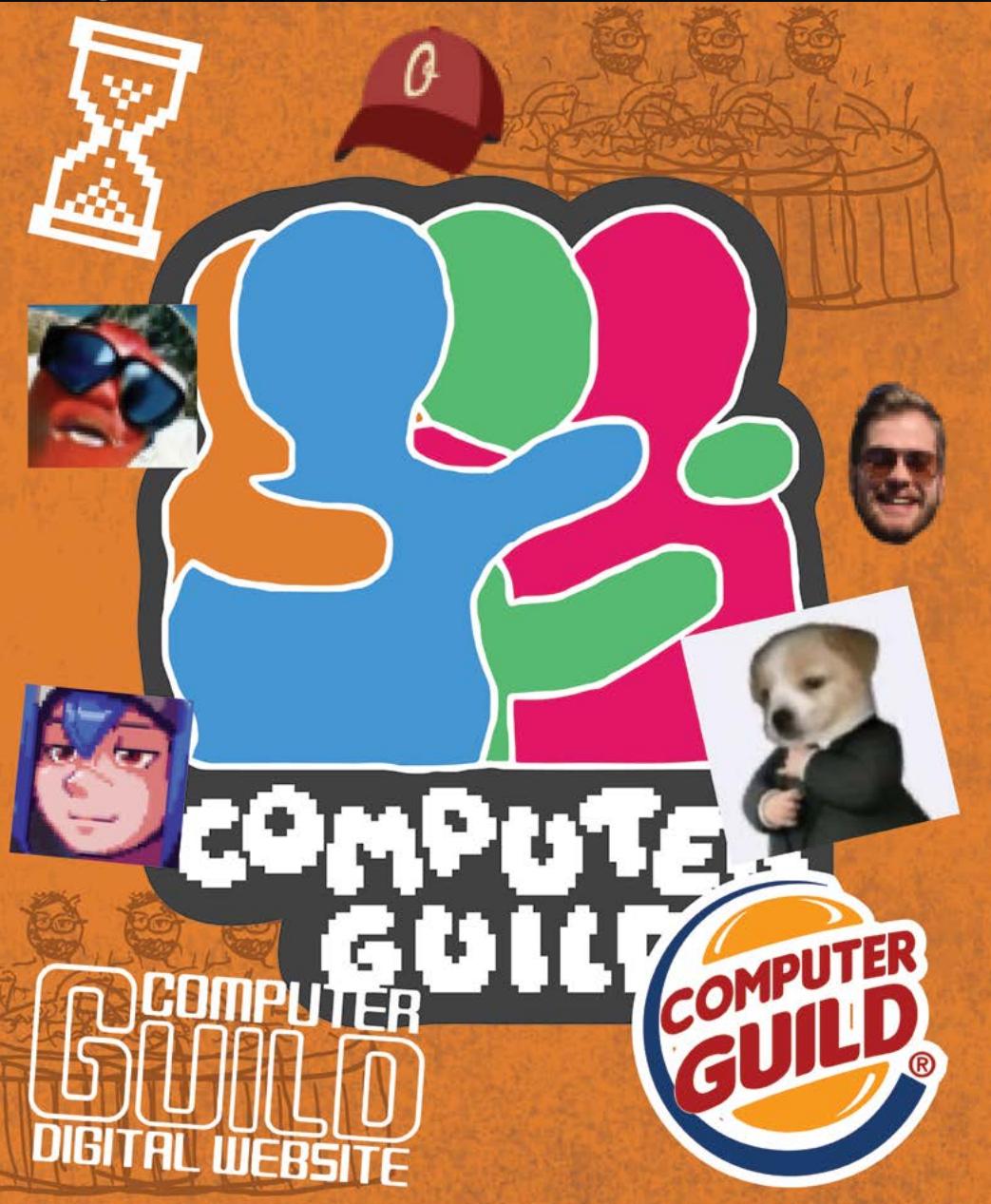
-Jus





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Details (average, fastest, slowest):
DNS+dialup: 15.1545 secs, 15.1362 secs, 15.1772 secs
DNS-lookup: 15.0618 secs, 15.0517 secs, 15.0807 secs

Status code distribution:
[200] 200 responses
PS C:\Users\culle> oha https://benchmarks-solid-start.vercel.app/
Summary:
Success rate: 1.0000
Total: 18.2747 secs
Slowest: 17.6236 secs
Fastest: 0.1252 secs
Average: 4.3147 secs
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GAME CLUB

ROUND 4



I've always been enamored with pirate history. Swashbuckling, deck swabbing, swill drinking pirates. They braved the high seas together with their crew of outlaws and took what wasn't (necessarily) theirs. Edward Teach, William Kidd, Anne Bonny, Mary Read & John Rackham (to name a few). I read their stories when I was a kid and dreamed of what their life must have been like. Sailing the high seas for days, weeks, months at a time. Did they actually enjoy sailing? Or was piracy just a way to make a quick 'piece of eight'? Luckily, Game Club played a game that gave me some more insight into what my favorite pirates what have been like in real life - a game by the name of

THE SECRET OF

MONKEY ISLAND

The Secret of Monkey Island is a legendary point-and-click adventure game by LucasFilm Games. Monkey Island had a few people on its development team that would soon be seen as luminaries in the industry. One notable name that worked on the game is 'Tim Schafer', who has since created and led Double Fine Productions (Psychonauts, The Cave, Brütal Legend).

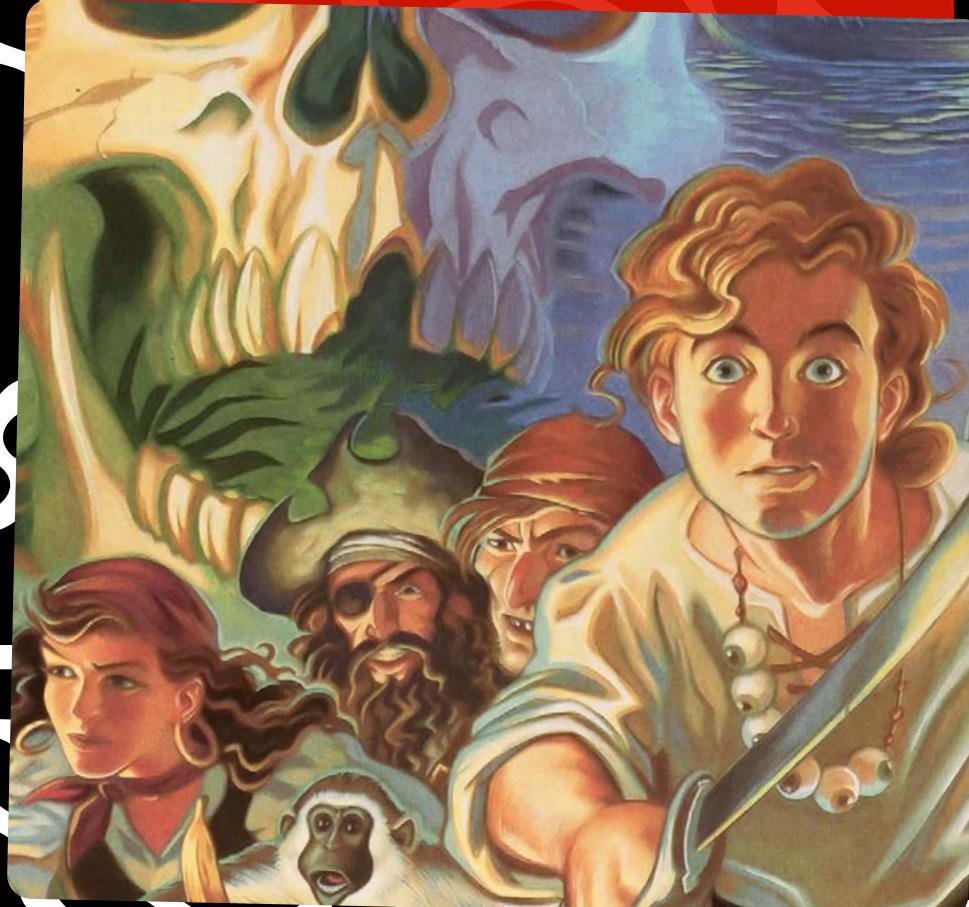
In The Secret of Monkey Island, you play as wannabe-pirate 'Guybrush Threepwood' as he tries his hardest to become a real swashbuckling corsair. Guybrush travels around pirate-infested Mélée Island speaking with pirate leaders and solving puzzles. There is no real danger in the game, it is just about exploration and critical thinking. Along the way however, Guybrush will get into sword fights, run into ghosts, anger island natives, and more.



It is VERY difficult to make a video game funny. Many have tried and failed miserably. I say this because the developers of The Secret of Monkey Island succeeded in this mission and most of the comedy they wrote still holds up 30+ years later. That alone is an incredible feat, but on top of that, they also created a world-class adventure game and began a series that would span 32 years (maybe more). This game had me laughing out loud at some of the jokes it has. One in particular is when the a pirate tries to drown Guybrush, but after he sinks to the bottom of the ocean, the player can just calmly walk around on the ocean floor and climb a ladder to get back on land because there is hardly threat of death or game over. Correction - after reading more about this part of the game, I guess you are given 10 minutes underwater and THEN Guybrush actually can die. Still, that's... A very generous amount of time.

I hardly played any point-and-click adventure games when I was a kid, because my family never really had a great computer. Because of this, I have very little experience with the genre, no nostalgia for it, and I find all the clicking to be a little cumbersome. That said, I am so glad GameClub decided to play this game, because I probably would never have played it otherwise. Even though the gameplay might not be my favorite, all the laughs alone kept me moving through this game and having a great time. Not to mention the great visuals from 1990 aging like fine wine.

I do need to dock a few points from the game, however. There's a lot happening on Mêlée Island and sometimes the next step in Guybrush's journey isn't quite spelled out as clearly as I would like it to be. This sort of issue comes with the territory of point-and-click adventure games, but I think it is something that could have been improved in *The Secret of Monkey Island*. One other issue I had with the game was very specific. To defeat an enemy, Guybrush has to



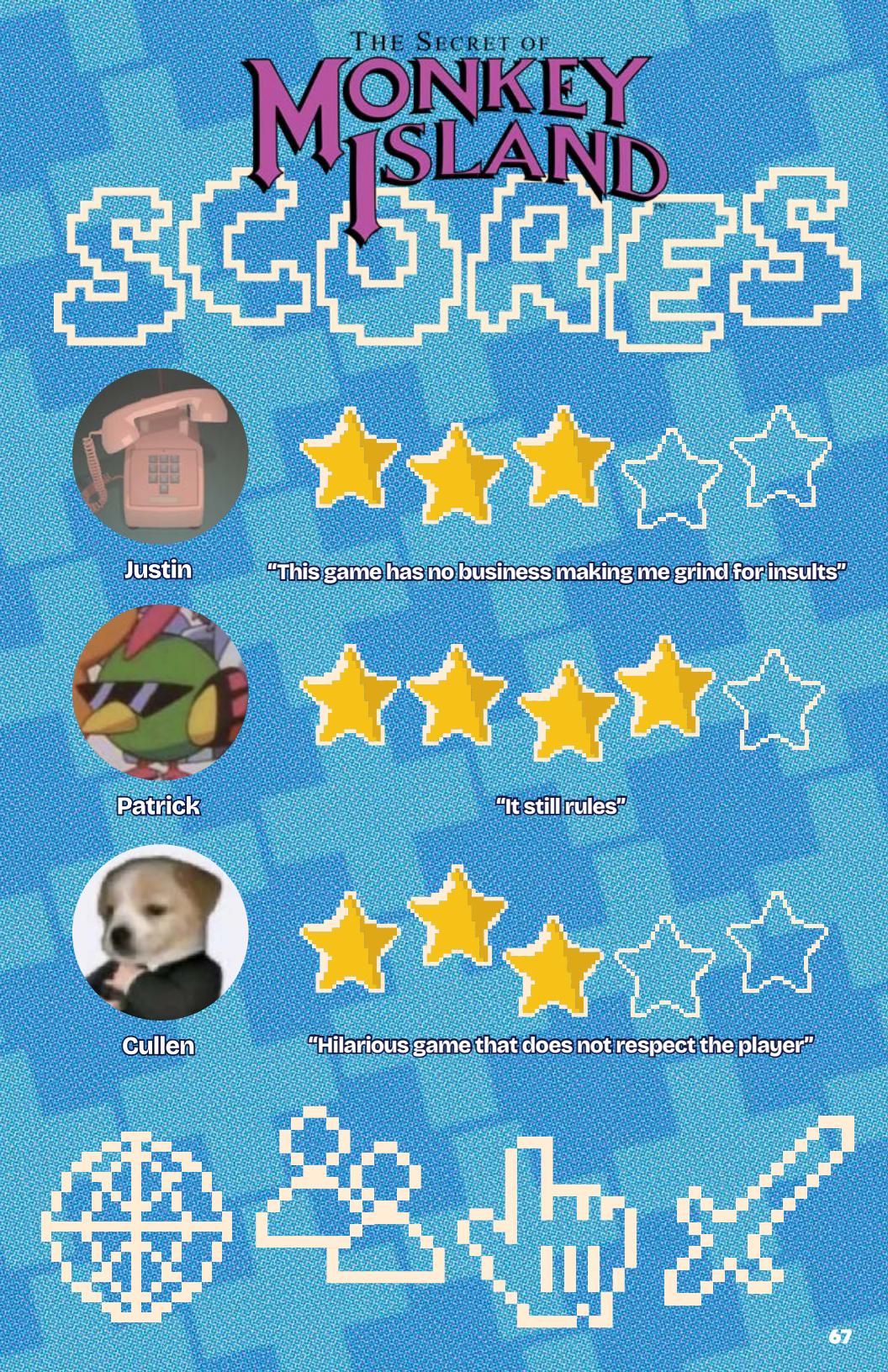
gather a repertoire of insults and to do this, the player has to encounter pirates on Mêlée Island and glean insults off of them. It feels almost like grinding in a JRPG, but much worse. Like I said - I haven't played too many games in this genre, but none of the ones I have played made me grind. Unfortunately I had to exchange insults with wayyyy too many pirates for my liking in order to progress the story and it really put a damper on things for a while.



Turns out... Guybrush Threepwood is not really a name I would put on a list with Edward Teach. But you know what? I am glad we played the game anyways. *The Secret of Monkey Island* reminded me that video games can actually be funny, even if the comedy in most games falls flat. If you have even a remote interest in playing this game, I would say go for it - I don't think you will walk away disappointed!



THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND



Justin



"This game has no business making me grind for insults"



Patrick



"It still rules"



Cullen



"Hilarious game that does not respect the player"







Pictured below is Justin's wife, Libby absolutely destroying him in the first 'Dead or Alive 3' [original xbox] tournament finals at The Computer Guild's second annual guild meetup.



GAMECLUB

ROUND 5



Vampires have never been my thing. I dressed up as a vampire one year for halloween, but not by choice. The whole blood-sucking thing doesn't do it for me and that traditional vampire look with the cape and slicked back hair just seems so.. Lame. Anyways, I ended up setting my personal feelings about vampires aside, because for round 5 of Game Club, we picked a game that is renown for its gameplay, art, music, and sexy vampires. The game we played was called



Castlevania: Symphony of the Night (SotN) is THE Castlevania game that put the 'vania' in metroidvania. Other Castlevania games that came after SotN have been very vania-y, but still nothing feels quite vania enough as Castlevania: Symphony of the Night. Metroidvania being the name of a genre of video games stemming from the games 'Metroid' and 'Castlevania: Symphony of the Night'. The genre usually includes games that are 2D side scrollers that have you exploring and uncovering a map, gaining powers, and backtracking through the map to reach new areas by using those powers. The metroidvania genre includes modern games like Hollow Knight, Axiom Verge, and Carrion. It has become a very popular genre for indie developers to work on, because of the low barrier to entry and high sales.

In Symphony of the Night, you play as Alucard - the son of Count Dracula. He arrives at Dracula's castle fully armed with weapons and spells and with the intention of destroying his father's castle. Within a few minutes of arriving at the castle gates, Alucard meets Death himself and is robbed of all his equipment and power (classic). Now, you have to progress through Dracula's castle starting at just level 1 and with no weapons. Along the way, Alucard meets some new friends, regains his powers, and steals some equipment from his Dad's castle.

The gameplay loop of a game like Symphony of the Night is extremely addicting. It makes these sorts of games very difficult to put down. In SotN, you explore a stretch of the castle, fight a boss, get a new ability, and find a new area to explore. Every time you check your map of the castle, you can probably see multiple new directions you haven't explored yet and the game is really good about rewarding you for exploring. Nothing you acquire in the castle ever really feels useless. Moving around the castle as Alucard also feels really good. Movement is snappy and responsive and so are attacks. Each different style of weapon has a different speed and range of attack. Alucard can swing daggers very fast, but the reach is really short and they are usually weaker than swords or other weapons. Using a two handed sword will give Alucard much longer reach, but the damage and range usually did not make up for the slow attack speed in my opinion. All of this combines to make for a world that consistently leaves the player curious about what could be behind the next door and also makes it just fun for the player to explore and engage in combat.



The thing that SotN got right was just about everything. Konami (The Company that developed Castlevania) took the concept of Metroid and added stats and equipment to it. In previous Castlevania games, if you couldn't get past a boss, all you could do was get better at the game. Now in SotN, if you are having trouble on a boss fight or in a particular room of the castle, you can spend some time leveling Alucard up so you can have an easier time. The game still requires skill and rewards a player for being skilled, but gives less experienced players an option as well.



Absolutely amazing game. I have always known about Symphony of the Night and I had played the first hour or so probably 10 times at this point, but I never stuck with the game until now and I can't believe how much it has blown me away. The only thing that really disappointed me was something that has always been hyped up about the game. I have heard countless times that the game has more than one ending and if you complete certain objectives, you unlock the 'upside down castle'. The upside down castle is a mirror version of Dracula's castle where the whole castle is flipped on its head. It can be unlocked right at the end of the game and it has all new boss fights, equipment, and powers to be found. This by itself is really awesome and something you don't really see much in AAA game development today. That said, actually exploring the upside down castle is not as fun as it sounds, because the castle was designed to be explored right-side up. This makes it very difficult to get around in the upside down version and not really that fun. I also found the difficulty curve to be a little too steep in the upside down castle, but in some ways it can be seen as a bonus area, so I suppose it's fine.

All in all, Castlevania: Symphony of the Night is a game I would highly recommend to anyone interested in knowing why the genre is called 'Metroidvania'. I would also say this game made me like vampires a little more as a whole. Alucard and Dracula give a little fresher take on vampires (1997) and honestly, I was here for it.



Castlevania

Symphony of the Night



Justin



"Episode 1 of Alucard's Oedipus Complex"



Patrick



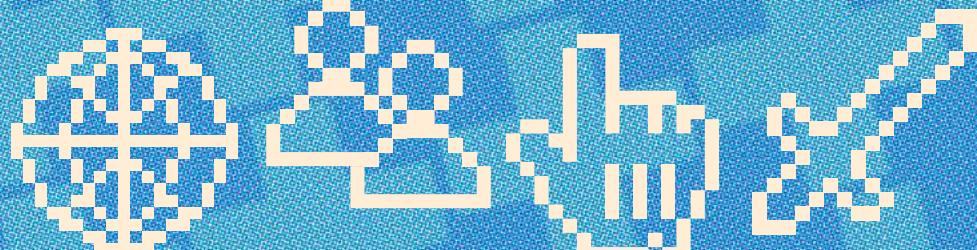
"Alucard is sexy as hell"



Cullen



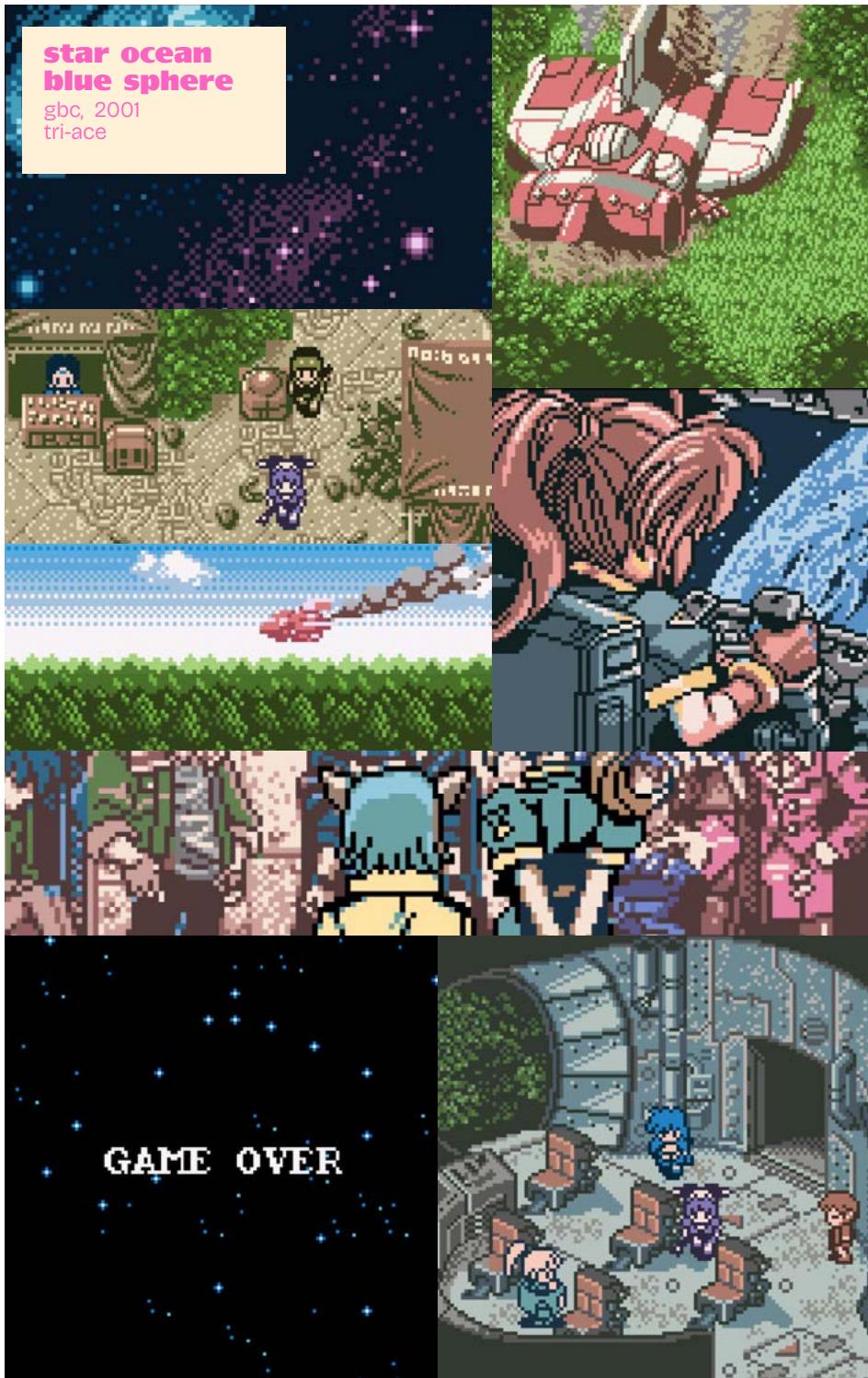
"Soundtrack obliterated me"





star ocean blue sphere

gbc, 2001
tri-ace



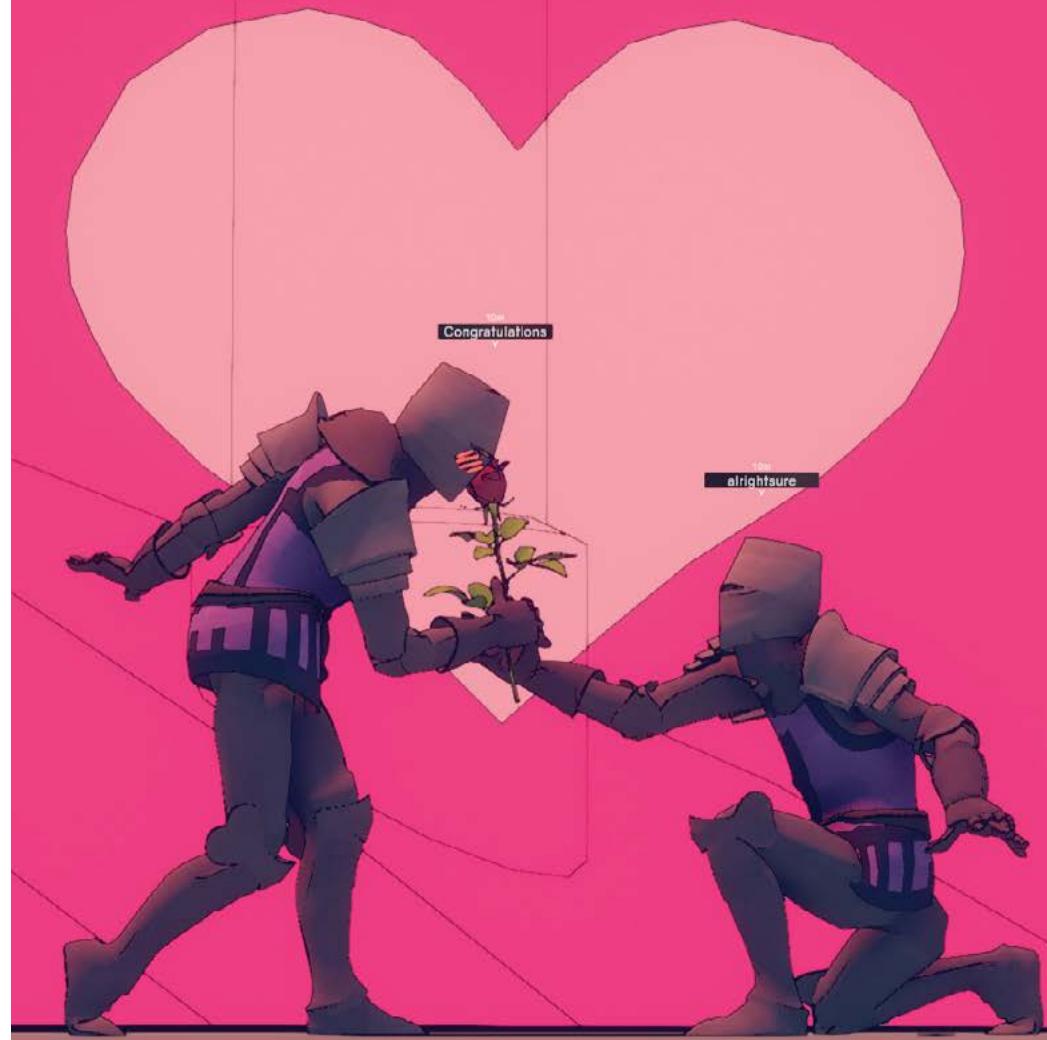
monster party

nes, 1989
human entertainment





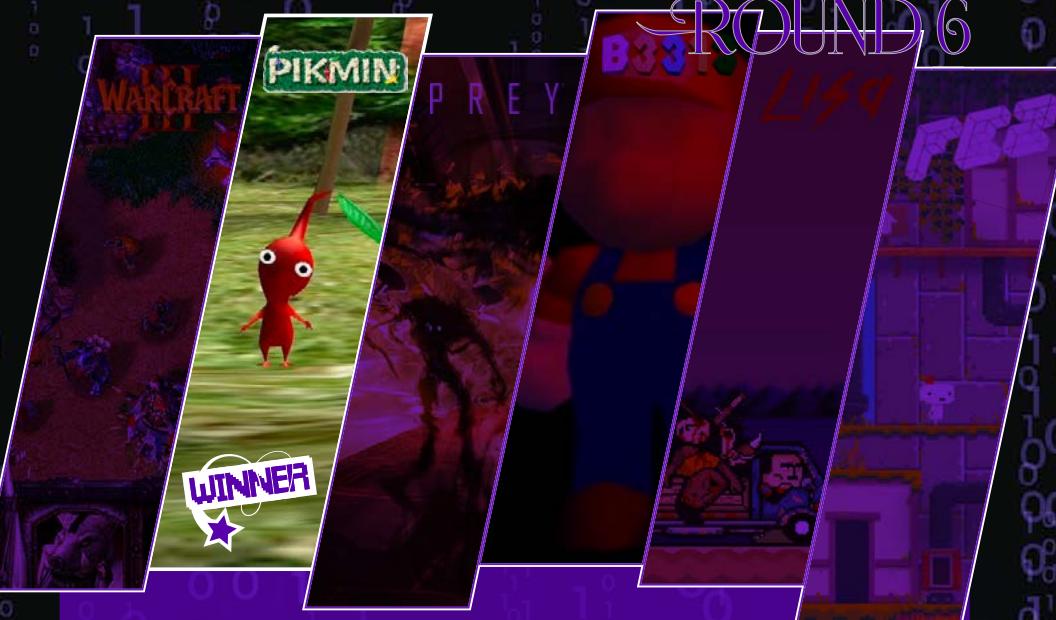
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85

GAMECLUB

ROUND 6



WINNER

Did you know that sunflowers are actually 1,000-2,000 individual flowers joined together? What about that some of the best fruits are actually distant relatives of roses? Ever try altering the pH level of your soil to change the color of your hydrangea blooms? Unfortunately, I myself have never had a green thumb - Sunflowers ravaged by rabbits before they could grow even 3 inches, the most bitter strawberries you've ever tasted, and under-watered cacti - Just a glimpse into my gardening past. Even though I've never had great luck with plant life, I know so many people who have a deep appreciation for it and that's where I've learned the facts I mentioned before. Nintendo's own Shigeru Miyamoto has a love for gardening and even designed a video game inspired by it. The game he created was a launch title for a purple cube with a handle, and said to be inspired by a carrot. That game was Nintendo's



I was not real hot on this game when it came out - I can remember playing the game at a little demo kiosk in 2001 at the K-Mart in my hometown. I wasn't into the visuals, had never played a game like it before, and thought the design of the main character was dumb. Fast forward to today - I have a fully developed brain and Pikmin is awesome.

I would classify Pikmin as a real-time strategy game with some light puzzle solving. You play as a tiny spaceman named Olimar whose ship crash landed on a strange planet. Shortly after crash landing, Oliver discovers a tiny, red, carrot-like creature that follows him around called a pikmin. Olimar also discovers a machine called an onion that converts the local flora & fauna into seeds that grow pikmin. When the pikmin deliver goods to the onion, the onion sucks them up and plants a number of seeds. The seeds then sprout in about 5 seconds and Olimar can uproot them to add more pikmin to his crew.



Olimar's main objective is to collect all of his missing ship parts that he lost in the crash landing so he can escape from the planet. Over the course of the game, Olimar directs his pikmin followers to fight enemies, transport ship parts & goods, and assist him in exploring the planet. Olimar can take up to 100 pikmin with him wherever he goes and if he has more than that, the extra pikmin are stored in the onion. As the player progresses through the game's different levels, they will find new types of pikmin to add to their crew as well. Olimar starts off with red pikmin which are resistant to fire, then he gets yellow pikmin, which can carry bomb rocks to blast down thick walls. Lastly, Olimar adds blue pikmin to his team. The blue pikmin are resistant to water and can safely walk through water that would drown any other pikmin. Each different type of pikmin has their own onion that generates their seeds.

The game has 5 different areas to explore. When you land in an area, a timer starts ticking down the time you have until it gets dark outside - about 13 minutes of real time. Once it becomes night time, the area is no longer safe because that is when the local fauna will be active. Olimar must gather all his pikmin and return to his ship and the onions before night time. Any pikmin left behind at night time will be eaten by animals in the area.

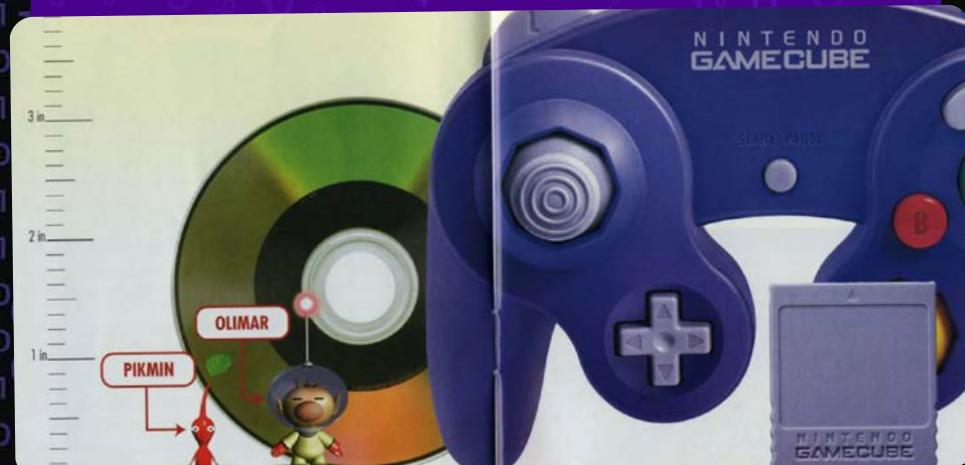
I've really come around on this game since I first played it at that K-Mart. This was my third full play through of the game and I still think it is fantastic. The other games in the series of course improve on many of the mechanics of the first game, but it is really awesome that this game even got made in the first place. In my opinion, this was really experimental for Nintendo and it was released as a launch-window title for the Gamecube! Most developers want to come out swinging on new consoles and not release something completely different from anything they have done before.



My favorite thing about this game is that Olimar and his pikmin are soooo tiny! Walking around giant blades of grass and flowers feels so cool. It also doesn't hurt that the pikmin are really cute. Not sure what was going through my head as a kid to make me not like this game. Visuals aside, the gameplay is also really strong - just as you would expect from any Nintendo game. However, it is a really terrible feeling you get when you command your pikmin to attack an enemy and you see the enemy just decimating your little friends.



A major issue I have with this game is the pathing for the pikmin when you are commanding them to move somewhere as a group. The player has to do this very often throughout the game and these little guys are incapable of moving in a straight line. I think some of this was fixed in the sequels, but when you want to maneuver 100 of these guys over a bridge with no railings, you are going to have major casualties. That just felt particularly unfair, because there isn't really a way around it unless I wanted to press A 100 times to throw each pikmin across the bridge individually. I get that maybe some of this is intentional because the pikmin don't really seem like there is too much going on inside their heads, but some QoL improvements in this area would have been nice.



Shigeru Miyamoto has taught me many things - plumbers have very interesting jobs, foxes make for great pilots, and there can be faster racing than formula 1. After playing Pikmin, I am happy to add to that list. From Pikmin, I learned you should always do whatever it takes to protect your little buddies. Even if it means throwing them one by one across a bridge. Unfortunately, I still didn't learn much about gardening from the game, though. Nonetheless - Pikmin maintains its spot in my list of favorite games.



PIKMIN



Justin



"Pretty awesome that this game got made"



Patrick



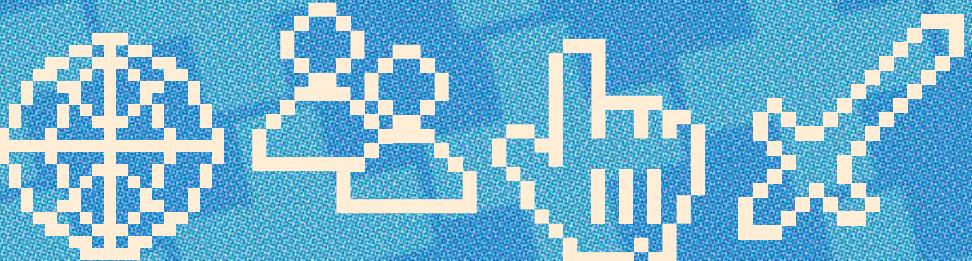
"I love my stupid little guys"



Cullen



"Pikmin is a 5/5 idea, but these little guys piss me off"



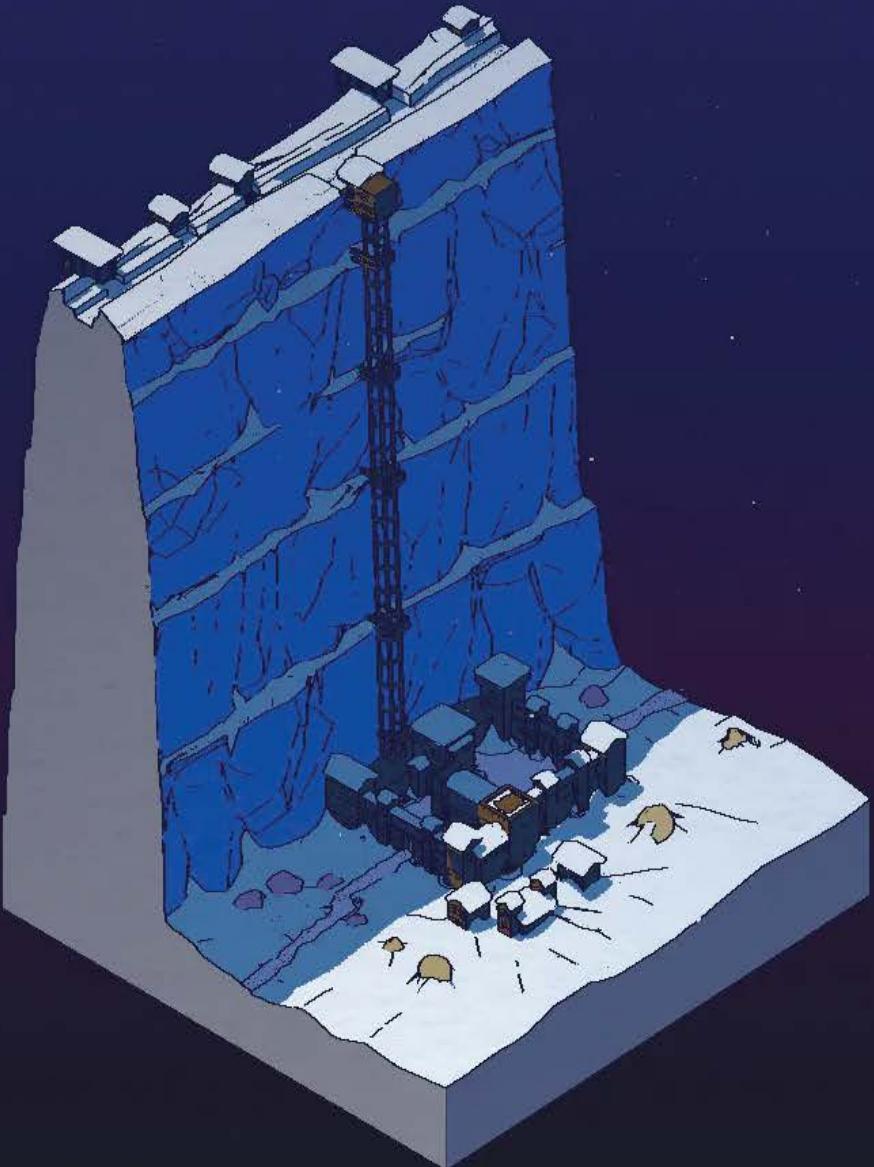


A little about me: I really hate subscriptions

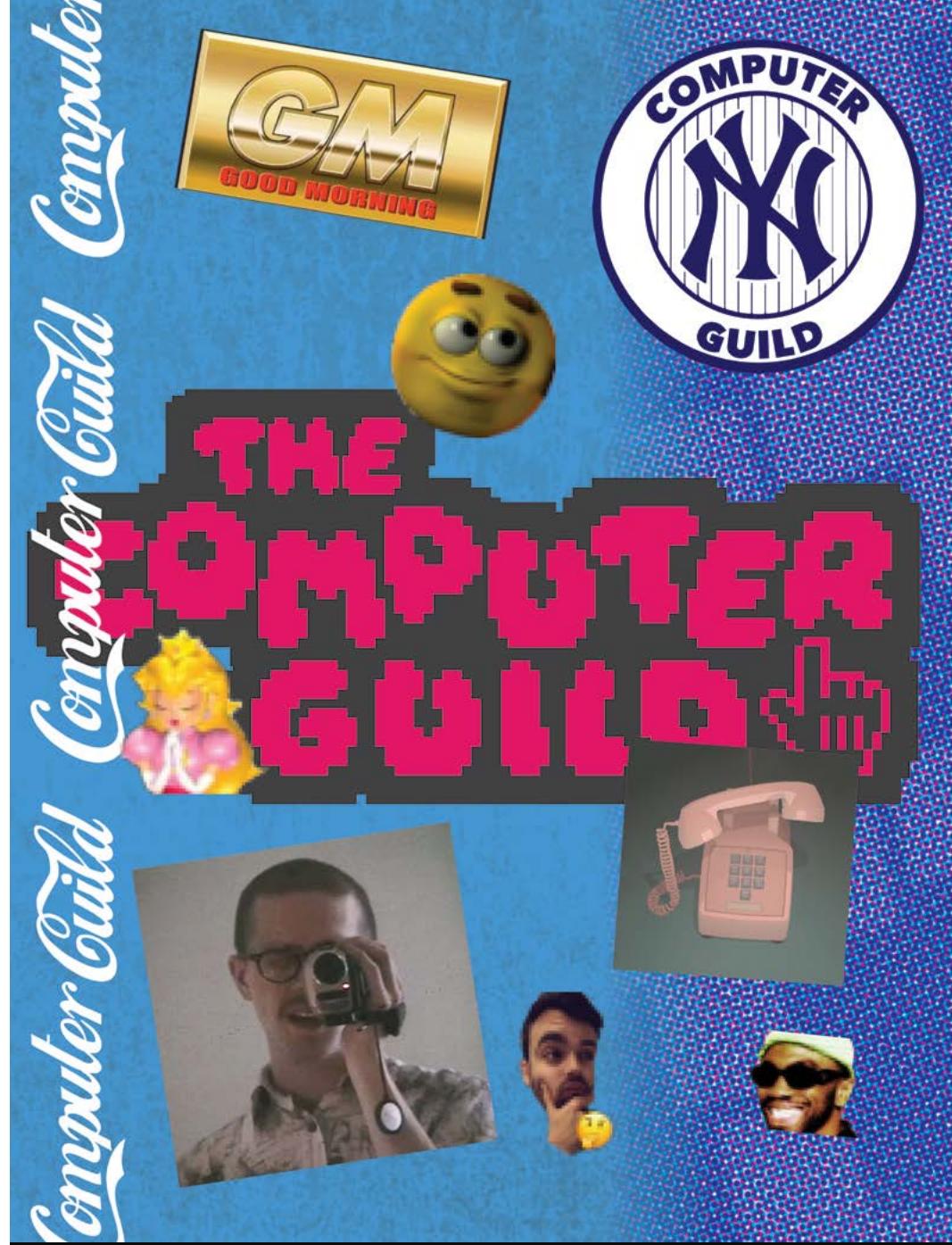
Back in 2020, Devolver published a game by 'That Silly Studio' using the Game of Thrones License. The game is called "Game of Thrones: Tale of Crows". I don't really care too much about Game of Thrones, but I really care about stuff when I like how it looks. And guess what? I am in love with everything about how this game looks. From the colors to the hand-drawn landscapes, to the way the game takes place on little slices of the world. The major, unforgiveable issue with this game is that it was only released on Apple Arcade, meaning I have to subscribe to the service if I want to play the game. There is no way to just outright purchase a license to the game. Four, almost five years have passed. I care about Game of Thrones so much less than I did in 2020, but I still think about Game of Thrones: Tale of Crows at least once a week. I will google it, look at screenshots, and wish it was purchase-able.

Yeah, I am being kind of petty at this point, but not everything needs to be a subscription! Just take my money one time in exchange for a good. Whatever. Check this game out if you have Apple Arcade.

- Jus







GAMECLUB

ROUND 6.5



My Dad purchased my family's first computer for Christmas in 2001. I can remember him unveiling the gift to the family as if he was revealing the grand prize of a game show. My Dad (like many dads) enjoys a good deal - he bought a computer that was not really able to do a whole lot besides type up word documents and play solitaire. Because of this, I stuck mostly to console gaming as a kid. Four years later, I am in fifth grade and my friend at school tells me about a computer game from Korea that just got released in North America. He tells me the game is an 'MMORPG' and teaches me what a 'Massive Multiplayer Online Role-playing Game' is. The game is called Maplestory and I would spend the next 5-7 days trying to download it on my toaster of a computer. Unbeknownst to me, this game would solidify itself in my mind and keep me thinking about it for the next 18 years (and counting).

In the following years, many friends at school would tell me about a bigger, better MMORPG that was way cooler and not made for babies, like Maplestory was. The game was called World of Warcraft. It had 3D graphics and was 'way more fun'. But after laying my eyes on the beautiful, timeless, pixel-perfect art of Maplestory (my opinion), how could my very visually-oriented mind bear to look at the chunky, ugly, early 3D 'art' of WoW (my opinion)? I think even at that age, I saw through WoW's pre-teen-focused design style and just completely

disregarded it. Not to mention the subscription fee you have to pay if you want to play the game - I didn't have that kind of money!

20+ years of video game addiction, and I still had not played one minute of WoW or even any of the earlier Warcraft games. That is, until Round 6.5 of GameClub, when I really focused in on the glaring Warcraft-shaped gap in my gaming history and suggested that we should play one of Blizzard Entertainment's legendary Warcraft games. While World of Warcraft has loomed large over the gaming industry for the last 20~ years, we weren't going to play an MMO for Gameclub, so we ended up choosing the next most important entry in the series:



Warcraft III takes place during a conflict between humans and corrupted orcs. The game starts the player off following Prince Arthas Menethil of Lordaeron as he fends off the plague that is being spread to his loyal subjects across the realm by the orcs. Over time, you see Arthas become more and more corrupted. He has a vendetta against the Dreadlord, Mal'Ganis for spreading the plague. To defeat him, Arthas ignores direct orders from the king, betrays his allies, and sells his soul. Now, if the game ended there, I would have been satisfied, but that is only the end of the first campaign - Three others come after it and even more if you own the Frozen Throne expansion!



Just like the first two games, Warcraft III is a real-time strategy game with a high fantasy setting. Warcraft III is split up into four campaigns, which are further split into a number of missions. The player takes control of an omnipotent force in the sky controlling all allied units on the battlefield. You are in charge of commanding your peasants to gather gold and wood, spending that gold and wood on units or structures, and ordering your soldiers to move and fight. The player is the brain for (almost) all activities in Warcraft III. All of your units are dumb little idiots that can't do (almost) anything unless you tell them otherwise. Some missions will have you moving your units from point A to point B in order to finish them, but the meat of the game are the missions where you need to really establish and grow your own little town that can provide you with the resources to crush the opposing forces.



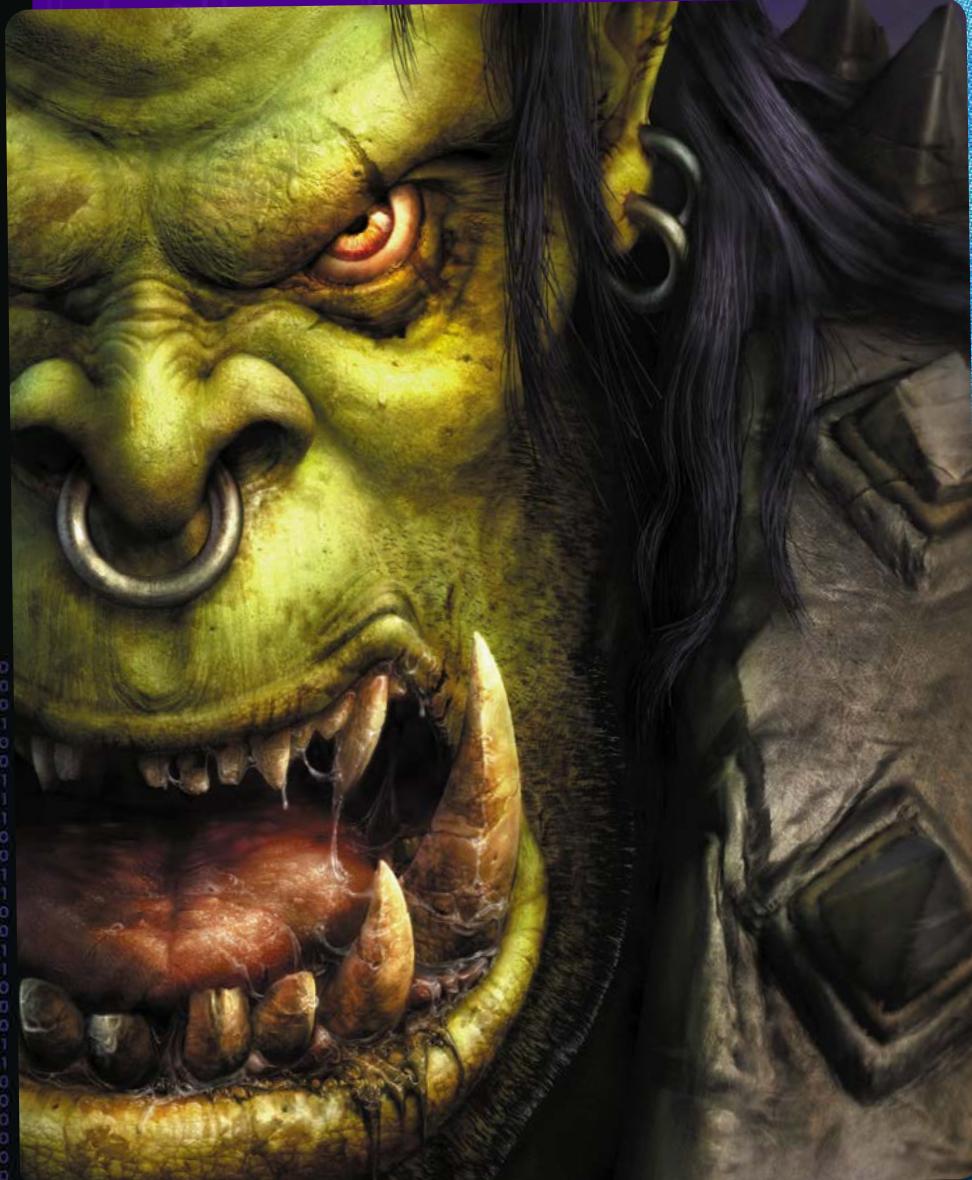
For the first time, the series has 3D graphics in Warcraft III. I am sure when this came out, the graphics looked amazing and I'll be honest - they have aged rather well. They are clearly old graphics made in an ancient time, but they don't hurt to look at - the game is very colorful and bright. The devs did a lot of color coding, so it is very easy to tell if a unit is an enemy or allied. I also want to shoutout the main menu - the animation times might be a little long for me, but I really enjoyed the overall 'vibe' of the main menu. Warcraft III doesn't just give you a logo with some options. You get to chill on a ravaged battlefield with some atmospheric lighting and rain pouring down. It is a simple thing, but it really helps set the tone the devs wanted and it gets you ready to play the game.



I was pleasantly surprised by Warcraft III. After 28 years of not wanting anything to do with the Warcraft franchise, I finally tried one of the games out and loved it! I never liked the art direction of Warcraft, but after playing the third game in the series, I gotta say - it grew on me. A new fan is born. I also loved the story of this game. I know Warcraft has a ton of lore, and maybe I am not so interested in all of that, but just experiencing the story of this game was great! Maybe a little funny how fast Arthas spirals into selling his soul, but that's okay - it is all part of the charm. The biggest critique I could give the game would be the camera zoom. Throughout the entire game, I was wishing the camera was more zoomed out. You kind of get used to it after a few missions, but it really would have been helpful.



20 years... It has been 20+ years since the release of World of Warcraft. Is it too late to finally start the game? Or maybe I should try out DOTA.. for me, playing Warcraft III kind of busted down the door to a whole new world. I am interested in playing more RTS games now, but also trying out a MOBA. I could see myself taking a peek at what World of Warcraft has going on, and there is even a critically acclaimed (joking) Warcraft movie that was released in 2016. I've got a lot to look forward to.



III WARCRAFT



Justin



"Way better than expected"



Patrick



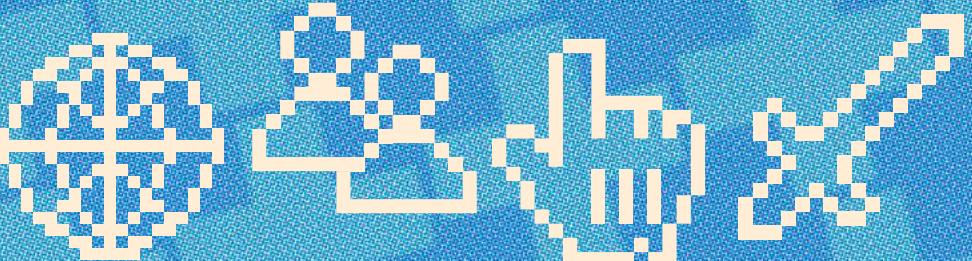
"Arthas did everything wrong"

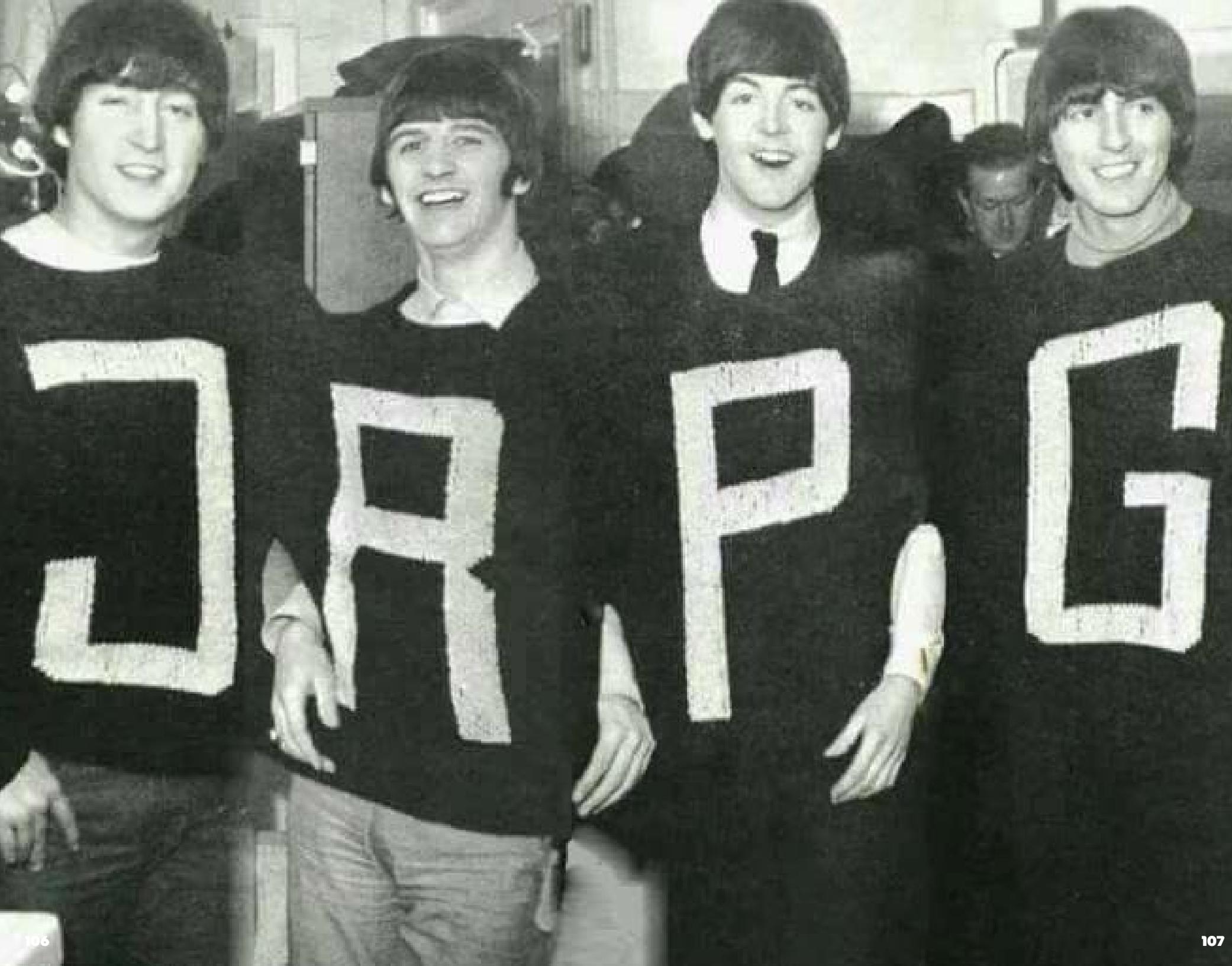


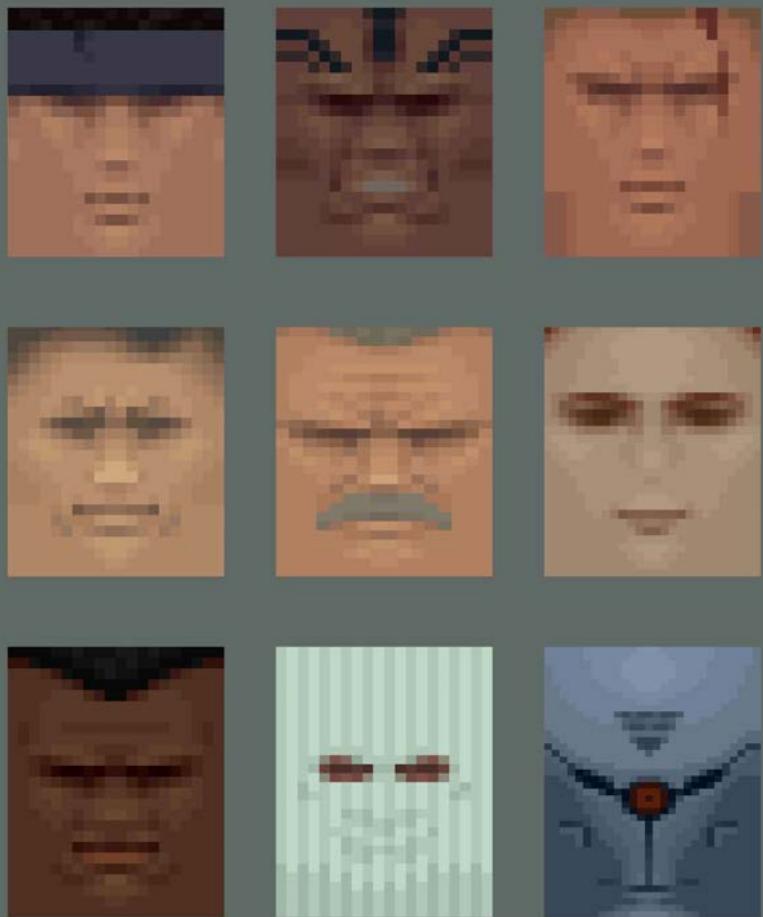
Cullen



"MOBAs were a mistake"











GAMECLUB ROUND 7



It's hard to say how much nostalgia affects someone interacting with a piece of their childhood. Of course it's different for everyone and there are many different factors at play — how positive the memory is, the personal relationships involved, total time spent on the subject, etc. For me, I get emotional anytime I see photographs or video of me or my family when I was young. It's getting pretty close to Christmas again as I am writing this and I am thinking back to last year, at my parent's house, when my dad thought it might be a good idea to get out all the beta tapes he shot when my sister and I were kids. First time riding a bike, jumping into piles of leaves, family birthday parties, and of course - every Christmas morning. Almost instantly, I had tears streaming down my face - I couldn't control them. Sure, I had a great childhood, but recorded on those tapes were intimate moments with family members and friends - some of whom are no longer with us. It's overwhelming to think the reason why these tapes exist is because of my parents' unconditional love for my sister and I. All of this is to say nostalgia is a really weird thing. I'm not sure why those videos make me cry, but they do. Maybe I just miss those days? Those people? What I

do know is that I don't just have rose-tinted glasses — I've got myself a rose-tinted telephoto zoom lens (for better or for worse). Anyways, this round, we played Japan Studio's

APE ESCAPE

All that talk about nostalgia was because when I was a kid, I played the absolute shit out of Ape Escape. I first played the game at a PlayStation kiosk in my hometown's K-Mart. I can remember not quite understanding the controls, but loving the game anyways. I suppose I would have been 5 or 6 years old at the time. I guess my Mom or Dad saw how much I was enjoying the game and probably gifted it to me for a birthday or Christmas. As a kid, there was not much I disliked about the game — the characters were cool, graphics were colorful, and gameplay was killer. I know after sinking countless hours into the game, I eventually managed to finish it, but I never 100% d it and I know there is a proper ending if you manage to catch all the monkeys.



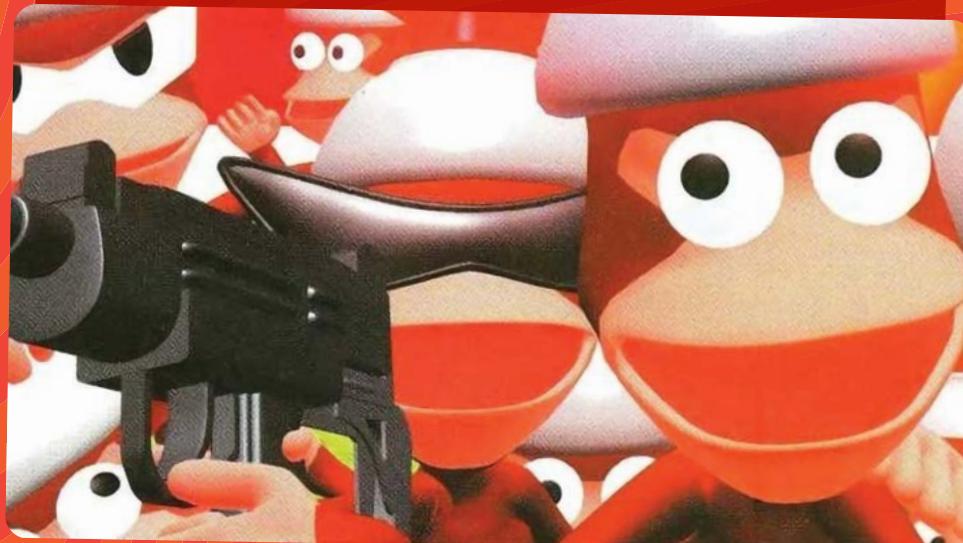
The story of Ape Escape starts when a monkey named Specter gets his hands on a special 'peak point helmet'. When Specter puts the helmet on, he becomes infinitely more intelligent, escapes the zoo he is being kept in, and begins manufacturing more helmets. After more helmets have been produced, Specter breaks a bunch of other monkeys out of the zoo and puts helmets on them. Together, they attack the professor's lab (the one that created the peak point helmet) and use his time machine to travel through time. Two kids (Spike and Jake) show up and agree to help the professor by going through time and capturing all the monkeys that escaped.



In the game, the player controls Spike and he navigates through different periods of history all the way up into the future trying to return all escaped monkeys to present day. Ape Escape is a 'collectathon platformer' game, meaning the player moves through large 3D environments while collecting things. Generally in the collectathon genre, the main items the player collects will sit in a static position in the game's level. One thing to note about Ape Escape is the fact that the player is mainly collecting living, breathing monkeys that move around. The monkeys more or less stay in the same area, but if they see you coming, they will do whatever they can to avoid Spike catching them in his net. It's an interesting twist on the idea of a collectathon and I think it really works well. I struggle to think of any other collectathon games with this twist.

This is the first and only game on the PlayStation to require the use of a DualShock controller. The game's gadgets and vehicles heavily rely on the use of the DualShock's analog sticks. This makes for some interesting and unique gameplay, but by the end of the game I got a little tired of having to spin the right analog stick over and over. Spike's movement is controlled by the left stick and to use whatever gadget he is holding in his hands, the player either moves or spins the right stick. At the time, I am pretty sure these controls were insane (and they kind of still are). The N64 had a single analog stick, but the PlayStation was the first console to support a controller with two analog sticks. Ape Escape really leaned into that and made the player's primary action dependent on the right analog stick and used the face buttons to change Spike's held gadget. An unusual control scheme, but it absolutely worked for the game.

Ape Escape's composer is named Soichi Terada. Ape Escape's composer is named Soichi Terada. Ape Escape's composer is named Soichi Terada. Are you writing this down? Are you taking notes? Drum & Bass music was certainly popular around the time Ape Escape came out, but it was not a normal genre of music to have in your video game soundtrack, let alone have your soundtrack centered around the genre. The music in this game is SO good! Each track feels distinct and hits the right mood for the setting. The theme for this game is something I have been able to conjure in my mind at will for the past 23 or so years. That's how catchy it is (and also, how much I played the game). It also is really impressive to have standout music in places like the level select screen and save menus. Terada put a lot of care into making the music for this game and it shows.



Ape Escape has and will always have a reserved plot of memory real estate for me as well as a rose-tinted forcefield around that plot of memory. It was one of the first video games I really fell in love with and thankfully it has aged very well, allowing me to enjoy it 20+ years later. The game isn't perfect though! The English voice acting in Ape Escape is absolutely atrocious (I'm sure the Japanese VA is better) and while unique, the controls can get a little tiresome. I also wish the boss fights in this game functioned more as puzzles that required you to use your gadgets. A few of them do, but more often than not, you are just waiting for the right opportunity to strike with your stun club. That said, everything the game does wrong, it makes up for with character and charm (and fun gameplay). Ape Escape is an easy recommend to anyone interested in the collectathon genre. Truly a unique series of games that have and will stand the test of time.



Well, before I finished writing this review, I managed to catch all 204 monkeys and finally defeat Specter. A goal 23~ years in the making. If anything, finally completing the game has only increased the tint on my rose-colored telephoto lens. It is really nice to have finally checked that off, though. I feel like I can put the figurative trophy up on the shelf in my head and rest easy knowing I've seen all that Ape Escape has to offer.

APE ESCAPE



Justin



"Composer did NOT need to go that hard!"



Patrick



"DualShock is the future"



Cullen



"I don't like it when games challenge me"







What the heck
is Electronic Mail?



THE BAG OF BATTERIES

by Brandon

I collect and own a lot of radios, cassette decks and other old audio equipment. A sizeable chunk of them not having a way to plug into an outlet. This means I have to resort to the illustrious battery to power these ancient artifacts and while I'm not burning through packs a day like a smoker on shag I still see my fair share of AA's AAA's and D's come and go. Love a good D. I can't say I'm a regular at my local battery drop off center either so at any given time I usually have a healthy pile of dead power bodies stinking up the joint. Those beautiful bastards, how can one thing bring so much joy and inspiration and then die suddenly, transitioning into judgemental toxic paperweights always whispering to me "you're not just gonna throw us away are you? We're batteries you freaking dolt, you can't do that. Maybe it's time you went back to the gym, you need it". Okay, okay let me just stretch some more first. I dont want to hurt myself on the leg press.

10 years ago I bought a mic stand. It's a good mic stand as to this day it still holds mics and it still stands. Though with old age there has emerged one small, probably easily fixable flaw and it's been barbecuing my britches for months: it sort of tilts down a little bit when I put both of my matched condenser mics on the mount and use them for stereo recordings. No matter how much I tighten down the extension arm it just can't reliably hold up both my mics at the angle I desire. The result is cataclysmic. I'll spare the gory details but rest assured I used to spend seconds, sometimes

minutes resetting the height of the extension arm so I could make funny sounds for a song or talk to the other Computer Guild members over voice chat. Im trembling just remembering those days.

You'll notice the carefully constructed past tense when referring to this dark age of mic mounting. It's because I did the unthinkable and turned two problems into one solution. While cleaning my studio, I found myself putting the batteries in a plastic bag - "wow these are heavy already" I remarked to myself in my head. "Goddamn you're sexy" I responded out loud and was about to leave the room when it hit me like a bag of dead D batteries: counterweight. I realized that the arm continues past the fulcrum and provides a perfect means of countering the weight of the mics and finding the equilibrium all the while also giving purpose to the batteries I'm too lazy to recycle. I hung the gray plastic bag from the far end of the mount and stood back watching the mics hang together in harmony not dropping a single centimeter. Oh glorious day! And the women and children wept. We turn to the sun and the lesson burns brightest in my eyes: define your flaws, dont let them define you and dont be afraid to talk to yourself like a little freak.





GAMECLUB

ROUND 8



Is there anything in your life that you really like the idea of, but just don't really use/engage with as much as you thought you would? Maybe those Pokemon cards you bought off eBay last year or the guitar that has been sitting in the corner of your room since you decided you were going to learn how to play? Well what about something you really like the idea of, but actively despise using or engaging with? I think this is a little less common than the other, but imagine a beautiful, hand-crafted teapot that burns your hand every time you use it. Or perhaps a gun that shoots the person holding it? Annoying, right? It's weird - why do we spend time and money on things we don't actually enjoy using? Well I don't know. But I do know that for me, this phenomenon comes in the form of a Sony PlayStation game called

SILENT HILL

Silent Hill is a survival horror game for the Sony PlayStation that released in North America in February of 1999. The game ended up spawning a moderately-sized series complete with spinoffs, comics, movies, etc. and remains incredibly popular (with its fans) today. Developed by Japanese pachinko artists "Konami", Silent Hill follows a father named Harry as he tries to find his missing adopted daughter after a car crash. While scouring the town of Silent Hill, Harry meets some locals, visits some spooky buildings, solves puzzles, and fends off angry demons.

This game has a very (very) strong VIBE. There are moments in this game where the vibe almost becomes tangible - like the thick, chewy fog that surrounds the town of Silent Hill. Everything seems uncertain - Are the locals real? What happened to this town? Is Harry in a nightmare? The game steeps you in a mood that is so potent, your neighbors will feel it when you're playing. Navigating a desolate town in a perpetual state of dusk is creepy enough on its own, but add in some demons and spooky lore and you've got yourself a tangible vibe. I can't explain how much the mood of Silent Hill clicks with me - it just really hits the spot. There isn't another video game that scratches this kind of itch for me let alone nearly this well.



Alright - if the last paragraph was the beautiful, hand-crafted teapot, then this is the part where it burns your hand every single time you use it: Silent Hill is not fun to play. Sure, you might say Silent Hill is a survival horror game and that it is supposed to be difficult and scary, but you know what? It should still be fun. My first issue with Silent Hill are the puzzles. I love puzzle games. That said, in every Silent Hill game,

it feels like the developers go out of their way to make the puzzles way more obtuse than they need to be. Instead of seeing a puzzle and solving it, I am trying to decipher what the puzzle wants me to do and then trying out what I think is right until I get somewhere. Attempting these puzzles and running back and forth to reference clues gets real old when monsters and demons chase you every where you go. The puzzles are (in a sense) the meat and potatoes of Silent Hill. They are the obstacles blocking Harry's way to his goal (other than enemies (but we'll get to that later)). They can be really rewarding if the player can solve them, but most of the puzzles in the game just felt a little more obtuse than I would have liked.



The PlayStation had certain limitations, graphical fidelity being one of them. Luckily, the entire town of Silent Hill is covered in a fog so thick. Harry cant see more than two feet in front of him. This cuts down on how many polygons the PlayStation had to load in at the time and simultaneously ruins your experience of exploring the town. With such limited visibility, Harry has to be directly in front of something for you to be able to see it. Early on in the game, I spent an hour and a half looking for a dog house that I missed because I was on the wrong side of the street when I went past it. Fog is cool and it definitely has a place in this game, but with it being so dense and opaque, it really put a damper on

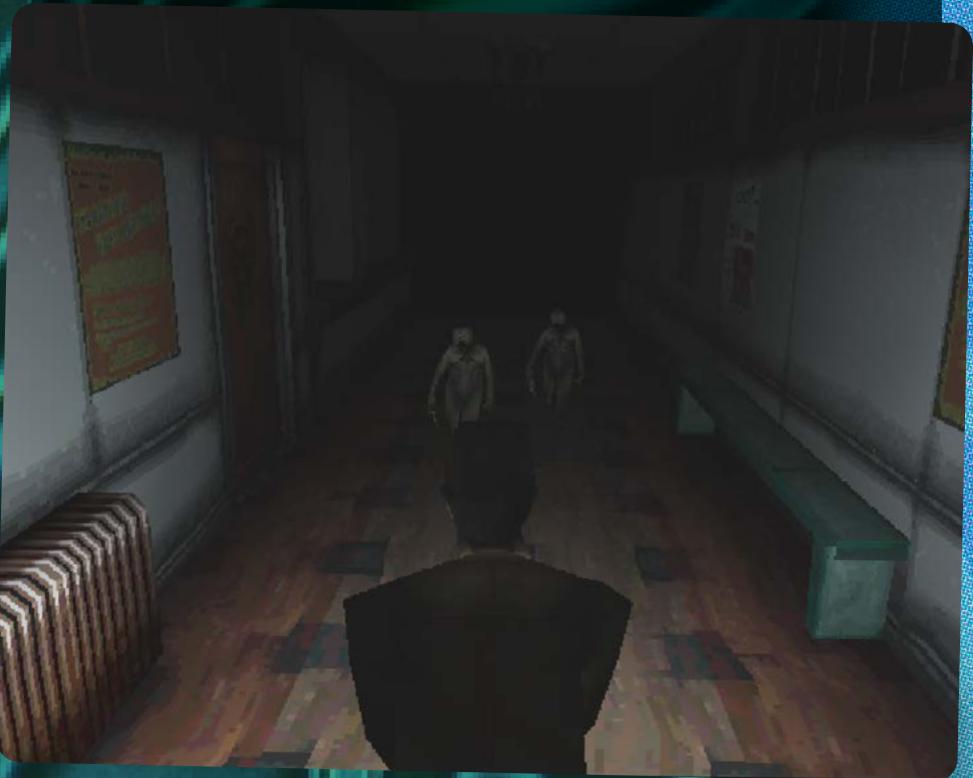
the exploration for me. I am sure the game is this way in part due to hardware limitations, but I know there are other PlayStation games that have much larger draw distances.



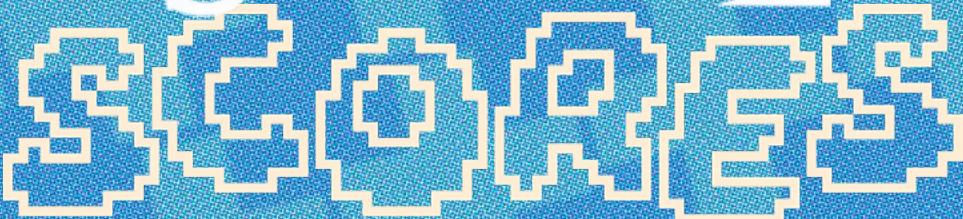
The last major issue I had with the game was combat (specifically melee combat). Harry moves his body with the grace of a rhinoceros. Which, in theory is fine - He is (probably) not trained in combat, so he shouldn't be super proficient with all these weapons. But it feels absolutely awful to control Harry during these situations. He just flails away with his lead pipe until he gets stunlocked by hell hounds. This was the studio's first open world 3D game and it was early-ish in the PS1's lifespan, so I am taking that into account, but combat in Silent Hill just feels so bad. There is also about 3x more combat than I would have liked in this game. This much mediocre combat does a lot to hurt that perfect vibe I was describing earlier.



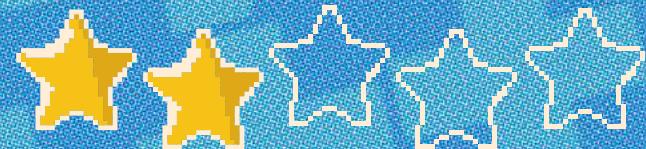
All in all, Silent Hill is a cool game. A cool game with a lot of issues that I will not be revisiting anytime soon. However, I am very much looking forward to the exciting, new Silent Hill games that were announced recently. One looks to be a new entry in the main series 'Silent Hill 6' and another is being made by one of my favorite game studios and is called 'Silent Hill: Townfall'. Before the recent announcement of the new games, there was an 11-year gap with no new Silent Hill games (besides a demo called P.T.) so it goes without saying that new games in the series are long overdue. I have always been a fan of the Silent Hill series, but I can say with confidence: it was never about the gameplay.



SILENT HILL



Justin



"There isn't any other game that I like as much, but hate playing"



Patrick



"I am sorry this all happened to Harry"



Cullen



"Just play Silent Hill 2"





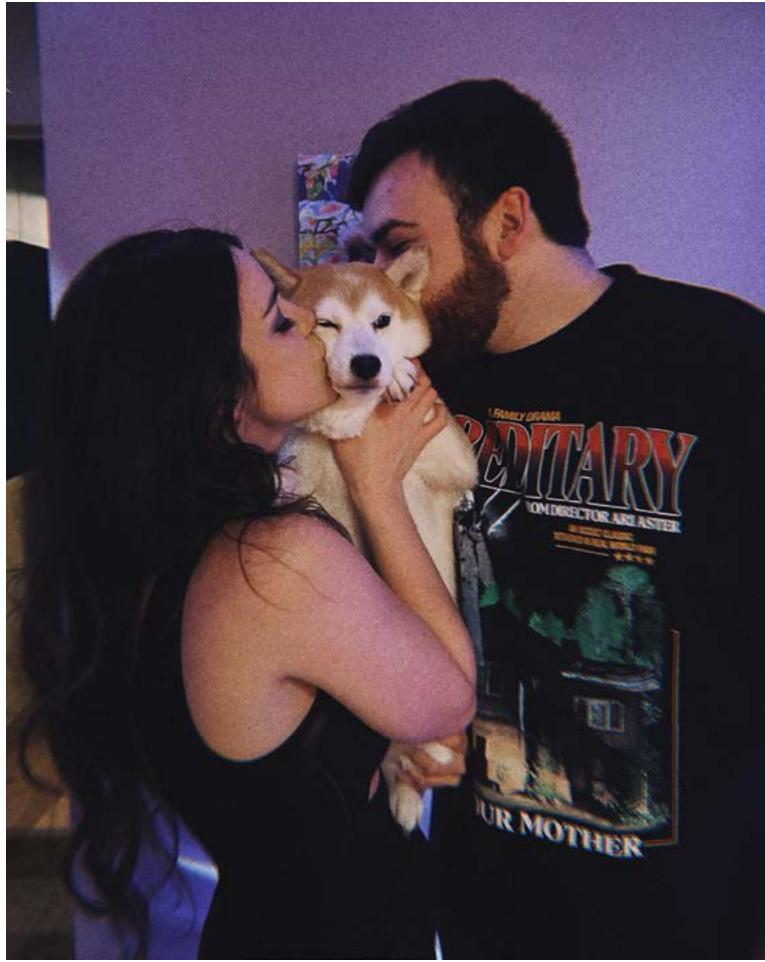
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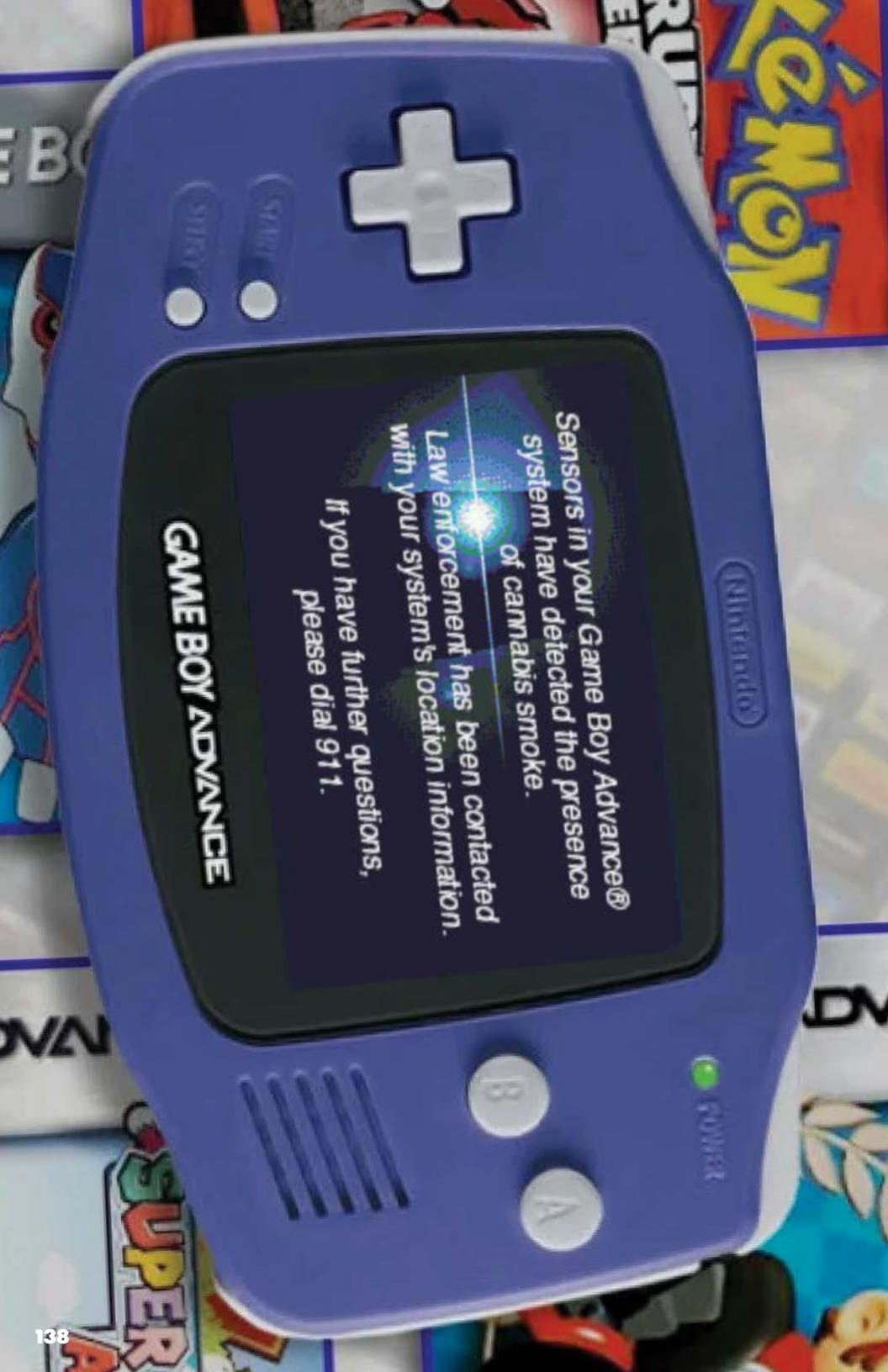


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GAMECLUB

ROUND 9



I follow video games pretty closely. I read articles published on video game news sites, I listen to podcasts about video game news, and I read books about video games and the video game industry. That said, there is only a single video game in history that I know the release date for. All other release dates have escaped my memory - probably because the information is trivial, but that is beside the point. The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim was released on 11.11.11. Skyrim was set to be the most immersive fantasy video game experience ever created and in more ways than one, it was. The game was (and is) loved by many. So many, that the developer has released the game 17 times on 10 different platforms. Skyrim is part of the long-running 'Elder Scrolls' series and it was really the first one to hit home for a wider, more mainstream audience. For round 9 of GameClub, we played an earlier game in the series that gave a little insight as to why The Elder Scrolls series didn't really take

off before Skyrim and we also got to see the DNA of these games at an early stage. The game we played was Bethesda's

The Elder Scrolls III MORROWIND



The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind is an open-world, action roleplaying game by Bethesda Studios. The game takes place on the continent of Tamriel in the province of Morrowind - home of the dark elves. The player starts by creating their character, stepping off a boat into the town of Seyda Neen, and getting told to find a man named 'Caius Cosades'. And that's it! After that, you are cut free from any sort of handholding. No waypoints on your map, no NPC saying "Follow me! This way!", just your trusty journal and some road signs.



In Morrowind, there are three meters on screen at all times - health, magicka, and fatigue. The health meter's purpose is pretty obvious. Magicka is spent when casting spells, and fatigue is used when jumping, attacking, etc. While in combat, a fourth meter will appear that shows the opponent's health.

Combat in this game is extremely similar to that of later Elder Scrolls games, but in Morrowind, different melee attacks are performed depending on the direction the player is moving. If the player is standing still, the attack will be a 'chop'. To slash, move left or right and to thrust, move forward or backwards. An interesting system, but difficult to get used to in my opinion. For example, I used a slashing weapon and the best way I found to deal high damage to my target was to constantly be strafing around them, which became very tedious. Even then, I would still accidentally trigger a thrust attack here and there by pressing the attack button at the wrong time.



While combat (for the most part) plays out like a dated elder scrolls game, Morrowind really shines in other areas. If you give enough effort into learning the game's systems, you will be rewarded. As mentioned earlier, there are no waypoints on your screen, so you need to be reading road signs in the game and looking at your map to be able to know where you are headed. This alone makes the game's exploration so much more gratifying, because you feel accomplished when you actually make it to the correct destination. It also works well because Morrowind is filled with dungeons, side quests, and characters. You will probably be wandering around more and stumbling into people or places you wouldn't have if you had just beelined it to your destination.

Leveling up in Morrowind is done by using your major and minor skills, which are selected during character creation. Skills govern just about anything you can do in the game (ex. Athletics, Sneak, Axes, Mercantile) Use a skill enough and it will gain a level. Gain 10 levels in any combination of skills and your character will gain a level. At the time of a level up, your characters stats will increase at a rate dependent on which 10 skills brought you to the level up. This system works extremely well and makes the player feel like they are really training a character in whatever skills they are actually using.



One of the most incredible things in Morrowind is the world itself. The dark elves' homeland is unlike anything else I have seen in a fantasy game. Giant mushrooms litter the landscape and strange beasts are everywhere. This area of Tamriel evolved differently because it is surrounded by ash and positioned near a large volcano. The 'fast-travel' in Morrowind is essentially a taxi service that uses massive beetle-like creatures with skyscraper-sized legs to transport you between towns. They are called Silt Striders and they are awesome. I was incredibly impressed with how much thought went into designing this part of Tamriel. It is unlike any of the other areas we have been able to explore and that makes it so much more interesting.

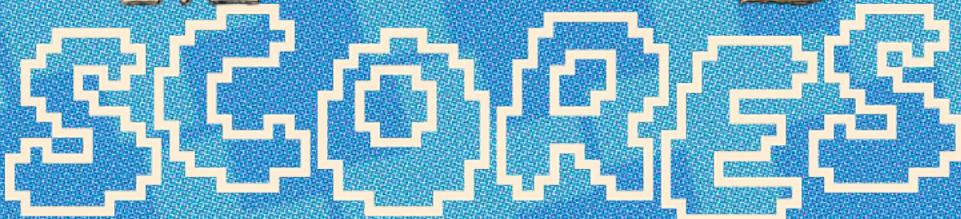
As with the later Elder Scrolls games, Morrowind gives the player a 'main quest'. In this game's case, the quest revolves around the rulers of Morrowind and their battle against 'Dagoth Ur'. Of course, a majority of the development resources went into fleshing out the main quest of this game, but here is the incredible thing about Elder Scrolls games: you can get so much enjoyment out of this game without ever going anywhere near the main quest. The world is full of things to do, dungeons to delve, and people to meet/help/kill. Like the later games, there are factions to join in Morrowind, but here, some of the factions are opposed and you need to think carefully on which one(s) you will pledge allegiance to! It is truly incredible how many distractions have been inserted into this game. There is potential for the player character to be the reincarnation of a legendary hero, but hang on - this woman promised me 15 gold coins if get rid of the three rats in her house.

One of my favorite games of all time is The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion. I've sunk countless hours into that game learning the ins and outs of its systems. This made it kind of difficult for me to play Morrowind - a game that in some ways is proto-Oblivion, but I'm glad I did. The Elder Scrolls DNA is visible, but many of Morrowind's systems are simpler/cruder, while some are much more complex. It was really interesting to compare the two during my time with Morrowind and I am glad to say I enjoyed it enough to where I know I will be revisiting it in the future. I was thoroughly impressed by the variety of things to do in this game - it has so much to do/solve/uncover and all of it was hand-crafted. I would take Morrowind over Bethesda's 'Starfield' any day and I am sure I'm not alone in that.



The Elder Scrolls III

MORROWIND



Justin



"Incredible amount of depth that I did not anticipate"



Patrick



"This n'wah loves his khajit wife"

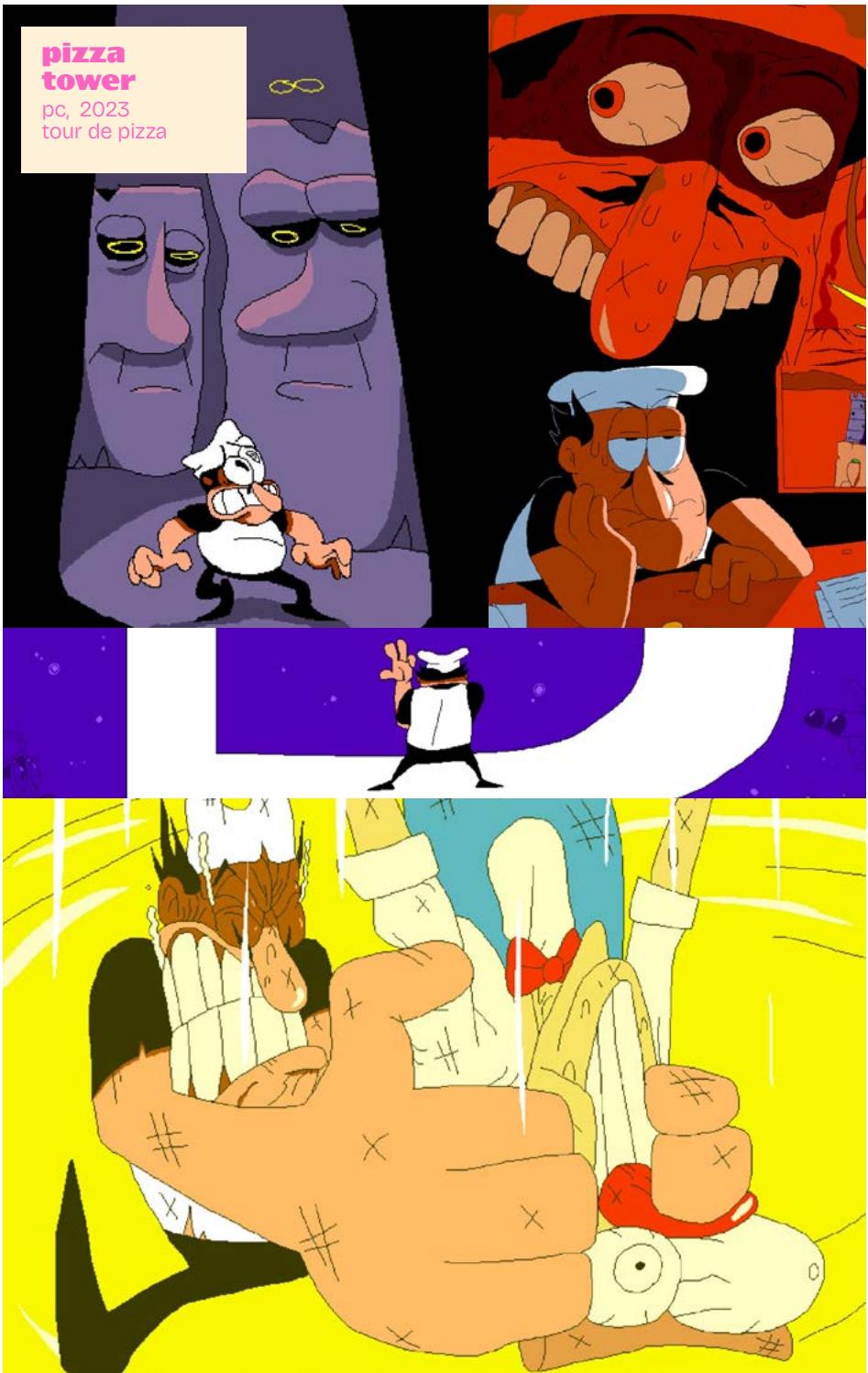


Cullen



"I didn't really play it that much"



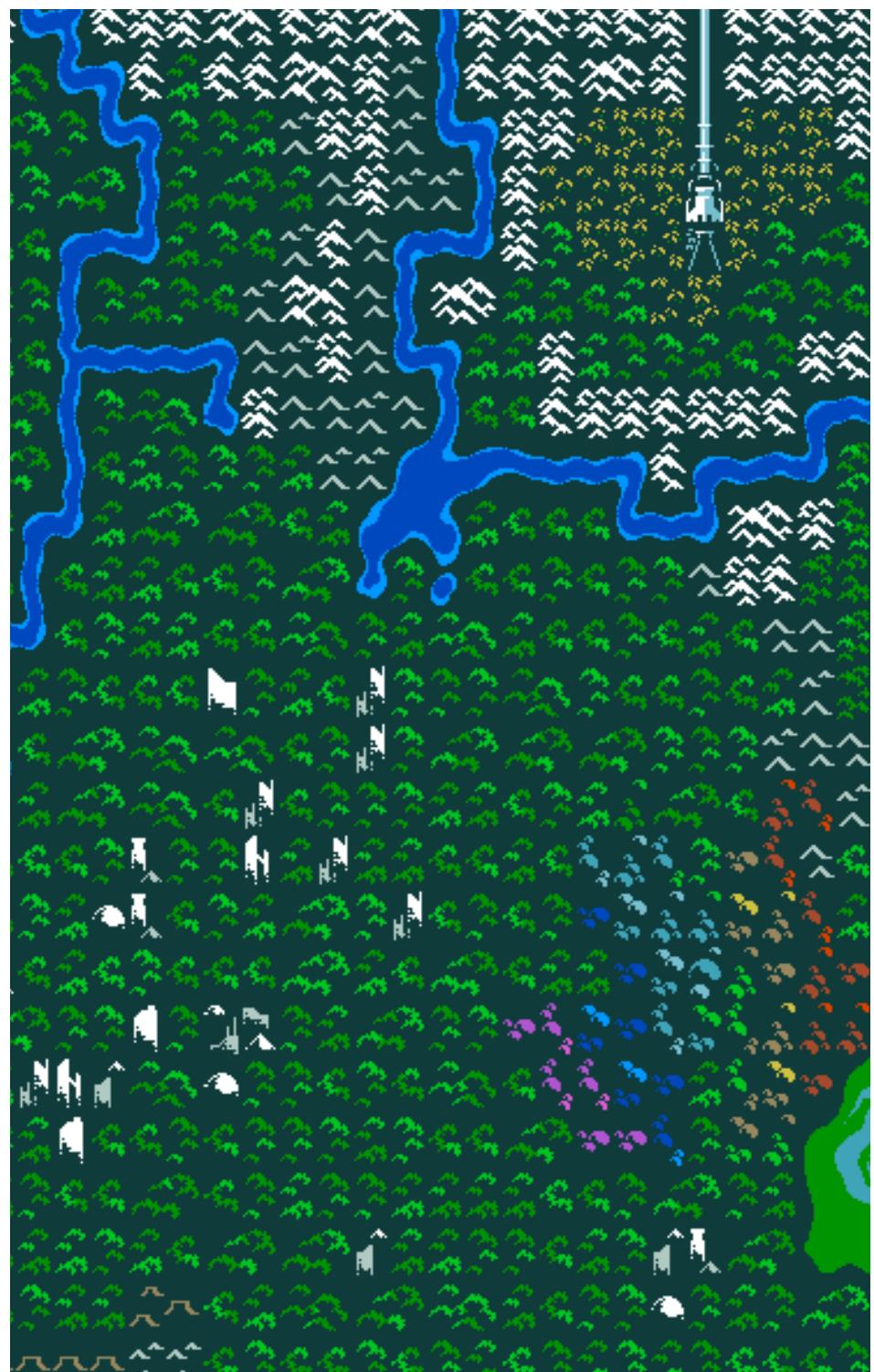


pizza tower
pc, 2023
tour de pizza



segal rally championship
saturn, 1994
sega





The RAT LORD cordially invites you to the
SEWER for a TASTEFUL DINING EXPERIENCE.



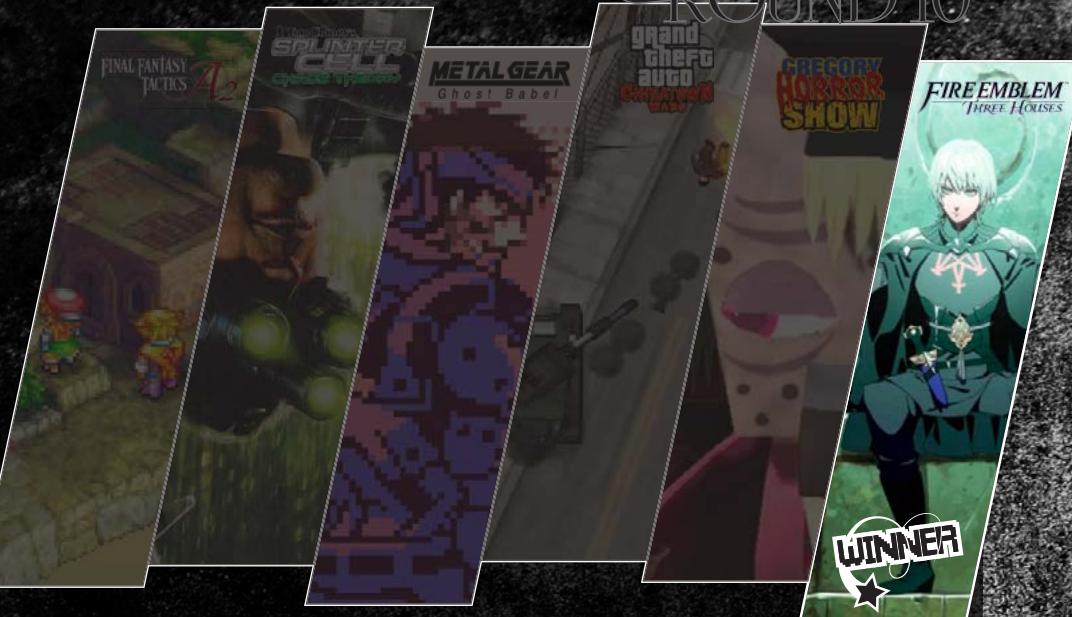
How do you ACCEPT this invitation?

- [] > With GRATITUDE
- [] > With ENTHUSIASM



GAMECLUB

ROUND 10



I've thought a lot about becoming a teacher. Mostly at the college level (I think I would have an easier time keeping a hold on my sanity). I think it would be great to teach what I know about design to students even if I don't necessarily think college is something most young designers should have to engage with. What I actually learned in college was how to use Adobe programs. This is something that has been useful to me every single day since college, but also something I didn't really need college for. With some dedication, I could have read a book on the Adobe Suite or even just watched a bunch of YouTube videos. Looking around at job openings, just about every entry level graphic designer job I see has a college-level education requirement and a prerequisite of 5 years working as a graphic designer. Like what?? This is an entry-level job and you want 5 years of work experience? Maybe that is just to scare away less confident designers? Not sure what that's about, but I am glad I am past that part of my career. Don't study graphic design. I bet it is really rewarding to teach, but one thing holding me back is meeting all the requirements to become

a professor. Getting a degree, finding a job at a college or university, etc. Interestingly enough, someone I know was able to skip all of that and become a professor purely based on their father's skill as a mercenary. That person is Byleth from

FIRE EMBLEM™ THREE HOUSES

Fire Emblem Three Houses is a strategy role-playing game. You take control of a character named Byleth who is given a professor role at Garreg Mach Monastery. Along with the professor role, Byleth is put in charge of one of the monastery's student houses. You get to pick between the Blue Lions, Golden Deer, or Black Eagles. Each house has 8 students, all with different backgrounds, combat specializations, and personalities. Each house also has one student that is a descendant of royalty acting as the house leader.



As the game begins, you are spending each month exploring the monastery, meeting & teaching your students, defending the monastery from bandits, and having tea parties. At the end of each month, you and your class go out on a mission that will progress the story. If you've never played a strategy role-playing game, this

genre of game typically plays out on grid where you move your units (students) through each area turn by turn and command them to attack & defeat the enemy. Before the battle, you choose which students will accompany you on the battlefield based on their individual level or specializations. These sorts of games invoke the feeling of commanding a small army, kind of like chess.



When you return from battle, your students will likely have leveled up and you may want to reassess their current academic goals. Each student has a combat class that dictates skills and stat gains from level ups. To reach higher level classes, you will need to educate your students on certain skills pertaining to those classes. Students begin the game with their default specializations, but as the player, you are given full control over what that student ends up studying at the monastery. While overwhelming at first, this is a huge amount of freedom that added a ton of interesting options to the game.

The story of Three Houses follows the ebbs and flows of the relationships between the leaders of the three houses and the nations they are from. The continent is home to three nations, each house leader is from a different nation and the monastery sits in the center of the continent. Depending on which house you choose, the story can vary greatly.

I have been a fan of Fire Emblem since the GameBoy Advance games were released. My favorite entry is Fire Emblem: The Binding Blade on GBA. The game never got a release in English, but has had a fan translation for a long time. If you've played smash bros, this is the Fire Emblem game that stars Roy (our boy). I've played and enjoyed most of the entries in the series through the 3DS games (loved the 3DS ones). When Three Houses was announced for the switch, I immediately preordered the collectors edition and could not contain my excitement for the game. Time passed and the game was released in July of 2019. For whatever reason, I was not really feeling Fire Emblem at the time and I decided to wait to play it. My wife ended up playing through half of it and I watched her play and picked up the gist of the story. Five years passed with the game on my 'to-play' list. I had tried to get into it, but never got very far because of all the learning it asks you to do up front with teaching classes and student specializations, etc. Now, the year is 2024 and The Computer Guild GameClub selects the game for Round 10. Serendipity! I sit down and learn the ins and outs of the game, pushing myself through the entry barrier and after playing through the game, I cannot believe I didn't take the time to do so sooner. In my opinion, this is a top-tier Fire Emblem game. It adds in a lot of content that the classic FE games didn't have, so I was a little skeptical about it, but once I let myself get enveloped in the storylines, I was really having a lot of fun.

I was very impressed with how interconnected everything is in the storyline. When you meet the students, you get to learn their backstories and many times, their backstories would actually have relevance to another student or character. This got exponentially cooler when I recruited a character from a different house (Felix) and he had past connections with students from my house. It sort of gives the feeling you are seeing some hidden content. Furthermore, I chose to be the professor for the Black Eagles and I sided with the leader of the house (Edelgard) at a pivotal point in the story. The choices I made led me down a path where I ended up commanding Felix to kill his own father in combat. This isn't something that happens normally — I had to recruit Felix from a different house and make very specific decisions that led me to a point where I am in battle with people from Felix's home. The game offers an incredible amount of freedom and is extremely well thought out in regards to any different path you choose to take.

The gameplay is extremely refined, but much easier than previous Fire Emblem games. Thankfully, the game offers higher difficulty levels. I just wasn't aware of how easy this game was when I started. Early entries in the Fire Emblem series can be known for being kind of brutal — when a character dies, that's it - they are gone forever and you cannot revive them. In Three Houses, you have the option to turn permadeath on, but you are not required to. Furthermore, even if you have permadeath on and one of your students dies, Three Houses gives you the ability to rewind time and make a different decision. The game is also really generous with this ability, letting you use it several times in each battle. Because of this, I never once came close to losing one of my students. I suppose this is a good thing, but I do kind of enjoy how emotional it can be when you permanently lose one of your characters that you've been training for the past 10 hours.

If you've made it this far, I'm sure you can tell that Fire Emblem Three Houses gets high praise from me. I am definitely a fan of the game and continue to look forward to more entries in the series. Also, if being a professor in real life is anything like being a professor in Three Houses, I think I am definitely interested. I gotta remember to ask my dad if he has any mercenary credentials.



FIRE EMBLEMTM

THREE HOUSES



Justin



"I stand with Edelgard"



Patrick



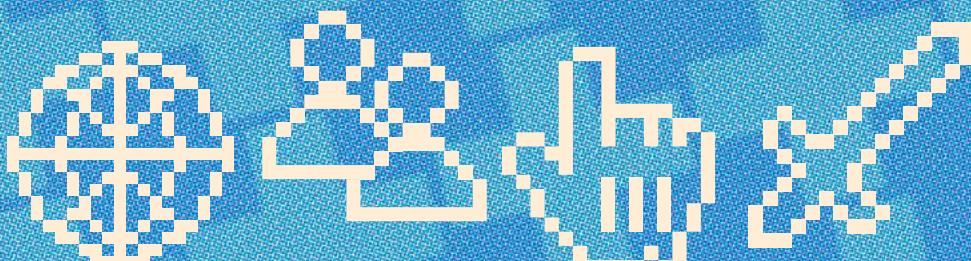
"I don't stand with Edelgard"



Cullen



"Too many fuckin' people"

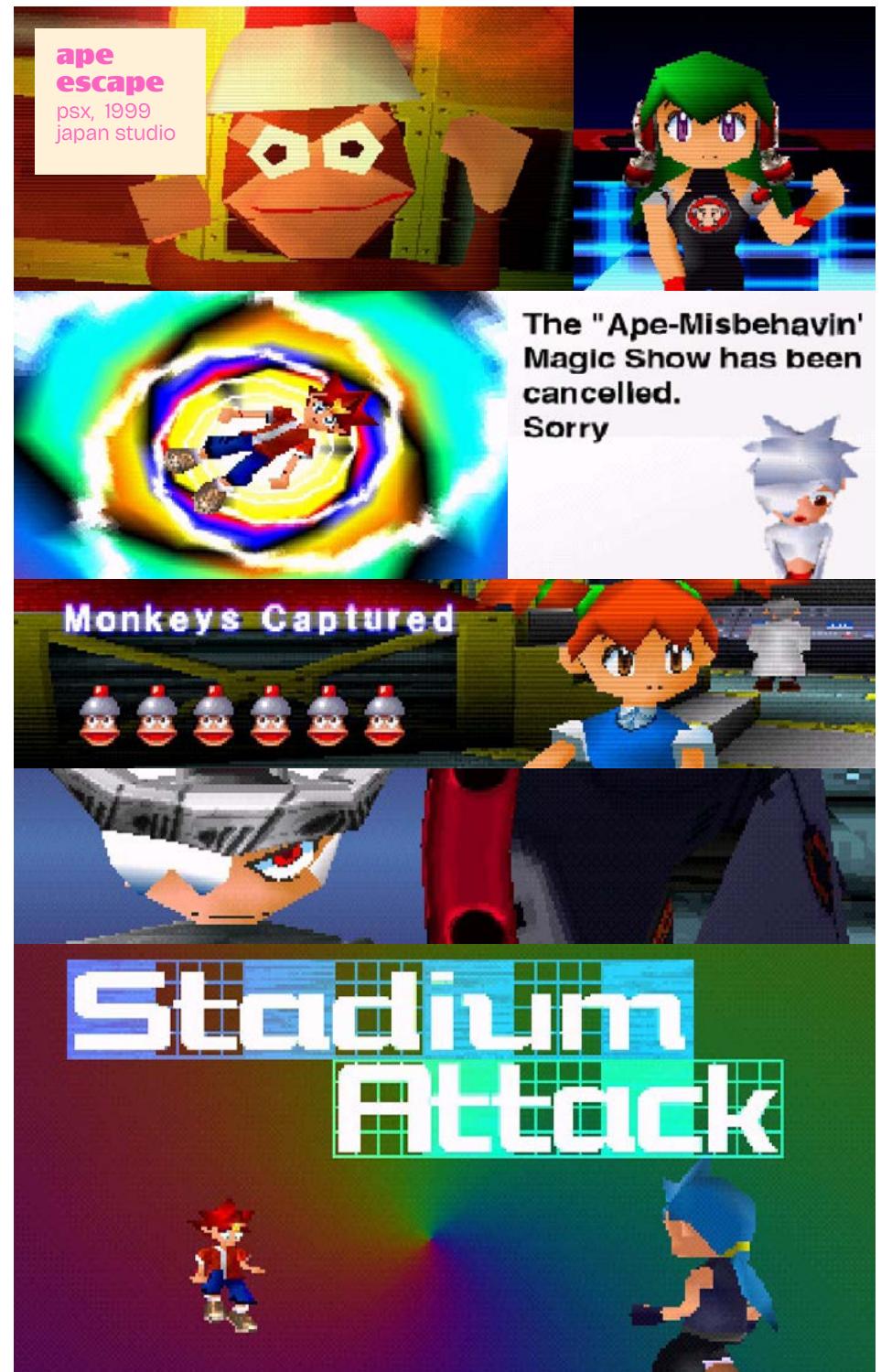




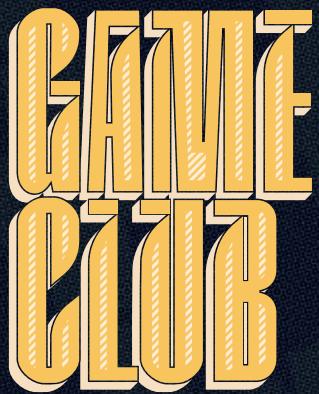
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See you again



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