Doki Doki Panic (same game more or less, but with other characters and a completely different look). Later on, the U.S. Super Mario 2 was released in Japan as Super Mario USA.

# 13 The Legend of Zelda

NES
Nintendo, 1987

The game: A unique top-down action-RPG. You control our little hero Link in his adventures to save Princess Zelda. Along the way, you collect dozens of power-ups that can help you defeat tougher enemies and get into previously inaccessible areas.

It made the list because: Zelda is simply a lot of fun to play—and it's one of the grandest adventures on the NES. The game is designed so well, all of us at *EGM* would still gladly play it today (and, in fact, we do). Every area of the map is well thought out, requiring you to use a little noggin-power in your quest. And each time you pick up a shiny new weapon, the game forces you to use it intelligently.

Coolest part: You find the pieces of the Triforce, you kill Ganon, you rescue Zelda. As you bask in your hard-earned victory, you slowly realize that the game designers are going to award you with a whole new second quest in the same cartridge!

Did you know: The Legend of Zelda is the first cartridge in gaming history to have a battery backup to save your games.
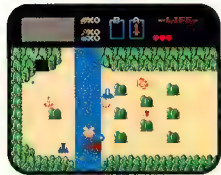
12 Castlevania: Symphony of the Night

PlayStation
Konami, 1997

The game: Castlevania finally makes its 32-Bit debut with Alucard's romp through creature-infested castles. This is classic Castlevania, with a few gameplay elements from Metroid and the NES Castlevania II thrown in for good measure.

It made the list because: This is not only the best 2-D game on the PlayStation, it's one of the best, period. There are an incredible amount of areas to explore, a vast army of creatures, and excellent traditional 2-D gameplay. The graphics and music are also top-notch. Plus, if you uncover the game's greatest secret, you'll double its length (nyah, nyah—we're not telling!).

Coolest part: All of the huge creatures that inhabit the game. Most of them aren't even Bosses, although they could easily pass for such. But don't worry—there are still plenty of Bosses.

Lucky Japanese: In Japan, Castlevania: SotN came bundled with an art book and a music CD filled with classic Castlevania tunes from earlier games in the series.

11 Super Mario World

Super NES
Nintendo, 1991

The game: Mario makes his 16-Bit debut, along with a soon-to-be-superstar dinosaur pal, new moves and a HUGE new world.

It made the list because: Like Mario 3, Super Mario World is a monster of a game, with plenty of warp zones and hidden keys to secret areas. Mario packs a few new maneuvers, including the ability to fly with a cape. But the real star here is Yoshi. Cute, tough and able to gain new powers depending on what he eats, Yoshi's the perfect companion to Miyamoto's plumber. Still, in terms of pure gameplay, Mario 3 remains the crown jewel of the series.

Coolest part: Yoshi (duh!). Oh, and knocking Bowser's hovering, smiley-faced ship from the sky at the game's finale. Whoa—look at the pretty scaling and rotation!

What's the deal with that: If the God-awful *Super Mario Brothers* flick is to be believed, the real-life Yoshi isn't nearly as cute as his video game counterpart.

10 Saturn Bomberman

Saturn
Sega, 1997

The game: You still get the same little Bomberman character who likes to blow up his friends (and enemies), but this time he's on the Saturn with up to 10

Producer, EA Sports' Madden Series

Scott Orr

10) Super Mario 64—N64
9) World Series Baseball—Saturn
Tie: 8 & 7) Tekken—PlayStation/Crash Bandicoot—PlayStation
Tie: 6 & 5) Donkey Kong—Super NES/Street Fighter II—Super NES

4) Punch-Out!!—NES
Tie: 3 & 2) NHL 94—Genesis/Madden 93—Genesis

1) Baseball—Intellivision

players at once. It's as good as multiplayer gaming on the consoles gets.

It made the list because: If you have a copy of Bomberman and can rustle up at least four friends, there's really no reason to play any other game—or even leave the house. It's simply the greatest party game on the planet. And Saturn Bomberman is the best incarnation of this classic series yet. Sure, the Super NES and TurboGrafx-16 versions come close, but now 10 players can try to blow each other to bits in a Hi-res Mode that is incredibly hectic and fun (although it burns the eyes a bit; Eight-player Mode's a little easier on your vision). Plus, you get options for team play and the ability to lob bombs from the sidelines after you die. Revenge is a wonderful thing.

Coolest part: Realizing that you've trapped your opponent(s) with bombs just as the one-ton weights are about to clobber you from above. Yep, you can start panicking now.

Don't you hate it when: You start trash-talking before a multiplayer game, only to start and trap yourself with two of your own damn bombs. D'oh!
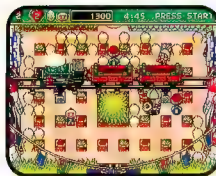
9 Final Fantasy III

Super NES
Nintendo, 1994

The game: A traditional, Japanese RPG with more gameplay extras than any other title in gaming history. It has a super-long quest, multiple (and interchangeable) characters and a fun, menu-driven realtime combat system.

It made the list because: OK, where should we start? The graphics are rich and beautiful, as is the music. The cast is crammed with personality. The story line is magical and so involving that you may need to keep notes to follow its twists and turns. Heck, you even battle dinosaurs! We could go on and on. Very few people can argue that FFIII isn't a AAA title (we'd like to be in on that argument). It's the game that revolutionized the genre, while keeping old-school RPG fundamentals alive. It's also far more rewarding than FFII, and just a tad better than the awesome FFVII (FFIII offers more varied gameplay). We'll love this game forever.

Coolest parts: Trying to decide which characters are going adventuring with you and which are staying behind on the airship to twiddle their swords. And what about how awesome each character is? Some have Street Fighter moves (how's that for RPG innovation?), some can transform, some have special attacks, etc. And don't even get us started on the opera scene. Then there are the Chocobos, the Espers, the mechs...hoo boy—there are too many "coolest parts" to list.

Did you know: Final Fantasy III is actually part six in the series. It's only called FFIII because it's the third one released in the States. And—you guessed it—Final Fantasy VII for the PlayStation is the sequel.
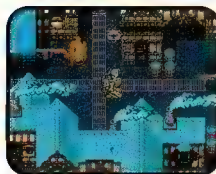
8 Contra III: The Alien Wars

Super NES
Konami, 1992

The game: Just like the original Contra, except a thousand times more intense.

It made the list because: Talk about sensory overload! This game has everything: huge Bosses, Mode 7 stages, ultradeep gameplay—all wrapped up in a beautifully atmospheric post-apocalyptic package. You get all the great control of the original, except now with new moves and the ability to carry and switch between two devastating weapons. But what really sets this game apart are its Bosses. No two can be toppled the same way. (Our favorite is the giant robot who smashes through the wall and lobs time bombs at you.)

Coolest part: Beating the game on normal or hard and watching the final Boss claw after you as you cling to an ascending helicopter gunship. And, of course, playing simultaneously with a buddy/sibling.

Where have I seen that before: Go back and watch the intro to Contra III: Alien Wars. Hmmm. Think maybe the folks behind *Independence Day* were fans of this game?


7 Super Mario World 2: Yoshi's Island

Super NES
Nintendo, 1995

The game: Super FX2-based side-scrolling platformer with the most amazingly unique graphics the Super NES has ever seen.

It made the list because: Yoshi's Island is as much a piece of art as a game. It's like a huge, playable coloring book. Unfortunately, the game couldn't have been released at a worse time, going unnoticed by quite a few gamers. Trust us—Yoshi's Island is the epitome of platform gaming, falling only inches behind Super Mario Bros. 3 as the best 2-D platformer of all time. Beautiful graphics, great gameplay, lots of bonus options and mini-games and well over 50 stages—what more could you ask for?

Coolest part: All of the "morphmation," what Nintendo calls the stretching and warping of the game characters. Also, your mad dash to rescue Baby Mario after he's been knocked off Yoshi.

Did you know: Yoshi's Island was in development for over three years before it was finally released. The game was redone almost from scratch at least once, but the end result shows that the time taken was certainly worth it.
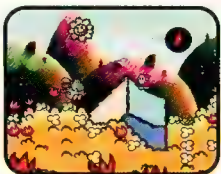
Leader of the team that created Street Fighter II

Nishitani also worked on SF2 Champion Edition, Final Fight and Forgotten Worlds. He left Capcom to form his own company, Arika Development, which developed Street Fighter EX for Capcom to publish.

What he had to say: Congratulations, *EGM*, on your 100th issue! I started working in this industry 12 years ago, back when we were making games with such little memory and weak hardware compared to the recent technology. Back then, who could imagine today's technology, such as game characters made with polygons that move in realtime, or that we'd play over a network. Game development has also changed. Today's games use more characters, animation, background, music and are overall becoming more flashy. Most recently, there is a need to have the latest technology, so for each part of a game—like CG, programming, modeling—there needs to be experts.

This industry has evolved very fast. More and more new technologies are emerging, and there will soon be more reasons than ever to play games. I find these new challenges exciting. I will try to make better games, so that I can be invited by *EGM* to reflect on the industry again someday.

10. Quath—Arcade
9. Tetris Plus—Saturn
8. RayStorm—Arcade
7. Cadash—Arcade
6. Darius Gaiden—Arcade
5. Final Fantasy series—Famicom/Super Famicom

4. Dragon Quest series—Famicom/Super Famicom
3. Dungeon series—Arcade
2. Street Fighter II, Street Fighter II Dash (Champion Edition in the U.S.)—Arcade

1. Diablo—PC

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6 Super Metroid

Super NES
Nintendo, 1994

The game: It's a bigger and better version of the futuristic 8-Bit platform/action classic. Super Metroid has tons of levels, weapons and secrets.

It made the list because: Boy, if you've played Super Metroid, then you wouldn't ask why. From the exciting intro (with elements taken from the end of the original Metroid game) to the emotional ending, this 16-Bit sequel is simply stunning. This game takes skill, brains and technique to complete successfully, and you'll love every minute of it.

Coolest part: Seeing you-know-who come to your rescue in the end.

Did you know: You get to see Samus in her bathing suit if you beat the game in under three hours. Also, if you let the demo run uninterrupted, you can see a slew of Samus' secret moves. A few of us didn't even notice the educational demo until *after* we beat the game. Better late than never, we guess.

5 Street Fighter II Turbo: Hyper Fighting

Super NES
Capcom, 1993

The game: The second SFII game to come out for the Super NES. This one added speed and playable Bosses to an already successful formula.

It made the list because: This is the best and newest Street Fighter that still plays like the classic. The series changed when it became "Super" and later "Alpha." But many of us still like old-school SFII best, and Hyper Fighting is as good as old-school gets. Excellent control on an excellent translation of an excellent fighting game engine. Need we say more?

Coolest part: Playing this game for hours and hours until your thumb just couldn't take anymore.

Coolest code: Pressing Down, R button, Up, L button, Y, B on the second player controller while the word "Turbo" scrolls across the opening screen. Now you can pick a 10-star speed setting. This is Hyper Fighting in the truest sense of the phrase.
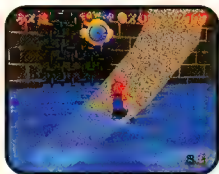
4 Super Mario 64

Nintendo 64
Nintendo, 1996

The game: This adventure stars a familiar plumber in a very unfamiliar setting: breathtaking 3-D worlds. But you already knew that.

It made the list because: Take your pick: Its selling power put the N64 on the map. Its look and feel spawned a new era of 3-D adventure knockoffs (Banjo-Kazooie, anyone?). Its many secrets, shortcuts—and even its bugs—fueled the hype that made it one of the most-talked-about games ever, certainly one of the best-selling. But most importantly, its gameplay showed that as far as 3-D gaming goes, we haven't seen anything yet. Just about everything in

Super Mario 64 works flawlessly—the analog control, the puzzles, Mario's new moves, the way most levels offer new challenges each time you visit them. Sure, the game has its tiny flaws, especially in the camera department. But we're talking about a title that's as revolutionary today as the original Super Mario Bros. was back in the mid-'80s. It's not easy creating an entirely new genre, no matter how many times Shigeru Miyamoto has done it. And while Super Mario 64 isn't quite as challenging or as fun as Mario 3, no gamer should die without playing—and beating—it first.

Coolest part: Seeing someone pull off the ultimate trick—reaching the roof of the castle before ever nabbing a single star. Trust us, it can be done.

A sleeper hit? Superstars—even digital ones—are just as "human" as you or me. Case in point: If you leave Mario alone for a minute or two, he'll sneak in a quick nap. Talk about your computer AI advancements!

3 The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past

Super NES
Nintendo, 1992

The game: A sequel to the 8-Bit action-RPG series, with better graphics, new tools and weapons, and more worlds to explore.

It made the list because: A Link to the Past takes everything that made the original Zelda such a classic and supercharges the entire package. The graphics are improved tenfold over the original, and the levels—especially outdoors—are huge (remember the forest maze?). The environments are also much more interactive than in previous Zeldas (remember lighting the torches in the dungeons with your lantern?) Part three of the Zelda series is clearly the best action-RPG ever made.

Coolest part: Remember seeing the rain for the first time? Remember thinking how awesome your Super Nintendo is when you saw that rain?

Did you know: In our reader poll for top games of all time, Zelda 64 received a dozen votes. Peculiar, wouldn't you say, for a game that isn't even out in Japan yet? We're sure the game's gonna be awesome, too, but let's not jump the gun yet.

2 Super Mario Bros. 3 (All-Stars Edition)

Super NES
Nintendo, 1990 (Original)
1993 (All-Stars Version)

The game: The third chapter in the insanely successful Super Mario Bros. series, it's also the single best platform game of all time (as well as the second best game of all time).

It made the list because: Super Mario Bros. 3 took the series back to its roots, but expanded upon the original game in every way imaginable. No other game since has been able to recapture the spirit of adventure and enchantment found in Mario 3. There are dozens of worlds to explore, tons of secrets to find, minigames up the wazoo, perfect gameplay and special animal costumes that grant never-before-seen powers. What, for instance, could be better than batting turtles with your tail after nabbing the Leaf power-up? Or how about sprinting and launching into the air for a few seconds of flight to grab those hard-to-reach coins? And for the first time, the levels were spread out on an overworld map that sprawled in every direction (but watch out for the roving Hammer Brothers!). The entire game just cries out to be explored! Best of all, the All-Stars version on the Super NES is like a dream come true—everything is re-created perfectly, but with gorgeous graphics and better sounds.

Coolest part: Using the Whistle from Zelda to get to the hidden Warp Zones!

Just a reminder: We're not including compilation games on our Top 100, or Super Mario All-Stars would be the clear-cut number-one game of all time. It's a sin not to own this king of compilations!

Game Designer, Nintendo

Shigeru Miyamoto has created or helped craft nearly half the games in the top-20 portion of our list. He's the man behind Mario, Donkey Kong, the Zelda games and other Nintendo classics, as well as the inventor of the side-scrolling platform genre (with Super Mario Bros.) and the perfector of the 3-D platform genre (with Super Mario 64). Ever humble, Miyamoto is the greatest game designer on Earth.

What he had to say: I am very honored to be chosen as a key person in this industry, but as a game developer I feel I am not in a position to judge other people's games. Also, I don't really play many other games, so I must apologize for refraining to provide my top-10 list.

But I would like to comment about how the gaming industry has changed in the past decade. It used to be that the industry had no real history, but in the past 10 years, there have been some things that can be called history. For example, there were not many games in the old days that can be enjoyable even today. But there are some games today that can still be enjoyable even five years from now. I feel this is the most profound change in the industry.

Shigeru Miyamoto

1 **Tetris**

Multiplatform
Created by Alexey Pajitnov in 1988

The game: Spend half your life forcing six differently shaped blocks into neat rows at the bottom of a well. Spend the other half waiting for the straight, skinny block so you can score a "Tetris."

It made the list because: Let's forget for a sec' that 40 million people worldwide play Tetris. Let's forget that—for most people—it's the single most addicting game on the planet. Let's forget that it paved the way for today's most exciting, flashy, combo-ridden puzzle games.

Tetris is as pure as a video game can get.

It's just you, seven blocks and a well. Your goal is incredibly simple: line up the blocks in rows and make them go away, preferably four rows at a time, to make room for the never-ending rain of blocks from above. When the right blocks come your way—and if you can manage to avoid mistakes—the game can be relaxing. One mislaid block, however, and your duties switch to damage control, a mad, panicky dash to clean up your mess or die. No, Tetris doesn't look, sound or play like any other video game. Nevertheless, it's complete gaming bliss.

When it came time to pick the best version of Tetris, we found ourselves in a pickle. First, we fired up the old Tengen version for the NES (you remember—the one Nintendo filed a lawsuit over because Tengen cracked the Big N's lockout chip?). We were really, really hoping this version was as good as we remembered. After all, wouldn't it be cool if the greatest game of all time was an outlaw? Alas, the Tetris packed with Dr. Mario for the Super NES plays a little better (it's easier to control the speed of your blocks' descent, and the Two-player Mode is more fun than the one in Tengen's). Still, many on the staff argued for the Game Boy version. You can take it anywhere and still play two-player games with the link cable. After hours of bickering, we finally realized that Tetris pretty much plays fine no matter which system you use to rock your puzzle blocks, whether it be a PC, console, Game Boy or a $10 keychain.
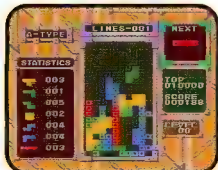
Coolest part: Knowing that whenever you get bored with the latest 3-D adventure or shooter or side-scroller or RPG or

You can't go wrong with any version of Tetris, be it on the Super NES...

...or the NES (seen here in the outlawed Tengen arcade port)...

...or the Game Boy. Hey, you really can take it with you—and link with a pal!

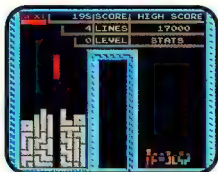sim, Tetris—and its seven blocks—will be waiting for you, always.

Did you know: The greatest video game of all time was never originally intended to be a video game at all. When Alexey Pajitnov invented Tetris, his intention was merely to create a mental exercise for fellow Russian scientists.
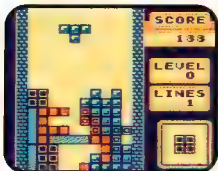

Maybe this is for another feature, but Tetris is the best keychain of all time, too.

Final Thoughts...

We know we're due for a tidal wave of mail from readers burning with questions and how-dare-you comments concerning our list. Where are all the Genesis games? How could we make a top-100 list that doesn't include Space Invaders or Pong or Pitfall or [insert your own MIA classic here]. And—most pressing of all, we're sure—what's the deal with all the NES and Super NES games in the top 20?

Remember, our list is NOT about influential games, or even the greatest games (which—by definition—should include influential titles). It's about games that play the best and are the most fun. The downside to this philosophy is that many old-school classics were nixed from our list during the selection process. Sure, we could have included Pong or Asteroids, but would you really rather play those instead of GoldenEye 007 or Sonic CD?

And as far as the predominance of Nintendo games goes: No, we are not biased against Sega or Sony. We have no reason to be. It just so happens that, in our opinion, many of the best games came out for the NES and Super NES. (Also note that many of these titles were crafted by Nintendo's Shigeru Miyamoto, the most gifted game designer on the planet.)

Some may look at our list and say it sends the wrong message to the industry, that it tells developers to stop fiddling with polygons and 3-D gameplay and go back to the good-ol' days of sprite-based platform games. Nothing could be further from the truth. Keep in mind that most of the 8- and 16-Bit titles on our list were designed at the height of sprite-based-gaming technology. Back then, the developers knew how to squeeze every ounce of gameplay out of the hardware, whereas today, they're still figuring out the nuances of shooting, kicking, jumping, climbing, etc., in a 3-D world. In some cases—Super Mario 64, Tomb Raider—they've succeeded beautifully, and we have little doubt that the next time we create a top-100 list (issue 200, perhaps) it'll be crammed with modern, 3-D, polygonal masterpieces.