

Saturnalia Miracles

Welcome to my favorite corner of video game fandom: the Sega Saturn. To this day it is still my favorite system of all time even as it seems to be one of the most neglected. It has fallen into the realm of the Turbografx-16 and the Lynx and the Jaguar. The one difference between the Saturn and some of these was that the Saturn was plain genius.

Unfortunately, the Saturn was, as Aladdin put it, the diamond in the rough. It was overshadowed by the Playstation's massive marketing and the Nintendo fanbase. The fiasco that was 32x and Sega CD probably didn't help. Even if it trailed behind the others, the system was top notch with some innovative features for the time, such as the beefy audio player compared to what the Playstation had. In addition, it had an expansion slot that could provide both additional game play in ROM carts as well as additional RAM.

Moving on the lines of the hardware, the Saturn had a fantastic controller. It took the layout of the phenomenal Genesis 6 button model and made that standard with two shoulder buttons. Now, I am a fan of fighting games but I am by no means a follower. I know there is a huge debate about D-pads and which ones suck and something tells me fighting fans may have loved the cupped shaped. I own a few fighters for the Saturn and I have never had any issue shooting off laser beams and rockin' that down right fierce. In fact, I actually think the nature of the shape made it easier than ever allowing instant rolling. I could hadouken with the best of them.

I own a ton of the peripherals for the systems. I have the steering wheel, which is one of the best ones I have ever used. I have one for the N64 that came with pedals and it just never had the responsiveness that the Saturn wheel had (not to mention the Saturn wheel had a flappy paddle gearbox shape for the shoulder buttons which is simply badass).

Another cool addition was the Saturn multi tap allowing for 6 controllers to plug into one of the ports. Many people say they would never use this, but they weren't me! Saturn Bomberman allowed for 10 players at once. While I never hit 10 people I did get 6-7 at once and it worked *flawlessly*. Playing Bomberman with that many people was a hoot and I have fond memories of it to this day.

I also had the Saturn light guns which were also top of the line. I never had ANY issues with aim, alignment or anything of the sort. Of course, most of the old light gun technology doesn't work with the LCD TV's that people mostly use nowadays, but at the time you couldn't top them. Another neat controller the Saturn had was the "3D controller." It was a controller designed to be used with games where you could run in every direction. What's interesting about it was that it was a forerunner to the Xbox controller, though some might disagree. It came with a Joystick above the D-pad with the

buttons to the right, and turned the shoulder button into triggers beneath the top left and right corners...eerie!

Don't forget the Netlink! Saturn was one of the first gaming consoles to offer online play. With a dial up connection you could play people all across the world. At the time, this was a pretty radical idea. While it may have had its share of problems, it was innovative and would help to launch the online gaming craze.

It had its share of random and odd peripherals as well. When I was in my youth, I found a saturn cartridge on ebay with X-Men on it thinking it was a game. It wasn't. It was actually a 4MB RAM cartridge that helped make games faster. Hey, we were like 13 and it turned out to be an excellent 5\$ Ebay purchase!

Alas, I need to come to my one gripe with the system which is mostly my fault anyway. Unlike the N64 and the Playstation which used memory cards and packs the Saturn used an internal memory system. While it is kind of cool that you didn't have to buy any external pieces to save a game, the entire save system ran on one lithium-ion battery. If that battery died, so did your saves (which I had the unfortunate task of experiencing). However buying a new one would give you another bundle of years with which you could save.

But, enough about the peripherals! It's time for the games! I have around 30-40 Saturn games. A bunch of them are sport games that I didn't play too often (nothing against them, just not much of a sports gamer) but the ones I tried all played extremely well, especially the baseball ones. The one thing the Saturn got right was its wide variety of games. From action adventure to sports to racing to puzzle to fighters to RPGs, it had them all. Some of my favorite games of all time are on the Saturn and sadly most people have never heard of them. That is what I plan to do here in the future.

I want to sit down and share my knowledge and my fond memories of my favorite game console of all time. I want to make you all feel the compulsive need to go out and find one and purchase it for yourself. I want to reveal to the future the glory of the Sega Saturn. I want to share the wonderful nature of the Sega Saturn, the diamond in the rough.

“Welcome to the Real World.”