

= ToeJam & Earl =

ToeJam & Earl is an action video game developed by Johnson Voorsanger Productions and published by Sega for the Sega Genesis video game console . Released in 1991 , it centers on the titular ToeJam and Earl ? alien rappers who have crash @-@ landed on Earth . As they attempt to escape the planet , players assume the role of either character and collect pieces of their wrecked spacecraft . ToeJam & Earl 's design was heavily influenced by the role @-@ playing video game Rogue , and took from it such features as the random generation of levels and items . It references and parodies 1980s and early 90s urban culture and is set to a funk soundtrack .

The game was positively received by critics , who praised its originality , soundtrack , humor and two @-@ player cooperative mode . It attained sleeper hit status despite low initial sales , and its protagonists were used as mascots by Sega . ToeJam & Earl was followed by two sequels : ToeJam & Earl in Panic on Funkotron and ToeJam & Earl III : Mission to Earth , released for the Mega Drive and Xbox , respectively . The sequels ' commercial and critical success was mixed . A fourth title , ToeJam & Earl : Back in the Groove , is currently in development with funds from Kickstarter . The game was re @-@ released for the Wii 's Virtual Console in December 2006 and re @-@ released again on PlayStation Network and Xbox Live Arcade in November 2012 .

= = Synopsis = =

ToeJam & Earl has been called a surreal , comic satire , and a " daringly misanthropic commentary on Earthly life " . ToeJam is red and has three legs . Earl is fat and orange . ToeJam wears a large gold medallion and a backwards baseball cap , while Earl is marked by high @-@ tops and oversized sunglasses ; both outfits are " over @-@ the @-@ top appropriations " of 1990s urban culture . Their speech features California slang . The game is set to a soundtrack which has been described both as jazz @-@ funk , and as hip hop . For the game 's unique sound , composer John Baker was inspired by Herbie Hancock and The Headhunters .

In the game 's opening sequence , ToeJam explains that Earl 's erratic piloting abilities have resulted in a crash @-@ landing on planet Earth . He says that they must find the widely scattered pieces of their spacecraft 's wreckage to return to their home planet , Funkotron . The player guides the characters as they avoid Earth 's antagonistic inhabitants and search for the debris . Should the player succeed , the final sequence depicts ToeJam and Earl escaping the planet in their reconstructed spacecraft . Under the player 's control , the characters proceed across a purple landscape that represents Funkotron , and are greeted by their friends and family .

= = Gameplay = =

ToeJam & Earl takes place from a 3 / 4 perspective in a 2D game world . Its gameplay mechanics were inspired by Rogue , which has led to its description as a Roguelike or dungeon @-@ crawl game . The game contains both single @-@ player and two @-@ player cooperative modes . The latter displays a single screen when both characters are near each other , but splits it apart when they are not . Playing the game with two players reveals dialogue and jokes between the characters not heard in the single player game .

The game is set on Earth , which is represented by randomly generated islands that float in space , each one a layer above the last . They are connected by elevators . Some islands contain pieces of spacecraft wreckage , of which the player must collect 10 to win the game . The player character drops to the island below if he falls from an island 's edge , which necessitates that the player again locate an elevator . Each island is populated by antagonistic " Earthlings " , such as phantom ice @-@ cream trucks , aggressive packs of " nerds " , giant hamsters , Bogeymen , man @-@ eating mailboxes , and chickens armed with mortars that shoot tomatoes . Certain Earthlings aid the player . The game has been described as " largely non @-@ violent " , as the protagonists can only attack enemies with thrown tomatoes ? one of many temporary , randomly generated power @-@ ups .

Power @-@ ups are contained in wrapped presents , which are categorized by appearance . The

contents of a present are unknown to the player until it is opened ; afterwards , all presents of that appearance are identified . Identification of presents ' contents is a central gameplay mechanic . Each power @-@ up has a unique effect : while one might increase the player characters ' running speed , another distracts enemies . Certain presents contain harmful power @-@ ups , such the loss of a " life " , or the " randomizer " , which hides the identity of all presents . In the game 's cooperative mode , if one player character opens a present in the vicinity of the other , its contents affect both characters . As players open more presents , the chances of accidentally opening the randomizer are increased , which prevents the game from becoming easier as more presents are identified .

= = Development = =

ToeJam & Earl creator Greg Johnson became a fan of Rogue as a university student . After he left university , he worked on games for Electronic Arts , including Starflight (1986) . After the completion of Starflight 2 , Johnson conceived ToeJam & Earl ? first the characters , then the plot ? while on a beach in Hawaii . The idea was a combination of Rogue 's gameplay concepts and a lighter version of Starflight 's science @-@ fiction themes . Johnson met programmer Mark Voorsanger through a mutual friend , while walking on Mount Tam in 1989 . He related the concept of ToeJam & Earl to Voorsanger , and the two resolved to make the game together . They formed Johnson Voorsanger Productions , and serious work on the game began soon after . Their status as commercial game designers allowed them to meet with Sega of America , and they used cards covered in landscape drawings to demonstrate their idea of randomly generated levels . Sega marketing manager Hugh Bowen was immediately interested in the concept and he enlisted the aid of producer Scott Berfield to sell the game to management ; Sega wanted innovative games and new mascots to compete with Nintendo .

The game 's small development team was composed of Johnson 's previous colleagues , and its music was composed by John Baker . The team 's goal was to make a humorous game that was " original , easy to understand and offered an immediate response to the player 's actions " . The designers wanted to include a two @-@ player mode so that they could play together , and considered ToeJam & Earl " a two player game with a one player option . " While Sega believed that hardware issues would prevent the feature from working , Voorsanger successfully implemented it . In a 1992 interview with Sega Visions , Johnson stated that the characters ToeJam and Earl evolved as reflections of his and Voorsanger 's personalities . Voorsanger disagreed , and called the characters " two different aspects of Greg 's personality " . Steve Purcell has stated that he contributed character designs to the game .

= = Reception = =

ToeJam & Earl received positive reviews , which Bill Paris of UGO described as " almost unanimous critical acclaim " . However , Sega deemed it a commercial failure due to low initial sales . The game built a cult following through word of mouth , and it was further aided by the Mega Drive 's Christmas 1991 sales spike , caused by the release of Sonic the Hedgehog . ToeJam & Earl was later considered a " cult " success .

Mean Machines found the game addictive and original , but found fault with its slow @-@ paced combat . One of the reviewers said , " Not everyone will like it ? it 's not normal enough for mass appeal ? but I think it 's destined to become a massive cult classic " . GamePro called the game 's originality " incredible " , and praised its graphics , music and humor . MegaTech praised the graphics , and the 2 @-@ player option , and said the game was " great fun - pure and simple " .

Mega said that it was " An OK game , but one which becomes completely essential when played with someone else . Got any friends ? Buy this . Haven 't got any friends ? Buy this and make some " . The game also appeared at number 26 on its list of the best games of all time .

Entertainment Weekly praised the " absolutely hilarious " sound effects and music .

Jeff Csaturi of Boys ' Life called it " another hot game " for the Mega Drive , alongside Sonic the

Hedgehog .

Ed Martinez of Game Informer commended the game 's soundtrack and unique concept , but found it to be too easy .

A review published in both the Chicago Tribune and Rome News @-@ Tribune likened ToeJam and Earl to " an outer @-@ space , rap version of Abbott and Costello " . The reviewers called it " the funniest game we 've seen in a long time " , and praised its soundtrack , graphics and action .

The Toronto Star acclaimed the game 's " hilariously designed split @-@ screen two @-@ player mode " , and said , " If you 've got a Sega @-@ Genesis system , you simply must check out [this] awesome rap ' n ' roll game " . Sega Visions praised the game 's " no @-@ repetitive action " and said , " This is the zaniest game that ever rocked Sega 's Genesis system . " Several months after the game 's release , Mega ranked it the 13th best Mega Drive game in its All @-@ Time Top 100 feature . The magazine praised the game 's " superbly manic and zany action " , and deemed it both " original and insane " . The Channel 4 video game programme GamesMaster gave the game a 70 % rating .

ToeJam & Earl was re @-@ released on the Nintendo Wii 's Virtual Console in 2006 . Official Nintendo Magazine scored the game 85 % , and praised its humor , originality and two @-@ player mode . However , the reviewer believed that the game 's enjoyability had diminished with time . GameSpot felt that the game 's 1990s idioms were dated , but that the gameplay ? particularly the two @-@ player mode ? was still enjoyable by modern standards . Jeremy Parish of 1UP found the game 's two @-@ player co @-@ operative mode more enjoyable than its single @-@ player , and described the graphics and sound as " oddly primitive " . Parish considered it " one of the best games to hit VC to date " . Eurogamer 's reviewer negatively received the game , and believed its gameplay to be unsatisfying and overly slow . IGN called the game 's visuals a " mixed bag " and derided the slow pace , but praised its unpredictability and believed that its sound design was " one thing you absolutely can 't fault " .

= = Legacy = =

ToeJam and Earl became " one of Sega 's second tier mascots , alongside Sonic " , and one of the Mega Drive 's " key exclusive franchises " . The characters appeared in a spin @-@ off light gun game , Ready , Aim , Tomatoes , developed by Johnson Voorsanger Productions as one of six mini @-@ games for the Menacer 6 @-@ game cartridge . In early 1992 , the developers began work on a sequel to ToeJam & Earl , and spent three months expanding on the original game 's concept by adding indoor areas and more terrain types . Sega was not impressed by the sequel , and believed it to be unmarketable . The team redesigned it as a platform game , as Sega was inclined to publish games in this genre . The game , titled ToeJam & Earl in Panic on Funkotron , was highly anticipated , and was a commercial and critical success when it released in 1993 . However , fans of the original game were disappointed by the change in design to a perceived generic style . Due to poor North American sales of the Sega Saturn , Sega 's next generation video game console , the ToeJam & Earl franchise was neglected . A ToeJam & Earl game planned for the Dreamcast was cancelled (a beta of the game was preserved , and on Christmas Day 2013 released on the internet by enthusiasts) , but a third installment , ToeJam & Earl III : Mission to Earth , was released for the Xbox in 2002 . The release returned to the concepts of the original game , but generated mixed reviews and poor sales . A new ToeJam & Earl game is currently in development by HumaNature Studios .

ToeJam & Earl has been called " weird " , " strange " , and " thoroughly odd " . Critics have difficulty in determining a genre for the game ; it has been called a platform game and Roguelike , as well as action and action @-@ adventure . While ToeJam & Earl 's success did not match that of the Mega Drive 's other popular titles , it has been considered a " classic " , and a " cult " game . Prior to ToeJam & Earl III 's conception , research by its developers found that the original ToeJam & Earl was preferred over its sequel . In an IGN survey , 65 % of respondents cited it as their favorite of the three games . The game was set to be re @-@ released on Xbox Live Arcade after winning a poll arranged by Sega , but this became uncertain because Johnson owns the rights to the characters

rather than Sega . The game , along with its sequel , was announced as part of Sega Vintage Collection series for release on November 7 , 2012 , to be released individually on PlayStation Network and as a collection on Xbox Live Arcade . The notion of a ToeJam & Earl game for the Nintendo DS failed to generate interest from publishers , but Johnson has reiterated the possibility of such a game in the future .

In February 2015 , Johnson announced a new title , ToeJam & Earl : Back in the Groove , which is being developed independently from Sega and funded by Kickstarter . The game revisits the format of the original game , featuring 2D character models on 3D worlds with overhead perspective , and is planned to support online multiplayer . The game was seeking a funding target of \$ 400 @, @ 000 USD by March 27 , 2015 , and reached its goal on March 25 , 2015 . On the last funding day , it reached \$ 508 @, @ 638 USD with 8 @, @ 873 backers , so the game will feature " old school " skins for ToeJam and Earl , the Hyper Funk Zone from ToeJam and Earl : Panic on Funkotron , and will include bonus playable characters such as ToeJam 's cousin GeekJam , Earl 's Mom , Lewanda and Peabo from ToeJam and Earl : Panic On Funkotron and even Latisha from ToeJam and Earl III : Mission to Earth .