

= Beat ' em up =

Beat ' em up (also known as brawler) is a video game genre featuring hand @-@ to @-@ hand combat between the protagonist and an improbably large number of opponents . These games typically take place in urban settings and feature crime @-@ fighting and revenge @-@ based plots , though some games may employ historical , sci @-@ fi or fantasy themes . Traditional beat ' em ups take place in scrolling , two @-@ dimensional (2D) levels , though some later games feature more open three @-@ dimensional (3D) environments with yet larger numbers of enemies . These games are noted for their simple gameplay , a source of both critical acclaim and derision . Two @-@ player cooperative gameplay and multiple player characters are also hallmarks of the genre .

The first influential beat ' em up was 1984 's Kung @-@ Fu Master , with 1986 's Renegade introducing the urban settings and underworld revenge themes employed extensively by later games . The genre then saw a period of high popularity between the release of Double Dragon in 1987 , which defined the two @-@ player cooperative mode central to classic beat ' em ups , and 1991 's Street Fighter II , which drew gamers towards one @-@ on @-@ one fighting games . Games such as Streets of Rage , Final Fight and Golden Axe are other classics to emerge from this period . The genre has been less popular since the emergence of 3D @-@ based mass @-@ market games , but still some beat ' em ups adapted the simple formula to utilize large @-@ scale 3D environments .

= = Definition = =

A beat ' em up (sometimes also called " brawlers ") is a type of action game where the player character must fight a large number of enemies in unarmed combat or with melee weapons . Gameplay consists of walking through a level , one section at a time , defeating a group of enemies before advancing to the next section ; a boss fight normally occurs at the end of each level . However arcade versions of these games are often quite difficult to win , causing players to spend more money to try to win .

Beat ' em ups are related to ? but distinct from ? fighting games , which are based around one @-@ on @-@ one matches rather than scrolling levels and multiple enemies . Such terminology is loosely applied , however , as some commentators prefer to conflate the two terms . At times , both one @-@ on @-@ one fighting games and scrolling beat ' em ups have influenced each other in terms of graphics and style and can appeal to fans of either genre . Occasionally , a game will feature both kinds of gameplay .

= = Game design = =

Beat ' em up games usually employ vigilante crime fighting and revenge plots with the action taking place on city streets , though historical and fantasy themed games also exist . Players must walk from one end of the game world to the other , and thus each game level will usually scroll horizontally . Some later beat ' em ups dispense with 2D @-@ based scrolling levels , instead allowing the player to roam around larger 3D environments , though they retain the same simple gameplay and control systems . Throughout the level , players may acquire weapons that they can use as well as power @-@ ups that replenish the player 's health .

As players walk through the level , they are stopped by groups of enemies who must be defeated before they can continue . The level ends when all the enemies are defeated . Each level contains many identical groups of enemies , making these games notable for their repetition . In beat ' em up games , players often fight a boss ? an enemy much stronger than the other enemies ? at the end of each level .

Beat ' em ups often allow the player to choose between a selection of protagonists ? each with their own strengths , weaknesses , and set of moves . Attacks can include rapid combinations of basic attacks (combos) as well as jumping and grappling attacks . Characters often have their own special attacks , which leads to different strategies depending on which character the player selects

. The control system is usually simple to learn , comprising as little as two buttons . These buttons can be combined to pull off combos , as well as jumping and grappling attacks . Since the release of Double Dragon , many beat ' em ups have allowed two players to play the game cooperatively ? a central aspect to the appeal of these games . Beat ' em ups are more likely to feature cooperative play than other game genres .

= = History = =

= = = Origin = = =

The first game to feature fist fighting was Sega 's boxing game Heavyweight Champ (1976) , which is viewed from a side @-@ view perspective like later fighting games . However , it was Data East 's fighting game Karate Champ (1984) which popularized martial arts themed games . The same year , Irem 's Hong Kong cinema @-@ inspired Kung @-@ Fu Master (known as Spartan X in Japan) laid the foundations for side @-@ scrolling beat ' em ups with its simple gameplay and multiple enemies . Also in 1984 , Bruce Lee combined multi @-@ player , multi @-@ character combat with traditional collecting , platform and puzzle gameplay . Later that year , Karateka combined the one @-@ on @-@ one fight sequences of Karate Champ with the freedom of movement in Kung @-@ Fu Master , and it successfully experimented with adding plot to its fighting action . It was also among the first beat ' em ups to be successfully ported to home systems . Nekketsu K?ha Kunio @-@ kun , released in 1986 in Japan , deviated from the martial arts themes of earlier games and introduced street brawling to the genre . The Western adaptation Renegade (released the same year) added an underworld revenge plot that proved more popular with gamers than the principled combat sport of other games . Renegade set the standard for future beat ' em up games as it introduced the ability to move both horizontally and vertically . It also introduced the use of combo attacks ; in contrast to earlier games , the opponents in Renegade and Double Dragon could take much more punishment , requiring a succession of punches , with the first hit temporarily immobilizing the enemy , making him unable to defend himself against successive punches .

= = = Golden age = = =

In 1987 , the release of Double Dragon ushered in a " Golden Age " for the beat ' em up genre that lasted nearly five years . The game was designed as Techn?s Japan 's spiritual successor to Renegade , but it took the genre to new heights with its detailed set of martial arts attacks and its outstanding two @-@ player cooperative gameplay . Double Dragon 's success resulted in a flood of beat ' em ups that came in the late 1980s , where acclaimed titles such as Golden Axe and Final Fight (both 1989) distinguished themselves from the others . Final Fight was Capcom 's intended sequel to Street Fighter (provisionally titled Street Fighter ' 89) , but the company ultimately gave it a new title . In contrast to the simple combo attacks in Renegade and Double Dragon , the combo attacks in Final Fight were much more dynamic . Acclaimed as the best game in the genre , Final Fight spawned two sequels and was later ported to other systems . Final Fight was also the cause for Capcom to be famous and for Technos Japan 's bankruptcy . Golden Axe was acclaimed for its visceral hack and slash action and cooperative mode and was influential through its selection of multiple protagonists with distinct fighting styles . It is considered one of the strongest beat ' em up titles for its fantasy elements , distinguishing it from the urban settings seen in other beat ' em ups . Another beat ' em up ? River City Ransom (1989) , named Street Gangs in Europe ? featured role @-@ playing game elements with which the player 's character could be upgraded , using money stolen from defeated enemies .

The Streets of Rage series was launched in the early 1990s and borrowed heavily from Final Fight . Streets of Rage 2 for Sega 's Mega Drive was notable for being one of the first console games to match the acclaim of arcade beat ' em ups . Its level design was praised for taking traditional beat ' em up settings and stringing them together in novel ways , and its success led to it being ported to

arcades . The beat ' em up was also a popular genre for video games based on television series and movies , with Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles a surprise success , and encouraged many more beat ' em up games based on the characters . However , the " golden age " of the genre ended in the wake of the success of Capcom 's Street Fighter II (1991) , which drew gamers back towards one @-@ on @-@ one fighting games , while the subsequent emerging popularity of 3D video games diminished the popularity of 2D @-@ based pugilistic games in general . By the mid @-@ 1990s , the genre suffered from a lack of innovation .

= = = 32 @-@ bit era onward = = =

Core Design 's Fighting Force (1997) was anticipated to redefine the genre for 32 @-@ bit consoles through its use of a 3D environment . However , it was met with a lukewarm reception . The Dynasty Warriors series , beginning with Dynasty Warriors 2 in 2000 , offered traditional beat ' em up action on large 3D battlefields , displaying dozens of characters on the screen at a time . The series to date spans 14 games (including expansions) which players in the West view as overly similar , although the games ' creators claim their large audience in Japan appreciates the subtle differences between the titles . While critics saw Dynasty Warriors 2 as innovative and technically impressive , they held a mixed opinion of later titles . These later games received praise for simple , enjoyable gameplay but were simultaneously derided as overly simplistic and repetitive . Another best @-@ selling Japanese series , Yakuza , combined elaborate plots and detailed interactive environments with street brawling action . Despite these releases , game reviewers started to pronounce that the genre had died off . By 2002 , there were virtually no new beat ' em ups being released in arcades .

Capcom 's Viewtiful Joe (2003) used cel @-@ shaded graphics and innovative gameplay features (such as the protagonist 's special powers) to " reinvigorate " its traditional 2D scrolling formula . The Behemoth 's Castle Crashers (2008) also featured cartoon graphics , quirky humor , and acclaimed cooperative gameplay . Rockstar Games ' The Warriors (based on the 1979 movie of the same name) , released in 2005 , featured large scale brawling in 3D environments interspersed with other activities such as chase sequences . The game also featured a more traditional side @-@ scrolling beat ' em up Armies of the Night as bonus content , which was acclaimed along with the main game and was later released on the PlayStation Portable . Releases such as God Hand in 2006 and MadWorld in 2009 were seen as parodies of violence in popular culture , earning both games praise for not taking themselves as seriously as early beat ' em up games . Classic beat ' em ups have been re @-@ released on services such as the Virtual Console ; critics reaffirmed the appeal of some , while the appeal of others has been deemed to have diminished with time . Although the genre lacks the same presence it did in the late 1980s , some titles such as Viewtiful Joe and God Hand kept the genre alive .

In recent years , the beat ' em up genre has seen a revival in the form of popular 3D hack and slash games in the style of Devil May Cry (2001 onwards) , including Ninja Gaiden (2004 onwards) , God of War (2005 onwards) , Heavenly Sword (2007) , Afro Samurai (2009) , and Bayonetta (2009) . Several traditional 2D scrolling beat ' em ups have also been released in recent years , including Scott Pilgrim vs. the World : The Game (2010) . The popular Grand Theft Auto series also has elements of the beat ' em up genre .