

GAME FAN

NEXT GENERATION VIDEO GAME MAGAZINE

VOLUME 2 - ISSUE 1



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 Interactive Entertainment

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We now return you to our regularly scheduled Ed Zone. Welcome, to the November issue of GameFan... pre-read about a thousand times.

GameFan has always been a publication with a rather large focus on the Japanese gaming scene. A glance into one of the chat groups on the net might lead you to believe this is due to the fact that we somehow have an interest in boosting the sales of import games. On the contrary, we're hoping [and are helping to facilitate] the American game scene catches up (and on, so you don't have to track down the imports. It's our job to keep you up to date on a worldwide scale.

The reason we are so adamant about the Japanese scene is because the industry there is not only more diversified, but adheres to a higher standard. Japanese games are packaged like someone cares about the people buying them. Amazing color art can be found throughout, along with either stickers, a special sleeve, a tiny music CD, or even the occasional collector pin.

Additionally, within weeks of a game's release, if it's worthy, an arranged music CD follows, featuring both arranged and original tracks from the game. Take Panzer Dragon, for instance. The music CD is incredible, easily eclipsing most of the ca-ca on your local FM dial. Andromeda hired the London Philharmonic to perform the title track. Game music is an industry unto itself in Japan. Fighting games especially get major retail exposure. Darkstalkers, SF2, Virtua Fighter, and Samurai Shodown characters are available in detailed garage kits, action figures, plush toys, key chains, etc. In many shops throughout Tokyo, imagine walking into a novelty store and picking up a perfect hand painted Killer Instinct, DKC, MK, or Street Fighter character.

The industry in Japan is broader in every sense of the word. I have a hard time believing that a similar market would not thrive in the US. To make matters worse, much of the time, by the time a Japanese game reaches you, it's been edited for American consumption. This can severely damage a game's motif. The most well-publicized example of this was '93's Sonic CD. The masterful techno soundtrack was replaced with elevator music resulting in an unbalanced blend of action and audio. In Japan, no particular category is overlooked based on projected sales figures, as is the case currently in the US. Take RPG's for instance. Unless prospective buyers can project earth-shatter-

ing numbers they will continue to avoid them and opt for the cheaper, more mainstream titles. I realize that lengthy translations are quite an endeavor, and it's a lot easier to buy a releasable product you can get into the marketplace quickly. But someone has got to be willing to invest the time and money to bring us the games we deserve. I believe that responsibility lies greatly with the manufacturer. SOA has not a single RPG on the market for the Saturn, after stating that now, with the advent of 32-bit hardware, the market would open up allowing them to re-affirm what helped bring them to fame in the first place: RPG's, namely Phantasy Star. There are already three great RPG's out in Japan that currently aren't even being worked on here... Why? Arc the Lad for the PlayStation's another example. Where is it? In order for gaming to become a truly universal pastime things are going to have to change. Are we to live and die by the flight sim, 3-D shooter, and racing game forever? I sure hope not.

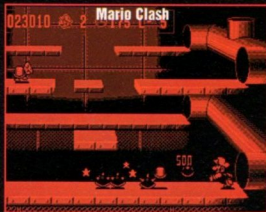
It and when things do change, I think it's time that, in the instance a game's soundtrack or general theme is changed, both versions should be offered on one disc. Many of the games you own, and will buy in the future, are mere shells of what they once were. Most recently, Gran Chaser, now titled Cyber Speedway, a sci-fi racing game designed by Syd Mead, and programmed by the masters at SOJ's Nextech, was stripped of its very fitting futuristic soundtrack. It was replaced with a mixture of grunge and pseudo-country complete with... singing? Ouch. It's like painting a mustache on the Mona Lisa. Buyers of that game will never know what a cool game that once was, and that's just not right. This, and this alone, is why we cover the import game scene so vigorously. So the next time you're on the net and some bonehead chimes in with NASTY LITTLE RUMORS, tell them to get a life and start worryin' about stuff that matters. Now, enough of my chatter, on with the magazine, there's important stuff in here that demands your immediate attention... Games!

PS. I've been receiving a bit of mail regarding the rating system in Viewpoint. Here's how it breaks down... 95-100%=A, 90-94%=A-, 85-89%=B+, 80-84%=B, 75-79%=C+, 70-74%=C, 65-69%=D+, 60-64%=D, 55-59%=F. Anything lower is too hurtin' to mention. A middle number is the degree, an 80% is barely a B title while an 83% is closer to a B+.



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VIRTUAL BOY VIEWPOINTS

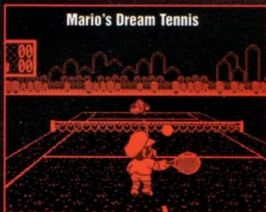


Mario Clash
Mario Smash was the first Virtual Boy game I ever experienced and to this day can hold my attention for hours. The three-dimensional effect is carried out extremely well, allowing you to perfectly time throws back and forth across the two planes. MC is big on both platform and strategy, and its stationary playfield provides a good stomping ground for first time users. MS's only drawback is diversity as there are only minor changes throughout the game.

G C P M O 75
8 9 6 7 6

Imagine the original 8-bit Mario Bros. in a 3-D environment with a second field added to the gameplay... that's Mario Clash. Though slicking through a minimally enhanced, 13-year-old game engine may not sound at all exciting, MC is actually kinda fun at the outset, but gradually gets more and more tedious as you progress- scenery changes rarely and new play mechanics and/or play situations are almost nonexistent. When the newly-released MarioLand VB is released, Clash will seem like a joke... that's the platformer to look out for.

G C P M O 72
8 9 6 7 6

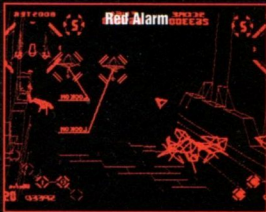


Mario's Dream Tennis
While not a particularly loaded Tennis game when it comes to options (it's strictly one player action) Mario's Tennis is a great playing and fantastic looking game. The environments are simply a joy to play on and the control is dead on. Anyone can pick up this Tennis game and instantly dial in the controls. I'll tell you one thing, once you've played Tennis in 3D it's hard to imagine playing any other way. Now bring on a game with actual players!

G C P M O 85
8 9 6 7 6

I've never been a fan of any type of sports game, but this game truly held my attention and was... well, uh... fun. Really fun, in fact. The actiony feel and ultra-simple play controls suited me perfectly, and the line-scrolling courts are truly a thing of beauty - playing games in 3-D is gonna be pure joy. If Mario's Tennis had a link-up option, it could easily be the best VB game so far. Even so, Red Alarm just barely beats it... what a pack-in!

G C P M O 82
8 9 6 7 6



Red Alarm
Oh yah, here's the one game you just gotta' have. It would be enough just having an average shooter to go along with these stunning 3D vector graphics... but instead you get a great shooter complete with varying terrain, huge twisting levels, and entire rooms to slay bosses. Three camera angles plus great voice and bgm combine to equal 3D shooting power. Imagine a textured game in a similar vein. You did buy one of these, right?

G C P M O 90
8 9 6 7 6

For me, the one and only reason to buy a Virtual Boy so far is Red Alarm. This is literally one of the best games I've ever played... and it's not only a fantastic title... it's by T&E Soft! How did T&E, one of the most hurtin' developers on the face of the planet, get the power to create this masterpiece? No matter - you'll forget all about where the game came from (and quite possibly everything else around you, for that matter) when you begin to play it. The actual gameplay is very StarFox, but you can turn around and go back, stop, or fly in reverse... all in gorgeous 3-D vector environments. If there is one fault with Red Alarm, it's that the difficulty is set way too high... but hey, there's always easy mode, right?

G C P M O 95
8 9 10 7 6

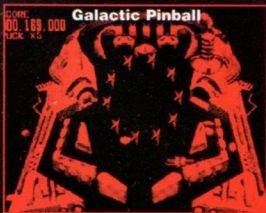


Teleroboxer
Teleroboxer... now here's a game I can live without. Fans of Punch-out may be mildly amused by the similar style action and OK 3D, but this is not what I'm looking for in a virtual experience. The complicated controls coupled with the insane pace made me nuts. A VF style game in 3D is needed for the VB

G C P M O 75
8 9 6 7 6

In my opinion, Teleroboxer is the second-worst of the VB launch titles behind Galactic Pinball. Technically the game is rather impressive, with huge, multi-jointed robotic 3-D dudes smacking your eyes with their non-pixelly scaling fists, but the control and game design is a step beyond pain. Even if you have the joy or so time it requires to get used to the double-pad control, or if you're a Nintendo boxing game freak like Kid Fan, the game proceeds at such a breakneck speed as to make actual playing impossible. I dummo... maybe I just suck at games.

G C P M O 68
8 9 6 7 7

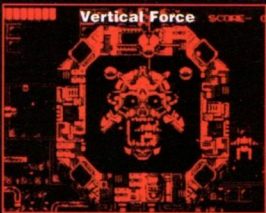


Galactic Pinball
Galactic Pinball, while somewhat amusing at first, never really goes anywhere spectacular. Most of the levels are devoid of any real entertainment. On the positive side, the 3D effects are very impressive and the areas are each very creative but more "stuff" is needed to make pinball an event. I suppose if you love pinball you'll enjoy, otherwise, pass.

G C P M O 60
8 9 6 7 5

I don't like pinball, (though I may enjoy the EXTREMELY rare Devil's Crush) and even in true 3-D it does absolutely nothing for me. The designers attempted to create some gameplay that justifies a three-dimensional environment. The bonus stages in which you have to destroy incoming asteroids, but on the whole, I recommend strongly that you do not go anywhere near Galactic Pinball.

G C P M O 60
8 9 6 7 6



Vertical Force
Here's another most own game. Vertical Force takes some getting used to with its multi level game play (you ascend and descend constantly) but once you do, you'll be hooked. Welcome to parallax heaven. This is as original a shooter I've seen in many moons. While it's hard it's not impossible. Learning how to deal with everything in 3D is half the fun here, the great graphics and music is the other half. Do not miss this one!

G C P M O 85
8 9 6 7 8

Another great but hard shooter is Hudson Soft's first VB game, Vertical Force. While VF doesn't pack the power of Red Alarm, it's easily one of the best initial offerings. Once you master the tricky play mechanics I'm sure you'll find that not only is the 3D effect stunning but that you're playing a really good shooter. Big mecha bosses and wave after wave of lil' enemies scaling about in fiery red is quite the sight.

G C P M O 80
8 9 6 7 8

Legend
G Graphics
C Control
P Play mechanics
M Music
O Originality