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Famimaga Earth World 95: the show which showcases every showy new Nintendo release on its way to Japanese gamestore shelves. *Super Play* joined the mad rush for the Square Soft stand, naturally...



The star of *Fushigi no Dungeon 2* smiles playfully from Chun Soft's stand.

Last year's Earth World event took place in the very heart of Tokyo, in Harumi, but this time around, on August 24-26, it was the turn of Yuenji Park, a heating amusement centre set in the suburbs of Japan's capital city, to play host to one of the biggest events in the Super Famicom's calendar.

The venue change was down to Nintendo's current Virtual Boy sales push, the theory being that Yuenji Park's numerous entertainment attractions would draw potential Veebee customers (the younger gaming sector) like alcoholics to a free beer festival. But more on the big N's potentially volatile red-LED project later.

Slightly smaller than last year's event, FEW 96 saw a total of 72 SFC games presented, with RPGs charging in to take centre stage by force, leaving much lesser represented categories such as action, puzzle and strategy to scoop up attention leftovers available only after the Nipponese gaming public had enjoyed their first opportunity to get their mitts on the big new releases from Square Soft and Enix.

Square's *Seiken Densetsu 3* attracted enormous interest, naturally – the new and much-vaunted triangle system proving especially popular, being a great progression from that of *Secret Of Mana*. Enix's contribution came in the form of a work-in-progress version of *Dragon Quest VI*, which revealed many new locations and characters. The 32-megabit action RPG *Tenchi So So*, which was covered in last month's *Fantasy Quest*, also had an airing, with most who played it claiming it bettered both *Soul Blazer* and *Illusion Of Gaia*.

1995's Earth World was a smaller event than that of last year, and a sober affair compared to UK shows.



"Fancy a game of *Final Fight 3*?"
"Not really, no."



Banpresto's *Tenchi Muyo* (below) is based directly on the evergreen anime TV series. What a twee colour scheme.



While besotted types discussed the saleability of Enix's products, younger gamers were happy just to marvel at their lush graphics.



Enix are pinning their hopes on *Dragon Quest VI*, which is due in December. Japanese gamers' mouths are watering.

Falcom's *Ys* series, jam-packed with action RPG-ness, is now in its fifth incarnation and will be released only on the SFC.



Human Hudson's wonderfully entitled *Crystal Beans* strutted into the ARPG arena, its inspiration coming from one of their previous releases, *Dungeon Explorer*, an old Gauntlet-style PC Engine hit which recently also made an appearance on the Mega CD.

Offering a Mana-style three-player multitap option and action along the lines of *Illusion of Time*, it looked like another innovative little gem from the geezers who brought us *S.O.S.* and *The Firemen*. Hudson Soft

Mega Man X3 was one of Capcom's biggest games at the show. Despite *Mega Man's* illustrated design overhaul, he's not been upgraded so obviously in the game itself.



continued to plunder their back catalogue with *Far East of Eden Zero*, an update of an ageing PC Engine RPG. A mightily colourful adventure, it's packed with such classically oriental images as elaborate pagodas and the odd flying dragon boat or two. Despite Hudson's continuing interest in the Western market, however, few if any of these are likely to be translated.

After an agonising wait of around 18 months, Japanese gamers were finally able to experience an almost finished version of Enix's *Tactics Ogre: Let Us Cling Together* at the show. It was certainly one of the most attractive games there, with glorious colour schemes and breathtaking attention to detail throughout, and it's now been confirmed for an October release in Japan. We'll have a full report on this potential stonker in *Fantasy Quest* next month.

Banpresto, known chiefly in Japan for their *Puyo Puyo* series, had *Tenchi Muyo* running on their stand. Using a beautiful pastel colour scheme, it's an isometric puzzle with puzzle-led gameplay à la *Ladytalker*. Will's certainly looking forward to that one.

Moving away from the world of sword swishery and magical caperings, *Soft Gold's* *Swindering Ranger* was certainly the cause of much eyebrow raising among Earth World attendees. Featuring SGI workstation-rendered graphics throughout, it's one looker of a game, with a slew of shiny spacecraft designs and alien beasts galore. Whether it'll incorporate such images into a playable finished game as successfully as Rare have been able is currently open to debate.

Interestingly, it's being published by Virgin's Japanese arm — we approached their UK division for details on a possible UK release only to learn that they aren't yet even aware of its existence. Oh well.

Following the excellent conversions of strategy sprawlers *Sim City 2000* and *Civilisation*, Pack-In Video showed their SFC translation of *Take The A-Train III*. Originally released in Japan on the PC 98 series (NEC's continually evolving Japanese PC standard) way back in 1990, when it was awarded Best Simulation by *LOGIN* magazine. The sequel, *A-Train IV*, has appeared on both the PlayStation and PC 98 to similar acclaim, but its complexity forced Pack-In to opt for a conversion of the previous game instead.

Capcom's presence at the show — which was considerably smaller than usual — confirmed what many had suspected for a long while: apart from having new levels and some very slight gameplay enhancements, *Rockman X3* and *Final Fight 3* were very similar to instalments that had gone before. Likewise their Donald Duck-licensed platformer, which was awkwardly similar to the Mickey Mouse series. The sad thing, of course, is that here is a company once reckoned for innovation and excellence, reduced to what has become a



sequel-churning factory. We'll have a minute's silence, please. Thank you.

Happier news concerned ASK's *Battletech 3050*, an adaptation of a Mega Drive title (itself based upon a tabletop wargaming system by FASA) using Front Mission-style robots. With particularly fluid action (for what could have been a lumbering game), a shed-load of futuristic weaponry on hand, and the irrefutably sexy lure of umpteen-foot-high mechar, it was arguably the hot game of the show. *Interplay* originally had the



Rendering Ranger's hero — what a rock chap

Rendering Ranger contains masses of images of this style. Look out Rare.



gameplay spark.

With upcoming software looking generally not much better than what's available at launch, perhaps the *Verdant* is destined to die a merry death, after all. Certainly, many retailers have not included the format already — you can still get a machine in Japan, but how they had the original street price.

In fact, it was down to the *Verdant* game to finally clamp the screws on some game of the show — would you believe *Virtual Fishing*? Yes, you'll fish the fish, not maggots and cure the one that got away in 3D. We're looking forward to *Virtual Crochet*, *Virtual Cup of Tea* and *Virtual Dosing Off*.



Space Station 3000's virtual space station. A view of the planet Earth from the station.



Space Station 3000's virtual space station. A view of the planet Earth from the station.

appear before Christmas.

The entire second floor of Young Frank's main building was dedicated to the *Vervee*, with some 10 new games for the system on display. Sadly, few titles shared the promise, with Hudson's *Virtual Bomberman* and *Procyon Zone 3* being little shoot-'em-up gun *Conquest* being demanding nothing more than a standard hand, Hudson's latest feature *Conquest Bomberman* gameplay too, while unfortunately, it neither exploits the full potential of the *Vervee* — it was a quarter-view display with only a handful of objects manipulated using 3D — nor does it utilize the link-up cable for multi-player games — kind of dull considering the nature of the game.

Those who've seen *Outgoing*

Flash on the PlayStation will recognize the inspiration for the robotic characters in *Conquest* *Space Station*, the company's other *Vervee* title. It's a 3D platformer sort of sim which sees you controlling projectile tank and flash in a 3D court. While presenting opposite objective 3D, like so many other *Vervee* titles, it fails that vital



Battletech 3050 is exactly the sort of thing Japanese gamers go for. They're still mecha mad.

