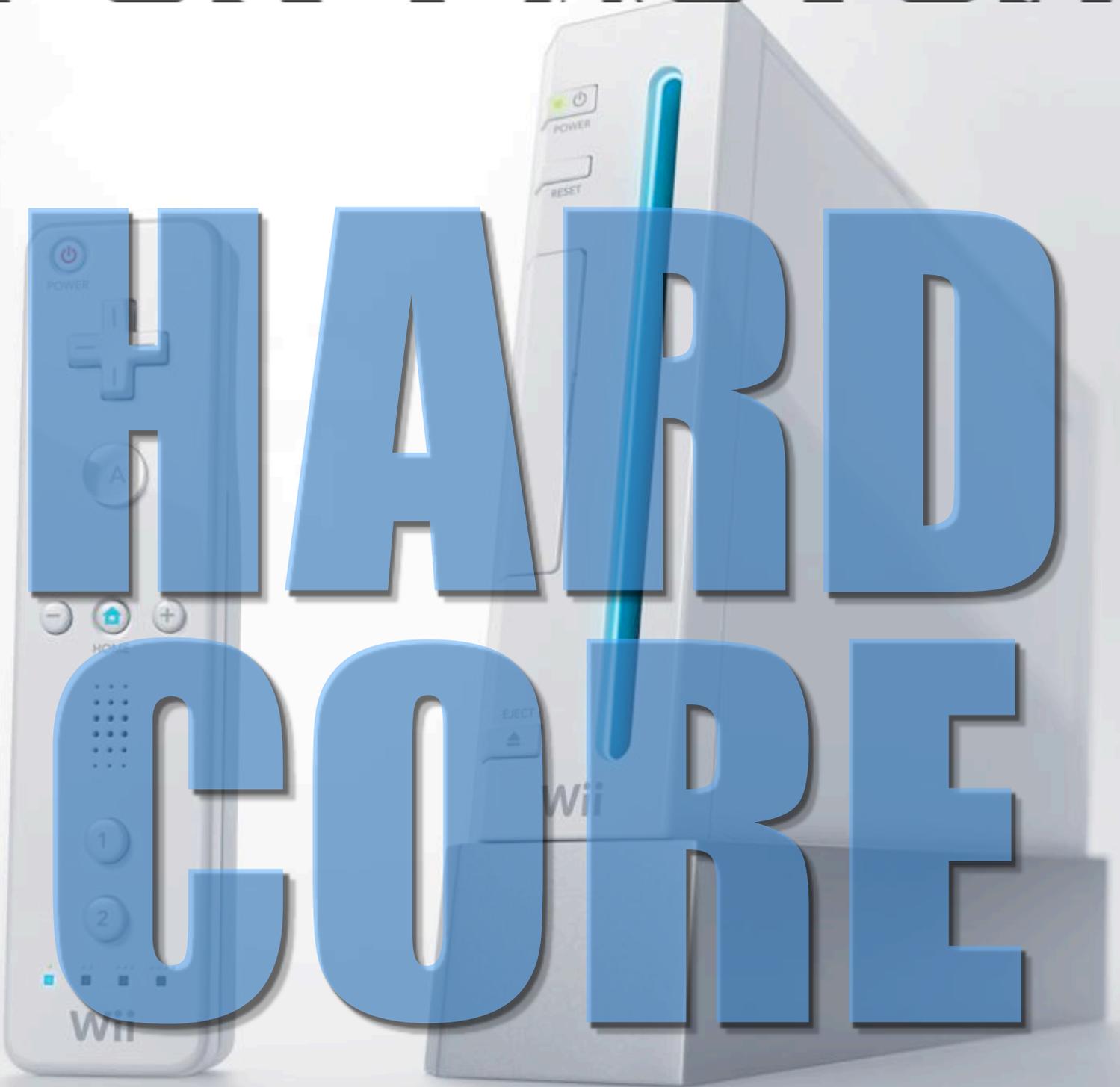


NINTENDO

FUN FACTOR



HARD CORE

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AWARD 8-BIT GAME
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TRADEWEST

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CREDITS

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Ryan	Features Development. Editing. Most Good Ideas. Writing: Fun Music!, <i>Final Fight</i> retrospective, the vast majority of Wii Core, More Core, Game Reviews.
Kevin	Ideas. Feedback. Moral Support.

The Nintendo Fun Club Podcast is Ryan, Kevin, John, and sometimes Lindsey.

Advertisements are used without permission and culled from our favorite video game magazines from our youth.

Please check out our podcast and previous issues of *Fun Factor!* at www.nintendofunclubpodcast.wordpress.com.

N I N T E N D O[®]

FUN CLUB

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Fun Factor #3, our love letter to the excellent selection of niche and hardcore games that found a home on Nintendo's little white console that could. Though many remember the Wii as a phenomenal machine for party games and family friendly experiences (which of course it was), we want to dedicate this issue to the many diverse and deep experiences available on the console. Ryan's list of hard core games continued to grow as we reminisced about the wealth of great core games available for Wii, and though we set out to create this feature because we already knew there were great experiences available for the platform in almost every genre, I think we were still surprised at how many games there were to write about.

While putting together this latest issue of Fun Factor, all of us at Nintendo Fun Club have been busy playing *Animal Crossing: New Leaf* (as we suspect most of you have been as well). We thought it would be fun to include some of the most FUN! photos we've taken while playing the game and share them in a feature we call "Nintendo Fun Club in Animal Crossing: New Leaf."

Ryan also wrote an excellent look back at the *Final Fight* games available on Nintendo systems. Check it out for his thoughts on the NES, SNES, and GBA *Final Fight* titles, as well as a special tribute to Haggar!

Kevin and John were able to check out the Chicago stop of the Wii U Summer Tour and we've included some photos of the event in this issue as well. If you've been listening to the podcast, you've heard our impressions of the excellent

games we played at the event, including *The Wonderful 101*, *Pikmin 3*, and *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker HD*. Follow the link the feature to find out if the tour will be stopping near you before it wraps up in September.

This our first issue following the 2013 E3 event, and while Nintendo showed some rad new games, many believe the company is still struggling to communicate what makes its console (Wii U) and its culture so special. Nintendo's E3 Nintendo Direct took place just one day after an Apple event announcing new versions of its operating systems (among other products), and its choices in communicating during the event led us to compare it to Nintendo. "Designed by Apple in California. Designed by Nintendo in Kyoto" compares the culture and messaging of Apple and Nintendo and explores whether Nintendo could do more to share its vision with the public.

We also include the game and music reviews and vintage advertisements that have been part of our first two issues. If you're new to the zine, please do go back and check out our first two issues. We really enjoy putting these issues together, and we hope you'll continue to read them and spread the word.

Please let us know what you think about the zine by sending comments to nintendofunclubpodcast@gmail.com.

Thanks again for taking the time to check out *Fun Factor!*, and don't forget to listen to the podcast (find it on [iTunes](#) or at nintendofunclubpodcast.wordpress.com).



Wii U Summer Tour 2013

Nintendo is taking its Wii U console out for a road trip this summer, visiting six locations across the United States to show off the system to the public. The event is taking place in popular vacation hot spots like Disneyland and Mall of America in an effort to place Wii U gamepads in the hands of potential customers who are unfamiliar with the system. Kevin and John were able to visit the tour's third stop at Navy Pier in Chicago to check out the event, including a few unreleased Wii U games. For full impressions of the games, listen to [episode 40 of the Nintendo Fun Club Podcast](#). We also wrote about it on our [blog](http://www.nintendofunclubpodcast.wordpress.com) at www.nintendofunclubpodcast.wordpress.com. The event runs in its various locations from May 26th to September 2nd, so be sure to [check Nintendo's event page for the full schedule](#).

Above: Kevin plays *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker HD* in front of the Chicago skyline.

Opposite page: Kevin plays more *Wind Waker HD*, Mario, Luigi, and Link adorn Wii U play rooms set up to show off a slew of both released and unreleased games, and Kevin and John pose in a warp pipe (thanks to Nintendo for the 480 x 360 jpeg which is just small enough to almost remind me of what it felt like to be at the Summer Tour).





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NINTENDO FUN CLUB IN

Welcome to Animal Crossing New Leaf

All of us here at Nintendo Fun Club have been playing *Animal Crossing: New Leaf* since launch day, and we're loving it. One of the best new features is the ability to post screenshots to Twitter, Tumblr, and Facebook directly from the game. We thought it would be fun to share some of the best screens we've taken so far in this issue of *Fun Factor!*





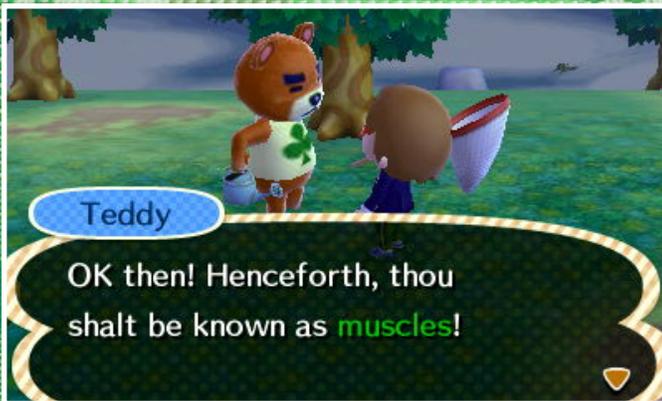
Mott

I thought, if this ladybro's in charge,
Derry is in good hands!



Wendy

You know, I just met **Ryan**
from **Mohawk**. I was all like, what
an awesome freshman mayor!



Teddy

OK then! Henceforth, thou
shalt be known as **muscles**!



Me wife's me life, at least when I'm on land.
At sea there's me boat, on the other hand!



6 / 24 Mo
12:19PM



Icewater why was he even made?



K.K.

Cool. I can dig that.
My axe is hot to play,
so cop a chair, Clare.

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TRULY EXCELLENT!



Hey dudes! How'd you like to ride the Power Phone Booth to six different worlds.

GALACTIC, MAN.

Search for famous historical dudes through space and time.

MOST COSMIC.

Party with the likes of Joan of Arc (*NOAH'S WIFE*) and Napoleon (*THE SHORT, DEAD DUDE*).

Then send them back in time or you'll miss the Wyld Stallyns concert — starring you!

HEAVY.

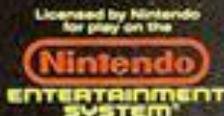
Save the world in this bodacious adventure. And remember — be excellent to each other!

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FUN MUSIC!

What is it?

This dark, sometimes-ambient, sometimes-rocking electronica soundtrack perfectly fits the vibe of Perfect Dark's conspiracy-laden world.

GRANT KIRKHOPE

PERFECT DARK

ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK

Why should Nintendo fans check it out?

Joanna Dark's original Nintendo 64 is not only her best, but arguably the best first person shooter to ever appear on a Nintendo platform. This soundtrack is a key component in setting the mood that makes the game a masterpiece in the genre.



Where can you get it?

It's available now as a pay-what-you-want download on Grant Kirkhope's [Bandcamp page!](#)

ATSUSHI KITAJOH

SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI: DEVIL

SUMMONER: SOUL HACKERS

What is it?

Jazz-infused synth-rock with pianos- yup, this is definitely a Shin Megami Tensei soundtrack. Included with the first run of retail copies, this six-track arrangement CD's slick disc art and song descriptions make it a must-own for SMT Maniax.

Why should Nintendo fans check it out?

It's included with one of the coolest RPGs on 3DS (see full review this issue).



Where can you get it?

The CD is only available packaged with first-run copies of Soul Hackers.

Abaddon



DO YOU HAVE
THE STOMACH
TO BATTLE
IN THE BELLY
OF THE BEAST?



UGLY
EYEBALLS



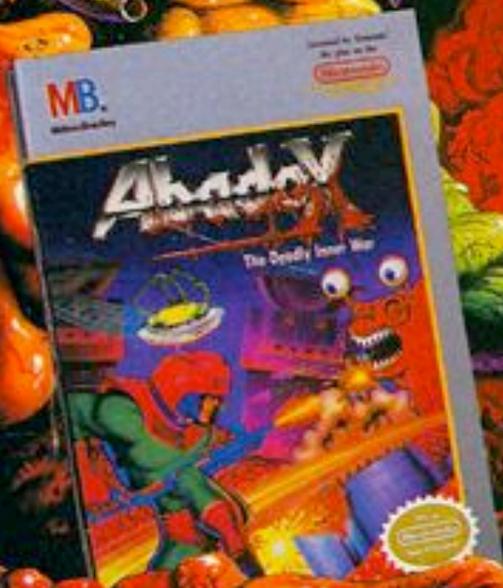
MUTANT
DOGS



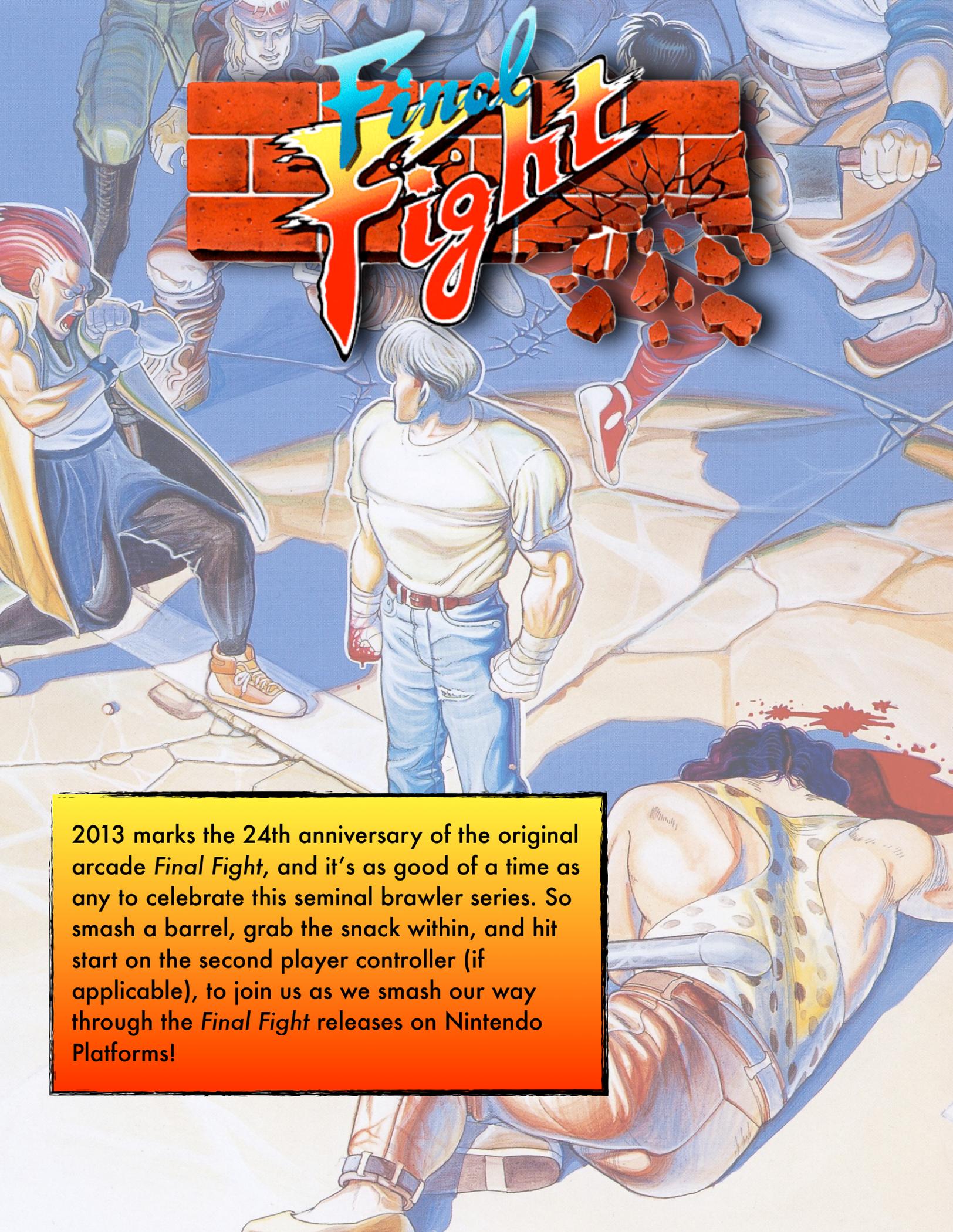
GUARDIAN
GHOULS



SKELETON FISH



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2013 marks the 24th anniversary of the original arcade *Final Fight*, and it's as good of a time as any to celebrate this seminal brawler series. So smash a barrel, grab the snack within, and hit start on the second player controller (if applicable), to join us as we smash our way through the *Final Fight* releases on Nintendo Platforms!

Final Fight (available on Wii Virtual Console)

Originally conceived as a sequel to the thoroughly mediocre *Street Fighter* (the original, not II), *Final Fight* made a huge splash when it landed in arcades in 1989. It certainly wasn't the first side-scrolling beat-em-up (Technos-developed-brawlers like *Renegade* and *Double Dragon* preceded it by years), but it was such a leap from those games in terms of playability and presentation that it was an instant hit in the arcades.



With the popularity of the game (and genre) at a fever pitch, it was a huge coup for Nintendo to have Capcom release the game as a launch title for the Super Famicom in 1990 (and The SNES the next year). Unfortunately, the port had a number of issues, including censorship, a lack of multiplayer, a missing playable character (Guy), an entire stage (Industrial Area) cut from the game, and more.

It's a testament to how excellent the core game is that despite these omissions, *Final Fight* on the SNES was still an enjoyable experience over 20 years ago, and remains so today.



Final Fight Guy

Aside from the addition of Guy, what else is new in this version? Not much actually. There are a few different items and enemy placements, but still no multiplayer mode. The missing stage remains missing, and while this version adds Guy, it removes Cody (which is actually an OK trade imo).

If you do decide to track down a copy of the game, I highly recommend going for the Japanese version, which can be found for under \$10 in Japanese game shops or online retailers such as Amazon.co.jp. If you don't have a fence for getting games from Japan to your country, your best bet is eBay, where copies go for \$30-\$90 depending on condition.

Even at \$90, the Super Famicom version is a better deal than trying to score a copy of the U.S. version, which was a Blockbuster Video exclusive and now sells for over \$200 (for just the cartridge)!

Final Fight 2 (Available on Wii Virtual Console)

This globe-trotting 1993 Super Nintendo exclusive rectifies what was probably the most egregious of the cuts to the original, adding a multiplayer mode. While the new characters Maki and Carlos feel somewhat uninspired and uninteresting, being able to punch your way through locations around the world with a friend makes up for their forgetability.



Mighty Final Fight

Possibly the first 8-bit demake, *Mighty Final Fight* is an awesome spinoff/re-imagining of/sequel to the original. Released late in the NES' life (1993!) the game borrowed wholesale from its contemporaries, lifting the RPG-lite XP system from *Double Dragon* and the humorous chibi character designs from the Kunio series.

Mighty Final Fight plays great as well - controls are responsive and the game moves at a brisker pace than its big brothers on SNES. Unfortunately, it is, like the original



SNES game, a single-player only affair. Had Capcom added a multiplayer option, this could have been the best game in the series - it really is that good.

Final Fight 3 (Available on Wii Virtual Console)

As stated many times here, multiplayer is a key feature of the beat 'em up genre. However, if you don't have anyone to pick up that second controller because your friends are all too cool to play brawlers from 1995 (meaning not cool at all), *Final Fight 3* offers a welcome solution- a computer-controlled partner of your choosing. This is a pretty great feature that unfortunately came a bit too late in the genre's lifespan to really catch on, which is a shame, because it adds an extra layer of unpredictability and vitality to the experience.

All partners aren't all that *FF3* adds to the mix- characters' movesets are expanded by the addition of special meters for Super Moves and double-tap-dash-attacks. Although the game occasionally suffers from significant bouts of slowdown, *Final Fight 3* is still an excellent entry in the series that brings quite a few welcome innovations. Not quite Capcom's capstone, but a respectable ending of sorts to an era and genre.



Final Fight One

This Game Boy Advance port of the original *Final Fight*, released in 2001, is superior to the SNES version in nearly every way. Not only are all three original characters playable but you can FINALLY play the game with a second player on a Nintendo system (provided they have a GBA, a second copy of the game, and a link cable). The Industrial Area is restored in this version, and the game's cover art is done by legendary SNK/Capcom artist Shinkiro - two more great reasons to pick it up. The only downside to this version is while it's still weirdly impressive to see the game running on a Game Boy Advance, it's definitely the worst looking of the versions. Even with the visual downgrade, *Final Fight One* remains a lovingly-crafted port worth your time, and one that would be a fantastic



Virtual Console title whenever Nintendo gets GBA games (outside of the Ambassador Program titles) up on the 3DS and Wii U eshops.

We've covered each of the *Final Fight* titles available for Nintendo consoles, but no retrospective of the series could be complete without a fitting tribute to its most beloved character, the man always ready to answer the call when needed...



Mike Haggar - The Constant

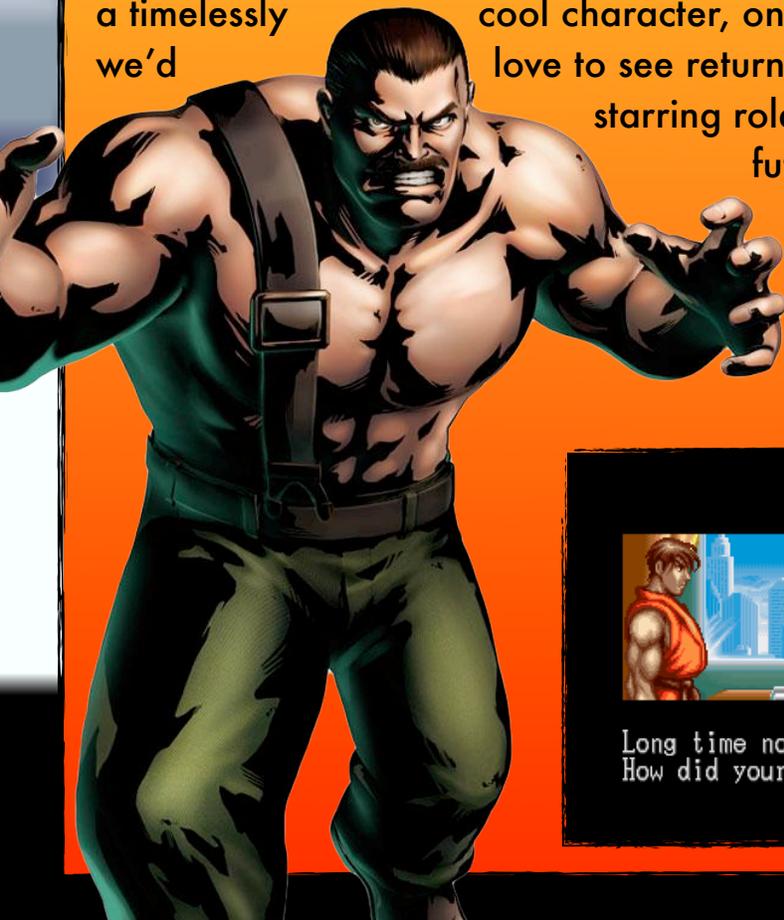
"The Mayor of Mayhem"

"The Burgomaster of Beat-Downs"

"The Public Servant of Punishment"

"The Chief Executive of Criminal-Element-Extraction"

The *Final Fight* series has had heroes, villains, and locations come and go throughout its various iterations, but there remains one consistent element that can be found in every game in the series. This common thread comes in the form of a muscle-bound, mustached man named Mike Haggar. A former professional wrestler turned mayor, Haggar takes to the streets in the original *Final Fight* when his daughter, Jessica, is kidnapped by the Mad Gear gang. Trading his suit for a pair of bright green pants and a leather-suspender-belt-thing, Haggar becomes a one man criminal justice system, pummeling the scum of the city. Mike Haggar is a timelessly cool character, one that we'd love to see return to a starring role in the future.

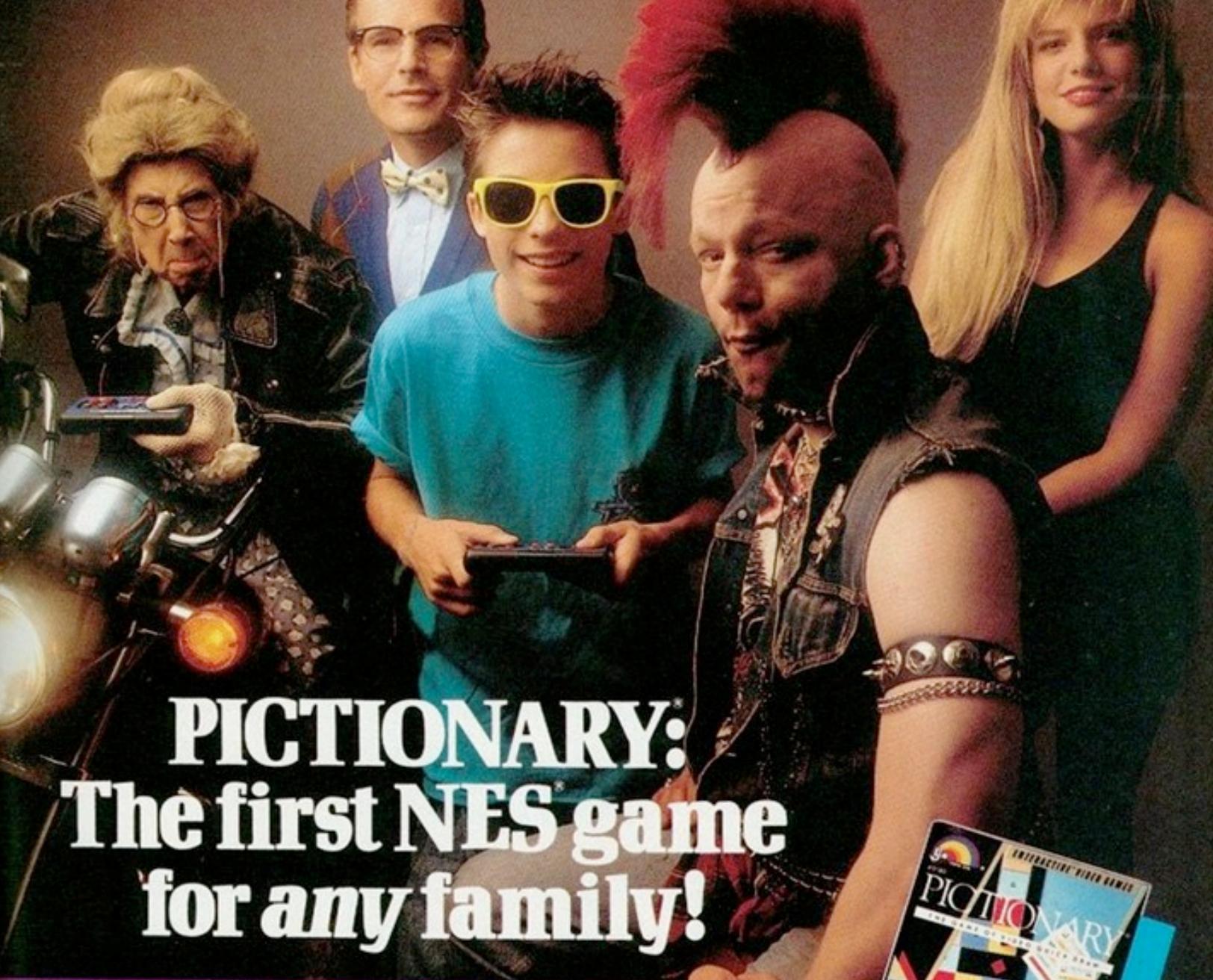


Mike Haggar



- Ht.: 6ft. 7in. Wt.: 309lbs.
- Home Town: NEW YORK, USA
- Favorite Attack:
- SPINNING PILEDRIVER
- Profile: FORMER MAYOR OF METRO CITY, HE LIKES TO POUND PUNKS.





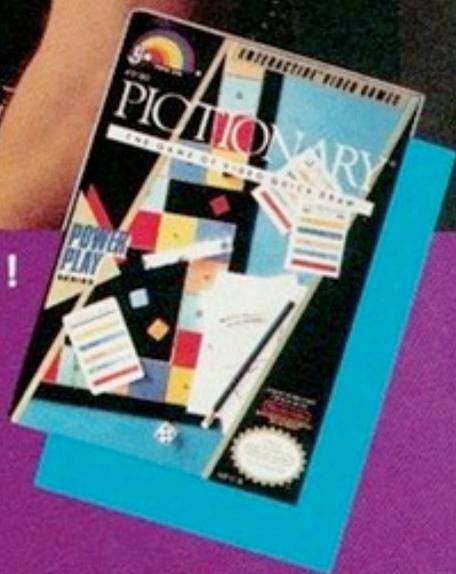
PICTIONARY: The first NES game for *any* family!

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An NES® game that *everyone* in the family will enjoy playing? Not *your* family you say? Wait 'til you play LJN's Pictionary!

Four thoroughly addictive arcade-type games will challenge the NES® champ in your family. The higher the score before the clock runs out, the more the hidden picture is revealed. Here's where the Pictionary fans take over, trying to identify the object before *their* time runs out.

Most videogamers will want to hog Pictionary all to themselves for the arcade action. Others might choose to play the electronic version of the legendary board game. Better yet, everyone can join in on the fast-paced, video quick-draw super arcade action together. So, get ready for Pictionary like it's never been played before.





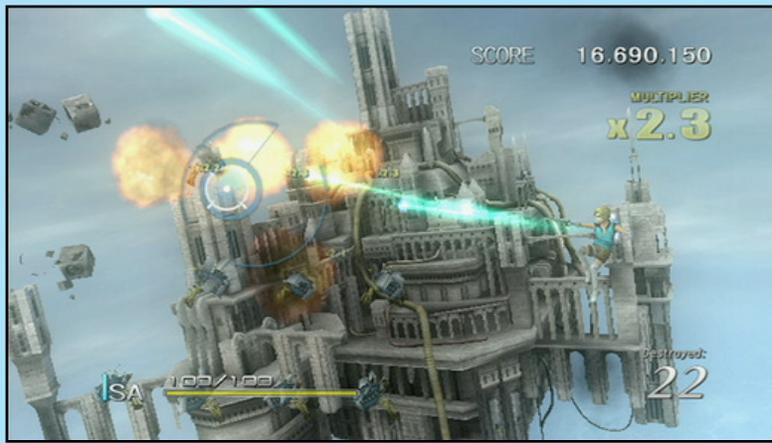
Wii Core

Fun Factor! pays tribute to the many excellent niche and hardcore games on Nintendo's "casual" console.



Nintendo's Wii console, released in late 2006, proved to be an enormous success for the company, outselling its competition and becoming one of the most popular video game systems of all time. However, many of the console's critics appear to believe the Wii achieved commercial success by ignoring the tried and true fans of hardcore games who stuck by the company through its less prosperous N64 and GameCube eras. They argue the company instead focused on a "blue ocean" strategy and casual gamers, meaning more experienced gamers looking for traditional, niche, or core titles were left behind by Nintendo.

However, we here at *Fun Factor!* disagree with this assessment, so we've put together this "Wii Core" feature to remind readers of the many excellent (and often overlooked) titles that deserve to be played and remembered. Hopefully this feature will help dispel the commonly told and considerably misguided story of the Wii. While it is true that Nintendo and its third party partners certainly served the expanded audience that helped make Wii so popular, join us in taking a look at the many unique and diverse titles that graced the platform over its six plus years on the market.



Sin & Punishment: Star Successor

Emboldened by the success of the original Nintendo 64 game's release on Virtual Console, Treasure and Nintendo teamed up to create this wonderful Wii sequel. *Star Successor* combines an excellent control scheme (thanks to the AR functionality of the Wii Remote) with the insane action and wonderfully bonkers art direction of the original to create a game even better than the first.



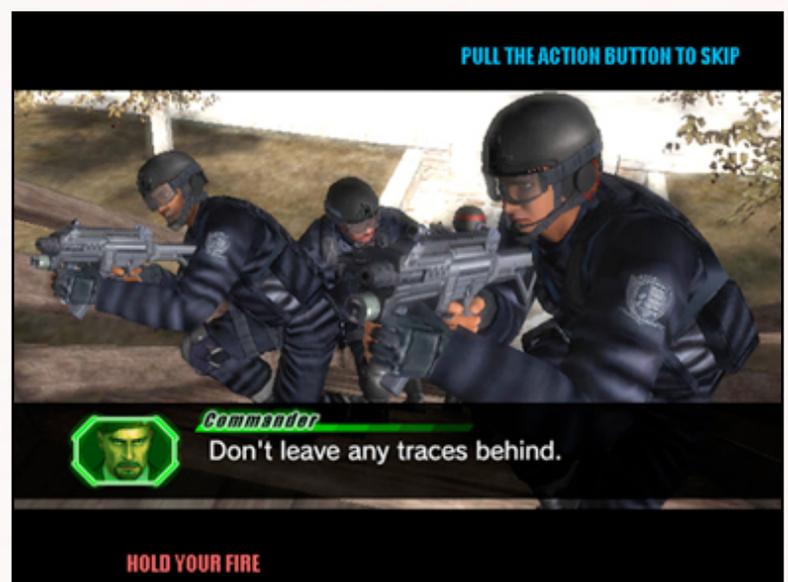
Sakura Wars: So Long, My Love

Support the troupes in this charming/deep/replayable/wonderful musical-mecha-strategy-RPG-dating-sim. Well-written, acted, and presented, the only localized game in the long-running fan-favorite *Sakura Taisen* is definitely worth your time. While the Wii version lacks the Japanese voice track that the PS2 one includes (booo), it does support progressive scan (yaaay, the PS2 version is only 480i), so this is the better looking of the two (especially on an HDTV).



Ghost Squad

Ghost Squad is a game where you hunt terrorists as a member of an elite squad of highly-trained soldiers, but don't let that turn you away. The story is pure goofy 80s war popcorn film material, as seen through the lens of legendary developer Sega AM2 (*Virtua Cop/Fighter*, *Daytona USA*, *Afterburner*, *OutRun*, etc). The action plays out not unlike other fast-paced Sega lightgun games such as *Virtua Cop* or *House of the Dead* - it's a lightgun game, you know what to expect- but the game offers plenty of branching paths and (crazy) unlockables to keep you coming back when you need a fast and fun gaming experience.





Monster Hunter Tri

Next time you hear someone running their mouth about how “people only played the Wii for a half hour every few months” or whatever, kindly direct them towards the average per person playtime in *Monster Hunter Tri* (which when last checked via the Nintendo Channel, was right around 90 hours). After spending 100+ hours with *Monster Hunter 3 Ultimate* (which is based on the Wii game), I can see how someone could put in that much time with Tri - it’s absolutely packed with content.



The Last Story

The Last Story finds Hironobu Sakaguchi and Nobuo Uematsu (original Final Fantasy series creator and composer, respectively) attempting to reinvent the genre that they popularized.

For the most part, they succeed. From an immediately likeable cast to interesting combat mechanics, it's one of the freshest entries into the genre in years. Come for the pretty art and music, stay for the alcoholic heroes.



Tenchu: Shadow Assassins

The first *Tenchu* game by series creators Acquire since 2000's *Tenchu 2* gives fans what they want: thoughtful traversal, rewarding stealth kills, and a variety of ninja tools and techniques at their disposal. The motion controls are interesting, but not always ideal, and can annoy at times with their imprecision. Thankfully, the game offers multiple difficulty



settings and a reasonable checkpoint system (with mid-mission saves), to keep frustration to a minimum.

Final Fantasy Fables: Chocobo's Dungeon

Once you get past the interesting, but poorly told, Saturday morning cartoon-style story, you may find quite a bit to like in *Chocobo's Dungeon*. The dungeon-crawling is standard fare for a Chunsoft rouge-like, but the extra touches in the periphery elevate *Chocobo's Dungeon* above its peers/brethren. Extra cute versions of Final Fantasy character designs, remixes of classic FF tunes, a collectible card game (playable online!), and some fun minigames make *Chocobo's Dungeon* worth checking out for both *Final Fantasy* and *Mystery Dungeon* fans.



Broken Sword: Shadow of the Templars

This "Director's Cut" version of the point and click adventure classic, *Broken Sword*, includes a host of updates to the original including a new prequel scenario and artwork from *Watchmen* artist Dave Gibbons. The Wii controls are perfectly suited to the game and the artstyle allows the game to still look great on an HDTV, making this arguably the definitive version of this memorable adventure. Not bad for a game that came to be from a fan petition on the internet.





The Sky Crawlers: Innocent Aces

This Wii flight sim is based on an anime based on series of Japanese novels, and yes, I said “Wii flight sim.” Developed by Project Aces (*Ace Combat*) and Access Games (*Deadly Premonition!*), the game has you switching the Wii Remote and nunchuck into opposite hands to manage the pitch, yaw, and other flight terms that I honestly don’t really know the meaning of. While the presentation of the game may not impress, the mythology of the world and ambitious attempt to recreate (expensive) flight simulator controls definitely does. However, if you don’t care about the story, you can skip all of the movies with the

press of a button (though you’ll be missing out on some beautiful anime cutscenes from Production I.G), and if you want a simpler, more *Star Fox/Rogue Squadron*-style experience, the game can be played with a Gamecube or Classic Controller.



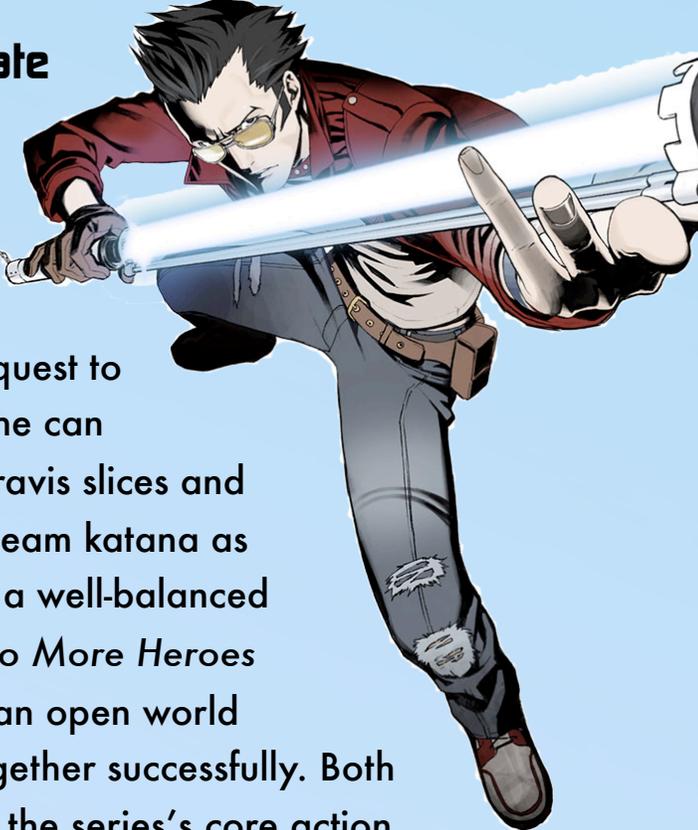
Xenoblade

There was a moment in *Xenoblade*, while exploring a town that seemed to just keep expanding vertically, when it really hit me- this game is enormous. What makes *Xenoblade* a classic is not simply that the game world is large, but that everything, from NPCs to trees is intentional. The world of *Xenoblade* feels authentic, with its own rich history, rather than sterile and soulless- it’s a great place to lose yourself for a hundred hours or so.



No More Heroes/No More Heroes 2: Desperate Struggle

The primary appeal of Suda 51's *No More Heroes* games is the series's trademark stylized violence and ridiculous premise (it follows comic book and pro wrestling loving protagonist Travis Touchdown's quest to become the world's number one assassin, mainly so he can copulate with the competition's beautiful recruiter). Travis slices and dices his way through hordes of enemies using his beam katana as players control the combat heavy gameplay through a well-balanced combination of motion and button control. The first *No More Heroes* attempted to combine its heavy focus on action with an open world cityscape (known as Santa Destroy), though not altogether successfully. Both *No More Heroes* titles use minigames to complement the series's core action game play, and those in the second game are a real highlight; each features an 8-bit presentation and is quickly and easily accessible once unlocked. The series's extreme violence and unique premise make *No More Heroes* the direct antithesis of the idea that the Wii was only home to sanitized or family friendly experiences.



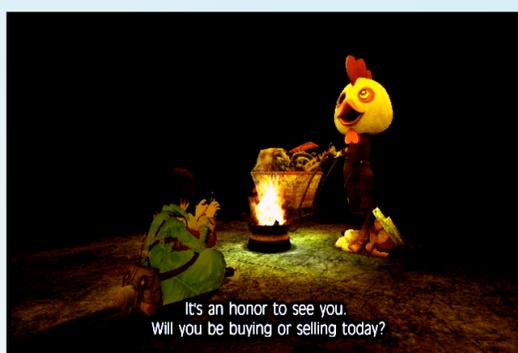
Silent Hill: Shattered Memories

This complete re-imagining of the original *Silent Hill* is an absolutely unforgettable experience and possibly my favorite third-party Wii release. *Shattered Memories* makes smart (but not entirely unique) use of the Wii Remote as a flashlight and phone, making it well-suited to the hardware. While some sections of the game may frustrate (the chase sections are more difficult than they need to be), it's worth persevering in order to experience the story. Focused less on violent, grotesque horror and more on psychological and human themes, no matter which ending you get, it will resonate with you. I'm still thinking about it.



Fragile Dreams: Farewell Ruins of the Moon

Set in a dark and depressing post-apocalyptic world, *Fragile Dreams* follows Seto, a boy who may be the last human in the world, on his quest for understanding and companionship. Unrelentingly bleak, this is a game all about the journey. Through Seto's hardships and sadness, I found myself empathizing with him more than most game characters. After a few hours, I was so invested in the world and his situation that I knew I needed to stick out the quest (and the clunky, but thankfully rare, combat). It's well worth devoting a weekend to this memorable experience.



Gunblade NY / L.A. Machineguns

This disc contains two SEGA-developed lightgun shooters, *Gunblade NY* (originally release in 1996) and *LA Machineguns* (1998). Both games are dizzying affairs (as you are a helicopter gunner, the camera constantly swoops around the action), with visuals only a mother (or *Virtua Cop* fan) could love. What the games lack in visual pizzazz they make up for with sheer charm. The enjoyable (albeit simple) gameplay is coated with some goofy story elements (you will fight terrorists in mechs) and some classic mid-90s Sega arcade music that really round out the package.



Tales of Symphonia: Dawn of the New World

While far from a niche series in Japan (the most recent console entry, *Xilia 2*, has sold over 500,000 copies) *Tales* games barely register on the sales charts in the West (if they are released here at all). Newcomers to the series may not be blown away by the story or cutscenes and series vets may not fall in love with the Harry Potter by way of Shinji Ikari protagonist, but there is still a lot to like about *Dawn of the New World*. The clean visuals are attractive, expressive, and still look good on an HDTV. The game is filled with charm and unabashed optimism—primarily exhibited through the series' trademark skits.



While you'll get the most out of *Dawn of the New World's* story if you've completed the original *Tales of Symphonia*, a passing familiarity with the events of that game should be enough for those wanting to check out one of the only action-RPGs on the Wii.

Batman: The Brave and the Bold

A game based on one of the most famous characters and brands in entertainment may not exactly scream "niche" or "hardcore," but this underappreciated gem deserves mentioning. This colorful and legitimately funny take on Batman (based on the animated series of the same name) provides classic 16-bit brawling that evokes memories of Konami's *The Adventures of Batman and Robin* for the Super Nintendo. While *The Brave and the Bold* doesn't have the noir/art deco style of that SNES classic, it is a gorgeous game, showcasing the fantastic 2D visuals developer WayForward is known for. *The Brave and the Bold* is an entertaining adventure well worth checking out for fans of great 2D art and animation, the brawlers of yesteryear, or Bat-Mite (who has a significant presence in the game).





Muramasa: The Demon Blade

Arguably the most beautiful game on the Wii (right up there with *Okami* and *Kirby's Epic Yarn* in my most humble opinion), *Muramasa* is absolutely striking when you first see it in motion. The hand-drawn visuals combine classic Japanese art styles like watercolor and woodblock printing to elegantly create a game world steeped in Japanese mythology. *Muramasa* doesn't just coast by on its looks though; there is a solid side-scrolling action game with plenty of content underneath the gorgeous exterior. Lite RPG elements combined with two different playable characters and multiple difficulty levels will keep you busy in the game world- and the visuals will make you happy to stay.





Shiren the Wanderer

This iteration of Chunsoft's only original *Mystery Dungeon* may be the most accessible yet, thanks to its "Easy" difficulty option (which lets you keep your items and levels after dying). Unlike the *Pokemon*, *Dragon Quest*, and *Final Fantasy* versions of *Mystery Dungeon* games, *Shiren* takes place in a mystical feudal Japan. The dungeon crawling and combat are the same as ever, but feel a bit more polished and satisfying here thanks to the weapon animations. Despite the simplistic visuals, the game still has style, with great music and art (the hand-drawn cutscenes and world map are particularly beautiful). If you've ever been curious about this series, but were turned off by the licensed versions, this is a great jumping-on point. And for *Mystery Dungeon* purists who crave the risk of losing their items upon death, there's always "Normal" difficulty.



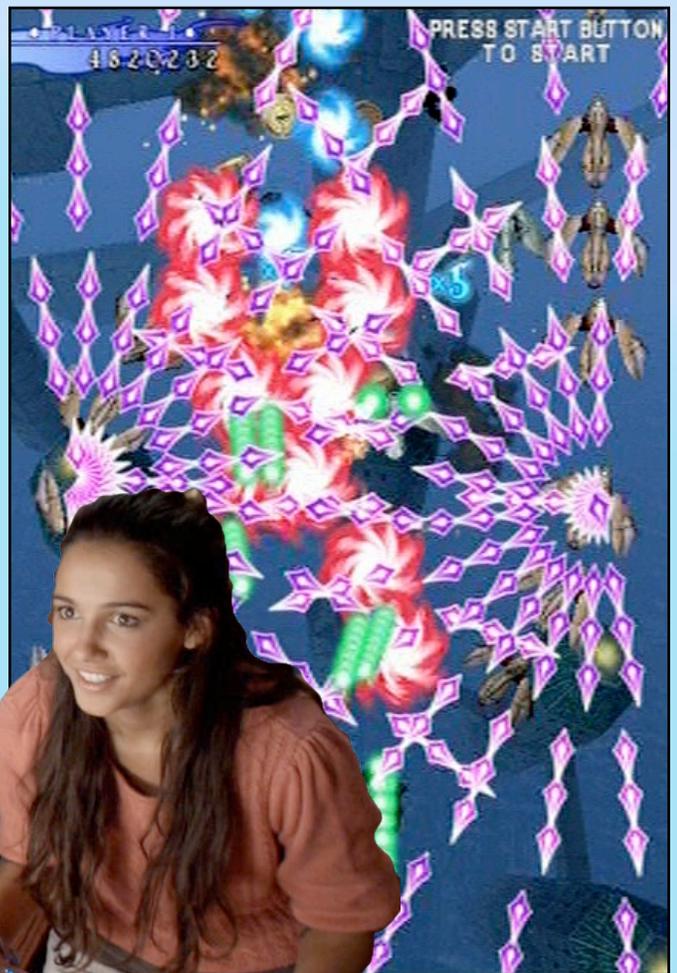
Phantom Brave

Phantom Brave is a strategy RPG from Nippon Ichi Software (*Disgaea*, *Rhapsody*) in which you play as a teenage girl who changes inanimate objects into "Phantoms" that fight for her. Sound niche enough for you? The premise is not all that makes *Phantom Brave* unique, however. The game eschews the grid-based combat of its turn-based contemporaries in favor of free character movement (within a circular range). While not exactly technically impressive, the large, detailed sprites are charming and full of personality (especially in story sequences) and the soundtrack can be quite lovely at times; if you're into this type of aesthetic, the game holds up remarkably well today. Definitely worth checking out for fans of the genre or NIS' better known works.



Castle of Shikigami III

As the title implies, this is the third *Castle of Shikigami* game, and actually the third to be released in North America. But while the first two games were PS2 budget titles with butchered, so-bad-it's-good localizations, *III* is the first time a game in the series has actually been given a proper release, thanks to Aksys Games. Not only is all of the (insane) story intact in this version, but all of the game content is as well - and there is a lot of it. Multiple modes, difficulty levels, and playable characters (each with their own style of attack) give this unique bullet hell shooter plenty of replay value. And yes, there is even a TATE mode. If you are the type of person who cares about TATE (or even knows what it is), then you should definitely give this a shot (pun intended).



Tatsunoko Vs. Capcom: Ultimate All-Stars

While *Tatsunoko Vs. Capcom* may not be a tournament-level mainstay fighter such as *Street Fighter IV* or *Virtua Fighter 5*, it still has a lot to offer. Deep, fast-paced combat and online play make it worth checking out for hardcore fighting game fans, but TVC also has appeal for non-EVO folks as well. The game sports an impressive character roster to pore over- while the Capcom side consists of familiar faces like Mega Man (preparing for his appearance in the next *Smash Bros.*, no doubt), the Tatsunoko characters will likely have you visiting Wikipedia at least once. In addition, Capcom even saw fit to team up with Mad Catz to create an official arcade



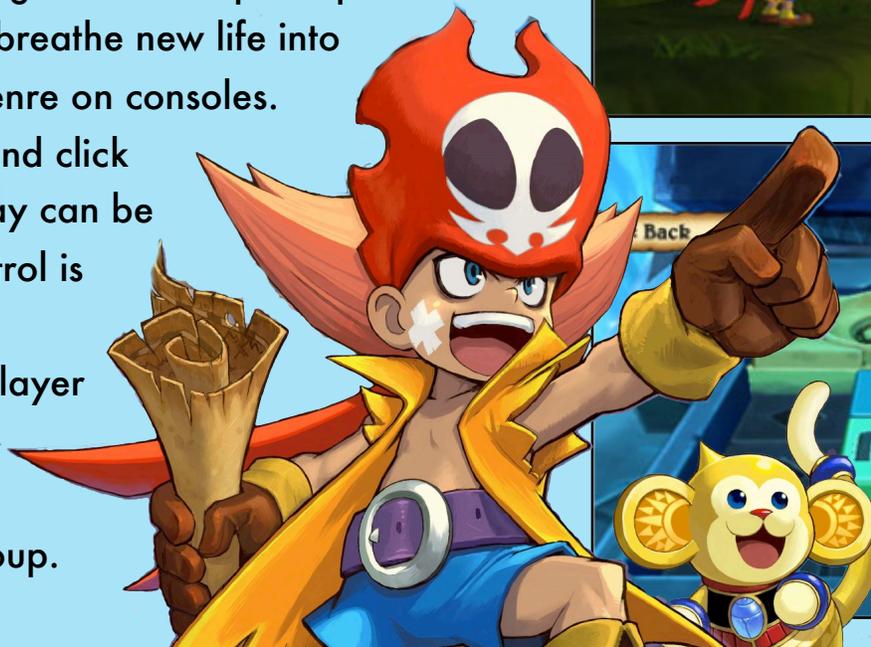
fightstick for the game (which also works on Wii U)!



Zack & Wiki: The Quest for Barbaro's Treasure

Arriving less than a year after the Wii's release, *Zack & Wiki* was a bright and beautiful new IP as challenging as it was creative. Capcom's first Wii game took advantage of the unique capabilities of the Wii Remote to breathe new life into an oft-neglected genre on consoles.

The game's point and click adventure gameplay can be difficult, but its control is intuitive and the addition of a two-player mode means it can be enjoyed alone or with a group.



More Core

There are so many hardcore and niche games on the Wii that we still haven't played them all!!



Arc Rise Fantasia

While maybe most notorious for its poor voice acting, *Arc Rise Fantasia* is a good-looking game with some serious developer pedigree. The director, Hiroyuki Kanemaru, is a Telenet (*Valis*, *Cosmic Fantasy*) veteran who also worked on *Tales of Symphonia* and the music in the game was at least partially composed by Yasunori Mitsuda (*Chrono Trigger/Cross*, *Xenogears*). While *Arc Rise Fantasia* was met with indifference by Western reviewers, the Amazon.com consumer reviews tell a different story, with plenty of positive comments and a 4.5/5 star overall rating. If you're in the mood for a colorful, traditional JRPG on the Wii, it seems that *Arc Rise Fantasia* isn't a bad choice- just be sure to turn off the voices.

**Rune Factory: Frontier / Rune
Factory: Tides of Destiny / Harvest
Moon: Animal Parade / Harvest
Moon: Tree of Tranquility**

Natsume was a fairly prolific publisher on the Wii, releasing multiple versions of their charming life sim / RPGs to the platform. All of their games (aside from the seemingly lazy Gamecube port of *Magical Melody*) appear to be well-received by their very devoted, diverse, and passionate fanbase.



Opoona

Unfortunately christened as “the RPG for babies,” Opoona got a lot of flack at release for its simplistic gameplay, cute visuals, and motion controls. However, it was developed by ArtePiazza (*Dragon Quest*) and features a soundtrack by Hitoshi Sakimoto (*Final Fantasy XII/Tactics*, *Crimson Shroud*, *Tactics Ogre/Ogre Battle*, *Vagrant Story*), so it may be worth picking up for fans of its creators.





Little King's Story

One of the highest rated third party titles on Wii (87 Metacritic score, if that sort of thing impresses you), this life-sim/strategy/role-playing exclusive is beloved by critics and fans alike. It's not difficult to see why, considering the game was developed by a certifiable all-star staff including Yasuhiro Wada (creator, *Harvest Moon*), Hideo Minaba (artist / character designer, *Final Fantasy V, VI, IX, XII*), Kazuyuki Kurashima (monster / character designer, *Moon: Remix RPG Adventure*), and Youichi Kawaguchi (programmer, *Dragon Quest VIII*). Man, I really need to play this game one of these days.





Trauma Team / Trauma Center: New Blood / Trauma Center: Second Opinion

Personally, I was always drawn to the *Trauma* series by the Shigenori Soejima character designs, but turned off by the difficulty and subject matter. However, the series has many fans who still chime in whenever a new Atlus game is being teased with a "I hope it's *Trauma Center*" comment (which is then swiftly buried under a sea of "IT BETTER BE *PERSONA 5*"s).



A Boy and His Blob

This reimagining of the NES puzzle-platformer is one of the most charming and beautiful games on the Wii. While the puzzle-platformer is far from a niche genre these days, *A Boy and His Blob* deserves hardcore cred for its gorgeous hand-drawn 2D visuals. Created by the sprite-masters at WayForward,



the game is every bit as lovely as you'd expect. And the game includes a "hug" button, that allows the boy to give the blob a hug. What could be more heartwarming than that?

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Designed by Apple in California

Designed by Nintendo in Kyoto

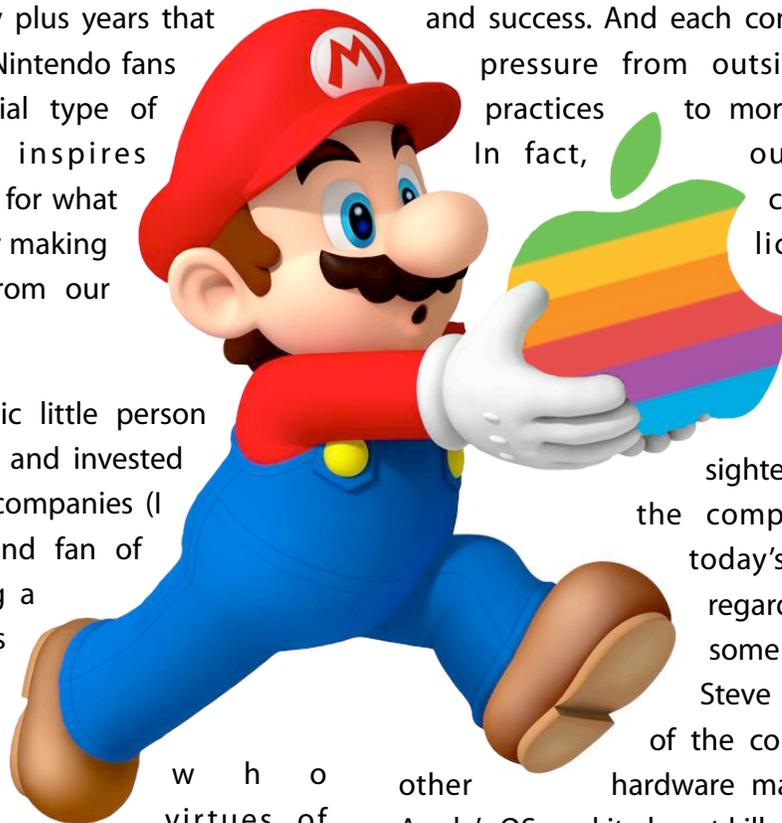
Though I like to think of myself as someone who maintains a healthy level of distrust toward major corporations and their intentions, the very obvious fact remains that I work on a zine focused on celebrating one. I think pledging allegiance to a giant company is foolish, and everyday it becomes more important to raise one's awareness of marketing and messaging.

That being said, I do believe there are companies whose intentions and goals are more true than others. If you're reading this zine right now, surely you feel that way about Nintendo. They have been able to build the kind of massive and loyal fanbase over the last thirty plus years that few companies can claim. Nintendo fans are known for that special type of fanboy zealotry that inspires passionate loyalty and love for what is basically a huge company making a great deal of money from our support of its products.

I am a profoundly pathetic little person because I am fiercely loyal and invested in not one, but two giant companies (I am also a big follower and fan of Apple). I first started using a Mac around eleven years ago, and in that time I've become one of those insufferable Apple loyalists who incessantly proclaims the virtues of one OS and platform over those of another. I am part

of a larger culture of people who really love using Apple's products and believe they are different, better, and more honest than those of their counterparts. I understand that the truth behind those beliefs is controversial and debatable, but I don't think there is much doubt surrounding the fact that there are many of us that feel that way.

Perhaps it is my bias and affinity toward these two companies, but I see quite a few similarities between Nintendo and Apple. Each company argues that its way of conducting its business is different than its competitors. Each company features an iconic figure who is credited for much of the company's creativity and success. And each company faces consistent pressure from outsiders to conform its practices to more traditional methods. In fact, outsiders consistently called for Apple to license its operating system to other hardware manufacturers in a similar kind of short-sighted misunderstanding of the company's strengths that today's analysts display in regard to Nintendo (when some of those outsiders fired Steve Jobs and took control of the company, they did allow other hardware manufacturers to license Apple's OS, and it almost killed the company).



One of the key differences I see, however, between the two companies is the way they communicate their unique culture and approach to their business to the rest of the world. Apple has long embraced its reputation as an outsider; Nintendo does as well, but I would argue less publicly.

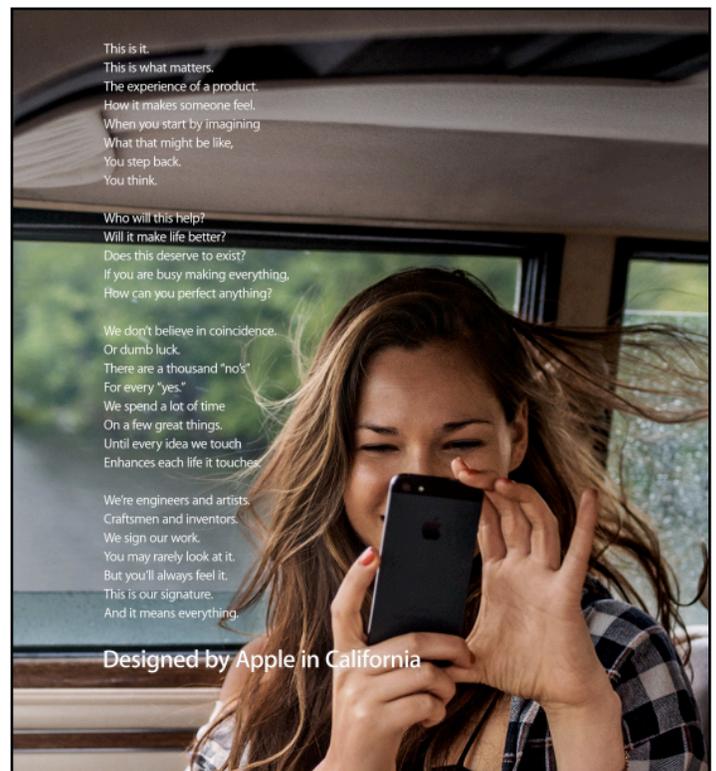
I've always seen the similarities between these two companies (as a fan of each of them, I often use the same lines of defense when discussing their approach with others), but Apple's recent "Designed by Apple in California" ad campaign and Nintendo's 2013 E3 presentations led me to compare them more closely recently.

Each year Apple holds an event for developers called WWDC (Worldwide Developer's Conference). They use the event to broadcast new software and hardware features to developers, as well as to run workshops and training modules. However, as Apple's popularity with consumers has grown, the WWDC keynote has become an event that the entire tech industry watches closely. It is live blogged and broadcast similarly to E3 press conferences. In fact, I was able to watch it broadcast live on my Apple TV in much the same way we all watched Nintendo's E3 Nintendo Direct. The WWDC keynote took place just one day before Nintendo's own E3 events.

There was a great deal of exciting news coming out of WWDC this year, but one of the smaller stories that probably flew under most people's radar was the "Designed by Apple in California" ad campaign. Apple premiered a tv spot completely focused on the company's self-professed unique approach to designing products. It very much appeals to the audience's emotions, featuring images and music that point to the impact the company's products make on its customers' lives.

The ad campaign is melodramatic and maudlin, but it also boldly celebrates what Apple believes makes it, and its products, so unique.

I've re-watched the ads a number of times while working on this article, and I'm struck by how well



Apple's ad sums up the way I feel about the inspirational creativity I associate with Nintendo. In fact, much of the ad's copy could just as accurately describe Nintendo and its methods. When the narrator asks "If everyone is busy making everything, how can anyone perfect anything? We start to confuse convenience with joy, abundance with choice," I immediately begin considering the way I view Nintendo in comparison to much of the rest of the games industry. When he states that "Designing something requires focus. The first thing we ask is what do we want people to feel? Delight, surprise...then we begin to craft around our intention. It takes time...we simplify. We perfect," I remember Miyamoto's many comments about Nintendo's design process.

And then I begin to ask myself why Nintendo doesn't communicate similar ideas about itself to the public. Certainly it requires a fair amount of arrogance to design entire ad campaigns about the profound impact a company has on its customers (and there is already some suggestion that these "Designed by Apple in California" ads are rubbing some the wrong way), but I think Nintendo believes that it crafts its products more carefully, and with better results, than its competitors. I also think

Designed by Apple in California



Follow [this link](#) to watch a sample video from Apple's latest ad campaign, titled "Designed by Apple in California."

Nintendo believes that the way it goes about developing software is crucial to its continued success, that its insistence on doing things its own way is precisely what makes its games worth creating and playing.

At this year's E3, Nintendo stepped aside from the spectacle and pageantry of the E3 press conference, ceding some of the limelight to the other console platform holders. It chose, in some ways, not to compare itself to Sony and Microsoft by taking a different approach to communicating its plans for the future. It shared the games being released for Wii U over the next twelve months, simplifying its message and make its communication all about experiencing its games.

But it said little about what makes Nintendo so special, and outside of interviews and press releases, it rarely does.

Both Apple and Nintendo, by my estimation, are passion companies. They, to paraphrase Apple's own celebration of itself, focus on doing a few things better than anyone else in the world. They are committed to remaining true to their visions for how their company's should be run and their current leadership would rather see its company dissolve than become just like its competition. Perhaps it is time for Nintendo to focus some of its marketing efforts on reminding us how different it is from the competition, on reminding us that its purpose is

singular and its focus is, and always has been, on crafting excellent games. Perhaps it is time for Nintendo to publicly distance itself from its competition not just in its actions and output, but in its messaging.

I know next to nothing about marketing, so I should remind the reader before wrapping up that I'm completely unqualified to make these kinds of suggestions. I haven't focus tested any of these ideas, and my amateur, armchair analysis of Nintendo's messaging is just that. But I do love Nintendo and its games for many of the same reasons I'm so happy with Apple's products, and I'd love to see Nintendo more boldly advertise its unique corporate culture and love for games.



Above/Below: Nintendo at E3 2013. The leadership at Nintendo truly love video games (and making themselves look ridiculous).



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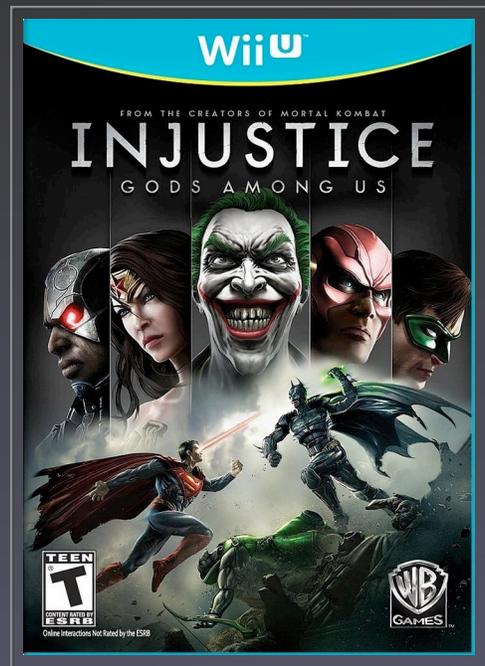
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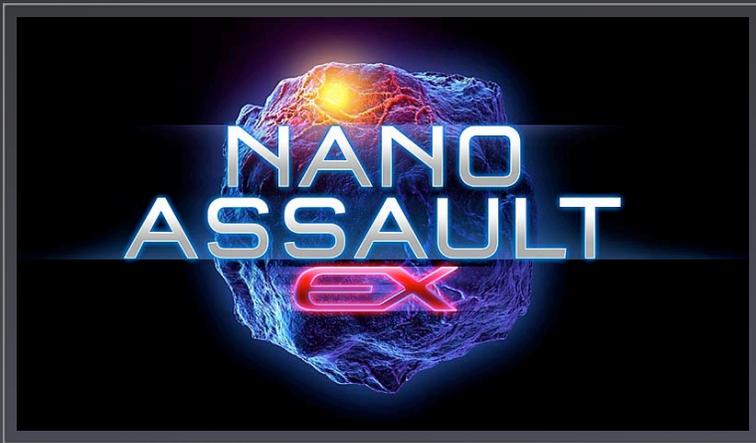
REVIEWS

Animal Crossing: New Leaf (3DS)

- FUN!** Absolutely packed with content, perhaps more than any Nintendo game ever
- FUN!** Brilliant localization, filled with humor, strangeness, and heartwarming sincerity
- FUN!** StreetPass functionality is well-implemented and useful
- FUN!** From the visuals to the music, the game absolutely oozes charm
- FUN!** Can be played for three hours or ten minutes and you'll still feel like you accomplished something
- FUN!** Time-unlocked features mean New Leaf continues to introduce new content, weeks and months down the road
- FUN!** Lots of ways for artistic folks to shine, and QR codes allow them to share their designs with other players
- FUN!** The ability to post screenshots to Twitter and Tumblr adds an extra layer of social depth to the experience
- UNFUN!** We experienced some connectivity issues in both local and online play
- UNFUN!** The game may feel a bit too familiar to those who have played all of the previous iterations

Injustice: Gods Among Us (Wii U)

- FUN!** Fully realized story mode- the best in the genre
- FUN!** Very accessible gameplay for those who are not hardcore fighting game players
- FUN!** Quite a few layers of hidden depth in the fighting system for those who wish to delve deeper
- FUN!** Unique and inspired interpretations of the DC characters
- FUN!** Wii U version runs smoothly and features off-TV play
- FUN!** A great deal of bonus content, unlockable via the leveling component that permeates every aspect of the game
- FUN!** While the concept of a superhero fighting game is not a new one, it still resonates, and this is the best realization of it
- UNFUN!** At the time of this writing, Injustice on Wii U lacks the lobby system of the other versions
- UNFUN!** Darker art design and story may not be for everyone
- UNFUN!** Wii U version received none of the pre-release DLC, and it's uncertain if it will receive all of the post-release content



REVIEWS

Nano Assault EX (3DS eShop)

- FUN!** One of the best looking, smoothest playing, games on 3DS
- FUN!** Life Force (NES) + Metroid-Prime-title-screen aesthetic totally works
- FUN!** Excellent and fitting electronic soundtrack
- FUN!** A variety of game play modes
- FUN!** Unlockable art and music can be purchased with in-game currency you earn or play coins
- FUN!** Great boss encounters from the classic school of game design
- FUN!** Circle Pad Pro support, if you are so inclined
- FUN!** A full retail game experience at a downloadable title price
- FUN!** Looks great in 3D - one of the games worth the trouble of turning the slider up
- UNFUN!** May be a bit too challenging for some; multiple difficulty levels would have been nice

Shin Megami Tensei Devil Summoner: Soul Hackers (3DS)

- FUN!** New casual difficulty option is a welcome addition to those intimidated by the challenge in previous entries
- FUN!** Fantastic localization makes you want to read every bit of text
- FUN!** A game longed for by fans, but previously never available in English since its original 1997 Sega Saturn release
- FUN!** Crazy cool/unique world and aesthetic still feels fresh
- FUN!** Touchscreen map is a blessing
- FUN!** The game has a cool use for your Play Coins
- FUN!** The then-crazy, mid-90s prediction of the digital future feels strangely prescient today
- FUN!** Awesome synth rock soundtrack totally jams
- FUN!** Striking and attractive character designs that you would expect from the series
- UNFUN!** Textures and dungeon designs remind you that this is, at its core, still a 1997 mid-budget Saturn dungeon crawler



REVIEWS

Bit.Trip Presents...

Runner 2: Future Legend of
Rhythm Alien
(Wii U eShop)

- FUN!** Bite-size levels make the game easy to pick up and play for a few minutes here and there
- FUN!** Smooth addition of new game mechanics every few levels
- FUN!** "Retro" levels feature a super cool aesthetic
- FUN!** Excellent leaderboard integration available after each level
- FUN!** Off TV play exclusive to Wii U makes the addictive game play that much more accessible
- FUN!** Unlockable costumes and characters
- FUN!** Branching paths and secret exits add to replay value
- FUN!** Charles Martinet!
- UNFUN!** Divisive art style unappealing to some
- UNFUN!** High difficulty level later in the game may be too frustrating for some

The Starship Damrey
(3DS eShop)

- FUN!** Well-written
- FUN!** Telling
- FUN!** You
- FUN!** Anything
- FUN!** Else
- FUN!** Would
- FUN!** Be
- FUN!** A
- FUN!** Disservice
- FUN!** A memorable experience
- UNFUN!** However brief

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