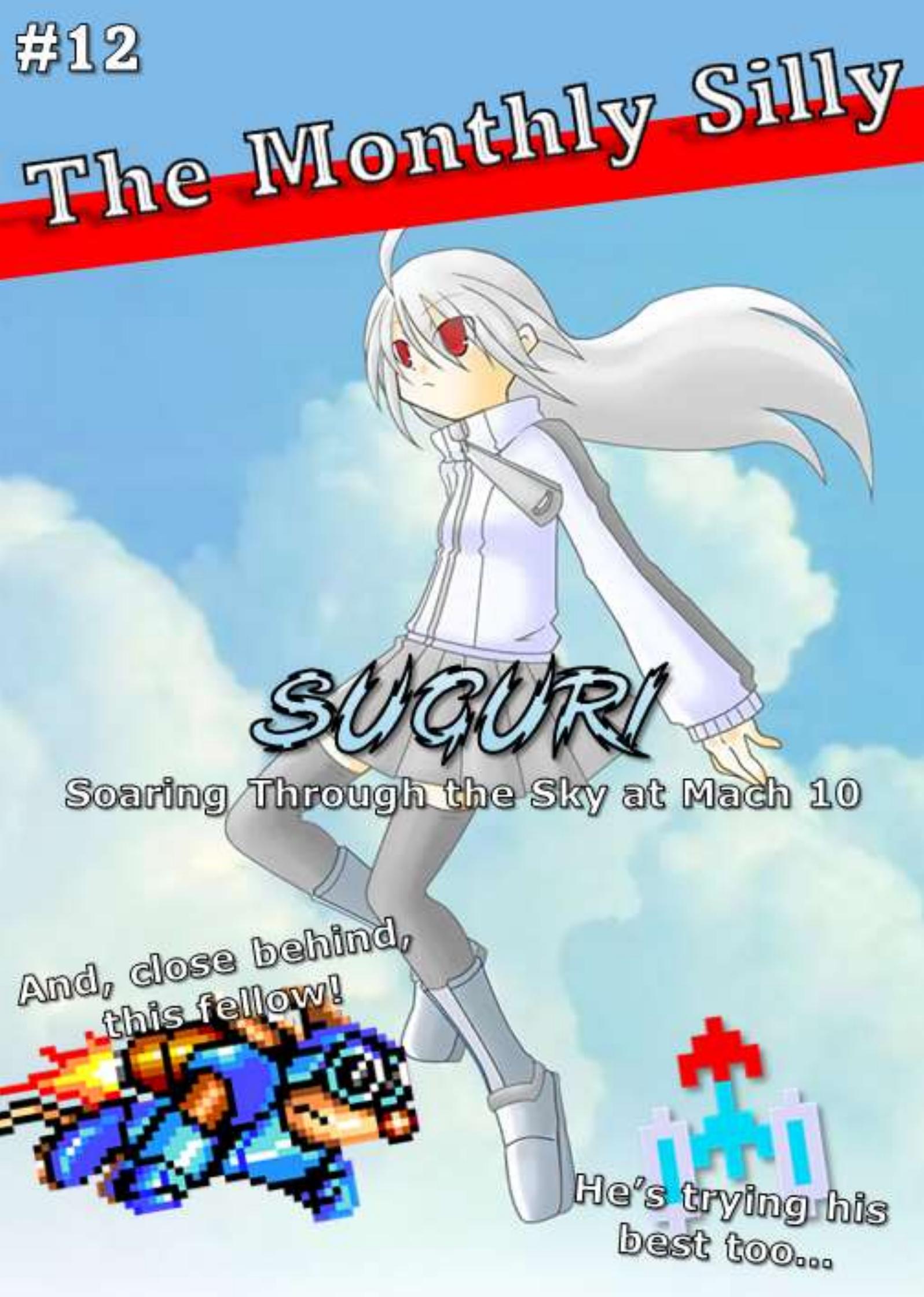


#12

The Monthly Silly



SUGURI

Soaring Through the Sky at Mach 10

And, close behind,
this fellow!

He's trying his
best too...

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13 – Lightning Round

New segment type where I review lots of different games in a short burst. Used for games where I don’t have enough to say about them to write a full review on them.

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Silly Spotlight 1

スグリ SUGURI



Suguri is a side-scrolling bullet hell originally released for PC in 2005. Gameplay has you flying through seven different stages as the titular Suguri, tasked with stopping a mysterious alien invasion, and it's a bit insane with it. Enemies have two different types of projectile – we'll call them “beam” and “missile” types for now – and both have to be dealt with in different ways. The game gives you a Hyper Dash, which can be held for as long as

you want and can completely pass through beams, but shooting brings you to a complete halt, so it's far from perfect, and missiles can still hit you during Hyper Dash. Although you can shoot missiles to destroy them, Suguri aims at enemies automatically, so this isn't a reliable strategy for getting rid of all of them.

I love this system. It creates a great emphasis on quick decision-making, forcing you to choose between shooting to defeat enemies and clear out missiles, or using your dash to evade beams, and it's helped by the game's weapon system. By playing through the game, you'll unlock various weapons that each do different things; some are quick shots ideal for players who want to move around a lot, others emphasize high damage or a wide range but force you to stop in place for a long time, there's a good bit of variety here. At the start of a stage, you can bring two weapons into battle, and it's always fun to experiment with which weapon combinations work best.



The bosses are also all excellent in this regard, each of their bullet patterns going a long way in expressing their personality; calm, tactical scientist Kyoko uses traps and slow-moving barriers to limit your movement, battle-hungry Kae uses lots of sudden bursts of power and fast close-range attacks, it's all great, and helps to make each one stand out within the short amount of time they get in the story.



Speaking of the story, it's mostly nothing special. For the most part, it's just a straightforward "bad guys want to take over, go stop them", more of an excuse for gameplay to happen than anything, but it's fine for what it is. It gets significantly better in the last stage, which ends up feeling oddly heartfelt by comparison, so it's worthy of some praise, but I obviously can't elaborate much there.

Lastly, I want to talk about the game's presentation, which I personally really like. It's very obviously budget-y, it being a doujin game released at Comiket originally, but there's something very charming about the game's whole style that I really like. There's not much to it, but it has soul. The soundtrack is also great, and although some of it wasn't really my thing personally, I really enjoyed a lot of it, with the stage 1, 4 and 7 themes as well as Kyoko and Kae's battle themes being particular favourites of mine.



Suguri is a fun game. It's fast, hectic and endlessly challenging, and despite only being made up of seven short stages, manages to feel replayable enough that if you're the type of person it's made for, you'll inevitably end up getting countless hours out of it. It's a very difficult game, even on the easiest difficulty, but it never feels cheap or unfair; there's the main arcade mode that boots you out if you die even once, but the game still offers you a level select option

if you just want to play through each level and see what it has to offer, and the individual levels themselves never feel cheaply designed or like insurmountable challenges. With its high difficulty, short length and unashamedly DIY presentation, Suguri won't be for everyone, but if you can appreciate it for what it is, you'll definitely love it.

Final Score	
Gameplay - 9	7
Story - 6	
Look/Sound - 7	

Silly Spotlight 2

Diver's Dream

I'm not sure how I feel about this one. Diver's Dream is a diving game developed by Konami and released for the PS1 in 1998, and has you searching the seabed of a calm seaside village for the wreckage of the Great Matilda, a ship said to contain untold wealth.

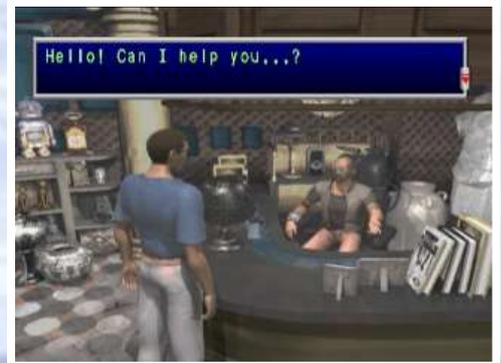


The first few stages are wonderful. The game has you exploring through beautiful, maze-like underwater caverns, accompanied by an excellent atmospheric soundtrack. You have a limited amount of air you can replenish at certain openings, as well as a health bar that can be depleted by enemy attacks, both of which can be restored by items which can be either found in the caverns or bought at the shop in the town. Additionally,

you'll also find lots of treasures along the way, which don't do anything but can be sold for varying amounts of money.

The whole thing has a really solid gameplay loop to it.

Treasures respawn once you exit a stage, and you can only carry a certain amount of items and treasures, which presents an interesting decision: leave now, sell your treasures, buy better items and equipment and try again, or keep pushing forwards in an attempt to clear the stage but risk losing what you've found? It's basically the structure of a dungeon-crawler RPG but applied to deep-sea diving, which I find really interesting.



The moment-to-moment gameplay is great, too; lesser lifeforms would describe it as "slow", "clunky" and "outdated", but that's the point. The slow movement enhances the calm, relaxing atmosphere, helping make gameplay feel more thoughtful and deliberate, and the somewhat awkward movement adds an extra layer of challenge. Learning how to move around is itself a skill that needs to be developed, which feels fitting for a game about this sort of thing. Overall, the tricky resource management of the limited air and life metres combined with the excellent soundtrack and slow pace creates an experience that feels both tense and relaxing in a way very few games can match.



I do unfortunately have my problems with the game, though, and most of my praise for it sadly disappears after the early stages. About a third of the way through, you're tasked with rescuing a trapped diver from an old ship. This stage is strange, but good; unlike the previous underwater caves, this is an old, rusted man-made ship, and the design reflects that, with much tighter corridors and locked doors you need to find the keys for. The sound design reflects

the change too, being much more eerie and ominous, almost like whatever lingering spirits might be present are watching you, just out of sight. It's not the best, the game's use of tank controls makes the sharp right-angled turns feel much more annoying to deal with than the gradual curves of the earlier caves, but for a one-time thing with a really distinct atmosphere compared to the rest of the game, it's worth it.

Except, it's not just this one time. Immediately after this stage, you're thrust straight into the wreckage of the Great Matilda, which is where you'll be spending the rest of the game. The dark, oppressive atmosphere of the previous stage made for an interesting change of pace, and the sharp right-angled turns were a bit annoying but not unbearable, but having this be the



majority of the game is another thing entirely. The dreariness of the shipwreck setting goes from intriguing to just plain unpleasant, and the game's somewhat awkward movement just really isn't built for this much tighter environment.



Diver's Dream is a hard one to rank. The gameplay and movement feels perfectly tailored to the early cave stages, but becomes a fair bit more annoying later on, although it's still generally tolerable. Likewise, the presentation and especially the soundtrack in those early stages is incredible, even if the town is comprised entirely of somewhat strange, off-putting

still images of 3D renders (forgivable), but the dull, dreary dark greys and browns of the shipwrecks and equally off-putting music brings the rest down quite a bit. I suppose it makes sense to rank those aspects somewhere in the middle, then, but that doesn't really do justice to either the game's early greatness or the slog it later becomes. Oh well, number rankings can only convey so much anyway. Diver's Dream: it is what it is, I suppose.

Final Score	
Gameplay - 7	6
Story - 5	
Look/Sound - 6	

Kill Your Friends!

JoJo's All-Star Battle R Bizarre Adventure

JoJo's Bizarre Adventure: All-Star Battle R is a 3D fighting game released for all major platforms in 2022. Now, when I say "3D fighting game", you probably imagine one of those cash-grab arena fighters, right? Wrong, this one's much weirder. Also better.

The "3D" here is much more akin to something like Tekken or Soul Calibur, in that it takes place in a 3D environment, but aside from the ability to sidestep attacks, controls and overall gameplay are mostly 2D. I really like this! JoJo characters themselves tend to be a lot more grounded than your usual anime cast; they get lots of wacky abilities from their Stands, sure, but in most cases they basically have the speed and durability of real people, so this structure works well to preserve that sense of them being "basically just people" while also keeping the movement from feeling too restricted.



Speaking of characters, my god there's a lot of them. The game launched with 51 characters, with 9 more being added later on (2 as free updates, 7 as paid DLC), and they're nearly all excellent. With how creative the Stand abilities in JoJo can get, especially later on, the characters were the one thing this game absolutely needed to get right, and the majority are great. Plenty come with entire mechanics just dedicated to them, like Abbacchio's Moody Blues replaying his previous actions around him automatically, the unique horse-riding mechanic of the Part 7 cast or Diavolo being able to [___], and for a JoJo game, I wouldn't have accepted anything less. Unfortunately, the way the game's massive cast is divided isn't exactly even; most of the roster consists of characters from parts 3, 4 and 5, with parts 6 and especially 7 and 8 left with barely anything. 1 and 2 don't get much either, but they had smaller casts to begin with and also aren't very good, so I don't mind it as much there, but it strikes me as a bit unfortunate that the later parts didn't get much, even as DLC later on.



Really fun, occasionally very complicated characters aside, the game also features a whole host of different system mechanics, some of which are good! The big one is the new Assist mechanic, which lets you pick a second character you can call in for an assist. Each one has a certain number of “offence” and “defence” assists; offence is an attack, defence is a burst

that stops the enemy’s combo. The offence ones are fine, but the defence ones can sometimes knock the opponent down, giving you time to set up your own attacks; you do have to time it right, but the ability to suddenly say “right, my turn now” instead of burst being a simple reset to neutral still strikes me as far too powerful.

Speaking of annoying defensive mechanics, if you block just as your opponent attacks, you’ll do a Stylish Guard, which has you dodge out of the way and lets you act instantly. I hate this. In general I can’t stand defensive mechanics that let you punish an attack that should in theory not be punishable even on block, but the fact that attempting Stylish Guard doesn’t even cost metre and “good timing” is the only thing you need for it to work bothers me even more. I honestly can’t really articulate why, this sort of thing in fighting games just bothers me.



I might have my small issues with how it plays, but how the whole thing looks and feels is excellent. The game’s art style, with its thick black outlines on everything, heavy use of emphasis lines and occasional use of coloured manga panels for in-game graphics perfectly captures the essence of JoJo as a series, and the moment-to-moment animation is consistently

excellent. A lot of other anime games seem content to slap on a bit of cel-shading and call it a day, but ASBR does a much better job of recreating that signature JoJo manga “look” in a 3D environment, and it’s so much better for it. Sound design is also perfect; great soundtrack aside, the sound effects are especially worthy of praise to me, as they give every single hit this really dense feeling of weight behind it that makes everything feel all the more satisfying.

I really like ASBR. It feels like the perfect encapsulation of everything I’d want from a JoJo fighting game, and even though I have my small issues with a few mechanics, it’s still a great time overall. Lots of anime games end up feeling like cheap cash grabs, but it’s clear to me that this one was made with a real appreciation for the source material.

Final Score	
Gameplay - 9	8
Story - 4	
Look/Sound - 10	

Easy Emulation

ROCKET KNIGHT ADVENTURES



Rocket Knight Adventures is a 2D platformer released for the Sega Mega Drive in 1993 where you play as Sparkster, an ambiguous creature thing. The game's main mechanic is the Rocket Dash, an 8-way dash that sends Sparkster flying across the screen and can be used by holding the attack button for a bit and then releasing. This is fun! He go nyoom.

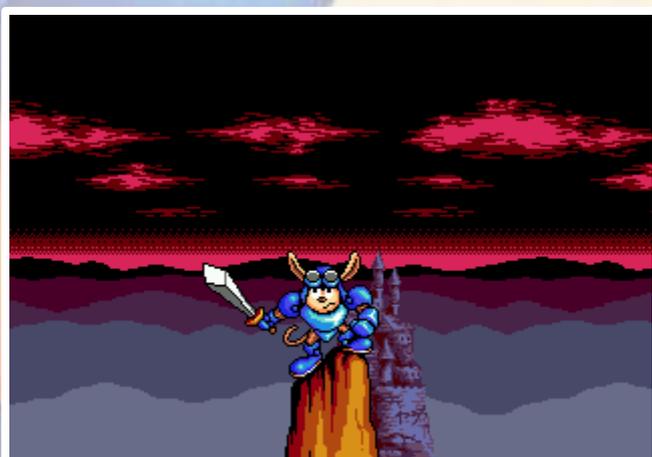
Ok, on a more serious note, I really like this mechanic.

The Rocket Dash has full invincibility and also damages enemies on contact, so it's a powerful option, but the distance it travels is huge, so if you use it without thinking, it's easy to end up in a bad spot. It's just well-balanced enough that you can't just throw it out whenever, but not to the point where you're expected to have fully memorized each level's entire layout before you can have any fun with it. Being familiar with level layouts helps, but it's not a requirement to get the most out of the game, unlike a certain other series of Mega Drive platformers with an emphasis on speed.

The Rocket Dash is also important in boss fights, too. Like I said, it grants full invincibility on use, so it's great for dodging or even going through bosses' attacks, and getting good at charging it up and releasing at just the right time is crucial to getting anywhere. Speaking of the bosses, they're really good! They all manage to feel like unique, distinct challenges that help to keep a sense of variety throughout the game, which is good given that my experience of boss fights in a lot of other games (mostly platformers and especially action titles) has been mostly negative. I think the Rocket Dash is a big part of why this game's bosses work; rather than feeling like a distraction from the much more enjoyable main gameplay, they still revolve around the same core tools, you're just finding new ways to apply them. Granted, the bosses aren't all great here, there's one particular one at the end of stage 3 I can't stand, and the final boss is a bit tedious too, but the rest are all great.



My experience with this game was a bit different to how I usually approach these. The game uses a limited lives/continues structure, where you go right back to the start once you run out and have no way of saving your progress. Now, my previous mindset would have been that lives are “Bad Game Design” and I’d have just used save states at the start of each stage anyway, but I decided to play this one as intended, and... yeah it was fine actually, not sure what I was so fussed about. I’m still not a huge fan of the structure, I won’t lie, but for a game as short as this, it’s honestly fine for it to work this way. Honestly I’m slowly being convinced that concrete rules around “bad game design” are either fake or at best greatly exaggerated, the lives structure works for a game like this where it’s short enough to be easily beatable in one go and the core mechanics benefit from repeat playthroughs.



I haven’t mentioned it yet, but the presentation here is also great. Sparkster is really expressive and well-animated, the stage environments look amazing, and the game also features a handful of cutscenes between stages. The whole thing has this really fun, silly cartoon appeal to it that ends up elevating the experience even further, making each new stage feel inherently exciting as you look forward to what the game might throw at you next. Unfortunately the soundtrack’s not all

that great, with most songs ranging from okayish to downright painful, but the excellent visual presentation more than makes up for it.

Rocket Knight Adventures is great fun. It’s occasionally a bit annoying in some parts (that fuckass airship level my beloved), and it doesn’t do a whole lot that’s all that unique or revolutionary, but what it does do, it does really well. Fun platforming, a simple story elevated by some really fun cutscenes, consistently great visuals, it’s just a solidly above average time. It’s unlikely to be anyone’s favourite, but if you’re looking for a fun game you’ll probably get through in about a week, you can’t really go wrong here.

Final Score	
Gameplay - 8	7
Story - 6	
Look/Sound - 7	

Shame Corner

SONIC™ COLOURS

All the way back in Issue #6, I wrote a Shame Corner review of Metroid Dread, gave it a relatively high 5/10 and said I'd "ran out of games I truly hated". That was a lie! I forgot about this one! Sonic Colours was released in 2010 for the Nintendo Wii, and spineless journoids the world over loved it.

You play as Sonic (just Sonic), and need to go and thwart Eggman's evil plan to make an evil space amusement park in space. Colours represents a shift away from the much better, more in-depth stories with plenty of characters and moving parts of the 2000s-era Sonic games, to simply having the story



be an excuse for gameplay to happen. I hate this! The Sonic series has such a great cast of memorable, amazing characters, and Colours is the exact point where Sega decided it'd be easier to just not use any of them.



I called Colours' story an "excuse for gameplay to happen", but not content for its story to be a mere nothingburger, Sega decided it needed to be abysmally painful, too! The story being both bad and utterly nothing is the only impressive thing this game does. Tails is also in this game, but rather than

doing anything of use, he's exclusively here as an excuse for Sonic can spout off cringe, annoying one-liners with someone. The writing in this game is utterly horrendous; Afraid to ever commit to anything or tell its already nonexistent story with a modicum of sincerity, the game has Sonic constantly joking about annoying nonsense that doesn't make any goddamn sense, as if to say, "hey, we know this is dumb too, you don't have to worry". "Of course you find it cringe, you're not the target age demographic", I hear you say! Well, guess what, I thought this was cringe when I was a child too! No joke, I remember being literally 7 years old and finding this obnoxious then too, I'd even try to make sure my parents weren't anywhere nearby whenever a cutscene started up so I wouldn't be seen watching something so awful.

Looking back, this game was my first exposure to the emotion of “cringe”, and I think it’s impressive to be able to make a 7-year-old child feel such a thing. Some marginally more respectable Colours enjoyers will say things like “well, fine, the story and writing are bad, but that doesn’t matter if the game’s fun!” Well, it does matter, it’s a Sonic game, but that doesn’t help when the gameplay is also bad too.

Sonic Colours, despite what many say, is not a 3D Sonic game. It is a very bad 2D Sonic game doing an even worse impression of a 3D one. Each world consists of one fairly okayish stage which is clearly where the budget went, and then 5-6 other much worse stages that are just gimmicky 2D platforming slop. I generally don’t think Sonic works in 2D, but even by those standards these stages are terrible. Sonic games are supposed to feel fast, but these are anything but; requiring an inordinate amount of patience for slow, precise jump timing, they feel more like bad Mario



levels than even half-decent Sonic stages.

And, to be honest, even the designated “good stage” in each world is often mediocre at best. Sonic Colours features the “Boost Gauge” seen in a lot of other much better Sonic games, which allows you to spend a limited resource in order to suddenly speed up and crash through enemies. Usually, this is fun! Colours



has the worst implementation of it I’ve experienced. Rather than gaining Boost naturally, you basically only get it from designated “White Wisps”, meaning the game is much more controlling over when and where you can boost. Adding to this, you also run out of Boost extremely quickly; rather than a fun bit of resource management that adds to your sense of speed like in other games, in Colours, you’re basically only meant to boost in the One Singular Telegraphed Spot Where The Game Wants You To Boost. Functionally this mechanic might as well not be there, it adds absolutely nothing.

Oh, there’s also the Wisps, I guess. Yeah, those are these weird extra powerup things, each world has a different one. They’re fine, I guess. No strong feelings either way. Oh well. Anyway, Sonic Colours is an abysmal experience. With its cringe-inducing writing, a pathetic, railroaded excuse of a boost mechanic and some of the slowest platforming I’ve seen in any Sonic game, Colours represents everything wrong with the 2010s era of Sonic design.

The journoids loved it at the time for being a “return to form” away from all the aspects that actually made Sonic good, so of course, Sega decided after this that every game for the next decade should just be Colours again, and I hated every second of it. At least the music’s still good, though, it took them another 7 or 8 years to figure out how to ruin that aspect of the series.

Final Score	
Gameplay - 1	2
Story - 1	
Look/Sound - 6	

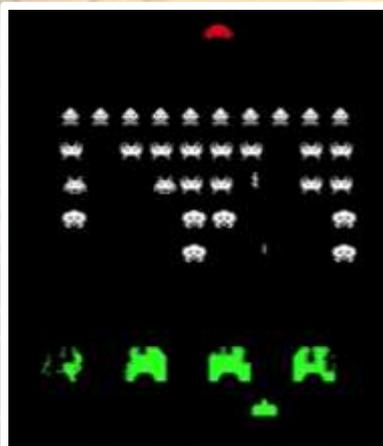
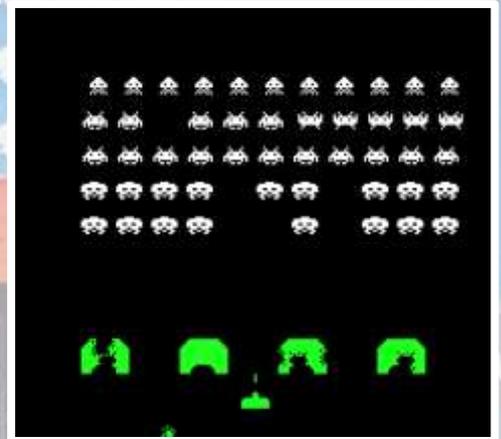
The Ancient Ones 1



SPACE INVADERS

Space Invaders is the first good video game. We all basically know how it plays so I won't go over the basics, but for 1978 there's a surprising amount of depth here that makes me think it really had no business being as fun as it is.

First, the shields! I love these. You can hide behind them to avoid attacks from enemy aliens, but having them present also makes it harder for you to shoot back at them. Of course, you can shoot holes through them, but this carries the risk of aliens shooting you through those same holes in return; so, you can either try to preserve the shields, you can make tiny little incisions in them which aliens are unlikely to shoot through but require precise positioning to make use of, or you can just say "fuck it" and destroy them entirely.



The way the aliens move is also genius. You can die in two ways in this game, either by getting shot or by the aliens moving down onto your ship. They move horizontally as a block, and each time an alien reaches the edge, they all move down by one space and start moving horizontally in the opposite direction. This makes it so that the best way to deal with them is to take out the left or rightmost column first, then move to the next, and so on. However, doing this means you have to put yourself in danger more often, being often less able to rely on the shields for protection, so to keep getting away with it, you have to start destroying the shields yourself eventually.

Space Invaders is a great game. It's simple, yes, and honestly pretty easy and repetitive by today's standards, but it still takes a good bit of figuring out to get good at, which is quite unusual for the time.

Aside from single-handedly creating the vertical shooter genre, it's also a game that manages to feel well ahead of its time in many ways. The mileage you'll get out of it today is limited, yes, but certainly far more than most other games of its time.

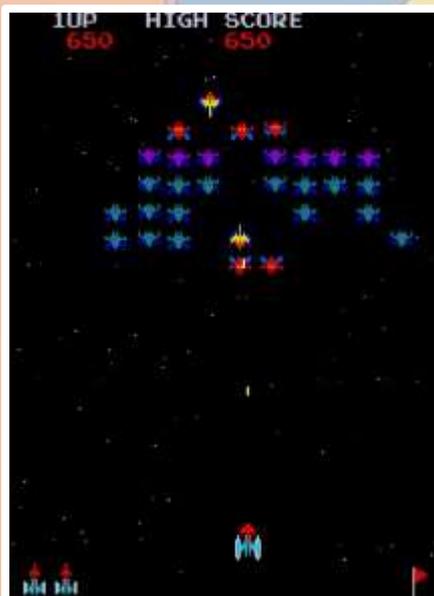
Final Score	
Gameplay - 7	8
Innovation - 10	
Look/Sound - 5	

The Ancient Ones 2

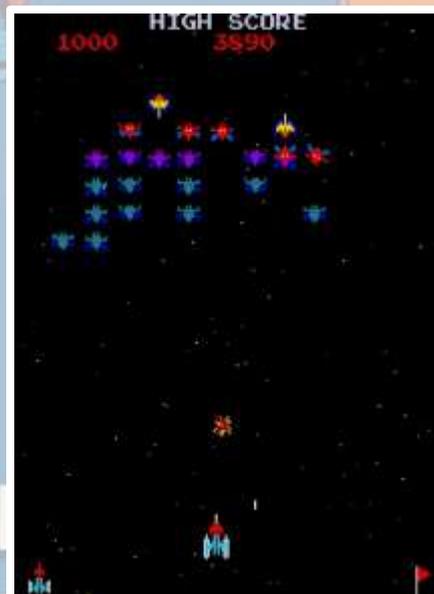


And if you need proof of how impressive Space Invaders is, Galaxian! Released a year later in 1979, Galaxian looked at Space Invaders and thought, “what if it was worse?”

Honestly, it’s easier to talk about what Galaxian doesn’t do than what it does. The shields are gone, and the aliens don’t try to come down towards you anymore, but that’s fine, most games like this don’t have those features. So, what does it add to make up for the loss of strategic depth? I mean... not much? The main thing it has going for it is that it’s a lot more visually



impressive than Space Invaders, which is fair enough, the stars zooming by in the distance are a nice touch, but that’s kind of it. See, marketing your game on “woah impressive graphics” without doing anything else noteworthy isn’t a new thing at all, Galaxian was doing it all the way back in the 70s!



Ok I lied, it does have one new gameplay addition. Yes, now the aliens will sometimes start zooming around annoyingly, making them an utter pain to actually hit! Your projectile travels slowly enough that, when their movements are this unpredictable, you

basically just have to shoot at random and hope you hit something. So, I suppose Galaxian does do something new, it’s also marginally more annoying to play as well!

Galaxian’s only value is as a comparison piece to Space Invaders. It’s easy to take what Space Invaders does for granted, but looking at what passed for a success at that time puts it into perspective how clever that game’s mechanics were. Galaxian, a game directly inspired by Space Invaders, completely failed to understand what made its predecessor work, resulting in an outright inferior copy that was maybe a bit nicer to look at, but still managed to stand out enough to be well-remembered even to this day. When you see where the bar was back then, Space Invaders turning out as good as it did really makes it clear how entirely deserved that game’s extreme success and popularity were.

Final Score	
Gameplay - 3	3
Innovation - 2	
Look/Sound - 6	

Lightning Round

Lightning Round #1

Welcome to Lightning Round, a new segment where I review lots of games in one go! Often there are games I want to talk about, but when I go to write about them, I realize I don't actually have that much to say, so I figured I'd put them all in this one segment. No clue if I'll ever do another one of these, but here we go!

Klonoa: Phantasy Reverie Series

I hate this thing. Fuckass awful ass remaster that completely butchers the entire character and personality of both games it tries and fails to remaster. DtP being fucked up I get because the PS1 vibes are harder to replicate in HD, but how do you make a PS2 game look worse? It's so oversaturated and awful and I hate it and sometimes characters start glowing for some reason???. The Klonoa games are wonderful aesthetic experiences and PRS captures none of that. So bad it became the catalyst for my current "never play remakes over the original" mentality. Avoid at all costs, 1/10.



Ristar

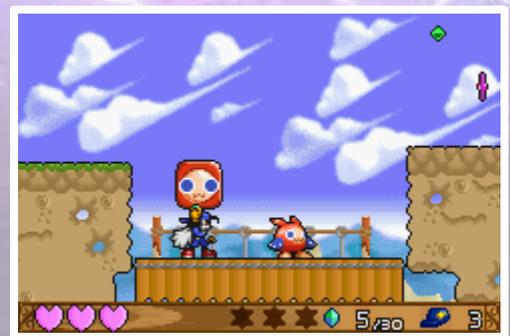
Now for some positivity! Ristar is a wonderful little platformer with fun gameplay, really nice environments and a fantastic soundtrack. Unfortunately there's not much to dissect about it, everything it does just works. 8/10.

51 Worldwide Games

Fun, small thing on the Switch that acts as a collection of 51 classic games from around the world, like Chess, Hanafuda, Backgammon and some more obscure picks like Mancala and Carrom. Spiritually a Wii game, although with mildly worse presentation than it would likely have had if it was on that console. Good fun, well worth buying, but doesn't do enough interesting for a review by virtue of being a collection of pre-existing games. 6/10.

Klonoa: Empire of Dreams

Pretty alright spinoff Klonoa platformer on the GBA. Fun gameplay, decent enough presentation, but doesn't really do anything that its successor Dream Champ Tournament didn't do better. And seeing as I already reviewed DCT in Issue #5, I don't see any reason to talk about EoD, given how identically the two play and how much more interesting DCT is. 6.5/10.





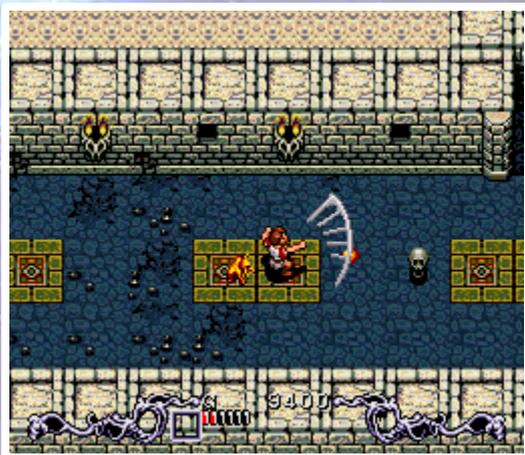
Klonoa 2: Lunatea's Veil

One of the two games Phantasy Reverie Series utterly butchered! Lunatea's Veil is the sequel to the earlier Door to Phantomile, and expands on that game's mechanical ideas wonderfully while providing some truly spectacular art direction (especially in the environments), a great soundtrack and oddly enough, a large amount of character development for Klonoa himself. I do actually have a lot to say about this

game, but all of what I want to say would involve heavy spoilers for both it and Door to Phantomile. Regardless, though, I absolutely love it. 9/10, my favourite game on this list.

Bujingai

Wuxia-themed PS2 hack-and-slash with some insane visual sauce which is unfortunately a baby ass piss easy ass baby game for babies. You can just mash the regular attack button to deal with most enemies, and it even features a "clash" mechanic where your character will auto-parry most attacks up to a certain point. Granted, I only got 3 stages in, and the one boss fight I got to seemed relatively promising, so maybe it gets more fun and challenging later on, but it's so boring I really don't want to bother finding out. There's not much to say here, it's just not very good. 4/10, carried by being cool to look at.



Brain Lord

Saved this one for last because it's the only one I could see myself maybe reviewing in the future. Zelda-esque SNES dungeon crawler with an occasional emphasis on puzzles that's fun to play, has a great soundtrack and is also very nice to look at. There's a really fun selection of weapons that all have their own strengths and weaknesses, a variety of spells to unlock, the core combat's a great time. I fully planned on reviewing it, until I got stuck on a dungeon, put the game down for maybe 2 or 3 weeks, and

then realized when I came back that I had no idea how to progress. If I ever decide to replay it from start to finish, highly likely I'll write about it then, but for now I don't really like the idea of reviewing a game I only got through half of (unless it's Shame Corner, anything goes there). The story's a bit nothing, sadly, but that goes for everything else here aside from Lunatea's Veil too; lots of games don't have much of a story, which unfortunately leaves me with even less to talk about. 7/10, might be higher or lower once the potential future review comes out.

The Yap Trap

Why I Don't Like

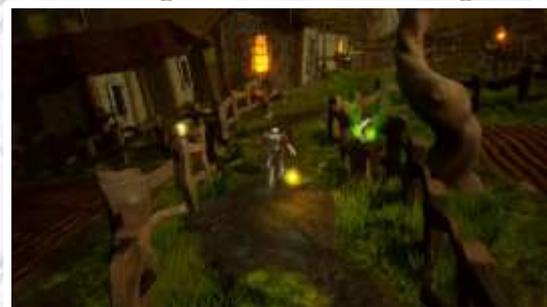
Remasters

I mentioned earlier that *Klonoa: Phantasy Reverie Series* was “so bad it became the catalyst for my current “never play remakes over the original” mentality”, but I'd like to elaborate more on why I think that way.

Ok, I don't hate all remasters, just the way people tend to approach them. Some, I think, are quite good; the PS4 *MediEvil* remaster, for example, is probably my favourite. It plays largely the same as the PS1 original, but with an all-new visual style that, while it's still a bit



of a different vibe and I ultimately prefer the original anyway, is still really charming in its own way, and if someone wanted to play this version instead, I wouldn't discourage them from doing so. But, even though I love this remaster, I still said I prefer the PS1 version



anyway, so what's up with that?

Ultimately, I view games as a form of art, and believe they should be treated with the respect that entails. True art, good or bad, is like a personalized time capsule, a window into the soul of its creator at the particular moment of its creation, and this is the

problem with remasters for me. Even the good ones are diluted, at best a mix of their creators' past and present souls and at worst being further muddled by the input of those who were never involved in the originals. This is different from remakes, new retellings of old games that are much more able to act as coherent artistic expressions of new developers; accurate, “faithful” remasters are simply a less pure experience.

But, I'm actually not 100% opposed to their existence either. They might not be as good, and for older games you really should just learn to emulate, but not everyone always has the option to do so. With my beloved *Phantasy Reverie Series*, for example, I dropped its version of *Lunatea's Veil* about 15



minutes in, went out and bought a physical copy of the original and played that on my PS2, since it's a famously annoying game to try to emulate. However, not everyone has a PS2, or will be lucky enough to be able to find a copy of the original, so I can acknowledge PRS as a “fine” substitute if you have no other options. Really it should be much more normal to just port the old games as they are to modern hardware, but it's not, so it is what it is.

No, my issue comes when people try to treat remasters as replacements for the originals. People will give a variety of excuses for this, all equally undeserving of respect but some pretending to be more sophisticated than others. A common one is that old games are “outdated” in how they look or play, and so should be “brought up to a modern standard” by being remastered. Absurd. Would you say that clearly, the art on the right is “bad and outdated” because it doesn’t use advanced digital techniques to achieve a more realistic look? Is it too hard for modern audiences to appreciate, does it need to be brought up to a modern standard? And, if it were, would you advocate that the new, modern remaster be treated as the only true, valid version? Is anyone who continues to appreciate the original “missing out” on “crucial quality of life features”? Yes, obviously getting used to the way certain older games look or play will take time, in the same way you have to “get used to” watching old movies in black and white, but that’s not an excuse to demand that any and all rough edges be sanded off so your “media” can be more easily “consumed”.



Another common one is the idea that these old games were “held back by the hardware of the time” and that remasters are actually better because they’re able to be more authentic versions, free from the technical limitations and design conventions that defined their originals. Nonsense again. Old games don’t have less value

because they were limited by technology; if anything, I’d argue that the limitations they had to work around often defined these games. The fog in Silent Hill, the slower, puzzle-based approach of the GBA Klonoa platformers, these are games that were very intentionally designed around their limited hardware. People will go on about how “limitation breeds creativity” all day, but then basically say “except for when it’s technology, then every aspect of a 15+ year old game’s design is an error that needs to be fixed”. Old games aren’t modern games waiting to escape the confines of their times, they just are what they are.

Likewise, the “dated design conventions” thing doesn’t hold much water for me either. All art is influenced by the cultural context it’s surrounded by, including modern games; it’s true that if, say, Mario 64 came out today, it’d probably have an easy mode where you always respawn at the exact spot where you died, but is that not just this newer hypothetical game being influenced by current ideas of what “good design” entails? And, can you really say it would have been a definitively “better” game for having that feature? I could write a whole other Yap Trap about my hatred for these “quality of life” features that just make engaging with a game’s mechanics completely optional, but that aside, I just find it weird when people act like developers used to have no agency whatsoever in adding these “dated design elements” to their games. No, every choice they made was completely deliberate, and to claim you’ve “fixed” these “dated” old games is an insult to their work.