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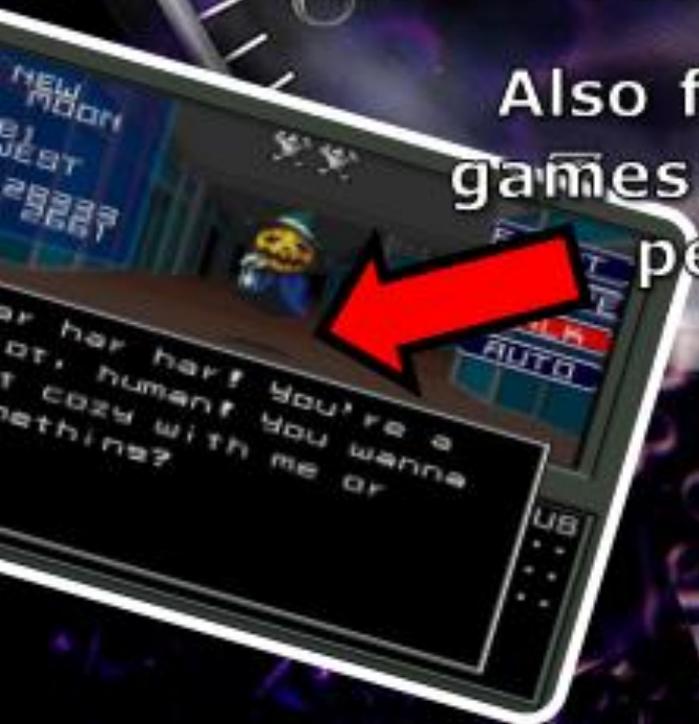
# The Monthly Silly



## Sonic's Past and Present

How the blue rat lost his soul

Also featuring:  
games for-insane  
people!



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# Silly Spotlight 1



Sonic Adventure 2, released in 2001 for the Dreamcast by Sega and later ported to the Gamecube in 2002, is the sequel to 1998's Sonic Adventure, a game which I should probably cover here at some point as well. It's split up into two "hero" and "dark" stories, each having the player alternate between using three different characters in different levels (Sonic, Tails and Knuckles for the Hero Story, and Shadow, Eggman and Rouge for the Dark Story).



Already, this premise is one of the main issues most

people have with the game; Sonic and Shadow's stages are fast-paced 3D platforming levels, about what you'd expect from a Sonic game, but Tails and Eggman are confined to a slow



mech suit and have gameplay more based around shooting down enemies, while Knuckles and Rouge have to search through their much more open-ended levels for randomly placed emerald fragments. Personally, I love the treasure-hunting levels, and usually either enjoy or at least tolerate the mech stages, so this was never an issue for me, but a lot

of people tend to write the game off just because of these stages' inclusion. Me personally, I think they need to get over themselves.

The design of these stages isn't always the best though, admittedly; one particularly bad Rouge level, Security Hall, has the player trying to collect emeralds under a strict time limit, meaning it effectively boils down to hoping you get lucky with the random placements so the timer doesn't kill you. I got lucky on my first try, so



it didn't seem so bad at first, but after a few more playthroughs, I understand the suffering.

Overall, though, the treasure and mech stages are still a fun addition to the game that helps to keep things varied, so I disagree with the idea that they just shouldn't be here.

Another contentious aspect of this game I personally love is the story. Most people tend to think of Sonic as being like Mario, in that the stories are fairly straightforward with not a



whole lot going on, which is what makes it so much fun to show them the deranged nonsense that makes up the bulk of this game's story. It begins with Sonic escaping from a military helicopter, only to later get arrested upon being mistaken for his evil lookalike Shadow and placed on Prison Island. Later, Amy tries to blackmail him by saying she'll help him escape if he marries her, Eggman blows up the entire

island, and all sorts of other bizarre events take place. None of it makes any sense, and I absolutely love it.

Unfortunately, not everyone saw it that way, so snivelling coward game journos tend to look back on this story with a sense of smug superiority ("why is all this in a game about a cartoon hedgehog"), but I absolutely love how unashamed this game was to just be itself, and how the developers'



passion for what they were making bled into every last corner of its design. Of course, it's not something anyone over the age of 10 is really going to be able to take seriously, and it's not helped by the hilariously bad voice acting, but it's an entertaining ride throughout, and I'd take this over a bland, sad husk afraid to truly be itself any day.



The soundtrack is also excellent, possibly my favourite of any game in this series, but a good soundtrack is generally to be expected of a Sonic game (before 2017, anyway), so that's not much of a surprise.

Overall, Sonic Adventure 2 is a great game, and my personal favourite entry in the series, but it's not without its flaws. It can be generally a bit of a janky mess, and although it's not completely riddled with bugs, the physics do feel a bit like they're held together with duct tape and the power of hope. Your enjoyment of the game will hinge largely on your appreciation for the very specific, unique vibe it brings to the table, not to mention the mech and treasure-hunting levels. Fortunately, I happen to enjoy just about everything the game has to offer, though, so I'd thoroughly recommend it to everyone reading this.

Final Score	
Gameplay - 6	9
Story - 10	
Look/Sound - 10	

# Silly Spotlight 2

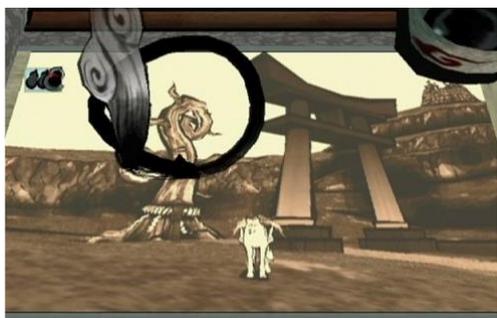


Okami, released for the PS2 in 2006, Wii in 2008, and later for PS3/4, Xbox One, Steam and Switch as Okami HD, is an action-adventure game where you play as a wolf incarnation of the Goddess Amaterasu, and travel across Nippon to save the land from darkness.

Immediately, the first thing that jumps out at the player is the game's art style, inspired by classical Japanese Sumi-E ink brush paintings. It's aged incredibly even to this day, to the point where the HD "remaster" doesn't even need to update the textures for the game to look amazing by modern standards (almost as if there's more to making a good-looking game than just high polygon counts and detailed textures).



However, the game isn't just nice to look at; Okami is an excellently-designed game, featuring a truly great story with many vast, detailed areas to explore.. The core gameplay is most easily compared to the Legend of Zelda series, with the player journeying through various different areas on a quest to vanquish Yami, the evil Lord of Darkness.



Along the way, you'll unlock several new techniques for your Celestial Brush, which can be used by painting on top of the screen in different ways, such as making a circle around a withered plant to rejuvenate it back to life, or drawing a straight line over a barrier to cut it in half.

Throughout the game, you unlock a total of 13 brush techniques, each of which use the mechanic in different unique and interesting ways, and by the end, the game has thoroughly managed to utilise it to its full extent. A particular favourite of mine is the Vine technique, which, upon painting a line from Amaterasu to certain floating blossoms, allows the player to zip straight to them, almost like a grappling hook. The Celestial Brush is a great mechanic, which does an excellent job of keeping the game fun and interesting throughout.

The game's combat is also quite fun. It seems a bit simple at first, with only one method of attack, but some of your brush techniques, such as the previously-mentioned cutting move or the one you get early on that creates a bomb on the field, can also be used to damage enemies, leading to an interesting layer of resource management with your ink; additionally, you also unlock other weapons later on that are harder to use but allow for greater damage output once mastered. Combat is approachable, but not mindless, and it's really as simple or complex as you want it to be. However, the ability to stockpile healing items and use them freely from the pause menu does make it feel a bit too easy in the mid to late game, so I'd recommend having some self-control and not abusing them if you want the game to provide a good challenge.



But, what about the story? Well, it's fairly simple, you travel across the land vanquishing darkness and helping those you come across, helped along the way by the miniscule wandering artist Issun, but where the story really shines is in the individual areas you visit. Every location the game has to offer is brimming with personality and character, from the mysterious Agata Forest, to the desolate, ice-cold Kamui, to a particular favourite of mine, the resort hotel Sasa Sanctuary managed entirely by sparrows and owned by the strangely imposing Jamba. It keeps the game interesting and varied all the way from beginning to end, ensuring that the fairly simple good-vs-evil narrative is able to stay fresh across the game's more than 30-hour quest. The ending is also a particular highlight of the game's story, although I don't particularly want to go into any detail on it for obvious reasons.

Overall, Okami is an excellent game, and great fun from start to finish. The game's art direction is nothing short of incredible to look at, and the soundtrack complements it perfectly, but beyond that, travelling throughout the game's world and seeing the various surprises it has to offer is a consistent delight, and keeps the game from getting stale for even a moment. The gameplay is fairly simple, but it gets the job done, and discovering the new brush techniques is a fun novelty. However, the gameplay is admittedly the weakest part of the game, as the combat is very easy to exploit using healing items, and near the end, you have to re-fight most of the game's bosses, which sours the experience somewhat. But even still, Okami is a great game, and not one you should pass up on.

Final Score	
Gameplay - 7	9
Story - 9	
Look/Sound - 10	

# Kill Your Friends!



BlazBlue: Centralfiction is a 2015 fighting game published by Arc System Works, and is in my opinion, the absolute peak of the genre; nothing made before or since this game, except for maybe Guilty Gear XX, has ever even come close to achieving the peak shown in this game.

In Centralfiction, you choose from one of 36 playable characters and battle your opponent, much like in any other fighting game, but what sets it apart from others in the genre is two things, the first of those being the immense variety of said characters. I don't mean this strictly in terms of numbers, although 36 is definitely a lot, but I'm much moreso talking about how the characters play.



In this game, no two characters, except for maybe Lambda-11 and Nu-13, play anything like each other; each one has a diverse assortment of tools and even whole mechanics entirely unique to their moveset to help them stand out from the crowd. These range from being on the simpler end, like how some of Ragna's

attacks can heal him or how Taokaka just moves really, really fast, to being much more in-depth, like how Arakune has a dedicated "Curse Meter" that, once it's full, causes his normal attacks to summon an army of bugs to attack the enemy, or how Nine the Phantom can mix elements to create attacks in a way that would take far too much time to explain to be worth going into any detail on. This approach to moveset design leads to a cast so large and varied that, no matter what type of character you want, simple or complex, fast or slow, Centralfiction is guaranteed to have it.



Another thing that sets this game apart from others like it is the fast, often frantic pacing, and the sheer amount of options most characters have for how they want to move through the



stage. Every character, by default, has the ability to run, double jump, and airdash, but like with every other aspect of the game, this varies further depending on who you choose. Some characters can airdash twice in one jump, some exchange the run for a short teleport, and a few have their own entirely unique movement options, like Izanami's ability to float in midair on command, or how Taokaka can cling onto walls and jump off them; for a more extreme example, Hazama generally has worse movement options than most characters, but in exchange, has a limited resource that allows him to shoot out a green chain and instantly dash along it in a variety of different ways.

The point is, Centralfiction's movement allows the player a great deal of freedom in how they want to play the game, and is about as fast, fluid and expressive as I believe it's possible for a fighting game to get. And, if for some reason,



none of that appeals to you and you want something slower and simpler, the game still has you covered anyway; characters like Nine or especially Hakumen generally offer a slower pace of gameplay, and on the most extreme end, Iron Tager completely lacks any of the movement options I've listed, being able to do nothing but

jump once and slowly walk in either direction; in exchange, though, he has some of the highest damage in the game, and once he manages to close in, it's effectively over for the opponent.

In conclusion, BlazBlue: Centralfiction is an incredible game, perhaps the best fighting game ever made, and I'd thoroughly recommend it to everyone reading this without even a moment's hesitation.

Admittedly, the game does have a somewhat steep learning curve, but once you can get into it, it's 100% worth it.

Sincerely, this is one of my favourite games I've ever played.



Final Score	
Gameplay - 10	10
Story - what	
Look/Sound - 10	

# Easy Emulation

# 真・女神転生

## SHIN•MEGAMI•TENSEI

Shin Megami Tensei, released in 1992 exclusively in Japan for the SNES, is an RPG best thought of as like Pokemon, but for insane people. In the game, you play as an ordinary teenager, who slowly finds that Tokyo is being overrun by demons. “Demons” in this game doesn’t necessarily mean flying red men with horns and pitchforks, although those are definitely here too, but specifically any mythological being, meaning Gods, evil spirits, and even biblical Angels are all classed as “demons”. Anyway, near the start of the game, you gain a special piece of technology that allows you to communicate with demons and store them as data inside your arm computer if they decide they like you, allowing you to summon them for use in battle. But, there’s a few things that make this a less simple task than it might seem at first...



First of all, the negotiation. The “if they decide they like you” from that last sentence is especially important, as negotiations can break down extremely easily; they’re determined partially by your Intelligence stat, partially by pure chance, and only a tiny bit by the actual answers you choose when negotiating. Basically, it’s purely up to the whims of the demon whether you get a fun new party member or die a painful death.

Speaking of pain, the encounter rate! This game loves to throw countless random encounters at you, and it’s perhaps the only game I’ve played where you can get multiple different encounters on the same tile, but this only applies to some areas; sometimes, the encounter rate is shockingly reasonable, and other times, it’s utterly absurd. If you’re going to play this game, find your emulator’s fast-forward function and abuse the hell out of it, because a large portion of the gameplay here is spent just trying to get through hordes of random enemies.

Additionally, another aspect of the gameplay I actually quite like is how it just... doesn't tell you where to go. At various points in the game, you'll just be plonked into a new area, with only a vague idea of what you're meant to be doing there, and the game will leave you to freely explore until you find the next event that progresses the story. It leads to a great sense of exploration, that I think is particularly effective after a certain event happens in the story which I won't spoil for now. Speaking of which, the story!



Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this game, there are three different alignments, and three separate story routes and endings to go along with them; the first two, Law and Chaos, are locked in a constant battle for supremacy, Law believing in absolute order above all else, with no respect for free will, while Chaos wants absolute anarchy, a world where only the strongest can possibly survive. Neutral, the game's third alignment, believes in finding a balance between the two extremes, typically accomplished by just killing everyone indiscriminately.



This might seem fairly simple, but Shin Megami Tensei does a great job of making you question which of these alignments is truly the correct answer, and never once tries to present one as the "true" or "best" answer, something many RPGs still get wrong even to this day, including some of this game's many sequels.

Additionally, the game's approach to how it conveys its story is also fairly unique. It's relatively light on text, generally not resorting to long, elaborate cutscenes, and usually only gives you the absolute bare minimum from required story moments.



However, the worldbuilding is truly where the game shines, every nook and cranny of the game's world having something interesting for you to find, and the game largely leaves you to discover its story for yourself, which can be difficult, but is much more satisfying. Overall, Shin Megami Tensei is a... confusing game to rank. On the one hand, it's got an excellent, thought-provoking story, and a great, truly unique visual identity unlike anything else out there, but actually playing it is a different story. At times it can be fun, the exploration being the highlight, but the constant encounters and fickle demon negotiation can at times turn it into a tedious nightmare to play. It's a great game, I personally love it, but you do really have to dig for that greatness, and I wouldn't blame anyone for giving up outright after a few hours.

Final Score	
Gameplay - 4	6
Story - 10	
Look/Sound - 9	

# Shame Corner

# SONIC™ FRONTIERS

Remember when I said I'd rather have Sonic Adventure 2's pure, unabashedly absurd fun than a "bland, sad husk afraid to truly be itself"? That wasn't a hypothetical, that was me saying I'd rather play it than Sonic Frontiers.

Frontiers was released in 2022, and is the latest in a long line of Sonic games that feel less formed by a genuine desire to do something interesting, and more by a petrifying fear of being seen as "cringe".

All of the deranged-but-fun nonsense of Adventure

2 has been sucked out, and replaced with a new sombre, melancholy tone, and a Sonic that now comes off as much more mature and reserved than before. "But wait", I hear you thinking, "isn't a Sonic game meant to feel fun and energetic, and isn't Sonic as a character meant to be cocky, impulsive, and distinctly NOT mature or reserved"? Well, no, apparently not. Having fun is cringe now, you know, we need to be sad all the time so we don't get made fun of.



One of the things the Sonic games released around Adventure 2's time got made fun of for was having "too many characters". Why this was an issue to the spineless journos of the time I have no idea, but as a result, Frontiers only features 3 characters, those being Sonic, Eggman, and brand new character Sage.

Well, this isn't technically true, Tails, Knuckles and Amy are all there too, but they might as well not be, given that the plot gives them exactly zero chances to do anything. All that they're here for is to occasionally talk to Sonic, and get stuck in Cyberspace or something, I really don't remember or care. All I remember is that they're too useless to do anything, so they might as well not count as being here. And even if they did do something, their presence here still isn't much; the Sonic series has so many great characters from after the "classic" games, and Sega's continued refusal to use any of them is just bizarre.

Oh, speaking of that, Cyberspace! Sonic Frontiers is an “open-zone” game, which means it’s split up into four smaller, all equally boring open worlds you can explore, instead of one big one. Dotted around the open zones are gates into “Cyberspace Levels”, the game’s main platforming challenges, which can have one of four set visual themes. Now, to their credit, there is a theme featuring countless interlocking, gravity-defying motorways that I actually really like, which I’ve included an image of on the side. The other three themes, though, are... just reused areas from the classic games. Again, this just feels like another example of Sega seemingly being embarrassed of everything they



made from Adventure onwards. It’s presented as you “going into the characters’ memories”, but it feels less like an idea anyone thought would be more interesting and more like Sega going “hey, guys, remember when we were good? Remember when you liked us, and didn’t make fun of us? Remember that?”. It’s pathetic.

This would be one thing if the Cyberspace levels were at least fun to play, but they’re really not. Every single one is frustratingly slow, and a decent portion of them take place in a 2D perspective, which aside from being even slower than the 3D Cyberspace levels, manages to yet again feel like Sega trying to appeal to the types of people who say things like “Sonic doesn’t work in 3D” rather than anything even a single person sincerely wanted to do. The combat isn’t much better, either. At first, it feels promising, with Sonic having a small but fun set of moves that has good potential to be expanded on, but this never happens, and all of the “special moves” you’re given later on just end up being flashy cutscene attacks that make you wait for them to end, further cementing this as one of the slowest Sonic games in the series.



Sonic Frontiers is a deeply self-conscious game; from a series that used to be fast, loud, and wholly unafraid to be itself comes an entry that embodies none of these attributes, and instead wants to mope around all day and be sad while it reminisces over better times. It’s not just a bad game, its mere existence is downright depressing. From the abysmally slow combat and platforming, to the terrible story where nothing happens, to the awful soundtrack that’s half ambient noise and half screechy EDM, none of this even feels like a Sonic game, let alone a good one.

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

# The Yap Trap

## Why are American games so boring?

This Yap Trap doesn't have much of a defined conclusion, and is more just me commenting on something I've noticed. That being, the fact that being American seems to be a -50% debuff to your ability to make good games. Granted, this isn't to say there are no great American games, Valve and Sucker Punch are the immediate first two examples I think of for American studios that make interesting games, but for the most part, Americans seem to only be capable of making "shoot game, sport game, and car game".

Overwhelmingly, the American game design mentality is one that wants to pursue these genres with as much "realism" as possible, with hardly any room for creative or interesting ideas. I first noticed this when I started thinking about how many of the games I like are Japanese, but after I thought about it, I noticed that all my favourite western games come from countries other than America. It's not that the Japanese are uniquely great at making games – ok, well, they are, but more than that, Americans are just shockingly bad at it.



This isn't just a modern thing, either. They were certainly better in the past, but even back in the 2000s, Americans were making boring, forgettable slop, such as the early Call of Duty or GTA games (which, to be fair, the latter at least had the idea of merging "shoot game" and "car game" together). American games did

absolutely get much worse during the 2010s, as the Americans were overwhelmingly the ones pushing to normalize boring movie-games and microtransaction-ridden live service slop, but they weren't exactly making consistent bangers during the 2000s either, even if their output was generally better.

Again, I should specify that this isn't a blanket statement, and there are plenty of great American games, but for some reason, they seem to have a uniquely boring attitude towards game design not even shared to the same extent by other western, English-speaking countries. They obsess over realism, only seem to be aware of a select few genres, and have been at the forefront of terrible monetization practices and the modern obsession with those "playable movies" I hate so much (The Last of Us was made by an American studio), and I really don't know why. Just what is it about the Americans that makes them think like this?

# What's Next?

# SONIC SHADOW GENERATIONS™

Alright, I'll calm down on the Sonic obsession after this, next month's issue will be more balanced. Sonic X Shadow Generations, referred to from here on out as Yaoi Generations and



releasing this October, is a 2-in-1 bundle, featuring a remaster of Sonic Generations, as well as a new campaign where you play as Shadow. Now, I got my hopes up for Frontiers potentially being what I'm about to describe, and we know how that went, but from what we've seen so far, the Shadow campaign

really feels like it has the potential to be Sonic's return to doing whatever it wants, and fully utilizing every aspect of its world and characters, as opposed to being a series defined by extreme self-consciousness like it has been since Colours released in 2010.

Everything about what we've seen so far feels like it was made by a 12 year old boy who thinks Shadow is the coolest damn thing he's ever seen, and I mean that in the best way possible. From Shadow's new Doom Powers, to the fact that Black Doom from Shadow's 2005 standalone game is apparently here, it's clear that



this isn't a game with the same sad, self-conscious energy of Frontiers, or the feeling of a desperate child trying to suck up to a disapproving teacher that games like Colours and Forces gave off. I honestly think there's good reason to be excited for this game, and I'm praying I don't get proven wrong. What we've heard of the music so far seems to take after Frontiers' insufferable EDM style, but that aside, I think there's real potential here.

As for the "Sonic Generations remaster" aspect of Yaoi Generations... I won't even lie, I forgot that part was a thing, I'm just hyperfocused on the Shadow campaign. It seems like Sega is finally making the Sonic game that appeals to my specific tastes in particular that I've wanted for so long... I really hope I'm not wrong in being excited for this.