The Monthly Silly

WE'RE SO BACK

They finally made another good Sonic game

You know what's not good? Ninja Gaiden!

(There's also a Summon Night review too)

GAME BOY ADVANCE

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SONIC GENERATIONS ™

Sonic Generations, released in 2011 for PS3, Xbox 360 and PC, and later remastered in 2024 for the Switch, PS4/PS5 and Xbox One/Series X, is a game that, up until this year, held the impressive record of being the last good Sonic game ever made. It should be stated that the remaster doesn't make that many changes, so unless stated otherwise, everything mentioned in this review applies to both versions of the game.

The gimmick with Generations is that, thanks to some time shenanigans I'll explain later, Sonic has been sent to the void alongside his younger self, and both Sonics now must go through various areas from their pasts in order to solve the strange time anomaly. I've criticized recent Sonic games for being too reliant on the series' past before, but given that Generations is a 20th anniversary title meant to be a celebration of everything the series has been before, I think it fits here. Plus, it's not like it's only acknowledging the "classic" games either, it's not afraid to pull from everything in the series' past, regardless of how well-received the games it pulls from might have been.
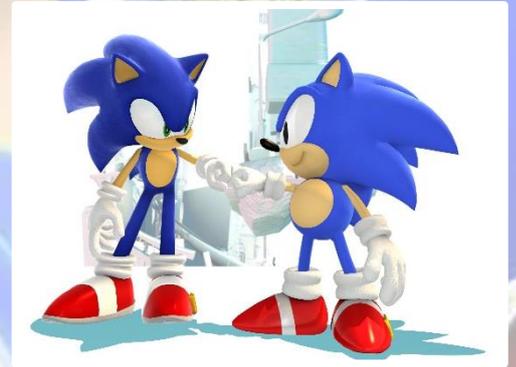
Anyway, in gameplay, this manifests as each of the nine stages being split into two "acts"; Act 1 has you playing as Classic Sonic in a 2D perspective, and Act 2 takes place in 3D and uses Modern Sonic. Now, some "people" like to say Sonic doesn't work in 3D, but I disagree – personally, I honestly think he can ONLY work in 3D. Think about it; Sonic as a series is built around going as fast as possible, with the big challenge of these games being to see how well you can maintain your speed, so taking place in a 2D perspective where you can only see a few feet in front of yourself by nature is extremely counter-intuitive. Sonic in 3D isn't just better, it's the only perspective that makes sense for the series. As a result, I really don't like any of Classic Sonic's stages, but that's fine, because the Modern stages are where the game really shines.

Modern Sonic's stages take place in 3D, and I absolutely love these. These stages are much faster, and feature the Boost mechanic returning from Unleashed and Colours, which allows you to drastically speed up and tear through enemies in exchange for using up your Boost Gauge. With the exception of Sky Sanctuary and Planet Wisp, both absolutely gorgeous stages which are tragically a complete nightmare to actually play, I absolutely love all of Modern Sonic's stages for how they perfectly nail the sense of speed that makes Sonic so amazing, and they make trudging through the Classic acts 100% worth it. The lives system makes trying to replay them to get a better time and rank kind of annoying, but fortunately, this mechanic was removed in the remaster.

Unfortunately, these stages aren't without their flaws, though; for some bizarre reason, the Modern stages will occasionally switch to a 2D perspective before going bck to 3D and allowing you to have fun again. This doesn't ruin these stages, they're still great fun, but in a game that already has the Classic stages, I don't understand why this decision was made. Overall, though, the Modern stages are still great fun, and by far the game's highlight.

The boss fights are amazing, too; dreadful final boss aside, the rest are all great fun, and provide a sense of visual spectacle not seen anywhere else in the game. I won't elaborate much for the sake of page space, but just know I absolutely love all of the bosses in this game.

Unfortunately, the story isn't really anything to write home about here; Sonic's birthday party gets interrupted by the Time Eater and everyone present is sent to the void, so you play through a bunch of stages and everything's back to normal at the end. The story here is really just an excuse for the gameplay to happen, which is a little disappointing for a Sonic game, but it's not offensively terrible or anything.

Overall, Generations is a strange game for me, in that it has lots of things I can't stand but I still love it in spite of that; the Classic stages are horrible, and the final boss is such a nightmare I don't even bother finishing the game whenever I replay it, but the other boss fights are all amazing, and combined with the incredible Modern stages, they're more than enough to keep me coming back to this game.

Final Score

Gameplay - 7

Story - 4

Look/Sound - 7

7

SHADOW GENERATIONS™

Shadow Generations was released for PC and all current and last-gen consoles in 2024, bundled with the Sonic Generations remaster, and... well, would you look at that, Sega finally remembered how to make a good Sonic game.

Taking place at the same time as Sonic Generations, the game starts with Shadow investigating the Space Colony ARK, only to end up in a white void similar to what Sonic and his friends were forced into; now, he too needs to traverse through various locations from his past, all while the ominous Black Moon looms above.

This game's story is significantly better than Sonic Generations; it's still fairly simple, but there are actual things that happen along the way, and more characters with a role to play than just Shadow himself. It's no Sonic Adventure 2, but it's consistently engaging, the msytery of just what the ever-evolving Black Moon even is being a particular highlight for me.

The game's overall presentation really adds to this; it feels like, for the longest time, the Sonic series has been afraid of letting its characters do cool stuff, and while there was a hint that this might be changing in Frontiers, this game really feels like it's managed to fully break that curse. Finally, a new Sonic game has managed to hit that middle ground of not constantly poking fun at itself like in Colours and Forces, but not being so overly serious and devoid of fun like Frontiers was, in a way that the series used to be so easily able to do in the 2000s, but which disappeared the moment Colours released. Shadow Generations feels like, after 14 years, the series has finally managed to break the curse placed on it by Colours, and it's just so refreshing to see. Sadly, the soundtrack's not great, featuring more of the annoying EDM nonsense the series has been plagued with ever since Forces in 2017, but you can unlock songs from other Sonic games that had better soundtracks to use instead, so it doesn't really matter.

The gameplay is excellent, too. It follows the same structure as Generations, with each stage being split into two acts, one in 2D and one in 3D, and the 2D acts... they're alright. 2D in a Sonic game still feels unnecessary, but the camera in these is far more pulled back than usual, and often tilts forwards too, so they're not as bad as 2D Sonic usually is. The 3D acts, though...

This might be 3D Sonic gameplay at its absolute best. The Modern stages in Sonic Generations were already amazing, but Shadow's 3D acts improve on them in several ways, the most significant being the complete lack of any 2D sections. Unlike in Sonic's game, where the "3D" acts would occasionally interrupt your fun to

make you play a slow, boring 2D section, Shadow just lets you keep going in 3D without this, and it makes the stages flow so much better as a result. That aside, though, it just generally controls better, and unlike in Sonic Generations, I don't think there's a single stage here I don't like. Really, my only complaint with the stages is that there's not enough of them.

This isn't the only way the game improves on its predecessor, though; unlike before, where White Space was just a glorified level select, here it's a full-on 3D hub world, with various hidden chests containing music, concept art and backstory details that can be unlocked with keys found in the game's stages. White Space in this game is great fun to run around in, and feels like a more developed, fully-realized version of Frontiers' half-baked Open Zone areas. Additionally, like in Sonic Generations, the bosses here are mostly quite fun, although I don't think they're quite as good as in that game.

Overall, Shadow Generations feels like a game I've been waiting for since years before it was announced. It has its flaws, like the (fortunately optional) original soundtrack, the 2D acts and the far too restrictive challenge key system needed to unlock boss fights and progress through the story, but the flawless 3D acts and incredible presentation more than make up for it, and I'd highly recommend it to anyone who likes this series, even if you haven't enjoyed the more recent installments.

Final Score

Gameplay - 9

Story - 6

Look/Sound - 8

8

Wii Party™

Wii Party is, brace yourself, a party game for the Wii, released in 2010 by Nintendo. Similarly to the Mario Party series, it's primarily a collection of minigames, with a variety of different game modes to play that use these minigames in different ways. There's the main five Party Games, typically lasting around 30-60 minutes, Pair Games, played with just two players and lasting around 20 minutes each, House Party, which uses the environment around you in different ways, and a handful of other modes. Of these, the Party Games are by far the ones you'll be spending the most time on, so I'll go over those first.

The first Party Game, Board Game Island, is in my opinion, the best of the collection. It's a fairly simple board game mode, where players take turns rolling dice to decide how many spaces they'll move, with the goal being to reach the end of the board and different spaces having different effects; you might land on a space that moves you forwards or backwards, one that triggers a minigame, or one that warps you into an infernal volcano dimension you need to escape from before you can continue. After everyone's rolled their dice, a minigame is played, and the higher you place, the farther you can move on your next turn. It's a simple game, but it's well-designed; the space effects and events that trigger as you make your way along the board are varied and interesting, and the pacing is just right, it's not too long or too short.

The next game, Globe Trot, is a tad more complex. This one plays much more like the first 8 Mario Party games, with the players being placed on a large, open-ended board and having to race each other to randomly-positioned Hotspots where they can get their photo taken; once enough turns have passed, the player with the most photos taken wins. It's a lot more mechanically complex than Board Game Island, featuring among other things the ability to buy item cards to influence the outcome of the game, which can be good and bad. At its best, Globe Trot is great fun, offering a much more strategic experience, but it's highly reliant on the random Hotspot placement, so at its worst, it simply devolves into one player being four spaces away when a new one spawns, and everyone else being twenty. It's a game with higher highs than Board Game Island, but much lower lows too.

The other games are... less worthy of being talked about in depth. Mii of a Kind has you trying to match together different Miis in a game that starts out interesting but gets increasingly tedious as it goes on, Spin-Off has a roulette wheel and is almost entirely luck-based, and Bingo is just Bingo. Those last two are so pointless that you might as well just make everyone roll a dice and give a gold star that says "you win" to the player with the highest number.

The Pair games are... I'll be honest, I've never had exactly one other person to play this game with, I always either play it by myself (rare) or with 2 or 3 other people, so I haven't played any of them in years. The House Party games I also haven't played in years, but they're more interesting, so I'll talk about them now.

The gimmick with these ones is that they focus on using the environment around you, and for

the most part, I'd say they do a good job with this concept. In Word Bomb, easily my favourite of the collection, you're given a "category" (for example, "cat breeds" or "yellow things"), and players take turns being put on a timer and naming things that fit within that category. The first player who can't think of a new thing is eliminated, and everyone else wins. It's good for a short, quick burst of entertainment, I like it a lot. The other House Party games sadly range from decent but forgettable to mildly shit, so since we're running out of space, instead of covering those in any great detail, I'm going to quickly list off some of my favourite other modes in this game.

Rule Reversal has you play a series of minigames, but with a twist; one player is cheating, and has an easier time than everyone else. You get points based on your performance, but if you can successfully guess who the cheater is, you steal some of their points. Guess wrong, though, and they steal some of yours instead. Additionally, there's also Garden Gridlock, a very fun singleplayer puzzle mode that could easily be its own game if it wanted to, and has a very specific aesthetic to it that I absolutely love.

Overlal, Wii Party is great; it's got some not-very-good modes, but more than enough great, varied ways to play that make up for it, and of its 80 minigames, I don't think there's a single bad one. The Wii had a lot of games like it, but in my opinion, Wii Party is by far the best of them.

Final Score	
Gameplay - 8	
Story - what	9
Look/Sound - 9	

SUMMON NIGHT
Swordcraft Story ™

Summon Night: Swordcraft Story is an action RPG released in 2003 for the Gameboy Advance. In the game, you play as either Cleru (male) or Pratty (female), the son/daughter of legendary swordsmith Shintetsu, a famed Craftlord who died three years ago protecting the Swordcraft City of Wystern. Now, to select his replacement, the six remaining Craftlords (the most powerful swordsmiths in charge of Wystern's government) have arranged a tournament to decide Shintetsu's successor, and your goal (at first, anyway) is to win this tournament.

Immediately, the first thing that jumps out at you about the game is how aggressively anime it is. Everything about its art style just screams "2000s anime series", and even the story feels structured less like a JRPG and more like a Fairy Tail-esque shonen series. I don't know if saying the story is "structured like an anime" makes any sense or not, but it's something I felt through the entire game, and I can't explain it any more effectively.

The story takes place over the course of ten in-game days, slowly unfolding as you go about your daily life, having various adventures and discovering the secrets hidden beneath Wystern's surface. The highlight here is definitely the characters; from the six remaining Craftlords, to strange child Razzy who ends up becoming a kind of little sister to the main character, to your definitely-not-gay rival Varil, almost all of the characters here are well-written, interesting, or at the very least entertaining to watch, and they make the fairly simple story far more enjoyable to play through. I found myself loving most of the characters, and the best part of the game for me by far was getting to see what they'd all get up to next.

Aiding the game's excellent character writing, at the end of each day, you can choose to spend some time with a character of your choice, discussing the events of the day with them. Although not every character is available for these segments, you have a good bit of freedom in who you choose to spend time with, and it really helps give each of them some added depth. The night segments are great, I really like them.

As for how the game plays, it's fairly simple. Exploration is done from a top-down perspective, while when you get into a battle, the game becomes a 2D beat-em-up where you can move and attack in real time, having to dodge your enemys' attacks and carefully time your own ones. Additionally, you can also summon your Guardian Beast, a magical being you're given at the start after a brief personality test to determine which one you're best suited to, and have it cast spells, which are a limited resource that helps to spice up the combat somewhat.

The real depth, however, comes from the weapon crafting system. The game features a dungeon called the Labyrinth you can make your way through whenever you like, battling enemies and obtaining materials to make weapons with. There are five different weapon types, Swords, Axes, Spears, Knuckles and Drills, each with their own strengths and weaknesses, and the ability to choose which ones you like or don't like, as well as having up to three you can switch between mid-battle on the fly, gives the game a good amount of depth in its combat.

Overall, Summon Night: Swordcraft Story is a great game. The story is consistently engaging, without even a single dull moment, and the excellently-written characters help elevate it to become something really exceptional. The gameplay, while also quite simple, is good fun too, although your enjoyment will hinge partially on your ability to tolerate large numbers of random encounters, and while the soundtrack is nothing special, the art style helps the game's presentation really stand out. Everything about it visually is brimming with charm and personality, and while there was clearly a lot of passion put into every aspect of this game, I think the art direction is where that's at its most obvious. Incredible game, I loved every moment of it. If you enjoy that lighter, less serious 2000s style of shonen storytelling, you should definitely pick this one up.

Final Score

Gameplay - 7

Story - 10

Look/Sound - 8

9

NINJA 外伝
GAIDEN

Ninja Gaiden is an NES action platformer released in 1988, and, to its credit, isn't nearly as offensively terrible as games I've covered in this segment in past issues. It's still a bit shit, though, and seeing people praise it as some kind of amazing classic annoys me enough that I wanted to give it the coverage it deserves here.

In Ninja Gaiden, you play as Ryu Hayabusa, a ninja seeking revenge for the death of his father, and are sent on a journey that quickly goes from small-scale revenge mission to a quest to save the world from certain destruction. Already, this leads into one of the game's major strengths, and a big part of why it's remembered so fondly today, that being the story. The game's story is far more in-depth than anything else of its time, and while it's still fairly simple, the inclusion of multiple detailed cutscenes is honestly impressive. Granted, the text moves along so slowly you're likely to just skip all of it, but it's still praise-worthy for the time. Sadly, though, being technically impressive and having a lot of cutscenes doesn't make your game good, something many developers have still yet to learn even to this day.

The main problem with Ninja Gaiden is its gameplay; the thing most people say about it these days is that it was "hard", but that's giving it too much credit. The game gets its difficulty not through challenging, well-thought-out level design, but through a combination of deliberately cheap enemy placements and infuriating system mechanics. For one, when you get hit, you get knocked back quite a distance, which is fine early on, but in the later levels, where the game combines tiny platforms with enemies attacking from all angles, this means that getting hit once by anything is almost guaranteed to kill you. And, thanks to the game's limited lives system, dying more than a handful of times will result in having to start the entire level over again, meaning you spend less time making actual progress and more time replaying the same part over and over, even though you already know you can do it.

The game also features a wall cling mechanic! I hate this. If you jump at a wall, any wall, Ryu will stick to it; from here, you can hold the direction away from the wall and press A to wall

jump off it, and… that's it, that's all you can do from a wall cling. You can't attack, can't press the down button to detach, nothing. This isn't an issue in every level, but in some, it's all too easy to accidentally cling onto a wall when you're trying to do something else, and then have to mentally shift from whatever you were doing before to holding away from the wall and pressing A to get off, while also hoping there isn't an enemy right in front of you that detaching from the wall will almost certainly result in you getting hit by. Again, this isn't an issue in every level, and in a better game I'd probably be willing to forgive it, but it adds to the overall feeling that the game just wants you to suffer.

There's also the item system! Occasionally, you'll find some kind of airborne object, usually a lamp, which you can destroy to get either healing, MP, score points, or an item. Once you pick up an item, you can hold Up and press B to use it, which costs some MP but can otherwise be done as much as you want. The system works well enough, and I honestly wouldn't have any issues with it, were it not for the fact that picking up

an item means you lose the one you had before. This results in a "fun" dynamic where if you get an item you like, you have to choose between not destroying lamps and running out of MP, or destroying them and risking having your current item replaced by another, much worse one. The most infuriating part is that the Select button does nothing – why they didn't just let you pick up multiple items, and use that to cycle between them, I have no idea.

Overall, this game just… doesn't work. Even the slightest mistake can get you killed, which wouldn't be so bad were it not for the fact that everything about it is made to kill you in ways you can't see coming – my favourite example of this being in level 4-2, where it starts with a platform you have to jump onto, only to spawn an enemy on it at the last second

that knocks you off and kills you. Even for the time, this game was bad, but it's been made even more pointless by games such as Strider 2 (1999) for the PS1 and even Vice: Project Doom (1991), also released for the NES, which are effectively just Ninja Gaiden but good. If any of what I've said sounds interesting, please, play one of those instead.

Final Score

Gameplay - 2

Story - 6

Look/Sound - 5

3

The Hilarious Death of Concord

Concord, released on the 23rd of August, 2024, was a first-person hero shooter developed by Sony's Firewalk Studios. With a budget of $400 million, it was predicted to be the next big thing, a "Star Wars-level media franchise" that would put Firewalk Studios on the level of big names like EA and Activision. Nobody played it and it got shut down after 2 weeks.

Concord is perhaps the funniest example of a failed AAA release in recent memory, not just because of its massive budget and even more massive expectations, but because it was actually a functional game. At its core, it was an alright hero shooter, definitely a bit generic and without much that stood out in terms of gameplay, but unlike most failed AAA slop, it wasn't a bug-filled mess actively trying to scam you. It's just that it failed the vibe check on such a catastrophic scale that nobody played it.

As a hero shooter, the one thing Concord really needed to get right was the character designs. The main appeal of hero shooters is the characters, you NEED to have appealing character designs if you want people to play these games, and half the cast in Concord look like shite cosplays of other, better characters. Everything about this game is soulless, corporate cringe, and even aside from being aesthetically repulsive, the designs tell you nothing about who the character is or what they do. Look at the guy above this sentence, Daw. What do you think he does? Did you guess that he's a support healer? No, of course you didn't!

In fairness, it's not like it's all bad, I actually quite like weird freaky mushroom person Lark over on the right, but the vast majority of these character designs are terrible. None of them are at all cool or attractive or in any way interesting whatsoever, looking at Concord's characters feels like looking at a freakish amalgamation of what a boardroom meeting full of aliens would think the "kids these days" would like. More broadly, I think Concord's designs are proof of the idea that you need some kind of core artistic vision in order to create anything capable of making a lasting impression; it's not just that Firewalk didn't make something cool or interesting, it's that they simply couldn't have. Lesson learned, don't give cringe people with no imaginations $400 million.

What's Next?
BloodRush
Undying Wish

BloodRush: Undying Wish is an upcoming top-down hack and slash by Brazilian developer Lightmancer Studios, which actually already has a free demo out now that should take you around 20 to 30 minutes to finish. Immediately, the first thing you'll probably notice is the game's pace; it's an extremely fast game, that requires you to make use of multiple different movement tools to zip across the stage. Oh, you want a block button? Why would you need that when you can just dodge out of the way instead! There's not much available in the current demo, but it feels like the type of game that's going to be absurdly difficult once it comes out, and I mean that in the best way possible. The movement is extremely fun and satisfying to get the hang of, and while the moveset in the demo is fairly simple, I've no doubt it'll be expanded on in the final release.

The only real issue I can think of with the gameplay is the weird statues that send you flying off in a certain direction when you attack them – fun in theory, but if there are lots of enemies surrounding one, it can be annoying to try and attack them, only to get shot off to a completely different part of the map. It's a fairly minor issue though, and the game feels really solidly made overall, so I'm excited to see what the finished product will look like.

Gameplay aside, the story also seems interesting, although most of what's in the demo is cryptic enough that I can't comment much on that aspect yet, and the game's art style and dark fantasy aesthetic is one I really enjoy. Overall, BloodRush: Undying Wish seems like a promising game, especially for a first release from its developer, and I'm looking forward to the final version. Like I said, the demo is fairly short, so if you like the sound of a fast-paced action game with a great art style and lots of fun movement options, I'd definitely recommend giving it a look.