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Distributed by Seymour Distribution Ltd, 2 East Poultry
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Future plc is a public company quoted on the London Stock Exchange (symbol: FUTR).
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PRESENTS

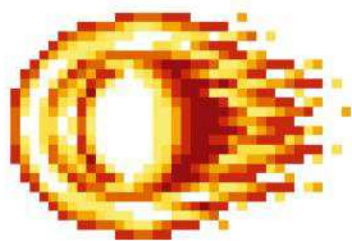
THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO classic gaming

WELCOME

You never forget your first game. That magical moment when you first picked up a joystick (or whatever the input of choice) and used it to interact with the blobs of light emanating

from your television screen. For me, it was a game called *Iceberg Works* on the Commodore Plus/4 computer. The games critic in me knows now that it was little more than an uninspired *Boulder Dash* clone with a vague Christmas theme. But the child deep inside tells tales of unparalleled bravery, as I descended deeper and deeper into the treacherous ice caverns to pluck presents from under the nose of crazed polar bears and bloodthirsty penguins.

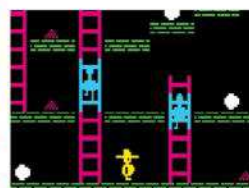
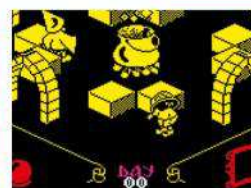
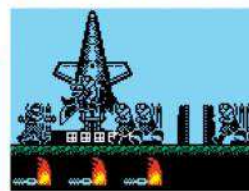
It doesn't matter whether you got your first taste of gaming on the ZX Spectrum in the '80s, or the PlayStation in the '90s, or even the Xbox One yesterday. Every generation goes through this very same transformative experience – the only things that change are the heroes on the screen, and the amount of polygons they're made up of. It's been our privilege to witness the evolution of our hobby over the past 30 years, and our editorial team's goal was to create something that takes you right back to that magical moment when you first picked up the controller – whenever that might have been.



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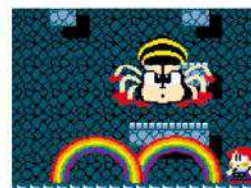
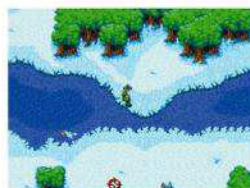
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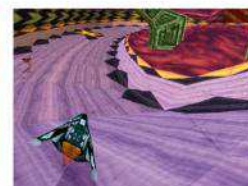
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SPECTRUM

The rubber-keyed wonder that launched the careers of hundreds of budding game developers

Even by the standards of the day, the ZX Spectrum was no powerhouse. The base model started at a measly 16KB RAM, it had a basically incapable 16 colour graphic output, one-channel sound and a rubber keyboard with a frankly undesirable layout.

But what it lacked in finesse, it more than made up for in charm. Charm, and a highly competitive price point, hitting retail in Britain at just £125. While the Speccy, as it was affectionately known, would fail to displace the Commodore 64 as the 8-bit computer of choice in North America, it won the hearts of the public in its native Britain.

In bringing reasonably-priced computing to the masses, the Spectrum also created a generation of coders,

gamers and enthusiasts like no other system did before or has since, and the humble system has been credited for launching the UK IT industry.

A side-benefit of the system inspiring so many coders is that it gave the Speccy a truly fearsome library of games – over 23,000 at last count (and we're refusing to do a recount). We haven't seen another system with the variety of the Spectrum's since, and it meant that although the rival C64 and Amstrad CPC computers had more juice in their tank, the Spectrum was the computer of choice for the gaming connoisseur. In that sense, it wasn't just coding that the Spectrum taught; it also taught many an owner to stand up for themselves in the playground...



With its rainbow streak and distinctive rubber keys, the ZX Spectrum was unmistakable.





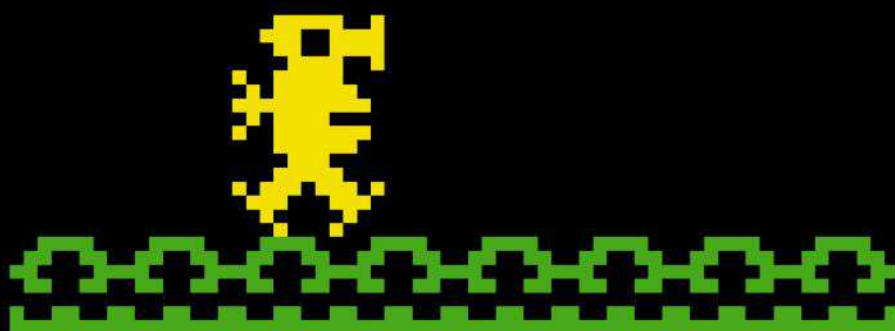
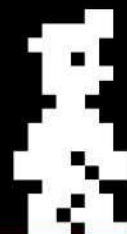
Manufacturer Sinclair

Processor Z80 @ 3.5MHz

Units sold 5 million

Released 1982

MANIC MINER



Developer Matthew Smith

Publisher Bug-Byte

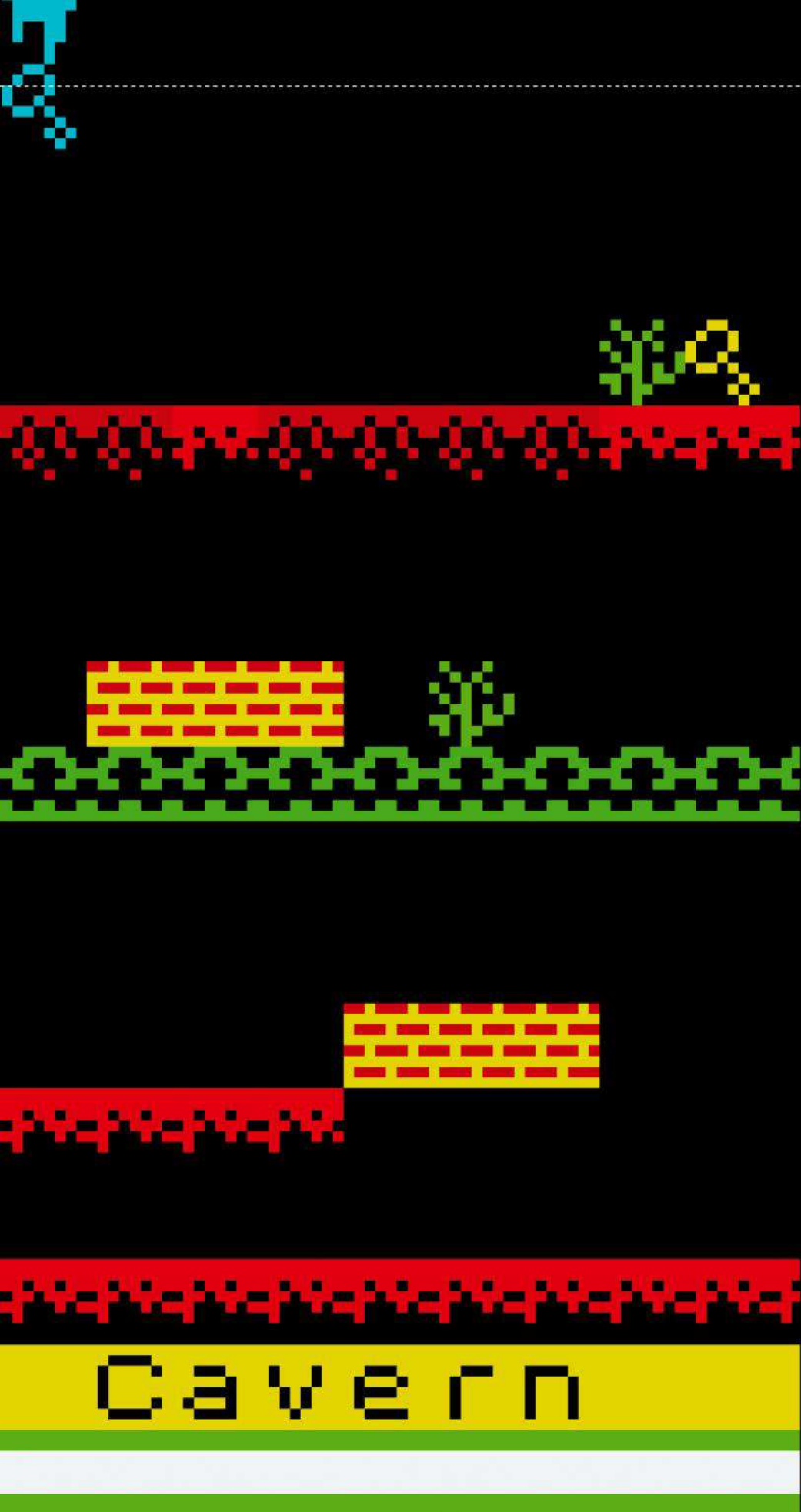
Genre Platformer

Released 1983

Central

AIR

High Score 000000



During the golden age of the 8-bit home computer, a select few programmers became almost as famous as the games they single-handedly created. Thanks to *Manic Miner*, which he knocked together in just six weeks, teenager Matthew Smith became synonymous with the burgeoning platform genre and by far the biggest celebrity on the Spectrum scene.

The aim in each of the 20 one-screen levels was to collect all of the flashing items and reach the exit. Pixel-perfect timing was required, as the slightest touch from a wandering enemy or any part of the environment that wasn't the floor meant instant death.

Without variable speed or momentum to contend with, Miner Willy's jumps always took exactly the same parabolic arc, travelling exactly the same distance. Beating a level meant finding the precise point from which to jump in order to clear a hazard, and there was no room whatsoever for improvisation. It was brutal, but the cheat code for skipping levels remains etched in the minds of a whole generation of British gamers.



▲ CLASSIC MOMENT

Skylab was an early space station that was steered into the earth's atmosphere, four years before *Manic Miner* was released, in an attempt to safely burn it up over an uninhabited area. Due to a NASA miscalculation, pieces of it ended up striking the ground near Perth, Australia. Topical!

Score



▲ CLASSIC BOSS

The legendary Eugene's Lair, complete with highly trained attack toilets. Eugene is the round levitating chap with glasses, and in this level the shrubbery will kill Miner Willy if he so much as stands close enough to sniff the flowers. Note the fiendishly hidden magenta stalactites (also deadly).



▲ CLASSIC VILLAIN

The Vat is patrolled by kangaroos, or possibly giant mutant rats, and the keys are suspended in a grid of disappearing floors. If you sink all the way to the bottom without grabbing all of the ones at the top, you won't be able to get back up and will have to suffer suicide by kangaroo (or rat) in order to restart.

01



02



▲ CLASSIC LEVEL

This level being set on Endor, those must be Wookiees roaming on the pleasantly-rounded branches. The way the floors disappear is particularly satisfying with this type of platform. They appear to melt smoothly away, but as long as a single pixel remains you can still use them to jump on.

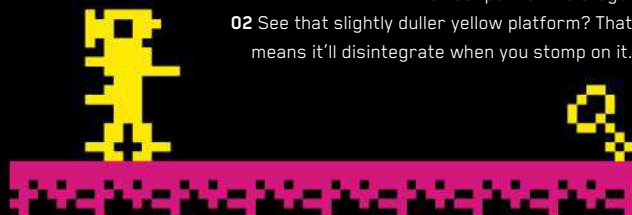


▲ CLASSIC HERO

Willy might be one of the more inflexible heroes going, but he has a few tricks up his sleeve. During his duels with the Kong Beast, he can disappear into the yellow box, bottom centre, to avoid those... steaming round things. To defeat his foe, he needs to flick the yellow switch, top centre, just to the right of Kong.

01 The Kong Beast returns. Strangely, avoiding those deadly green bushes is arguably the trickiest part of the stage.

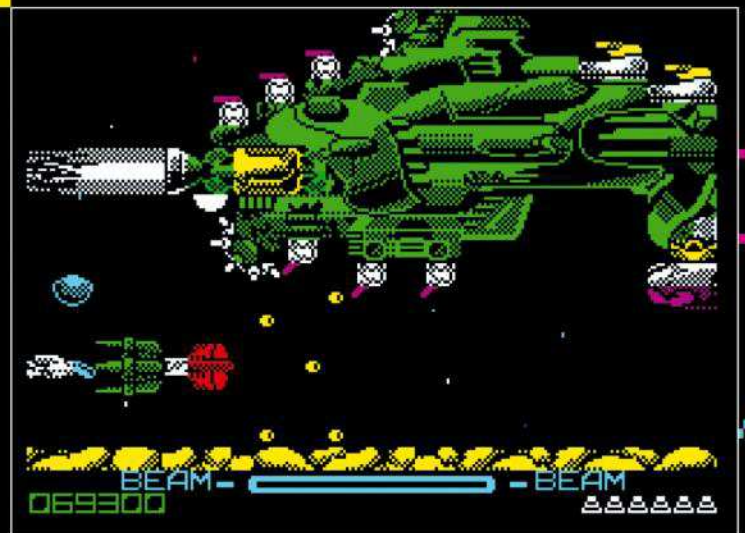
02 See that slightly duller yellow platform? That means it'll disintegrate when you stomp on it.



01

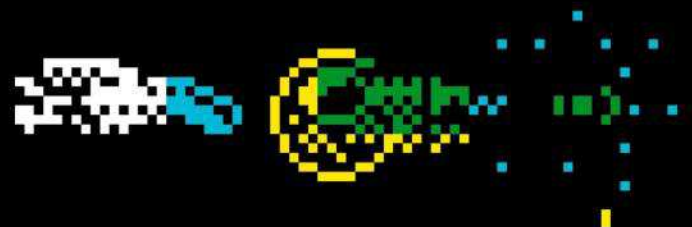


01 The second stage, comprised of snarling freaks that would break off from the floor and ceiling and chase after your ship, was faithfully recreated on Spectrum.



R-Type

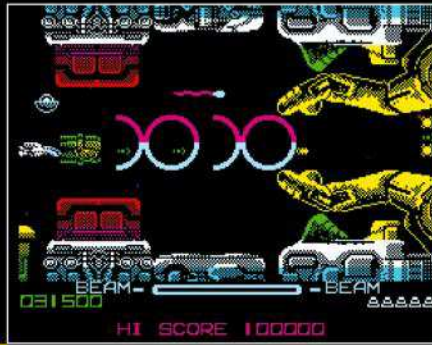
Developer Software Studios
Publisher Electric Dreams Software
Genre Shoot-'em-up
Released 1988





▲ CLASSIC LEVEL

It wasn't meant to be possible to have such large, colourful objects in a Spectrum game, and few if any ever managed to top *R-Type's* screen-filling cyan and magenta monsters. You can see how everything is designed around those 8x8 squares.



▲ CLASSIC BOSS

It's the Gigeresque alien mecha monstrosity Dobkeratops, one of the best known recurring bosses in the *R-Type* series. The Spectrum version coloured him all red, because basically none of the other palette of colours would have been remotely suitable.



The distinctive look of most Spectrum games was forced on programmers by its severe graphical limitations.

The screen was divided into squares of 8x8 pixels, and each square could only contain two of the machine's tiny palette of garish colours. As graphics moved around the screen, they'd take on the colour attributes of the underlying squares. To avoid the screen turning into a mismatched mess of coloured blocks, programmers usually stuck with black or white sprites on a single-coloured background.

The big, bold arcade graphics of *R-Type* allowed for an alternative approach, in which everything was made as large and chunky as possible, designed around those 8x8 squares. It's a technique used by a select few Spectrum games, notably *Light Force* and *Trapdoor*, and although the enhanced colour came at the expense of smoothness of movement, it made for a very eye-catching effect.

Virtually everything from Irem's state-of-the-art coin-op was somehow crammed into 48 kilobytes of RAM, demonstrating that six years after its launch, as the 16-bit next gen steadily gained traction, the humble Spectrum still had a few tricks up its sleeve.

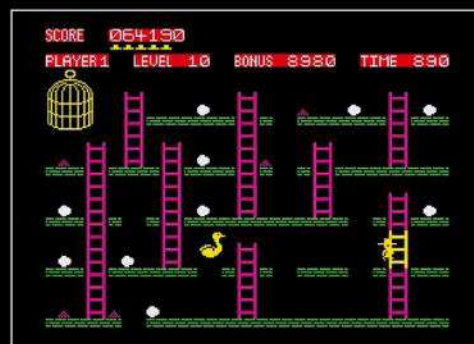
Chuckie Egg

Developer A&F Software

Publisher A&F Software

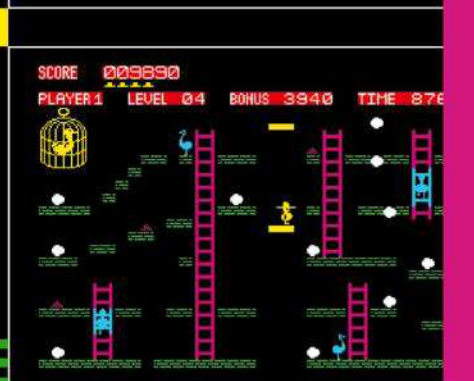
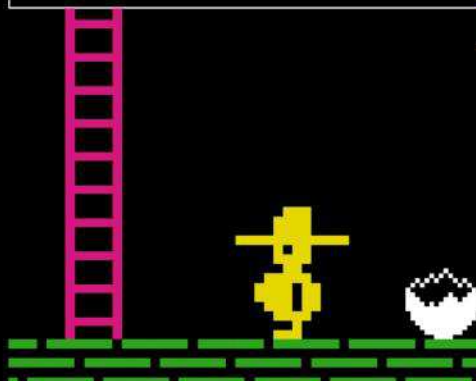
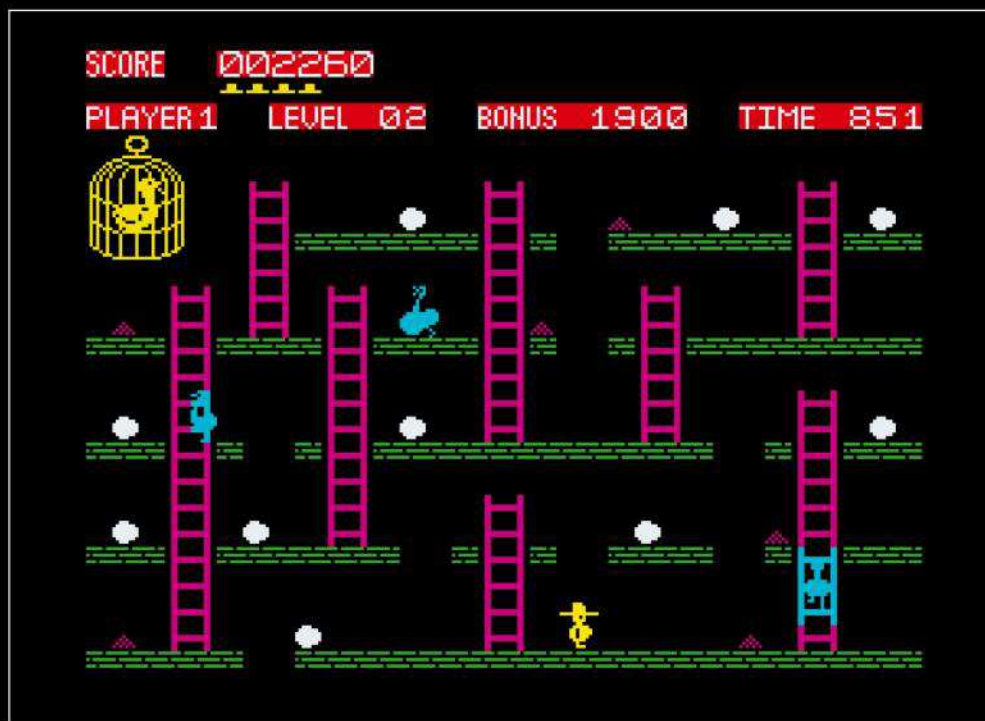
Genre Platformer

Released 1983



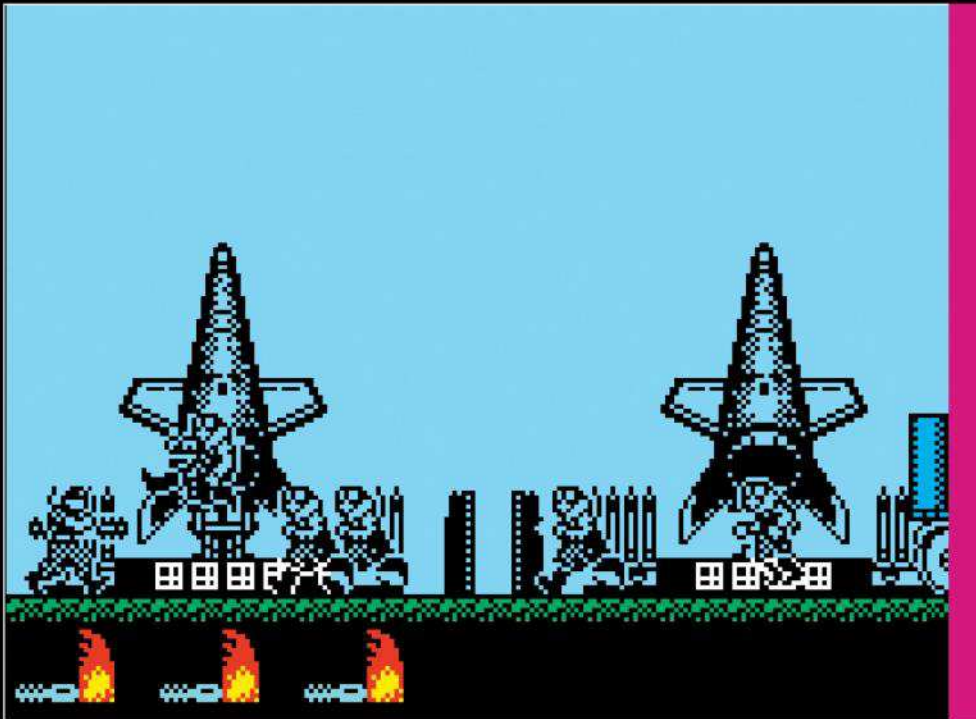
▲ CLASSIC BOSS

The giant duck is free! It floats over the platforms, homing in on our hero who has cunningly attempted to disguise himself as a ladder, painting it with the yellow hue of his own body via the Spectrum's unavoidable colour clash feature. The duck is unlikely to be fooled.



Gaining wide exposure thanks to being one of a limited selection of decent games for the BBC Micro, which was installed in almost every school computer room in the eighties, versions of *Chuckie Egg* appeared on a vast array of 8-bit formats.

While some versions were somewhat nicer to play than others, the basic gameplay remained the same. You travel through eight levels of platforms and ladders, avoiding hens and collecting eggs. When you reach the end, you start again except with a giant duck chasing you, and every additional time you beat it, more and more hens are added. It shifted over a million copies.

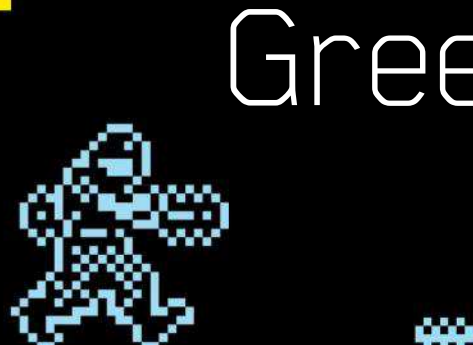
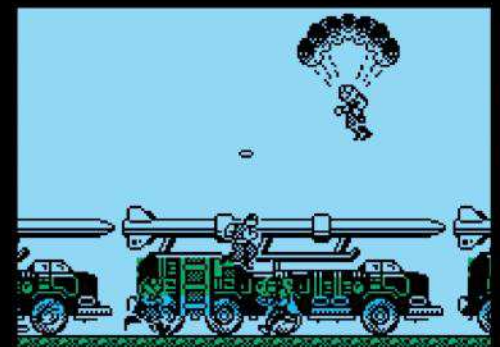
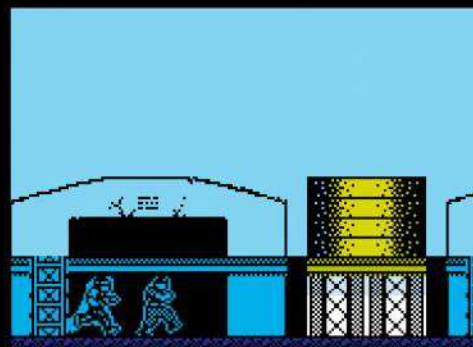


Making licensed arcade conversions for 8-bit computers generally involved the programmer borrowing a coin-op machine, or just watching a video of people playing it, and somehow trying to recreate as much of the game as possible on vastly inferior hardware.

The results were often far better than anyone had any right to expect, and this was one of the Spectrum's top arcade ports. The brutal difficulty of the original Konami coin-op was increased somewhat by the way enemy bullets blended into the background, but the first couple of levels (the only ones most people ever saw) were great.

▲ CLASSIC WEAPON

Although you could collect a rocket launcher or flamethrower, the vast majority of enemies had to be taken out by stopping to jab them with a knife. With an endless stream of them approaching from both sides of the screen, progress through the levels was a slow, gruelling stab-a-thon.



Green Beret

Developer Jonathan Smith

Publisher Imagine Software

Genre Run and gun

Released 1986



Ocean



Founded 1984
Headquarters Manchester, England
Years active 1984-1998
Lead platform ZX Spectrum



Classic Developer From bedroom to billions – the company that began the licensed game craze

A three time Golden Joystick award winner for Software House of the Year, Ocean's first proper hit was the definitely-not-Track And Field 1984 joystick-waggler Daley Thompson's Decathlon. Thus began a legacy of licensed titles; Ocean soon secured the rights to *officially* convert Konami's arcade games for home computers (released on its Imagine imprint) along with those of Data East and Taito.

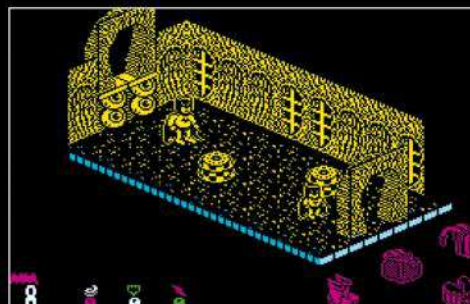
Perhaps Ocean's most famous trick was securing movie licenses – the likes of *Rambo*, *RoboCop* and, er, *Hudson Hawk* – and using them to make a bucketload of money despite middling to poor review scores. Bigger licenses like *Platoon* got special treatment – Ocean

pioneered the multi-load approach, essentially packaging several unique gameplay styles onto a single tape, making the most of the Spectrum's limited memory.

1986's *Batman* is probably the highlight of Ocean's licensed catalogue, exposing none of the Speccy's weaknesses with its beautiful isometric puzzling. Denton Designs' *The Great Escape* (1986) – just one of the 130 games Ocean published from external developers – is another classic, introducing smooth scrolling and some truly clever gameplay to the Spectrum. But the shallow, unenjoyable primary colour mess of *Knight Rider*, released in 1986, was Ocean's low water mark.



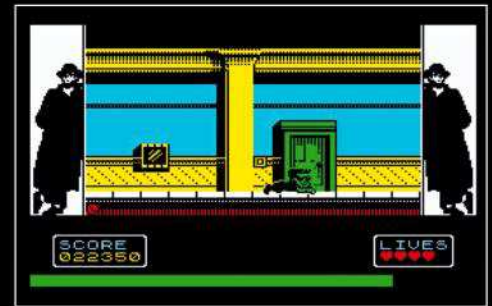
Rambo 1985



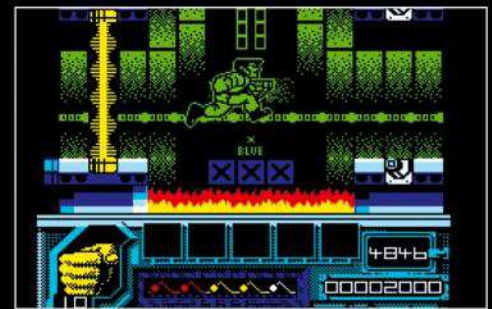
Batman 1986



Navy Seals 1990



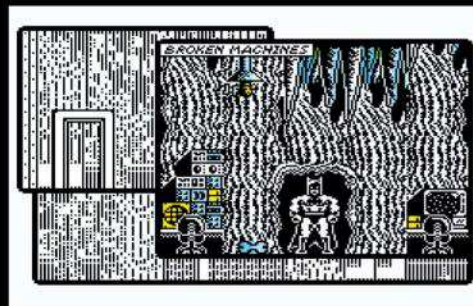
Hudson Hawk 1991



Total Recall 1991



Platoon 1987



Batman: The Caped Crusader 1988



Robocop 1989



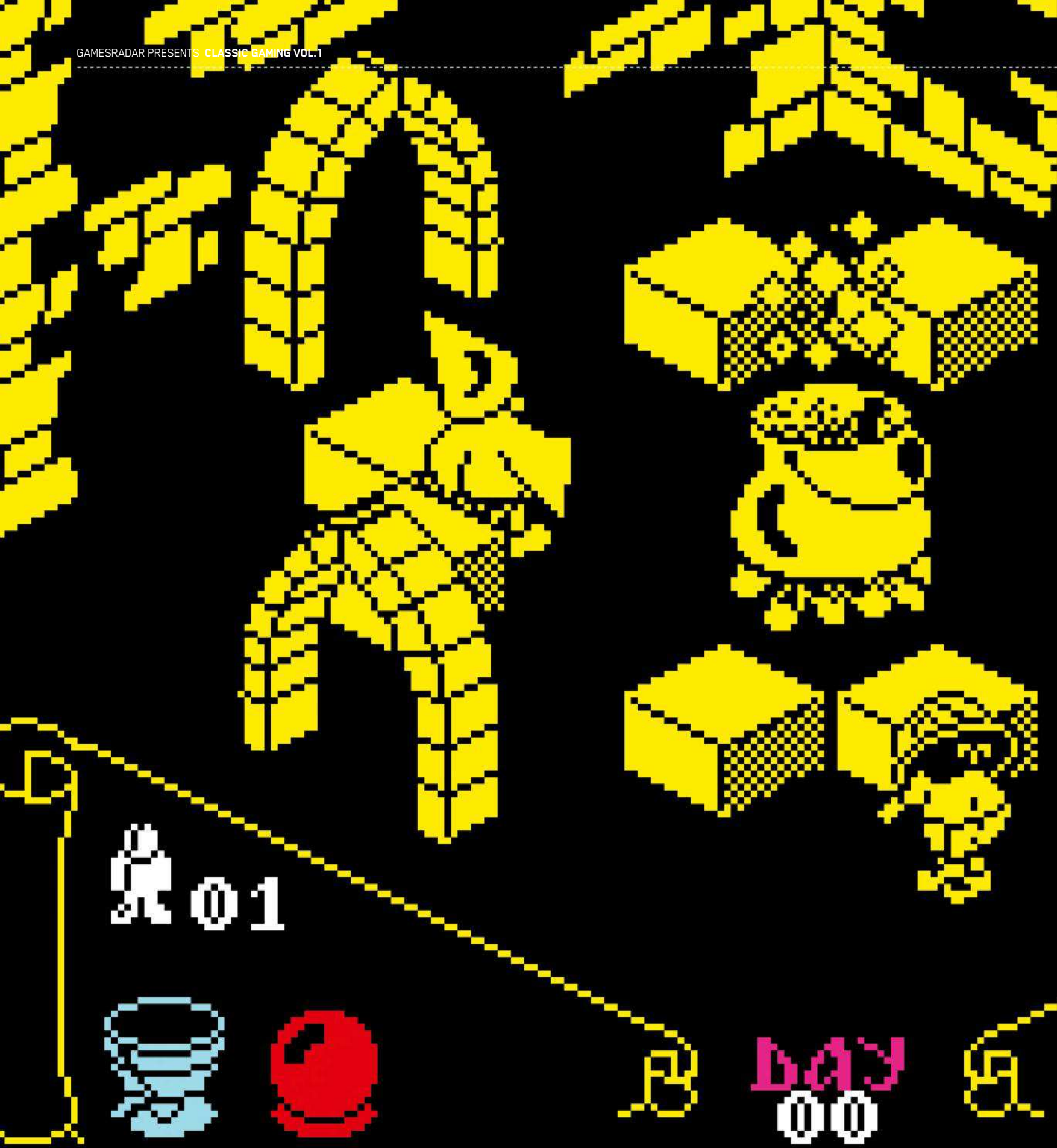
Knight Rider 1986



Cobra 1986



The Transformers 1986

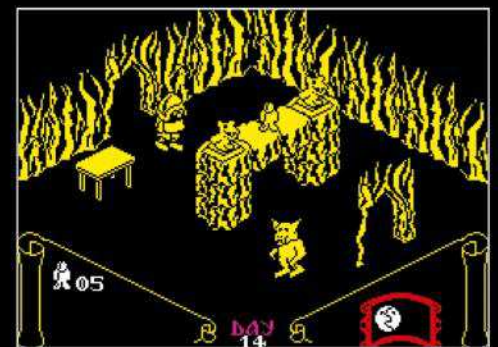


KNIGHT LORE

Back in 1984 Ultimate was Britain's coolest, most revered, most secretive software house. You could see it in their magazine ads – while others went to great lengths to spell out every selling point of a game (High score table! 100% machine code! Extra life at 10,000 points!), Ultimate's ads were nothing more than a full colour page with a stylish game logo and the name of the company. No screenshots, no text whatsoever.

Knight Lore was arguably their most influential game, creating an entirely new genre that was soon flooded with copycats. An adventure presented in a startlingly solid isometric 3D perspective, it was by far the best looking computer game anyone had seen at the time. It was a glimpse into the future.

The 3D view gave a new dimension to what was otherwise fairly standard gameplay. Piling up items to reach higher platforms and judging jumps from entirely unfamiliar angles meant *Knight Lore*, with its awkward rotate/move tank-style controls, was an experience unlike any previous game.



▲ CLASSIC HERO

Our hero Sabreman is cursed to turn into a werewolf every night. Here he is in mid transformation, which is a game-pausing effect you'll see every couple of minutes. You certainly don't want it to happen in mid leap.

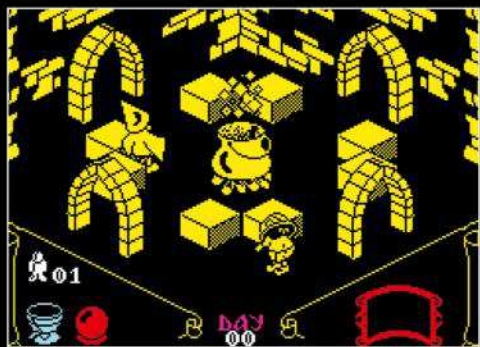


Developer Ultimate

Publisher Ultimate

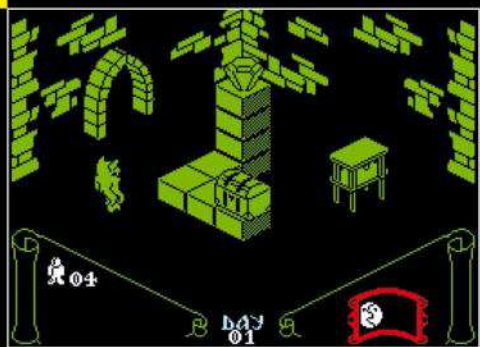
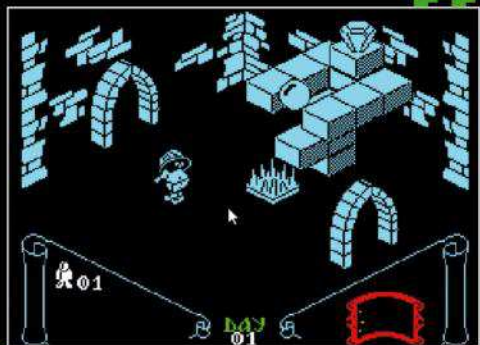
Genre Role-playing game

Released 1984



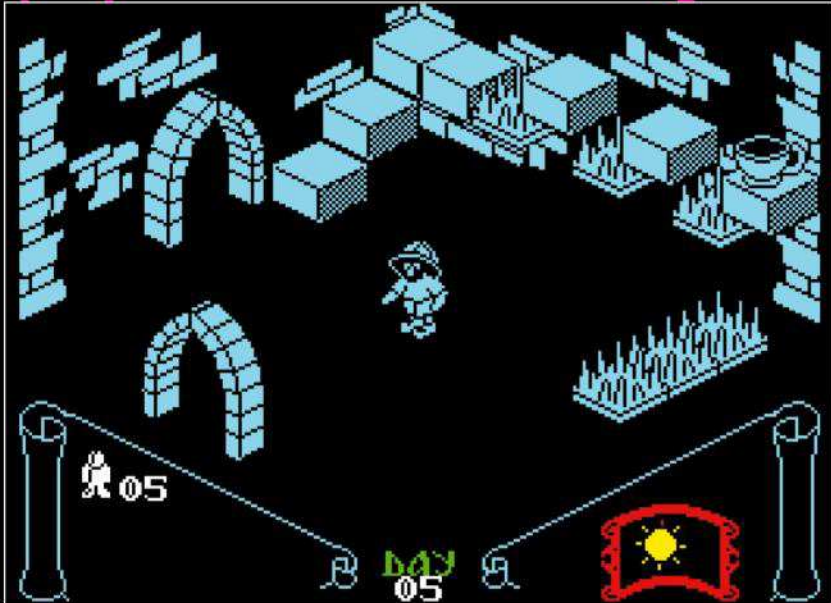
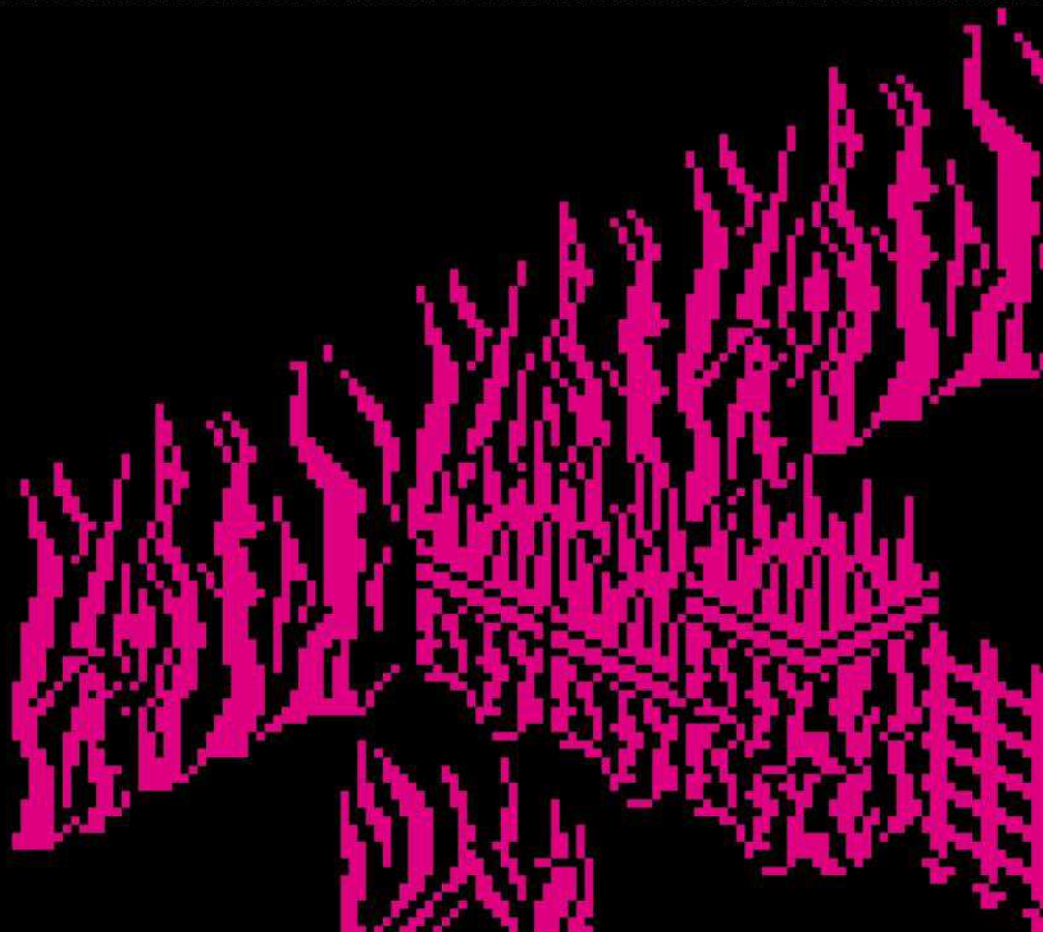
▲ CLASSIC MOMENT

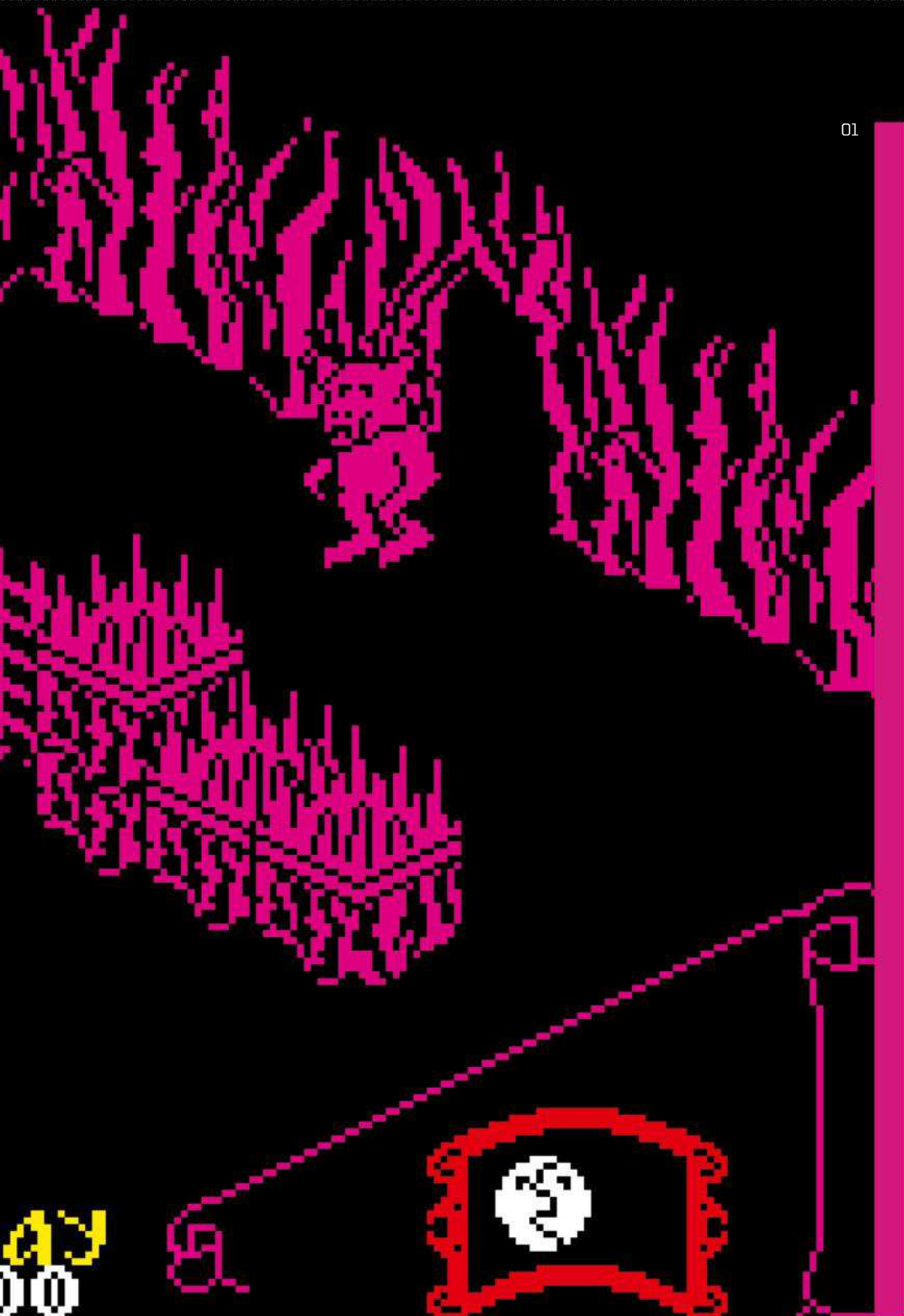
To remove the curse Sabreman must deposit a selection of items into the wizard's cauldron. Unfortunately the items are scattered far and wide in the most dangerous parts of the castle, and you can only keep three of them in your inventory at any time.



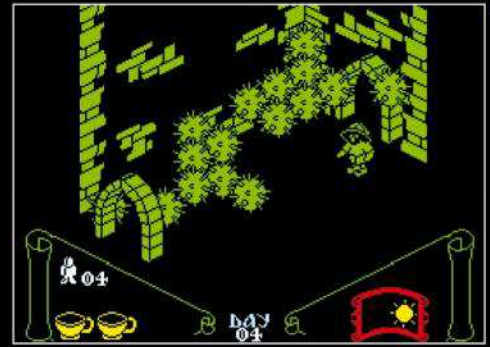
▲ CLASSIC LEVEL

Certain objects, like that table, can be pushed around the screen to let you access higher platforms. You could also drop an item from your inventory, stand on it and pick it up again at the moment you jump. Most of these things you wouldn't want to leave behind.



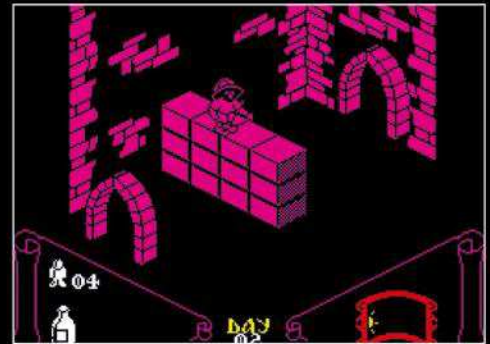


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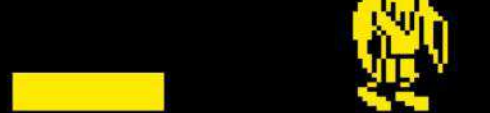
▲ CLASSIC VILLAIN

The game's Filmmation engine was great at displaying static scenes, but when there were lots of moving objects it could slow down to a crawl. It was worth making the slow motion crawl across an enemy-filled room to grab an extra life, though.



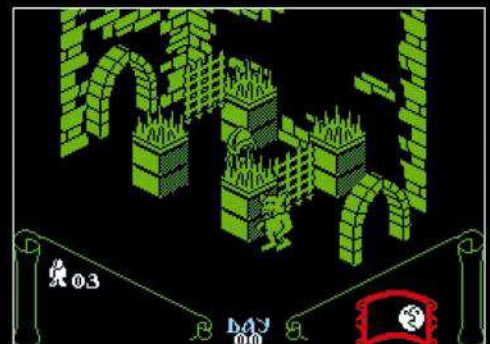
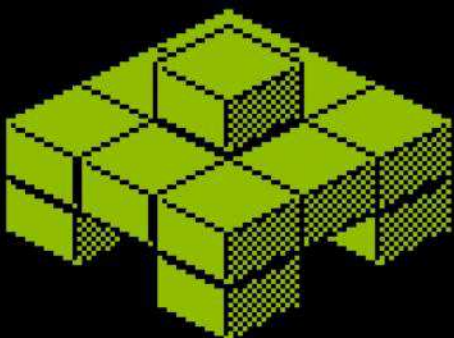
▲ CLASSIC INTRO

This simple screen is due north of your starting location. You only have 40 day/night cycles to complete the game, and your only directions came in the form of a poem that came in the game cassette's sleeve.



01 Life as a werewolf isn't all bad – you can jump higher, for starters, aiding with many of the puzzles.

02 Sabreman appeared in four games in total. (Five, if you include the unreleased *Mire Mare*.)



Jet Set Willy

Developer Matthew Smith

Publisher Software Projections

Genre Platformer

Released 1984



01



02





▲ CLASSIC MOMENT

Venturing off in a new direction and seeing one more room before dying was as much as the average gamer could hope for, and it was actually pretty cool. Unless you accidentally entered the new room from high up on the screen, in which case you'd repeatedly fall to your death until all your lives were gone.



03



▲ CLASSIC LEVEL

Because the game was so large and difficult, when playground rumours started about hidden features such as a secret island you could travel to by boat, nobody could conclusively disprove them. The island was actually added to the sequel, which was made without the involvement of Matthew Smith.



What *Miner Willy* did next. Having found huge success with *Manic Miner*, Matthew Smith took his signature character (and, thanks to an astonishingly lax contract, the entire previously published game) to a different software house, where he set about designing a suitably ambitious sequel. *Jet Set Willy* abandoned the more usual linear progression of levels in favour of free-form exploration of *Miner Willy's* large and unsurprisingly hazardous mansion. Having wrecked the joint during a riotous party, Willy is forced by his housekeeper to pick up trash from all 61 rooms before she'll allow him into his bedroom for some much needed sleep.

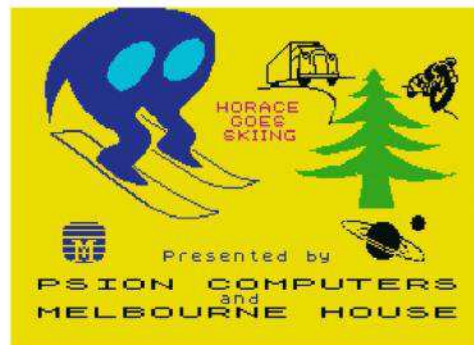
Her command is effectively a death sentence, since it wasn't actually possible to complete the game. An array of bugs meant that certain items weren't collectible, and visiting the attic would corrupt other rooms, turning them into death traps. Code was created for players to manually edit the game files to fix the error, but unless you bought the particular Spectrum mag these were printed in, you wouldn't have known they existed.

Such was the game's ball-shrivelling difficulty though, most players never noticed it was broken.



01 You had to time your swing carefully if you didn't want to meet your end via the Cold Store's deadly ice cream cones(!) or penguins(!!).

02 According to the plot, Willy bought his mansion with his gains from his previous mining exploits.



One of the most widely known early Spectrum games, largely by virtue of being given away free with the computer for several years.

Horace Goes Skiing was the tale of an amorphous blue blob (with massive empty eye sockets) who, foolishly, wants to run across a busy six-lane motorway.

On the other side of said motorway lies an abstract ski slope, dotted with the occasional tree and some flags that you're supposed to pass through. And all the way at the bottom of the ski slope is the motorway again. Repeat until you run out of dollars to pay for Horace's ambulance fees.



CLASSIC MOMENT
 You're going the wrong way, Horace! You're going the...ahh, what does it matter? If he reaches the bottom in one piece he'll only try running across the motorway again, so maybe it's for the best if he just ignores the flags and goes full pelt for the moguls and trees. Blaze of glory, Horace.



Horace Goes Skiing

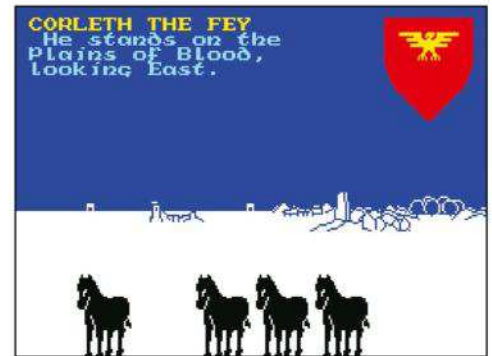
Developer Beam Software

Publisher Sinclair Research

Genre Sports

Released 1982



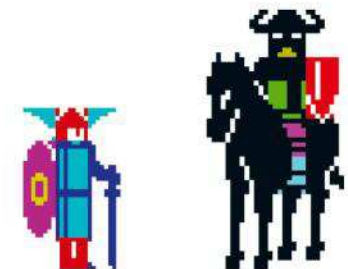
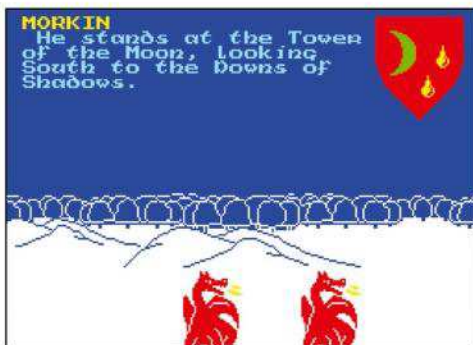
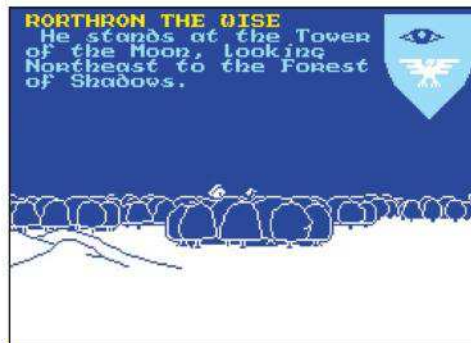


A game with 100 screens would have been considered pretty large for the Spectrum. *Lords of Midnight* boasted something like 4,000 panoramic locations, each viewable from eight compass directions, giving a total of 32,000 possible screens. By any standard, this was a seriously large game.

A unique hybrid of adventure and war game, *Midnight* involves switching between four different characters as they roam the colossal map in search of new recruits. The aim is to amass an army capable of defeating the evil Doomdark, under whose spell the Land of Midnight has been plunged into an everlasting winter. A Tolienesque epic in 48K.

▲ CLASSIC MOMENT

Looks like Luxor the Moonprince is going to have to get his sword dirty if he wants to get to those caves in the distance. Combat is a matter of selecting the option to fight. The action happens behind the scenes, and the results are conveyed via text afterwards.



Lords of Midnight

Developer Mike Singleton

Publisher Beyond Software

Genre Role-playing game

Released 1984



DIZZY

SPOTLIGHT

How gaming's original budget hero took an expensive toll on the sanity of Speccy owners...

Creators The Oliver Twins

Publisher Codemasters

Series lifespan 1987 - 2015

Latest release Wonderland Dizzy

Dizzy's creators Philip and Andrew Oliver say the reason their most famous hero took the form of an egg with boxing gloves is because they were looking for a shape that would be easy to draw and rotate. But drawing him would turn out to be the only thing about Dizzy that was easy, as anyone's who's played through one of his platform adventures can attest.

You see, Dizzy isn't just his name – it's also a description of his state of mind most of the time. Being an egg, he's prone to rolling down hills uncontrollably, which meant you had to be pixel-perfect with your jumps if you wanted to avoid overshooting and

drowning him in a pond, or have him tumble into the jaws of a crocodile.

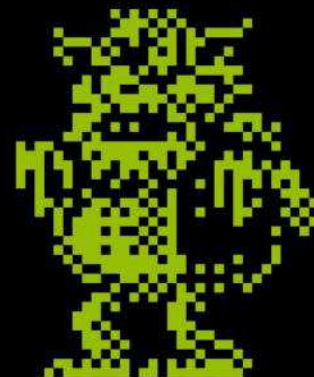
But despite the frustrations of controlling such an untameable hero, the Dizzy games couldn't help but, well, dizzy you with the charms of the inventory-based puzzling that drove the gameplay. While these puzzles were a simple case of matching an item with the obstacle they'd remove, this would sometimes require a lot of back-tracking over an ever-expanded world, plus a little outside-the-box thinking. (As an example: to get past that snap-happy croc, you hopped on with a length of rope and tied it around his snout. Voilà! Instant platform.)



Dizzy - The Ultimate Cartoon Adventure 1987



Fast Food 1987





Treasure Island Dizzy 1988



Fantasy World Dizzy 1989



Dizzy Panic 1990



Magicland Dizzy 1990



Bubble Dizzy 1990



Dizzy Down The Rapids 1991



Spellbound Dizzy 1991

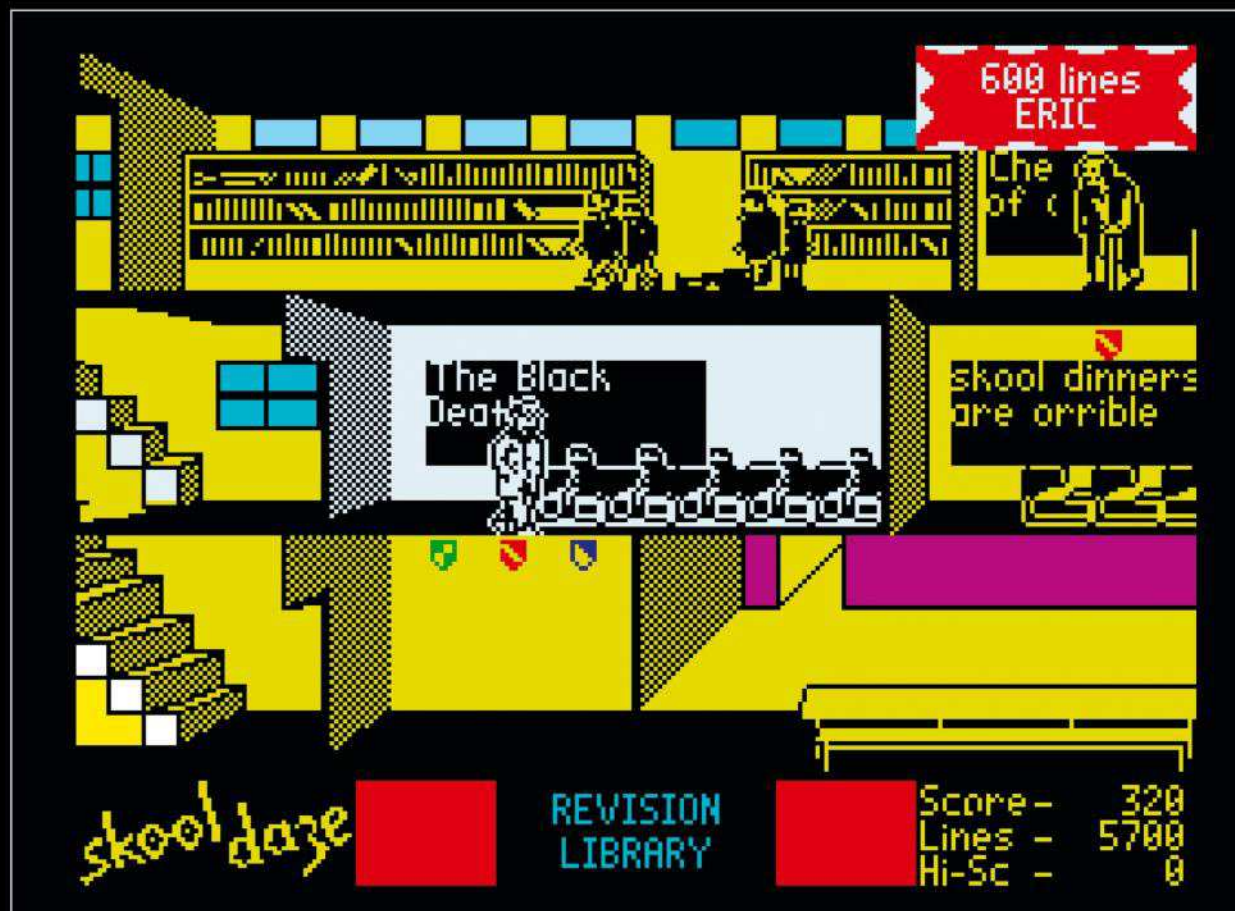


Dizzy Prince of the Yolkfolk 1991

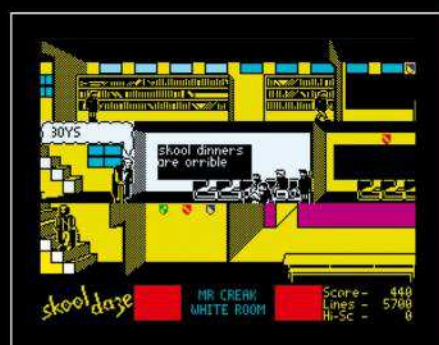
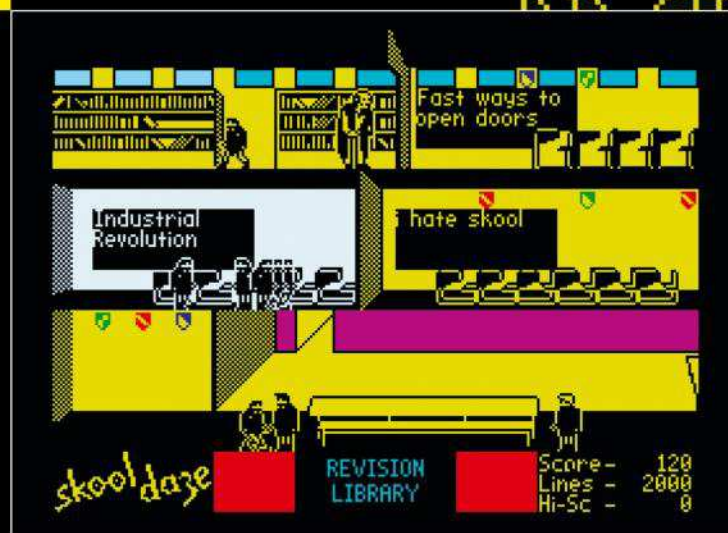
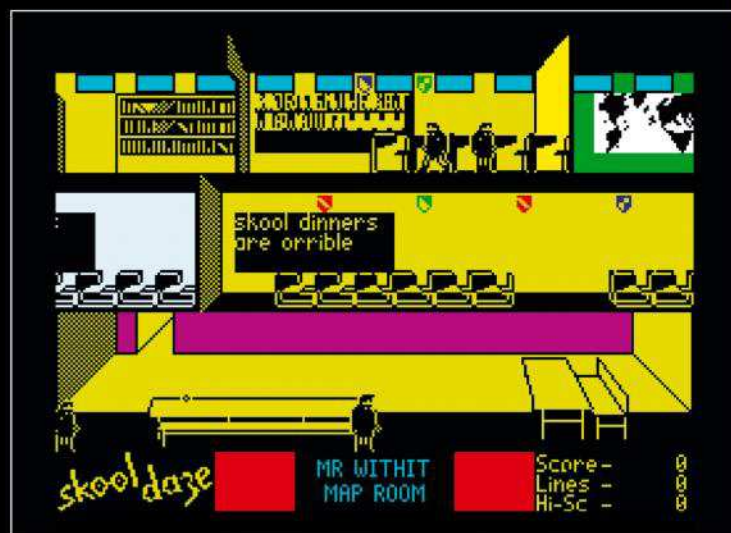


Crystal Kingdom Dizzy 1992

01



01 Eric can receive lines for things that aren't his doing - such as being nearest to teacher when a pupil-made projectile collides with his bonce.
 02 There's Mr Withit, warbling on about geography again. The school was its own little ecosystem, and one of the first true sandbox game worlds.



Skool Daze

HURRY UP YOU HORROR

Developer David & Helen Reidy

Publisher Microsphere

Genre Sandbox

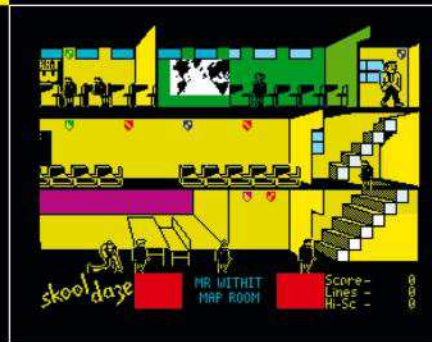
Released 1984



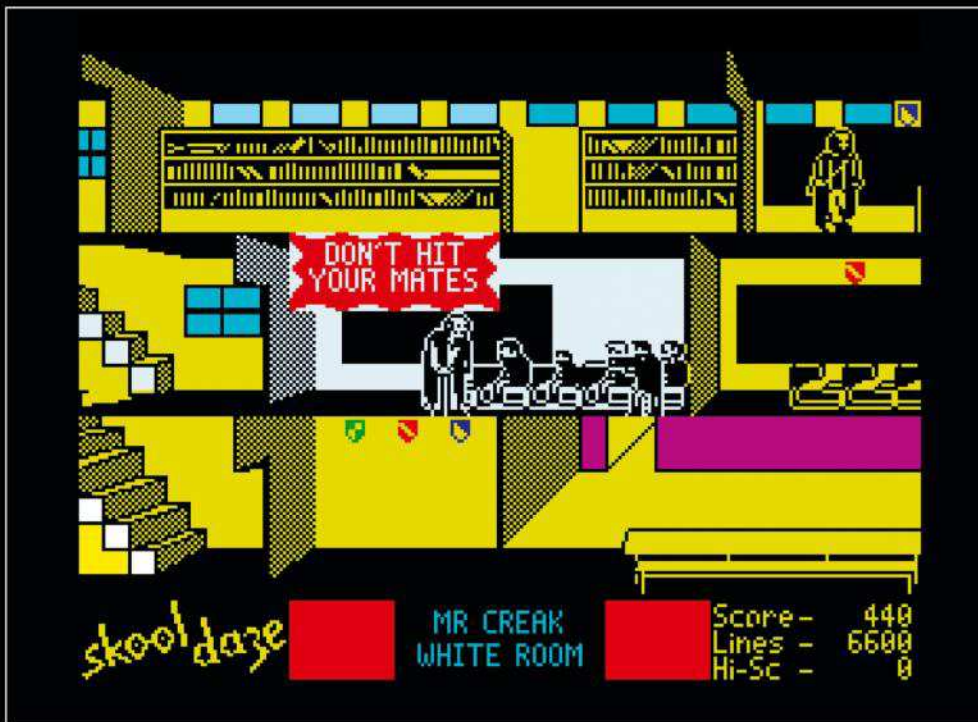


▲ CLASSIC MOMENT

The school is so chronically oversubscribed, there aren't enough chairs for all the pupils. You have to shove somebody out of their seat, forcing them to shove the next person out, until eventually you get shoved out yourself. Then you get given lines for falling on the floor.



02



▲ CLASSIC BOSS

School swot Einstein spends most of the lessons telling tales. Sometimes the teachers give him lines for being a grass, but usually it's you who gets the punishment. Repeatedly knocking him out of his chair so he can't finish his sentence is the only way to shut him up.



An authentic simulation of 1980s school life, *Skool Daze* sees young Eric endure an endless timetable of double maths, triple geography and relentless bullying as he attempts to liberate an incriminating report from the headmaster's safe.

It was unusual in that the school would more or less run itself if you left it alone. Pupils would go from class to class, write on the blackboards before the teachers arrive, punch each other in the face during breaks and tell tales to get each other in trouble.

In the midst of this clockwork riot, your job was to set all of the school's trophies flashing, by jumping up and hitting them or by knocking down a teacher and bouncing a catapult off his head. Once this was accomplished, the teachers would be hypnotised into giving up their piece of the safe combination.

Retrieving the report would allow you to move up a year rather than be held back for remedial purposes, while accumulating 10,000 lines worth of punishment – an all too easy feat – would see you expelled. A sequel, *Back 2 Skool*, expanded on the format to great effect, but the original is probably the more fondly remembered.



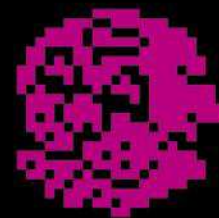
Head Over Heels

Developer Jon Ritman

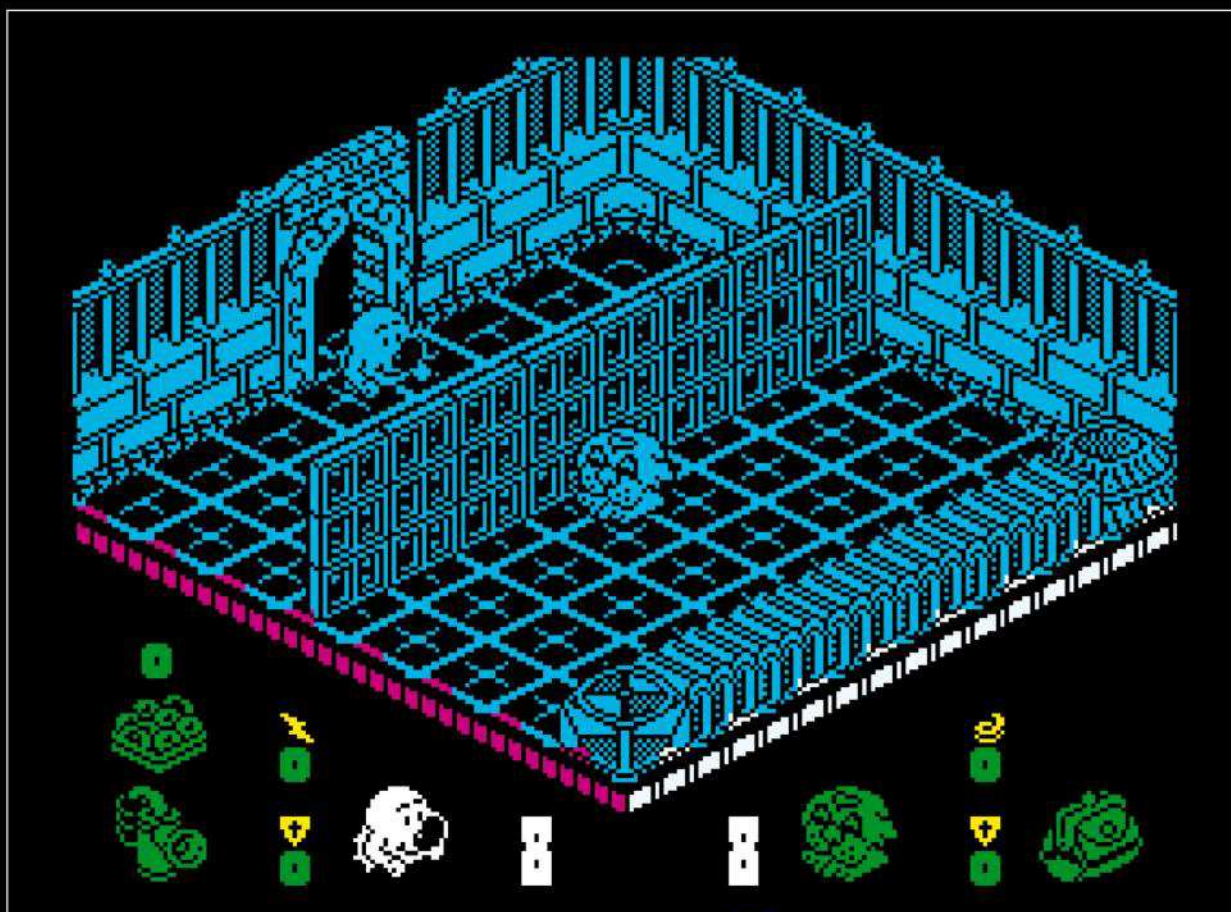
Publisher Ocean

Genre Action-adventure

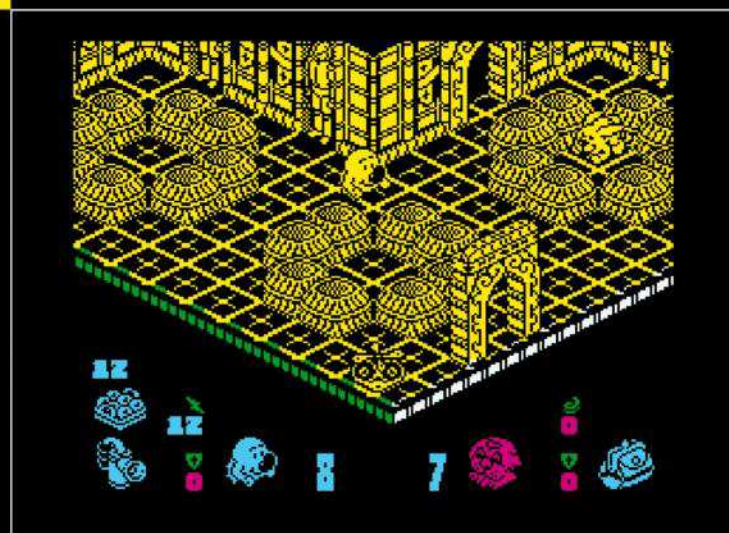
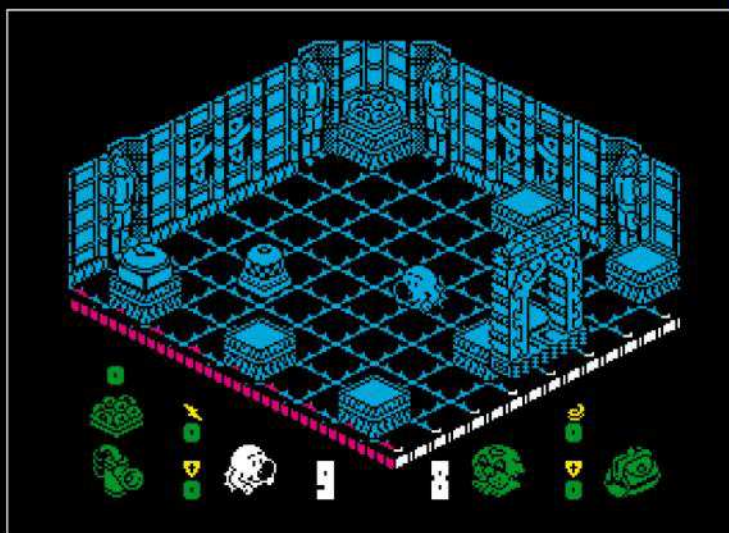
Released 1987

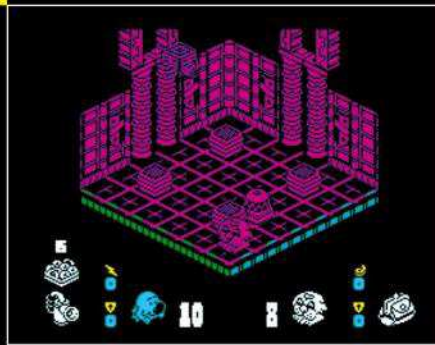
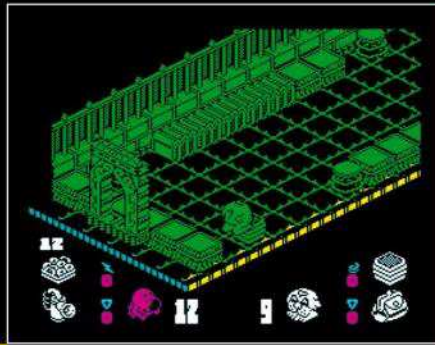


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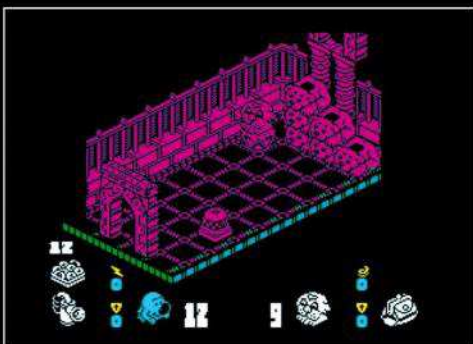
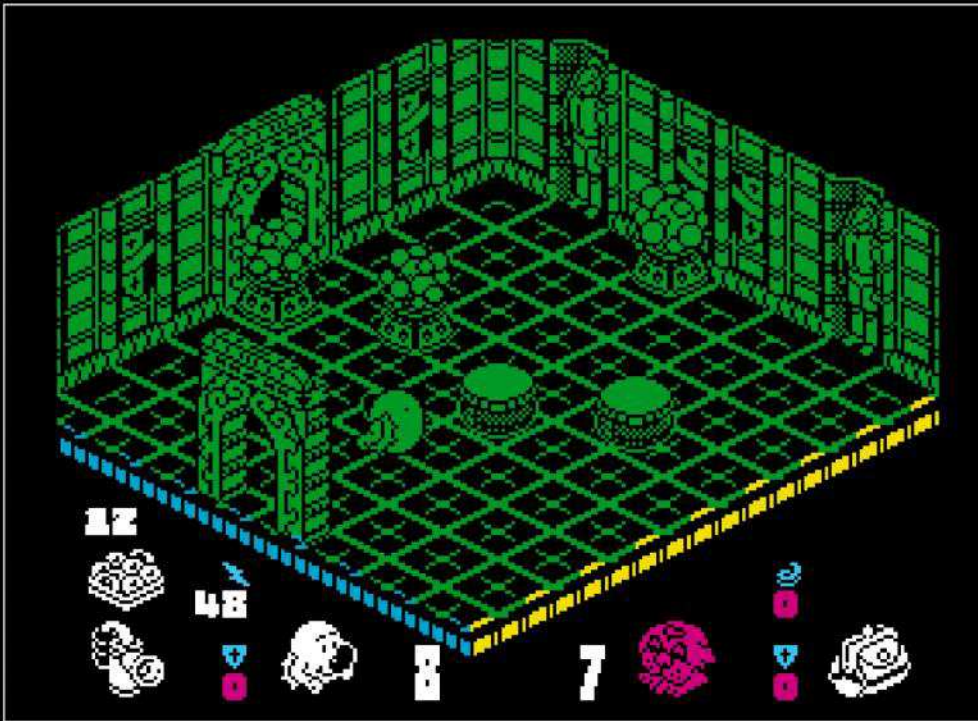
02





▲ CLASSIC WEAPON

Yes, that's a Dalek with the head of Prince Charles. You control it by pushing those round bumpers until it's in the correct position to act as a platform for crossing the deadly spiked floor. Head and Heels are working together for this bit.

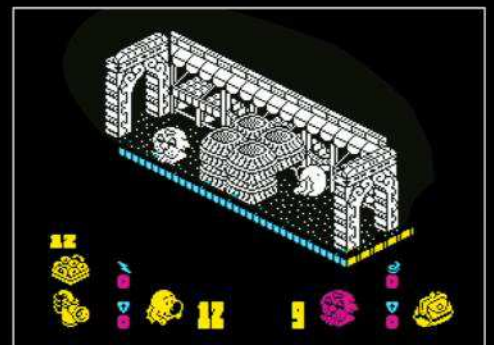


◀ CLASSIC MOMENT

Heels prepares to climb one of the dog staircases. They just vanish if Head enters the room. Heels will need to carry some bongos up to the top, though, because his feeble jump isn't high enough to reach the doorway. It's all perfectly logical.

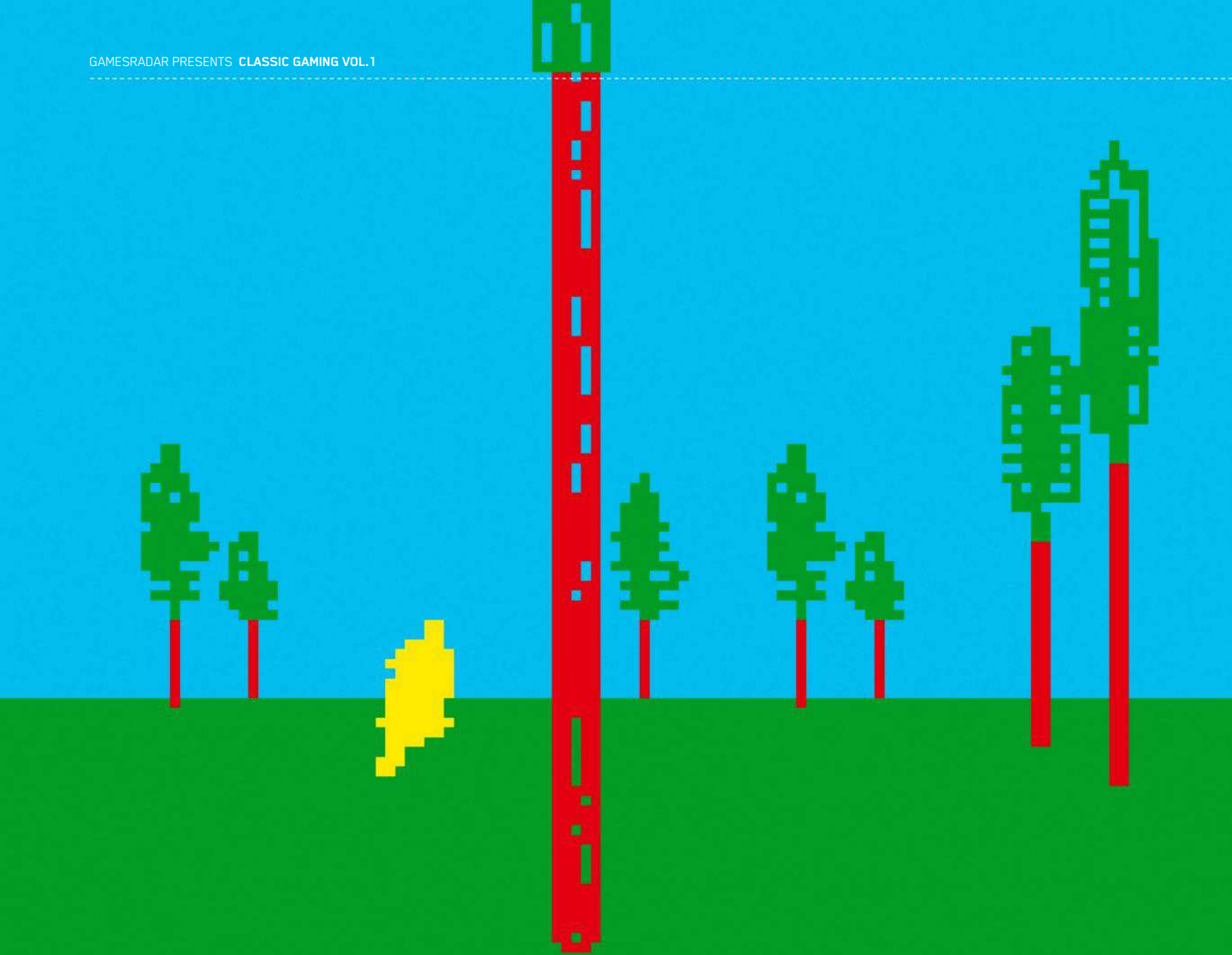
Released in 1987, three years after the game that inspired it, *Head Over Heels* was the most highly evolved of all the many *Knight Lore*-style adventure on the Spectrum.

With five themed areas it was many times the size of *Knight Lore*, yet somehow it managed to pack in a graphical density and variety far beyond that offered by Ultimate's pioneering game. Even the floors were intricately detailed, and as if to prove that it really did deserve to be regarded as a different species, *Head Over Heels* had two separate characters to play with. Head could leap high and glide gracefully though the air, while Heels could run fast and climb disappearing staircases made from dogs. Yes. After a while the two would meet up so you could stack them together and combine their abilities, but certain puzzles would eventually split them up again. It was a big game, and like most Spectrum titles it lacked a save feature, forcing you to complete the entire thing in one sitting. Still, if ever there was a game that justified the risk of melting your Spectrum by leaving it switched on overnight, it was surely *Head Over Heels*.



01 On the game's opening screen, we see both Head (the dog) and Heels (the cat) – so close, and yet, thanks to the wall between them, so far away.

02 Head could jump for England (or whatever country it is he's from), but he's far more sluggish than Heels.



DEATHCHASE

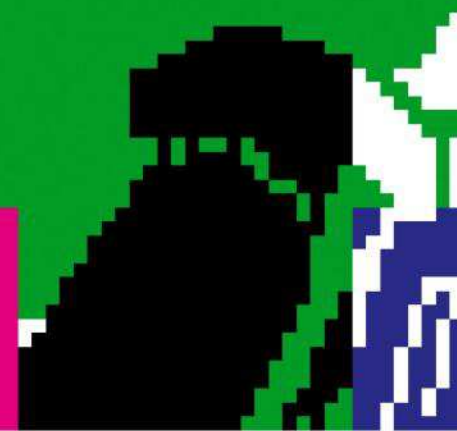
Developer Mervyn Estcourt

Publisher Micromega

Genre Action

Released 1983

: \$: 005680 :
: LIVES : 3 :





CULT CLASSIC



Sometimes, the simplest ideas really are the best. In *Deathchase* (commonly but incorrectly known as *3D Deathchase*), you play a maniac on a gun-mounted motorbike who hunts down two other motorcyclists in an endless forest. (You can see one of them on this page – he’s that yellow blob to the left.) The sense of speed is exhilarating, and the thrill of the hunt only heightens when day turns to night.

HI : 00000000
 [] RANGE

AMIGA

Commodore's beauty was big, bulky and relentlessly beige, but its games were a riot of colour and fun

Bridging the gap between the glory days of the 8-bit home computers and the dawn of modern-day Windows PCs, the Amiga came into prominence during an era where gaming was beginning to find both its feet and its identity, and that was reflected in its vibrant and varied software library.

While you'd still find the odd offering that was produced by one or two bedroom programmers (and it had a very healthy public domain scene), increasingly we'd see games built by much larger teams of specialists. The result: games that were bigger than ever before, both in size and in scope. Often larger than the Amiga's puny floppy disk format could handle, in fact, meaning many games came on

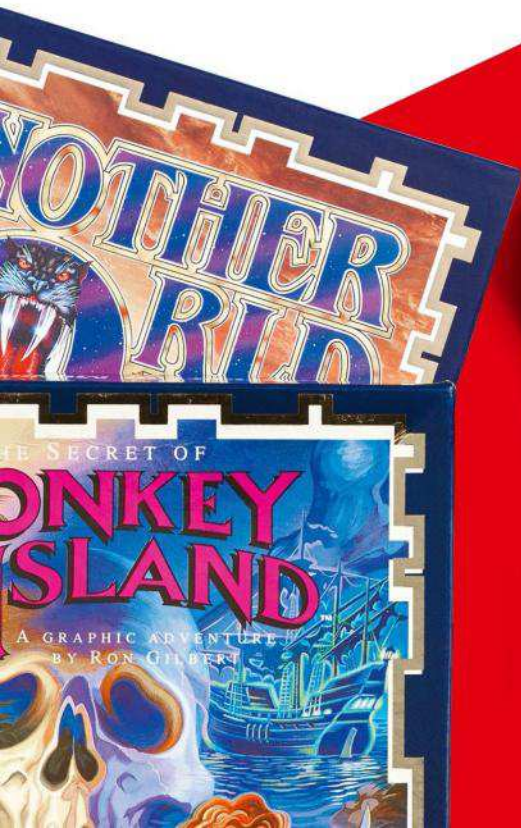
multiple disks (sometimes, such as with the LucasArts adventures, in excess of ten), which meant disk-swapping was a way of life for Amiga owners. After the pains of 1980s cassette tape decks, however, the Amiga was considered the very definition of convenience.

In its later years, the Amiga found itself under pressure not from its rival Atari ST and IBM PC systems, but from a new breed of 16-bit consoles such as the Sega Mega Drive and the Super Nintendo Entertainment System.

To combat this, Commodore introduced various hardware revisions – from the sleek A600 to the ill-fated CD32 – but compatibility woes and a lack of developer support meant that by the mid-90s, the line had run out of steam.



This model is an Amiga 500 running Workbench version 1.3. It came out of the box with just 512kb of RAM, but this could be doubled with an expansion.



Manufacturer Commodore
Processor Motorola 68000 @ 7.09mhz
Units sold 4 million
Released 1987



THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND



Walk to

Developer Lucasfilm Games

Publisher Lucasfilm Games

Genre Point and click adventure

Released 1990

Guybrush Threepwood wants to be a mighty pirate, but there's a problem: the weedy twerp could barely pirate a

CD, let alone survive in the cut and thrust world of buccaneering. With the pirate captains unimpressed by his ability to hold his breath for ten minutes, Threepwood ("Threepwood!") sets off to fulfil three trials in order to prove that he's made of rummer stuff than his hapless appearance suggests.

You'll never read an article about the funniest videogames of all-time that doesn't mention *Monkey Island*. Lucasfilm's all-star writing team, led by Ron Gilbert and a young Tim Schafer, delivered a swashbuckling comedy epic that felt more like an interactive comic book than it did a videogame.

Smooth-talking salesman Stan and his sinking ships. The mythical (or IS it?) three-headed monkey. A rubber chicken with a pulley in the middle. We could fill this entire book with unforgettable characters and in-jokes. But it was often the throwaway one-liners from the scurvy supporting cast that compelled players to continue clicking round the next corner.



▲ CLASSIC MOMENT

Gilbert hated the way adventure games discouraged experimentation by killing you, so coming a cropper in *Monkey Island* is almost impossible, except for one scene where our hero (true to his boast) has ten minutes to free himself from the idol anchoring him to the seabed. The solution is simpler than it seems.

01



▲ CLASSIC LEVEL

After much ado, Threewood ("Threepwood!") finally manages to assemble a crew to follow him to Monkey Island™. Alas, the allure of sunbathing swiftly turns them mutinous, and Gorbush ("Guybrush!") has to cook up a more, ahem, explosive method of reaching shore. It's a short but sweet section that gives the two main sections room to breathe.

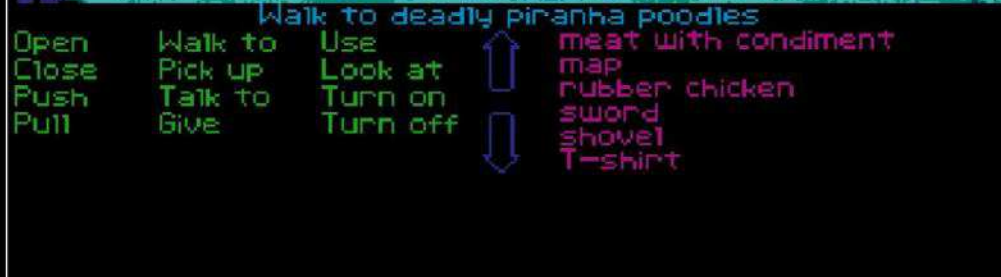


▲ CLASSIC VILLAIN

Threewood's ("Threepwood's!") movements are shadowed by the ghost pirate captain LeChuck, an ex of the governess Elaine Marley in life, and scourge of the seas in death. In the game's thrilling climax, LeChuck punches Threewood ("Threepwood!") all across Mêlée Island, until our hero happens on the only substance no pirate's guts can withstand.



Walk to ja



02



ail entrance

breath mint
red herring
hunk o' meat
pot



01 Mêlée Island is host to the game's first chapter. Many pirates of low moral fibre call this remote Caribbean island their home.
02 We're outside the governess' mansion, where the Fabulous Idol lurks within. But before we can even think about pilfering it, we've got the problem of her deadly attack poodles to deal with...



Soon you'll be wearing my sword like a shish kebab!
You make me want to puke.
Nobody's even drawn blood from me and nobody ever will!
You fight like a dairy farmer.
I got this scar on my face during a mighty struggle!
Have you stopped wearing diapers yet?

▲ CLASSIC WEAPON

On Mêlée Island, sword fights between pirates are decided not by sparring skills, but by razor-sharp wit. After learning numerous insults and retorts while practicing with the local drunkards, Droopface ("Threepwood!") challenges the Sword Master, and has to counter her brand-new barbs with the most appropriate of his learned responses.



My name's Guybrush Threepwood, and I want to be a pirate!

▲ CLASSIC INTRO

"You want to be a pirate, eh? You look more like a flooring inspector." The lookout is the first character you meet, and while he plays such a small part in the story as a whole, his snide retorts are typical of the kind of thinly-veiled contempt Gibberish ("Guybrush!") will be met with throughout his adventure.



Prince of Persia

Developer Domark

Publisher Brøderbund

Genre Action-adventure

Released 1990



01





▲ CLASSIC BOSS

When it came down to it, Jaffar was every bit as mortal as anyone you'd fought so far – falling quickly to some well-timed thrusts of your sword. In some ways it was anticlimactic, but it served the narrative beautifully: he wasn't a super-villain, just a really nasty guy.



02



▲ CLASSIC MOMENT

The Prince's shadowy doppelgänger presented an intriguing dilemma: how do you kill your own reflection, especially since damaging it meant you felt the same pain? The answer, of course, was to merge with it, an epiphany that few players would forget.



Before the days of fancy motion-capture studios, game makers had to come up with cheaper, more inventive alternatives for realistic animation. Designer Jordan Mechner smartly decided to adopt the cinematic technique of rotoscoping, tracing over individual frames of footage of his brother in white clothes to create the movements of the titular hero. For the swashbuckling sword fighting, meanwhile, Mechner used stills from Errol Flynn and Basil Rathbone's duel in *The Adventures of Robin Hood*.

The results set a new standard for character animation in video games. But more than that, they added to the sense of horror when you sent the poor Prince plummeting to a violent death. The Tower he had to escape to rescue a princess from the merciless vizier was so stuffed with traps, spikes and enemies that it made your average *Uncharted* level look like a children's ball pit. And with just an hour to achieve your goal, every death meant something – so once the visual impact of a skewering was dulled by repetition, it still felt like a serious setback. Precise and economical, it remains a memorably distinctive experience more than a quarter of a century on.

03



01 Sword-fighting is about timing your thrusts and parries, and knowing when to advance or retreat.

02 With only an hour to save the day, sometimes the Prince had to throw caution to the wind.

03 Getting caught between one of these snap-happy nasties was a particularly gruesome way to die.

Cannon Fodder

Developer Sensible Software

Publisher Virgin Interactive

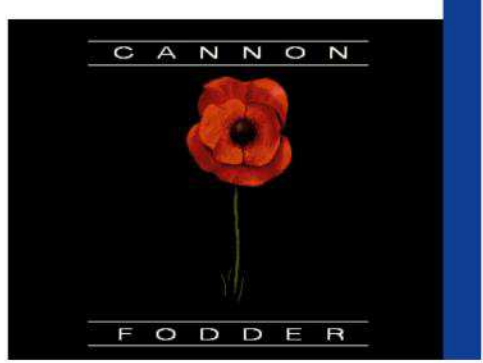
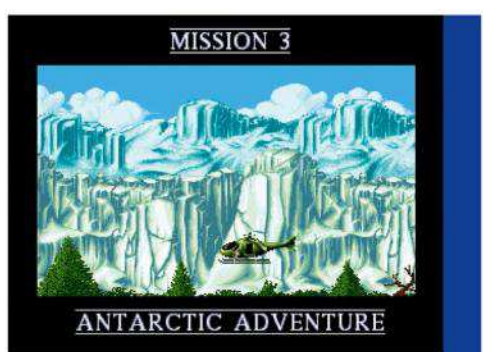
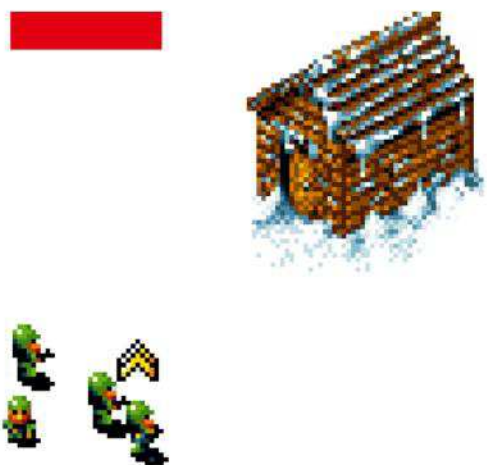
Genre Strategy

Released 1993



▲ CLASSIC MOMENT

There was something very powerful and shocking about the first time you gunned down an enemy and he didn't die - instead lying there writhing and yelping in pain, inviting you to put him out of his misery. More thought-provoking than many so-called moral dilemmas in modern games.



This game is not in any way endorsed by the Royal British Legion. *Cannon Fodder's* splash screen cheekily referenced the legal battle over using a red poppy on its cover. Ferocious press coverage called for a ban, making *Cannon Fodder* one of the first 'video nasties' to be criticised for tone rather than content. Yet it had a much-misread anti-war agenda. The infamous motto "war has never been so much fun" was clearly sarcastic, while its screen of new recruits lining up before a hill studded with gravestones marking the fallen starkly highlighted the sad futility of conflict. Yet beneath the poignant imagery was a compelling (and, yes, so much fun) mix of action and strategy.

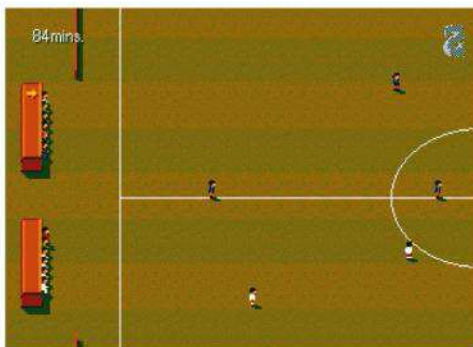
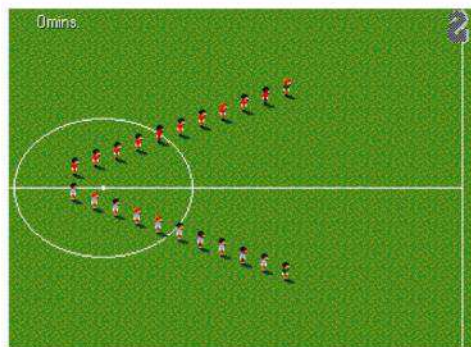


Still considered by some as the greatest football game ever made, *SWOS* was a superb refinement of the original's excellent foundations.

It played a more flexible game, promoting an attractive brand of tiki-taka passing football while still allowing for the odd uncultured hoof upfield. Unrealistic as it was, the sublime aftertouch gave you a degree of control unmatched by other simulations of the beautiful game at the time. Meanwhile, a new career mode with light management elements laid down a template from which so many sports games since have borrowed – likewise, the concept of subsequent releases with their updated rosters and features.

▲ CLASSIC HERO

Tempting as it is to highlight the ludicrously good Gianluca Vialli, the real hero of *SWOS* was the goal-scoring superstar hero celebrated in its absurdly catchy theme tune, who let his hair down and played to the fans.



Sensible World of Soccer

Developer Sensible Software

Publisher Renegade

Genre Sports

Released 1994





The Bitmap Brothers



Founded 1987

Headquarters Wapping, UK

Years active 1987 - current

Lead platform Amiga

Classic Developer The Wapping-based outfit that made it cool to be a games programmer

Before the likes of Hideki Kamiya, John Romero and Hideo Kojima became gaming icons, there were the Bitmap Brothers – the original game programming rockstars.

Founded in London in 1987, the Bitmap Bros swiftly rose to become the most recognisable figures in the UK games industry. This was a deliberate move by co-founders Mike Montgomery, Steve Kelly and Eric Matthews, who were tired of publishers hogging all the publicity. To get themselves noticed, they sent pictures of themselves to games magazines,

posing in the leather jackets and dark shades that became their trademark. The rest, as they say, was history.

And their games were as cool as their makers' public personas. While the Bitmap Bros tried their hand at a variety of genres, their back catalogue was united by the Bitmap's distinctive, metallic-grey graphical style. They were also one of the first to use professional artists for their in-game music – most famously, their 1989 title *Xenon II: Megablast* used the dance track *Megablast*, by UK act *Bomb The Bass*, as its loading screen music.



XENON 1988

The Bros' first effort was this vertically-scrolling shoot-'em-up where the player could swap between a craft and a tank on the fly. It was most notable for being featured on ITV's Saturday morning kids show *Get Fresh*, where contestants would shout instructions to a blindfolded player over the phone.

01



02



03

**01 Xenon II: Megablast** 1988

The sequel captured the Amiga owning public's imagination at the time with its big, beautiful sprites and finger-snapping dance soundtrack. But time hasn't been too kind; the tempo is too slow to truly excite, and it had a nasty tendency to funnel your ship down narrow, enemy-packed corridors.

02 Speedball 2 1990

There are plenty of games based on existing sports, but not enough with the brass neck to invent their own sport. Speedball was a thuggish cyberpunk sport which allowed you to punch your opponents clean out, but there are also numerous ingenious ways to snatch a last-gasp win.

03 Cadaver 1990

Bitmap's one and only foray into the RPG genre was this isometric adventure, where as Karadoc, a bounty hunter dwarf, you amble round a castle solving puzzles and slaying everything from rats to dragons.

**GODS** 1991

Bitmap's first crack at a platformer, *Gods*' biggest contribution to gaming history was what, to our knowledge, is one of the first ever cracks at adaptive AI. The smoother your passage through the game, the tougher the enemies became. Considering it was cement-hard, however, few could verify that claim.

**MAGIC POCKETS** 1991

Possibly the closest the Bitmaps ever got to a true duffer, although despite its ponderous pace it was still better than a great many games in a saturated platformer market. Its hero, the 1990s-cool Bitmap Kid, dispatched his foes with level-specific special powers that originated from his pockets. (Er...)

**THE CHAOS ENGINE** 1993

The Bitmaps rediscovered their earlier form with this technically-accomplished top-down shooter set in a steampunk Victorian Britain. It was built for co-operative play, although the Amiga would fight alongside you if another player couldn't be found. The 1996 sequel was the Bitmap's Amiga swansong.

LEMMINGS

Developer DMA Design

Publisher Psygnosis

Genre Puzzle

Released 1991

OUT 9





Let's go! And with that cheery battle cry, the trapdoor creaked open and the lemmings dropped into the level to begin their merry march towards their doom. Only you, an all-omnipotent mouse cursor, could prevent these suicidal nitwits from hurling themselves into the nearest convenient lava pit. Based on the old wives' tale that lemmings (the rodent) would blindly follow each other off cliffs, *Lemmings* (the puzzler) was one of the first games to deny the player direct control over its heroes. Instead, you had to coax the ever-marching lems to the finish line by assigning jobs to individual members of the pack.

But coming up with the solution, of course, was only half the battle. While you were keeping one eye on a lemming building a bridge to the exit or digging an elaborate tunnel network, the other eye had to work overtime to ensure the rest of the herd weren't blundering into trouble. Fusing the puzzle and action genres in a way we hadn't seen before, *Lemmings* was hugely influential, paving the way for many of today's real-time strategy titles.



▲ CLASSIC MOMENT

Occasionally, *Lemmings* would break away from the classic fire/ice/earth themes and pay homage to other Psygnosis Amiga games. The first two *Shadow of the Beasts* each received a stage built using graphics from the original game, as did horizontal-scrolling shoot-'em-ups *Menace* and *Awesome* (pictured).

18 IN 01%





01



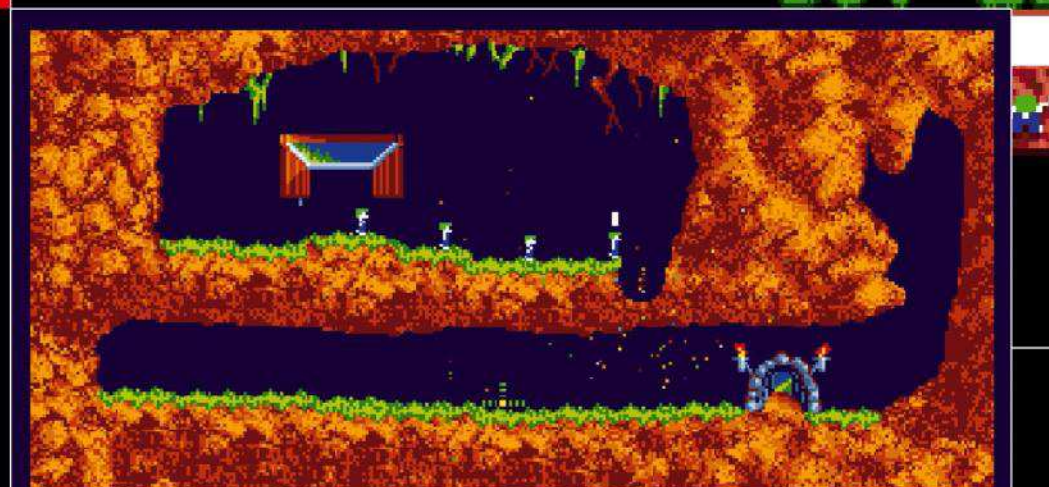
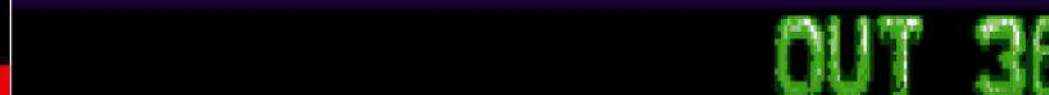
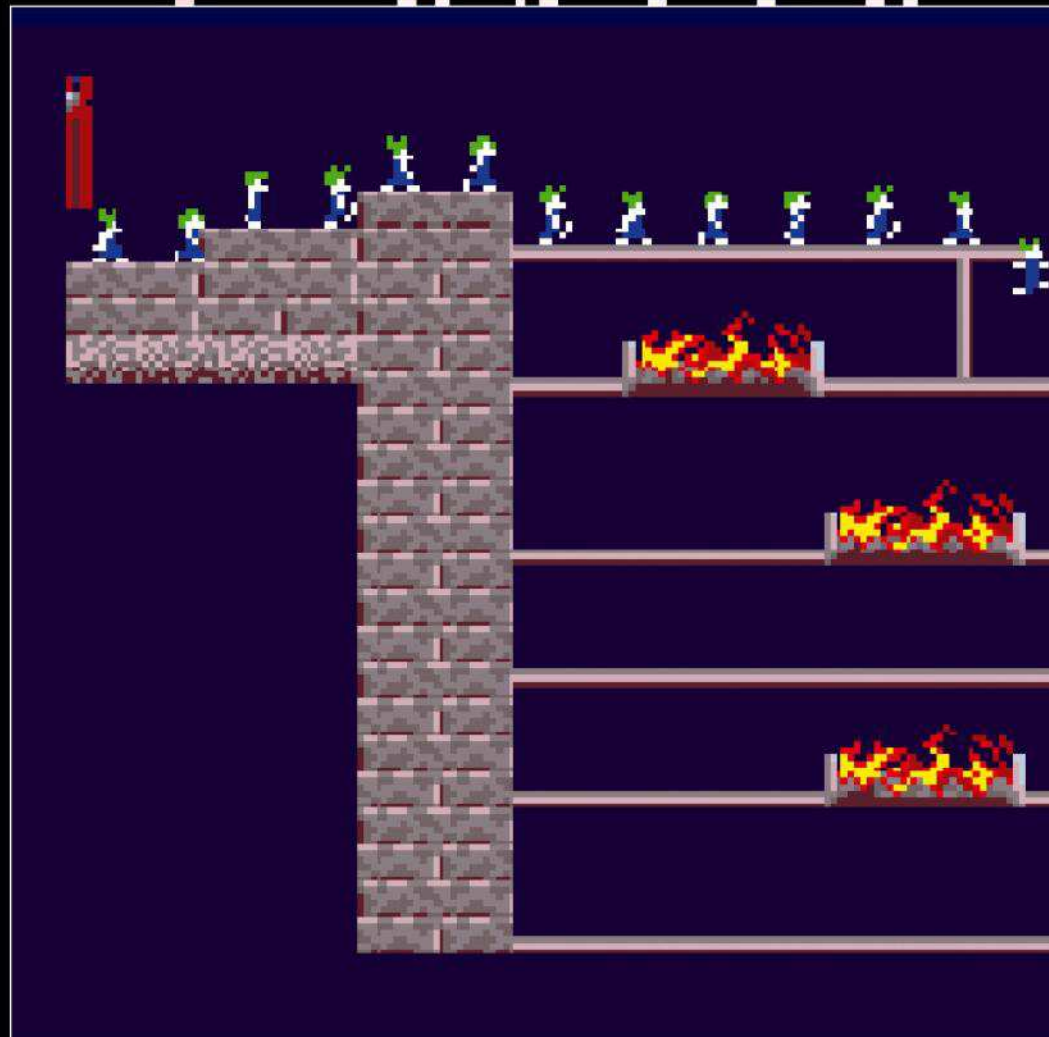
▲ CLASSIC INTRO

Disk one's animated short introduces the player to the lemmings' cavalier attitude to survival. A pile of them leap out of a hot air balloon, apropos of nothing, and begin marching indiscriminately. One serves as a blocker, the unsung hero of the tribe, freeing the way for the other to climb up what is revealed to be the 'L' of a massive *Lemmings* sign.



▲ CLASSIC VILLAIN

You don't actually encounter another living soul throughout the 120 level-long campaign, but some unseen force has clearly got it in for our heroes, judging by the number of traps dotted about the place. Of course, if things go south, you can play the ultimate villain by pressing the nuke button. Cathartic.



02



▲ CLASSIC LEVEL

Ironically, while *Lemmings* is largely a game about crowd control, the toughest stage in the game has you looking over just one, solitary lemming. Armed only with a handful of diggers, builders and builders, you had to guide this lonely lem to the finish by guiding it over a gauntlet of barely-there platforms. After this, just two more screens to go.



▲ CLASSIC HERO

While their dopey, suicidal antics often frustrated, it was impossible not to root for the lemmings. While they were only a few pixels tall, DMA Design managed to pack a boatload of charisma into just a handful of animation frames. Plus, the toe-curling splat of lem on concrete could break even the most hardened of hearts.



01 Not as easy as it looks. You have to time the explosions just right or the floors will break in the wrong place, leaving you to watch helplessly as the group march into a waiting furnace. **02** Later on, the game begins remixing old levels. Here's an alternate take on the opening puzzle, Just Dig.

01



01 Aarbron isn't the most graceful of heroes, so these precarious leaps are proper heart-in-mouth stuff – one slip and it's curtains. This chap isn't exactly helping matters either.

02 You have to kill this guy as a matter of priority – if he's allowed to reach the edge, you'll find yourself snookered, and it's a swift trip back to the beginning of the game for you.

02



Shadow of the Beast II

Developer Reflections Interactive

Publisher Psygnosis

Genre Action-adventure

Released 1990



▲ CLASSIC INTRO

An animated intro swallows up the entire first disk; it shows a mysterious winged demon swoop down onto a hut and snatch away Aarbron's sister. With that, you're dropped into the badlands of Karamoon, and are left to figure things out for yourself. The graphics were stunning for their time.



▲ CLASSIC MOMENT

Short of *International Karate*'s 'trouser-dropping' antics, is there an Amiga cheat more widely circulated than this one? Head right, talk to the tribe leader, and ask him about 'Ten pints'. He'll activate the infinite health cheat, and you might – just might – stand half a chance.

This puzzle-platformer was the ultimate example of style over substance. (As was its 1989 predecessor, come to

think of it.) It came packaged in a big, extravagant box adorned with custom artwork from the fantasy landscape illustrator, Roger Dean, and it sold itself on its beautiful graphics, slick scrolling and haunting soundtrack. But as soon as the game proper began, things swiftly turned ugly.

Simply put, this was one of the toughest games ever committed to disk. Aarbron, our half-man, half-beast hero, was also half-dead right out of the blocks; he entered the world of Karamoon with only a tiny vial of health, health the locals would delight in depleting at an incredible pace. And of course, you only got one life.

But despite the punishing difficulty, there was a tremendous sense of discovery and adventure about *Shadow of the Beast II*'s world, as the intrigue sparked by Dean's surreal artwork bled through into the game itself. You might not always have know what you were doing, but you knew it was more than just the luxurious graphics that were spurring you into doing it.



Turrican

Developer Factor 5

Publisher Rainbow Arts

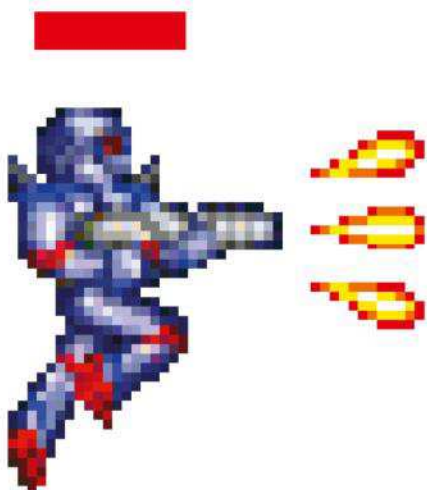
Genre Run and gun

Released 1990



▲ CLASSIC WEAPON

If you held down the fire button, Turrican would fire out his lightning whip, harnessing a thick beam of energy that could be rotated to take out enemies at any angle. Though its range was limited to begin with, once lengthened via upgrades it became almost unstoppable.



Despite attracting the attention of Nintendo's lawyers with *The Great Giana Sisters*, designer and coder Manfred Trenz wasn't about to shy away from his affection for that company's games.

Turrican owed a clear debt to *Metroid* – not least in the protagonist's Morph Ball-esque circular saw transformation – but in the way it blended labyrinthine levels with *Contra*-like shooting, it felt like its own game. With bold and exciting boss fights (the first stage alone sends out a giant robot fist to pound you into submission) and a wonderful Chris Huelsbeck soundtrack, *Turrican* proved that console-style games could work just as well on computers.

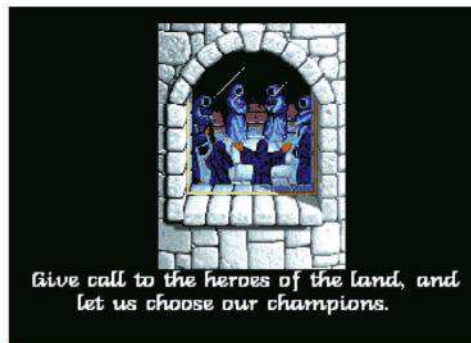


If you've enjoyed *Legend of Grimrock* or its sequel recently, then look no further than Westwood's vintage dungeon-crawler for its biggest inspiration.

A perilous descent into a dark and unforgiving underworld, this was an RPG that thrived on pressure, its mouse-based real-time interface lending combat a frantic intensity as you desperately juggled weapons and spells against increasingly hard-hitting creatures. With the ability to recruit additional party members – either by talking to key NPCs or resurrecting corpses – you could give yourself more of a shot at reaching the eponymous Beholder. Thankfully, the Amiga port offered a more fitting reward than the PC original's abrupt ending.

▲ CLASSIC MOMENT

The opening proved a real baptism of fire, casting you into the sewers below the city of Waterdeep with a rockslide preventing your escape. You'd no choice but to head onward and downward. Then the first Kobolds arrived to knock ten bells out of your frontline pairing and you knew you were in for a fight.



Eye of the Beholder

Developer Westwood Associates
Publisher Strategic Simulations, Inc.
Genre Role-playing game
Released 1991



LucasArts SPOTLIGHT

The company that dragged the adventure game genre out of the text parser doldrums



Founded 1982
Headquarters San Francisco
Years active 1982-2013
Lead platform Amiga

Younger gamers might have a hard time believing this, especially if they've recently hacked their way through one of Telltale's recent efforts, but the idea of graphic adventures such as *The Walking Dead* or *Life Is Strange* featuring moving images was once considered little more than a gimmick.

This way of thinking was a hangover from the genre's roots in text-based adventures such as *Zork*, where the player was left to picture the world in their head, and interact with it by typing clunky phrases such as 'BREAK LOCK WITH STONE' into the command line.

As technology progressed,

adventures began to include moving images, but were still slaves to the inflexible text parsers. This began to change when George Lucas formed Lucasfilm Games (later LucasArts) in 1982. The studio struck gold five years later with a new game engine called SCUMM (Script Creation Utility for Maniac Mansion), which introduced a new, more intuitive interface; instead of typing a vague command, you clicked on one of a list of action commands and then the item/person you wanted to do it to. This stripped out a lot of the guesswork that blighted the genre, and allowed the designers to implement tougher, more complex puzzles.



MANIAC MANSION 1987

Co-written by Gary Winnick and Rob Glibert (later of *Monkey Island* fame), this B movie send-up is remembered for allowing you to swap control between multiple teens as they delved deep inside a creepy mansion – a rudimentary 'lives' system of sorts, given the dangers lurking within.



01



02



01 Zak McKracken and the Alien

Mindbenders 1989

Originally released on Commodore 64 in 1988 and ported to 16-bit a year later, this cheeky adventure with an Indiana Jones lilt saw our hero Zak, a tabloid hack, attempt to foil the plans of an alien race bent on dumbing down the human race.

02 Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade 1989

In which Gilbert and co attempted to tackle one of the big knocks against the genre – the lack of replayability. Its puzzles had many ways they could be completed – finding them all was the only way to max out your score.

03 Loom 1990

The most po-faced of all the LucasArts adventures, this brooding fantasy adventure was unusual among SCUMM games in that it dropped the verb-object interface in favour of spells that our hero could play on his weaving staff thing.

03



MONKEY ISLAND 2: LECHUCK'S REVENGE 1991

The sequel to LucasArts' most celebrated adventure (p 36) was a bigger, bolder and brighter affair, in which pirate-graduate Guybrush, realising his tales of defeating LeChuck are growing old, goes on the hunt for the mystical treasure, Big Whoop.

INDIANA JONES & THE FATE OF ATLANTIS 1992

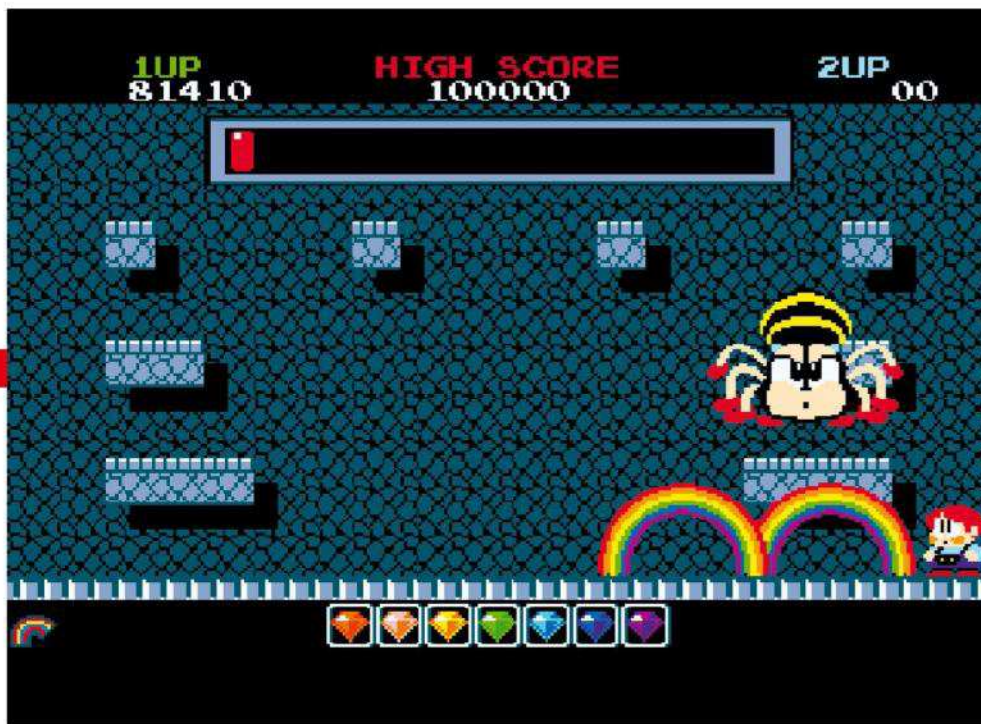
An original Indy adventure set in a world on the cusp of World War II, *Fate of Atlantis'* plot diverges in one of three ways early on, allowing you to play to your strengths: brawn, wits or teamwork...





▲ CLASSIC LEVEL

Each of the seven islands had a distinct theme; Insect (pictured), Combat, Monster, Toy, Doh (based on Taito's *Breakout* clone, *Arkanoid*), Robot and Dragon. While at first it seems the local wildlife have it in for you, the crystal ball power-up reveals they are the disguised cronies from *Bubble Bobble*.



Rainbow Islands

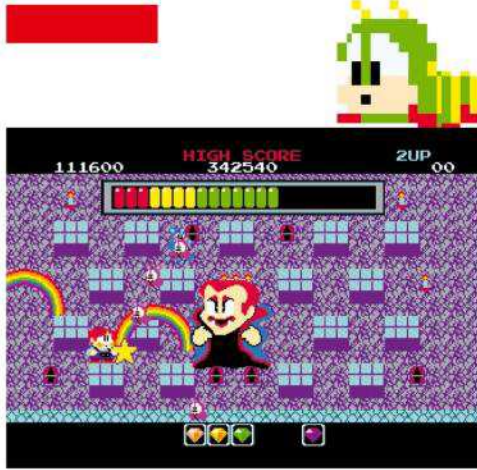
01

Developer Taito
 Publisher Ocean
 Genre Platform
 Released 1990



▼ CLASSIC BOSS

At the very top of each island, a supersized version of one of the enemies you previously encountered awaits. Monster Island's boss, an enormous Dracula, is one of the game's sternest tests. Not only does he constantly home in on your position, but with a swish of his cape he sends an arc of bats your way.



02



The late videogame designer Fukio Mitsuji liked to get creative with his games' weaponry. Instead of guns and swords, he preferred to arm the player with everyday objects that were both interesting to look at, and offered a satisfying way of pulling the trigger. This was the inspiration behind the 1986 fixed-screen platformer *Bubble Bobble*, where you had to encase your foes in bubbles and then pop them with spikes on the cutesy dinosaur heroes' backs.

But Mitsuji also hated samey sequels, which is why he made this follow-up a completely different type of platformer. Now, Bub and Bob (now reverted to human form) defeated their foes first by throwing rainbows in the air and then jumping on them, sending them crashing down onto anything foolishly lurking underneath.

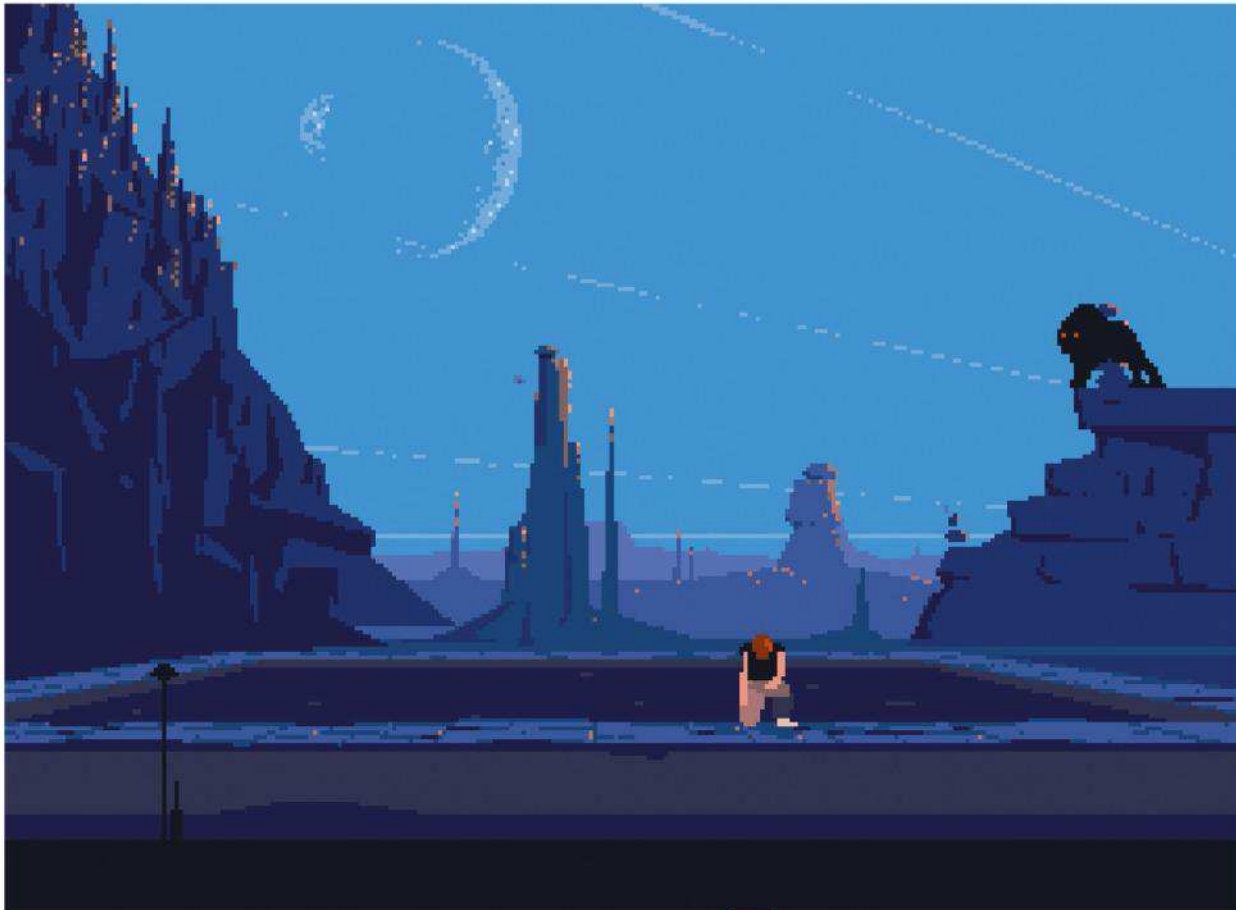
The rainbows also served another purpose – as makeshift platforms. The titular islands, you see, were slowly (or, if you were dawdling long enough to trigger the 'Hurry up!' warning, not so slowly) sinking into the ocean, so you had to use your rainbows to reach higher ground. It was a hook so good, *Rainbow Islands* was named *Amiga Power's* all-time top Amiga game in its inaugural 'issue zero'.



01 If you collected all seven gems while exploring an island, you'd earn a massive gem after the boss fight. Gathering all seven of these was the only way to unlock the final three islands – in the arcade original, at least.

02 By World 6, things get tough. The sentient screws bounce wildly down the screen, while the homing robo-heads reassess your position every few seconds or so.

01



01 The twin moons, the weird pillars, that...thing. The world perfectly captures that notion of 'otherliness'.

02 Despite not sharing a common language, Lester and Buddy made for a great team.

03 To achieve Lester's detailed animation, Chahi used the same rotoscoping technique as *Prince of Persia* (p. 40), filming himself with a few pieces of foam arranged as a prop gun.



Another World

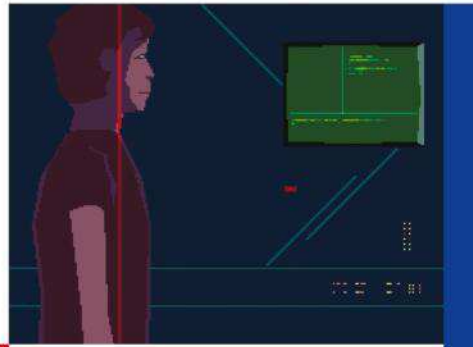
Developer US Gold

Publisher Delphine Software

Genre Action-adventure

Released 1991





▲ CLASSIC INTRO

The setup was masterful: Lester screeched up to his lab in his Ferrari, entered the building, and began work on a particle acceleration experiment. An ominous wind blew outside before lightning struck, hitting his equipment and zapping the physicist - and a chunk of his lab - to who knew where?



02



03



Known as *Out of This World* in North America, many contemporary action-adventure games have been

touched by the influence of Eric Chahi's daring vision. It was one of the first games to effectively borrow from the language of Hollywood, with story sequences and cutaways shot with a cinematographer's eye. This heightened both the atmosphere and the tension of the action beats: a shadowy creature in hot pursuit felt all the more threatening after you'd seen its feral fury in close-up, while an attack from a leech hit all the harder for the camera's focus on its single sharp tooth and the cut to it scything into poor Lester's leg.

Chahi's decision to eschew a HUD of any kind - or, for that matter, offer you any kind of hint of what you were supposed to do - was a risky move, and its trial-and-error mechanics could be frustrating at times (many players drowned on the first screen, not realising they were able to move). But that was part of its appeal: you felt suitably lost in this austere world, steadily learning how to survive.



▲ CLASSIC MOMENT

An imprisoned Lester formed an unlikely bond with a similarly captive alien, communicating through gesture as they made their escape. This led to some thrilling set-pieces, but there was nothing quite as satisfying as that initial moment when the pair swung back and forth in their cage, causing it to fall and flatten the guard.

APIDYA

Developer Kaiko

Publisher Team17

Genre Shoot-'em-up

Released 1992

CULT CLASSIC



At a time when most shoot-'em-ups were happy to coast along with generic space themes, Kaiko's *Apinya* took the war to a new frontier – your back garden. With our hero transformed into a honeybee, he had to shoot his way through ponds and sewers, pitting his wits against, among other things, an overgrown praying mantis and a discarded children's doll.



MEGA DRIVE

Sega's most successful console, the Mega Drive was a thorn in Nintendo's side across two generations

Having been unable to break Nintendo's dominance during the 8-bit era, Sega decided the best way to turn heads their way was with sheer power.

Although having said that, if you cracked open a Sega Mega Drive (released in the US as the Sega Genesis), inside you'd find some pretty familiar circuitry. The main processor, a Motorola 68000, was the same found in many popular computers of the time, while its Z80 sub-processor, which handled the sound, could be found inside a Game Boy. Yet despite its humble innards, the Mega Drive was able to punch above its weight technically because its processors were freed to concentrate exclusively on gaming. That the tech was similar

to many arcade games of the time was also a big win for Sega's fledgling console. Developers found it easy to program for, and the familiarity of the architecture led to many fantastic coin-op conversions. To be this good, contrary to the popular marketing line, didn't takes ages.

The Mega Drive proved how important it was to be first to the market, competing favourably against Nintendo on two fronts – first the NES, and later the SNES. Later attempts to give the system extra grunt would flop, however, with neither the Mega-CD (Sega CD in North America) or the 32X add-ons gaining much traction. With the Mega Drive, it seemed, simplicity really was the key to its success.



Sega's boast of '16-bit Blast Processing' hinted at the Mega Drive's rapid processing speeds, which enabled higher resolutions and complex parallax scrolling.





Manufacturer SEGA

Processor Motorola 68000

Units sold 35 million

Released 1988



SONIC THE HEDGEHOG

Developer Sonic Team
Publisher Sega
Genre Platform
Released 1991



Sega was doing perfectly well in the console business in the late Eighties, but the higher-ups had noticed Nintendo's repeated success with Mario and commanded internal development teams to create a company mascot.

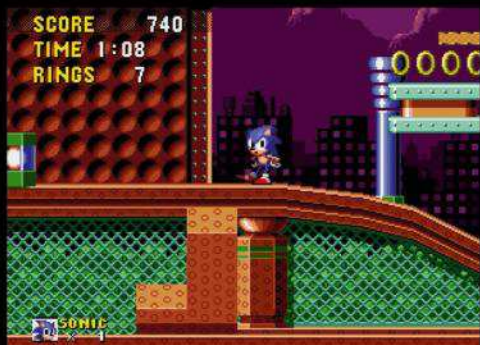
This spiky speed merchant was the response, and he was an instant hit, giving the Mega Drive a huge boost off the line. Finally, Mario had a rival.

It wasn't necessarily that Sonic was better, but he was a distinct alternative, and considered much cooler than a chubby Italian plumber. Sure, your objective might have been to collect gems and free woodland creatures, but there was a certain edge that made Sonic such a draw. Of course, all of this would have been for nothing had his game been no good, but this was a refreshingly different brand of platformer, conducted at a blistering pace. Though enemies and hazards would regularly slow Sonic down, once learned, these levels were designed so that expert players could use his greatest asset in thrilling, showboating speedruns. It remains a vibrant, unforgettable symbol of the 16-bit era.



▲ CLASSIC INTRO

The musical "SE-GAAA!", the bright title screen and that earworm theme tune before you hit start and were thrust into the Green Hill Zone, knowing you were in for something exciting and new. These images immediately imprinted themselves onto the minds of a generation of players.



▲ CLASSIC HERO

Sonic himself, of course. A masterpiece of character design with a bold, striking look and an irreverent streak captured perfectly in his smirking, finger-wagging antics. Better still was his idle animation which saw him impatiently glaring at the player, tapping his feet to encourage you to get a move on.



▲ CLASSIC LEVEL

The pinball madness of the Spring Yard Zone had its fans, and there something gently hallucinatory about those rotating special stages, but it was impossible to look beyond Green Hill Zone Act One. Loops and leaps and rings and spikes: it all added up to the most iconic stage since *Super Mario Bros'* World 1-1.





▲ CLASSIC MOMENT

No survival horror has anything on the clammy-palmed tension of the underwater sections. Any time Sonic found himself short of air, a countdown would begin, with the insistent music steadily accelerating to send you into a panic as you scrambled for the surface. Terrifying.



▲ CLASSIC VILLAIN

Wherever Sonic may be, you can be sure that his arch-nemesis Dr Ivo Robotnik isn't too far away, lingering like a bad smell. The rotund, egg-obsessed scientist has trapped South Island's fluffy inhabitants in the shells of violent robots, and it's up to Sonic to free them - and give Robotnik's egghead a bounce or two for good measure, too.

02

01 In the largely-underground Marble Zone, the pace slows down dramatically as Sonic attempts to avoid insta-death via spine-crunching pistons.

02 The disorientating special stages are where you can find the Chaos Emeralds - if you can remember which way is up, that is.



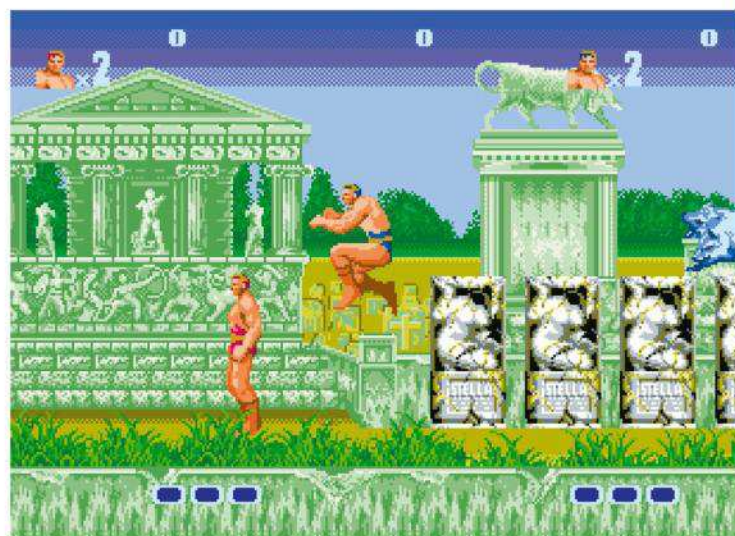
01



01 Stage 2 sees our centurion hero in the swamps, where he's harassed by serpents that span the height of the screen. Fortunately, one kick and their heads pop clean off.

02 Talking of heads, this ogre came complete with an infinite supply of them, that he would chuck in our hero's direction. But fear not, as a few sturdy punches to the breadbasket would easily take him down.

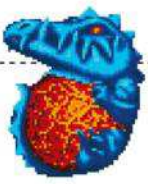
02



Altered Beast

Developer Sega
Publisher Sega
Genre Beat-'em-up
Released 1988





▲ CLASSIC MOMENT

Back in the '80s, the sight of a hungry beast leaping onto your muscle-bound hero to chew his face off was presumably rather disturbing. These days, it looks like a man with his head stuck in a purple pillowcase.



▲ CLASSIC BOSS

We use the term 'classic' advisedly here. Though memorably designed, stage 2's final encounter could be over in seconds – with a couple of blasts of your dragon form's lightning ability, the fight ended before it had chance to really get going.



This port of Sega's side-scrolling arcade brawler was more significant for what it represented than how it played. At the time, it was a real feather in Sega's cap: with the Mega Drive beating Nintendo's SNES to stores by a good 12 months, it could boast that it had a machine capable of graphics straight out of the arcade. It was a slightly misleading claim, as it turned out: the sprites were far from an exact match, though the Mega Drive version did use parallax scrolling, which was absent from the arcade game.

Most people remember the Mega Drive version of *Altered Beast* for its mangled speech samples, particularly the infamous "Wise fwom your gwave!" introduction – though, in truth, it was more garbled than lisped, and the "Welcome to your doom!" boss speech was every bit as unintentionally hilarious. What remained was a simple beat-'em-up that offered meat-headed pleasures, enlivened by the monstrous transformations of its hero into a wolf, an electrically-charged dragon and a rolling bear. As a pack-in game it did its job, helping to sell the Mega Drive as a powerful new console that every gamer desired.



Desert Strike

Developer Electronic Arts

Publisher Electronic Arts

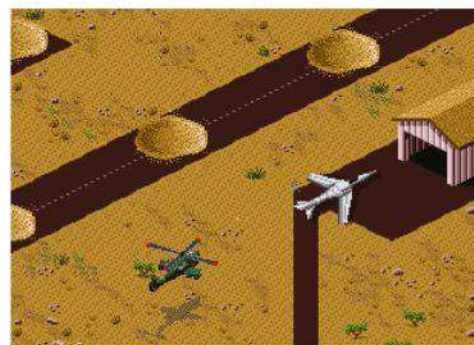
Genre Shoot 'em up

Released 1992

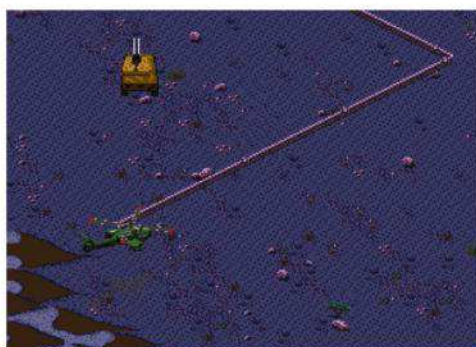


▲ CLASSIC INTRO

A tense final mission that sees you hovering above twilight dunes is certainly worthy of mention, but *Desert Strike's* awesomely bad taste intro is one for the ages, as the horrifying actions of this terrorist 'madman' are revealed.



Were it released for the first time today, *Desert Strike* would no doubt prompt dozens of hand-wringing op-eds for its questionable politics and jingoistic depiction of war. Back in 1992, players barely batted an eyelid at this isometric shooter which cast you as an Apache pilot, tasked with blowing up enemy radars and airports while rescuing secret agents from a conflict with a fictional dictator (who clearly in no way resembled any real world figure). Tactical, entertaining and steeply challenging, *Desert Strike* was unusually open and deep: a sandbox filled with chunky toys that just happened to have missile-firing capabilities.





Strider

Developer Capcom

Publisher Capcom

Genre Platform

Released 1990

Capcom's stylish action game was another string to the Mega Drive's bow in its early years, in a conversion that really was incredibly close to being arcade-perfect. Beyond its technical excellence, *Strider* was simply a sumptuously designed piece of work, with a gorgeously animated hero that somehow made lilac jumpsuits seem cool, a constant sense of forward momentum, restless invention in its level design and a real hotpot of cultural influences in its stages. It was a Capcom game, which of course meant it was ferociously tough, but few games of that era stand up quite as well today as *Strider*.



▲ CLASSIC BOSS

Nothing quite prepared you for the moment where 24 Kazakh officers join together to form a centipede mech wielding a hammer and sickle. If you weren't sure *Strider* was a classic before fighting this Ouroboros, you were once it had finally fallen to your plasma sword.





Electronic Arts



Founded 1982

Headquarters Redwood City, California

Years active 1982-current

Lead platform Mega Drive

Classic Developer EA's industry-conquering formula of annual updates began life on Sega

As we know, Electronic Arts owes its fortune to its yearly updates of sports franchises such as FIFA, Madden and NHL. But the company also owes its *entire existence* to them, too. Trip Hawkins' main motivation for founding the company in 1982 was because he wanted to make computerised versions of the Strat-O-Matic tabletop sports sims he enjoyed in his youth. Hawkins immediately set about making this happen, approaching NFL commentator John Madden in 1984 about the possibility of endorsing an American football game. Madden not

only agreed, but got deeply involved in the developmental process, only agreeing to put his name to the game if it featured 11 players a side – a feat that frazzled the chips of most 1980s computers. After a protracted developmental process – it was known internally as 'Trip's Folly' – the first Madden launched on the Apple II computer in 1988. But it was on the Mega Drive, two years later, that the series found popularity, leading to the creation of three other series that continue to make their presence known today – FIFA, NHL and PGA Tour.



JOHN MADDEN FOOTBALL 1990

Despite its lack of an NFL licence (the teams are instead loosely based on the colours and locations of real NFL teams of the time), *Madden* immediately resonated with fans of the sport, thanks to its large number of plays and faithful reproduction of the pace and flow of the real thing.

01



02



03



01 The Legend of Galahad 1992

Amiga owners might know it better as *Leander*; a slick and beautiful anime-styled platformer that's notable for being the debut offering from Traveller's Tales, who now make the popular Lego tie-ins of movie franchises such as Star Wars.

02 Rolo to the Rescue 1992

This sweet platformer saw escaped circus elephant Rolo liberate the caged animals in each level; freed critters could then be controlled to make use of their special abilities. But one question: what kind of circus keeps squirrels and moles?

03 FIFA International Soccer 1993

An (ultimately successful) attempt to branch out into the European market, *FIFA* eschewed the top-down viewpoint made popular by games such as *Kick-Off*, instead going for an isometric view. The result was a slower-paced effort that felt more 'real', if not always as fun.



ROAD RASH 1991

Marrying racing and fighting before *Mario Kart* was anything more than a twinkle in Shigeru Miyamoto's eye, this was a classic 'make your way to the front of the pack' racer, with the twist being that collisions forced you to run back to your overturned bike.



NHL HOCKEY 1991

A fast-paced sport taking place in an enclosed arena, where it's legal to bulldoze players with your shoulders, or even fight them? Sounds like the perfect material for a videogame tie-in, and EA's debut offering didn't disappoint. (Even though the NHL later made them take out the fighting.)



SHAQ FU 1994

Conclusive proof that not everything sports-related EA touched turned to gold. This questionable fighter saw Orlando Magic center Shaq fall into a wormhole into another dimension, where he was forced into combat with various monsters. But the biggest monster of all was the sluggish controls.

STREETS OF RAGE



The early days of the Mega Drive were all about proving it could match, or at least come close to, the quality of the company's arcade output. Sega's next raft of games set out to show what it could do on its own. Which isn't to say that *Streets of Rage* was entirely original in concept – it leveraged ideas from Technōs Japan's *Double Dragon* series and Capcom's *Final Fight* – but the Mega Drive had a new, exclusive side-scrolling beat-'em-up it could call its own.

Though supplanted by its sequels (*Streets of Rage 2* tends to be the connoisseur's choice of 16-bit brawler) the original got the series off to a strong start. It looked good, with colourful and detailed art, and sounded even better, with Yuzo Koshiro's excellent soundtrack drawing its inspiration from the house and rave music of the time, in a clear departure from the usual chiptune fare. With its funky beats and crunchy beatdowns, *Streets of Rage* was an impressive flexing of Sega's developmental muscle – proving it could keep pace with anyone as it strove to stay at the industry's summit.

Developer Sega

Publisher Sega

Genre Beat-'em-up

Released 1991



▲ CLASSIC HERO

Unlike *Double Dragon* and *Final Fight*, *Streets of Rage* had a playable woman on its roster. Blaze was, admittedly, a female archetype – faster and weaker than the men – though her vicious throws made her a real force to be reckoned with.

01



▲ CLASSIC WEAPON

A shout-out to the alarmingly useful pepper shaker, but there was nothing quite like calling upon a police officer with a rocket launcher when surrounded, and watching in delight as his missiles set the stage ablaze, creating a ring of fire to make your assailants eat asphalt.



1 PLAYER

ADAM	AXEL	BLAZE
POWER A	POWER A	POWER B
JUMP A	JUMP B	JUMP A
SPEED B	SPEED A	SPEED A



▲ CLASSIC BOSS

Streets of Rage had an embarrassment of riches in this regard, from lanky hipsters with boomerangs to backflipping twins and an oversized wrestler. But nothing quite says '1990s gaming' like an encounter with a fat, bald man capable of vomiting fire. He was a tough nut to crack, too.



1 PLAYER

ADAM	AXEL	BLAZE
POWER A	POWER A	POWER B
JUMP A	JUMP B	JUMP A
SPEED B	SPEED A	SPEED A

02



▲ CLASSIC LEVEL

The final penthouse boss rush could be a little too arduous, so we've plumped for the penultimate stage – a cramped and claustrophobic ascent aboard an external elevator. With increasingly populous waves of enemies jumping into the fray, you needed all your crowd control skills to survive.



▲ CLASSIC MOMENT

Like most beat-'em-ups, *Streets of Rage* is more fun with two players – but many a friendship swiftly turned sour during the final confrontation with Mr X. If one of the players accepts his offer to become his right hand man/woman and the other declines, the former pals square off in a fight to the death.



01 Seriously, who fights with a boomerang? Especially given that he must be touching seven feet tall.
02 While Axel and Blaze would both return in *Streets of Rage 2*, Adam managed to get himself kidnapped, the big dummy.



01



01 The boombox is one of *ToeJam & Earl's* more formidable weapons, stopping everyone (including this present-pilfering mole) in their tracks for an impromptu boogying session.
 02 Not every level had a rocketship piece. But if it did, you could bet your bottom dollar it was big and horrible.
 03 If you managed to answer the telephone in time, extra tiles of the map would be revealed. Stressful!



02



ToeJam & Earl

Developer ToeJam & Earl Productions
Publisher Sega
Genre Action
Released 1991





▲ CLASSIC MOMENT

The first level is surrounded not by void but by water, so it's impossible to fall any lower. Or so you'd think. If you had the Icarus Wings, or the more-trouble-than-they're-worth Rocket Boots, you could zip to the bottom left hand of the map, where a doughnut-shaped island gave you access to the mysterious, yet curiously relaxing, level zero.



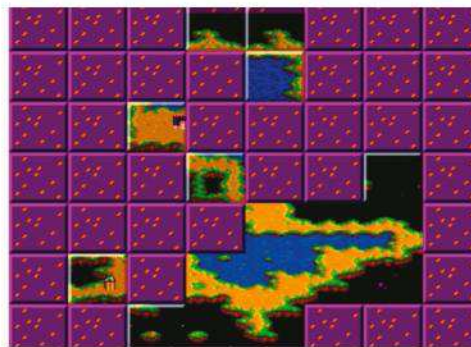
Toejam & Earl are two jammin' alien rappers who have had the misfortune of crash-landing their spaceship on the weirdest, most far-out planet in the entire Universe – Planet Earth!

What follows is an adventure unlike any other, as our funky heroes gingerly climb their way up 25 levels of the Earth's surface, seeking out pieces of their ruined ship as they go. Alas, our heroes' quest is complicated by the planet's bizarre and deadly inhabitants – encountering everything from giant hamsters in wheels, to deranged dentists, to phantom ice cream trucks(!).

ToeJam & Earl is an off-kilter take on a formula invented by the 1980 dungeon-crawler, *Rogue*. Like that title, *ToeJam & Earl's* levels are randomly-generated from game to game (although there was also a pre-set option), meaning you never knew what lurked around the next corner. Coupled with the fact that the level map only revealed itself as you explored it, this gave the adventure a tremendous sense of mystery, and infinite layouts mean almost infinite replayability value.



03



▲ CLASSIC WEAPON

ToeJam's *Rogue*-like mystique extended to the power-ups, which were wrapped as presents. The only way to know what was inside each pattern was to blindly open it (or, preferably, pay the Carrot Man to tell you). Presents could be bad as well as good – the worst being the Randomiser, which undid all your good investigative work.



Silly, surreal and altogether groovy, *Earthworm Jim* set out to prove that Japan didn't necessarily hold all the cards when it came to the best action-platformers on console. Though some had it pegged as a case of style over substance thanks to its outstanding, characterful hand-drawn animation, this was a ceaselessly creative adventure, blending running and jumping with unconventional gunplay and levels crammed with one-off gags and ideas. Folding in escort missions, races and light puzzles, it never stopped trying to entertain. Its irresistible sense of fun helped it find a large audience – enough to spawn sequels, an animated series and a merchandising line.



Earthworm Jim

Developer Shiny Entertainment
Publisher Virgin Interactive
Genre Platform
Released 1994

▲ CLASSIC WEAPON

Jim's standard Plasma Blaster was fun to shoot – not least for its hero's hilariously dramatic stances while aiming – but he is, in fact, his own best weapon. His ability to stretch his body taut gave him the ability to swing from hooks, but it was often more effectively used to lash out at enemies above.





Golden Axe

Developer Sega AM1

Publisher Sega

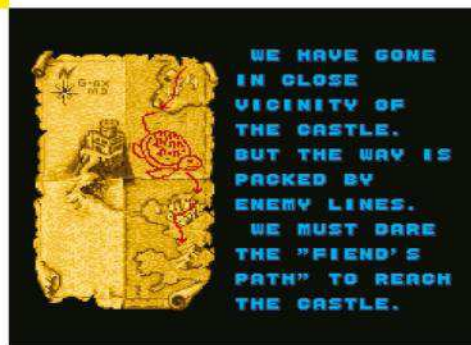
Genre Beat 'em up

Released 1989



If nothing else, *Golden Axe's* triumvirate of heroes have earned their place in the all-time Greatest Character Names in Games list: barbarian Ax Battler, amazon Tyris Flare and dwarf Gilius Thunderhead (and we should save a spot for villain Death Adder, too).

Golden Axe was another in the Mega Drive's long line of terrific arcade ports, and though it looks a little old hat these days, its mix of co-op brawling and swords-and-spells fantasy captivated plenty of Mega Drive players at the time. Endearingly single-minded and full of personality, the original remains superior to Secret Level's woeful 2008 reboot, *Beast Rider*.



▲ CLASSIC HERO

Gilius Thunderhead never let his diminutive size prevent him from getting his axe dirty as he sought revenge for his brother's demise at the hands of Death Adder's troops. Strong and sturdy, he became a cult favourite, resurfacing recently as a playable racer in *Sonic and All-Stars Racing: Transformed*.



FIGHTER SPOTLIGHT

It was east vs west, finesse vs fizzle, Capcom vs Midway in the battle of the Mega Drive brawlers

Creators Capcom

Publisher Capcom

Series lifespan 1987-current

Latest release Street Fighter V (2016)

STREET FIGHTER II: SPECIAL CHAMPIONSHIP EDITION 1993

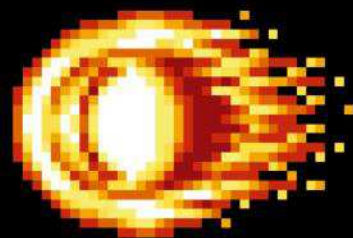
Street Fighter II is more commonly associated with Nintendo's rival Super Nintendo system, and with good reason. In 1992, Capcom wowed SNES owners with an almost perfect conversion of their arcade smash.

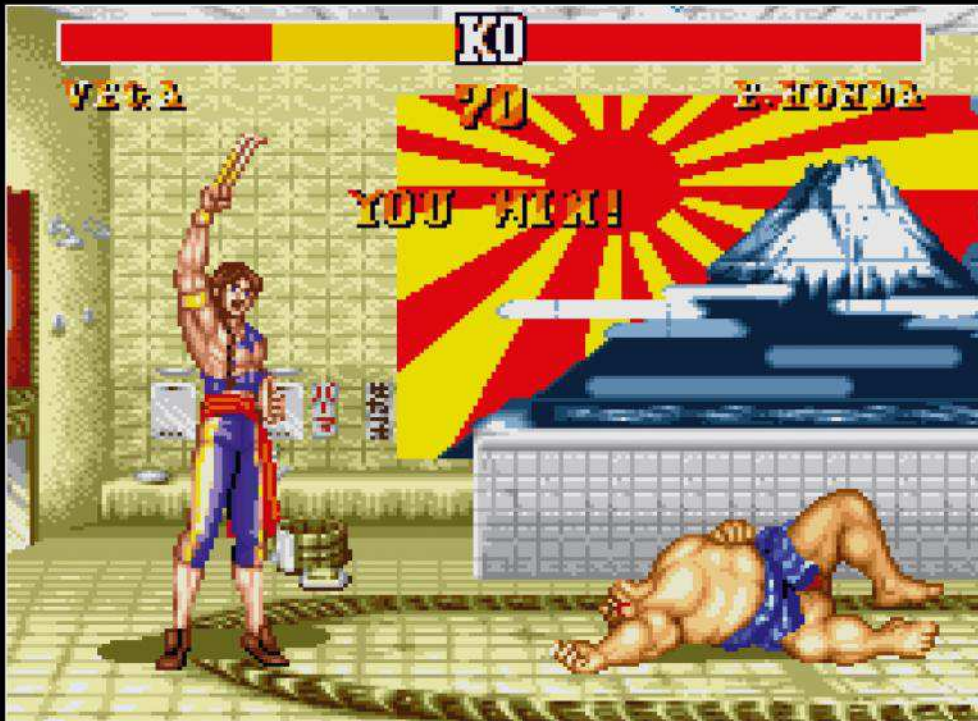
Given the state of the SNES port of *Final Fight* a few years before, many assumed *Street Fighter II's* big, bold visuals and varied cast were beyond the capabilities of the SNES' processors.

Yet, everything (bar a couple of Dhalsim's elephants) made it over. It was, for a while, a major bragging point for SNES owners. But parity was restored a year later when Mega Drive owners received *Street Fighter II:*

Special Championship Edition, a faithful conversion of the revised *Championship Edition* arcade cabinet, which allowed players to pit the World Warriors against colour-swapped versions of themselves, and unlocked the four end-of-game bosses for selection for the first time. It was also briefly (until 1994's *Super Street Fighter II*) the definitive home console version, also delivering the features of the SNES' *Turbo* edition released at the same time.

It was also the first game to make use of the Mega Drive's new six-button pad, although you could still use the normal controller by pressing start to switch between punches and kicks.





MORTAL KOMBAT 1993

Street Fighter II's popularity made the one-on-one fighting game one of the hottest genres of the '90s, and it spawned a raft of copycat contenders (including Sega's own effort, *Eternal Champions*). Yet none would pose as much as a threat to *Street Fighter's* dominance as *Mortal Kombat*, despite the fact that Midway's game was, on a strategic level, one of the more basic fighting games going.

But what it lacked in finesse, it made up for in showmanship. *Mortal Kombat's* most eye-catching feature was its use of digitised sprites based on real actors. This made the game look more 'adult' than the cartoony sprites favoured

by other fighting games, and the coolness factor was multiplied by *Mortal Kombat's* trademark gimmick – the excessive blood and gore.

If the sprites caught the eye, then the gruesome fatalities made them pop out – the sight of Sub-Zero ripping off his beaten opponent's head and holding it aloft as a trophy, spinal cord and all, is one of the most iconic in all of gaming. To most players, the gore *was* *Mortal Kombat*, and it helped the technically-inferior Mega Drive version nudge ahead of the SNES port. While Nintendo's family-friendly policies outlawed blood, Mega Drive owners could spill claret to their heart's content.





01

Castle of Illusion

Developer Sega AM7

Publisher Sega

Genre Platformer

Released 1990



02





▲ CLASSIC MOMENT

Mickey reuniting with Minnie has a touch of the old-fashioned about it, but it's certainly more movingly rendered than any time Mario saves Peach, as the pair warmly embrace one another while standing on a rainbow bridge. Awww.



▲ CLASSIC LEVEL

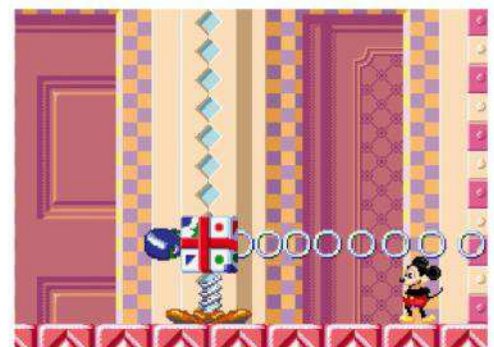
Outside the brilliant Toy Town stage that indulged in some gravity-flipping trickery, we had a huge soft spot for the forest level which used leaves as moving platforms. The background of dewy webs against a verdant canopy of trees is a classic Disney touch.



03

Capcom's *DuckTales* aside, Disney hadn't been particularly well served by video games until Sega got its hands on the studio's biggest icon and created a vintage platformer. In truth, there was nothing particularly clever about its controls – Mickey could bounce on enemies or throw objects at them to defeat them – nor its narrative setup (rescue Minnie from the malevolent Mizrabel). Instead, all the invention was reserved for its level design, with plenty of exploration and a little dash of puzzle-solving to keep things interesting.

But ultimately, *Castle of Illusion's* biggest asset was its graphics, which captured the look and feel of classic characters, creatures and environments. There was an unmistakable dose of Disney magic found in everything from the lushly detailed scenery to Mickey's excellent animation. It wasn't a particularly large game, but it felt generous, and its Practice Mode proved the perfect introduction to platformers for young kids, with a selection of three curtailed stages to play through and no boss fights. Further fine platformers followed in its wake, from *Quackshot* to follow-up *World of Illusion*, but this was the game that raised the bar.



01 In Toy Town, killer jack-in-the-boxes and murderous toy soldiers reign supreme.

02 It's like Indiana Jones, if Indiana's mortal enemies were butterflies and mushrooms.

03 Nope, this isn't a printing error; in Toy Town, switches would turn the level literally on its head.

Ecco The Dolphin

Developer Novotrade International

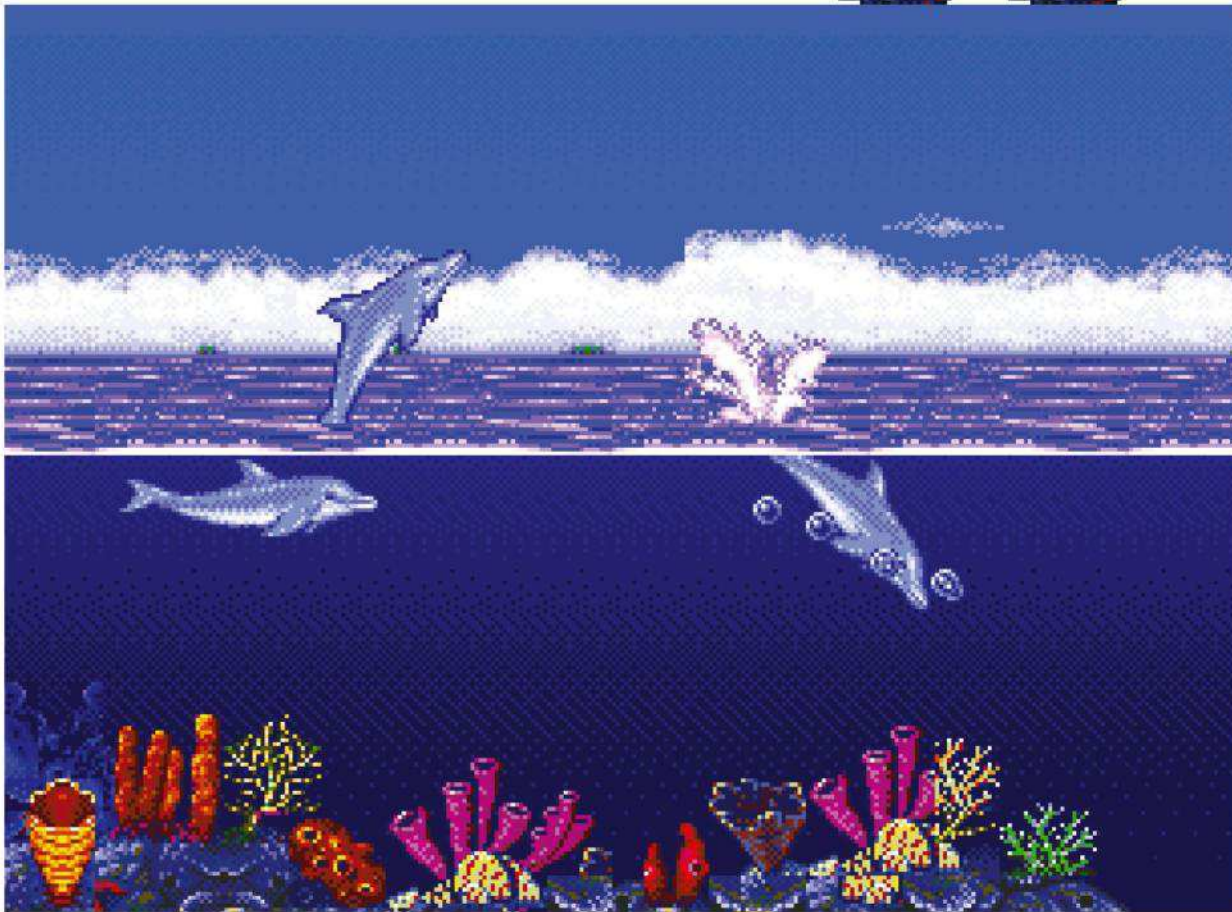
Publisher Sega

Genre Action-adventure

Released 1992

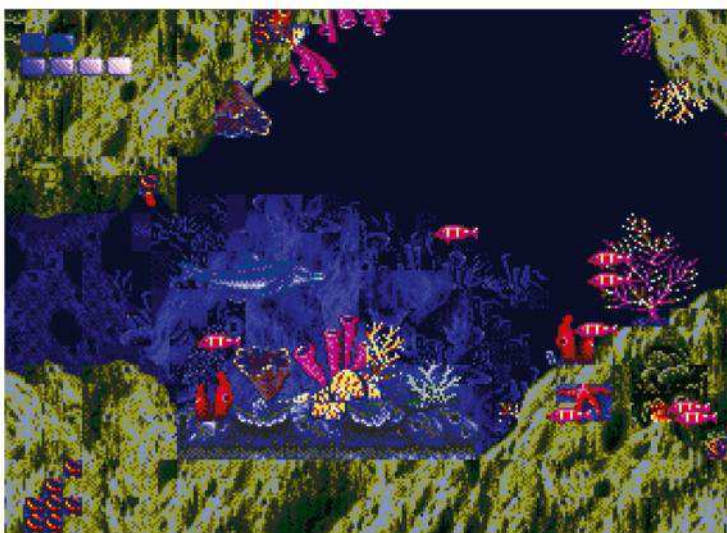
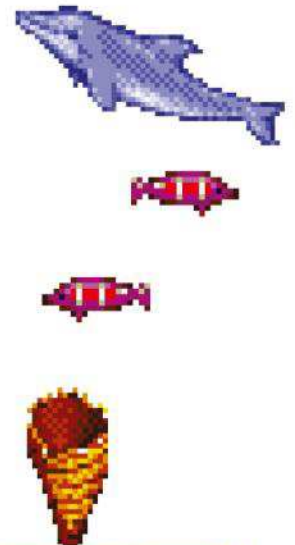


01



01 The tranquil opening is a chance for you to stretch your fins as Ecco, and learn the peculiarities of the control system.

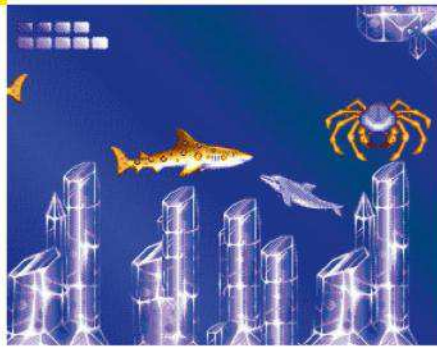
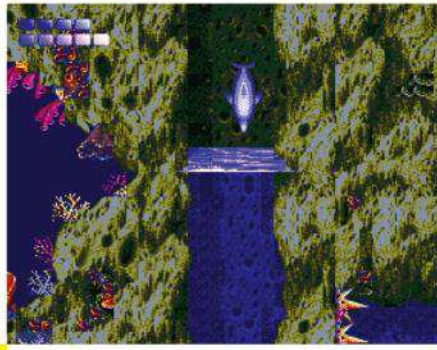
02 Eek! The ocean is long and full of terrors, but it's nothing a short, sharp thrust of Ecco's bottlenose can't fix.





▲ CLASSIC INTRO

A quiet, slow-paced opening is suddenly, rudely interrupted by a curious anomaly that sees your pod and other sea creatures whisked up into the sky. Shortly afterwards, you encounter another dolphin and communicate by sonar. "Suddenly great winds of water..." she says, setting up an intriguing mystery that compels you to continue playing.



02



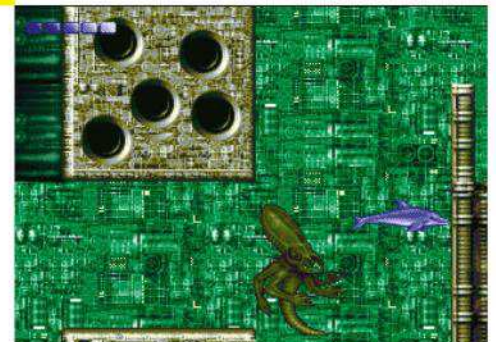
▲ CLASSIC LEVEL

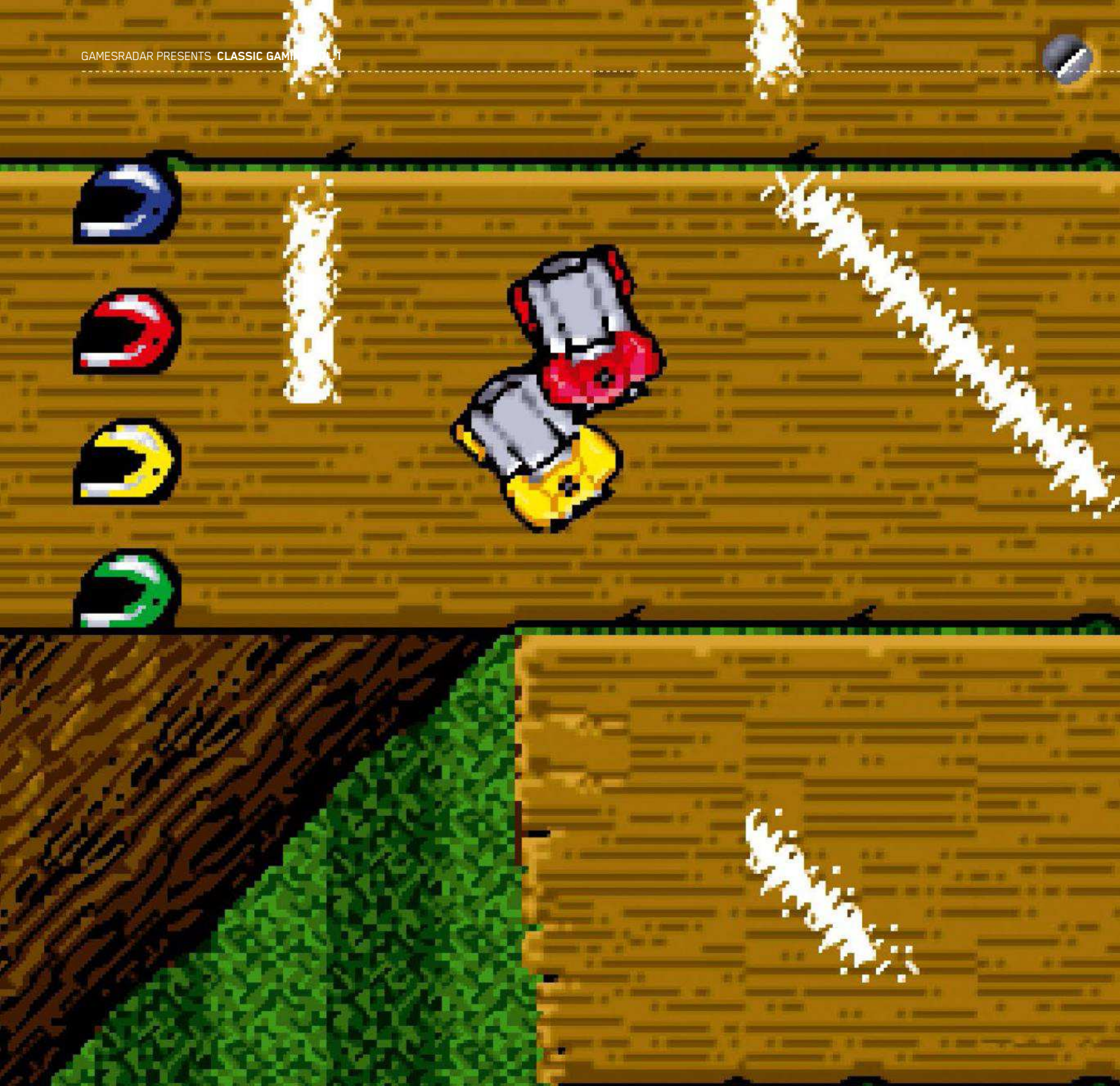
The final, frustratingly hard stage will forever be burned into our retinas, but the moment *Ecco* reaches its surreal peak is surely the stage where you breach the surface and a pterodactyl catches you in its beak, carrying you to another part of the ocean.



At first glance, *Ed Annunziata's* gorgeous aquatic adventure looks like a piece of edutainment (or perhaps even environmental propaganda) as a bizarre incident sees the titular bottlenose separated from the rest of his pod. But what follows is something truly, memorably weird, as a plot inspired by conspiracy theories and prog rock – no, really – sends Ecco into ever stranger waters. By the end, he's visited an underwater city, travelled to prehistoric times, and been chased around an enormous, shifting machine by grasping aliens.

More than two decades on, *Ecco The Dolphin* is still utterly unique, with its wilfully peculiar combination of peaceful exploration and an often absurdly high difficulty level. These days, it's hard to imagine any big publisher taking a punt on a daring and singular creative vision like this – though you can arguably trace the lineage of any art game from the modern era back to wonderfully odd experiments like *Ecco*. Even now it stands apart as one of the most individual and idiosyncratic games of its era. Though far from perfect, no one who played it will forget it.





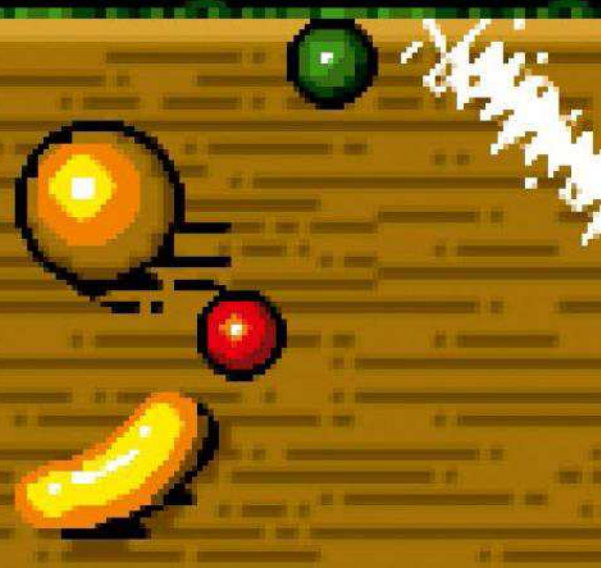
MICRO MACHINES

Developer Codemasters

Publisher Codemasters

Genre Top-down racer

Released 1991



Time

0.0672

Laps

3



CULT CLASSIC



With *Micro Machines*, the Codies solved a long-standing multiplayer game issue – which player the camera should focus on – by making the objective of the game to drive so far ahead of the other racer that it shunted them off the screen entirely. The designers used the licence creatively, with tracks set in bath tubs, sand pits and messy breakfast tables scattered with cornflakes and marmalade traps.



Manufacturer Sony
Processor R3000A 32bit RISC chip
Units sold 102.49 million
Released 1994



PLAYSTATION

The system that single-handedly made gaming 'cool' and introduced us to a new wave of heroes and genres

In retrospect, it's easy to see why many industry experts of the time thought Sony had no chance of breaking the Sega/Nintendo duopoly which held a stranglehold over the market throughout the '90s.

After all, Sony had to follow a long line of pretenders who had tried and failed; such as fellow tech giants Philips with the CD-i and Panasonic with the 3DO.

Further extending the PlayStation's odds to Leicester City-proportions, it used compact discs as its media of choice – a format that had the stench of failure wafting around it following dalliances such as the Sega's doomed Mega CD. It was doubted that gamers, used to the immediacy afforded by cartridges, could stomach a return to

the days of lengthy loading screens.

Instead, the decision proved to be a masterstroke, as big-name developers such as Square dropped the N64 like a bad habit and moved their projects over to PlayStation, where the greater space afforded by CDs allowed them to realise their creative visions.

Two other things helped Sony conquer the gaming world at their first attempt. Firstly, the controller's ergonomic dual-handed shape, which swiftly became the industry standard. Secondly, the company set about changing public perceptions of the hobby, opening itself up to new markets and making the PlayStation seem like a cool, desirable piece of tech. It also helped that it also had the games to back up its boast.



The PlayStation was a stylish console – even if you had to turn it upside-down to read discs after a few years' wear.



FINAL FANTASY VII

Developer Square

Publisher Sony

Genre Role-playing game

Released 1997



How did Sony muscle into the console market and dethrone industry vanguards Nintendo and Sega at the first time of

asking? *Final Fantasy VII* had a lot to do with it. With the role-playing series already established as a system seller on Nintendo's platforms, Sony swiped the franchise away from its former home thanks to its decision to pursue disc media for its shiny new console. Square knew that its ambitions for *Final Fantasy*'s future couldn't be met on Nintendo's cartridge format, so it jumped ship to PS1 – and millions of fans in the east followed.

That *Final Fantasy VII* would be a runaway success in the west wasn't always a given as Japanese RPGs hadn't always taken hold overseas. But its 50+ hour length, deep combat systems, gigantic world and breathtaking cut-scenes soon converted millions of newcomers into fans of the genre. Indeed, its cast and save-the-world plot carved a legacy so strong that fans clamoured for a remake for years. Two decades on, Square Enix's upcoming *Final Fantasy VII Remake* is one of the most hotly anticipated games of all.



▲ CLASSIC HERO

A former soldier turned mercenary, Cloud Strife can instantly be pegged by his trademark spiky hair. His immense popularity is the result of many factors, including his evolution from arrogant sword-for-hire to benevolent world saver, and his repeated encounters with his even cooler arch-enemy.

01



▲ CLASSIC WEAPON

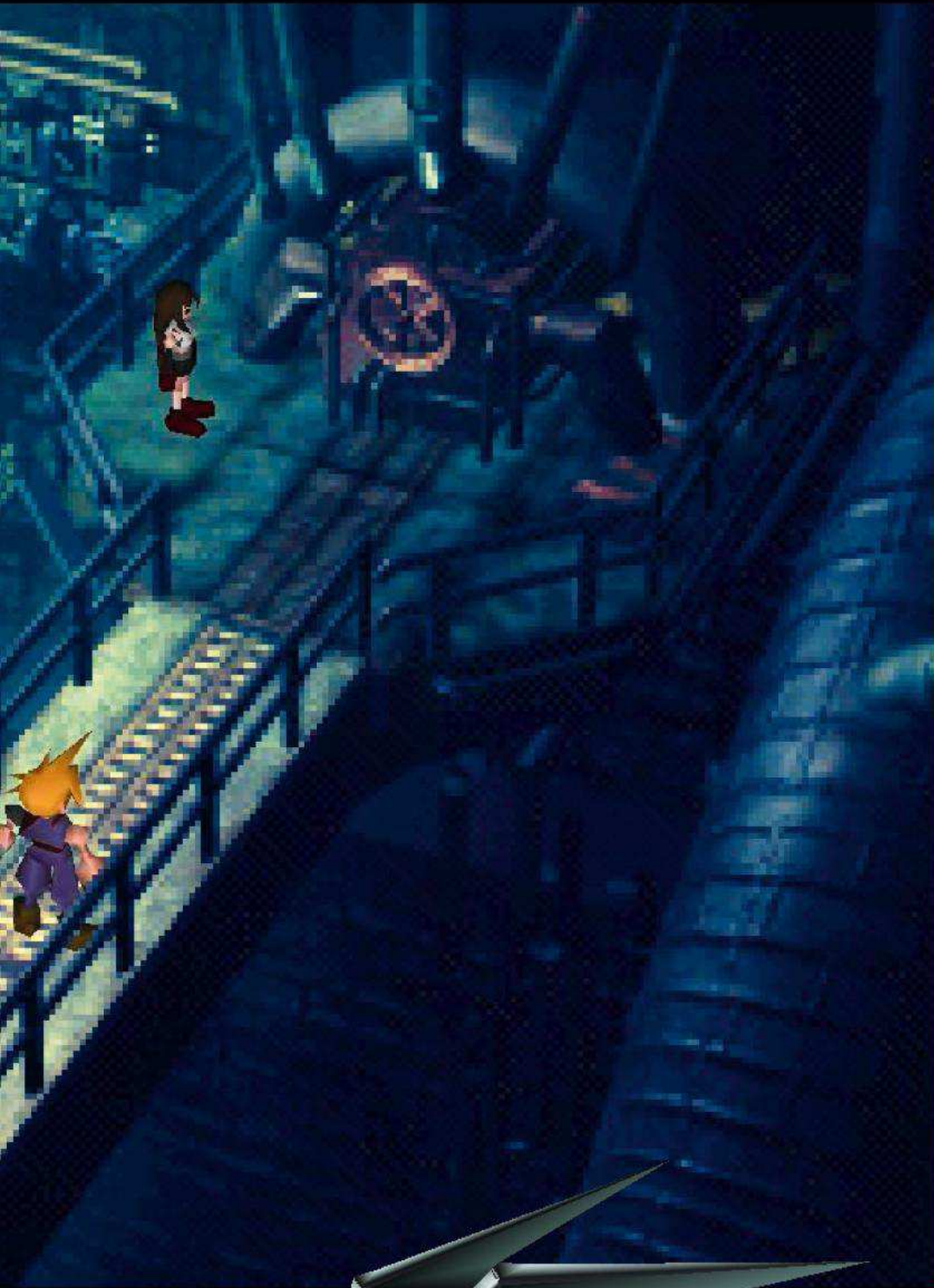
Cloud's default broadsword is actually one of *Final Fantasy VII's* weakest items. But thanks to its unique, oversized look (the two holes were twin Materia slots for magic orbs) and its appearance in all promotional artwork and in-game cut-scenes, the Buster Sword became one of the most readily recognisable, iconic weapons in all of gaming.



▲ CLASSIC BOSS

Bosses rarely came tougher than this. Hiding in the endgame, Ruby Weapon could be found lurking by Gold Saucer on the world map, although tackling the towering bruiser was highly inadvisable for the unprepared. Along with Emerald Weapon deep underwater, besting Ruby was an entirely optional badge of honour reserved only for the brave.





01 The love triange between Cloud, Tifa and Aerith tugs at the heartstrings - and promptly ends with one heck of a twist.
02 Bahamut is one of the most fearsome summons in the game.



▲ CLASSIC LEVEL

Wedged between all the world saving action, the cast's trip to Gold Saucer was a masterful change of pace. A giant amusement park in the sky (think a scaled down Alton Towers built atop a massive tree), it was a diversion that entertained for hours upon hours thanks to playable arcade machines, gambling mini-games and oh-so catchy music.



▲ CLASSIC VILLAIN

Brandishing a sword as long as his rap sheet, Sephiroth is one of the most iconic bad guys in videogame history. Seen here during the Nibelheim Incident, in which he destroys an entire village, he is better known for another act of murder that you probably already know all about, but we won't spoil, just in case.



02



Metal Gear Solid

Developer Konami

Publisher Konami

Genre Stealth-action

Released 1998



01 Successful infiltration favours the brave; vision cones on your radar helped you decide just how brave you dare be. **02** Throughout the adventure, Snake is shadowed by the mysterious and skilled Gray Fox. What's his deal?



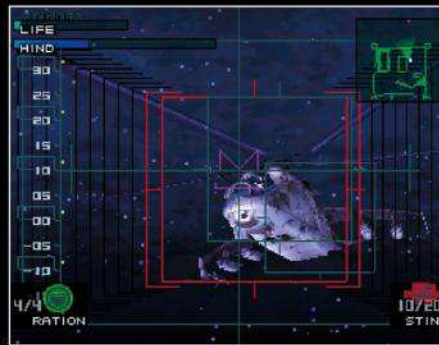
01





▲ CLASSIC MOMENT

"It should be on the back of the CD case," splutters ArmsTech president Kenneth Baker of Meryl's Codec number, setting into motion the next step in the storyline. Cue hours of searching the game's world for a CD case and coming up empty handed - only to discover he meant the *physical game box itself*. Cunning.



02



▶ CLASSIC BOSS

Floating superfreak Psycho Mantis continued *Metal Gear Solid's* love of fourth-wall breaks by "reading your mind". During the battle, he commented on other Konami games if your memory stick contained appropriate save data, and anticipated your movements unless you unplugged your controller and put it back into the PS1's fourth port.

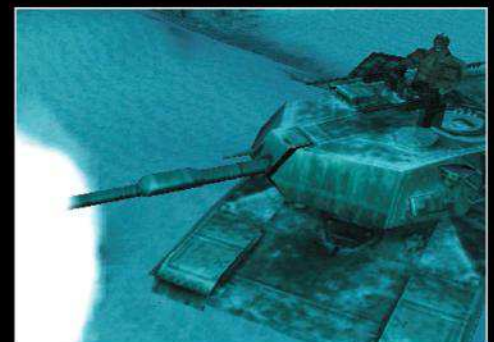


Repackaging a top-down NES adventure series into a fully 3D stealth epic, *Metal Gear Solid* was an early statement of intent that a new breed of game developers wanted to align themselves closer to the big-budget blockbusters typically reserved for Hollywood's cinema output.

Featuring a convoluted, complex plot told through hours upon hours of cut-scenes and dialogue, interspersed with tightly knit stealth sections, lavish action sequences, zany boss battles and sweeping, film-esque cinematography, Konami's PS1 classic propelled writer and director Hideo Kojima to legendary status in the development scene.

Metal Gear Solid introduced a new audience to the world of spy-cum-special-ops-agent Solid Snake, and bombarded him with the tools to approach the pseudo-sandbox world as he pleased; all-guns blazing with heavy weaponry, or softly-softly, neck-snappy stealth with slinky cover systems and chaff grenades for knocking out security cameras. And with those tools came great challenge, as hugely advanced AI systems that would track you by footprints or noises proved to be formidable foes.

Featuring violence, swearing, nudity and the odd fourth-wall breaking puzzle, it was a pivotal moment in gaming history as the industry began to explore new ideas and territories.



Wipeout

Developer Psygnosis

Publisher Psygnosis

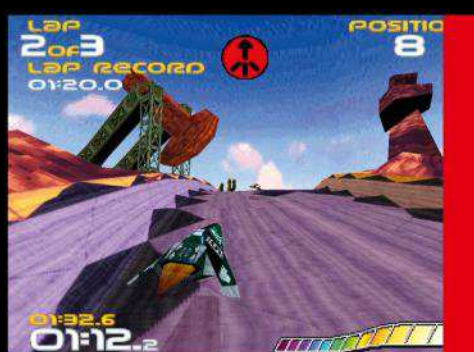
Genre Racing

Released 1995



CLASSIC WEAPON

While hardly unique to *Wipeout*, the boosts pads which line its tracks and give passing ships an additional slug of speed rank among gaming's most satisfying examples. They're also potentially its most dangerous, as the game's demanding handling and the cruel speed-sapping effect of wall impacts necessitates perfect judgement.



Before *Wipeout*, videogames were still lumbered with tiresome stereotypes about the nature of those who enjoyed them. Sony and Psygnosis knew that there was a broader market to tap and worked with now defunct design studio Designers Republic to create a striking look and licensed an incredible soundtrack that featured *The Chemical Brothers*, *Leftfield*, *Orbital* and more. It wasn't simply a slickly presented package, however. Though unforgiving in the context of modern games, it backed-up its cool exterior with serpentine sci-fi tracks and convincingly weighty anti-grav handling. It's a breakneck shock to the senses.





▲ CLASSIC BOSS

In a game infamous for its brilliantly offbeat boss fights, Tommy Gun-wielding Pinstripe Potoroo managed to stand out. From his impeccably-tailored crimson suit to his maniacal laughter as he peppered his luxuriant office with near-constant fire (Crash quivering behind upended furniture), he screamed style – in a strong Chicago accent, natch.



Hilariously codenamed “Sonic’s Ass Game”, platformer *Crash Bandicoot*’s highly original, fully 3D perspective-

switching meant PS1 players spent plenty of time staring at the marsupial’s jorts-clad behind.

Sony’s mascot game aimed to give *Mario 64* a run for its money. Sharp character models, slick animation, iconic bongo tunes and creative crate-smashing puzzles kept players tornado-spinning the expressive hero towards wumpa fruit and girlfriend-rescuing glory.

Tokens triggered bonus rounds, and an alternate ending could be unlocked by breaking all crates in each fiendishly-difficult level... without dying, mind. A genuine, eccentric charmer.



Crash Bandicoot

Developer Naughty Dog

Publisher Sony

Genre Platformer

Released 1996

Tomb Raider

SPOTLIGHT

The rise and rise of the Tomb Raider who would go on to become a PlayStation icon

Creators Core Design

Publisher Edios

Series lifespan 1996-current

Latest release Rise of the Tomb Raider (2015)

Just like a certain id Software title full of hell spawn, the fact that we're still playing a game with exactly the same name twenty years on shows the influence of a certain Ms Croft.

First emerging onto the PlayStation, PC and Sega Saturn in 1996, *Tomb Raider's* original blueprint was laid out in 1993 at UK studio Core Design. The story goes that Core artist Toby Gard wanted an Indiana Jones clone to be the star, but then switched to a female hero to avoid too many similarities. After a quick name change from Laura Cruz – which just didn't sound stiff upper lip

enough – Lara Croft was born.

From the second game onwards, Sony won exclusivity on Lara's adventures, which secured the PlayStation stratospheric success as Lara's globe-trotting treasure hunts sold in their millions. A worldwide phenomenon from the first game onwards, there had been nothing even vaguely like this combo of puzzling and action-adventuring in a 3D environment. Not to speak of the confident heroine with her pistols and brains. When it comes to iconic game characters, there's been few others who can compete since.



TOMB RAIDER 1996

Lara kicked off her plundering career looking for three pieces of an artefact known as the Scion. The original *Tomb Raider* doesn't pull any punches. The puzzles are tricky, the combat is tough and the fact that you can only save at dedicated crystals means serious tension where death's concerned.

TOMB RAIDER 2 1997

Fancy a trip to Venice? The Great Wall of China perhaps? Or even Tibet? Lara goes global in her best adventure. You might only remember locking the butler in the freezer, but the environments were bigger and more beautiful, the movement puzzles perfectly timed and even better, you could save anywhere.



TOMB RAIDER 3 1998

Somehow only arriving a year after the previous adventure, this added a few new important moves to Lara's repertoire and even more ways to die. While Ms Croft could now crouch, sprint and swing on bars and vines, she could also get caught in quicksand and currents. Oh, and the save crystals came back.



THE LAST REVELATION 1999

This slice of ponytail swinging action introduced us to 16 year old Lara and her mentor Werner Von Croy who ends up unfortunately sealed inside a tomb. Despite the new additions of a compass, ropes to swing on and more open levels with different routes, there was little truly fresh being served up.



CHRONICLES 2000

Ms Croft's final PlayStation adventure went out with a fizzle instead of a bang. While Lara got a camo snow suit and a black catsuit for sneaking, and there were plenty of puzzles and beautiful environments, the fast-changing gaming landscape meant that after five years, she was no longer cutting edge.



Developer Capcom

Publisher Capcom

Genre Survival horror

Released 1996

RESIDENT EVIL

The rise of the survival horror genre in the late '90s was all a result of this: the battle between a depleted squad of special forces agents and a mansion teeming with zombies and colossal creepy crawlies. *Resident Evil* wasn't gaming's first foray into horror, but the advent of the CD as a mainstream gaming format meant it was one of the first to conjure up a realistic 3D world filled with gruesome enemies and high quality music and effects.

The stranded Special Tactics and Rescue Service team found themselves in a rather unique pickle. As monsters shambled down hallways and room-sized sentient plants attacked with poison, players had to juggle priorities since limited ammunition, item slots and save points meant it was often better to run than to stand and fight.

Barmy puzzles saw heroes Chris and Jill ferrying crests and emblems all over the mansion grounds to unlock doors, while CCTV-like fixed camera angles ramped up the tension by ensuring that while we could hear the shuffling of undead horrors round corners, we couldn't see them until (almost) too late.



▲ CLASSIC MOMENT

Many will point to the narrow hallway where dogs burst through windows as jump scare perfection, but as a defining scene nothing beat disturbing the first zombie; squelchy sounds of man eating man from a hunched figure just out of sight, followed by an eerie cut-scene as a pallid, gore-soaked face caught sight of you.

01



▲ CLASSIC WEAPON

Depending on the order of your actions, finding the Remington M870 shotgun displayed on a wall meant solving a puzzle involving a busted replica or triggering a ceiling trap that almost turned you into sandwich filling. Once it was safely yours, aiming upwards and firing at nearby zombies guaranteed a sickly head explosion of red ichor.



▲ CLASSIC INTRO

This live-action intro is positively legendary. A wonkily shot, unintentionally funny short in which hammy actors portraying the game's major stars find pieces of a colleague in the woods and then run away from a dog attack and into the dreaded Spencer mansion, it was a true case of something being so bad it's spectacularly brilliant.





▲ CLASSIC HERO

The initial character choice between Chris Redfield and Jill Valentine influenced more than just your looks. Extra inventory slots plus a handy lock pick (thus eliminating the need for fiddly small keys) made Jill the easier pick, and her bespoke storyline featured the game's best character – Barry Burton and his infamously cheesy dialogue.



▲ CLASSIC BOSS

Arachnophobes look away now. Few of *Resident Evil's* horrors were quite as unnerving as the mutant spiders, who eschewed web spinning for more primal (and direct) forms of hunting their prey. Venture into the tunnels and you'll find an even bigger mini-beast, Black Tiger, waiting in her den.



01 The Cerberus – mutated doberman pinchers – are fast and tricky to hit. Our advice – run!

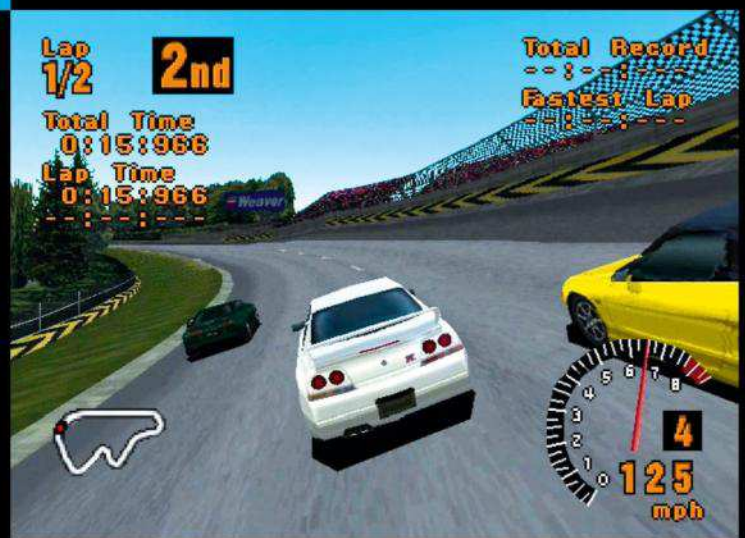
02 Boom! Barry shows you the most efficient way to off a zombie. With ammo scarce, you'd be well advised to practice your aim.



01



01 If you can't so much as look at these screenshots without whistling 'Lose Control' by Ash or humming Garbage's 'As Heaven is Wide', you may just have been a PlayStation owner in the late '90s.



MITSUBISHI		USED/INFORMATION		
EXIT	FIJI BLUE	 <p>92 GTO</p>	<p>PRICE: 8,000</p> <p>DRIVETRAIN 4WD</p> <p>221HP</p> <p>3637lb</p>	
SPC	INFO			BUY
Day 1	10,000			My Car

Gran Turismo

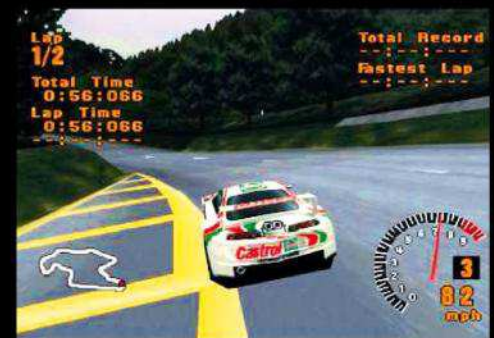
Developer Sony
 Publisher Sony
 Genre Racing
 Released 1997





▲ CLASSIC MOMENT

Gran Turismo came with its own driving school and set of tests which had to be passed in order to take part in race events. The detailed nature of the lessons reflected creator Kazunori Yamauchi's passion for race-day etiquette and on-track skill, and set the tone for a game that really was all about driving well, not just going fast.



▲ CLASSIC LEVEL

While the series has featured a number of real-world tracks since, the first game offered 11 fictional creations – demonstrating the developers' astonishing ability to conjure up believable raceways. While everybody will have their own favourite, Trial Mountain – with its deceptively difficult corners and sweeping views – must surely be the most iconic.

You can't overstate *Gran Turismo's* impact on the racing genre. While the series has lost some of its edge in the intervening years, with whipper-snapper rivals such as *Forza Motorsport* stealing a march on the old series (a situation Polyphony hopes to rectify with *Gran Turismo Sport*), the original *Gran Turismo* redefined everything.

Five years in the making and stuffed with nearly 150 cars – all of which could be tinkered with and all of which were recognisable – it was a love letter to petrolheads. It was also, at the time of release, the best-looking PlayStation game yet, its astonishing car models looking and moving – to 1997 gamers' eyes, at least – just like the real thing. In a landscape that favoured over-the-top arcade racers built around fictional vehicles with outlandish spoilers, it was a beacon of heartfelt clarity that, crucially, let players build a collection of vehicles which included both unobtainable exotica and a convincing approximation of their dad's hatchback.

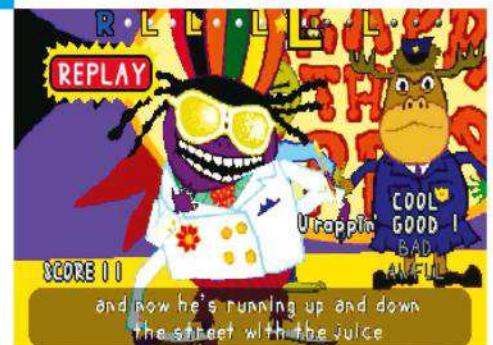
PaRappa The Rapper

Developer NanaOn-Sha

Publisher Sony

Genre Rhythm action

Released 1996



CLASSIC LEVEL

PaRappa finally gets some quality alone time with love interest Sunny Funny... but ends up desperate for the loo. Typical. To jump the bathroom queue, he must go head-to-head with all four of his equally incontinent teachers in a rap battle. Things get buttock-clenchingly intense when double-lined rapping is introduced.



Believe it or not, this beanie-clad, paper-thin rapping dog and his merry band of adorable weirdos are spoken of in reverential tones. The first "modern" popular rhythm game, *PaRappa the Rapper* was joyous and eccentric – a tale of love, faith and the all-conquering power of spitting bars. Punching buttons had PaRappa mimic mentors' rhymes for a "U rappin Good" rating. Unforgivingly precise timing windows garnered it a mythic reputation for difficulty, but it was worth it all to chop, kick and punch in Master Onion's dojo or pass a driving test using only the power of hip-hop.



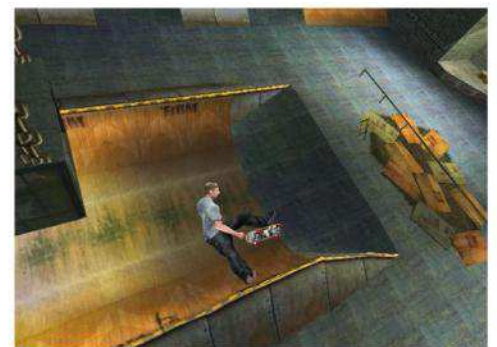
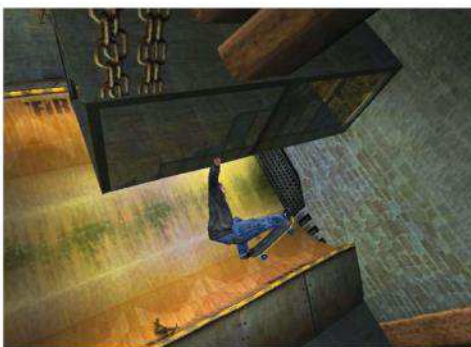
By 1999 PS1 had established itself as the coolest console around, and while *Tony Hawk's Skateboarding* (known as *Pro Skater* in the US) was also available on other formats, it's PlayStation where the series thrived and became a cult phenomenon. Forget about a niche skater appeal: its blend of sports action and arcade high-score chasing propelled the series into the spotlight, and the virtual skateboarding scene was quickly embraced by gamers from all walks of life.

With the MTV generation at its peak, developer Neversoft's decision to mix its suite of grungy levels with licensed punk/thrash tunes from the likes of *Dead Kennedys* and *Goldfinger* would prove to be a landmark move. The soundtrack quickly became a phenomenon, and was the perfect backdrop to a high-skill, borderline rhythmic finger-tapping game of reactions and technical innovation.

Balancing grinds, spotting gaps and working out the best lines to catch the biggest air meant each level became a second home for players.

▲ CLASSIC LEVEL

No level in *Tony Hawk's* long history was as famous as Warehouse. This small, indoor park was the world's introduction to the game and featured everything a budding skater could want – rails, quarter pipes, a half pipe, ramps and a secret spot. It proved to be so popular it was even brought back in some of the sequels, albeit in remixed form.



Tony Hawk's Skateboarding

Developer Neversoft

Publisher Activision

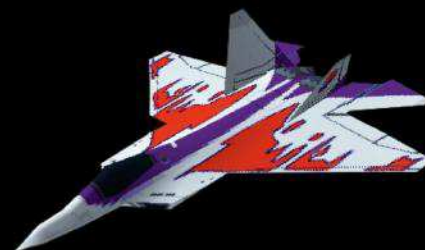
Genre Action

Released 1999

Namco



Founded 1955
Headquarters Tokyo, Japan
Years active 1978-current
Lead platform PlayStation



Classic Developer Thanks to quality Namco titles like Ridge Racer, PS1 impressed right out the gate

Originally a company running children's rides on a department store roof in Yokohama, Namco underwent almost constant metamorphosis to become one of the most prolific and influential videogame studios of our time. Founded by the indefatigably forward-thinking Masaya Nakamura, it was the birthplace of cultural icon and pizza lookalike Pac-Man, who first wacca'd out of the gate in 1980. Later, it worked with Nintendo (where by the end of the eighties its games accounted for 40% of all NES sales), and afterwards, Sega.

It was the Sony PlayStation, however, where Namco shone. The company used the system's unprecedented power to deliver high-quality ports of smash-hit arcade titles like *Ridge Racer*,

leaving gamers utterly gobsmacked the world over. Stunning visuals, a varied catalogue of games, innovative new mechanics: these were the hallmarks of the Namco and PlayStation partnership. Namco invested in the kind of talent that would stick around for generations to come (Tekken creator Katsuhiro Harada springs to mind). Many of its best videogames were PlayStation exclusive. You wanted the Ace Combat or Soul series? You'd have to say a big, wallet-mandated hello to Sony's grey good-time console. Together, Namco and PS1 pushed each other (and games as a whole) to new heights, creating legendary games that still hold up, and franchises that continue on to this today, over a decade on from Namco's merger with toy giants Bandai.



RIDGE RACER 1995

Done with your impression of the iconic announcer? Then let's begin. In graphics, audio and controls, Ridge Racer arguably surpassed every other racing game of its time. Its use of three-dimensional polygons was unique. More importantly, it was a total rush to play – solid drifting mechanics meant even corners were a full-throttle affair.



01



02



03

01 **Time Crisis** 1997

The arcade shooter's "duck" pedal became a button on PS1, gleefully hammered when taking fire to blow raspberries at enemies from behind cover. Did we mention that button was on the side of a bundled GunCon light gun controller? Because it was – and it made blasting through that time limit that much sweeter.

02 **Soul Blade** 1996

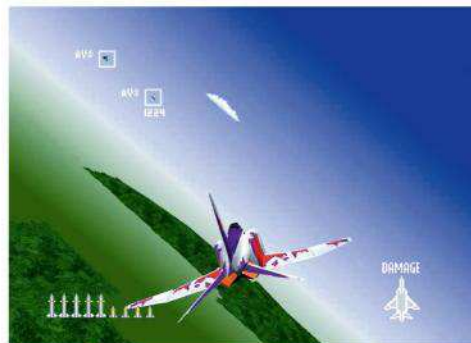
Curious devs at Namco asked themselves the question, "What if we put honking great weapons in a fighting game?" The answer was *Soul Blade* (the series' name eventually changed to *Soulcaliber*). An accessible combo system ensured it became a PlayStation classic.

03 **Tekken** 1994

Letting you control all four of your fighter's limbs independently, *Tekken's* innovative four-button system remains the series' defining feature. Thanks to excellent collision detection, blows felt meaty.

**KLONOA** 1997

Set in the mysterious Phantomile, a land powered by dreams, this inventive 2.5D side-scrolling platformer was an adorable masterclass in picking up your foes and throwing them at other foes – or chucking them on the ground to propel yourself further into the air. Short, but sweet, and perfectly formed to boot.

**AIR COMBAT** 1995

The first console instalment in the *Ace Combat* series brought the intense arcade flight-sim experience to television sets everywhere. Swooping down upon oil refineries, dodging air attacks from vicious CPU, preventing whole cities from going up in flames – suddenly, it was all possible from your sofa.

**POINT BLANK** 1997

Another light gun shooter? Oh, go on then. It was a far cry from the grittier likes of *Time Crisis*, colourful 2D sprites whizzing about to task you with taking out ninjas, flying targets, meteorites and even apples from heads, William Tell-style. Delightfully old-school, frenzied fun.

01



Castlevania: Symphony of the Night



Developer Konami

Publisher Konami

Genre Platformer

Released 1997



▲ CLASSIC WEAPON

Powerful blade Crissaegrim is tricky to come across; only Schmoos in the Forbidden Library occasionally drop them. It can be swung while walking, slashes four times per attack, and has a huge hitbox. It's also one-handed, so can be dual-wielded, making Alucard basically invincible. Undoubtedly broken – and subsequently brilliant.



02



▲ CLASSIC MOMENT

That final boss battle was your lot, right? Wrong. If you had the Holy Glasses equipped during the fight and attacked the device controlling Richter, an entirely new, inverted version of the already massive castle would unlock. A gasp-worthy revelation – and a whole other half of the game to enjoy.



Back in 1997 when polygons were the new black, PS1 seemed destined to close the door on 2D. Not so. In walked *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night* to reinvent the side-scrolling platformer, introducing RPG elements and sprawling, non-linear level design... all while remaining stubbornly two-dimensional. Its sumptuous, fluidly-animated 32-bit sprites are ageless – much like vampire prince protagonist Alucard, in fact.

A mysterious tale unfolded to an iconic Gothic score, gory special moves pulled off with dual-wielded weapons and D-pad combos. And what a variety of monsters there was – all that glorious new compact disc space meant an unprecedented amount to battle and explore through. Secrets, shapeshifting, flying ghost skeletons – the list goes on. And when players reached the “end” of Konami’s quest, it became all too clear that *Symphony of the Night* was much, much more than it appeared.

Like most masterpieces, it didn’t fly off shelves initially. Once the world started to realise its significance, Konami’s immortal creation stepped out from the shadows. Exemplifying the thrill of watching your character grow that all the great action RPGs boast, it remains an eternal classic.



01 Boasting the torso of a woman, three dog heads where a waist should be, and moray eels for limbs, the Underground Caverns’ Scylla is a stern test.

02 The monsters all have their own bespoke death animations, and witnessing them all is a treat.

01

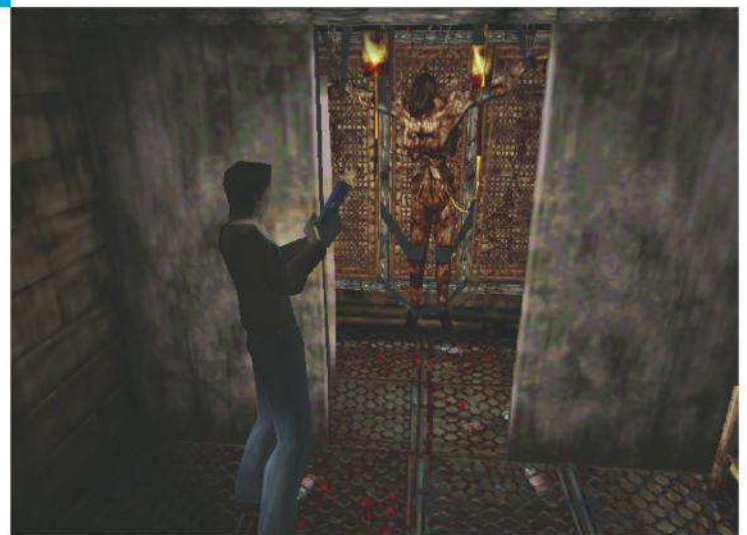


01 *Silent Hill's* bald, rotting hell-dogs are incredibly sensitive to sound. Needless to say, you want to go out of your way not to attract their attention.

02 Say what you will about *Silent Hill*, but the inhabitants really know their stuff when it comes to interior decorating.



02



Silent Hill

Developer Konami

Publisher Konami

Genre Horror

Released 1999





▲ CLASSIC MOMENT

A banging locker in Midwich Elementary School lead to a well-timed jump scare involved a cat bursting out and being eaten by a monster. Playing on that knowledge, Konami repeated the trick in the school's hellish version - only for it to be empty. A few seconds later, however, a corpse dropped out of another locker.



▲ CLASSIC INTRO

After a creepy opening montage that screamed '90s TV drama, Silent Hill started with everyman Harry Mason waking up in his crashed car to find his young daughter Cheryl has disappeared into the dense fog of an off-the-map town. He caught glimpses of her and set off in pursuit, straight into the maw of an alley filled with entrails.



While *Resident Evil* was happily throwing big weapons and crowds of zombies at horror fans, Konami's exploration into the genre was far more reserved. As much of a psychological horror as an all-out monster gallery (though to be fair, it delivered demons – horrible, gag-worthy ones at that – aplenty), it largely eschewed *Resi's* claustrophobic, fixed-camera setup for a pioneering foggy, wide-open ghost town setting and proper 3D movement and exploration.

Protagonist Harry Mason was just a regular dad trapped in a horrific situation, and his skills reflected that. More apt to beat away enemies with a lead pipe than a gun (when you did get a pistol his aim was never true), he carried a radio that crackled to give warning of impending attacks from within the choking fog. That atmosphere was actually a result of PS1's technical limitations and the inability to draw objects more than a few metres away from Harry, but Konami turned this drawback into an asset by making the omnipresent grey mist all part of the town's paranormal power.

As reality blended with an alternate nightmare dimension, players could never tell what was coming next - they only knew to fear it.



X-MEN VS. STREET FIGHTER

CULT CLASSIC



We're not sure who at Capcom convinced Marvel that 1995's *Marvel Super Heroes* should be followed-up with a crossover where Rogue does battle with Ryu, but we're glad they did. The PlayStation era was a lean one for 2D fighting game fans as the genre fell out of vogue, but these collaborations were a definite highlight. Wolverine, Gambit and friends were natural fits for Capcom's cartoony universe.

GAMEBOY

ARENA



Developer Capcom

Publisher Capcom

Genre Fighting

Released 1998

LEVEL





Manufacturer Nintendo
Processor 64-bit NEC VR4300
Units sold 32.93 million
Released 1996

NINTENDO 64

20 years on, we can now see this much-maligned console for what it is: one of the most innovative gaming systems ever created

The Nintendo 64 was born into a world where there wasn't yet an accepted standard for the brave new world of 3D gaming, and this led to some playful experimentation by Nintendo's hardware designers. And nothing typified the console's inventive nature more than its bizarre controller.

A strange-looking, three-pronged affair, the N64 controller was a throw-everything-at-the-wall kind of design that was built to be held in different ways for different game types. It could be held like a normal controller for 2D games, while the middle section of the controller featured an analogue stick and a trigger hidden underneath, which could be used to pilot characters around 3D landscapes.

While it would prove to be the PlayStation's more conventional dual-handed design that stuck, the N64's analogue stick was a clever innovation that would go on to become an industry standard. Why, Sony even saw fit to revise their own PlayStation controller to shoehorn in a couple of analogue sticks of their own.

Another controller mainstay that first saw light of day on N64 – rumble feedback, in the form of a bulky add-on that slotted into the back of the controller. Sadly, for all the N64's pioneering spirit, it was hamstrung by its slavish devotion to the media of yesteryear, its cartridges lacking the space to hold the full-motion videos that wowed PlayStation audiences.

The Expansion Pak doubled the N64's RAM to 8MB, and was required for games such as *Majora's Mask*.





SUPER MARIO 64

Developer Nintendo EAD

Publisher Nintendo

Genre Platformer

Released 1996

Without an ounce of overstatement, Mario's 3D debut was and is one of the most important

games ever made. It's hard to fathom the pressure Nintendo must have been under – it not only had to sell consoles, but also convince players that its mascot could be equally at home as in his side-scrolling outings. How do you translate a 2D series into 3D? *Super Mario 64* was the textbook answer. More than that, it set the agenda for 3D gaming as a whole, such that it's hard to think of a game released since – especially sandbox games – that doesn't owe Nintendo a debt.

Quite apart from defining an era, it happened to be a brilliant game in its own right. A gloriously inviting and secret-packed castle hub hid wonderful virtual playgrounds behind each of its doors (and sometimes in its walls and floors, too). All were fun to explore, with many hosting tricky platforming runs that required all of Mario's expanded moveset to conquer. Some would say Nintendo has never bettered it; either way, it remains one of the medium's true masterpieces.



▲ CLASSIC HERO

It has to be Mario himself, of course – manoeuvring him felt every bit as 'right' as it did in 2D, his capabilities delightfully expanded to give him the freedom to triple-jump and side-flip around his alluringly spacious surroundings. A nod, too, to cameraman Lakitu, somehow managing to keep up wherever Mario goes.

01



▲ CLASSIC BOSS

With an extra dimension, Nintendo had to reinvent the language of the boss battle. It came up with a few inventive solutions, from nudging Big Bully into the lava to ground-pounding the fallen Whomp King's dodgy back. But there was no pleasure as enjoyably tactile as grabbing Bowser by the tail and lobbing him into spikes.



▲ CLASSIC MOMENT

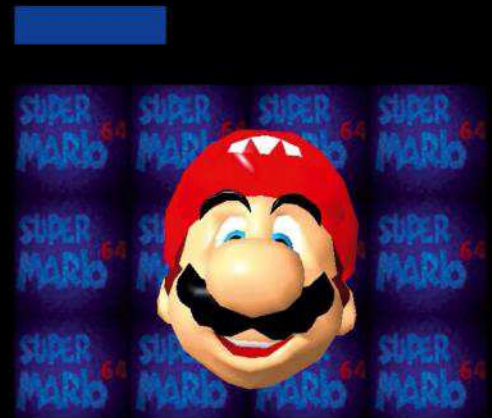
If there was one question that nagged at Mario fans while playing *Super Mario 64*, it was "Where the flip is Yoshi?" With 120 stars under his belt, the plumber finally discovered the whereabouts of his dino chum: he was on top of Peach's castle all along! A charming reward for your efforts in digging out every celestial trophy on offer.





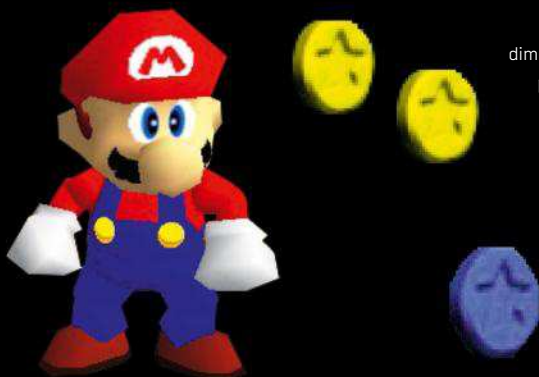
▲ CLASSIC LEVEL

Impossible just to pick one from such a consistently outstanding selection. Peach's Castle was delightful, a hub that functioned as a great Mario level in and of itself. But there was something special about the rangy, satisfying Whomp's Fortress that made it a joy to return to. Nintendo evidently agreed, resurrecting it in *Super Mario Galaxy 2*.



▲ CLASSIC INTRO

Nintendo ushered in the 3D era with a massive 3D model of Mario's grinning face, which protruded from the title screen and which you could fool around with to your heart's content. From there, we cut to Lakitu as he performs a dramatic swoop-by of Peach's castle. Truly we were about to enter a whole new era of gaming.



01 Despite the emergence of a whole new dimension, *Mario 64's* levels managed to feature platforming action just as taut as those seen in his 2D adventures.



GoldenEye 007

Developer Rare

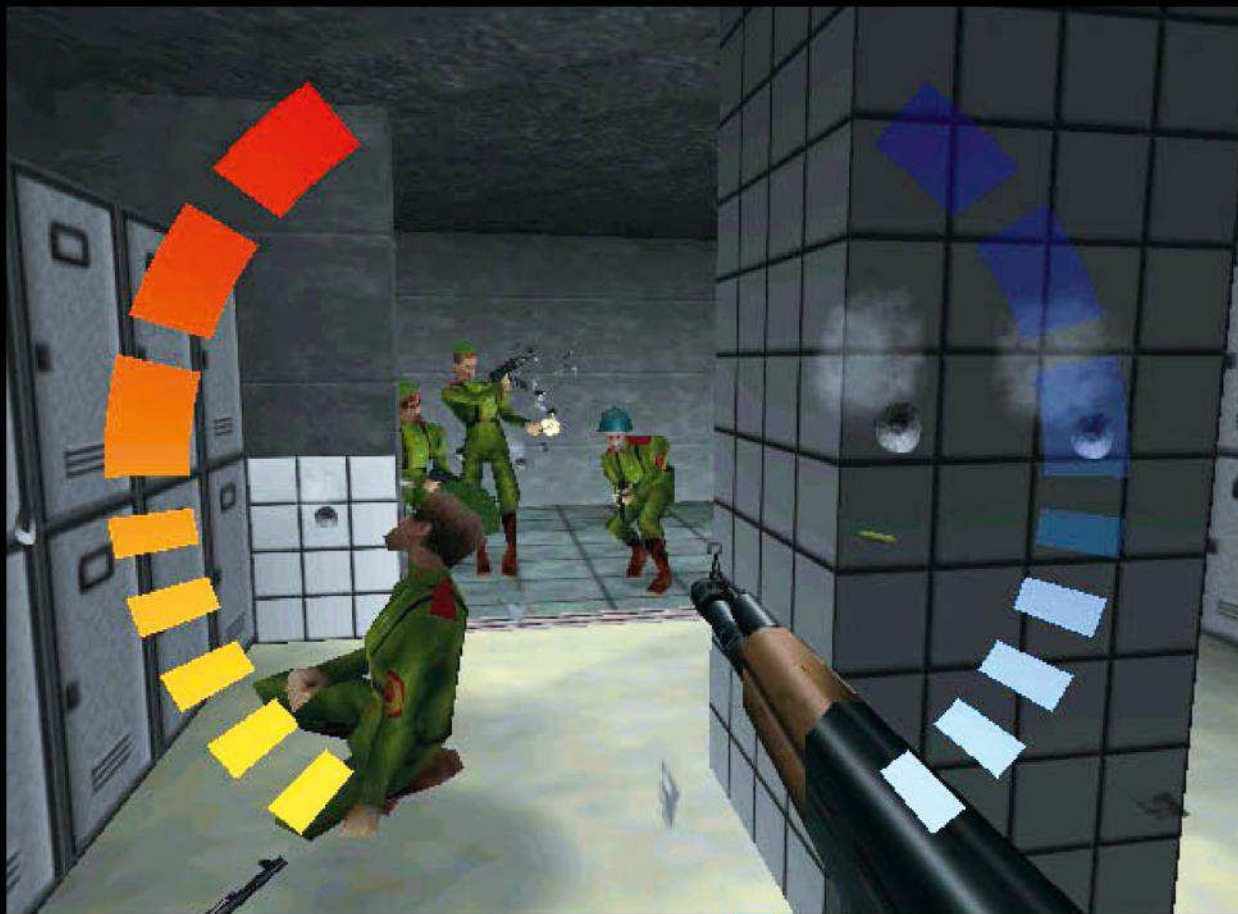
Publisher Nintendo

Genre First-person shooter

Released 1997



01



02





▲ CLASSIC WEAPON

One of the best examples of 'classic' not meaning 'good'; the Klobb was memorable for all the wrong reasons: its range and accuracy were poor, it rapidly chewed through ammo and it was so loud as to be almost unusable on stealth-based levels. Rubbish, then, but endearingly so.



▲ CLASSIC LEVEL

Facility was brilliant in both its forms. In the campaign, its opening saw Bond enter through the vents into a toilet occupied by guards: you could hunt your prey with extreme prejudice or sneak out without attracting attention. And in multiplayer, it's transformed into a thrilling game of cat and mouse.



Were we to call *Doom* the father of the first-person shooter (FPS), then *GoldenEye 007* was the cool uncle. This thoroughly classy and stylish shooter was conclusive proof that licenced games needn't be lowest-common denominator tat. And though it took a few liberties with the plot of the film, here was a globe-trotting espionage adventure that really 'got' Bond's appeal: slick and precise, with just a hint of the preposterous. Its campaign was brilliantly diverse, one moment calling for slow and careful tactics, the next letting you charge in guns blazing. Some would argue that *Perfect Dark* (p. 140) did the superspy thing better, but *GoldenEye* laid the ideal template for the modern FPS.

Besides, it also had that multiplayer. Campaign stages were repurposed into maps that hosted astoundingly addictive four-player deathmatches. Though hardly perfectly balanced – everyone clamoured to play Oddjob, as his diminutive size made him much more difficult to hit – that's no surprise given that it was only added at the 11th hour. With that in mind, it's amazing how well it hung together, and it would go on to revolutionise the genre – it took a long time for anyone to top it.



01 The AI may have been basic, but at least they had the decency and the awareness to crumble into a melodramatic heap when shot.

02 When *GoldenEye* took the action outside, draw distance woes often made tracking enemies tricky.

RIVAL



This might seem a weird thing to say about a game in which you race aliens in the year 2560, but *F-Zero X* is possibly the 'realist' racing game there has ever been. There's no rubber-band AI or result-fixing so rivals always come out on top – just you and 29 other racers going hell for leather to the finish line.

There's stakes, too. Using boost comes as the expense of your health bar – but an even bigger risk of using it is that you could misjudge a corner and tumble into the abyss. We've seen races end with less than five left in the field. Oh, and it's fast. Very, very fast.



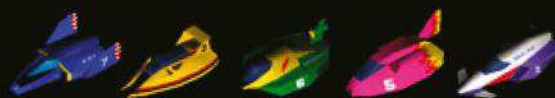
F-Zero X

Developer Nintendo EAD

Publisher Nintendo

Genre Racing

Released 1998



▲ CLASSIC MOMENT

The Jack Cup's second track, Silence, is little more than a big loop punctuated by go-faster strips. Hit them all and you could hit speeds in excess of 1,000 km/h. It's a tremendous introduction to the game's blinding speed – and a well-timed collision is a great opportunity to end your rivals' race early.

Star Fox 64

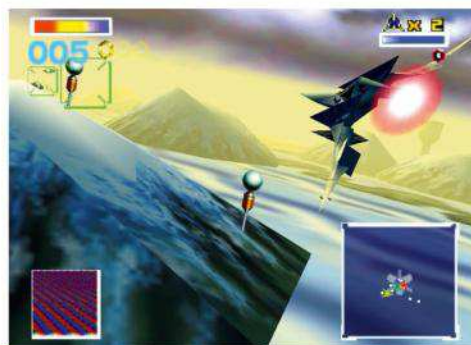
Developer Nintendo EAD

Publisher Nintendo

Genre Shoot-'em-up

Released 1997

A game so good that Nintendo dodged making a straight sequel to it – instead, continuing the series with spin-offs and remakes of varying standard. It's understandable in the sense that Nintendo managed to hone its formula to something approaching perfection; a score-focused space opera that wrapped a simple but stirring tale around a series of miniature galactic skirmishes, with multiple routes adding substantial replay value. Blending tautly crafted rollercoaster thrills with challenging dogfights in more open arenas, and combining goofy charm with drum-tight design, the game otherwise known as *Lylat Wars* in Europe proved yet another immaculate release from a publisher at its peak.



▲ CLASSIC LEVEL

The arrival of Star Wolf on Fortuna gives you a tricky optional challenge: defeat them all in good time and you can access the route to Solar. Now this was a test – with the Arwing taking damage from its molten temperatures, you had to constantly shoot enemies and collect rings to survive. Intense.



Rare



Founded 1982 (as Ultimate Play The Game)

Headquarters Twycross, Leicestershire

Years active 1982-current

Lead platform Nintendo 64



Classic Developer The British studio that, for a short while, out-Nintendo'd Nintendo

Now part of Microsoft's fleet of internal game studios, Rare might have seen better days, but during their prime years as a Nintendo-owned studio in the 1990s, their name was a watchword for innovation and quality.

This was particular true during the Nintendo 64 era, where Rare played Pixar to Nintendo's Disney, propping up the console's software library with a succession of hits that breathed new life into ailing Nintendo heroes such as Donkey Kong – and gave birth to several new ones, too.

The British-born outfit showcased the imagination and versatility that would go on to serve them so well under Nintendo's stewardship right from the very beginning. Founded in 1982 by brothers Chris and Tim

Stamper under the name Ashby Computers & Graphics Ltd, and trading under the more recognisable name Ultimate Play the Game, the team that would evolve into Rare were major players on the ZX Spectrum scene, their revolutionary isometric Filmation game engine giving rise to numerous adventures, such as *Knight Lore* (p.18) thought beyond the scope of the Spectrum's humble capabilities.

One of the first western developers to court the notoriously-insular Nintendo, Rare were rewarded for their creativity with a near-unlimited budget. Their investment in 3D graphics during the SNES era made them one of the most technically-advanced studios going, and the research left Rare well-placed to dominate during the N64 era.



BLAST CORPS 1997

Kind of an updated version of the classic puzzle game *Pipemania*, where you have to stop a runaway nuclear missile carrier from colliding with objects by swapping between construction vehicles and clearing the way.

01



02



03

**01 Diddy Kong Racing** 1997

Whisper it – Rare's rival to *Mario Kart 64* may have been the better game. Certainly, it had the more developed single-player offering, taking place in a hub world with a sense of adventure and progression, rather than just being a succession of races.

02 Conker's Bad Fur Day 2001

Rare's final N64 title was destined to be a family-friendly affair like Banjo and DK, before a lengthy delay and overhaul saw Conker re-imagined as a potty-mouthed punk who fought with opera-singing piles of excrement. Heart-wrenching ending, mind.

03 Donkey Kong 64 1999

Rare rescued DK from videogame hero purgatory with 1994 SNES platformer *Donkey Kong Country*, but despite being one of the few games to require the expansion pak, it's most famous for over-doing it with the collectibles.

**GOLDENEYE 007** 1997

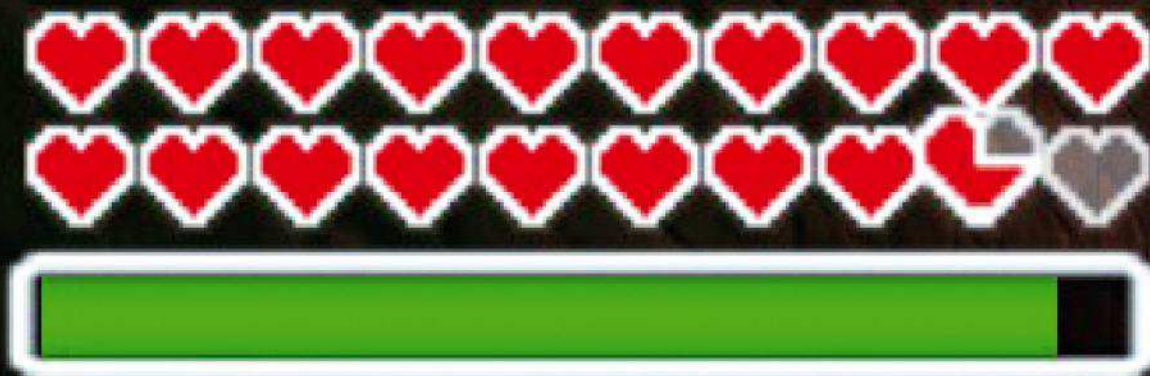
You can read about this (and pseudo-sequel *Perfect Dark*) elsewhere on these pages, but we'd be amiss not to include the game that popularised the deathmatch on consoles, and swallowed many a student's hopes of earning a degree.

**BANJO-KAZOOIE** 1998

Like *Mario 64*, this effort, starring everyone's favourite bird/bear combo, was as much a puzzle game as it was a platformer, with the player roaming sprawling, self-contained levels looking for challenges to complete.

**JET FORCE GEMINI** 1999

While awkward controls may have dimmed its legacy somewhat, *Jet Force Gemini* was a trailblazer that successfully fused elements of platforming and shooting to forge something unique, which had an equally keen eye for exploration and destruction.



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: OCARINA OF TIME

Developer Nintendo EAD

Publisher Nintendo

Genre Action-adventure

Released 1998





Games are improving all the time. Creative visions are no longer restricted by technological limitations, and today's developers have years of design lessons to draw from. So it speaks volumes about the astonishing craft of *Ocarina of Time* that, 18 years since its release, it's *still* routinely referred to as the greatest game of all-time.

Like *Mario 64*, Link's N64 debut had a tough SNES act to follow. But it didn't just emerge from *Link to the Past's* shadow; rather, it created a long one of its own. It was another landmark moment in game design, demonstrating how combat could function effectively in a 3D space. The pioneering Z-targeting system has influenced every lock-on mechanic you've encountered since.

At its heart, *Ocarina* was a disarmingly touching coming-of-age tale with a fantasy wrapper: the story of an identifiably normal kid charged with a responsibility he didn't seem ready for, and the adult he had to become to fulfil it. As a fable and as a game, it had that rare timeless quality; little wonder it is still so widely cherished.



▲ CLASSIC HERO

Nintendo provided just enough back-story to give us an idea of Link's personality, but otherwise left us to imprint ourselves upon him. His journey was so affecting because it was *our* journey, too, with his reactions - from horror at Hyrule's ruin to his determination to set things right - mirroring our own.

01



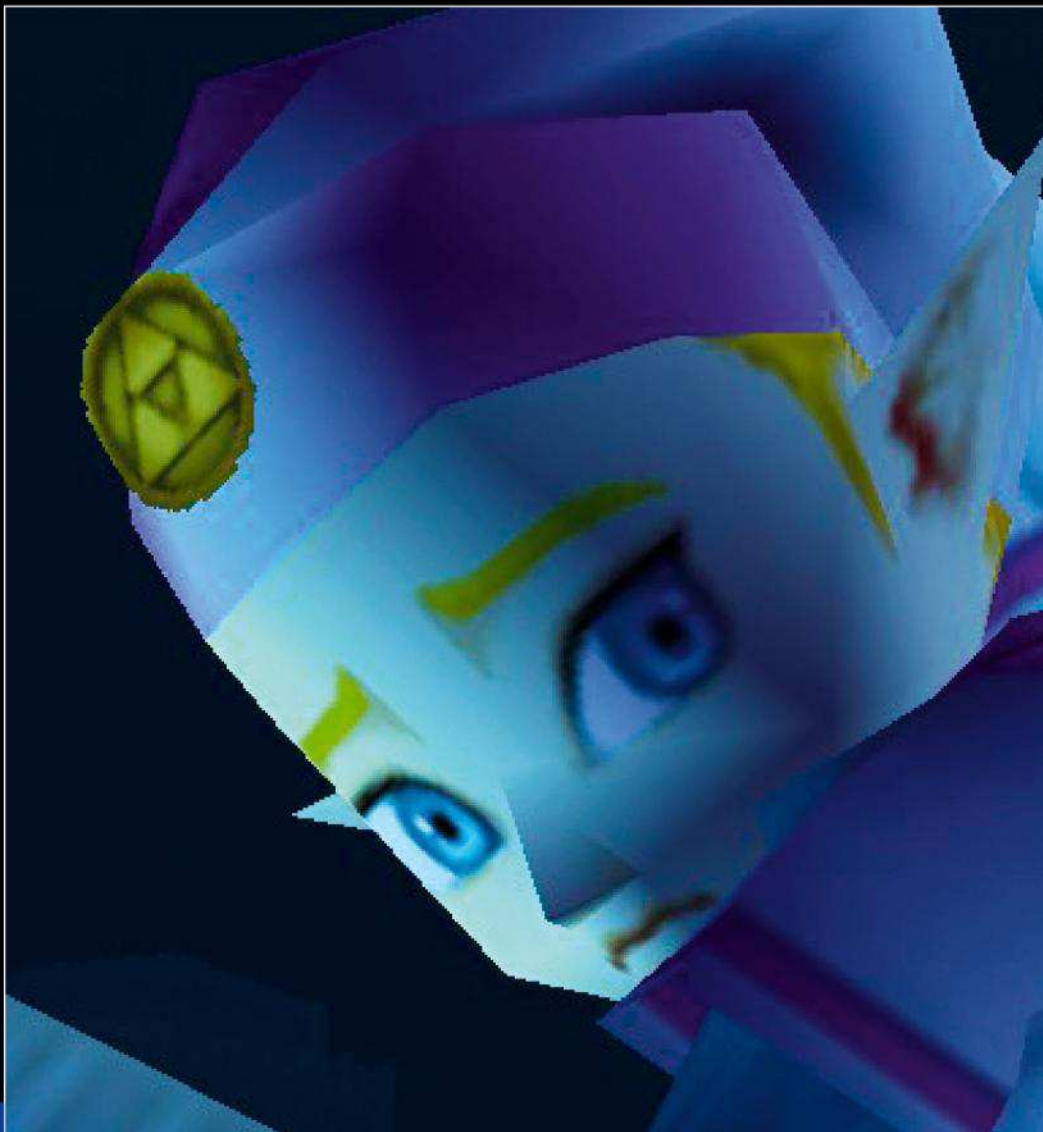
▲ CLASSIC INTRO

It began with a nightmare; a dark, grinning villain, a scared princess. Then a wise old tree, telling a fairy to go and find a hero. Navi's subsequent first-person flight around the Kokiri village was the perfect introduction to Link's world, with a lovely moment of slapstick comedy as she collided with a fence.



▲ CLASSIC LEVEL

For many, it was venturing out into Hyrule Field for the first time, that vast expanse of green spread out in front of you, giving you the freedom to go wherever you wanted. But every bit as powerful is the moment you return as an adult, with Hyrule Town razed to rubble and populated by ReDeads. Chilling.



02



▲ CLASSIC BOSS

The culmination of Link's journey, everything you and he had been building towards, was the final confrontation with Ganondorf. So evil he played his own organ introduction, he was a fittingly fearsome opponent for one of the most exhilarating and dramatically staged climactic battles we've ever played. The perfect end to a near-perfect game.



▲ CLASSIC MOMENT

You'll have to race the Lon Lon Ranch's greedy owner Ingo several times in order to win Epona's freedom. And even if you're victorious, you'll have to engineer an escape route, since the infuriated Ingo bolts the gate shut and refuses to let you leave. Epona's worth the trouble, allowing you to trot across the vast rolling fields with ease.



01 Princess Zelda is a more active and capable character in *Ocarina of Time* than her depiction in some of the earlier installments.

02 Throughout the adventure, Link is shadowed by Navi, a fairy bestowed upon him by the Great Deku Tree to offer hints and guidance.



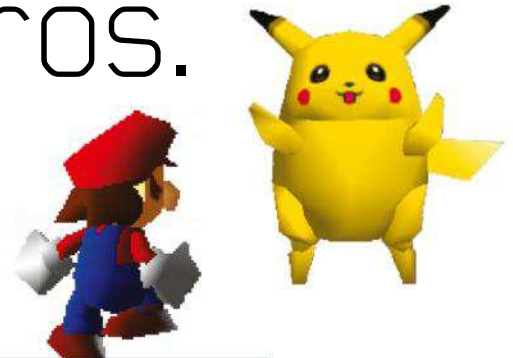
Super Smash Bros.

Developer HAL Laboratory

Publisher Nintendo

Genre Fighting

Released 1999



01



02





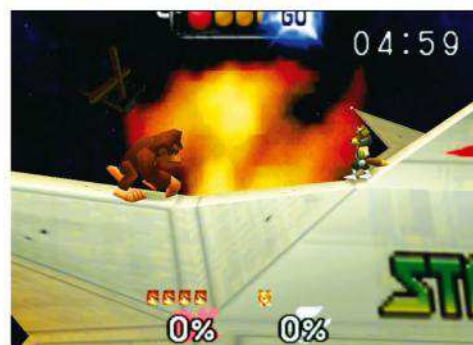
▲ CLASSIC HERO

He might not have been the most effective fighter – Pikachu’s electric attacks were distinctly overpowered – but seeing a character like Ness in battle with vastly more popular characters was a startling moment. It was obvious Sakurai didn’t just want to celebrate Nintendo’s best-loved heroes, but to give its underdogs a chance to shine, too.



▲ CLASSIC MOMENT

It’s no longer a big deal, but witnessing a collection of beloved mascots at one another’s throats was genuinely unexpected back in 1999. Letting Mario and Luigi settle their sibling rivalry with fists, feet and fireballs demonstrated that Nintendo was willing and able to poke fun at itself.



Sensing that fighting games were growing ever more impenetrable to the masses, Masahiro Sakurai set out to create an accessible kind of brawler which would accommodate more than two players at once. Having assembled a prototype with the help of HAL colleague Satoru Iwata, Sakurai cheekily decided to pep it up by adding a host of Nintendo characters – without Nintendo’s permission. With Iwata putting in a good word on his behalf, Sakurai finally dared to show Shigeru Miyamoto, and eventually got the go-ahead to develop his idea.

The decision to replace the standard health bars of most beat-’em-ups with a damage meter – steadily increasing the knockback for each hit landed – was a stroke of genius, allowing vulnerable players who stayed in the fight long enough to earn surprise comeback wins by smashing their rivals off the screen. Compared to more recent entries the original was limited in its scope, with 12 characters and just nine stages, yet the novelty value of seeing Nintendo favourites smacking each other around was all the greater. Sakurai’s daring gave Nintendo an unlikely hit, and the series went on to become one of Nintendo’s biggest.



01 If you ever wondered who’d come out on top in a brawl between Metroid heroine Samus or Pokémon singing sensation Jigglypuff, Smash Bros had your weird fantasies covered.

02 Target Stages were brutally taxing agility tests.

01



01 The first Special Cup race, DK Jungle Parkway, features this moustache-bridling leap over a passing cruise ship.
02 Red shells, green shells and bananas now also came in multiples.



Mario Kart 64

Developer Nintendo EAD
 Publisher Nintendo
 Genre Racer
 Released 1996





▲ CLASSIC HERO

It's-a-him again! You wouldn't know it to look at him, but Mario here is actually a 2D sprite. To conserve the N64's memory, *Mario Kart 64's* racers were 2D images drawn from various angles, giving the illusion of them being three dimensional. *Mario 64's* Bob-ombs and Wigglers also pulled this trick, known as billboarding.



02



▲ CLASSIC LEVEL

The N64 outing was the first Mario Kart game to offer 'mirrored' tracks – essentially the game's core tracks, except experienced backwards. It was an inexpensive way of providing new, fresh challenges, and for the most part an unexciting one – until you reach Toad's Turnpike, where suddenly you find yourself racing amidst oncoming traffic.



The N64's 3D graphics allowed the flat-packed circuits we saw in *Super Mario Kart* to explode into life in a riotous bloom of colour, charm and invention.

Track features that were beyond the capabilities of the SNES suddenly became possible, such as the death-defying leaps of faith that punctuated Royal Raceway and DK Jungle Parkway, or the spine-juddering peaks and troughs of the wild Wario Stadium.

Also new to the series was moving enemies (Piranha Plants don't count); Sherbet Land's caverns were populated by killer penguins defending their turf, while roving Chain Chomps prowled Rainbow Road, looking for fenders to bend. And who can forget the one Easter Egg no-one wanted to unwrap – the spinning oval of doom waiting to trash your race on the final straight of the mazy Yoshi Valley?

The most enduring use of the N64's extra grunt however came with the ever-popular battle mode, where stubby 2D arenas ballooned into tactically-rich, multi-layered affairs. They were so vast that the developers needed to implement a radar to help the players find each other. 20 years and countless sequels on, Nintendo still hasn't managed to better it.



MARIO SPOTLIGHT

One of gaming's great dilettantes, Nintendo's mascot has truly done and seen it all

Creators Various

Publisher Nintendo

Series lifespan 1981-current

Latest release Mario & Luigi: Paper Jam (2015)

We've known almost from the very beginning that there's more to Mario than platforming (and plumbing). In his time, gaming's most famous mascot has tried his hand at; running a cement factory (*Mario's Cement Factory*, Game & Watch, 1983); a stint in the army (*Mario's Bombs Away*, Game & Watch, 1983); being a villainous circus owner (*Donkey Kong Jr*, Arcade, 1982); being the next Wayne Gretzky (*Donkey Kong Hockey*, Game & Watch, 1982), and, well, you begin to get the idea.

But it was on home consoles that

Mario really began to branch his moustache-like tentacles out into a range of different professions. After dabbling in medicine on the NES in *Dr Mario* and earning his karting spurs on the SNES' *Super Mario Kart*, it was the Nintendo 64 that really showcased our mushroom-scoffing hero's versatility, with a spread of games that saw Mario dip one of his gloved fingers into almost every genre going.

Here are just some of his N64 exploits (and remember, this is in addition to *Smash Bros* and *Mario Kart 64*)...



YOSHI'S STORY 1997

Yoshi's first platform adventure sans Mario (the be-tongued dino was the playable character in *Super Mario World 2: Yoshi's Island*, albeit with a baby Mario in the saddle) was a short but sweet affair which was built for repeated play, with the goal being to bag high-scores, and explore nooks and crannies for rare-coloured Yoshis.



01



02



03

**01 Mario Golf 64** 1998

Teeing off the range of Mario Sports titles, which would go on to encompass everything from basketball to ice hockey, *Mario Golf 64* was a relatively straight-laced arcade golf game with tracks that drew from classic Mario locations such as Shy Guy Desert and Boo Valley.

02 Mario Party 1998

One of three Mario Party games to hit the N64, this outing contains over 50 Mario-themed mini-games all linked together by a traditional dice-roll board game. Available games ranged from Whack-A-Plant to the frankly unpronounceable Bombsketball.

03 Mario Artist 1999

Japan-only suite of four connected software tools for the ill-fated 64DD add-on: *Paint Studio* (self-explanatory), *Talent Studio* (animation software), *Polygon Studio* (design and render 3D images) and *Communication Kit* (to help you share your creations with other users).

**MARIO TENNIS** 2000

In which Mario and Bowser take time out from being mortal enemies to serve up a fast-paced slice of tennis action. It was distinguished from other tennis games of the era by its unique flow, fuelled by the 'charge' mechanic that gifted you better power and accuracy over your shots.

**PAPER MARIO** 2000

After a dry run on SNES, the N64 saw Mazza fully commit to the role-playing game genre on paper. Or should we say, *as* paper. Flanked by several whimsical allies – from pink Bob-Ombs to a be-shaded Lakitu – Mario embarks on an adventure of devastating wit, while Luigi stays at home.

**DR MARIO 64** 2001

Is this man even a doctor? Can we see his certificate? Because his only solution to burgeoning bacteria populations appears to be to indiscriminately chuck pills at the problem until it resolves itself, one way or the other. It's a remake of the 1990 Game Boy puzzler, with Wario also getting in on the act.

01



01 As with *GoldenEye*, ramping up the difficulty led to new objectives needing to be fulfilled, changing the way you approached the level dramatically.

02 Infiltrating and escaping the dataDyne Central facility is a tasty way for players to learn how to play while on the job, as it were.



02



Perfect Dark

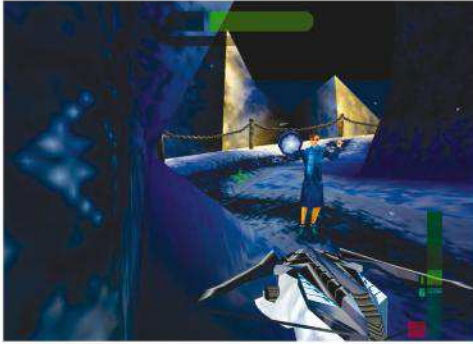
Developer Rare

Publisher Nintendo

Genre First-person shooter

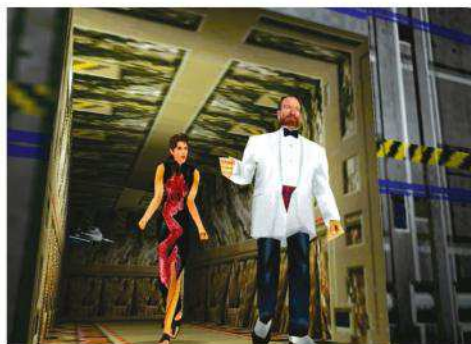
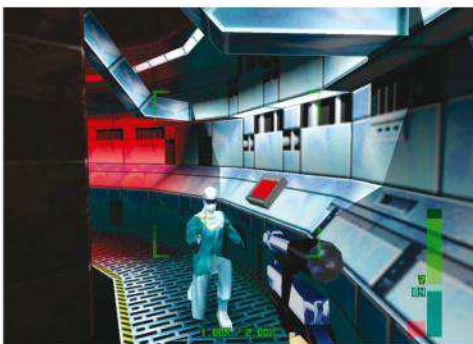
Released 2000





▲ CLASSIC LEVEL

Halfway through the game, Joanna finds herself needing to smuggle herself – and her bag of lethal tricks – aboard the president's plane. This requires a more subtle touch than the norm – namely, commandeering a passing stewardess' uniform. Getting your weapons past security, however, is a tricky task. First you'll need a suitcase...



Arriving on the scene while the console was in its twilight years, this spiritual successor to *GoldenEye 007* (p.124) saw the debuting espionage agent Joanna Dark – true to form – pass under the radar of a great many N64 owners.

Which was a pity, because technical wobbles notwithstanding, this was a lively follow-up that solidified *GoldenEye's* rock-solid foundations in numerous ways. No longer a slave to a film licence, Rare took the opportunity to cast *Perfect Dark* in the (then) far-flung future of 2023, unlocking the cabinet to a plethora of sci-fi weaponry that would have left Bond lore-bores shaken, not stirred.

Memorable gadgets included the FarSight, a cumbersome-but-deadly railgun that could target and fire through solid walls; the CamSpy, a reconnaissance drone that could be used to scout ahead; and of course, the famous laptop gun, which not only shape-shifted into an innocent-looking PC for easy storage, but could also be deployed as a sentry gun.

Perfect Dark doesn't get the multiplayer love *GoldenEye* does, but it's very much its equal, with imaginative twists such as the counter-operative mode, where one player played through a campaign mission while the other attempted to halt them with a succession of cannon fodder soldiers.

◀ CLASSIC SCENE

In-between missions, you can explore the Carrington Institute hub and play around with your weaponry. Familiarise yourself with the layout, as late on in the campaign the Skedar launch an assault on the facility, and Dark, not exactly dressed for the occasion in cocktail dress and heels, has to rescue hostages and deactivate a bomb.

The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask

Developer Nintendo EAD

Publisher Nintendo

Genre Action-adventure

Released 2000



01

01 The Happy Mask Salesman returns from *Ocarina of Time*, wild mood swings and all.

02 The sickeningly-in-love Honey and Darling run a shop in East Clock Town, where Link can try his luck at three different mini-games.



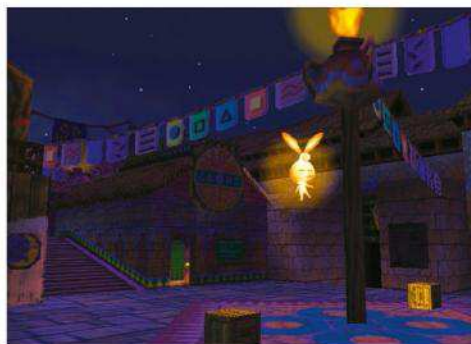
▲ CLASSIC INTRO

Before the title screen had even appeared, the brief vignettes of Termina perfectly evoked the dark fairytale vibe. First we got a glimpse of a peaceful bucolic setting with a familiar child swinging his legs atop a wooden platform. Then we saw Skull Kid and the terrifying encroaching moon and felt a shiver of eerie horror. Supremely effective.



▲ CLASSIC WEAPON

Not so much an individual weapon as a series of them. There was a terrible compulsion to complete your set of masks, partly because many of them were legitimately useful, but also because donning almost every one of them made Link look either funny or creepy – or occasionally both.



○ *Ocarina of Time* had taken an unusually long time to make.

Sure, three years might not seem like much by today's standards, but back in 1998 it was out of the ordinary. Not wishing to let those 3D assets go to waste, Nintendo set out to make a new edition, *Master Quest*. But designer Eiji Aonuma had grander plans, defying orders by crafting brand new dungeons in his spare time. He pitched a follow-up, only to be told that any such project would only be greenlit if he could guarantee delivery in 12 months' time.

Development extended longer than the original deadline, but the follow-up was another classic, with a clever temporal twist that saw Link replaying the same 72-hour period in an attempt to save the land of Termina from a lunar apocalypse. Compact, intimate and somehow bleaker and weirder than *Ocarina* at its darkest, this twisted fable was regarded by some fans as superior to even its much-loved predecessor. Whichever you preferred, this represented a one-two punch of adventuring excellence that had PlayStation owners looking on with envious eyes.



02



SIN & PUNISHMENT

Developer Treasure

Publisher Nintendo

Genre Run and gun

Released 2000



CULT CLASSIC



Cruelly denied to Nintendo 64 owners outside of Japan, this effort from cult developers Treasure – who had already made a name for themselves with shoot-'em-ups such as *Radiant Silvergun* – was a run-and-gun affair that played out like the old *Cabal* shooting gallery games of yore, except with added scrolling and splendour. It finally escaped Japan in 2007, as an offering on the Wii's Virtual Console service.



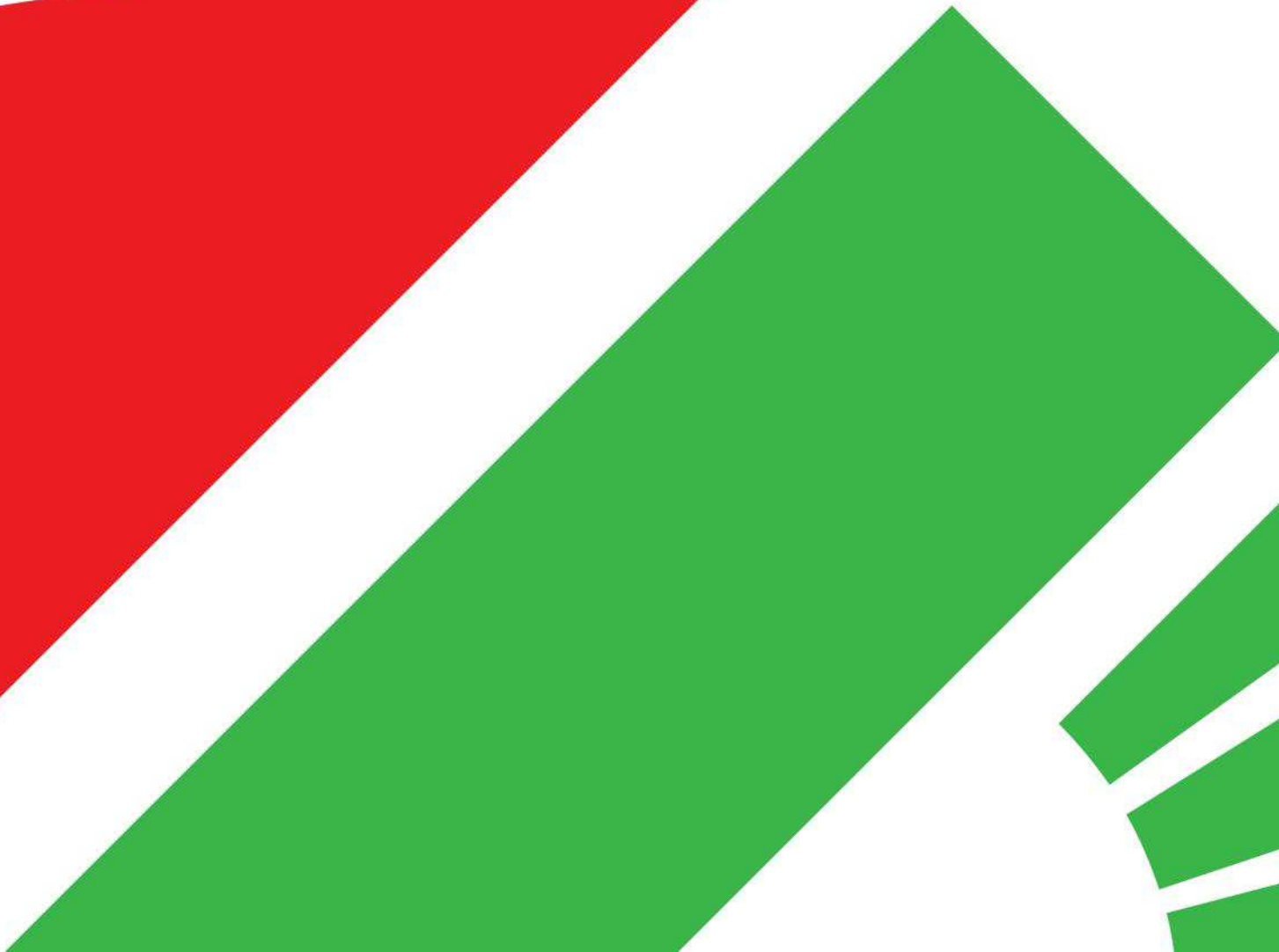
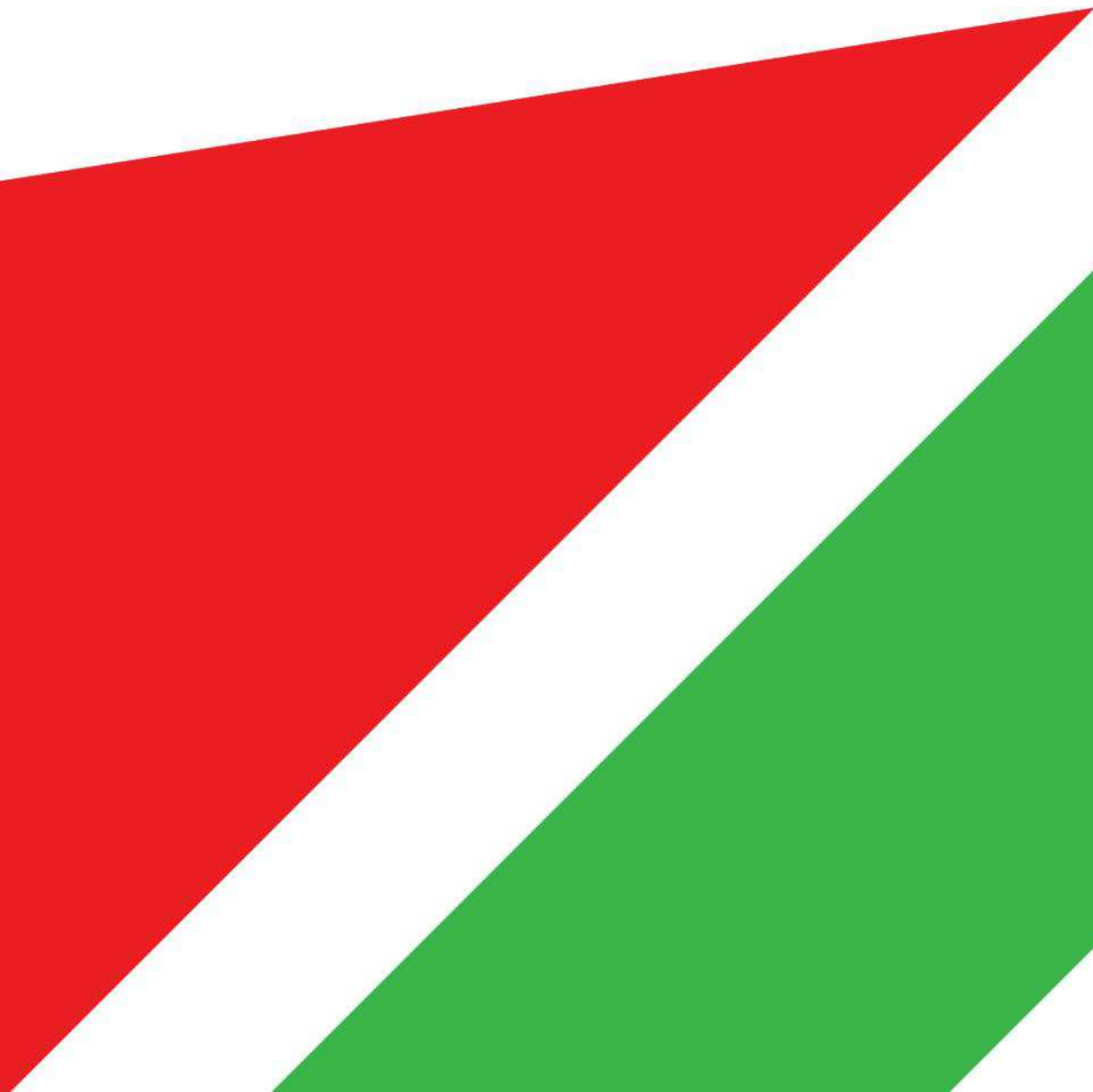
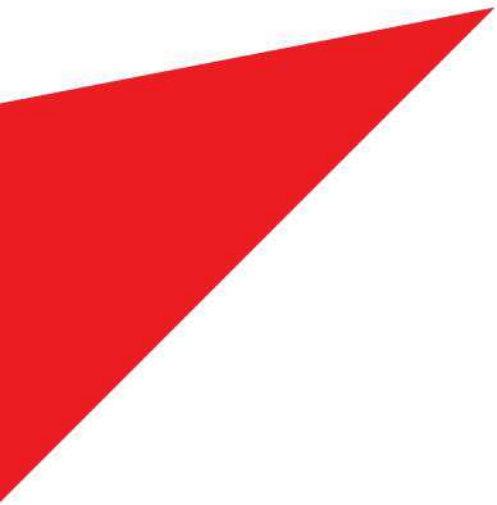
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