

PC Engine

ISSUE 5 • AUGUST 2011 • FREE

GAMER

REVIEWED

HEAVENLY

イースI・II

YS I・II

**GINGERS HAVE
MORE FUN**

**CULTURE
REPORT**

HYPER JAPAN 2011

PLUS

NUCLEAR POWERED

アトミックロボキッドスペシャル

ATOMIC ROBO-KID SPECIAL

THAT'S NOT MY TRUNK

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE: HOMEBREW NEWS • WHY BLU-RAY SUCKS

PC Engine

4 HOME COOKIN'

Pulling the tab on the can of homebrew, we take a glance at some exciting up-and-coming titles for the PC Engine.

6 REVIEW : YS BOOKS I & II

It may not have complex characters or stunning graphics; can this action based RPG live up to the hype?

15 FISH & TIPS

Having trouble with your chopper? Some swift finger work should help you out.

16 REVIEW : ATOMIC ROBO-KID SPECIAL

UPL's shoot 'em up is more than just an arcade conversion. Find out why in our review.

22 TOP BANANA

From the depth of various hells, two horror-based characters fight it out to the death.

23 DR. BAKUDA'S HAPPY HOUR

Today, the doctor tells of his love for modern filming techniques and how wonderful Blu-ray discs are.

24 GAMING TONGUE

Joe Redifer tackles some 3D retro in a manly way and throws in an NES game for good measure.

28 CULTURE CLUB

Hyper Japan 2011 was a major cultural event in London. Check out our in-depth report to see pictures of Japanese girls in maid outfits.

38 THE FINAL COUNTDOWN

They are what you see more often than anything else in games - the dreaded Game Over/Continue screens.

gine GAMER

Issue 5

AUG 2011

www.pcengine.co.uk/gamer

paul@pcengine.co.uk

It's not long over a week since I was at Hyper Japan 2011 in London, and I'm still having withdrawal symptoms from being surrounded by total Japaneseness.



Living in the UK meant that my only access to the PC Engine was through Japanese import shops. There was no official release over here and no noticeable interest in the American TurboGrafx-16.

So to me, the PC Engine was and is more than just a games console. It's a connection...a portal into that strange and unique (and also exciting) culture of Japan. So I say 'Long live the PC Engine and all that it represents!' And if you know any single Japanese girls, just give them my email address. Cheers.

[sunteam_paul](#)

Home Cookin'

We take a look inside the larder and find out about what's happening in Homebrew.

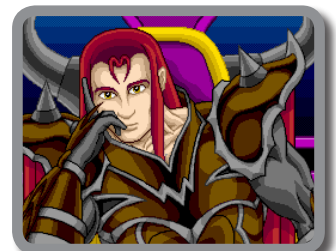
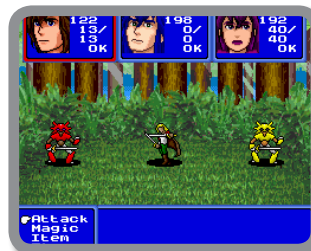
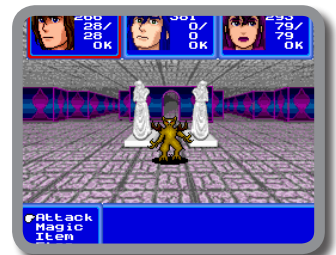


Much like a teenager's face, there's been a pimple-like burst of action on the PC Engine homebrew scene recently. Here's a preview of some the major titles that you can look forward to firing up in the future.

FROZEN UTOPIA

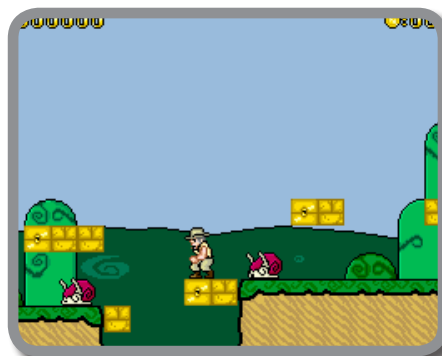
MYSTERIOUS SONG

In development for nearly as long as Duke Nukem Forever, Mysterious Song is a traditional JRPG, featuring visual scenes and real human voice acting. It is promised to have challenging and strategic battles and is nearing the final stages of completion (where it will be presumably placed into a time machine to be released in March 2010, as the website states).



JUNGLE BROS.

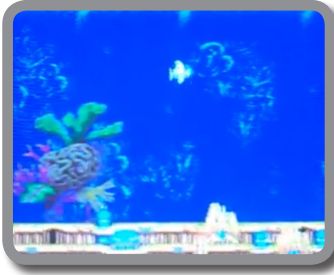
An obviously Mario Bros. inspired platform game, with a cute Indiana Jones style theme to it. And there's caves. No platformer is complete without caves.



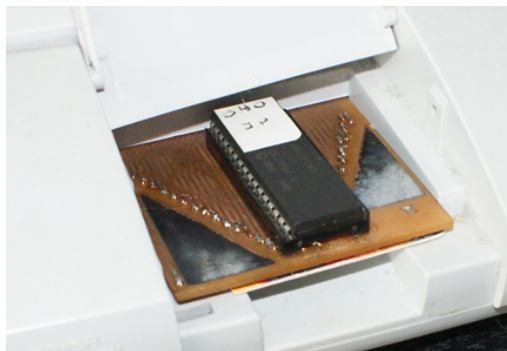
AETHERBYTE

RETROCADE

A compilation of retro-remakes (can you have retro on retro?) featuring homages to Defender, Pac-Man, Joust, Jungle Hunt and the half-pipe from Skate or Die 2. The Pac-Man clone is called Pyramid Plunder and has an Egyptian setting, while Atlantean, the Defender clone, is set underwater - Deep Blue stlye - only it will look and play a lot better.



Also, Aetherbyte is excitingly working on a way to actually manufacture and produce HuCard games. The working prototype was seen at the CCAG Show,

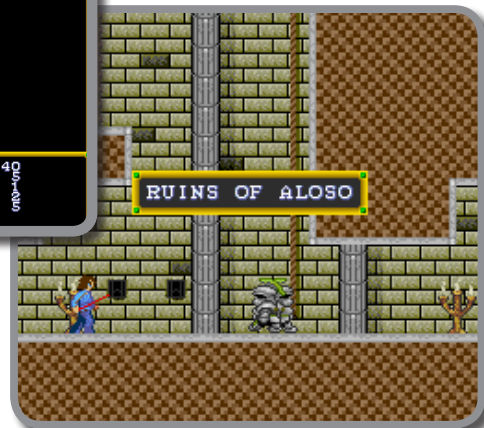


along with a preview of an Asteroids game, planned to be a multi-player title when used with the PC Engine GT. I have one of these prototype HuCards in my possession, and a close inspection reveals its components to be some hard, brown toffee, an old supermarket loyalty card and a strange black oblong that apparently contains 'magic'.

EPONASOFT

MONOLITH

With a pretty sturdy platform gaming engine already in place, this could be one of the titles to keep a beady eye on. A basic prototype has been released to the public, although it is likely to see many visual changes before the game is released. The music is also pretty great so far.



Ys Books I&II

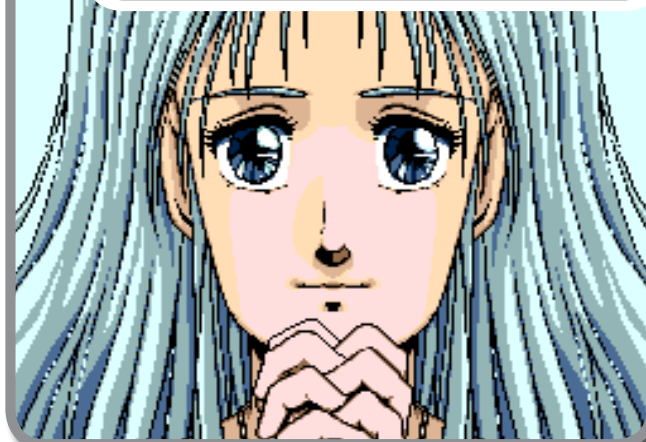
So this Adol, he's a young guy right? He figures he knows a bit of the old parry and thrust and can feel safe enough on his own. So he decides to take a gap year and has a little boat trip. But as soon as he sets foot on land, a creepy looking woman propositions him on the docks and drags him back to her



shop to look at her 'crystal ball'. She then proposes what seems to be a bit of kinky roleplay, by saying he's a great warrior and needs to save the world. So naturally Adol's getting all excited and agreeing to everything (eager to get a bit of action after being trapped on a boat for six months with a bunch of burly sailors). But you know what? It figures out she's actually telling the truth. Sucks to be him.

Esteria is a land that, to be perfectly honest, is going down the crapper

Every RPG needs a damsel locked in a dungeon. In Feena's case, I think she likes it.



pretty fast. Demons and monsters are running free over the fields, a suspicious man in a black cape (most likely a flasher) is seen nipping into shops and chatting with children, and people are generally a bit miffed at everything. In the old days, they used to rely on the blessing of six priests and the two goddesses that protected the land, but they must have got bored or something, as they bugged off years ago, ripping a huge chunk of land into the sky in the process.





The shrine has multiple levels as well as interiors - it's easy to get lost.

So it's down to this one man. Or, I rather suspect it's down to one woman. I'm pretty convinced that Sara, the local seer and crackpot, hangs around the docks all day, telling anyone who gets off the boat that they are the saviour of the land. Let's face it, hundreds may have died following the dream, but sooner or later she just has to be right. But back to Adol.



Penniless, he's forced to raise some cash to buy weapons and armour (apparently Sara likes her men to look butch) and then sent out to recover six books, written by the priests of Ys in ancient times. These books tell the history of Ys and it is said (by whom I'm not sure) that if the books are reunited with the priests then the land will become peaceful once more.

Unfortunately for Adol, it's not just a trip to the local library. These books are scattered all over the place (in abandoned temples, down mineshafts), which is pretty careless to be honest. And to cap



it all, the last book is held at the top of Darm Tower (which looms over the landscape like a giant Pez dispenser on Jerry Seinfeld's knee) by the most naughty of demons, Dark Fact. This guy needs a good hard spanking, and Adol is the man for the job.

And that's pretty much just the start of Adol's adventure. Obviously



Animazing

The anime style 'cinemas' in Ys set the standard in their day and remain some of my all time favourites. Below are a few images, but I've decided to modify them a bit to avoid any excessive spoilers.



frustrated, he goes on to flirt with a blue haired girl in a dungeon, then a red headed girl with a terminal illness, then again with the blue haired girl, then finally settles on the ginger one, all the time convincing people he's just 'trying to save the world' or some such nonsense (and after all that, the sequel sees him leave his 'girlfriend' and go off with a muscular dude that punches through walls. Seems he was barking up the wrong tree this whole time).



There's nothing like shooting fiery balls up a monster's behind when he's not looking.

But down to basics. Ys I&II is (rather obviously) the first two games of the Ys series, stitched together seamlessly and presented as a single title. This makes perfect sense as it's a single storyline and Ys I is just too short to justify release on it's own. Although a 'role-playing game', Ys avoids being one of those



The slopes look fun, but you aren't getting far without some heavy shoes.



After a rough night on the town, it's no wonder Fact is in a foul mood.

eternal snorefests where every three steps you are thrust into a battle scene which involves you selecting menu options to win. No siree, Ys is an all out action RPG where you quite literally run head-first into your enemies to defeat them. This bump-to-win gameplay is actually quite exciting, especially in confined spaces or areas with large groups of monsters (or 'goons' as the game calls them), and learning to impact at the right



The mine in Ys I is very claustrophobic, with only a small light around you.

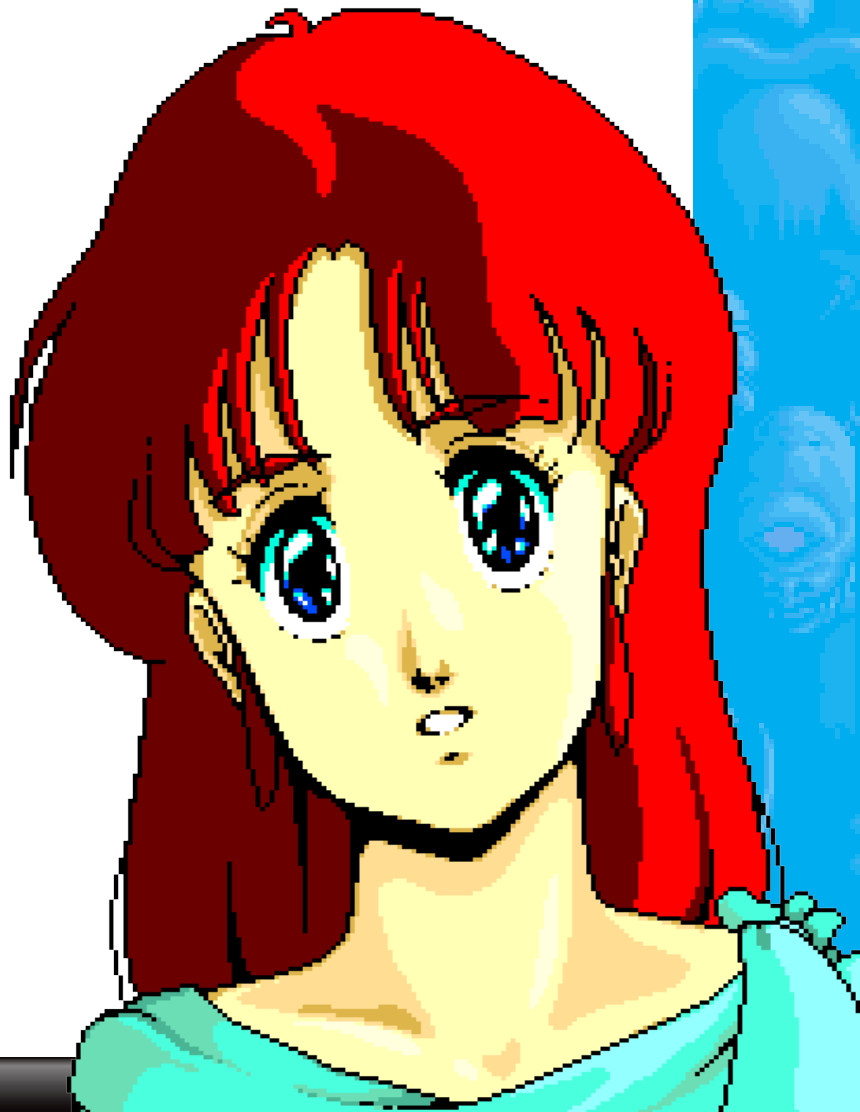
angle is key. Thankfully, the game doesn't just rely on this the whole time, as the latter half has you gain fireballs that can be shot at your foes, and later on home-in on them (which is really satisfying).

Progression in Ys is the norm for the genre. Get gold to buy better weapons. Find items to lead you to



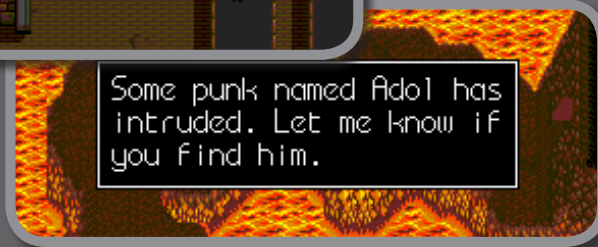
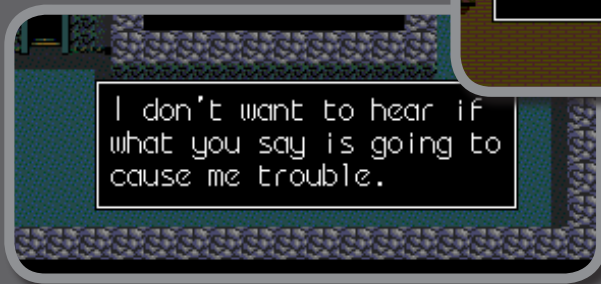
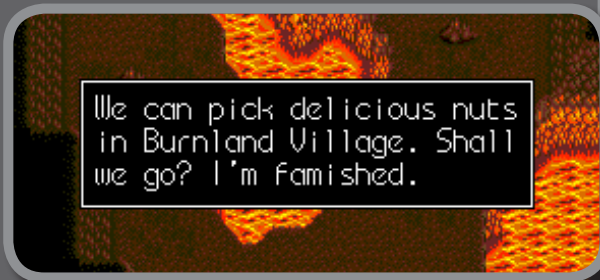
Newly arrived in Rance, and Adol is already chasing the ladies.

new locations. You know the drill. There's also the obligatory parts where you need to work hard on levelling up your character to be able to defeat a boss - most bosses have a point where they go from



The Goon Show

Talking to goons is more fun than eating babies, so here are a few examples of how the other side thinks.



rock hard to manageable just by gaining a level, so be prepared to spend some time walking to-and-fro near spawn points to get that power up. Thankfully these bottlenecks are not too bad (unless you've been rushing through the game) and the satisfaction of destroying a particularly nasty boss (like that sodding bat-creature in the mines) makes up for it.

The areas in Ys go through the usual locations: field, mine, tower, snowy mountain, lava etc, but although



the graphics are hardly state of the art (even at the time), they have a certain unique style and charm to them, and set the atmosphere well enough. The monsters look generic at a glance, but are also pretty cool and the way they quickly judder around makes them both frightening and slightly amusing.



I bet she says that to all the boys.

Gaining items and powers is important to any RPG. In Ys I, the primary method is rings. When worn, these rings give different effects, such as power boost or healing ability. The latter is essential - in open areas and villages you can just lounge around to increase any lost health, but in dungeons you're stuffed unless you have this ring with you. As the game moves on to Ys II, the powers get far cooler. By obtaining various staves, you can throw the aforementioned fireballs, teleport to a village you have visited or transform yourself into a goon.

Transforming yourself is one of the neatest features I've ever seen in an RPG. Not only do you get to wander around looking like a bright yellow kangaroo, you also get to have a chat with the baddies that you have been killing all this time. They often have amusing things to say, and you start to gain an odd sympathy for them;



Adol leaves the poorly translated Zeptic Village.

it provides a strange window into the lives of the goons.

No review on Ys is complete without a nod to the second most important feature of the game: the music. The music in the Ys games is pretty good. And by pretty good,



Getting cursed is a laugh, but sadly doesn't last long.

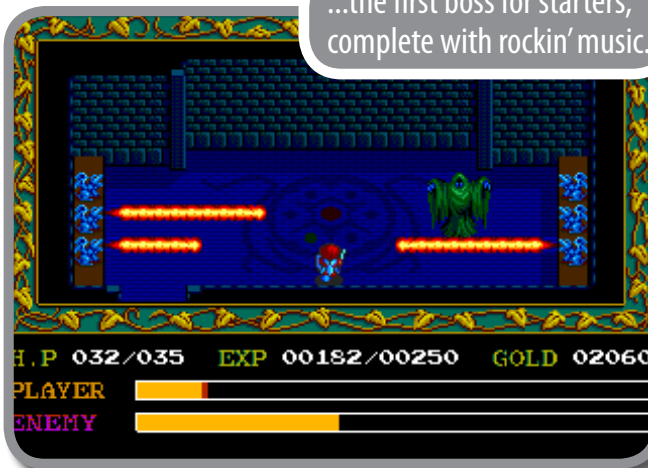
I mean totally amazing. And by totally amazing I mean buy this just as an audio CD - if you're a gamer and like this sort of thing anyway (I doubt you'd get your dentist to put it on in the waiting room, but you know what I mean). Top music. Best game soundtrack ever. All that stuff.

But the most vital element that makes YS I&II a killer app for the system is the storyline. And when I say storyline, I don't

just mean the basic good vs evil plot that is so common to games of this ilk, but the pacing, flow and



What evils await you inside the Goddess's Palace?...



...the first boss for starters, complete with rockin' music.

sense of importance and drama that it imparts.

Firstly there are the characters. They might seem like cardboard cutout clichés who say very little, but I've played games that have fully voiced, intricate and developed characters and still I cared less about them and what they have to say as I do the

characters in Ys. These people are all important, they inhabit a world that has a great weight of history behind them. Everything they say needs to be listened to and once the story has ended, you WILL remember them.



One of the greatest XP grind spots in gaming history.

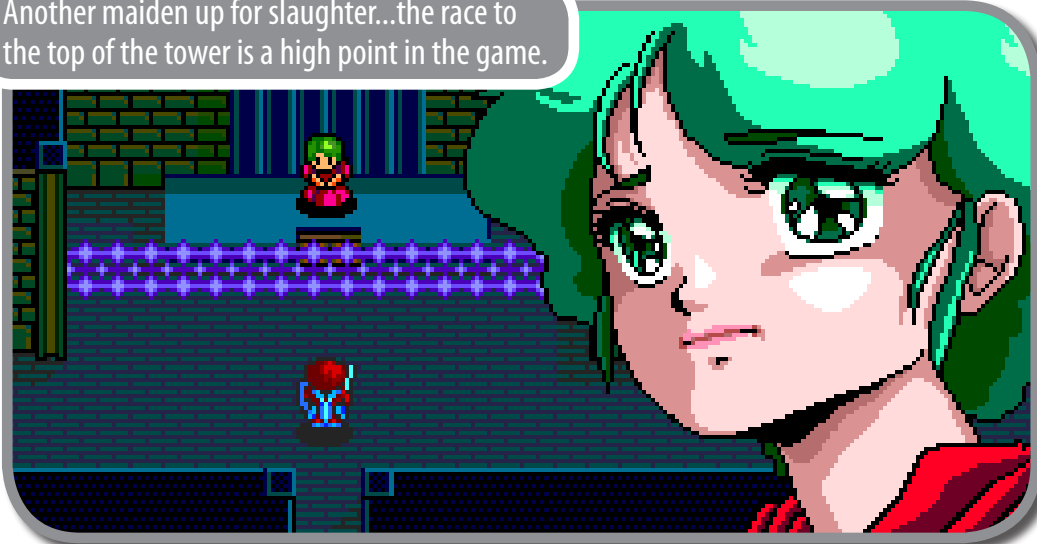
The plot itself is not overly complex. Sure, it's a bit more than the most simplistic 'kill the bad guy' stories, but the events that unfold just seem really important, and once you are nearing the climax of Ys II, you can actually feel the world-changing importance of what is happening around you. It is just epic and some of the sequences still send a shiver down my spine, even playing it today.

And to fully put icing on this



The start of each game has a nice location to begin working on that experience bar

Another maiden up for slaughter...the race to the top of the tower is a high point in the game.



explode with delight, not least because it contains two utterly fantastic pieces of music.

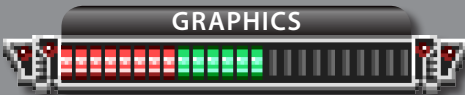
And when you are

sitting there, watching the final screen animate into infinity, you will know that you've just been part of something very special.

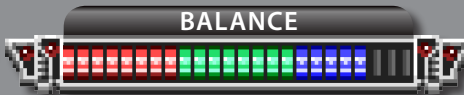
particular cake, there are some superb animated sequences which later games on the improved Super-CD format still can't hold a candle to. Directed to perfection, the opening sequence just rocks, the Ys I&II split is pant-wettingly good and the ending will make your brain

You must have Ys. No excuses. **SP**

THE OVERLY COMPLICATED SCORING SYSTEM



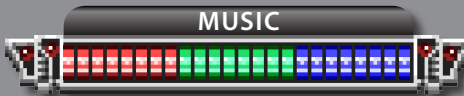
Somewhat simple, but they convey a convincing atmosphere well.



Well balanced with only a few spots that require you to grind out a lot of experience points.



Effective chip effects that have a unique and memorable personality to them.



Amazing compositions and even better arrangements make this almost perfect.

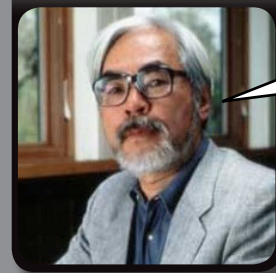


A choice of speeds along with responsive control, although you can't move diagonally.



Once you start, you'll be glued to this until you complete it. And you'll come back again.

STAR QUALITY

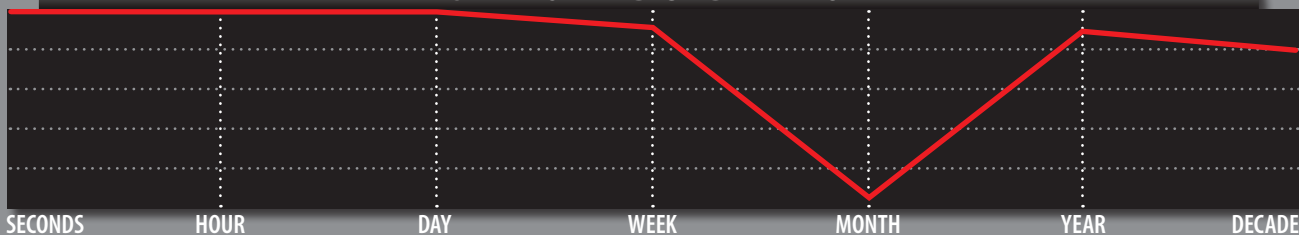


I AM NEARLY PERFECT

TOTAL SCORE

999 /1000

GRAPH OF PREDICTED INTEREST



MAKER: HUDSON SOFT • YEAR: 1989 (1990US) • FORMAT: CD-ROM

This amazing image of a Duobot was done by Laurent Kermel of www.videogameden.com.

Do you have any PC Engine based fan art? It doesn't matter if it's stunning or contemptible, fully painted or drawn in Paint - I'd love to see it. Send your art to paul@pcengine.co.uk.



Fish & Tips

Hints and cheats to help you stay ahead of the pack.

Mr Heli: Credits & Sound Test

If you are struggling to keep your chopper up, or just want to relax to some 'rad choonz' (or something), then try these super handy tips below. Just start from the title screen (where you select the mode) and input the required code.



I, II, II, I, SELECT

II, I, I, II, SELECT

PLAY!



UP TO 99 CONTINUES!

LISTEN!



BGM SELECT!

Atomic Robo-Kid

SPECIAL

You know, in the old days they would make video games of anything - soap operas, snack foods and even pop groups. So it must have really galled UPL when they were putting the finishing touches to their 'Henry the Hoover' game and failed to budget the extra 2500 yen for the license. So one quick touch-up of the main sprite, and they had Atomic Robo-Kid.

When you look like a cross between a dustbin and an elephant, you might seem a rather unlikely hero, destined for failure. And indeed the original arcade game was unexceptional. But one day, the mild mannered janitor at UPL had a wonderful idea - make some changes to the levels to shake things up and release it on the increasingly popular PC Engine. What a winner.

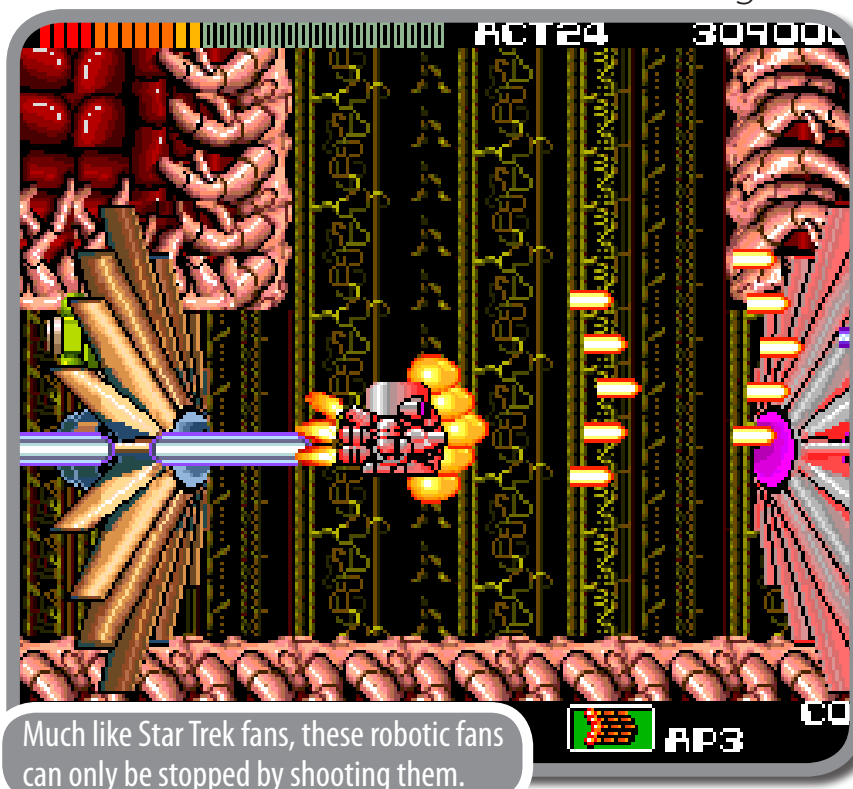
Atomic Robo-Kid Special (or ARKS as I will call it from now on because it's trendy to do such things) could be described simply as a shoot 'em up. This would be doing it a disservice though, as the game is far more unique



Those winged probes drop weapons, which you sorely need at this point.

than people give it credit for. So let's give it some credit.

The weapon system in ARKS is somewhat Gradius-like in nature. Certain winged pod things will poop out an orb when destroyed - these orbs can be shot and go



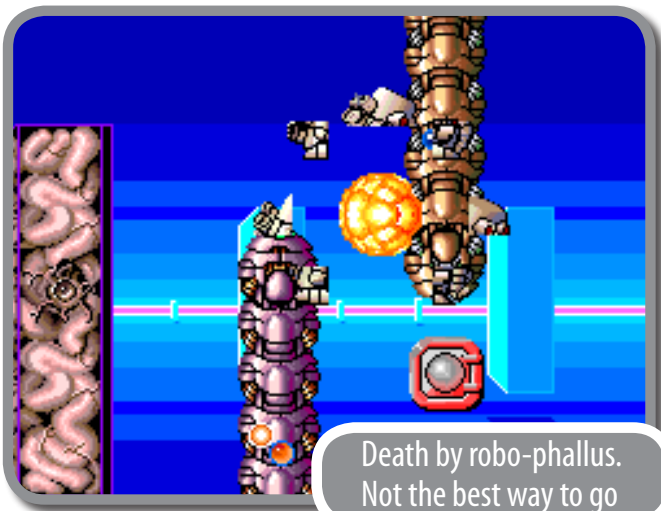
Much like Star Trek fans, these robotic fans can only be stopped by shooting them.

Don't stop to admire the pretty scenery or you'll get a laser in the face.



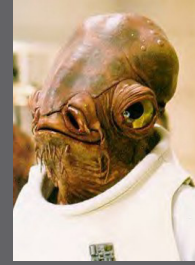
through a roulette of weapons when done so. Be careful not to blast away too freely, as they will shatter after a few hits, leaving you with nothing but an empty feeling inside, much like attending a Charlie Sheen live comedy show.

The weapons themselves come in four flavours (flavours? Why do people always say that?). You have the standard forward firing shot, thin 3-way lasers, missiles and a 5-way shot whose name is sneakily deceptive, as all the shots fire forward (which sounds rubbish but is really rather good). Weapons



It's a trap!

ARKS isn't a shooter you can plough through like mowing a lawn. It's more like mowing a lawn with a few stones strewn around. Green laser turrets appear right in front of you, breakable walls conceal squads of baddies led by a robotic Pac-Man; it's a dangerous world. There are also hidden areas so keep your eyes open and be prepared to explore.



can be switched at any time (once acquired) and they all seem to be particularly useful in specific areas of the game - even though you'll favour the missile for the most part.

Learning the control technique is an important part of success because flying around all over the place shooting randomly will get you nowhere. While button II is your trigger, button I has two functions. Firstly, it switches weapons to the next in line, and secondly it locks your direction allowing you

Old Fatty Lumpkin there loves to spit balls at you. Just leg it.



to retreat and still fire forward. Total beginners might get a little frustrated at their weapon changing when they are trying to fix their direction, but with a little practice it becomes second nature.

But enough about weapons, it's really the level design that gives the game its personality.

While you start off on a standard left-to-right scrolling stage, the game is far more than just that. Other stages have a more maze-like design and even though you are mostly being led along a single path, the multiple directions and hidden passages do much to

add the feeling of exploration that you don't get in most standard shoot 'em ups.

There are also certain



Open The Hatch

BABY NOM NOM NOM



As every LOST fan knows, the hatch is really important. In ARKS, the hatch is your exit

from the level, but be warned, sometimes it's sneakily hidden inside a particularly nasty baddie.

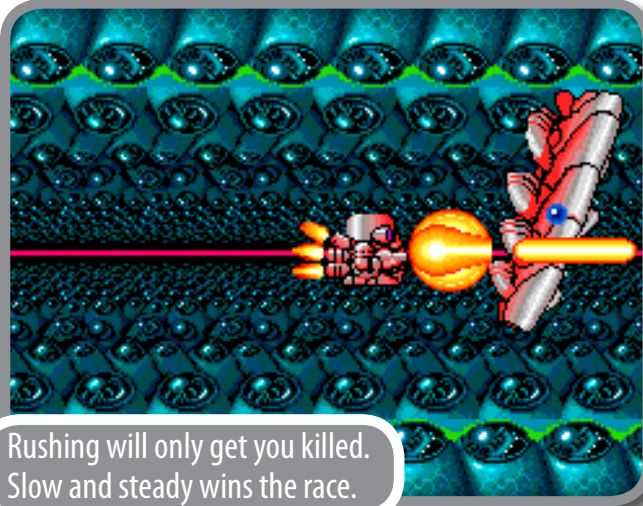


'western gunfight' style shoot-out levels. In these, you are placed in a single room with an enemy on the other side of the screen. Between you is a constantly moving barrier of objects that you must shoot through to hit him, before he hits you. These can be tougher than the actual levels sometimes and although a trifle annoying, are quite satisfying when won.

Thirdly are the boss fights. Set in a large scrolling arena, the bosses are mostly very large and have a



The 3-Way sometimes comes in handy, but is mostly useless.



Rushing will only get you killed.
Slow and steady wins the race.

particular strategy to dispose of them in the most efficient way. They tend to have multiple stages as well and follow you around mercilessly, trying to trap you in the corners, so you must keep on your toes to avoid destruction.

So it all sounds very nice, but is ARKS actually worth playing? To that I would say "Totally", or possibly "Totally, Dude" if you look like a surfer. It's the kind of game that is really easy to dismiss after a quick play, but it begins to shine once you get to know it a little better.

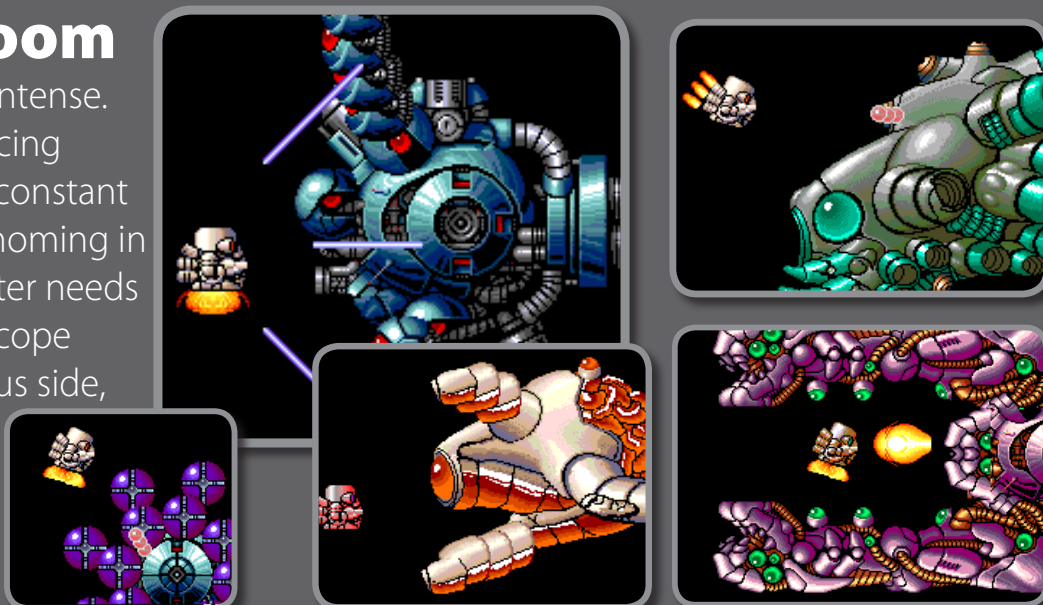


Ah missiles! Hell on your thumbs
but damn, are they good.

From a visual standpoint, it's actually a mixed bag, although mostly great. There is some simple, but effective parallax on certain levels, a lot of variation in the backgrounds, which range from really well drawn to kind of odd and abstract at times. The sprite design and shading is superb, especially some of the bosses which just look lovely. And above all it just has personality to it and a style of its own. There is a little bit of flicker

Panic Room

Bosses can be intense. The panic inducing music and the constant and relentless homing in on your character needs a cool head to cope with. On the plus side, they look great in a weird sort of way.



If the 'vs' levels are dragging, the game throws you some power-ups to help.



here and there, but mostly it's fairly robust.

Moving on to sound, the game has plenty of loud zaps, booms and rumbles - in fact the sound effects are great and like the graphics, have a personality to them, from the wibbly shattering noises, to the deep growling that is just plain threatening.

Musically, the game might not be what you expect. The sound used in the tunes is generally light, high pitched and tinkly, quite the opposite to the typical shooty compositions. Initially this may be a bit of a downer for some, but again, a little time and familiarity

makes all the difference. I think the music in ARKS is great - the tunes are well composed with a couple of really stand-out tracks, and create the perfect atmosphere for the game. Like the graphics, they feel unique, and help to really push the individual personality that this game has.



You just KNOW they put the exit inside one of those sentries. Sneaky gits.

I'm really glad that I bought Atomic Robo-Kid Special. I've played the arcade version briefly and found it frustrating and just a bit rubbish, but UPL have taken the putty and reworked it in just the right places to make an appealing, sometimes challenging, and memorable game

Shop till you drop (literally)

This little robot guy is a shopkeeper. He's so cute, he cries if you shoot him. But the little bugger charges an arm and a leg - and I really mean that, as every upgrade costs you a whole life, so shop carefully.



You have to be quick to catch that cute extra life running away from you.



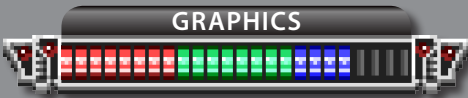
for the PC Engine. Learning the levels, from the secrets to the little tricks that can get you out of a tight spot, is a fun journey to take.

The main criticism that any could have with the game is the ease in which you can get to the end. It's strange, as when I played this as a

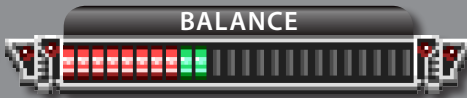
sprightly youth it seemed more of a challenge. But now it's a lot easier. It's certainly not because I'm better at gaming than I was then, quite the reverse. But the final boss is, to be honest, a bit of a bitch, so if you limit your continues then the longevity will be increased. That's not to say that you'll chuck it in a drawer once you complete it, as it is enjoyable enough to be worth taking for a spin again and again.

So if you're looking for something that is more than just another shooter, Atomic Robo-Kid Special is the one for you. It's Atomic Robo-Kid. And it's just a bit special. **SP**

THE OVERLY COMPLICATED SCORING SYSTEM



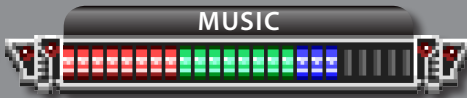
Nice chunky sprites with a unique and appealing visual style.



Fairly easy to blast through once you know how, with some mild frustration on the way.



Some great effects that really give the game an arcade-like quality to it.



Despite the weedy sound, the tunes are memorable and serve their purpose.



It takes a while to feel comfortable with the controls, which are a little fiddly.



It's a solid game that you will dip into with some frequency, even after completion.

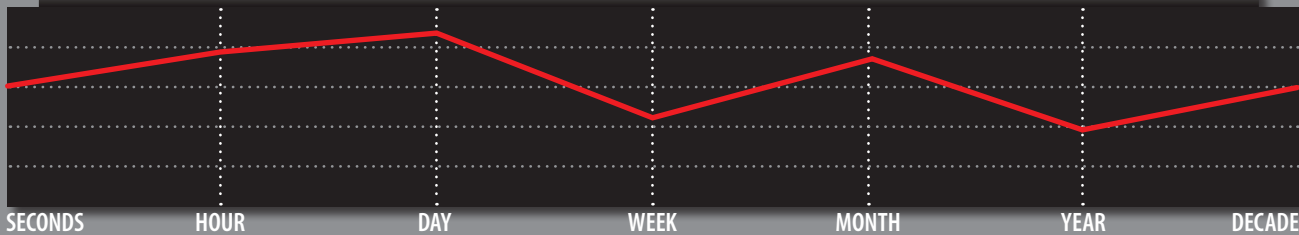
STAR QUALITY



YOU WILL APPRECIATE MY STYLE OVER TIME

TOTAL SCORE
875
/1000

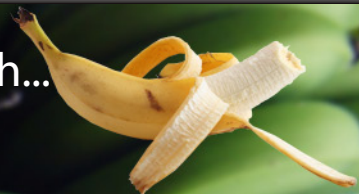
GRAPH OF PREDICTED INTEREST



MAKER: UPL • **YEAR:** 1990 • **FORMAT:** HUCARD

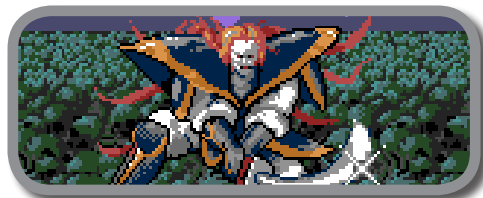
Top Banana

A fight to the death...
but who will win?



TAIRA NO KAGEKIYO

GENPEI TÔMA DEN



VS

RICK TAYLOR

SPLATTERHOUSE



ROUND 1 : WEAPONRY

WIN 🍌

Being a resurrected Samurai means limited choice in weaponry, but Kagekiyo's sword is pretty sharp - I've even seen it cut through tin cans as though they were butter!

Rick has to use what he can find, and by sheer variety he wins this round - if he's not swinging a 2x4, he's chucking a spear, shooting a rifle or waving around a nasty looking meat cleaver.

ROUND 2 : HEROISM

WIN 🍌

While certainly tenacious, Kagekiyo's motives are mostly full of vengeance in defeating his enemies. He certainly has honour, but there are better ways to spend your spare time.

Rescuing a lady in distress is a noble and heroic deed, although it is slightly tarnished when you end up killing the lady in question. Still, his heart was in the right place and he just scrapes a win.

WIN 🍌

ROUND 3 : PHYSICAL PROWESS

Kagekiyo is no slouch when it comes to moving around. Even in heavy armour, this guy leaps around like he has springs on his feet and his arms can bend in all sorts of directions.

Rick isn't a slim man. He has power behind his punches, but would struggle to win a hundred metre sprint. Weight lifting is all well and good, but you have to stay off the pies as well.

WIN 🍌

ROUND 4 : FEAR FACTOR

I don't know about you, but if I saw a red headed samurai zombie running towards me with a bloody great sword in his hand, while being chased by demons, I'd need new pants.

Rick is pretty intimidating. Lots of muscles and that Jason style hockey mask is certainly scary, but you get the feeling that inside he's just a cuddly little teddy bear.

ROUND 5 : MOST FUN AT PARTIES

WIN 🍌

Admittedly, Kagekiya would come in handy when it comes to carving up the meat, but you have to offset that by the smell of zombie and fact that most of your guests will flee in terror.

Although a bit on the angry side, Rick seems like a nice enough bloke. He could perform some fun supernatural feats of strength, and the girls will love those rippling biceps.

OVERALL WINNER



RICK TAYLOR

Rick is just a good guy that had bad things happen to him. His pure heart showed when he chose rescue over running. And he's great to have around if you're having trouble getting the top off that pickle jar.



Dr. Bakuda's Happy Hour



Shown the error of his ways, Dr. Bakuda has turned his powers to good and wishes to spread joy and cheer to all around him.

Please note the opinions of Dr. Bakuda may not represent the opinions of the Editorial staff.

Wobbly cam. I mean WHAT THE HELL? What is it with wobbly cam? I mean GRAAAUGH!! Arg! Huff. Calm down. Ohmmmmmm.

But you know what I mean. I tried watching a few episodes of Battlestar Galactica and I had to take motion sickness pills. Then I thought I'd stick on Battle: Los Angeles instead and the camera was shaking around so much I physically vomited into my slippers. Christ on a Bike, I know these directors love the 'documentary' style filmmaking but if you're going to film something handheld, just do it - don't shake the bastard camera around to make it SEEM more realistic because you know what? IT TAKES YOU OUT OF THE MOVIE. Get it?

And don't get me started on Blu-ray. I mean, I expect to look around and see pox covered villagers bowing to knights on horses every time I play a Blu-ray because obviously we've gone back to living in the MIDDLE AGES.

I used to put in a DVD, get a couple of copyright messages, reach the menu and push play. Simple. Now, with this 'super advanced new technology' I put in a Blu-ray, then go and make a cup of tea - not just pop a bag in the pot - no, I fly over to India, grow a tea plant from scratch, harvest and process it and weave the tea bag from the clippings of my beard that has grown 2 inches longer since I started. Finally I sit down to enjoy my cuppa, and the Blu-ray disc is STILL loading!

They call this progress? I call it a bag of fermenting parrot droppings dipped into a septic tank. Discs take longer to load, computers take longer to start (I remember when you'd flick the switch and there you were, ready to go, no waiting), what in the name of Mad Mel Gibson is going on in the world here?

I hate kids too. "Boo hoo, it takes this game ages to load, boo hoo". Well try loading a game from cassette tape you little snots. You don't know how good you have it.



Gaming Tongue

The world of gaming is not confined to the PC Engine. **Joe Redifer** gives you a taste of whatever else is out there.

Virtual Hydlide

SATURN • ATLUS • 1995

Oh my Evolution, this game is a jumbled mess. I remember renting this game and rushing home to play it. My girlfriend at the time was with me. When I got home I went straight to my Saturn and started playing this game and she got so mega upset with me for going straight to the games instead of paying attention to her that she started crying and became extremely upset with me for days. So I was left alone with Virtual Hydlide.



Can't you just feel the excitement from here?

I really enjoyed Super Hydlide on the Genesis and felt this one had to be way better because it was on the Saturn. Wait...what is this? What's going on here? What is this mess of pixels? Where am I supposed to go? What am I supposed to do? Why do I suddenly feel the need to vomit? Is

Check for guards before pilfering all that shiny crap



it because I had treated my girlfriend so poorly? No, no that can't be it, treating women like second-class citizens makes me happy. It turned out that the graphics themselves really caused my stomach to churn.

This game is bad. Avoid at all costs. You couldn't pay me to have a copy of Virtual Hydlide in my collection. Though I think the save file might still exist on one of my Saturn Back-up RAM carts. **JR**

This map is actually the best artwork in the game



Screenshots kindly supplied TeraPatrick2008 and Flying Omelette <http://www.flyingomelette.com>

Crash 'n Burn

3DO • EIDOS • 1993

I gladly spent \$700 on a brand new 3DO and I am rewarded with Crash 'n Burn. Upon first starting the game, you are greeted with horribly cheesy FMVs of the characters you can select. These are people who were rejected from high school drama class for being too crappy.



Actual photos were all the rage in the 90's before people realised they suck.

The draw distance was pretty good. The game itself was kind of lame, just another post-apocalyptic battle racer. My friends finally came over and saw the game and they were really impressed with the Rainbow Road stage. I felt that was the least impressive stage visually, but my friends were idiots.



Who needs F-Zero when you have a 3DO?

One supposedly Asian female says something like "If you want to know my seek-let" (instead of secret). It's that bad. I usually picked the doctor or mad scientist guy with wild hair who gets excited at watching things explode. This, of course, slows down the menu selections tremendously.

We finally get into the game and it is pretty cool for its time, but the 3DO cannot display 240p, so it is showing a 240p screen in a 480i signal and that makes it look more blocky than it should.

But this and a few other games did prompt one of them to buy a 3DO once the price came down to a far more reasonable \$500 which anybody could afford. Ah, 3DO, I just can't figure out why you weren't a success! **JR**



3D Spy Hunter anyone?

Screenshots kindly supplied by Guard Master
<http://www31.brinkster.com/guardmaster>

Hard Drivin'

MEGA DRIVE • TENGEN • 1990

Wow, is this ever a poor game. But I must admit that this was kind of a guilty pleasure for me back in the day.



Far ahead of it's time, it seems the game was designed for widescreen TVs.

See, I was fascinated with everything 3D. Being able to go where I wanted to and move around things blew my mind, even if it had a frame rate of 14 frames per hour. I would turn off the sound and listen to cassette tapes of awful bands like Warrant and the like. I would play for hours. My mom knew I liked this game because I had rented it once.

So one day when I didn't fail any classes in high school, she bought the game for my highly uneducated ass. I couldn't have been more happy



With a course map like that, surely this is a serious rival to Out Run.

about getting straight D-'s that quarter, and apparently neither could she. This taught me a valuable life lesson as well; Do not reward success, reward lack of failure.

Now if you'll excuse me, I must go because my shift at McDonald's starts in 10 minutes. **JR**



The models are almost photo-real



The most fun you'll have is watching your vehicle crash and burst into flames during the instant replays.

Blaster Master

NES • SUNSOFT • 1988

I first saw Blaster Master via videotape when a friend from high school purchased it (or had his parents buy it for him, more than likely). I had a Sega and he had a Nintendo, so of course we were at war. You couldn't own both systems, you just couldn't do it! It defied all logic.



You can pop out of your tank and take a stroll, or a leak behind a bush.

So we videotaped ourselves playing games and lent the tapes to each other so we could both see what we were missing. We didn't just point the camera at the TV like YouTubers do these days, nope... all direct-feed gameplay! Anyway, Blaster Master blew me away with the size of its mazes and the music. Well, mostly it was the music. I would watch and rewatch the Blaster Master segment again and again just to hear the awesome



Your tank is agile in a way that Masamune Shirow would be proud of.

music, and it was not a short segment.

Of course, years later when I found an NES in a thrift store for \$8, Blaster Master was the first game I got. It is worth owning for the music. The gameplay is good, too... just not as good as the music. Did I mention the music was good? Hopefully sunteam_paul will be able to embed the music in this page that plays when your eyes look at this text. **JR**

Bored of driving? Go shoot some rocks for power-ups.



Culture Club

We stir the petri dish of Japanese culture and see what floats to the surface. Then eat it.



HYPER JAPAN 2011 22-24 JULY at OLYMPIA TWO in LONDON

It was pretty obvious this was the right tube train to Olympia. The girls dressed up as Victorian dolls waiting at the platform were a dead giveaway.



I was perfectly placed to nab some free sake at the start of the day

Billed as the UK's biggest J-culture party, I had the pleasure of attending the Friday event. This was a good thing as I hear Saturday was overbooked and some people took hours to get in. Of course, being the



Minamoto Kitchan
(yes, it is spelt like that)

editor of the infamous PC Engine Gamer magazine, I strolled briskly through the entrance, while a flock of Japanese girls swooned around me. Or did I dream that?

Anyways, The event was held at Olympia Two, split neatly into two floors. The top held the stage area



Konami's Yu-Gi-Oh! stand

JaruJaru

The first stage event I was witness to involved a couple of almost naked Japanese men. While I momentarily thought I had slipped into a performance of 'Ai Cho Aniki - The Musical' it turned out far less sinister than that. They were, in fact, a Japanese comedy duo called JaruJaru, who are Junpei Goto and Shusuke Fukutoku.

I hear from a cousin of a friend's brother that they are regulars at an Osaka comedy theatre, and that this was only the second time they have appeared in London, but I cannot get hold of them to confirm or deny this.

They did a couple of sketches - the first featuring a doomed attempt at sumo training, and the second featuring wacky results when trying to take a photograph. Between these skits was some video footage of them performing classic black & white style physical funnies.

They were actually quite amusing, and what your grandmother would call 'good clean fun', their Japaneseness adding to the comedy value. Japanese people are just naturally funny.



and many things of a food-type nature. There were a ton of stalls selling Japanese sweets, bento boxes, onigiri (rice balls) and sushi, along with a few places to get sake or Asahi Beer. Strangely, one stall was giving out little free bottles of Yakult, which I avoided because it tastes like baby sick. There were also some places to buy neat looking



Nano Blocks are like teeny tiny Lego. Cute.

Lick my Loli

While typical cosplay was generally under-represented on the day I attended (the main cosplay event was on Saturday), the same could not be said of that most unique of Japanese trends: Lolita fashion.

This desire to dress up in Victorian style fluffy skirts can be somewhat of a mystery to your average foreigner, but it seems to be spreading as 90% of the Lolis were westerners, and a good proportion of them choosing the classic Sweet Lolita pinks,

although there was some GothLoli dotted around too.

With all these fashion pioneers wandering around, this meant there was also a good selection of stalls devoted to lace, hair bows and fake plastic food, just in case walking about looking like a sweet shop is your kind of thing.



Loli gals pose for someone else, but with ninja-like reflexes I swooped in and took the shot



All manner of girl-stuff, including fabric tea cups!





Atsuko Ikeda teaches a sushi class

tableware, as well as the Sushi Awards 2011 which were being held here.

For those who lacked the desire to consume all these tempting goodies, the upper floor also had a variety of random stalls such as rather epic massage chairs, magazines, bikes, bonsai and somewhere you could get dressed up in a kimono and have your picture taken.



Make yourself pretty with Kimono de go

Unfortunately I ran out of time for the latter.

Descending the central staircase took you right into the realm of the otaku. There were PS3s showcasing the latest Dragon Ball and Naruto games (among others) and Nintendo were out in force with the 3DS. I managed to have a quick go on Star Fox and Super Mario 3D and found

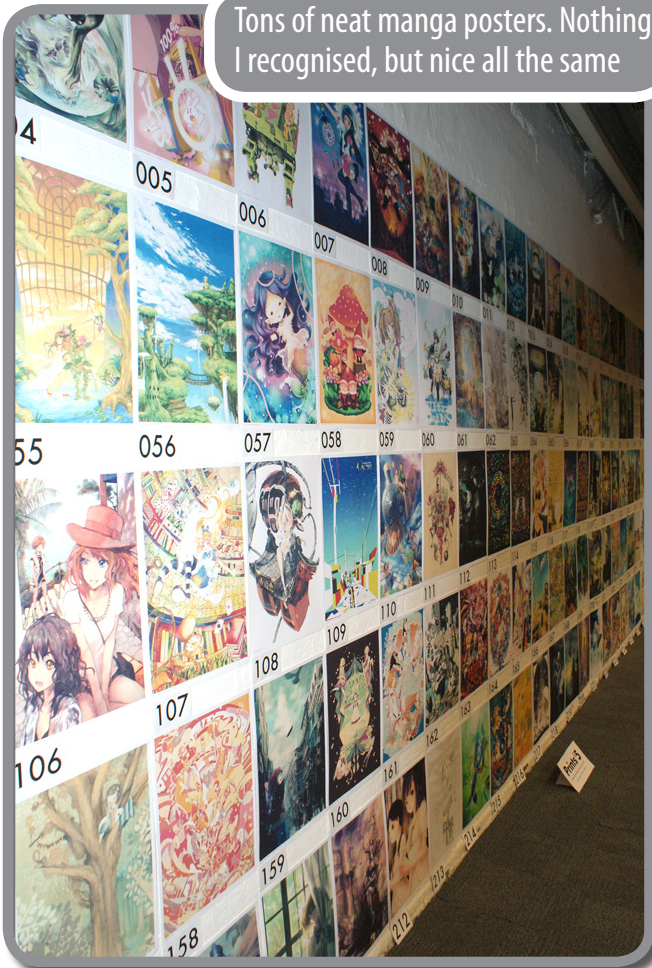


Maid★Planet

While the girls from Maid Cafe (and a few guys but let's face it, we're not interested in them) spent much of their time serving pancakes and cookies while dressed in schoolgirl uniforms (I'll leave you to decide which part of that sentence makes me drool more), they also injected much fun into the stage area when called upon to teach and perform Wotagei.

For those of you that aren't familiar with the vernacular of modern Japan, Wotagei is a type of dancing which isn't a million miles from cheerleading - except this is performed by energetic fans of Japanese idol singers. After first teaching the basic moves, they managed to get a whole bunch of clueless gaijin on stage. What followed was some crazy Jpop and lots of localised chaos involving clapping, jumping and running around a lot. And if you can't enjoy Japanese girls in maid outfits dancing around on stage there's something seriously wrong with you.





Tons of neat manga posters. Nothing I recognised, but nice all the same

myself satisfied with the 3D effect. Perhaps I'll get one if my DS breaks down one day.

Also here were many stands of anime and game related goodies, loads of Gundam model kits, manga-style posters and fluffy totoros as far as the eye could see. For the gals, there was plenty of choices for clothing and accessory stands, and even a hairdresser.

There was also a small secondary show space area which was a place to host such things as Tsugaru-Shamisen, Kimono Fashion Show and Aikido Demonstration amongst other things. I managed to rest my



Cyber Candy was probably the most migraine-inducing stall of the show



Lots of J-mags. I can't believe how much Newtype costs these days

Nom

With all the food stalls covering the top floor, it was difficult to decide what to have for lunchie-munchies. The decision was easy when encountering the Sushi Plus stall - who can resist purchasing from one girl with cat ears and another who is dancing merrily around.



The bento was actually quite tasty, despite my wariness of Japanese food, so I got another later on.



Nihon Buyo

After everyone was exhausted just watching the Maid Planet performance, the stage moved on to more Nihon Buyo - the more traditional Japanese dance. Unfortunately, this did not feature any girls in uniforms of any sort, but did have some smashing kimonos on display and despite the momentary glitch when one dancer dropped her fan, it was rather soothing to watch.

It also featured a bloke dressed up as a woman.



Bloke



Isn't that unlucky?



Piperoids are these really neat little robots - all made from paper pipes, with the aid of some scissors

aching feet while watching the shamisen player and his singing ladyfriend, which was pretty good stuff.

The whole event moved at a decent pace, with plenty of stage events to sit and watch between shopping and eating. There was the worlds-first showing of a robot hand developed by ITK, some talk about Japanese Multimedia (which I missed), a slightly disjointed chat with Gothic Lolita Cellist, Kanon Wakeshima and a manga seminar by the omnipresent Helen McCarthy (which I completely missed). The event finished with a charity raffle,

The top floor, complete with sock shop



Slightly Pervy Models

At any event such as this, there are bound to be a whole collection of anime models on display. Square Enix had a disappointingly small collection, even though you could see their store room was stuffed

with cardboard boxes. Many of their pre-made models were blessed with incorrectly scaled boobage. Except Solid Snake. He didn't have any boobs (as far as I could see).

GRR



An interesting combination of bonsai and Thunderbirds, using the tree as the engine smoke.

Also note the nekkid gal on the grass and the bizarre tiny sumo. I didn't ask.

Tsugaru-Shamisen



I feel lucky that I know enough about Japan to understand and feel comfortable with the weirdness, while still having the feeling of excitement and wonder at events like these. I can only imagine next year's will be even bigger, and I'm sure I'll be there. **SP**

featuring a guest appearance by Dragon Ball characters with pretty neat costumes. All in all, it was an interesting, enjoyable and fun event.



A selection of cosplay

Want some cheese with that (rice) whine?

With the effect of the morning's free glass (plastic cup) of sake long worn off, it was time to spend a few minutes of the evening learning about the process of sake making. Knowledgeable sake-lady Satomi Okubo talked through how the rice is polished in varying degrees depending on the projected final quality, then also went to talk about some other interesting facts, although by this time I had consumed a couple more free shots and was considering proposing to one of the waitresses.



My empty sake cups (in case you were interested)

Bang a Drum

Undoubtedly, the most well received stage event of the day was the taiko charity performance by Joji Hirota and his group of mostly young people. Although originally used to beat out orders on the battlefields, modern Taiko drumming began as late as 1951 and has become increasingly popular overseas. The *Battlestar Galactica* soundtrack is full of it.

Anyway, the performance was jolly good: Hirota-san pulled off a

spectacular solo, recovering perfectly from a wayward drumstick, and one of his young minions beat the living crap out of his drum, to the applause of the audience. It's a pity the strap broke and it fell off him a few minutes later, but like a true pro he picked another drum and started beating that to hell and back within seconds.

Taiko might just sound like a load of people banging drums. Well it is, but I highly recommend it.



The Final Countdown

A definitive top 10 of PC Engine game features



Game Over/Continue Screens

10. Berabo Man

Before he went soft, Dr Bakuda used to be up to all sorts of mischief, and the cute little version of him with erupting hair is just adorable and makes continuing a joy.



7. Jackie Chan

Simple in concept, this Game Over screen is still pretty cool, with a cartoon Jackie straining under two huge stone blocks. Add the racy music and it's pretty memorable. Hooyah!



9. Ai Cho Aniki

This is probably the most creepy and uncomfortable Game Over screen you've

ever seen in your life. Words cannot describe it. However, top points for some pretty good art skills though.

6. Exile

Actually bothering to take advantage of the CD format, our hero Sadler does a wonderful spin and sword slash that even Arnie would be proud of. This one makes it almost worth dying.



8. Blodia

A touching scene...the lonely landscape cares nothing for the broken sphere that litters its surface. But better still, seeing



this means you can turn this horribly frustrating game off at last.



5. Download

The picture may be kind of neat, but the dreadful (and somewhat offensive) English on the continue screen is just classic.



2. CD Denjin

This is just brilliant. A melancholy song plays you out as you walk slowly off into the sunset. The accompanying weather forecast just makes it that much funnier. And if you choose not to continue, well... splat!



4. Hana Taka Daka!?

As if dying wasn't frustrating enough, you have to put up with a fat teddy-bear who sticks his tongue out and laughs at you. It's as if Taito was daring you to punch your TV.



3. Operation Wolf

A classic image, this great Game Over screen features the noble soldier reaching for some Tums after eating his dinner a bit too quickly and getting indigestion.



1. Avenger

It might not do much; just a single image with a bit of colour cycling, but boy is this picture from Avenger great. The design, shading and colour scheme are just perfectly combined and it's an image that never fails to make me go 'wow'. I love it.





sunteam

www.pcengine.co.uk/sunteam