

Bit Age Times #7

(The Newsletter for the Second Generation)

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Top 50 Bit Age Games

Here is where it gets real tough! I struggled with this section alot. I did use alot of input from readers to fill it. The first 10 are easy, it is just where to put them. The last ten are also easy as they are the ones that barely made it. But the middle ones, especially this batch are tough. It is here that you start questioning if these picks should have been higher or lower. I expect that I will get the most criticism from this group. So flame away, I am ready!

30. **Prince of Persia**-One of the most beautiful games of its time was Prince of Persia. This was one of the first times that the character moved realistically. The whole game flowed so beautifully. This really was a springboard for many other games that began to incorporate both the gameplay style (Out of this World) and the smooth animation.

29. **R-Type**-You can define the Bit Age by three popular styles of gameplay; fighting games, scrolling platform games and shooters. When you speak of shooters, you need to include R-Type, one of the most popular and influential shooters! It gave you huge bosses, tons of weapons and more stuff to shoot than any person should ever have to contend with. It was a shooter's dream!

28. **Shining Force Series**-The Bit Age saw the rise of RPGs. Before the Bit Age, these were strictly limited to the computers. But games like Shining Force soon proved that the consoles could make RPGs that could meet and in some instances, surpass what the computers were doing. Gorgeous graphics, rich storyline, compelling characters were all trademarks of this grand series that stretched onward and provided a few of the bright spots for the Sega Saturn.

27. **Pirates**-One of Sid Meier's first big hits and for many the introduction into a whole new kind of game. A game where exploration was as crucial as battle. Where the sense of discovery was so great that you had to keep playing. Where great gameplay was the motivating factor and not some new gimmick. This was the beginning of many great adventures by one of the best programmers of our generation!

26. **Tecmo Bowl**-This is the football game that really sent the virtual sport flying! It added the real players, teams and more! It kept stats of the game and added cool animations for touchdown celebrations and more. Plus, it was a fun game to play!

25. **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles**-Every genre has two titles that were responsible for the evolution of the genre. While Double Dragon was the game that started the side scrolling beat-em up, it was TMNT that took it to the next level. With great graphics, four characters and most importantly it featured four players at one time! Soon after this, every beat-em up featured this feature (Simpsons, Cap and Avengers, X-Men, etc...). Please note, I am referring to the arcade game and not the Nintendo 8-Bit game.

24. **Gauntlet**-Take Robotron and put it in a dungeon and you have Gauntlet. This is the pure action game of the Bit Age! With the ability to choose which character you wanted to control, potions and food that could be shot and more enemies than anyone should have to contend with, this game had it all! Plus, that cool speech, "Elf needs food badly".

23. **Super Mario Kart**-This game created a whole new genre of racing game. Instead of the usual racing game, this one added humor and lots of silliness. Crazy tracks to race around, familiar characters and some really off the wall power-ups, made this a game the whole family could play and enjoy! To this day there are still lots of games that follow this successful formula (including Diddy Kong Racing and Crash Team Racing).

22. **Military Madness**-The most innovative game on the Turbo Grafx and one of the best! This war game featured not only strategy, but exciting gameplay. Who says that wargames needed to be dull? This is a game that is still as much fun today as it was back then.

21. **Herzog Zwei**-This was real time strategy before it became the buzzword. It was one of the best games for the Genesis and a true inspiration to many games that came later.



(Remember the good old, Atari joystick? I do and I miss it! Sniff.)

Goodbye Joystick

One of the biggest changes from the classic era to the Bit Age was the familiar joystick being pushed aside for the gamepad. While it was a staple of the early systems, it soon found itself outside, looking in. Soon the gamepad was on all the new systems and it was here to stay. But we take this time to say goodbye to the proud joystick. Sure, you can still find them for systems, but they are now an accessory. They are not the once proud controller that was proximately featured in the game. No more machismo as you held tight to it like the handle of a baseball bat (I know what you are thinking and you better get that smirk off your face).

Sure the gamepad has some advantages. It does fit nicely in the hand and it is easier to access the many buttons they put on them. But there is just something about the joystick. I think part of it was that the arcades always featured joysticks and it was part of the arcade feel. Gamepads seemed so alien to me. Besides they forced me to be left-handed. While this has been no problem for the tons of impressionable youths that grew up during the Nintendo era, it was tough for an old dog like myself who grew accustomed to the joystick. Plus, if you want to threaten someone who is beating the daylights out of you, the joystick is a much more convincing threat than a wimpy little gamepad. You could grab that by the handle and club them senseless. Much scarier than swinging the gamepad around like a watch on a chain.

So we move into a new era of games and the controllers continue to evolve. We now see hybrids of gamepads and joysticks. We have controllers with force feedback and analog controllers. But we must not forget the mighty joystick. It was there in the beginning and it helped us defend the world from many Space Invaders, ghosts, monsters and what have you. It served us proud and must never be forgotten. So please send your donations to the "Build a Joystick Monument in Tom's Front Yard Fund." Your donation is tax deductible, unless you are audited and it will go to a worthy cause. Let us not let this servant of man be forgotten. Get those checks out today!

Sega CD Saga

By Fred Wagaman

OK, I'll admit it. I'm an early adopter. I bought my Saturn the day it arrived at Toys R Us. I pre-bought my Playstation. I was standing in line to get my Dreamcast at midnight last September. And yes, I preordered an Atari Jaguar when it was first announced. (Hey, they can't all be winners)

But one machine I was able to resist getting when it first came out was a Sega CD.

I waited almost 6 months. Then I found a great deal at a used game store that got me a Sega CD with a couple of games for almost 25% off what it was going for new. I couldn't resist. It was one of the original under-the-Genesis units. By this time, the newer side-by-side units were available.

I had the machine for several months when I picked up Spiderman vs. the Kingpin. I had really enjoyed the original Spiderman for the Genesis and thought I'd like this one too.

Unfortunately for me, it didn't work.

It's not that there was a problem with the game working at all. But at certain, and consistent, places, the game would just lock-up. Nothing would happen. Nada.

So I called Sega.

After explaining my problem, I was informed that even though I was beyond my warranty period, that I should package my system up. They would send a company to pick it up and take care of the problem for me. So I took my original boxes and packed it up (Today's Tip: Always save your boxes and receipts). A few days later, my machine was picked up and the waiting game began.

Knowing a little about software, hardware and the like, I had some suspicions on what the problem was and how it would be fixed. I noticed that when I booted my Sega CD, a version number would appear on the upper right-hand portion of the screen. Mine said "ver 1.2". I expected that they would replace the firmware inside the unit with a later version and send the machine back to me.

I was surprised when, less than a week later, there was a package for me at the front door from Sega. I was even more surprised when I opened it and found a brand new side-by-side Sega CD unit inside the box. I had expected them to replace the rom. They did all right, but sent it in a completely new housing. It even included all of the pack ins including Sewer Shark. (I didn't send pack my pack ins or even my power supplies when I returned my unit).

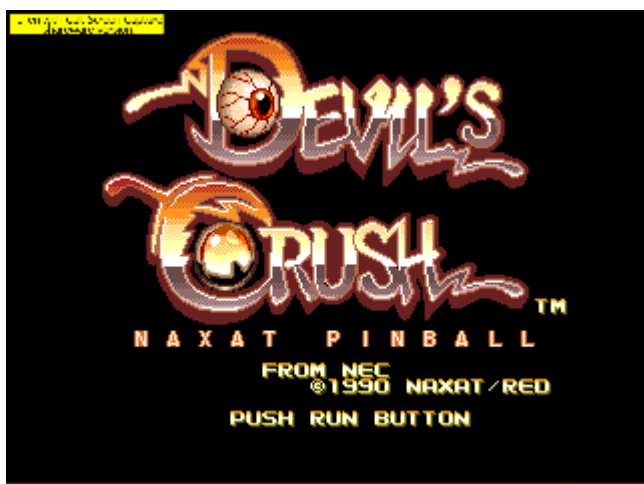
I was excited to get a free game and a new unit. I had wished they told me they were going to replace it. I was a little disappointed because I liked the over-under unit.

Anyhow, the first thing I did once the unit was hooked up, was to check the rom version. My suspicions were confirmed when "ver 2.1" appeared on the screen. Spiderman didn't have any further problems.

I have long since gotten rid of my side-by-side and replaced it with an over-under. I also picked up a CDX unit some time ago (A CDX is a Sega CD/Genesis combo in a portable CD player like unit).

So, if you happen to run into troubles playing a game or two on your old Sega CD unit, don't fret. Don't think your system is broken. It's probably the version of the firmware that is the problem.

Fred would also like to note that some versions of the Saturn have some issues with the game "Croc". Some machines will drop polygons or lose Croc's eyes. All other games appear to play well on the machine, but the same copy of the game plays fine on other Saturns. Any comments on similar issues can be sent to him at fcw3@postoffice.ptd.net.



The Devil Made Me Play it!

Ever play a game that was so addictive that figured there must be other forces behind it? Well, that is the kind of game that Devil's Crush is! It is still my all-time favorite pinball game! I know what you're thinking, a pinball game? How boring. But this one offers a lot more than the typical silver ball action. A whole lot more!

One of the first things you will notice with this game is the large amount of detail. From the skull who laughs at you to the many different targets and hidden things that pop up, there is a lot to do in this game. The best part is the better you do, the more sub-games you get to play. These are different screens where you will have to defeat creatures or clear a certain amount of targets with your pinball. These are both exciting and can send your score to another level! There are a bunch of little bonus rounds to play and discovering them is half the fun!



While this game is the sequel to Alien Crush, the first pinball game released on the Turbo Grafx, it is anything but an update. It improves greatly on the initial concept of Alien Crush and the biggest improvement is the smooth scrolling of the ball from screen to screen. One problem with Alien Crush was that the pinball table was two screens big, but when you went from one screen to the next, there was a pause as the Turbo would load back in the other screen. This jerkiness was quite annoying and detracted from an otherwise good pinball game. But in Devil's Crush, the ball moves effortlessly from one screen to the next. Which is good as there are now three different screens that make up the pinball table. You would go nuts if it had to keep pausing.

One of the best features of Devil's Crush is the very atmospheric music. When you combine them with the eerie sound effects, you get a very haunting game and one that will draw you in. They are a perfect compliment for the dark graphics with pentagrams, skulls and all sorts of little demons. It really is a little taste of Hell on Earth, only it doesn't scare you into sainthood, like the real Hell is supposed to.

While pinball games have not always fared well on home consoles, mainly because a straight adaptation of a pinball machine will always fall short, Devil's Crush is a big success! This can be credited to the programmers who took a pinball game and morphed it with a video game, to give you an experience that you will not find at a game room. This union combines the best of both worlds to make something that is highly original, entertaining and totally engrossing! If you own a Turbo Grafx, you must have this game. It is that good!

The Greatest Battle

In the history of video games, there has been some massive battles for supremacy. The old Atari vs Intellivision battle was one of the first and most fierce. Then came the Nintendo vs Sega Master System. Actually, that was more of a massacre. Who can forget the Sega Genesis vs Super Nintendo or the more recent Sega Saturn vs Sony Playstation? But none of these will come close to the battle that is beginning to brew in the video game industry. No time in the history of the industry has so many companies with deep, deep pockets ever battle for such a huge industry. The video game industry is bigger now than ever and the stakes are much greater. What used to be a hundred million dollar industry is now a multi billion dollar industry and growing! Growing very fast! So we have four major competitors vying for your entertainment dollars and only two will be successful (at least that is how the industry has always been, a two console market). Which ones will it be and why? While I don't have all the answers (judging by some of the email about my top 50 list, I couldn't buy a clue with Bill Gates money), I will give my predictions. I will let you know how each one stacks up, in my opinion and why they will be successful or not. So here they are in what order I expect them to finish. Oh, I threw in the mystery one too, the X-Box.

#5-[Project X](#)-While on paper, this one sounds very intriguing, it has yet to actually materialize. The mystery system that has been discussed for the last two years or so, has been nothing but hype. For anyone not familiar, this is the platform that will ship with DVD players. So you can choose a cheaper DVD player that just plays DVDs or you can choose a DVD player for more money that also plays games for this system. It will be done by numerous companies, ala 3DO. I personally don't think it has much chance. If it was out now and was the first DVD console on the market, possibly. But the longer it waits, the worse its chances. And those chances aren't that great right now. When choosing between a system made by one dedicated company or one that is part of a federation of sorts, take the one dedicated company every time!



#4-[Sega Dreamcast](#)-While I like the Dreamcast and think it is a great system, it made two major errors. The first big error is it went into the next generation race with yesterday's technology. By not having a DVD player and instead going with a modified CD-Rom drive, the gigadrive, was a fatal mistake. The most information a single Dreamcast CD can hold is 1 Gig, which is an astonishing amount of memory. But the Sony and others who are going DVD will be able to hold 4-5 times as much. That means bigger games, more music, more sound effects, more of everything!

The second big flaw that Sega did was to launch the system without the internet site up and running. The system came out almost 6 months ago and the system still is not up. This was a horrible mistake. If they had it up and running from the get-go, they could have sold twice as many units. If they would have had games like NFL 2K and others internet ready, the word of mouth and peer pressure would have sold tons of units. Sure their sales are very good, incredible, but think how much better they could still be if they had this in place? Everyday they delay this is going to cost them.

On a positive note, they have sold enough units to date to guarantee a steady stream of games for the next year or so. They also have a solid arcade division that continues to bring them games like Crazy Taxi and Zombie's Revenge. Add in some great programmers and you have a tough competitor. They were also aided by the delay of the Dolphin. But without a DVD and the long delay in getting their internet network up and running, they have shot themselves in the foot twice already and most people only have two feet.



#3-[Nintendo Dolphin](#)-Nintendo has a lot going for them. They have zero debt and 6 billion in the bank! Oh yeah, they have a license to print money, namely the Pokemon craze that will not die off. Add in the still profitable Nintendo 64 and Color Gameboy and you have a company that can go toe to toe with anyone. Oh yeah, they are also the most successful video game company ever! But even that and their guaranteed franchises like Mario, Zelda and Donkey Kong is enough to win the war.

In the past, Nintendo was able to live on their reputation and history. They also had the advantage of being the biggest company in the industry and could pummel the rest. But this time around, they have to face two companies that are even bigger than they are; Sony and Microsoft. Both of these companies not only have the funds, but also the ties to battle the giant. Sony has already beaten Nintendo once with the Playstation and showed they were vulnerable. Of course, Nintendo went with the not so profitable cartridges, a mistake they are not going to make a second time. But they are also doing what they always do and be the last system out. While this may benefit them in making sure they have the best technology, it also means that a lot of gamers have already committed to a game system, like they did with the Playstation. Nintendo really needs to get this system out quickly to win the battle. They also need to have a solid online gaming community ready.

#2-[Microsoft Xbox](#)-While they are the newest in the industry, they are the most dangerous! Microsoft is the second biggest company in the world (Cisco recently beat them out) and has a ton of money to throw into this. They also have some of the best programmers in their employment (go ahead and laugh, but they are successful, like it or not) and already have a gaming division up and running. So they are ready and can make some serious waves.

While money and expertise will not guarantee success, Microsoft has a lot more going for it. First off, they already have lots of internet experience and can make sure they have a very good system up! They already have experience with online games. They have been doing it for a few years and can have it up and running with no problem.

Another huge advantage Microsoft has is they have lots of ties in the industry. They have been working with the top chip makers, 3D graphics companies and others, so it is easy for them to get the best companies to work with them. Clout and the deepest pockets guarantee this. So you can be sure they will have the best of everything for their system and will have a huge number of companies ready to sign up to produce games for them.



#1-[Sony Playstation 2](#)-Right now, Sony is the most popular and the top choice of gamers. The Playstation was a huge hit (over 70 million sold!) and gave them the reputation as the top video game company in the world! They have proven to know how to market a system and to make it successful. They have the finances, the clout and the experience to repeat!

But what Sony has that no one else does is the ability to play the original Playstation games. Couple this with the ability to play DVD movies and you have a fantastic selling point! Much easier to convince the significant other/parent to buy a system when you don't have to abandon all your old games!

Sony also the advantage that every company and their brother wants to make games for the system. So all the big hits from Final Fantasy to Grand Turismo to Resident Evil will be

on the system. They also have a very good software company of their own and will keep a steady stream of hits coming out. And it is software that sells a system!

Sites of the Month

There are numerous good sites out there that deal with Bit Age games and systems, but I only have room to cover two a month. So if you have a site you would like to see me spotlight, please send it in and I will take a look at it. In the meantime, here are two more deserving sites to check out!

Phantasy Star Pages

Anyone who owned a Sega Genesis and was a fan of RPGs, owned Phantasy Star! It was one of the best series of games from the first one on the Sega Master System to the later ones on the Sega Genesis. They gave you great characters, deep storylines and tons of gameplay! This site is a dedication to this incredible series!

If you are a fan of the series, you must check out this site! From the information about the games, to the links to the original poems and sketches, you have a plethora of Phantasy Star info. You could OD' on Phantasy Star! There is so much to check out, you will need a few days to absorb it all! So if you are a fan, check out this site at the following URL:
<http://www.phantasy-star.net/pspage1.shtml>

Assembler

This site is dedicated to the obscure, and it has it! Kevin O'Conner has managed to get photos and more of some of the most obscure game systems ever! We are talking stuff like FM Towns Marty, Playdia, Mega CD and more! If you ever had any interest in systems that the average person will never see, let alone own, then check out this very informative site!

While there is more on his site, it is the extremely rare systems that are the main attraction! I can remember reading about and wanting a FM Towns when I was young. Never bought one, but at least now I can see what I was so interested in. Great site! It can be found at the following URL:
<http://www.geocities.com/Tokyo/Ginza/2271/pcengine.html>

I Was a Teenage Altered Beast

Chapter Three

Once I got over my admiration of my macho body, I grabbed my sword and yanked it out of the belly of the great beast. I then took the sword and cleaned off the blood. Then I pulled my dagger out and skinned the beast. I pulled the skin off carefully, not to tear it too much. I would wear it like a trophy to prove to the guys back in the village that I did indeed slay the mighty beast! I wrapped the skin around my shoulders and carried on my journey.

Little did I know that taxidermy was not my strong point. In fact, I knew absolutely nothing about it. As I walked on, I realized the large amount of flies buzzing around me. I also noticed the increased chatter of the crows as they flew up and tried to grab a piece of the hanging flesh that still was on the skin. After a few hundred more yards, I realized it was that stinking skin that was attracting all the attention. So I pulled it off and tossed it into the woods. I then ran for the nearest stream to wash off the blood that has seeped into my hair and clothes. I felt as disgusting as I looked.

As I came up to the stream, I stopped once again to admire myself. Damn, I look good! A little lumpy from all these new muscles, but much better than the shadow of a man I used to be. I could probably go from cleaning up after the horses to making shoes for them! Dare to dream! As I dove in the water and enjoyed the cool feel, I was quick to wash away the blood. Last thing a person wants to have is a blood trail. It will send every predator and scavenger after you.

Once I felt clean, I got back on land and put my clothes back on. As I got dressed, I heard a sound from behind me. It sounded like a groaning sound. As I turned around, I saw there was a bunch of zombies walking towards me. They were following the trail of blood that I had left. I tried to move away from them, but soon found that they had me surrounded. There was nothing to do, but fight it out! So I waited for one to come near me and

WHAMMO!, I punched his head in! While it is quite disgusting to stick your fist through an undead's head, it is also quite gratifying to see the body collapse into a pile. Once I got over the disgustingness of the action, I had a field day! I was kicking butt like there was no tomorrow! If Hercules could see me now! But the zombies kept coming, one after another. Soon there was a few piles of bodies around me and it was getting hard to get around. But after four straight hours of face punching, they finally quit coming. Either they got smarter or I wiped them all out, I am unsure which, but I could finally catch my breath and take a break.

When I looked around at the carnage, I also noticed it was nighttime. So I piled all the zombies into one huge pile and made a monster bonfire! Sure, they stunk as their decayed flesh burned, but it kept every creature away from me. The sheer size of the fire and the putrid odor was enough to ensure a good night sleep. I knew that I would need the sleep as my journey was going to get even more dangerous and even these newly formed muscles may not be enough to save dear Penelope.

Conclusion

As the weather gets better and the grass gets greener, we think of things of spring. Of course one of these is baseball and the newest batch of new baseball games that came to your favorite video game system. So next month, we will spotlight some of the great baseball games of the Bit Age. From the deep Baseball Stars to the totally engrossing World Series Baseball, we will look at some of the different ones available. So grab your mitt and your bat and get ready to swing for the fences! See you in a month!

[Tom Zjaba](#)