

Bit Age Times

The newsletter for the second generation of video games and beyond!

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Where is #34?

It was brought to my attention that in my Top 50 most influential games of the Bit Age, I forgot to put in #34. Someone in my rush to get them all done, I overlooked this one. What is even more odd is that no one else picked up on it for so long. With the amount of email I received on this list, I know that people were reading it. Guess we all just overlooked that one.

So I need some help with #34. I need you, the readers to send in what game you think should fill the empty slot and I will collect all the games sent in and make a decision on which one should be #34. So if there is a game that you felt was unjustly left off the list, this is your chance to rectify the situation. So send in what the missing game should be and help fill in the huge void.

Take a Chance, Take a Chance, Take a Chan Chan Chance

By [Fred Wagaman](#)

What games have you played lately ? Chances are, if you're an American gamer, you've been playing a sports game. Or maybe a fighting game. Or, a little less likely, a role-playing game.

Do you ever feel that those are your only choices ?

Except for puzzle and racing games.

Do you ever get tired of those choices ? Do you ever wish that there might be something else ?

Back on the 16-bit era, Sega received many complaints about their slow delivery of role-playing games. This was around the time of Phantasy Star 4. People were clamoring for the title to be released. Sega was reluctant because, in their marketing opinion, Americans didn't like role-playing games. Americans wanted sports games. Eventually, Sega did release PS4 and they were vindicated by its slow sales. "See" they said "role-playing games are a fringe market and aren't worth our investment to produce for the American market."

Did I mention its price at release was \$99.95 ? This was just \$30 less than the price of a new Genesis !

Even I, a person that was a big Phantasy Star fan, balked at the idea of paying \$100 for a game. Sega gave no excuses, no apologies and very little backing to the game. I really think they did it on purpose thinking that we'd stop asking for things and accept what they give us.

Jump ahead a couple of years. Sony's Playstation is leading the pack of "Next Gen" systems. Final Fantasy 7 is released in Japan. Square and Sony have what amounts to an exclusive agreement. Sony debates whether to release the game stateside. Sony takes the chance, backs the product and gets a huge hit. The genre gets established here and ranks as one of the strongest in the US.

In Japan, there are dating games, where the goal is to sweet talk women and achieve some sort of goal with them (Clean thoughts everyone). Usually this is achieved by talking with them and giving flowers and the like. It's a game about relationships. That kind of game would never fly here, would it ? The cultures of Japan and the US are too different. But a game like that, tuned to the US culture and developed from a woman's perspective just might. Will anyone take a chance with a game like that ? I doubt it ?

But there's another genre I've yet to figure out why we don't have here. The Beatmania type games. If you've never seen or played these games, you are missing something.

They are music games where your goal is to perform along to the a variety of song types. Sort of like "Parrappa the Rapper" without the cartoon. Where Parrappa was more of a simon-says with a beat game, the Beatmania are more music-oriented. And there is usually an optional controller to make it even more fun. There has been a turntable controller, a dance pad and even a guitar controller. These are very cool. The Playstation 2 has also received a drum controller for Drummania and is supposed to get Keyboardmania as well.

So why don't we get those games here ?

Konami (manufacturers of the Beatmania series) doesn't think that they'd sell here.

Hmm. Fun games that are music oriented and have cool controllers ? Nope. They wouldn't sell a single copy here (...he typed with sarcasm).

This is the sort of thing that worries me with the next generation of machines. We're going to get our fighting games (Tekken series), our racing games (Gran Turismo series) and our role playing games. We're going to get our puzzle games and our latest updates of Madden. And they'll sell. There will be a ton of PS2s sold just because they're the latest thing. But if the games are continue to be retreads of past games, will interest wane ?

Will you continue to pay \$50 for your latest football and baseball game updates. Or if you get a chance, will you try something else ?

(Fred has been playing games for over 25 years and actively collecting them for over 10. The 2400+ games in his collection takes up most of his home office and living room. He lives in Denver, PA with his understanding wife Jennie, his 4 year old, button-loving son Max and his 1 year old, 4th player, Lynzie. He foresees the day when you'll buy a football game once and download the latest roster for it each year. For a fee of course. He can be contacted at fcw3@mail.ptd.net).

Sites of the Month

Remember those long lost games you played on your old Atari ST, Amiga or early PC computer? You know those fun little games that you got rid of years ago, when your new computer didn't come with a 5 1/4 drive. Well, I am sure that you have all but abandoned hope of ever playing those fun little games again, right? Think again! Today, there are numerous sites that carry these games, which are aptly named "Abandonware".

[Computer Games of Olde](#)

During my searches across the net, I came across a bunch of sites that carried games. Some had huge selections, but you had to go through endless pages to get to them, only to find dead links. Others carried certain games and some were nothing more than a page designed to get you to go to other pages (in an attempt to make money from clicks). Then I stumbled upon a little site called the Computer Games of Olde. While it didn't have the

huge selection of games (it currently has almost 200 and growing), it did have an easy to navigate site, the links all worked and there were lots of great games to download!

As I searched through the site, I was able to find some games that I thought were lost forever. Games like The Lost Dutchman's Mine, Lord of the Rings and Speedball 2. These were games I enjoyed on my Atari ST, so many years ago and now I can play them on the PC, without all that disk swapping and slow load times.

So if you are like me and would like to relive some memories, check out this site. It is a simple site, but there are constant updates and lots of great games to play! What more do you want in a site? Here is the URL:

<http://oldgames.terrashare.com/index.htm>

RetroBase

Here is a site that has taken a few systems and really put in the info for them. They currently have the Turbo Graphx, Atari Jaguar, Atari Lynx and Sega Mega Drive covered and do I mean covered! We are talking pictures and info for almost every game released and many that were never released. It is amazing at the games that never even knew were planned for some of these systems.

But this site is not happy to just cover these systems. They are in the works to cover the Sega Game Gear, Sega Master System and the Neo Geo. So as you can see, this is a site that is poised to become a regular hangout of gamers everywhere! Check it out at the following URL:

<http://www.retrobase.com/>

Neo Geo Review

This month I took a sorta odd little game and decided to review it. It is a game that I never heard of as none of the local arcades carry this one on their Neo Geo machines. But I found the game interesting, so I decided to share it with out.



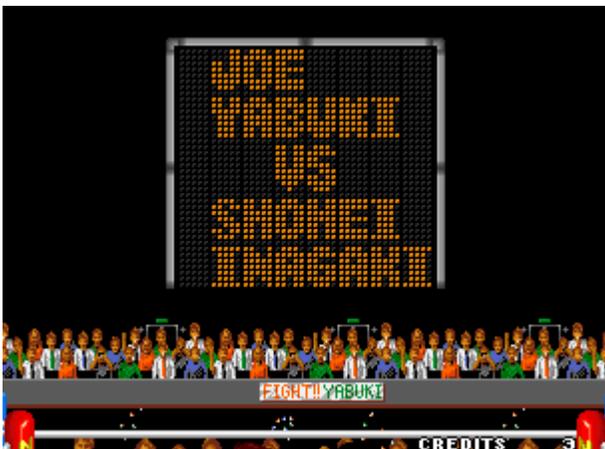
Legend of Success Joe

If you boil it down to its basic gameplay, you have a simple side scrolling fighting game. But what sets this one apart from the others is its attempt to try and tell a story as well. This is what actually keeps you playing the game, where most games of this genre would have lost you after a few games.



(Your first big opponent, a purple punk!)

The story starts off with you in a Boy Reformatory School, where you have to fight for your survival. You appear to be the person who some thugs want to rough up and it is up to you to show they you are no light weight. Once you dispatch this group of ruffians, you capture the attention of a boxing coach, who gets you into the wonderful world of boxing, where you get to get paid to beat people up.



(To see your name in lights, every ruffians dream!)

As you work your way along, you find that while the settings change, there is still other bullies that you need to contend with, both in and out of the ring. The story is pretty comical as you make your way along. The action is pretty basic, with a straight ahead punch, a body blow and an uppercut. You can also block punches, but that is about it. There are the power meter, so you can gauge your health as well as your opponents (don't you wish these existed in real life).



(You aren't even safe in the locker room. Bet Rocky never had these problems.)

While it isn't anything groundbreaking and once you complete the game (with the aid of lots of continues), you probably won't want to play it again. But it is a fun run, while you see what happens to our hero and how the story ends.

Letters to the Editor

Another flurry of letters has arrived, most dealing with the usual stuff (the Top 50 list and my reports on the next generation systems), but there are a few others too. So read on!

So which of the next generation systems are you going to buy?

I am not an early adopter. In fact, I usually don't buy a system until it is dying. I am a scavenger and so my guess is that the Dreamcast will be the first one I buy. As much as the Playstation 2, X-Box and Starcube intrigue me, their prices will more than keep me away. As great as they seem to be, \$300.00 is more than I am willing to spend on a system.

Why do you only review Neo Geo games? signed Just Curious

I do plan on reviewing more games in the future, but right now I just don't have the time. The main reason that the Neo Geo gets the nod is that I never had the chance to play it as new. The thought of playing \$150-\$300 for a single game seemed ludicrous to me. So now I can enjoy these games that I only heard of and that is the main appeal.

Which of the handheld systems would you recommend? signed Looking for Games on the Go

Funny you should ask. Check back next month when I will do a review and rating of all the Bit Age handheld systems. I will take a look at the Gameboy, Gamegear, Lynx, Turbo Express and the Sega Nomad. So check back for a big Handheld issue!

Why do you write about the next generation games, but you don't carry them for sale on your site? signed Possible customer

I do carry the Nintendo games for sale, but that is all at the present time. The way my business works is that I deal in the totally dead systems. When they fall to a point where I can readily buy them cheap and resell them for a decent profit, then I begin to carry them. I am hoping to soon add Sega Genesis to my list of systems that I support.

I like your reviews of new games, as opposed to the old ones. Can you do more of these reviews? signed Not Stuck in the Past

I have actually received quite a bit of email from people who want to see more newer game reviews. They liked the High Heat review and wanted to see more in that vein. So, I will try to do one a month if possible. I don't buy a lot of new games, but I do buy a few, so I will try to do some reviews for you.



This was one of those games that I decided to go against my nature and buy it new. The thought of paying \$50.00 for a game is a hard concept for me to swallow, but I really enjoyed the first. So, I swallowed hard and forked over the \$37.00 that I was able to find it on sale for (that cheap side of me is always looking for a bargain). I gladly took the game home and decided to put it through the paces. Will it live up to the hype? Will they stray far from the winning formula of the first one? Let us see.

As I created my character and begun playing, I quickly realized that the elements that made the first one so good were still intact. You have the same, simple controls. Almost everything can be done with the mouse, which makes things very easy. The same inventory setup and character screens are still there. So if you played the first one, this one will be an easy transition.

One of the best features of this game and the original is the automapping. I personally think that this should be a mandatory feature on all role playing games. Call me a wimp, but I personally have better things to do than pull out the graph paper and map. It is dull, it is stupid and totally unnecessary. I know some people really dig this, and you can ignore the auto map if you are that masochistic. I want to enjoy my game and have it turn into a part time job.

I was also pleased that the developing story was part of this game. I am one of those people who likes a reason for my adventure. I think that an adventurer who just goes out for gold and glory is pretty shallow and makes for a dull story. What kind of fool would risk life and limb without a good reason? Diablo and the sequel shined here. You were given enough of a story to get you started and as you completed mini quests, more information

opened up. People began to trust you and will help you more. This really adds to the game and helps to immerse you.

The beasts that you do battle with are well animated and there is enough variety to keep your interest. While there is the customary recycling of the same character design, there is enough variety. Plus, different creatures battle in different ways. No more just run forward and fight. Some will run away and others will only attack from a distance. Then there are annoying creatures like these leaping little beasts in the desert that are hard as heck to hit. Plus, this time you have to contend with poison and being frozen. While the stand and go toe to toe with every creature will work alright in the start of the game, you will soon find that some evasive measures must be taken if you are to survive.

The weapons are quite plentiful and there seems to be something for everyone. I have only finished a little over half the game and have already found a plethora of items. They also kept the nice feature of your weapons and armor wearing out. Nothing will make you appreciate your local blacksmith like having your sword break in the midst of a battle. It will teach you to inspect all weapons and armor before leaving town.

One big difference in this incarnation is that you have skill trees. What these essentially are is branching skills. You decide what skills you want to build and it then opens up branches to other skills. Think of Civilization 2 and you have an idea of how it works. While this does make you think about what to build and what to ignore, it is a feature that I can do without. Like power locks on a car, it is nice, but not necessary.

The only flaws with this otherwise great sequel is the save game feature. In the original, you could save anywhere and as often as you liked. This allowed you to save from a lot of backtracking. But for some unknown reason, they decided to totally screw this one up. While you can save anywhere, you always start back in the town. Plus, you cannot save without leaving the game. This is so stupid, it is beyond me. Nothing is worse than getting ready to battle a major foe and know that if you lose, you have to backtrack all the way back. This does make Town Portal Spells all the more valuable.

To make your journey a little easier, they did add portals that once you step on them, they can be used to move about the game without so much walking. But a good save feature would be eons better than this. Guess every game must have a flaw, too bad it is such a big one.

If you liked the original game, you should enjoy this. It is the typical sequel, bigger, graphically more pleasing and aurally more enticing. It is essentially the same game, just a lot more of it. But this is a good thing as many sequels tried to redo a winning formula and ended up ruining the whole thing. This time they almost got a sequel right. If they just put back the old save feature, it would be an awesome game.

I Was a Teenage Altered Beast

Chapter Six

As I struggled to contain the beast that had consumed me, I kept a vision of my beloved in my head. I figured if I focused on my mission, I could control the beast and complete the mission. Little did I realize the foolishness of this thinking. I could no more control this raging beast, than a farmer can control the weather that is decimating his crops. I had become a force of nature and nature is controlled by no one.

Soon I found my hunger overwhelming me. I ran through the swamp and headed through the woods. Hours passed and time became a complete blur. Soon the day gave way to the night and I found myself near a small farm. As I looked over the land, I spied some sheep in the fields. They were still asleep and not aware of my presence. Before I knew what I was doing, I was racing after them and surprised them in their slumber. Since they were fenced in, they had a false sense of security. They believed this flimsy fence which served to contain them, could keep a force such as myself out. How foolish domesticated animals are. Within moments, I rushed in and began tearing and devouring one sheep after another. Soon the sound of carnage and the incessant bleating awoke the farmer, who came out with crude axe to see what was the commotion all about. As he moved his crude torch into the pen, he saw my eyes as they glowed in the darkness. Blood was dripping from my mouth as I peered at the oncoming light. The fear that must have gripped his heart as he saw what could only be described as a monster.

As he tried to determine whether to chase me off or run for the safety of his house, I took advantage of the moment and rushed at him. His slowed reflexes were no match for me and before he could recover from the shock, he was dead. I tore out his neck and drank deep of the warm blood that poured from his veins.

The rest of the night was a blur, but I remember craving the taste of human flesh. Something about those soft creatures that cannot be described. I finally found my way to a small cave and rested. As I slept, the images of the day rushed through my head. Frightening images of scared faces and screams. Blood was everywhere.

As I fell into a deep slumber, I was abruptly awoken by the sounds of feet and yelling. As I arose from the floor, I looked out and saw a mob of people coming up the path towards the cave where I was resting. They were following a trail of blood that I left, which led right into the cave. In my bloodlust, I didn't think of the consequences. Like a wolf that grabs a farmer's chicken, the pangs of hunger are far greater than the thought of the consequences. Consciences are for humans and this was something that I was not. My humanity was trapped, deep in the body of fur and fangs.

As the group neared the cave, I saw that the wizard who had stolen my beloved, was now leading the charge. The people were chanting his name as if he was some great hero. They all came equipped with weapons from swords to farming utensils. They came to kill the beast and the beast was I.

Conclusion

A short issue, but this summer is miserable for me. I am one of the handful that looks forward to the fall and the cooler weather and kids returning to school. So you have one more month of small newsletters to contend with before I can return to my normal sized ones. Keep playing those games and get a little sun!

[-Tom Zjaba](#)