

Bit Age Times

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Deja Vu?

As I look at the Sega Dreamcast and its exit from the industry, I cannot help but think of a similar system that suffered a similar fate. The more I looked at the two, the more similar their situations were. This system is the Turbo Grafx. While there are some noticeable differences, namely that the Turbo Grafx was a big hit in Japan, where the Dreamcast was a bust in Japan. But look at the similarities and see if you can see them.

First off, both systems are favorites of hardcore gamers, the people who own multiple systems and lots of games. The Turbo offered some great games like Splatthouse, Devil's Crush, Bonk's Adventure and Military Madness. Many of the games were great games, but never caught on with the general public. The Dreamcast also has lots of innovative games and great playing ones that are also overlooked. Games like Shenmue, Jet Grind Radio and Virtua Tennis are great games that had less than stellar sales.

One big problem that the Turbo Grafx had was that it was considered underpowered upon arrival. While it boasted a 16 bit processor, it really was two 8 bit processors, where the Sega Genesis and later the Super Nintendo actually had 16 bit processors. While it was quite capable of producing great games, the press was not quite so kind to it. The Dreamcast suffered a similar fate. While it also was more than capable of producing great looking and playing games, the Playstation 2's potential was more than it could compete with. Plus, with DVD becoming the media of choice for next generation systems, the Dreamcast shipped with a souped up CD Rom drive, the Gigadrive.

One of the biggest problems that both systems had was they were unable to unseat the reigning champion of the time. In the Turbo Grafx's case, it was the 8-Bit Nintendo. While the

Turbo offered better graphics, better sound and bigger games, people still bought the Nintendo over it. With the Nintendo's immense library and all the big franchises aboard, it was the system of choice. The Dreamcast also was plagued by a seemingly invincible system, this time the Playstation. With 70 million systems sold and possibly the largest game library of all time, the Playstation offered so much to gamers, especially the casual ones. It was cheaper and more readily available. No matter how much better the Dreamcast's games were, it could not win out against the Playstation, which continued to outsell it.

Another similarity between the two systems was they both paved the way for a major innovation in the video game market. The Turbo Grafx was the first home console with a CD Rom player, something that was a big deal at the time. For the first time, you could put animation, real music and actual footage in a game. Games like Dragon's Lair were suddenly a real possibility. The Dreamcast was the first system that offered a built in modem and a real network, designed strictly for game playing. Online gameplay, something that was reserved just for computers was now available on a home console. In both cases, the innovation will see greater acceptance and usage on other systems.

Here are two different systems. They came out in different eras and competed with different systems for market share, but they both suffered a similar fate. As time goes by, I really think the Sega Dreamcast will become much like the Turbo Grafx in the eyes of hard core gamers and collectors of video games. It will be considered a great system that died a premature death. It will remain in demand among gamers and will retain more of its value than other systems of the era. So you may want to pick up a system and some games before the system totally vanishes and it becomes a sought after collectible.

Addendum - People always want to know what games will be the valuable ones. While I am far from a fortune teller, there are a few games on the Dreamcast that have the potential to be highly sought after games. Here are a few that I think will be in demand and why (Please remember this is just a person's opinion. I am not liable if you decide to sink little Jimmy's college fund into these games and they become worthless. Video games are not a good investment.):

Bangai-Oh-The game is made by Treasure, one of the most collected and coveted of the software companies. Can you say Radiant Silvergun? While this will probably not become that much in demand, it has potential.

Typing of the Dead-Due to its quirky nature and similarities to House of the Dead, many people passed on this gem. Too bad as the gameplay is great and fun and there is so much to the game. Plus, can you think of a better way to learn to type?

Illbleed-This is a love it or hate it kind of game. But it is also a game that is so unique and so different that it could become a cult classic. This especially bodes well with the genre it is in. Plus, with some of the negative feedback, especially from the magazines, the game is in very short supply.

Record of Lodoss War-RPGs are always in demand and this game is probably the hardest to find of all the Dreamcast RPGs. It doesn't hurt that the gameplay is great and the game is deep and a lot of fun to play! Add in that it is based on an anime series and you have a lot of potential.

Skies of Arcadia-The best RPG made for the Dreamcast also came out when the Playstation 2 was hot and the sales of this game were far from stellar. Too bad as the game is incredible!



Playstation Games, Already Becoming a Collectible

While the system is still chugging along, with large sales and a ton of software still being developed for it, some of the games have already moved to the realm of collectible. Given the immense player base and the even more immense library of games, it is not hard to believe some games are so much in short supply, that they are rising in price. But with most Playstation games only remaining in print for a short period, you are bound to have some scarce games. Here is a list of a few games that are already becoming valuable and sought after:

Final Fantasy Tactics-Possibly one of the rarest of the Final Fantasy games for the Playstation (not hard as FFXVII and FFXVIII sold in the millions). Plus, with FFX coming for the Playstation 2, it means even more fans of the series. This game has sold on eBay for anywhere from \$50.00 to over \$90.00! Not bad for a four year old game!

Monster Rancher-While the sequels can be found very cheap, the original is both hard to find and highly sought after by gamers. While the game sells for around \$40.00-\$50.00, about the same price as it originally came out for, it is still quite amazing for a game to retain its value. The game does have potential for even more value as it has spawned a cartoon show and action figure line.

Intelligent Cube-This is a case of a game that was totally overlooked and word of mouth spread about the game, after it was already out of print. While Intelligent Cube was a great game from day one, it was a puzzle game and overlooked by most gamers. Too bad as it is one of the most original and fun games for the Playstation. Now the game goes for around \$50.00.

Namco Museum Volume 2-While all the Namco museums were once worth money, the first and third ones have since been released again. But the second one, the one without Pacman or Ms. Pacman, is very hard to find. It regularly goes for \$35.00-\$50.00 and probably has one of the best lineups of games from the series, with the very playable Super Pacman and Mappy leading the way! Also, the fourth and fifth volumes are also in demand, but with more unknown games on them, they do not command as much money.

Ogre Battle-It was valuable on the Super Nintendo and the same holds true on the Playstation. The classic turn based battle game remains in short supply and high demand! Another game that regularly sells for over \$50.00.

Xenogears-Another RPG with robots and more! This is another of the out of print games that keeps getting more and more interest. Being that the game was made by Square, makers of the Final Fantasy series, it is no wonder that the game is in demand. Another game that sells in the \$50.00 range.

Other games that may become collectible are the Lunar series (they go for good money now, but they have not been released that long), the Final Fantasy Anthology, Nectaris: Military Madness, Grandia and some others that escape me. While these games are now commanding this kind of money, there is no way of knowing if they will maintain this value or not. A few of these games could go the way of Panzer Dragoon Saga (a Sega Saturn game that sells for over \$100.00) or could be re-released like the Namco Museum #1 and #3 were and see the value drop considerably. So keep this in mind when you are thinking of paying big money for one of these games. Buy the game for the gameplay and think of anything else as a bonus.

Light Guns, The Law of the Bit Age!

One of the devices that came into prominence during the Bit Age is the light gun. While guns have been part of video games from well before the video game, it wasn't until the Bit Age that these became an integral part of the home video game experience.

The first home video game system, the Odyssey 1 had a gun for it. It was a separate purchase and looked like a shotgun. There were a few games that took advantage of it, but it was mostly a novelty. Later, some of the home pong units, like the Coleco Telstar, came with light guns. Again, they were for use on a primitive game like skeet shoot, which consisted of shooting a dot as it made its way across the screen.

During the Bit Age, the variety of games for use with the light guns became more varied. From skeet shoot like games (Duck Hunt) to duels (like Wild Gunmen) to real life battles (Mad Dog McCree series), the light gun found its place in the homes and added more realism to video games. No more did you have to use the joystick as a gun and try to move the crosshairs in place, now you could aim and shoot the target!

Even today, there are many light gun games that still come out. The House of the Dead series from Sega and the Point Blank and Time Crisis series from Namco for the Playstation are just a few of the very popular games that are available. Despite public outcry and fear of repercussion due to the school shootings, the light gun game is one genre that should remain a part of video games, both past and present.

Something Smells

By [Fred Wagaman](#)

Two different stories in today's news got me thinking. The first was from the "Fastest Game News Online" (<http://www.fgnonline.com/playstation2/news/18717.html>). It is an article about how "Crazy Taxi" is the hottest PS2 product right now. The other story is from the L.A. Times (<http://www.latimes.com/news/front/20010529/t000044865.html>) concerning "payola".

If you're not familiar with the term "payola", it is basically record companies rewarding radio stations for playing the songs the record companies want them to. This practice was the norm until it was banned almost 40 years ago.

What do these two things have in common you ask.

Good question.

When the Playstation was first released, I remember talking to the manager of my local chain game store. As the story went, each manager was given a Sony Playstation and the lesser employees were permitted to buy them at a substantial discount. This was not common knowledge. I thought it was a pretty smart move on the part of a company trying to get its foot in the door and to generate some buzz about their product. It might even be normal practice now.

Shifting gears here. Hold on. They might grind a little.

The Sega Dreamcast was a good seller. It started out pretty good and probably made some decent money for the retailers. Except for the internet, most of the feedback I received about the DC was negative. What was worse was the information I heard retailers giving potential customers about the DC. "The machine is underpowered". "A better one is coming from Sony". "The Playstation 2 is going to destroy the Dreamcast". "The games aren't that good

compared to what is coming for the PS2.” Many times I had to bite my lip while this crap was tossed at a customer.

Shift to now. Crazy Taxi for the PS2 is a “must have” title.

Folks, it’s the same game as the Dreamcast version.

The DC version is a blast. No question that the PS2 version would be too.

So where was this support when Crazy Taxi came out for the DC ?

Wasn’t it Sony that basically shafted retailers and customers last Christmas with their pathetic attempt at a system launch ?

Why didn’t retailers steer their customers to the Dreamcast, a system that they had a plentiful supply of ?

Why is a year old game for a machine that wasn’t worth selling now the hottest thing on the supposed be-all and end-all of game machines ?

Maybe it isn’t payola, but game-ola.

-sniff- -sniff-

Something smells rotten.

(Fred has also heard of other game companies attempting to strong-arm retailers about the competition. Specifically Nintendo vs. the XBOX. What stories have you heard or what have you seen that makes you wonder what goes on behind the scenes of your local game store chain ? If you’ve got any good ones let Fred know at fcw3@mail.ptd.net).

Bit Age Games Today!

Many of the most popular games of the Bit Age are seeing revivals on today's machines, with more coming! The Playstation, especially has a huge selection of games available and any Bit Age fan would be in heaven with the selection. Take a look at some of the games available that are either re-releases or updated versions:

[Speedball](#)-This favorite of the Atari ST and Amiga featured brutal, futuristic sports at its finest. A new and updated version is available for the Playstation which is quite true to the original.

[Master of Monsters](#)-This strategy game was a favorite on the Sega Genesis and captivated many players. A new version is on the Playstation and features the same strategy battles with lots of mythical creatures.

[Nectaris: Military Madness](#)-One of the first strategy war games and a huge favorite of Turbo Grafx fans. This game is very similar to the original, one of the complaints of reviewers. But for us old school gamers, that is just fine. Also on the Playstation.

[Castlevania: Symphony of the Night](#)-The venerable series which started on the Nintendo 8-bit was a huge game and remains so. This version retains the 2D look (unlike the Nintendo 64 version that went to 3D) and is a great game!

Megaman-There is a large selection of Megaman games for the Playstation and even one for the Nintendo 64 (not counting the Gameboy, which has almost every conceivable game ever made) from the different Megaman X to the Megaman Legends.

Final Fantasy-This series has become a huge event. With Final Fantasy 7, 8 and 9 all being million sellers, to the highly anticipated Final Fantasy Anthology (finally bringing FF #4 and #5 to the USA).

Mario 64-The Nintendo 64 system seller was none other than Nintendo's most popular character. Look for the same to happen with the Gamecube.

Zelda 64-Who can forget the mad scramble for the gold version of Zelda, not to mention the huge selling sequel, Majora's Mask.

These are just a few of the many games from the Bit Age era that continue to remain popular. Look for this trend to magnify in the next batch of systems this fall.

Why Hasn't This Happened?

Which video game character is almost as known as Mickey Mouse? If you said Mario, you win a pat on the back (the newsletter is free, what kind of prize did you expect?). Not only is Mario part of pop culture, so is many of Nintendo's other creations. My question is....Why hasn't Nintendo created a theme park based on these characters?

While there may be a theme park like I am suggesting in Japan, it is unknown to me. But I really think that Nintendo is missing the boat, in a big way, by not either making a themed amusement park or licensing their characters to an established amusement park. Think of the possibilities you can do with the wide selection of characters created. With Mario, Luigi, Princess Peach, Bowser, Kirby, Yoshi, Pikachu, Zelda, Link, Donkey Kong, Wario, etc..., you have a plethora of characters to base rides around and have walking around in costume, to entice the kiddies to buy even more merchandise. Just the Pokemon characters alone have endless possibilities. The Squirtle water rides, Jigglypuff's bouncing chambers, etc... Then add in the rest of the characters and you have a theme park just begging to be created.

Think of the theme possibilities! You can have the jungle area for Donkey Kong with the Diddy Kong Jungle Racers, Donkey Kong Falls water ride and of course a barrel ride!

Next you have Mario and Friends with the Princesses castle, Bowser's haunted house and the Mighty Mario Roller Coaster!

Onward to the fantasy zone where you would do battle along with Link and have a horse racing game among other themed games. There could even be some live jousts and other activities to keep the guests busy.

Plus, we need the Pokemon section, which could be the kid's section. With the aforementioned rides as well as many others, we could have a real cool section! And we have not even added in Metroid, Starfox and Kirby, all of whom could either share a section with others or make their own section. Now all we need to happen is for Nintendo to go through with it, they do have a few extra billion sitting in the bank.

Conclusion

A small issue, but I just wanted to get one out there. Hopefully in a few months, when we do another issue, I will do a bigger issue and get some contributors. Until then, keep playing those games and enjoy!

-[Tom Zjaba](#)