

GAMING INSURRECTION

FOR GAMERS, BY GAMERS

YEAR 16

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ISSUE 48

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SMASHING

GI jumps into the classic N64 fighter with a tournament and more!



from the editor

Hello GI readers! It's good to see you, and I hope you're enjoying the change of seasons and weather toward a warmer time. We here at GI have been playing lots of interesting things, mostly Christmas and Valentine's Day gifts that were must-have additions to the game collection.

One of those additions was Super Smash Bros. Ultimate for the Switch. Though we've said this before in a previous issue about Smash Bros. Brawl — the 2Q2008 issue to be exact — this game really feels like the end. And what better way to celebrate the potential for real end of the series than to go where it all began: Super Smash Bros. for the Nintendo 64. This issue, we're pulling the proverbial master hand strings of a CPU only tournament featuring the game's original 12 characters. We wanted to know who the CPU would crown as the top boss of the original Smash crew, and

we got our answer. Read our centerpiece to find out who took the retro crown.

We also took a ride with the latest entry in another long-running fighting game series: Soulcalibur VI. We'll admit that the sword and sorcery series has grown on us in the more than 25 years of its sword clashing, so we've taken a stab so to speak at the latest entry. See if it makes the comeback it deserves with our Game of the Issue review.

This issue is all about the return to the basics and comfort games that we've grown to love. I hope it's a smashing good time for you, dear reader, as it was for us here at GI.

Enjoy the issue!



Lyndsey Beatty, editor-in-chief



LYNDSLEY BEATTY
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

LYNDSLEY BEATTY is co-founder and editor-in-chief of GI. She enjoys binge watching TV with her husband, editing as part of the Uppercut Editions team and playing various retro video games. Lyndsey resides in Columbia, S.C., and is an accounting auditor for the state of South Carolina.

CONTACT:

lyndseyb@gaminginsurrection.com

GAMING INSURRECTION

Editor-in-Chief
Lyndsey Beatty

Facebook
[Facebook.com/GamingInsurrection](https://www.facebook.com/GamingInsurrection)

Editor-at-Large
Brandon Beatty

YouTube
User: [GamingInsurrection](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCGamingInsurrection)

Website
www.gaminginsurrection.com

Twitter
[@GamingInsurrect](https://twitter.com/GamingInsurrect)

GI REVIEW POLICY

Scale is from 1 to 5 as follows:

1 — **Broken**. Absolutely do not play this game. A broken mess from start to finish. Game is unplayable and irredeemable in all areas.

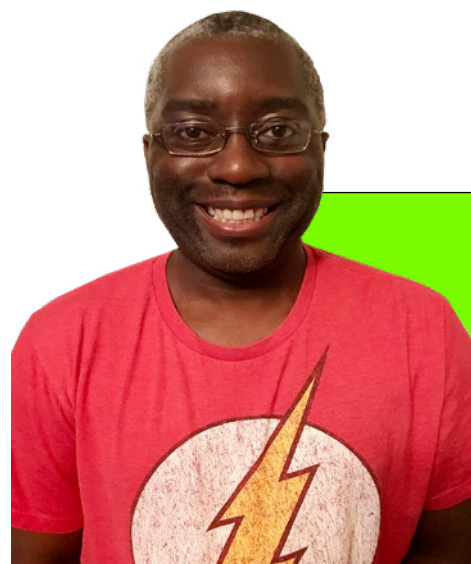
2 — **Substandard**. The game isn't for everyone. Some mechanics work; others need work. Overall design is questionable in some areas.

3 — **Average and meets expectations**. Mechanics work and it's a decent package overall. It's playable, and you'll come back to the game.

4 — **Above average**. Exceeds expectations. Overall, a great game worth keeping in a gamer's library. Presentation and mechanics all work as expected and add to or enhance the gaming experience.

5 — **Masterpiece**. Everyone should play this title at least once to experience what it has to offer.

STAFF



BRANDON BEATTY
EDITOR-AT-LARGE

BRANDON BEATTY is editor-at-large for GI. Brandon writes reviews when the mood strikes him, produces the quarterly Otaku Corner column for The Strip and spends a significant amount of time watching new and old anime alike with his wife. Brandon resides in Columbia, S.C., and is a security specialist for the state of South Carolina.

CONTACT:

brandonb@gaminginsurrection.com

A life well lived with the Super Smash Bros. series

Smash Bros., it seems, is in my blood. I've been playing Smash for so long that I can immediately tell where a stage or theme originated without having to research, and I'm well versed in tier lists for the original game just from having played it so much.

I'm the kind of person that started the original Smash with Samus — because of course I chose to main Samus given my love of the Metroid series — garnered 5,000 K.O.'s against the CPU, erased my records and did it again within six months. My history with Smash goes way back. Smash Bros. 64 was one of the first games I could afford on my own, and I happily bought it with one of my first adult-money paychecks. I saved up the money to get

a GameCube in January 2003 and bought Melee as my first game for that console. I bought Brawl the day it was released and reviewed it shortly thereafter. However, it took a minute to get Smash 4 and Ultimate for their respective systems, mostly because I didn't buy either a Wii U or Switch until well into their life cycles.

I may have moved away from my love of Nintendo, but Smash



Lyndsey Beatty
CRY OF WAR

has always been on the radar in some way regardless. I can't ignore the lure of suiting up for a new contest, not when there are fools who need to be judged by my mid-tier special beam cannon with Samus. I say that as a rent-a-hero smasher who just enjoys the simple life of Smash, but truth be told, I have always loved the simplistic nature of Smash Bros. It can get involved and detailed as any fighting game on the market can be, but at its core, Smash is about Nintendo and video game nostalgia. And that's what it should be. It's a smashingly fabulous experience to be able to watch a series grow from 12 Nintendo characters duking it out to more than five times as many characters and references.

With five years of Smash Ultimate, I don't

know if this is the end of the series and who knows if Sakurai will pull another masterpiece out of his gaming hat. After all, there have been more great Smash games than terrible Smash games, and it's still loved on in the tournament scene. What I am sure of is that I will still be playing Smash, years after a release if need be. I've been tilting up, down, and forward for 25 years.

What's a few more smashes in the grand scheme of things?

Lyndsey Beatty is editor-in-chief of Gaming Insurrection. She can be reached by email at lyndseyb@gaminginsurrection.com



Lyndsey Beatty
BEAT.TRIP.GAME

Smash themes have excelled for decades

We love the essence of Smash Bros., and some of that essence is captured in the presentation of Nintendo — and gaming — history found throughout the series. Some of the aesthetic highlights are the fantastic various remixes and remakes of popular video game music selections. If you're a fan of video game tunes, Smash Bros. as a whole probably has something you love. There's nothing quite like hearing an epic theme or a cool remix of something you've heard before as you're battling with your favorite character. These are our favorite Smash themes from the first game to the most current.

Character Select Screen (Super Smash Bros. N64): Of all of the character select screens in the series, the original is closest to my heart. The horns are special and make the track what it is. The drums are fantastic also. And, because I like it so much, I was pleasantly surprised to see it make a return as the results theme starting with Super Smash Bros. 4.

Hyrule Castle Stage – The Legend of Zelda (Super Smash Bros. N64): I'm not a fan of Zelda by any stretch

of the imagination; I'm a Mario gal. So, it was nice to fall in love with the original Smash's interpretation of the Legend of Zelda's overworld theme. It sounds nice and crisp here and the trumpet is especially nice in this version.

Home Run Contest/Break the Targets (Super Smash Bros. Melee): One of my overall favorite themes in Smash Bros. is found in the mini-games. I played enough Home Run Contest to learn this piano theme and learn to love it. It didn't take much because the piano is a game changer from the first time that I heard it. It's fun and fast paced and brings back memories of trying to get no-ping hits with Samus. Fun times all around.

Saria's Song – The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time (Super Smash Bros. Melee): I'm still not a Zelda fan, but this theme might change my mind. It's so clean and flirty and fun that I played Ocarina of Time just to hear it in its natural glory. The flute is fun and bright, which makes it one of the better Zelda themes. Fun fact: I have made my town theme Saria's Song in every version of Animal Crossing, based off this version of the song.

Brinstar Depths – Metroid (Super

Smash Bros. Melee): This is easily my favorite remix of an existing Nintendo theme. It's already obvious that I'm a huge fan of Metroid but I hadn't heard this until I played Melee because I didn't make it that far into the original Metroid. The opening chords of this track are what make me a video game music fan. It invokes the horror of Metroid — the desolation of the original game and Super Metroid — and it's the standard bearer for remixes. This is my favorite of all Metroid themes and my favorite Smash theme.

All-Star Rest Area (Super Smash Bros. Brawl): This laidback R&B jam is based on the overarching main theme of Brawl, and is one of the better remixes of that theme. It's chill and relaxed and is nice to just sit and listen to when you're in between rounds in the All-Star mode.

75m (Super Smash Bros. Brawl): I am definitely not a fan of Donkey Kong as evidenced by a few reviews over the years in GI. However, this track makes up for the foolishness I usually associate with the scion of Kongdom. I don't like playing the stage, but this remix is fire solely based on the intro. The usage of sound effects from the arcade game also makes this track golden.

Walugi Pinball – Mario Kart DS (Super Smash Bros. Brawl): As a massive Mario Kart fan, I recognize that this remix of the existing stadium theme is better in Brawl than the original game. It's faster and has a better beat. It's fun to fight to this, and the sped-up pace fits better with Smash's faster pace.

Battle in the Base – Metal Gear Solid III: Snake Eater (Super Smash Bros. Brawl): Truthfully, I've never played Metal Gear Solid III but this theme rocks. Hard. It's a nice spy theme that fits the Shadow Moses Island stage, and everything about it is solid. The violin and the horns are crazy, and the drums and touch of flute are phenomenal. The quality of the instruments is obvious as soon as you hear the opening chords. The intro alone is a banger.

Dialga/Palkia Battle at Spear Pillar! – Pokémon Diamond and Pearl Versions (Super Smash Bros. Brawl): I haven't played or had much interest in Pokémon since the original Generation I games, but this theme is an absolute banger. The intro piano is attention-getting and one of the more interesting things to come out of the later generations. It's reminiscent of early Pokémon themes found in Red and Blue. The

stage is a pain to fight on in Brawl, but the theme makes it worth it.

Song of Storms – The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time (Super Smash Bros. Brawl): If you hadn't noticed, I'm not a fan of Zelda. However, it seems a lot of the series' music is on this list of favorite Smash themes. That's because the quality of the music is undeniably great. Song of Storms is evidence of this. It has everything you could possibly want from an epic theme: Dramatic drums, a cute flirty flute and a maritime theme that fits well within Link's adventures. And we haven't even talked about the intro chords that immediately grab your attention.

Conquest (Ablaze)/Anna's Emporium – Fire Emblem Awakening (Super Smash Bros. Ultimate): I have never played Fire Emblem Awakening, but I'm familiar enough with the series to know this is a masterpiece. Found in the World of Light mode, this track evokes old J-RPGs of yore and of the more recent and excellent Chained Echoes. The usage of real violins and horns make this track a must-have in the Smash Bros. collection.



INTRO

By Lyndsey Beatty | Gaming Insurrection

A small fighting game featuring famous video game characters had a dream: Get 12 names and faces from the world of Nintendo together and see who would win. It was 1999 and the Nintendo 64 was rummaging along trying to compete in the marketplace. Super Smash Bros. was a runaway hit for the four-player machine and from this sleeper arose a juggernaut of epic proportions.

Smash Bros. has enjoyed the heights of success; just looking at its sales figures, the series has sold 73.74 million copies worldwide in 25 years. That easily puts it in the upper echelon of best-selling video game series. But what about the first game, you may ask? What about the one that started it all? Well, that origin story is strong: It's sold 5.55 million copies worldwide. While that's small in comparison with some of the other series entries, it's a strong start for any franchise.

And that strong start is why we're here. We here at GI are major fans of the Nintendo fighting suite. With our favorite video game characters (Mario and Samus) appearing in a game together, a prime quality soundtrack and fun frantic gameplay, we've always loved Smash. That love has led us to finally working out our longtime idea: Who is the best of the best when it comes to the original Smash Bros.? Sure, we know about later entries, but in the one that started it all, who reigns supreme? We answer that with a smashingly fun tournament featuring the OGs.

The king or queen of Smashland has finally been crowned.



INTRO

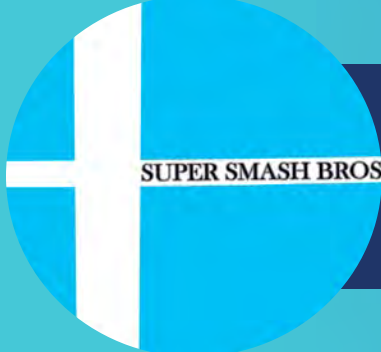


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N/A





FAVORITE STAGES



Hyrule Castle
Character: Link, The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time
Smash debut: Super Smash Bros., 1999



Mushroom Kingdom
Character: Mario series, Super Mario Bros.
Smash debut: Super Smash Bros., 1999



Saffron City
Character: Pikachu, Jigglypuff, Pokémon Red & Blue
Smash debut: Super Smash Bros., 1999



Brinstar Depths
Character: Samus Aran, Metroid
Smash debut: Super Smash Bros. Melee, 2001



Termina: Great Bay
Character: The Legend of Zelda series, The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask
Smash debut: Super Smash Bros. Melee, 2001



Figure-8 Circuit
Character: Mario Kart series, Mario Kart DS
Smash debut: Super Smash Bros. Brawl, 2008



Shadow Moses Island
Character: Solid Snake, Metal Gear Solid
Smash debut: Super Smash Bros. Brawl, 2008



Spear Pillar
Character: Pokémon series
Smash debut: Super Smash Bros. Brawl, 2008

SMASH 64 TIER ANALYSIS



Tier list

S tier: Pikachu, Kirby

A tier: Captain Falcon, Fox, Yoshi

B tier: Jigglypuff, Mario

C tier: Samus, Donkey Kong, Ness, Link, Luigi



S tier

The top tier in Smash 64 is marked by speed and power with quick damage uptick. Kirby has power moves (Final Cutter and Air Drop) that can K.O. quickly as does Pikachu (Thunderspike and Thunder and Thundershock). Both characters have an excellent return move in their arsenal as well, and Pikachu can save itself and counter edge guard with Quick Attack easily.



A tier

Captain Falcon is a damage demon, as a fully powered Falcon Punch is almost a guaranteed K.O. at decent levels. Fox can rack up damage, has a nice projectile reflection and is quick. Yoshi has a decent return and Flutter Jumps are more than adequate. He's also an excellent edge guard because of his Egg Lay.



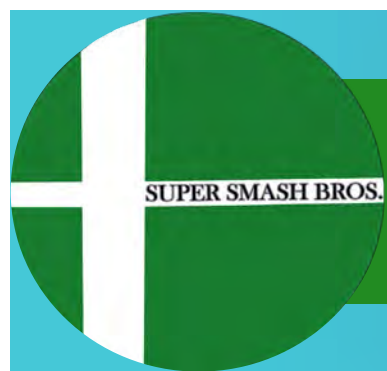
C tier

Jigglypuff isn't a joke here as she is in later games in the series, and Rest is a silent killer if used appropriately. Jigglypuff has decent return skill as well. Mario can do damage decently quickly and some of his Smash attacks are quick guaranteed K.O.s at the right damage level. Both characters are considered average.



D tier

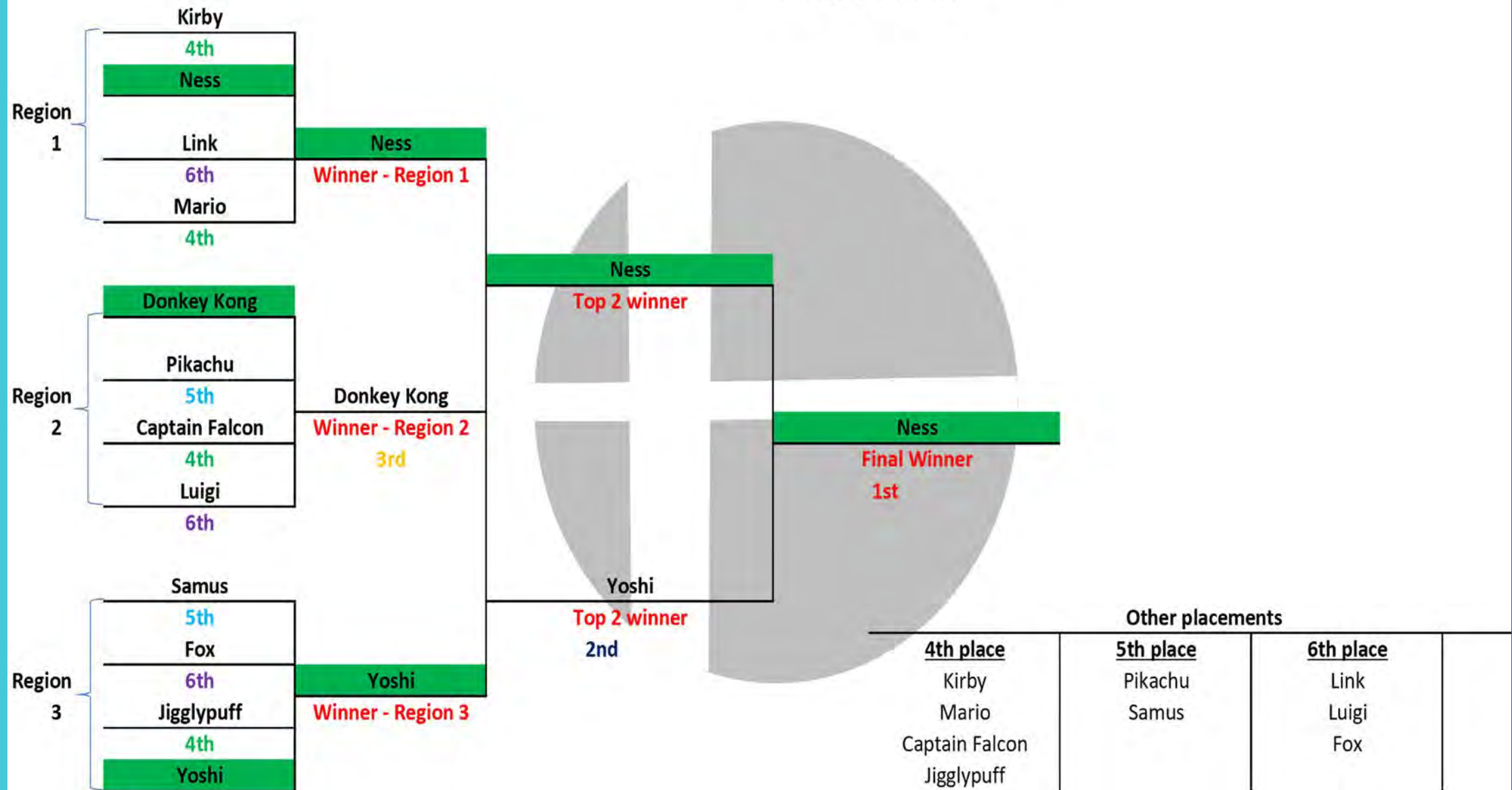
These are the below-average fighters. Samus is slow and bulky but can be made to be better in the right hands. Think Captain Falcon but much slower-paced and with a projectile. Donkey Kong is also extremely slow, but he can pack a powerful punch. Never underestimate the power of his Giant Punch at high levels in a crowd. Also, his return is decent and can keep him in the fight. Ness does good damage, but his fatal flaw is his return move in PK Thunder. It is extremely hard to control and relies more on luck than skill to be successful. Link, while powerful, has atrocious jump range, making his return move nowhere near as good as it should be. Also, his Bomb does him no favors and can be easily avoided. Finally, Luigi is the poor man's Mario; his saving grace is his Fire Jump Punch. It is an almost guaranteed K.O. at about 60 percent damage or higher on some characters.



SMASH 64 TOURNAMENT

TOURNAMENT BRACKETS

Super Smash Bros. Brawl for All Select Tournament
Friday, April 5, 2024



TOURNAMENT RULES

These are the rules for the Super Smash Bros. 64 tournament:

CPU only — No human players will enter, and all 12 playable characters will be used. Master Hand is not usable as it is not normally avail-

able for selection. Participants are seeded 1 to 12 in three regions, with four characters per region. Three stages will be playable in the first regional round: Hyrule Castle, Saffron City and Kirby's Dreamland. The finale will take place on

the Mushroom Kingdom stage.

Tournament particulars:

- Time limit: 5 minutes each regional round
- CPU Difficulty: 5
- Items: High

- Bombs: Bob-omb/Motion Sensor
 - Pokeballs
 - No health regenerating items, Super Stars or Hammers
 - Baseball Bats are allowable
- All other items are turned off

SMASH 64 TOURNAMENT



Region 1

Ness/Kirby/Mario/Link

Location: Hyrule Castle

A lot of self-destructs happened for all combatants. Despite this, Ness was able to pull out the victory because of aggressive play and a few well-timed Home-Run Bat hits in a crowd. Kirby was also aggressive and should have been the frontrunner because of his top-tier status, but his self-destruct count doomed his run for the top spot.

Predicted winner: Mario

Actual winner: Ness



SMASH 64 TOURNAMENT

DK



Region 2

Donkey Kong/Pikachu/Captain Falcon/Luigi

Location: Saffron City

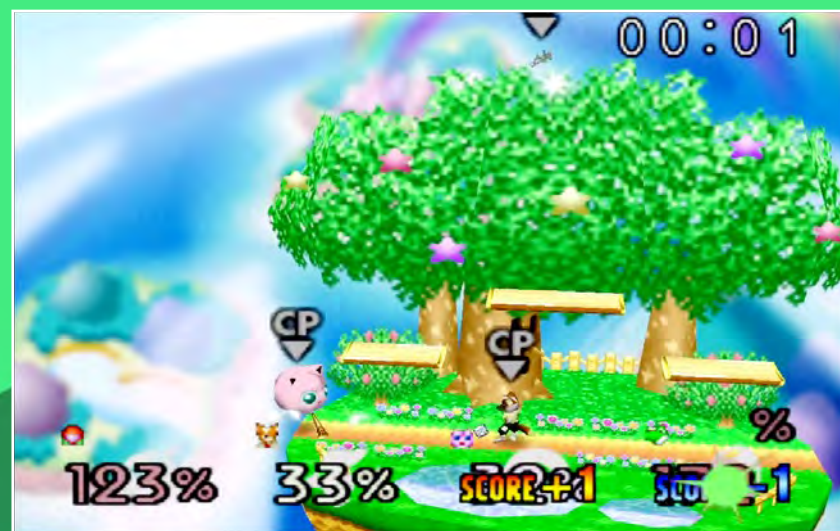
Aggressive play from Donkey Kong earned him the victory, though Captain Falcon put up a decent fight for second place. Pikachu had too many self-destructs ultimately, which put it in third place. Luigi, as expected based on his low-tier placement, came in last place. While Pokéballs and the Pokémon in the terrain played a part in some of the K.O.s, most of the self-destructs arose from missing platforms and bombs.

Predicted winner: Captain Falcon

Actual winner: Donkey Kong



SMASH 64 TOURNAMENT



MASH 64

Region 3

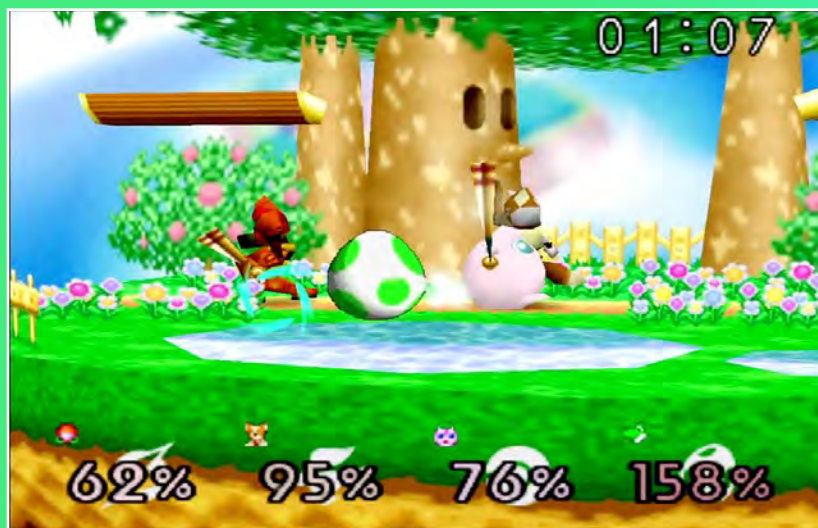
Samus/Fox/Jigglypuff/Yoshi

Location: Dream Land

Home-Run Bats played a large role in the match with several K.O.s achieved in rapid succession through the instant kill method. Fox, who was expected to be a frontrunner, did poorly. And, while Yoshi made mistakes with a few self-destructs, he made up for it with sound play that kept Fox occupied with fewer K.O.s.

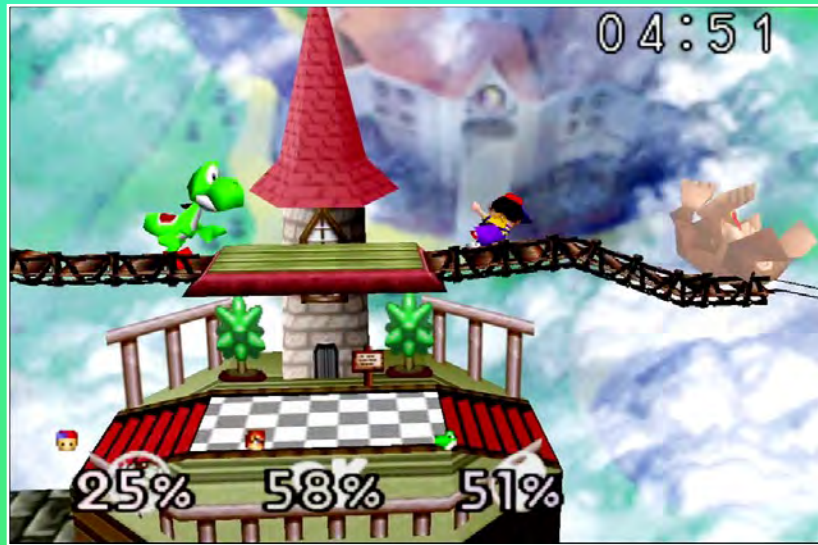
Predicted winner: Samus

Actual winner: Yoshi





SMASH 64 TOURNAMENT



DK



Semifinals

Ness/Donkey Kong/Yoshi

Location: Peach's Castle

The battle was fierce from the opening go with several knockbacks from all three characters. Yoshi pulled off an excellent strategy in the opening minutes of the battle: by turning Ness into an egg off the edge where he couldn't recover in time. This took advantage of Ness' weakness in his recovery move — PK Thunder. However, Ness continually utilized PK Fire to his advantage, which usually meant hitting a Motion Sensor Bomb at the right time. The battle eventually went to a Sudden Death match between Yoshi and Ness, who traded blows until Ness eventually won with a solid K.O.

Predicted winner: Yoshi

Actual winner: Ness





SMASH 64 TOURNAMENT



Finals

Ness/Yoshi

Location: Mushroom Kingdom

The battle started slowly but picked up the pace by the 2:30 mark. Ness scored an early K.O. by trapping Yoshi under the stage's left-side brick ledge. Pokémon and other items played a helpful role in K.O.s, but a lot of self-destructs came in the form of the stage's scale platforms. At the 0:30 mark, Yoshi managed to land an important Meteor K.O., but it wasn't enough to secure the victory. Ness had far fewer self-destructs and won the overall tournament with a small margin over Yoshi.

Predicted winner: Yoshi

Actual winner: Ness

SMASH 64 REVIEW



Developer: HAL Laboratory, Release: 1999

A smashing good time

Super Smash Bros. set the standard for multiplayer fun

By LYNDSEY BEATTY
GAMING INSURRECTION

Super Smash Bros. came out of nowhere. No one was expecting this juggernaut of percentage-based damage to take root in 1999, and yet here we are. The later games in the series expounded on the dominance of the series, but what about the first game? Don't worry, it establishes that dominance handily.

Smash 64, as it's now colloquially known, takes 12 Nintendo franchise characters and pits them against each other in up to four-player battles. Increasing your opponents' damage in displayed percentages will most certainly result in a K.O. by knocking them off the top, left, right or bottom of the screen. With a small assortment of controls, this seems super simple, and it is. And it's also where it gets hard. There is strategy involved, layers of depth involved in how to get the all-important K.O. The characters — some of Nintendo's best and brightest — play the most important role in that depth. There are established tiers for Smash 64, though who you chose to play is really your business and your preference. I personally am a Samus and Mario main, but neither of those characters are considered top tier. And that's just fine because I have fun



SCORE:
5 OUT 5

playing them regardless.

And the fun I have playing is palpable because there is so much fun to be had. From the nostalgic quirks in character move sets to the solid, tight mechanics, Smash 64 is a dream to play. Even after 25 years and multiple further games in the series, I still can pick up Smash 64 and pull off combos and execute tactics with my mains. That's because of the tight controls and ease in understanding how Smash works.

Smash 64 also excels in its presentation. The graphics, though blocky for the time because of the Nintendo 64's hardware, are still cute and fun. There's a certain charm, for instance, in picking out all of the retro elements packed into the backgrounds of each

stage or details on the characters. And the soundtrack rocks just as much as the graphics. After all, it's the soundtrack that started it all in terms of nostalgic Nintendo love letters, so it stands to reason that the soundtrack is fantastic to start.

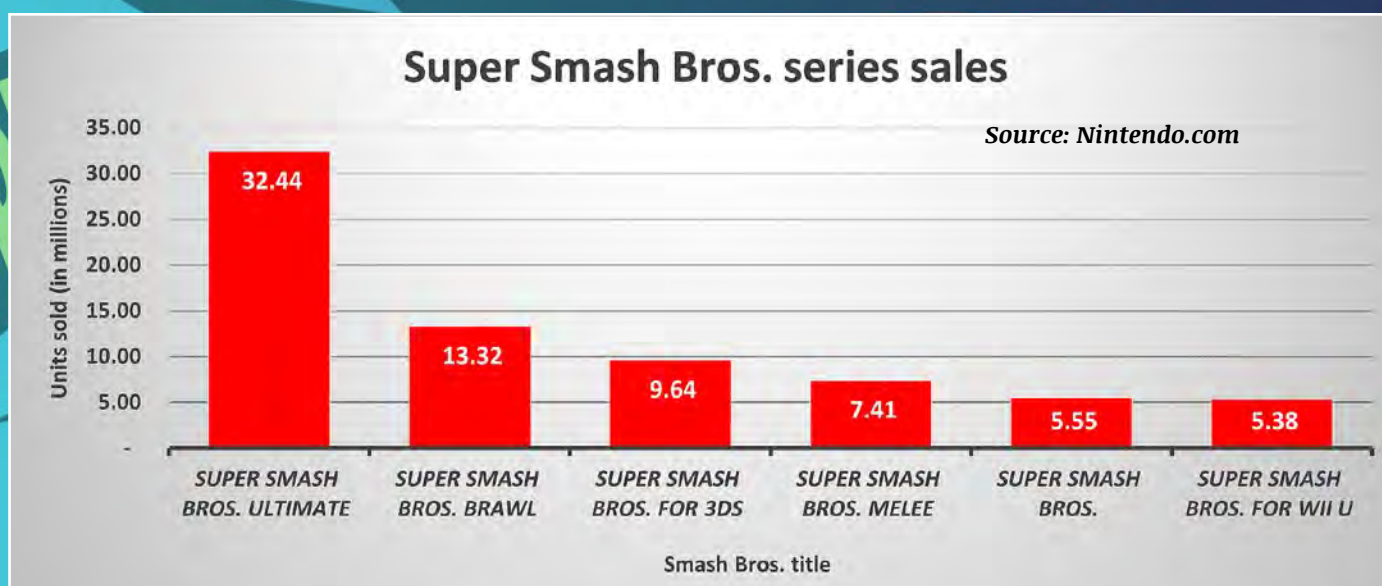
There isn't much I don't love about Smash 64, either. Aside from minor gripes about the score display feature not being available, there isn't anything else that I can point to as a detraction from the overall Smash 64 experience. And, the score display gripe is an extremely minor flaw because it was made a feature in the excellent sequel and a main feature in the following games after that.

Smash 64 is absolute perfection and one of the best beginnings of a franchise in video games. Not many other fighting games with a unique premise as Smash 64 can say they have this clean of a start and that they got infinitely better as they iterated. Smash 64 is truly a knockout origin story.



SUPER SMASH BROS. STATS

Game	Console	Total sales (in millions)	Rank in system's games selling at least 1 million	No. of games sold at least 1 million copies
Super Smash Bros. Ultimate	Switch	32.44	3	88
Super Smash Bros. Brawl	Wii	13.32	8	64
Super Smash Bros. for 3DS	3DS	9.64	8	57
Super Smash Bros. Melee	GC	7.41	1	35
Super Smash Bros.	N64	5.55	5	49
Super Smash Bros. for Wii U	Wii U	5.38	4	20



Year released: 1999
Console: Nintendo 64
No. of characters: 12
No. of stages: 9



Year released: 2001
Console: Nintendo GameCube
No. of characters: 26
No. of stages: 29



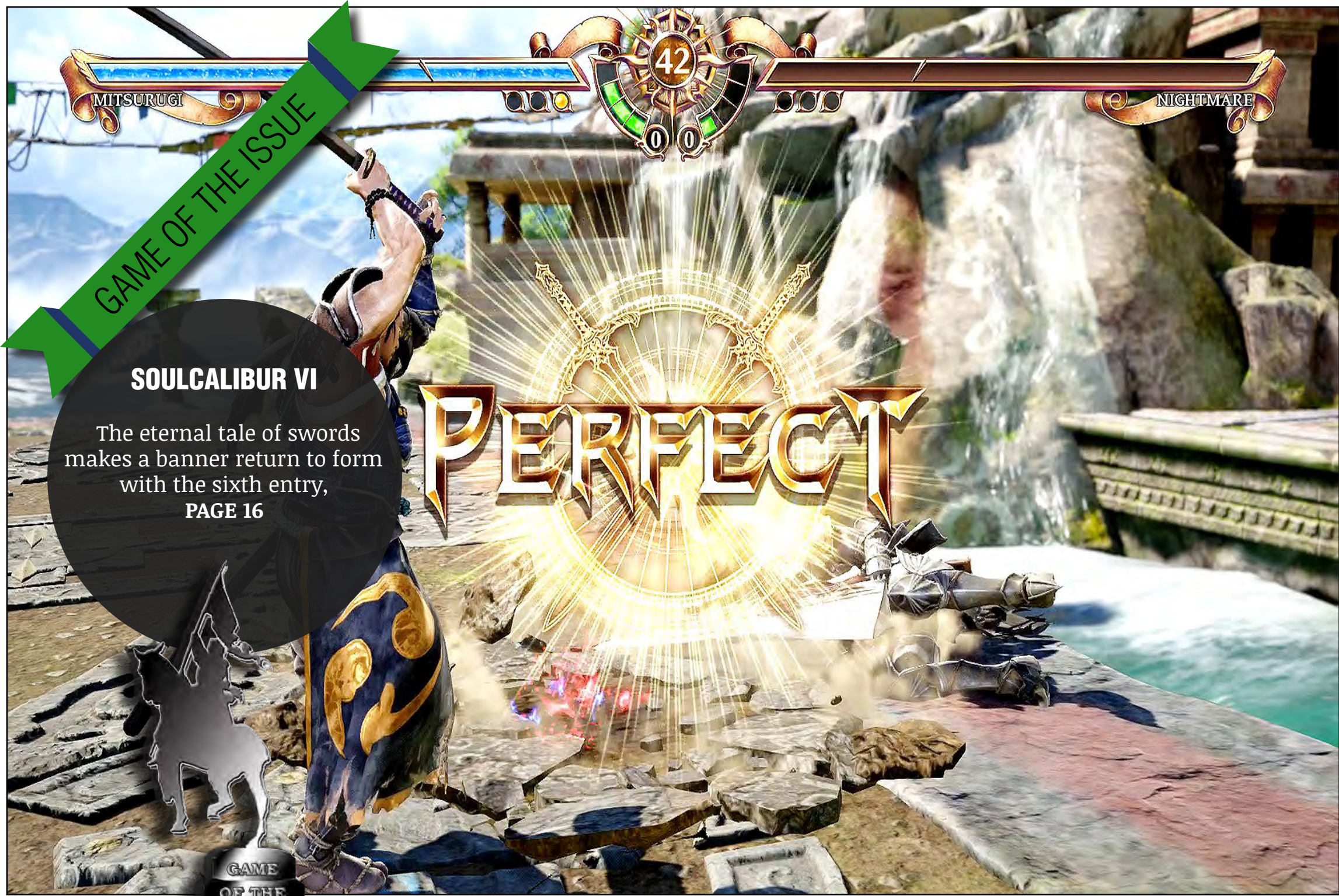
Year released: 2008
Console: Nintendo Wii
No. of characters: 39
No. of stages: 41



Year released: 2012
Console: Nintendo 3DS/Nintendo Wii U
No. of characters: 58 (7 DLC)
No. of stages: 42 (3DS)/55 (Wii U)



Year released: 2018
Console: Nintendo Switch
No. of characters: 89 (13 DLC)
No. of stages: 115



GAME OF THE ISSUE

SOULCALIBUR VI

The eternal tale of swords makes a banner return to form with the sixth entry, **PAGE 16**

GAME OF THE ISSUE

INSIDE



Dance Dance Revolution Konamix

Konami's house brand of DDR tunes made a lasting impression on us U.S. fans. That impression meant importing the other mixes to find out where this goodness originated.



Knockout Kings 2000

EA Sports was in your face as early as 2000 and with good reason. This boxing simulator stole the crown with varied options and tight gameplay.



Shadow Dancer: Secret of the Shinobi

Joe and new canine companion Yamato take to the streets of past futuristic New York City to stop alien destruction in this fantastic Shinobi entry.



Chuck Rock

A middling platformer that does nothing well in an age of standard-bearers is the historic legacy of Chuck Rock.



Developer: Project Soul, **Release:** 2018

A new stage of history

Soulcalibur returns to its roots

It's been a long time since Soulcalibur was good. And I mean, really good, where it's about the fighting and the locales and the sick character designs. Because make no mistake, Soulcalibur hit a brick wall right about the time of the fourth entry. Seriously, no one asked for Star Wars draped all over Soulcalibur, yet there we were with Yoda and the gang making themselves at home in the series known for its sword and sorcery. But then something happened: Someone on Project Soul said, "you know what would be great? Returning back to the thing that made us successful in the first place: Soulcalibur." And here we are with the sixth entry and it's a return to form.

Soulcalibur VI is essentially a retelling of the second game in the series, Soulcalibur. The evil sword Soul Edge has fallen into the wrong hands throughout history, and it has now found its way into the embrace of one Siegfried. Siegfried, having lost his tenuous grasp on sanity and reality in general, has transformed into the Azure Knight, better known as Nightmare, and begun wreaking havoc on the world in this demonic possessed guise.

There are those who seek the sword for righteous reasons and those who seek it for greed and glory, but the sword must be stopped. Because it's a retread of Soulcalibur, not too much has changed story-wise. The entire cast of the game has returned with some new folks sprinkled in for good measure. This is fine because that cast was legendary and set the standard for future entries.

But what if you wanted to do a little something different this time around? The excellent character creator has everything covered. This mode is so well done and such a time sink. I spent at least two hours making a reasonable facsimile of the Capcom's Ruby



By **Lyndsey Beatty**

**SCORE:
4.5 OUT 5**

Heart — my favorite pirate — and it was painless and easy to do, even with the default offerings. This creator mode has been around a long time in Soulcalibur — since the third game — but here it's refined and polished. I spent more time here than anywhere else, and what I wanted to make was only limited by my lack of ideas.

Despite lacking in skill with Soulcalibur over the years, I was pleasantly surprised with the ease of jumping into fighting. I have had an extended absence from the series, but I could still pull off moves and combos with old favorites like Mitsurugi, Cervantes, Ivy and Voldo. The fighting felt polished and clean, much like older entries, which is critical in drawing in someone like me that hasn't really played much since Soulcalibur II.

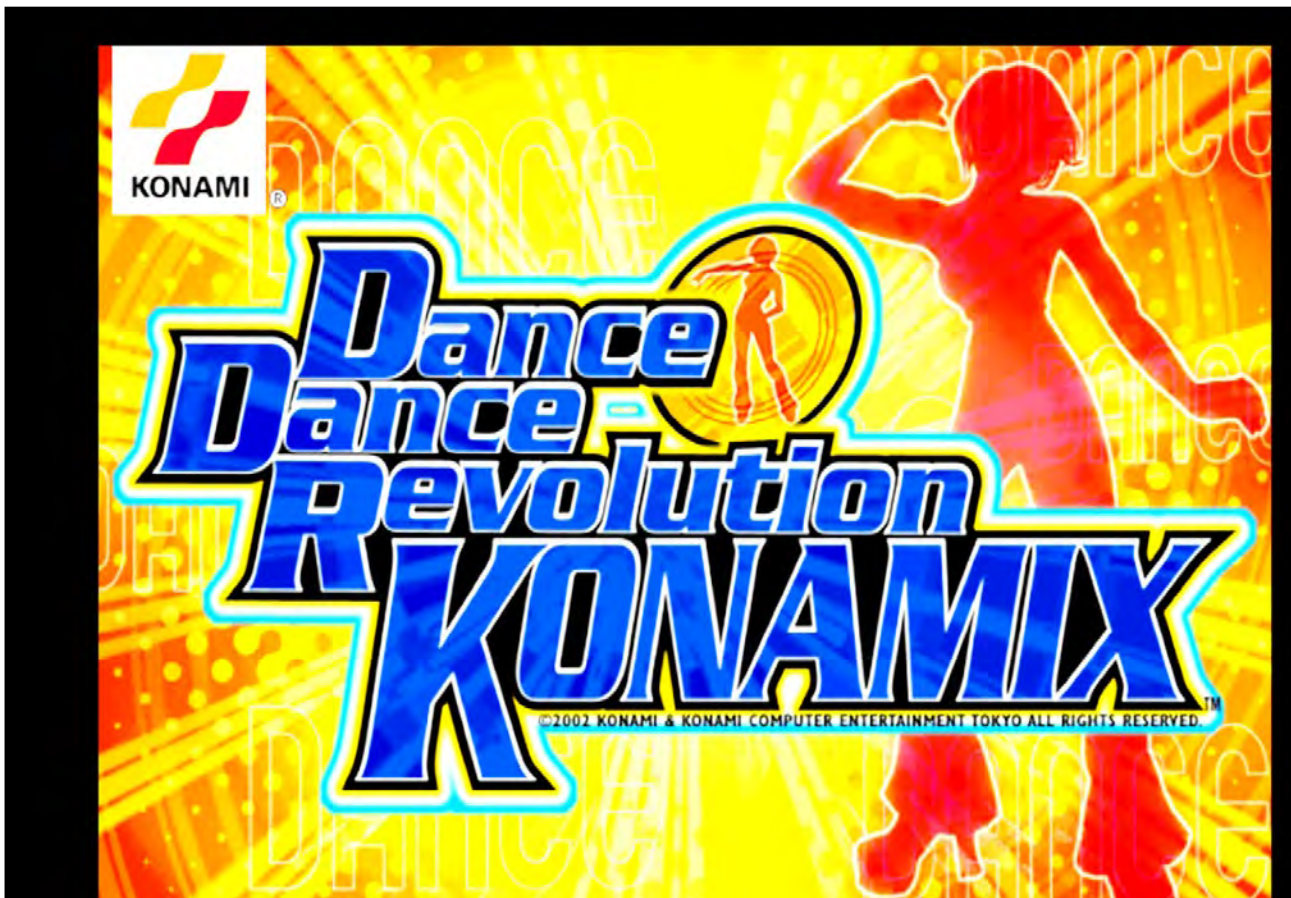
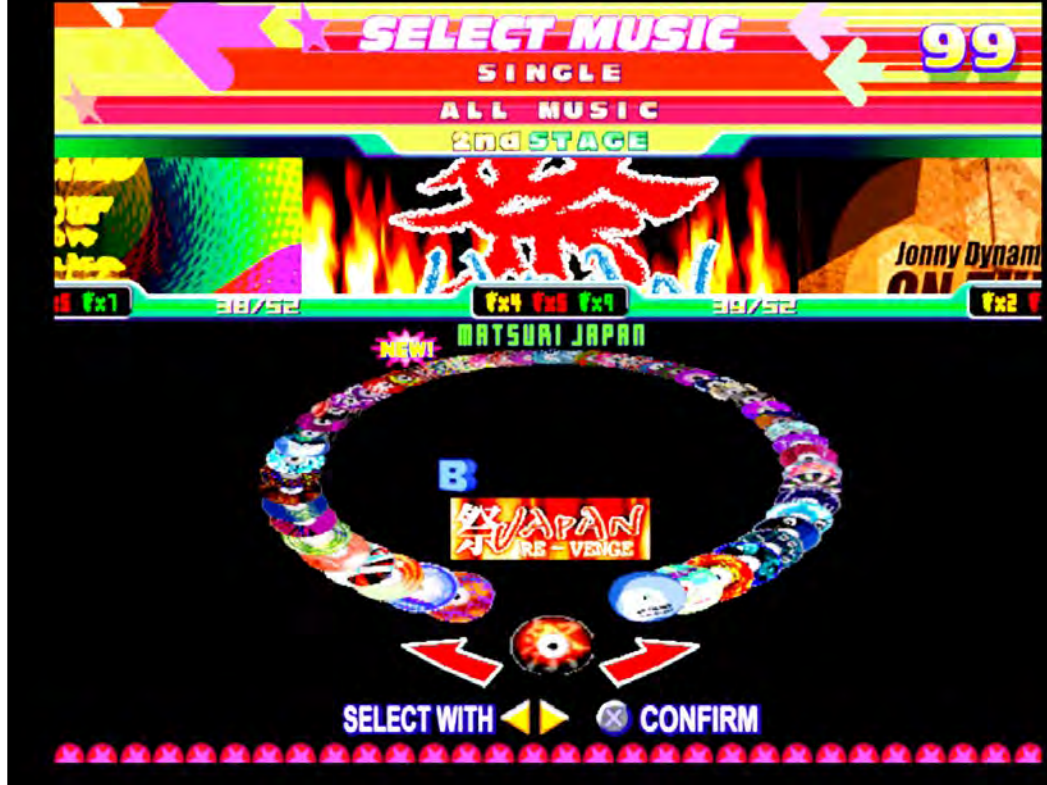
Another good nostalgic draw was the presentation. Soulcalibur as a series has never lacked in the aesthetics department, and this game is no different. It looks nice, with good character models and enticing backgrounds. Because it's basically a remake, the backgrounds are references to previous stages but with a more modern cleanup job applied. I absolutely loved the original Soulcalibur's look and still do, and this version does good in reminding me of why that is. While not quite as groundbreaking in its graphics as the arcade and Dreamcast port were 25 years ago, they're still quite breathtaking and beautiful.

And, there isn't too much to dislike about Soulcalibur VI. I'm not fond of the AI difficulty, which seems a little too spotty. A few matches felt like rubber banding in the second round if I won the first round, but then if there was a third round, the AI would just stand there and let me wail away. That's weird in a fighting game, but then again, most Soulcalibur entries felt that way in the beginning of the series. I just wish that was fixed by the sixth game.

Overall, Soulcalibur VI tries to make up for the missteps of the past with a solid reimagining and return to its roots. Though it's been five years since release and no new content has been on the horizon, it's a still a viable fighting game for those who haven't dived back into the world of souls. The soul still burns in this rehabbed and reformed sequel.

WANT MORE SOULCALIBUR?

GI has covered Soulcalibur extensively over the years. Head to our archives at www.gaminginsurrection.com/archives to download issues about the series.



Developer: KCE Tokyo, Release: 2001

Devilish dancing demon

There's blood on the dance floor with Konamix



By Lyndsey Beatty

list worth playing and makes up for a few weird issues. But how does it play? In terms of DDR mix playability, it's not user friendly like later mixes. The timing is highly suspect, and adjusting that feature in the options is still useless. Because of the differences in frame rates and modern televisions, trying to

As a devout Dance Dance Revolution fan, I've made it clear that quality DDR is non-negotiable. And what I mean by that is, a mix has to be good. It has to have DDR originals, maybe a few quality licenses and the interface has to be workable. DDR Konamix, a North American port of DDR 4th Mix, is a semi-decent solution to a real problem.

Konamix plays like every other early pre-SuperNova version of DDR. Stepping on arrows in time to a song is refined by this point, so it's nothing new, and scoring also remains the same as DDR 1st Mix through 3rd Mix. So, really the most important aspect of this mix is the songlist, and there are some gems here. Some of our favorites appeared here for the first time in a North American release, such as PARANOIA Rebirth and SUPER STAR. The 52 songs in the tracklist are all Konami originals, hence the name, and that's a boon because that immediately makes the

play this is a fool's errand because it's almost so off that you're never going to do well. The weird timing issues mean a lot of Goods, Greats and Boos. Also, the interface is obnoxious until you choose to use All Music. With everything unlocked, the All Music option makes the game tolerable. With a lot of flawed options and playability issues, DDR Konamix isn't exactly a must-have. However, only because of the Konami originals should you buy this; some of these beauties are rare enough that you'd need to import Japanese mixes to see them again. While I have a nostalgic fondness for Konamix because it was my first exposure to modern DDR, I would only consider this mix if you want to be called a DDR master.

SCORE: 2.5 OUT 5





Developer: EA Sports, Release: 2000

Not technically a knockout

Knockout Kings packs a slight punch for PSOne

Ah, Electronic Arts aka Crunch Time World Headquarters, how gamers love thee (sarcasm inserted). Beginning in 1995, there wasn't a sports game, collegiate or professional, that was not given EA's sports label "the game amongst sports games." When you saw officially licensed sport game commercials in the late '90s to early 2000s, nine times out of 10 they would be from EA Sports. I have played some titles in EA's Madden series but my main experience with EA Sports came during my junior year in college when I played an EA game that featured the best of professional boxing to determine who was truly the undisputed best amongst them. Knockout Kings 2000 stepped into the ring and put on a show.

In Knockout Kings 2000, you get to play as one of 25 legendary professional boxers such as Marvellous Marvin Hagler, "Smokin" Joe Frazier, Sonny Liston, and my favorite, the "Greatest of all Time" Muhammad Ali. In addition to these classic boxers, you can create your own boxer like I did with boxers named "Bustajawz" or "Crusher Bear". Depending on which option you choose, you'll be fighting at well-known sport venues such as Caesar's Palace and Great Western Coliseum in either the Championship, Slugfest or Training modes.

Despite EA's attempt to faithfully render each professional boxer's and venue, the graphics are of PSOne quality. It can be difficult to see boxers unless you have excellent mastery over the game's camera system, which brings out the scenes in better quality.

The controls in Knockout Kings 2000 are simple and do not require complicated movements unlike other fighting games. The super



By
Brandon Beatty

SCORE:
4 OUT 5

punch is very easy to perform, which is a blessing since I'm a button masher at heart. I can say with confidence that after a few bouts, I became a new world heavyweight champion going straight to training to maintain my competitive edge.

EA did excellent in the music department with each mode having a unique theme for training and various music styles for the Championship and Slugfest modes. I especially like the '50s-like guitar entrance theme and a hip-hop horror mix that brought fear to my opponents' hearts when I used my "Crusher Bear" character. The sound was top quality, and EA gave

upcoming artists such as Androyd, Alien Fashion Show and my personal favorite rapper, O, a place to shine.

O provided the main theme "In the Game" as well as a music video with cameos by Hagler, Roy Jones Jr., and Floyd Mayweather Jr., which was a nice touch.

I like a lot about Knockout Kings 2000 but there are some problems. The camera needs adjustment so the fighters can be seen properly but even worse the modeling of each fighter looks like EA rushed its programmers. The fighters are unrecognizable, which is disappointing.

Another issue that I had was in the training session where I wanted to learn combo techniques. The training wanted to rush my learning, resulting in little training value for my boxer.

My final problem was announcing calls. While I appreciate that respected boxing commentators Al Albert and Sean O'Grady called the action, their timing was off sometimes on making crucial commentary, or they were not made at all.

Knockout Kings 2000 is a great sports game for the PSOne. While EA is known for cash grabs, and low-quality work on their games, I believe that they found the magic formula for success with this.





Developer: Sega, Release: 1990

A secret legend in the making

Shinobi sequel barks up the right tree

Before Sonic the Hedgehog and Yakuza, Sega had established game franchises and mascots for the arcade and home console market. One of those mascots was very popular and came out on the scene at a time when Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles were blowing up across the country. His name was Joe Musashi, and his adventures were detailed in the game series "Shinobi." Ever since its 1987 release, Joe fought a one-ninja war on crime against the evil Zeed organization, which plotted global dominance with their style of ninja arts. Time after time, through various Sega games, Joe defeated Zeed and kept the world at peace. However, in Shadow Dancer: The Secret of Shinobi, Joe would once again take up his sword against evil.

Shadow Dancer takes place one year after Joe's most recent battle with Zeed. In 1997, New York City comes under attack by a cult organization called Union Lizard. NYC is laid to waste with survivors captured as UL hostages. One of Joe's students, Kaito, hears about UL's assaults on a neighborhood and sets out to free its residents. Unfortunately, Kaito falls in battle. Enraged, Joe heads to NYC to battle, accompanied by Yamato, Kaito's canine companion. With a new ally, Joe enters this latest conflict determined to free NYC from UL clutches and avenge his student's death.

Shadow Dancer's controls are simple. While I was impressed with the game-ready default setup, I also appreciated that there are other configurations. You also have the option of using normal or non-shuriken mode, which takes away the ability to throw shuriken from a distance. I also appreciated that Joe can also call upon three



SCORE:
4 OUT 5

types of ninjutsu in the forms of fire, tornado, and meteorites. The most vital weapon that Joe has in his latest battle is Yamato, who can be used to attack on-screen enemies without hesitation, truly giving credit to the phrase "take a bite out of crime." Every time I unleashed Yamato aka Kuma-puppy TM, I loved seeing the bad guys cry in pain as they thought that nothing could stop them. Jokes on them that a ninja dog brings them instant terror.

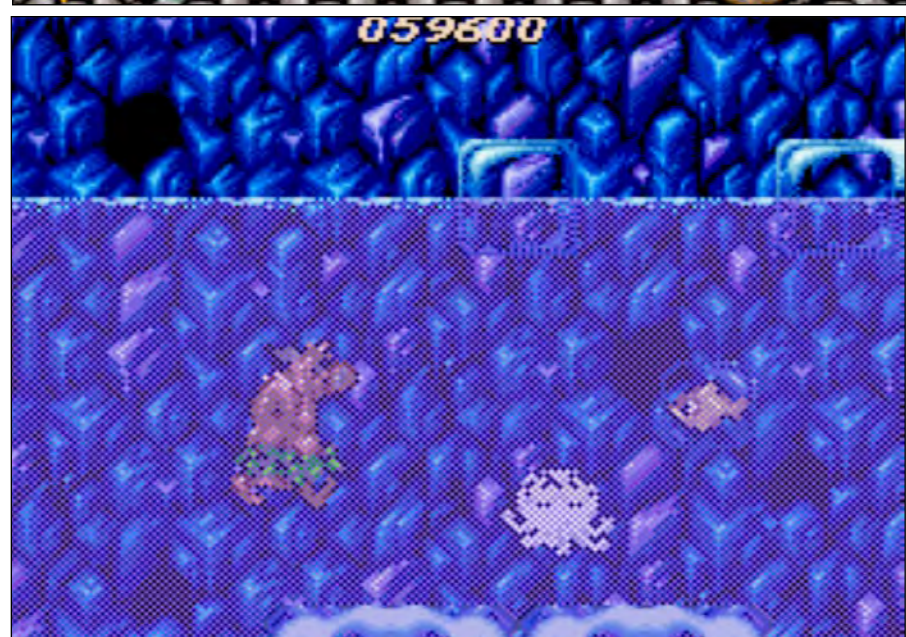
The graphics were pretty decent as if Sega pulled the game from the actual arcade cabinet. The music is '90s genre fitting for Sega games and will make you feel a special

fondness for the nostalgic days of arcades. I also like that with each stage the music blended with the scenery, especially at the Statue of Liberty.

While I do love Shadow Dancer, I have a few gripes. The ability to control Yamato is determined by having no enemies on screen; if Yamato or other enemies are on different levels of stages or when an enemy can avoid him by jumping up or down out of his reach, it can get frustrating. I also don't care for the imposed time limit that makes you rush to the end of the stage.

My final grievance with Shadow Dancer is that at the end of each stage, there is a bonus stage where you must hit as many enemy ninjas as you can with shuriken. I threw a ton of shuriken at ninja but got low scores for my efforts. It's a lot of work for little reward and seems like a waste of time, honestly.

Shadow Dancer: The Secret of Shinobi is a game that helped cement Sega's legacy in the video game industry. Sega is reintroducing classic games in various forms for a new generation of gamers. Sega would be wise to reintroduce Joe Musashi as the undisputed member of video game royalty and legend in video game hero history that he is.



Developer: Core Design Ltd., Release: 1992

Mediocre prehistoric origins

Dinosaur mechanics does in Chuck Rock

For whatever reason, I used to be enamored with Chuck Rock. Maybe it was the colorful graphics, or it was the “charming” platforming. Whatever it was, it isn’t here in modern gaming and with critical hindsight now, I can safely say it should have rolled back under the rock it slithered from.

There isn’t much to the threadbare bedrock of Chuck Rock. You, Chuck, are a prehistoric meathead who isn’t capable of more than a few words and grunts. You’re tasked with retrieving your kidnapped wife, Ophelia, from your love rival, Gary. You traverse through six stages, gut bumping dinosaurs and other creatures, lifting heavy rocks to solve puzzles and eating various foods to replenish your health. Occasionally, you’ll fight a boss who tries to keep you from your beloved and eat you. Just about everything is hostile and there are many natural obstacles threatening you on the journey.

It seems, however, that no one mentioned that the actual gameplay was the real threat here. For starters, nothing does anything well. Chuck is lethargic and aimless without a true sense of purpose. I get it, he’s a caveman, but that gimmick falls flat fairly fast. He’s a chore to control in a hop ‘n’ bop that’s aping Super Mario World, and it’s aping the terrible parts while trying to be cute.

While the graphics are nice, knowing what’s a hazard and what is useful isn’t the easiest to discern. Some items blend well, and some enemies look like



By Lyndsey Beatty

SCORE: 2 OUT 5

they could be helpful items. It’s a shame considering the graphics are clean and deeply hued with a comic book ink feel. Chuck has a nice sprite and matches well with the concept as do the dinosaurs.

However, while they look nice, nothing nice can be said about the soundtrack. It’s monotonous and boring, and there’s nothing that stands out. It’s boring and goofy, much like the gameplay and the

“ Let’s be glad that with a better discerning eye, I learned to leave some games in the Stone Ages. ”

concept, which does nothing to endear anyone looking for a nice solid early Super Nintendo or Genesis platformer.

What we have here is a failure to capitalize on an established platformer.

Mario set the standard a year earlier with the excellent standard-bearer Super Mario World. Core should have taken a look at that and emulated what they saw. They didn’t, and we’re stuck with something that, while cute, is nigh unplayable in some spots and a chore in others. Let’s be glad that with a better discerning eye, I learned to leave some games in the Stone Ages.



RETRO GAME CORNER



Samus Aran
 Creation date: 1986
 Series: Metroid
 Playable Smash debut: Super Smash Bros., 1999

Dr. Mario
 Creation date: 1990
 Series: Dr. Mario
 Playable Smash debut: Super Smash Bros. Melee, 2001

Donkey Kong
 Creation date: 1981
 Series: Donkey Kong
 Playable Smash debut: Super Smash Bros., 1999

Mario
 Creation date: 1981
 Series: Donkey Kong
 Playable Smash debut: Super Smash Bros., 1999

Veteran

By Lyndsey Beatty
 Gaming Insurrection

For all of the years that I've been playing the Smash Bros. series, I don't have a ton of favorite characters. However, being a gaming enthusiast from way back means I do have a select roster of favorites despite knowing a little something about every character in the large list of heroes from Nintendo's past.



Princess Peach
 Creation date: 1985
 Series: Super Mario Bros.
 Playable Smash debut: Super Smash Bros. Melee, 2001

Little Mac
 Creation date: 1984
 Series: Punch-Out!!
 Playable Smash debut: Super Smash Bros. for Wii U, 2014

Villager
 Creation date: 2001
 Series: Animal Crossing
 Playable Smash debut: Super Smash Bros. for Wii U, 2014

Wolf O'Donnell
 Creation date: 1997
 Series: Star Fox
 Playable Smash debut: Super Smash Bros. Brawl, 2008

SONG SPOTLIGHT

By Lyndsey Beatty



Don't forget to download our DDR glossary of terms!



Artist: S & K
 Difficulty: 5/7/8
 Chosen difficulty: Heavy
 BPM: 132

Get Up'N Move is a favorite around these parts. There's a history with the song on the now-defunct DDR Freak forums with a former user named Phil Up'N Move and lots of fun playing it in various arcade mixes pre-Extreme. There's much to love about the infectious groove of the song, and the dance chart is decent, too. The steps aren't hard for an 8-footer, and it teaches some concepts such as triplets and stutter stepping. The steps follow the background melody and make a lot of sense, so they are easy to learn. The steps also, at times, follow the lead vocalist's verse, so learning the song — as always — is a smart decision if you want to do well with the song. Also, speed it up slightly to get the best results.

Suggested Speed Mod: x2



Artist: 8 bit
 Difficulty: 4/6/9
 Chosen difficulty: Heavy
 BPM: 200

This fast-paced remix of Afronova is one of the hallmarks of DDR 5th Mix, and it will simultaneously excite and frustrate to no end. It's hard and fast with a lot of twisting and turning that doesn't let up the majority of the song. The drumbeat is going to be your marker for gauging how to step. The stepchart closely follows it so it's your guide throughout the song. From the opening notes, it's obvious that this is going to be hard. There's a lot of Afronova here but somehow more frustrating in that there are a lot of off-timed steps going on that will make you winded quickly at this speed. It's fairly long as well with no places to conserve your energy, so you're going to have to hope for the best. If you can get away with it, we recommend that you do not speed it up more than 1.5. That Speed Mod puts the speed at 300 BPM, which is extremely hard to read if you're not prepared for it.

Suggested Speed Mod: x1.5



Artist: NM feat. Sunny
 Difficulty: 7
 Chosen difficulty: Oni (only)
 BPM: 132

This is an Oni only difficulty song, and it's not that hard overall. There are elements of the original version, which helps when trying to learn the melody. The stepchart follows the vocal portion and sometimes the background beat, so it's advantageous to learn both. The speed is nice and relatively slow so speeding it up to get a better sight read is a recommended tactic.

Suggested Speed Mod: x2

dance dance
 revolution
 spotlight

1st mix	2nd mix
3rd mix	4th mix
5th mix	6th mix
7th mix	Extreme
SuperNova	
SuperNova 2	



ON HIATUS

DDR Spotlight will take a short break for Issue 49 and will return in Issue 50.

SYSTEMS

Mystical Ninja Starring Goemon



WHAT IS MYSTICAL NINJA?

Mystical Ninja Starring Goemon is a third-person adventure game that focuses on four friends working together to stop the Peach Mountain Shoguns. You begin with Goemon and Ebisumaru in an alternate universe Edo where giant robots and technology have made an earlier impact and are more prevalent in society. Later in the adventure, Yae and Sasuke join the team.



MYSTICAL MECHANICS

The action is split into two parts: ground action with the four characters, and Giant Impact robot battles. On the ground, you switch among the four characters using their unique weapons and magic powers to solve puzzles and defeat bosses. The four characters each acquire magic powers through mini-games sprinkled throughout Japan. In Giant Impact battles, the characters square off against other mecha-robots using their sentient mech friend Impact, who also moonlights as an actor.



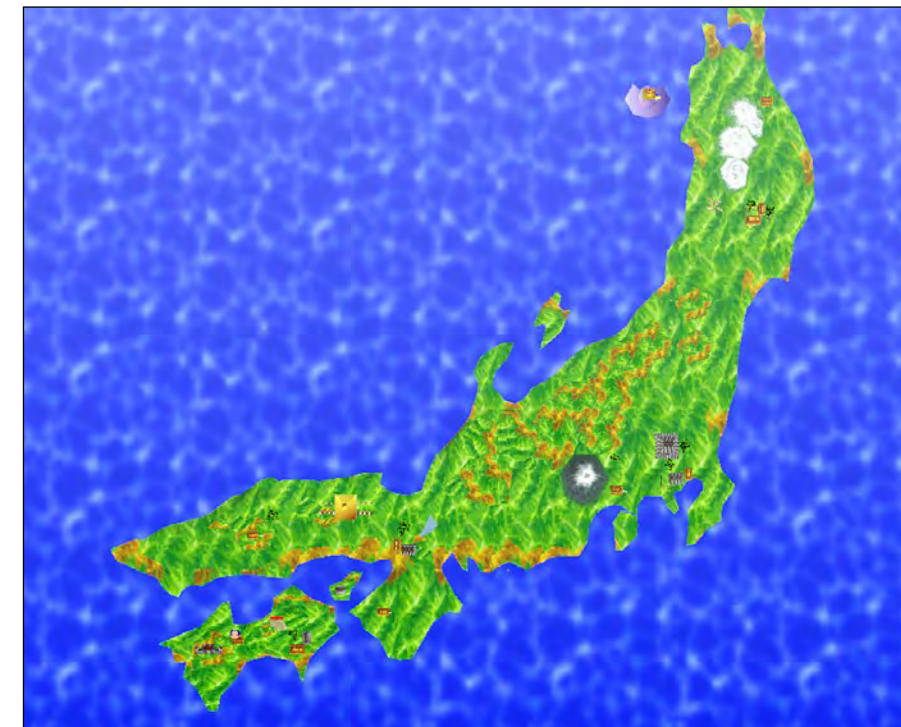
HELP ALONG THE WAY

Goemon and the crew can visit several shops to buy supplies to aid in the quest. Shops sell armor that absorbs multiple hits, extra lives, and health-restoring rice balls. Restaurants can restore health depending on the meal consumed, and inns are open to save the game and to rest and restore health as well. Coffee shops serve as location markers to aid fast-travel once it's unlocked. The crew can also visit the Fortune Teller, who gives information about progress and the next steps in the adventure for 10 Ryo.



GOOD FORTUNES

Be on the lookout for Silver and Gold Fortune Dolls. The dolls increase your stamina gauge with every three found throughout the world. There are 45 scattered across the world and collecting them all will unlock the Impact Boss Rush mode.



AESTHETICALLY PLEASING ART

Goemon's surroundings are fantastic. From the architecture to the geographically accurate map of Japan, Goemon finds ways to shine outside of the fun gameplay. The soundtrack is also a favorite at GI. We've covered our favorite tracks from the game in two issues: 1Q2009 and 2Q2014.



MORTAL KOMBAT MOBILE

Credit: Murdoink @ Mortal Kombat Warehouse for all background and logo art and renders/www.mortalkombatwarehouse.com

LYNDSEY BEATTY
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Welcome to a small tournament called Mortal Kombat ...

Hello all, I'm a longtime Mortal Kombat enthusiast who dived headlong into the world of MK Mobile in 2018. This new section delves into the intricacies of character card collection, fusions and team creation for towers.

Look for information on the basics to get you started and how to conquer the 100-level Shao Kahn's Tower to help you when you're ready to take on the challenging themed towers.



MK MOBILE STATISTICS

- Number of cards owned: 165
- Total number of cards (as of press time): 168
- Percentage owned: 98.2%

Cards missing (as of press time)

- Circle of Shadow Nightwolf
- Klassic Movie Sonya Blade
- Edenian Blood Sindel

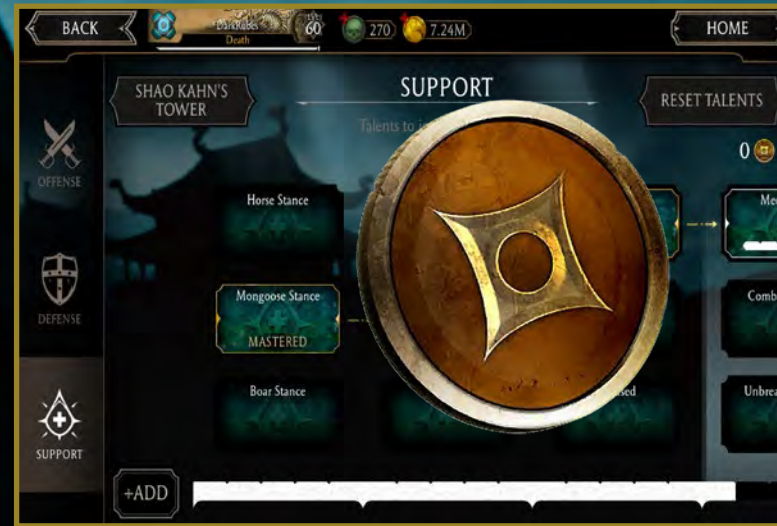


Shao Kahn's Tower

A challenging 100-story tower that rewards Koins, Souls, Spirit Fragments and Talent Tree Points. Sometimes with unique conditions to overcome, the matches will test your strategy skills and ability to form teams suited to the challenge.

Matches are in increments of three before a refresh is needed to continue. We also will approach this Tower as the warmup to the various Normal and Fatal towers that appear to get you prepped for the real thing.

Individual tower match guides, team formation and strategy will be discussed.



Talent Tree guide

The ultimate helper in keeping your teams on top is the Talent Tree. Skills will help you stay alive longer, boost your team's damage output or take less damage against the myriad conditions thrown at you in various modes. Talent Tree points are earned in Shao Kahn's Tower and can help change the tide of battle. The talents you unlock give bonuses to your entire account.

We will break down the best choices in the three tree branches and help you chart a path to a well-balanced fighting squad for nearly any situation.



Character spotlight

Who you have fighting on your side is important, and character analysis helps you stay victorious in Mortal Kombat Mobile.

We're going to look at all available characters, their strengths and weaknesses with rankings for each. We will also spotlight team synergy; who you work with can determine if you're working at all.

MORTAL KOMBAT MOBILE

Credit: Murdoink @ Mortal Kombat Warehouse for all background and logo art and renders/www.mortalkombatwarehouse.com

KHARACTER SPOTLIGHT

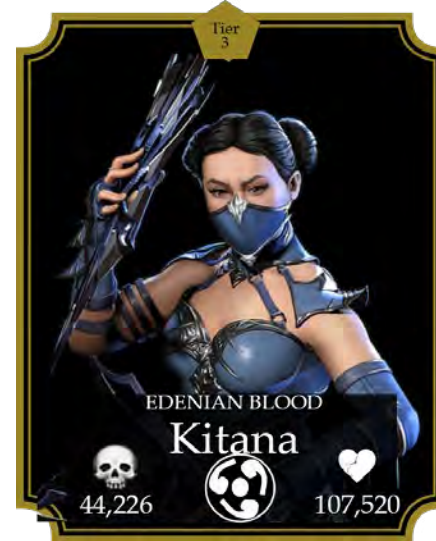
THIS ISSUE:

- MK11 Sindel
- Edenian Blood Kitana
- Sub-Zero (Prime)



MK11 Sindel
Class: Diamond
Tier: 5

Despite the terrible characterization of this version of Sindel, the Mobile version is an absolute unstoppable force. She has an excellent kit that takes advantage of highly aggressive status effects. Add in that she can apply Shield Break to the entire team, and she's an absolute must-have addition to any MK11, Outworld or Netherrealm team.



Edenian Blood Kitana
Class: Gold
Tier: 3

It's another version of Kitana on the roster, but she's not terrible. She has good effects and potential for high damage with her passive, though it does require maintaining blocking. Her potential for damage is her ace in the hole, so work toward keeping it available and ready if it's not already active. She's an effective addition to the Edenian Blood team and as a Gold version of Kitana that isn't Mournful.



Sub-Zero (Prime)
Class: Silver
Tier: 3

The prime version of Sub-Zero isn't the best Silver card, but he's useful. He's a decent Silver card to use until you have Kenshi, mostly because of his passive. Keep him surrounded by Martial Artist teammates to maximize efficiency.



TIER RANKINGS

Tier 1: Garbage tier. This tier is for cards that don't do a lot of damage or contribute with their passives, even with add-ons from Shao Kahn's Tower or gear. Use these only if you absolutely are required. These mostly consist of the bronze and silver characters, except for Kenshi Prime.

Tier 2: Slight useful. Their passives either contribute or a special move is useful in service of another card. They can be made to be somewhat useful with gear and add-ons and higher fusions, but they struggle to be useful even with

the best gear.

Tier 3: A solid mid-level card. These cards are useful in passives and special moves. They can hold their own on point and win matches.

Tier 4: An above-average card. These are highly useful and can be used in any of the Challenge Towers (Shirai Ryu, Lin Kuei, etc.) and are more than capable of holding down a roster spot and surviving against high-level cards if their close in level. These cards have

excellent special moves and do a lot of damage quickly.

Tier 5: The top echelon of cards. These cards are the best in the game and their special moves and passives have game-breaking potential. They are the cards that you buy packs for and try to build up for Challenge Towers and will potentially make it to the 170 and higher levels of a tower at even a low fusion. They are most diamonds but there are a few gold cards in the mix.

MORTAL KOMBAT MOBILE

Credit: Murdoink @ Mortal Kombat Warehouse for all background and logo art and renders/www.mortalkombatwarehouse.com

SHAO KAHN'S TOWER GUIDE

THIS ISSUE:

- Match 28: No conditions
- Match 29: Off Balance
- Match 30: No conditions



Match 28: Bojutsu Kung Jin, Level 40/A-List Johnny Cage, Level 40/Sun God Kotal Kahn, Level 40

Conditions: None

The difficulty here isn't much harder than the past few fights. The opposing team is Fusion III so they aren't a threat that a Fusion IV or higher team can't beat. Utilize your team's strengths and this shouldn't be that much of a battle.

- First tower run:** Gold Fusion – III or higher, Diamond – Any
- Second tower run:** Gold Fusion – III or higher, Diamond – Any



Match 29: Noxious Reptile, Level 40/Cybernetic Jacqui Briggs, Level 40/Master of Souls Ermac, Level 40

Conditions: Off Balance

Watch out for Noxious Reptile's ability to increase Bleed and Poison damage. Both conditions over time are obnoxious to deal with, and the AI will waste no time stacking other effects on to them. As with Match 28, take out the team quickly with a higher Gold or Diamond team. Fusion level IV or higher should do the trick. And, be prepared for the Off Balance condition. Constant tagging in and out will slow you down.

- First tower run:** Gold Fusion – IV or higher, Diamond – Any
- Second tower run:** Gold Fusion – IV or higher, Diamond – Any



Match 30: Heavy Weapons Jax Briggs, Level 40/Venomous D'Vorah, Level 40/Stunt Double Johnny Cage, Level 40

Conditions: None

Heavy Weapons Jax Briggs is the threat in this battle. He can break the shield of the entire team fairly quickly with his Special Attack 2 (L.A.W. Blast). Get him out of the way quickly and the fight shouldn't last long at all, especially without conditions.

- First tower run:** Gold Fusion – IV or higher, Diamond – Any
- Second tower run:** Gold Fusion – IV or higher, Diamond – Any



MORTAL KOMBAT MOBILE



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TALENT TREE GUIDE: FINAL

THIS ISSUE:

- Offense talent 05
- Offense talent 06
- Offense talent 07

Tier 5

Recommended choice: Investing in Thunderous Blows will make things more balanced as you can have a 50 percent damage boost for Special 1 with the Devastator and a 26 percent damage boost for your Special 2 attacks.

Tier 6

The Art of the Tsunami – This is a good choice to pick as it gives you a 30 percent chance of dealing 20 percent of damage to the entire team instead of focusing on just one target, which the Death Mark Technique skill does in Tier 7. While that stacks three times, the effect is gone once that enemy is knocked out and it resets. This skill, if it triggers, will work on all targets that are alive making it a better choice.

Unbridled Savagery – This is also a good choice especially if you use diamonds or Gunslinger Erron Black, who have unblockable Special 2 attacks as it adds a 30 percent damage boost to unblockable attacks. However, the one thing to be wary about is if the opponent has invested in Centaurian Defense, which reflects unblockable attack damage; you can end up hurting yourself more if the damage is reflected so be mindful of this fact if this skill is your choice.

Tier 7

Death Mark Technique – Combo enders have a 20 percent chance to apply Death Mark to the active opponent. This is recommended as the best choice because it doesn't require much to activate, and you should be doing combo enders nearly 100 percent of the time (unless fighting Assassin Jade).

Brutal Ending is cute if you like using Brutality-enabled characters, but if they aren't among the select few already in the game, this isn't worth spending the points on.



Earning Talent Points

There is only one source of earning talent points: SHAO KAHN'S TOWER. Before you play the tower for the first time, you are given two talent points to start. The tower has 100 battles with increasing difficulty, and you are rewarded one talent point for winning each battle.

However, you are limited to playing three matches each day by default. However, you can play more than three matches by spending 50 souls to refresh the limit, and this can be done twice in a 24-hour period, which increases your limit to nine matches a day if you decide to spend souls to progress at a much faster rate.

Investing Talent Points

On completing Shao Kahn's Tower, you are rewarded with a total of 102 talent points which you can spend any way you like. There are two areas of the talent tree in each category where talent points can be invested, unlocking skill tiers and buying skills and their upgrades.

There are seven skill tiers in each category and there are a total of 20 skills to choose from. The first six tiers have three skills each to choose from and the seventh tier has two skills. The first tier is unlocked by default, and you are allowed to invest in one of the three available skills. To unlock the subsequent tiers, you are required to buy a skill in the current tier that is accessible to you and then spend five Talent Points. This is done by clicking the Add button at the bottom left of the tree. You are given a choice of spending one, three or five Talent Points towards unlocking the next tier. Selecting the five-point option will automatically unlock the next tier.

Additionally, skills can also be upgraded as well to increase the effect beyond what the skill provides at default. There are five upgrade levels and each upgrade costs one Talent Point, so a skill costs five Talent Points to master. To have a 100 percent complete tree in a category, you have to buy and master seven skills and also unlock six tiers in the process. This will cost a total of 65 Talent Points. To have 100 percent completion in all three categories, the cost is 195 Talent Points.

Choosing your skills and upgrades

This is the most crucial part of the whole talent tree system, and it requires careful planning of knowing what skills to invest in. This requires a thorough understanding of your own play style, the kind of characters you use and knowing which skills from the list will bring the most benefit to the majority of the cards you use more often in Faction Wars.

You cannot purchase more than one skill in a tier per category at a given time, so you are only allowed to choose seven out of the 20 skills in a category. The fact that you only have 102 Talent Points to spend means that it is possible to master seven skills only in one of the three categories.

After having a look at all of the available kills across all three categories, investing of Talent Points more on the DEFENSE and SUPPORT categories is highly recommended.

WORKING WITH TALENT POINTS

Courtesy of TestYourMight.com

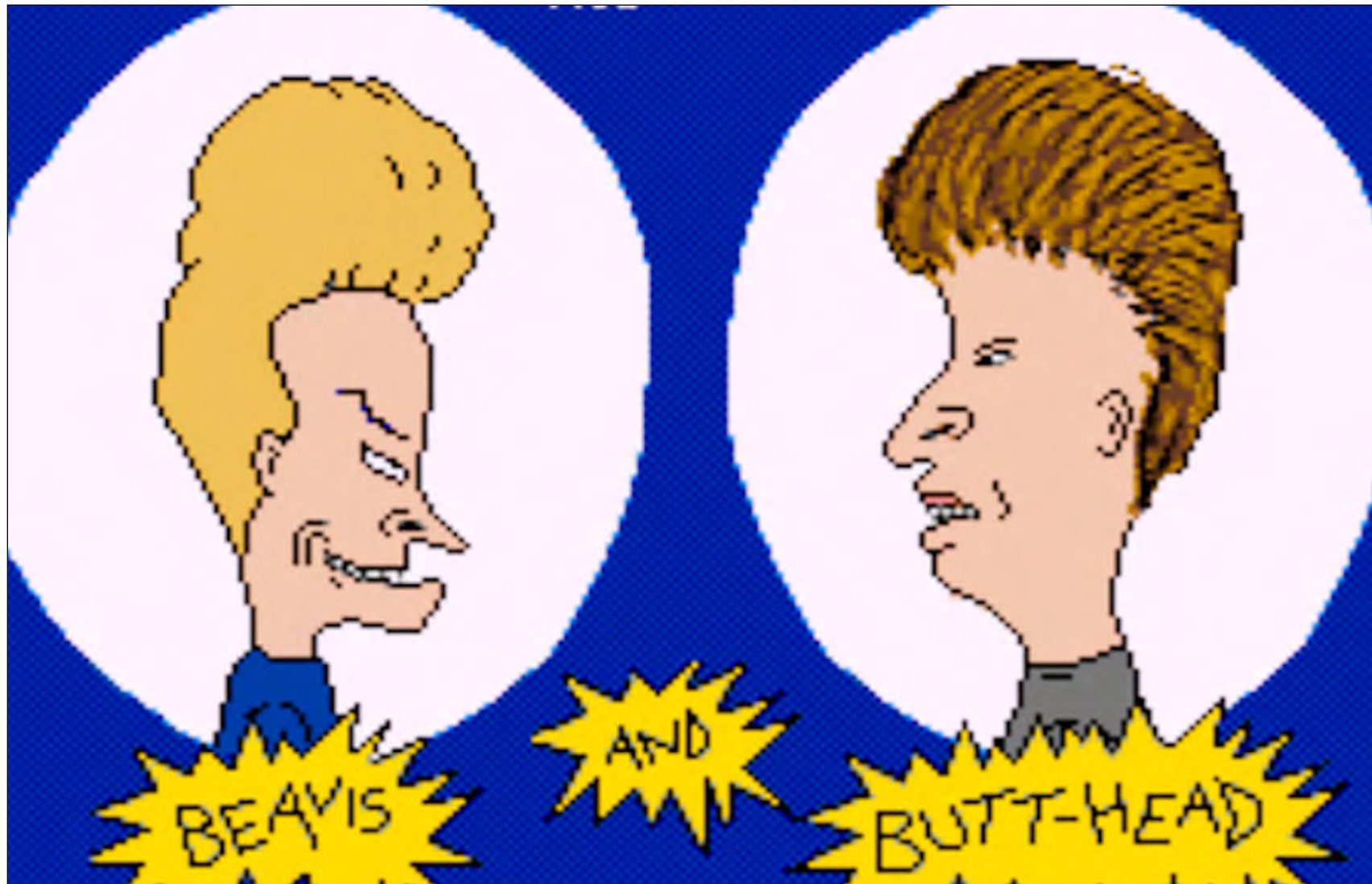
Beavis & Butt-Head remain '90s relics

I'm not ashamed to say that I am a child of the '80s. This generally means that I am of an age where MTV still had meaning, and the gossamer web of ignorance was generally intact when it came to questionable entertainment. I was a young buck watching MTV shows daily, and of course I watched Beavis and Butt-Head. Because who didn't watch it if they were 13 or older? Sometimes, however, I regret this folly because of reasons, reasons I shall elaborate for the masses not old enough to understand how TV rots your brain cells and some video game adaptations practically introduce atrophy.

Beavis and Butt-Head are your quintessential doofuses. These were the kids you stayed away from in high school because you knew they didn't wash and were general idiots. And yet, we watched their show. Well, by the time they were mainstream for their obsessive love of Judas Priest, there was a video game that talked about how much they were doofuses. Imagine the goofy show except in video game form but then add the most generic elements possible and weird unresponsive controls. That is Beavis and Butt-Head in a nutshell.

It would take longer than them being a thing in pop culture to explain why the game is among the worst ever created but I have time today. I'm old so I definitely can shake my fist for a minute. The game plays like the worst platformer called in for a sick day, found out it didn't have PTO and then trudged into work anyway despite coughing up its lungs. "I'm fine; it's just allergies." No, it's not just allergies and you are not fine. Take your sick ass home because this is embarrassing. The controls are embarrassing and likely to die when you least need them to do so. Nothing works well, and figuring out how certain mechanics work is like sticking a thermometer in your eye. The graphics somehow look worse than the already trash show and make fellow garbage nominee South Park 64 look like Tekken 8. The music is even worse; everything sounds like a tinny recreation of the duo's beloved GWAR embarking on a coke-fueled binge and deciding to play Radio City Music Hall naked. It's lower than low. What makes this even worse is the fact that it is actually GWAR. Proudly featured as a bullet point on the back of the game box is a statement that it features the music of GWAR. I wish that I didn't know that they loved GWAR and that this is somehow a selling point for a trash game, but here we are 30 years later musing about our life choices and why we know this about Beavis and Butt-Head.

I want to know who made this and why. I want to know why someone thought the



world needed more Beavis and Butt-Head and decided to plague unsuspecting naïve gamers with this foolhardy tripe. I want to know who bought it, because that's how they remained viable and how we got a feature film. I want to know who thought this was better than spinoff Daria, which was infinitely cooler in retrospect. At least she made sense and washed. I want to know who thought it would be a great idea to let this loose on the world and why it actually succeeded in snatching money from the pockets of young babes like me through sales and rentals.

Thank goodness for the sense and sensibilities of mortal men with decision-making



power who decided Beavis and Butt-Head no longer needed to be a thing. This blight of a tie-in was quite possibly breaking the law.

Lyndsey Beatty is editor-in-chief of Gaming Insurrection. She can be reached by email at lyndseyb@gaminginsurrection.com

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View this content at www.gaminginsurrection.com/TheStrip

PROPERTY REVIEW

Black Adam

Warner Bros. Pictures, 2022



Photos courtesy of RottenTomatoes.com

The Rock rolls as antihero

There is nothing more impactful in comics than the “waking the sleeping giant and now you’ve made him mad” trope. Each company has something like this in its repertoire, and for DC, it came in the form of Black Adam.

Set in the present day, Black Adam tells the story of Teth-Adam, a man born in ancient times that loses his family and becomes the titular antihero. Adam rose among his people to stop injustice and cruelty with the same gods who empowered the superhero Shazam but soon found himself just as cruel and brutal as the tyrant he fought against in his grief. Imprisoned for humanity’s own good, Adam is awakened by descendants of revolutionaries seeking to liberate his now-modern home from oppression and tyranny.

The modern-day elements of the story are your average run-of-the-mill points. Adam, once awakened, destroys a lot of things and interacts with a young boy who knows the legend of the antihero. But where it shines is its cast. Say what you will about Dwayne Johnson’s meteoric rise in the film industry, but the man has passion. And that shows in Adam. Johnson’s physical strength and charm keep the character interesting and give a much-needed dose of empathy. You can understand and sympathize with why Adam might be just a tad bit angry upon awakening, and you can understand his grief at what his home has become in the modern day. It’s just something about how Johnson cuts an imposing but ultimately warm figure in the virtual god that makes

HOW WE GRADE

We score the properties in three categories: Casting (or voice acting in cases of animated), plot and similarities to its source material. Each category receives points out of the maximum of 10 per category and 30 overall. The percentage is the final score.

you root for him despite the menagerie.

Of special note are the supporting heroes that oppose Adam’s roaring rampage of revenge. Aldis Hodge as Hawkman and Pierce Brosnan as Doctor Fate are fantastic. Hawkman’s by-the-book attitude makes things a little predictable, but you can’t knock the fact that Hawkman just wants to stop the foolishness while Adam seems to revel in it. Their multiple fights are something fun to behold, and Hodge more than shows up to do his part in making it fun. Brosnan’s elder statesman role is perfection. We’re already biased because it’s Brosnan and he’s great in just about everything he’s in, but he takes Doctor Fate to an incredible level and brings a nice touch of humanity to the role. Also, understanding just how powerful Doctor Fate is takes a delicate approach because you don’t want him to outshine the lead in Adam; Brosnan has the chops to do it and it works perfectly.

Rounding out the support roles, Noah

See BLACK ADAM, PAGE 32



Lyndsey Beatty
STRIP TALK

Kang Dynasty is over with major MCU bag fumble

Kang the Conqueror wowed us. We were charmed. Foolishly, perhaps. But we were in. We saw the buildup and the follow through with Loki Season 1. We were primed for the Kang Dynasty. We gave Jonathan Majors his flowers and anticipated the greatness that would surely ensue because Majors ate and left no crumbs in the Loki Season 1 finale.

And then Majors fumbled the bag.

Somehow, some way Jonathan Majors — who left absolutely no piece of the scenery unchewed in his portrayal of the major villain Kang — managed to mess up Marvel money. Y’all, he was going to get Marvel MARVEL money, the likes of which we haven’t seen since the days of RDJ. He was supposed to be on the threat level of Thanos and make him look like Ronan the Accuser by comparison. How did he fumble this hefty bag? Well, by now, we all know that he was found guilty on a few counts of assault. That’s just it. He assaulted someone he used to date, and it didn’t fall in his favor.

The condemnation from Marvel was swift and merciless. Majors, my guy, you were out of the picture before your court case even finished, as evidenced by the throwaway line at the end of Loki Season 2, which you starred in. Read this again: They had you starring in a series that they wrote you out of in the coda with a throwaway line. Marvel already knew they were done with you before you knew they were done with you. The audience knew Marvel was done with you before you knew Marvel was done with you. An ignominious way to go, I’d wager.

I have so many questions: How do you fumble Marvel money, guy? You were literally about to be the face of a billion-dollar franchise. Your performance was hailed as powerful and a taste of things to come, highly anticipated and impossible to duplicate. All eyes were on you and what you would do next. And then you get into a he said, she said

See MAJOR FUMBLE, PAGE 32



Fellow otaku, let's try to avoid 'Nobunasty' label

Brandon Beatty
OTAKU CORNER

Trigger warning: This story contains elements of child pornography. The subject of this article was charged in November 2017 and found guilty in February 2018 of violating Japan's Anti-Child Prostitution and Pornography ordinance.

The year was 2003. As a soon-to-be minted college graduate, my reignited passion for anime and manga was emboldened by Cartoon Network's announcement of a new anime series coming to its Toonami block. This series was set in Meiji era Japan's final days during which a legendary swordsman who is a former assassin began to atone for his actions by taking up his sword to fight for the innocent.



Nishiwaki

His name was Kenshin Himura, and his story was called Rurouni Kenshin. When I saw Rurouni Kenshin, I was hooked. I'm an aficionado of things samurai and action, and I was excited to watch every episode and read the manga series created by Nobuhiro Nishiwaki. The manga adaptation was perfect in the areas of storytelling and art just as the anime. Kenshin and company's adventures made Nishiwaki (under the pen name of Nobuhiro Watsuki) an overnight manga star with more than 70 million copies of Rurouni Kenshin sold globally and adapted into several anime movies, a live action trilogy and a 2023 reboot of the anime. However, with news of the 2023 reboot, Nishiwaki reignited years of controversy that brought shadows of division among Kenshin fans and spotlighted a dark problem festering in the anime industry in Japan and the West.

In November 2017, Anime News Network reporter Rafael Pineda broke the story that Nishiwaki was charged with possession of child pornography. Acting on an anonymous tip regarding a different investigation, Tokyo Metropolitan Police raided Nishiwaki's office



and home resulting in the discovery of numerous DVDs containing footage of nude young women in their early teens. Pineda noted Nishiwaki's deposition where he stated that he "liked girls in late elementary school to the second year of middle school." As a result, Nishiwaki was convicted of child pornography possession under Japan's Anti Child Prostitution and Pornography ordinance in 2018 and he was fined 200,000 yen (U.S. \$1,900).

This action led manga publishers Shueisha and Viz Media to suspend publication of Kenshin's Hokkaido arc (Viz Media ultimately decided to cancel future issues) and brought a chorus of international condemnation upon Nishiwaki. Despite the anger and calls for cancelation of Rurouni Kenshin by otaku worldwide, Nishiwaki returned to the manga and anime scene with a 2021 exhibition project that was supported by mangakas Takeshi Obata (Death Note), Masashi Kishimoto (Naruto), Eiichiro Oda (One Piece), and

Hiroyuki Takei (Shaman King). These creators also caught displeasure from their readers for having contact with Nishiwaki. In July 2023, Aniplex of America premiered the reboot at Anime Expo in Los Angeles.

Although the premiere did include some of the Japanese voice cast and an Aniplex producer, Nishiwaki did not attend because of possible violations of U.S. and California sex offender laws. When news of the English dub was released, I and other otaku were understandably upset, believing that Nishiwaki should not profit from this project. However, CBR.com's Renee Senzatimore reported that actors Howard Wang, Bill Butts and Yong Yea who voice Kenshin, Saito, and Jin-e Udo stated that they condemn Nishiwaki's actions and have donated their profits from the remake to Child Rescue Coalition, a organization that assists law enforcement by tracking down

See NOBUNASTY, PAGE 32



Series: The Masterful Cat is Depressed Again Today

Episodes: 1-6 reviewed (of 13)

Premise: An office worker, Saku Fukuzawa, has rescued a black Maine Coon named Yukichi and taken him home to her absolutely filthy apartment. Slowly but surely, Saku changes her life for the better. Her apartment gets cleaner, and she starts eating better and living better. It turns out these changes are because Yukichi has grown abnormally large and taken over the chores of the household. What follows is the day to day of Yukichi and how Saku struggles with having an abnormally large almost human cat in her house and life.

Is it worth watching?: Yes. If you're a cat lover, you're going to love the fact that a large cat is running his human's household. The humor that results from humans around Yukichi not believing he is a cat is absolutely hilarious.

Breakout character: Yukichi. The masterful cat absolutely steals every scene he is in simply because he's a large, adorable cat.

Where it's going?: It's interesting to see how many people are going to figure out that Yukichi is a real cat. Also, Saku's relationship with her boss may turn into something romantically viable.



with Lyndsey Beatty

MARVEL CHARACTER HIGHLIGHT

Name: Richard Rider

Alias: Nova Prime, Kid Nova, Nova #11249-44396, the Human Rocket, Quasar

Affiliation: Nova Corps, Guardians of the Galaxy, United Front, New Warriors, Defenders, Champions of Xandar, Secret Avengers

Special abilities: Access to the Nova Force; energy projection and absorption; superhuman strength, speed, durability, agility, and reflexes; ability to exert influence over gravitational forces and open wormholes; regenerative healing factor; and, flight

Background: Richard Rider, a high schooler in New York, is selected as the successor to the last surviving member of the Nova Corps, Rhomann Dey. Rider then takes on the uniform of the Corps and travels the galaxy fighting villains of the Marvel universe and teaming with the Guardians of the Galaxy, Thor and Spider-Man. He later joins a few of his fellow villains and travels to Xandar to help the Xandarians against the Skrulls. When the Skrulls are defeated, he gives up his powers and returns to Earth. He later regains his powers and takes on Annihilus.

Relationships: Namorita, ex-girlfriend; Robert Rider, Nova, brother

First Versus appearance: Ultimate Marvel vs. Capcom 3

Appearances in other media:

Video games: Marvel Super Hero Squad: The Infinity Gauntlet, Ultimate Marvel vs. Capcom 3, Marvel vs. Capcom: Infinite, Marvel Ultimate Alliance 3: The Black Order, Marvel: Future Fight, Marvel Puzzle Quest (Sam Alexander version)



TOP 5 ON THE STRIP — DC BAG FUMBLES EDITION



Henry Cavill no longer Superman

We don't know what James Gunn and Peter What's His Name were thinking when they decided to get rid of the best actor in the role since the late vaunted Christopher Reeve, but this injustice was foolhardy and dumb. And whatever point they were trying to make was lost because Cavill was the catch you needed to keep folks interested. Goofy is as goofy does.



Ezra Miller debacle

While Marvel has Jonathan Majors' foolishness to contend with, DC has its own weirdo in Ezra Miller. You can't be mediocre in the day job and dumb in your play around time and think folks won't notice or care. We're not going to see a terrible Flash movie while knowing Miller is garbage, too. Absolutely not.



Snyder Cut precedent

We've harped on this before: Do not open the Pandora's Box of releasing a Director's Cut just because the original movie fell short. Everybody and their daddy are going to want to do that when their much-ballyhooed project doesn't meet expectations. Oh, and it turns out that Snyder was faking some of the support for his still-not-great Justice League cut. Make it make sense.



James Gunn and Peter What's His Name hired

Unfortunately, we know who James Gunn is, and we don't care about Peter What's His Name still. There hasn't been one good decision to come out that brain trust yet, and we're still not sure what's the future plan. So far, all we've seen is the first two decisions on this list and The Rock not retained. Huh?



Black Adam done for now

Apparently, people didn't like Black Adam. OK, but we'll take a movie with promise and potential with a passionate lead in The Rock any day. The rationale behind not using Black Adam is about as smart as firing Cavill, and Gunn and Peter What's His Name's brain trust managed to muck it up in one stone's throw. We hope The Rock laughs while counting those likeness royalty checks.



Black Adam shines as origin despite mixed critical reviews

BLACK ADAM, from PAGE 29

Centineo as Atom Smasher and Quintessa Swindell as Cyclone are equally fantastic. Their humor and young naivete bring a lightness to things when there's a lot of "Adam is mad and killing" to go around. Sarah Shahi, who we know from the original *L Word on Showtime*, is serviceable and does a good job of being a frantic mom who's smart. She does the work and that's what you expect from her character, nothing more.

Marwan Kenzari is a good villain and provides a good bad guy for Adam to terrorize. Bodhi Sabongui is cute as Amon and makes the "modernizing the ancient guy" elements work when he's in play.

Having invested in the character and this film, we're not sure where the criticism of the film came from. It's a good superhero origin story with beautiful special effects and good acting. All involved provided a fun ride for a good character who is well-known in the comic world. It's a shame that it came to a grind-

ing halt with the changeover in DC's management. Maybe one day there will be a return on the investment with Johnson in the titular role again. Black Adam — while not making it in the black at the box office — didn't leave a black mark on the DCEU's record despite critical reviews.

Like the comics: 8

Acting: 8

Story: 6

Total score: 22/30 or 7.3



Majors no longer has future in MCU projects

MAJOR FUMBLE, from PAGE 29

near brawl with your now-ex-girlfriend. You have now cost yourself millions, and your reputation is in tatters.

But back to the money for a second. The Marvel bag — as we so lovingly call it around these GI parts — was an assured pay day and come up. You were already lauded for *Lovecraft Country*. Marvel money is known for being life changing. Did you not understand that you could do whatever you wanted after this? Young, black, gifted, talented actor who caught folks' eye just on your name alone, do you not realize how much you fumbled the bag and messed up? No, I don't think you do because you're still out here not taking accountability for your actions and still doing too much.

Marvel is never coming back and they're right not to do so. You've done too much negative,

and you've not been smart about things. You always, always, ALWAYS, take the money, shut up and keep your head down until the checks clear. You never mess up the truckload of money that Marvel intends to back up to your door. Just ask RDJ or his compatriot Terrence Howard. Whatever you do, don't mess up the money with foolishness. You will not get a second chance. You will be replaced, the role cast with someone who doesn't look anything like you and that will be that. You will watch that bag hopelessly slip through your fingers, and you'll wonder what could have been as another young, black, gifted, talented actor steps into your role of a lifetime and secures the bag where you failed. And, yes, we know you're sorry, champ. Or are you?

Lyndsey Beatty is editor-in-chief of Gaming Insurrection. She can be reached by email at lyndseyb@gaminginsurrection.com

Ruroni Kenshin manga placed on hiatus with author charged

NOBUNASTY, from PAGE 30

child predators through technological support.

As an otaku, I understand that Kenshin and Co. are NOT the criminals here, Nishiwaki or "Nobunasty" as I refer to him, is. Nobunasty, you should be ashamed of yourself and be denied royalties from any future Kenshin projects. I know that is a far stretch in legal terms, but he should learn from Kenshin and use the rest of his life to fight against this most evil of crimes.

I also hold Shueisha and Aniplex responsible as well, since having knowledge that Nobunasty was found guilty in a court of law that he had possession of child pornography, they brought unjust work upon those who worked on various Kenshin projects to clean up his image. This foolishness forced anime licensors, dubbing companies and actors in Japan and outside of it to say that anime and manga do

not condone such behavior of artists such as Nobunasty and should donate profits to organizations that fight crimes such as child pornography.

Finally, to Viz Media, Mr. Butts, Mr. Wang, and Mr. Yea; I have the utmost respect for your separate actions to hold Nobunasty accountable. Canceling future releases and donating profits may not stop him from profiting off Kenshin but it sends a clear message that sexualizing children is NOT COOL.

I will state this for GI readers new and old: GI will keep to our bread and butter of reviewing the latest and greatest in gaming and geek culture, but when real world issues step into these topics, we will speak up and inform our readers. Why? Because Kenshin Himura said so that he did. It's also the right thing to do. Don't be an ignorant otaku.

Brandon Beatty is editor-at-large of Gaming Insurrection. He can be reached by email at brandonb@gaminginsurrection.com