

The call goes out...

Role Call

Issue 1



100% RPG FANZINE

Role Call

Greetings to all, and welcome to this, the first issue of a brand new RPG specific fanzine - Role Call! I am but the editor and a contributor to what I hope will become everyone's RPG 'zine. I don't profess to be an expert, I'm just one of the more dedicated fans wanting to spread the word. And when the call goes out, hopefully it will be heard - a plaintive cry in the dark getting stronger every day - a call for more RPGs in this country! That's the main issue we hope to force on the powers that be. Nintendo? Are you listening? I may be wrong but I don't think there's been one single turn-based game released for the UK SNES apart from Mystic Quest! It's a sorry situation, one we hope to rectify. I happen to be very stubborn and when I can't have what I want I find a way round it, ie. having a converted SNES and buying American carts! Anyway I'll tell you a bit about myself and what I do.

My name is Rachel, I'm 20 years old and unemployed at the moment. I'm a complete RPG fanatic, my passion stems from idyllic early years spent lost in Speccy text adventures. I always loved fantasy in any form, I read the books, I watched the films but generally I was a closet fan until I first tried Japanese RPGs on the PC Engine and SNES. Now there's no going back, and I wouldn't if I could. Fortunately I like turn-based and action RPGs equally, so I can offer balanced reviews.

This is of course the first issue of Role Call, so as a taster of what's to come I decided to produce an initial fanzine covering every role playing game I could find. So it serves as a directory which I hope will prove invaluable to you. Future issues of Role Call will cover new games, previews, playing guides, letters etc. Anyway back to the present - I've actually written most of the reviews in this issue, but I hope to have more contributors soon, any offers? You may have noticed I have also done a lot of artwork including the manga strip at the back of the 'zine, I know I can draw but I'm not brilliant. Again, I'd welcome any help.

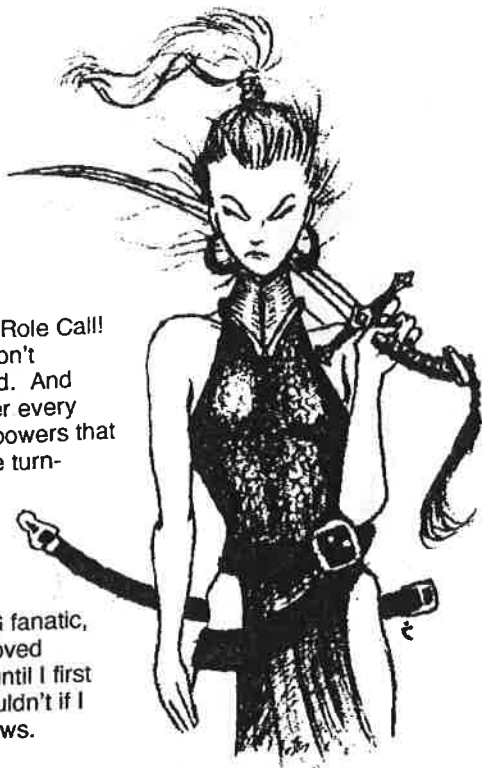
Right, about the other contributors- first there's Steve Leadbeater who has been a great help in writing an awful lot of Megadrive reviews. I didn't even know there were this many RPGs on the Sega machine, I never used to own one and getting this 'zine out would have been an immense task without Steve's help. Short of buying every single RPG for the system I don't know how I'd have managed. Then there's Simon Dominguez, a big fan of anime and RPGs who also writes for Animace, he's done some reviews and some features (which I'm putting in a later issue). I'm really grateful to these two, as I am to Warren Tokuda, who has produced the superior artwork for Role Call! Superior in that it's better than mine! Yeah, before you ask, Warren IS Japanese although he's lived in the US all his life. He's actually my penpal, it's a lucky coincidence he can draw and wants to contribute.

Anyway, reviews start on the page opposite and continue in alphabetical order. On page 15 you'll find a review of the latest release - Ogre Battle. After that, on page 16, there's a guide that I've written to playing imported games on your console. Finally, the glossary at the back covers some key roleplaying terms. I hope you enjoy this first issue, and that it serves as a good example of what's to come.

Thanks,

R. Ryan.

Rachel Ryan, editor, writer, artist - Role Call



Contact -
Miss Rachel Ryan
Role Call
25 Oakdene Avenue,
Woolston,
Warrington
Cheshire
WA1 4NU
Tel (01925) 490 910

Role Call is produced in Pagestream 2,
running on an unexpanded Amiga 1200.
Send correspondence on paper or disk
(Amiga or 720K PC) to the address above.

To receive the next six issues of Role Call as they hit the streets, send a cheque/PO for 7 pounds (made payable to Miss Rachel Ryan) to the address on the left. Individual copies are 1.20, payable by the same method. Hopefully Role Call will be out once a month, but you'll be notified as to any delays or changes in schedule.

Brain Lord

Super Nintendo

1994 Enix

Action RPG with logical puzzles

Review by Rachel

Well, here we have it, the first review ever in Role Call. And what a shame it is too, because this is one hell of a bad effort from Enix. Basically what we have here is a poor Zelda imitation, with no real plot to speak of and cardboard cut out characters. Oh dear.

Lets look at some of the faults shall we? Firstly those graphics, ranging from the very bland to about the gaudiest ever seen on the Nintendo. Poor definition too is a problem, enter a shop to buy something and you are presented with icons to represent the goods on offer, you really can't tell what things are until you select them. In fact everything in this game has a vague feel to it, especially the story. It's been badly translated - for instance you will meet certain people in one location, then go to the next and find them there as well! They never actually say how they got there, oh no, they just proceed to give you clues on how to continue. Which you don't need, even at the very beginning of the game. The puzzles are quite hard, logical push-the-block type affairs - but often you'll solve them by employing a bit of trial and error.

The main problems with this game though concern the main character. He is too hard to control, and will fall down the slightest of gaps should you mis-time a jump. Which happens ALL the time - there is no margin for error, especially on moving platforms. Its so infuriating because there are hardly any monsters in certain areas and you still keep getting killed by the unfair collision detection. The guy must have permanent grease on his feet, the way he just slides off everything - it spoils the game. I really think action fans should look elsewhere for their entertainment, in fact you'll find that there are better games detailed in this very fanzine. Certainly those other games by Enix themselves, this one pales in comparison.

Story 4

Combat 6

Gamelife 5

Graphics 6

Sound 6

OVERALL 5



Breath of Fire

1993 Capcom Ltd.
Super Nintendo US/Japan
16 Mbit cartridge
Turn based combat
Review by Rachel

When Breath of Fire was released in Japan and America it won many fans. Capcom needed to prove that they could produce a quality title that wasn't another version of the flogged-to-death Streetfighter II, and their decision to enter the RPG market was a wise one. Indeed, Breath of Fire was so well received in Japan that the prestigious RPG company Squaresoft picked it up for translation into English. Many people bought it because of Square's reputation for producing quality software. Due to this, I concede that a lot of you will already have played this game, but for the benefit of those who haven't, here's Role Call's long delayed review.

You play a young, blue haired warrior who is a descendant of the Light Dragons. In Japan this character is known as Ryu, although you may choose your own name for him. At the start of the game Ryu awakes to discover that his village is being consumed by fire - it has been plundered by the re-emerging Dark Dragon Clan. Ryu's destiny is to destroy Zog, leader of the Dark Dragons, and on the inevitable journey that follows he will meet many characters - some of whom will join him on his quest.

I was very impressed with the amount of detail in this game. The passage of time is represented by an accelerated progression of day to night, to day and so on. Enter a village by day, and the little characters will be up and about, all having something to say. Enter by night and most will be in their beds, the sky will be dark and the lights in the houses on. Each village features a musical score and graphics which cleverly portray the mood and character of it's citizens. Certain scenarios will only occur by day, others by night so always be attentive. The NPCs themselves each have a character of their own, and are grouped by the communities in which they live. Most of these village communities have their very own type of inhabitant, often not found elsewhere, and there are a lot of anthropomorphic clans featured (a clue to why I like this game so much?) The thief Karn can actually merge with animal characters in the party to become a almost indomitable fighter (he has four such 'Super Forms'). And the main character himself has the ability to use his magic to change into any of an array of powerful dragons during a battle. Wonderful stuff indeed.

The combat sequences within this game really impressed me. Attention to detail here is exceptional, with a graphical representation of landscape in the battle that exactly corresponds to your position on the map, and time of day. It's all achieved by skillfully altering the palette to fit in with the current time, and the amount of combinations here must be in the hundreds. For the actual fighting Capcom have employed an icon-based system, in place of the usual menus. Is this an attempt to make the game more friendly towards those action-mad Capcom fans? Perhaps. There is a good balance between physical fighting and magic, but I found that the combat got easier as my fighters got more powerful. One of the main problems of the game is it's flawed learning curve.

The weapon system has been well realized by Capcom, with two handed and one handed weapons available, plus standard fare such as boomerangs which hit all the assailants in one swipe. However, if you search areas fully you will find some of the more intimidating weapons quite early on - making the rest of the game a walk-through. Sometimes the battles seem like more of a distraction than an integral part of the gameplay, and in certain locations you will find yourself heading for the 'Auto battle' icon on almost every occasion. This seems to be an indication of Capcom's inexperience in the RPG field, another thing you'll notice is the inclusion of energy bars displaying the life force of each enemy. It takes away a lot of the learning process, it's a shame. But if you do find things difficult, any attempts to run away from a fight are consistently unsuccessful.

The storyline of Breath of Fire may seem at first to be completely unoriginal, indeed a lot of it is. But it evolves and gets better later on with many unusual twists and irony. To me however, the game will be memorable mainly because of the clever way in which the characters are portrayed. I won't forget the chirpy musicians of Tunlan, and the cheeky but lovable thieves of Bleak. I doubt I'll ever get the incredibly appropriate tunes of either town out of my head either. In summary, I think you should buy this game, and I'd especially recommend it to those action RPG players wanting to make the jump to the turn-based genre. All in all - despite it's faults, it ranks among the best RPGs I've ever played.

Story 7

Combat 7

Gamelife 8

Graphics 9

Sound 9

OVERALL 8

Cosmic Fantasy II

PC Engine CD ROM Japan/US
Working Designs
Turn based combat
Review by Rachel

Working Designs are an American company dedicated to the translation of Japanese RPGs mainly for the CD format. When the old 'Engine didn't catch on in the States, they turned their attention to the Sega CD. You can't help feeling sorry for them really, they can't have sold that many games. Generally, their releases are characterized by simplistic in-game graphics and lush CD animation.

Anyway, on with the review. Cosmic Fantasy II sports probably the best animation yet seen on the 'Engine, and on most machines for that matter. It's an anime film on CD, with a great plot and lovable central characters. As you play, each turning point in the story results in a considerably long anime sequence - in fact if this was an anime film I'd be raving about it. It has everything, RPG element, sci-fi space bits, romance, tragedy and a dash of anthropomorphism to boot. Great. Now about that combat. This is what lets the game down, it is so damn easy you don't even have to plan each move properly. Literally, it's a case of 'stick button I on autofire and hold' in many locations. And what is the point in the various types of armour that deflect different types of magic, when the game NEVER tells you when an offensive spell has been cast on your party? How can you work out which item to wear? Honestly.

To round up this review, if you have an 'Engine then go for it, this game is worth a look just for the plot and animation. If not, then consider it only if you are a complete RPG/anime fanatic with wads of cash. Because PC Engines still are not all that cheap, believe me.

Story 9 Combat 4 Gamelife 7 Graphics: in game 5, anime bits 9 Sound 8 OVERALL 7

Dragon Slayer - The Legend of Heroes

PC Engine Super CD ROM Japan/US
1989 Falcom
US Version 1990 Hudson Soft
Turn-based combat
Review by Rachel

You may have noticed that this game is by Falcom, creators of Ys Book I and II. Unlike Ys Dragon Slayer is a turn based game, and it's one of a series of games in Japan which drew on the popularity of Enix's Dragon Quest series. The only other Dragon Slayer game that I've seen is a Gameboy title, which is awful - don't buy it.

Again, what we have here is a CD ROM game boasting great anime intros, and also audio speech when you talk to certain NPCs. As a story this is another that would work as an anime, though there is actually a lot less animation in this than in Cosmic Fantasy. But the combat is much better, and there is more strategy involved. Don't expect something in the league of Final Fantasy though, this is limited in a lot of areas, for example all armour can be worn by anyone in the party regardless of age or build. Graphics too are basic, but this is something to expect in a game of it's age.

Dragon Slayer's story is that of a young prince, Logan, who will inherit the throne from his late father on his 16th birthday. Meanwhile the land of Farlayne is being ruled over by a temporary leader, Baron Drax - unfortunately Drax does not want to hand the throne over to Logan. You can guess what happens, and in the resulting furor Logan must win back his kingdom. I don't know what the fuss is about - Farlayne is tiny, just one of a number of lands on the world map. In fact, for it's age Dragon Slayer is huge, I think it took me about 50 hours to play it. This is mainly due to the combat being more of a challenge and the fact that this IS a CD based game.

In my opinion this is another recommendation to PC Engine owners, despite the limited graphics you can't deny that Falcom know their stuff. I'd like to see more of their games translated, it's a shame that the PC Engine never took off in the USA or they might have been. However, with Ys V out soon in Japan on the Super Nintendo this situation may change.



Story 7 Combat 7 Gamelife 8 Graphics 4 Sound 7 OVERALL 7

Exile

Sega Megadrive Japan/US
PC Engine CD Japan/US
Working Designs
Action RPG
Review by Rachel

Dark and moody, and working up to the ultimate anti-climax, only the Japanese can write stuff as depressing as this. It's meant to be this way too, a depiction of everything that's bad about mankind. And it does make you think, which is what the designers obviously intended.

Basically the 'Engine and Sega versions are the same, except the PC Engine incarnation has more animation. What we're looking at here in terms of gameplay is about how arcadey an RPG can go while still getting away with being tagged 'RPG'. There are overhead RPG bits in the towns and other locations, but enter a battlefield such as a temple or cave and the game becomes a platform slash-em-up. Can't say fairer than that, really. Despite the equippable items and stats, I personally wouldn't class Exile as a role player. You might glean some enjoyment from it, but even then it won't last long due to a) being easy because of almost limitless health potions and b) not being a big game anyway. While it sports a decent, albeit cynical plot Exile is yet another run-of-the-mill game - whichever category it fits into.

Story 7 Combat 4 Gamelife 4 Graphics 5 Sound 6 OVERALL 5

Faery Tale Adventure

Sega Megadrive US/UK
C64/Amiga/PC
Electronic Arts
Western style RPG
Review by Steve

Every now and then a game comes along which redefines a genre...well this ain't it. This, to be blunt, is godawful trash without a single redeeming feature. The story is drawn out and uninteresting, the graphics are hilarious with your character mincing around like Julian Clary on Mogadon. Combat is dreadful and so slow it's unreal with the super hard monster outside the starting location syndrome to the full.

So, crap to look at and to play but its saving grace is that it is near impossible to track down these days. Hooray for progress.

Story 3 Combat 2 Gamelife 6 Graphics 2 Sound 2 OVERALL 2

Final Fantasy - Mystic Quest

Super Nintendo Japan/US/UK
1992,1993 Square Ltd.
UK title - Mystic Quest Legend
Japanese Title Final Fantasy USA
4 Mbit cartridge
Turn based combat
Review by Rachel

This game was released in the US as a introduction to roleplaying games, for US gamers who found Final Fantasy II too hard. It isn't a game as such, more of a training session on a cartridge. Basically you kill some monsters (well done etc etc), go to the next town, kill more monsters, enter a dungeon, kill monsters, take treasure and so on. Instead of being attacked by the enemy, *you* attack *them* to clear the path you are to take. To build up experience you take on battlefields, here you are presented with battle after battle (no exploring in between) until all the nasties are defeated. There is no trekking across the map, the computer takes you to where you want to go. Boring? You said it. Graphics are basic, sound is appalling and as for the plot, well, not much to say really except that it's one of those 'retrieve the crystals' affairs - but nothing like as involving as that of Final Fantasy II. Oh yes, please, please don't buy this for the Final Fantasy monicker. This is NOT Final Fantasy, it doesn't even come close - though it serves it's purpose as an entry-level RPG with nothing else to recommend it. Competent gamers should steer well clear.

Story 4 Combat 4 Gamelife 3 Graphics 3 Sound 2 OVERALL 4

Final Fantasy II

Super Nintendo Japan/US
1991 Square Ltd.
Japanese Title FF4
8 Mbit cartridge
Turn based combat
Review by Rachel

This game is showing it's age now, the graphics look basic by today's standard and the sound, while impressive, doesn't come close to that of FF3. So why must you buy it? Two words, story and combat. These two areas shine in this game (as with FF3) and are the only elements that must be taken into consideration when buying an RPG. Don't be put off by the fact that you've been denied the experience that is Final Fantasy on the US NES (I haven't played it either) as all the Final Fantasy games work well in their own right. Take them as they are - individual episodes in the history of a fantasy world.

FF2's story follows the fortunes of Cecil, a Dark Knight who has come to despise what he is. Cecil questions the integrity of his missions, and as a result is relieved of his post as leader of the Red Wings. The whole story in itself is a quality experience, you will encounter romance, victory and tragedy as you progress through the levels of experience, involving many characters, friend or foe. Like all the Final Fantasy games, there are lots of secret areas to be found, and it's a great feeling when you discover something new.

The combat in the Final Fantasy games will be a new experience to those who haven't played any of the series before. Battles are in real time, so as well as making the right decisions you must make them quickly to be successful. This system doesn't rule out the factor of character speed as each party member must recover energy before he/she makes a move, this includes spellcasting. Magic itself plays a big part in battle, with each character having their own method of magic execution. The whole area of combat is so much more impressive than in other RPGs, and was improved further in Final Fantasy III.

So- what else is there to say? If you can find a copy buy it, even if you've already played FF3. Despite it's age it's a game worthy of being in everyone's collection.



Story 8 Combat 9 Gamelife 7 Graphics 6 Sound 8 OVERALL 9

Final Fantasy III

Japan/US Super Nintendo
1993, 1994 Square
Japanese Title: FF6
24 Mbit cartridge
Review by Rachel



Right, I'm going to be incredibly predictable now, if you haven't already bought this game then order your copy immediately. No excuses, here's a fact for you - FF3 works perfectly on a converted, switchable SNES. No glitches, no system crashes, nothing - so get a conversion done! It might mean more expense but this game is worth it, even if it means selling your entire RPG collection.

With that out of the way I can get on with the review. I've actually been putting off writing this, it's hard for me to convey pure enjoyment as I'm such a pessimist. But this game is excellent, true genius, everything everybody wanted in an RPG and more. Final Fantasy 3 concerns itself with the rebirth of magic in the discovery of a magical being, an Esper, and the resultant tragedy which is brought upon the earth. The storyline in itself is magical, with each revelation you are drawn further into the fantasy, until it's extremely difficult to drag yourself away. I'm not exaggerating, I have spent sleepless nights in front of my SNES discovering new twists in the plot. The characters are like living, breathing entities, you will regard them as your friends. And, there isn't actually a central character whom you control throughout the adventure, practically every individual who is ever in your party has equal importance to the story. So there isn't a hero as such, or heroine for that matter, and the game is so much better for it. I mean, come on - we're all sick of the 'destined hero rescuing girl/world/both' formula, it's about time some game broke the mould. And it couldn't have been done better, quite frankly.

In comparison to other Final Fantasy games you may have played, well this is a similar experience, it is Final Fantasy after all. But everything is so much better. For example, remember the magical creatures that Rydia in FF2 could call? Well now you have espers, and although each esper can only be summoned once in each battle, the effects are startling. Also, the very fact that you have an esper equipped installs the user with magic abilities, they will then proceed to learn spells. Swapping espers between party members allows each character to learn the spells of different espers, the scope is almost unlimited. And that's just one aspect of this game that impressed me, I could go on and fill up the fanzine enthusing about Final Fantasy 3.

One factor not implemented in other games is Relics- each character can equip two of these and they effect gameplay (including movement and combat) considerably. Some enhance magic, others simply speed you up, some- like the Dragoon Boots add new actions to your repertoire (the Boots let you jump - like Kain, the Dragoon in FF2) Not all items can be bought, in fact, if I recall, I stole my boots from a monster in Zozo using Locke's 'Steal' command. Amazing, eh?

As with Final Fantasy 2, each character has their own form of attack, like in Streetfighter. This is really no exaggeration here, there is even a character (Sabin) with special moves that require SFII style joystick combinations! It's all quite engrossing, in fact, the whole area of combat in FF3 is superbly managed, one thing to note is that each battle is a different experience, there's none of the old 'keep pressing A' situation that sometimes cropped up in FF2.

There isn't enough room in this fanzine to give this game the space it deserves, so I'll finish this review by telling you about the presentation. The graphics are the best I've ever seen in an RPG, the attention to detail beats even Breath of Fire for accuracy. The little characters have a huge number of facial expressions, and although the sprites themselves are tiny each emotion is conveyed exactly. Travel (eg.. riding on a Chocobo) presents the best Mode 7 experience yet. The sound is simply amazing, with the sort of music I'd tape and listen to on my Walkman, if I had one. That Chocobo music! And the opera - you'll have to see it for yourself. Indeed, buy Final Fantasy 3 now, we won't be seeing another RPG of it's calibre for a long, long time.

Story 10

Combat 10

Gamelife 10

Graphics 10

Sound 10

OVERALL 10

Illusion of Gaia

Super Nintendo Japan/US/UK
1994 Enix

UK Title - Illusion of Time
16 Mbit cartridge
Review by Rachel



When the release of Illusion of Gaia was first announced in the US, Enix touted it as the sequel to Soulblazer. Forget this, although handled by the same team it isn't a follow-up and never was. Though some bits do hark back to Soulblazer, namely one NPC and the guardian of the 'secret' location, the path to which is pointlessly revealed in the manual. Don't read the manual, it gives away the whole game. But do put time aside for Illusion of Gaia, as it's one of my personal favourites.

You control a character called Will, a young teenage boy with telekinesis. That in itself offers possibilities, and this is realised to good effect. Will has another ability, the power to change his form. During the course of his adventure Will finds other identities in the shape of Freedan, a tall sword wielding knight, and Shadow, the Ultimate Warrior who appears to Will right at the end of the game. It's true that there could have been other transformations - but those that are here add a lot to the gameplay and often you need to change from one form to another to solve a puzzle. We could do with more games like this, right Enix? It would have been nice though, if the control could be switched to the NPCs that follow Will about, but serve to contribute to plot and nothing else.

The story itself is a tale of a trek to the Tower of Babel (it will keep cropping up in games) by a party of child adventurers led by Will, who learn many lessons and grow up along the way. It's Will's quest to find his father, and the whole narrative has this sentimental feel to it. It's charming, if soppy, and I certainly enjoyed it. Graphics are standard Enix fare, cutesy and well defined, with a musical accompaniment designed

cont. next page

Illusion of Gaia (cont.)-

to impress. Which it does, I loved some of the tunes - these even boast sound samples (such as seagull cries) to add to the atmosphere relayed by the graphics. Combat itself is simplistic but appealing in it's very nature, there aren't any weapon power-ups but generally Will's array of physical abilities make up for this.

As usual, I have a couple of general complaints to air. The translation for example, seems to be a little compromised in places, which is an on-going problem with Enix's games. Also, the ancient history's a bit ill-conceived, especially the world map, which is a pity because this is one of Enix's better efforts, with it's lush presentation and regard for detail everything smacks of quality. The children themselves have depth and character, and the game as a whole is so likeable. Veterans of Soulblazer will appreciate Illusion of Gaia as it's similar in it's style and gameplay, while the graphics and sound are an improvement on the old favourite. Indeed, it's worth noting that this has also earned itself a release in the UK - which is a good thing and serves to brighten up the current situation regarding official releases.



Story 8 Combat 8 Puzzles 7 Gamelife 6 Graphics 8 Sound 8 OVERALL 8

King's Bounty

Sega Megadrive/C64/Amiga/PC
Electronic Arts
RPG/Wargame
Review by Steve

Explore the world, beat things up (in a nice tactical way) and achieve power in this wargame cum RPG. Recruit armies, hunt the criminals and capture castles - this is a very involving game which is let down by appalling graphics.

Apart from the dodgy graphics the game plays very well with lots of troop types to recruit or kill and a fairly large play area. Unfortunately the game mechanics are easy to learn and so the game is quite easy to finish. Worth a look if you can track down a second-hand copy.

**Story 4 Combat 8
Gamelife 5 Graphics 3
Sound 3 OVERALL 6**

Lagoon

Super Nintendo Japan/US/UK
Kemco
8 Mbit cartridge
Action RPG
Review by Rachel

One word for this one - infuriating. How Nasir (the hero) puts up with the slow NPCs and pointless mazes of his world I'll never know. Or how you will, for that matter. OK, it's not altogether bad, but it could have been a lot better.

Those of you that have played Ys on the PC Engine will experience a lot of deja vu while playing this. The whole game is a homage to Ys, the format is the same, the graphics are similar and the menu system appears to have been lifted byte for byte from Ys' coding. Can't be bad then eh? Wrong. Even the bits that are supposedly an improvement on aspects of Ys are flawed, the combat for example. Nasir has such a tiny sword that you almost have to bump into enemies for it to make contact - might as well be playing Ys. And those NPCs, arrgh! They follow you at about half your speed so you constantly have to pause in the action for them to catch up. The storyline too is a bit daft and jars due to some unexplained bits. The music is tinny and forgettable. And why can't you go in the houses? If they wanted to improve on Ys they could at least have made this possible.

Verdict? Not for the impatient. If you don't like mapping areas out then don't even consider getting Lagoon. However it's worth a quick bash if you can buy it cheaply, it has a certain charm and some people do like it a lot. But I doubt that these people have ever experienced the wonder that is Ys.

Story 4 Combat 6 Gamelife 5 Graphics 5 Sound 5 OVERALL 5



Landstalker

Sega Megadrive Japan/US/UK
1993 Climax
16Mbit cartridge
Isometric action RPG with puzzles
Review by Steve

This review could be very short - "BUY IT" but that would leave a huge space and is not exactly professional. So I'd better tell you a bit more about it.

You play the part of an intrepid treasure hunter hunting down the lost treasure of King Nole on the mysterious Mercator Isle. As the game unfolds you learn more about your quest which builds into an excellent climax.

The game is presented in a 3/4 perspective and is one of very few games to do this successfully by taking the action elements of Zelda with a few platform antics thrown in. The puzzles range from simple block pushing to some real swines involving two or three different areas.

Graphically this really is superb with a large array of nasties and locations all drawn with great detail. It also sounds brilliant with a great selection of atmospheric tunes and spot effects.

So, it looks good, sounds good, plays like a dream and is absolutely enormous. What more do you want?

Story 8 Combat 8 Puzzles 9 Gamelife 9 Graphics 9 Sound 9 OVERALL 9

The Legend of the Mystical Ninja

Super Nintendo Japan/US/UK
1993 Konami
Japanese Title- Ganbare Goeman
8 Mbit cartridge
Action RPG with platform sections
Review by Rachel

While some of you will hail Mystical Ninja as one of the best games ever made, others may dismiss it as another platformer masquerading as an RPG. It's certainly a peculiar one this, offering a mish-mash of genres in it's wide array of sub games. Ever wanted to play Breakout in an RPG? Or perhaps you'd prefer to indulge in a spot of mole bashing, courtesy of a 'sim' of one of those daft foam mallet contraptions sometimes seen in arcades. All such wishes are granted, served up in typically bizarre Japanese style.

Yes this game is very Japanese, to the extent that I would say that some of it's charm is lost in translation. Western gamers won't fully appreciate the references to popular Japanese cultural icons. The translation itself is a bit tragic, too Americanised - the two main characters have become Kid Ying and Dr Yang - ill translated Chinese I think you'll find. Still, at least you know what's going on and instructions can be adhered to, this isn't always the case in the game's sequels - as yet unreleased in the West, more's the pity.

As a fan of most things Japanese I obviously loved Mystical Ninja. And I think you will too, as it's the gameplay which stands out most - this is a prime example of Konami's excellence. It IS an arcadey experience, but players of action RPGs won't have a problem with that. Oh, and with this game being available on UK cart you really don't have an excuse not to own it, do you?



Story 5 Combat 8 Gamelife 8 Graphics 8 Sound 7 OVERALL 8

The Legend of Zelda

Full Title: The Legend of Zelda - A Link to the Past
Super Nintendo Japan/US/UK
1992 Nintendo
8 Mbit cartridge
Action RPG with logical puzzles
Review by Rachel

Though generally Nintendo have little commitment to producing RPGs, they made a good contribution to the action RPG genre with the Zelda series. There are four Zelda games to date, the first two on the NES, this, the third, on the SNES and the latest - Link's Awakening on Gameboy. And basically, they are all very good games, though for the sake of space I haven't covered the NES games in this 'zine (they're looking a bit old now anyway).

Zelda - Link to the Past is a masterpiece of an ARPG, the puzzles are very well structured and the fantasy world of Hyrule superbly rendered through the charming graphics and music. Link himself is a likeable character, and has a wide array of actions specified by whichever item is equipped. Yes it's a 'collect and use' game, but the progression from one section to the next is well thought out, the items themselves all proving invaluable. The gameplay is very rewarding, you can see partly into locations before you enter them - and when you find the item that allows access you'll relish exploring the new area. Storyline too is enjoyable, a light world/dark world affair where you must skip between the two dimensions to solve a lot of the puzzles.

Basically Zelda is a must-buy. OK, so it's odds-on you've played it, but if not get a copy now. Do believe the hype.

Story 8 Combat 9 Puzzles 9 Gamelife 7
Graphics 9 Sound 8 OVERALL 9

The Legend of Zelda - Link's Awakening

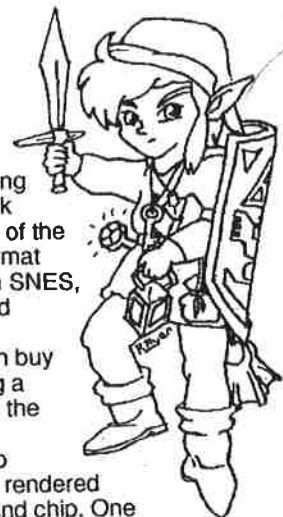
Gameboy Japan/US/UK
1993 Nintendo
Action RPG with logical puzzles
Review by Rachel

This is the only game in the Zelda series that isn't set in the ever-changing world of Hyrule - in this adventure Link is stranded on Koholint Island, abode of the mysterious Wind Fish. The actual format of this game is like that of Zelda III on SNES, with the same methods of combat and puzzle-solving.

In fact, if you liked Zelda III then buy this game, hell, it's even worth buying a Gameboy or SGB to play it on. Even the graphics are familiar, with the same depictions of trees, chests etc. It also boasts Zelda's catchy musical score rendered perfectly through the GB's chirpy sound chip. One gripe though, there's odd translation at times - but generally the game is excellent and almost as good as SNES Zelda. It's certainly worth a look because although the two games are so similar, this is a whole new story, a whole new Zelda experience.

Needless to say, I was impressed and I think you will be too.

Story 7 Combat 9 Puzzles 8 Gamelife 7
Graphics 8 Sound 8 OVERALL 8



Lufia and the Fortress of Doom

Taito 1993
Super Nintendo US/Japan
8 Mbit cartridge
Japanese Title- Estpolis
Turn based combat
Review by Rachel

A rather colourful one this, with pleasing, cheerful graphics featuring little SD characters. You are an Aleckian knight, and it is your mission to thwart the evil Sinistrals' second attempt to take over the world. Accompanying you throughout the quest is Lufia, a girl with mystery origins.

The story which unfolds as you play the game is quite formulaic, there are no gripping twists in the plot. There is some annoying repetition, in that long conversations are repeated if you talk to a person twice. You have to backtrack a lot, this can be infuriating. For example there is a cave you have to visit more than once, this requires long treks across the map. I enjoyed the combat though-

cont. next page



Lufia and the Fortress of Doom (cont)-

presents a challenge, and you'll have to procure items to beat the bosses. One thing to note, if a foe is defeated when you still have turns left on it, your fighters will hit the empty space rather than move to the next monster. There is some strong useage of magic, with powerful offensive spells- some of which can be enhanced by the use of special rings.

Graphics are very Japanese, and I liked the way in which the interior of buildings could be seen from the outside (the roof isn't drawn). This overcomes the 'Tardis' effect implemented in the majority of RPGs. Decent use of music here, and the tunes fit well with the locations. All in all, an above average RPG that most will enjoy and play to completion.

Story 5 Combat 7 Gamelife 7 Graphics 7 Sound 7 Overall 7

Might & Magic 2

Sega Megadrive/PC/SNES/Amiga/C64
Electronic Arts
Western style RPG
Review by Steve

Part two of the excellent Might and Magic series sees you attempt to track down the elemental orbs of CRON and free the planet. This is a big step up from the original and is the hardest of the M&M saga. The game starts off poorly with your badly equipped party falling foul to almost anything they meet. But persevere and a huge quest will unfold which will take months to complete.

There is little storyline through the game but the main plot unfolds through a series of mini quests and chance finds in the undergrowth. Combat is involving but slow with a couple of encounters taking an absolute age to get through (beating up 250 goblins with only six characters for instance) and straying into unfriendly territory will almost certainly end in death unless you are seriously powerful. There are a vast number of weapons, armour and specials which aid you in your quest and you can recruit NPC's at inns who are usually higher ranked than your own characters.

Graphics are passable with an absolutely huge array of nasties to beat into a pulp and a varied world to wander through.

Not really recommended to a beginner this is perfect for those long winter nights but PC/AMIGA owners should get the vastly superior third part.

**Story 3 Combat 5 Gamelife 9
Graphics 7 Sound N/A OVERALL 7**

Paladin's Quest

Japan/US Super Nintendo
1993 Asmik/Enix
8 Mbit cartridge
Japanese title : Lennus
Turn based combat
Review by Rachel

Mystic Quest

Gameboy Japan/US/UK
1991 Square
Japanese Title- Seiken Densetsu
US Title- Final Fantasy Adventure
Action RPG
Review by Rachel



Yeah, this has lots of incarnations. Don't be fooled, it isn't a Final Fantasy game, nor by any stretch of the imagination is it like Mystic Quest on the SNES. Look at that Japanese title and you'll see that it's actually the original Seiken Densetsu, in other words the prequel to the SNES classic Secret of Mana. It's funny that. You see, it reminds me a lot of the first Zelda game on NES, in the way the screens are set out and some of the actual gameplay (item based). It'll appeal more to Zelda fans than Mana did in that respect. Square fans too will love it, it being the prequel to Mana and therefore full of references to that game - in fact some parts of Mana follow on from this. There's also all the favourites from the Final Fantasy series in Mystic Quest - Moogles, Chocobos (and the Chocobo theme music), airships, rabites - they're all here. It's a veritable feast for Final Fantasy gamers, that is if they can stand the action based gameplay.

I think though that Mystic Quest will appeal to all RPG players, as it's a really involving gaming experience. Being a Secret of Mana game it has a huge array of weapons and spells for an ARPG, plus the 'charge' that builds up for a move. As it's older and due to the fact that it's running on a Gameboy, it is more simplistic than it's sequel, demonstrating a textual item selection system rather than the rotating rings seen in Secret of Mana. I suppose the simplicity is what makes it comparable to Zelda, coupled with fact that it has certain elements of that game (kill all the nasties in a room to get an item etc etc) and although the graphics are also similar to the first Zelda the actual sprites are very Final Fantasy. Where NPC's are concerned, there are quite a few living in the villages which are scattered about the playfield, though not as many as in Mana.

As a whole Mystic Quest is a very interesting title, and should be acquired by all role playing fans. Mainly as an experience of Mana's roots (groan) and as a great little game in it's own right. But watch out for the translation, this has the worst examples of errors that I've ever seen in a game from Square - which is very unfortunate as clearer and longer conversations could have made this the best Gameboy release ever. The actual game could have been a bit longer, too.

**Story 7 Combat 8 Gamelife 5
Graphics 5 Sound 7 OVERALL 8**

This isn't actually a bad little RPG, despite the graphics which really are diabolical. The adventure is set on the alien world of Lennus, and follows the story of Chezni - a 13(!) year old student of magic. That makes a nice change, a magic user as the hero. Anyway, Chezni's in real trouble, he's just released a demon from an abandoned tower - and thus threatened the future of Lennus. Chezni must now undo his actions, well you must in any case.

I really must have a moan about the graphics, which are meant to convey the feeling of an alien fantasy - but I don't see why the trees have to look like lollipop sticks. The music does make up for it in a way, the tunes are melodic and ethereal if a bit repetitive. But this really doesn't matter all that much, what does matter is gameplay. The combat in particular is a breath of fresh air, quite a challenge has been offered by Enix. Which can get frustrating for beginners (you should see my sister play) but enthusiasts like me will

cont.. next page



Paladin's Quest (cont.)-

enjoy it. A couple of points though - there are no MP in this game, magic uses up HP. You can imagine the problems that this can cause, but often it adds to the strategy, because you have to decide whether using a spell will take off more HP than if you were to simply attack. Which could result in the assailant surviving for it's next move. Another point is the speed, when you enter a location the party members are incredibly slow in comparison to the monsters, which means you get hit first on every turn - until you've built up your speed. And though you can hire fighters in the villages, it's possible to fight through on your own merits.

What lets down the gameplay more than anything however is the plot. Again, bad translation by Enix is a problem, certain things aren't explained and there are consequently big gaps in the narrative. But there are some really stupid bits that aren't even a result of bad translation, for example at one point you stem the flow of larva from a volcano, when it drains off, the village beneath the larva is still intact - and get this - the people are still in it and alive! But gripes aside, as a whole the story flows quite well and the feelings it's meant to convey do come over to the player.

If you do see a copy of Paladin's in a shop, then I'd say yes, buy it if you're an RPG fanatic. But otherwise, consider the decision especially if you haven't played Final Fantasy II first - which Paladin's Quest obviously tries to improve on but doesn't even come close.

Story 5 Combat 7 Gamelife 6 Graphics 4 Sound 7 OVERALL 6

Phantasy Star II

Sega Megadrive Japan/US/UK
Turn based combat
Review by Steve

The first console RPG that I ever played was Phantasy Star II and it's largely responsible for my interest in the genre now. At sixty pounds it was a wallet buster but it's worth every penny.

Charged with finding out what is going wrong at a local research center you are sucked into a wholly believable game world. The plot is excellent and moves at a fair old pace. Graphics are reasonable but not outstanding but it's the game mechanics that are the attraction.

Combat is turn based and heavy on the tactics. The main criticism of the game is that it is very linear (and I mean VERY) so that you are forced along in a set pattern. Nevertheless it still stands up today as a fine example of the genre and is well worth picking up if you find it second-hand.



Phantasy Star III

Sega Megadrive Japan/US/UK
Turn based combat
Review by Steve

Phantasy Star 3 plays in an almost identical way to its predecessor, which is no bad thing but it adds a whole new slant on the RPG game by introducing generations of adventurers. At the end of the first chapter you have to choose between two girls. Your choice alters the second part of the game. This also happens at the end of the second part so in theory you have seven different ways of playing through the game and that makes for one HUGE challenge. Graphics are good as is the sound and overall this is one of the best RPGS on the machine.



**Story 9 Combat 7 Gamelife 10
Graphics 7 Sound 7 OVERALL 8**

**Story 8 Combat 7 Gamelife 8
Graphics 6 Sound 5 OVERALL 7**

Powers Kingdom

1994 Micro Cabin/Panasonic
3DO Japan/US/UK
3D Turn based combat
Review by Rachel

There's a name I like to group most RPGs under, whether action or turn based I call the genre 'narrative RPGs'. This is not a narrative RPG, because it has no narrative. It's all such a great shame, because the 3D has been implemented well in the battle sequences.

When I say there isn't a storyline, I don't mean that the storyline is bad, I mean, quite literally, that there is none. I was quite incredulous at the complete lack of NPCs in this game - there are no villages, only shops between the battlefields. The little Gundam-like characters you control have no personality. You equip them with weapons much as you'd equip a spaceship in a shoot-em-up.

I did say that the 3D combat was impressive, well I'll diversify. A lot of new strategies surface with the use of 3D, the main one being that you have the ability to plan the position of a fighter, like in Shining Force, but here it's almost like 3D chess. You can only hit an enemy next to you, and magic will only work on characters within a certain range. There's also the area of defence, vulnerable characters can be moved behind trees and other party members for protection.

The main problem with the 3D in Powers Kingdom is that the landscape is pretty bland, and you can't see for as far as you would with an overhead map. So it's easier to get lost. However a system of small battlefields is employed, each to be completed in turn over the course of the game. Like in Mystic Quest. There is no rejuvenation of enemies once you have completed an area, and therefore the progression through levels of experience is set. The same type of enemies appear time and time again, this gets boring after a while.

I won't recommend Powers Kingdom to 3DO owners, I think the best purpose it serves is as an example of a 3D RPG, and we could see similar approaches in games yet to come. I can only hope that future RPGs on 3DO, should they surface, will be blessed with a storyline. Developers take note.

Story 0 Combat 7 Gamelife 4 Graphics 7 Sound 6 Overall 4

Secret of Mana

Super Nintendo Japan/US/UK

1993 Square

16 Mbit cartridge

Japanese Title - Seiken Densetsu II (sequel to Gameboy game-see Mystic Quest)

Action RPG

Review by Rachel



A ground-breaking action role-player, Secret of Mana was THE game responsible for making the genre fashionable in the West. Receiving rave reviews Mana soared into the charts earning itself a UK release late last year. It's the story of a hero who upsets the balance of nature by pulling the Mana sword from it's stone. Banished from his village, he sets off on a journey across the world, eventually discovering his true identity.

Mana itself owes a lot of it's structure to turn-based games, with it's many equippable weapons, and stats etc. It's a middle of the road affair, which means instant appeal to devotees of either sub-genre. Don't expect compromises in gameplay though, Mana excels here, with the many spells to cast and the different attacks offered by 64 available weapons! The reason for so many weapons is that there are 3 party members (unlike other ARPGs) and it is possible for up to three players to partake in the action simultaneously! Though each person will want to play the hero all the time, it's great fun working together with your mates. An involving storyline too made it the top game of the year for me, with many NPCs all involved in their own personal battles.

Another area that impressed was Mana's aesthetics. Presentation wise Secret of Mana is beautiful, and massive with it, averaging 70 hours worth of gorgeous pastel scenery and harmonious music. Mana boasts exquisite graphical detail, especially in the villages. Regarding travel, few games rival the Mode 7 experience offered by riding on Flammie

the dragon! And this game must have the best item selection system ever to grace an ARPG, equipping a weapon is simplicity itself.

Yes Mana seems faultless, but I do have some niggles about the bosses. I think perhaps there are too many, and you can defeat some of them by casting the same spell over and over again. And the translation's a bit iffy, in that it's over-American. Sorry, but I don't yell "Way to go!" on defeating a boss and I don't think the character would either. However, I'm being fussy. The pros certainly eclipse the cons - this is yet another classic from Square, and if you missed out you have some catching up to do as a sequel is in development.

Story 9 Combat 9 Gamelife 9 Graphics 9 Sound 9 OVERALL 9

Seventh Saga

Super Nintendo US

1993 Enix

8 Mbit cartridge

Turn based combat

Review by Rachel

I'm going to be very hard on this one, even though I didn't play it to any great extent. This is the fault of the game and not my patience, the situation was this - I had a hell of a lot of other games to wade through and to put it bluntly Seventh Saga was downright boring. This could be due to it's Western origins, but honestly I myself could design a better Jap-style game than this. Lets give some examples of faults. For a start, the game incorporates a menu system for exploring and talking - like Shining Force, but unlike Shining Force key menu selections aren't also allocated to buttons on the pad. This is stupid - the SNES has six buttons for goodness' sake!

Another whinge regards the combat. It demonstrates some of the worst Mode 7 graphics ever (when the view pans down from an overhead perspective to a behind-the-party battle scene), also the fighters are limited in their style and the actual execution of moves. You do have the choice of six central players - elves, humans, a demon and a tetujin (sic) - but it would have been better to play as a good all rounder than have the pick of six decidedly specialized characters, and using this system also results in a compromised story line. The choice IS one that must be made as you're on your own for quite a while at the start - but where's the strategy here?

The graphics in Seventh Saga also present a problem. Everything is magnified, from the actual characters to the buildings. The effect is that you feel swamped by the sheer size of everything and it's easier to get lost. I did like some of the music though - but again, the SNES has six sound channels, why only use two? I'm sorry, but this is monotonous, contrived, ill-conceived trite. If, as a fan of the genre you do have this in your collection - then bag it and bin it.

Story 4 Combat 4 Gamelife 3 Graphics 6 Sound 6 OVERALL 4

Shadowrun

Super Nintendo US/UK

1993 Data East Inc. Developed by Beam Software

8 Mbit cartridge

Isometric Action RPG with logical puzzles

Review by Rachel

As it's based on the turn based books and board game you'd expect Shadowrun to be indeed, a turn based RPG. But it's not, in fact it's another action puzzler - and works well in this format. It's actually one of my favourite all-time games, and despite it's dark and moody cyberpunk setting I'd recommend it to fans of Zelda. That is, if they can throw off the cutesy garb and adopt the mantle of Jake Armatage, a futuristic semi-cyborg Shadowrunner fighting the likes of vampire cults and reactivated corpses.

In fact, Jake should be at home with those corpses, at the start of the game he wakes up in a morgue. It's your task to unravel his identity, and the identity of those who put him there in the first place. This morbid streak runs throughout the whole adventure, it makes me wonder why Nintendo allowed this game through their 'family' guidelines. Perhaps they saw sense, for once. Indeed, Shadowrun's nature is never offputting as it's storyline is one of the best ever, and even the obligatory orcs and dwarves featured in the books (and most western RPGs) don't look daft in the futuristic setting.

cont. next page-

Shadowrun (cont)-

Perhaps another unique thing I should mention - due to the very nature of the game the combat is not with swords but with guns. It's all handled very well, with multidirectional bullets and a great control system that would ordinarily be more at home with a mouse. You get the chance to recruit other Shadowrunners as the game progresses, these com-controlled characters will also fight with guns and aid you with their special abilities. Such as physically jacking into a computer so that you can fight your way through the network! This seemingly daft notion really adds to the game, as do Shadowrun's graphics which, while often simple, enhance the mood effectively. The sound is chippy at times but again, it all fits in with the tense situations.

I'd recommend Shadowrun to all RPG fans. I think that everyone will appreciate the puzzles (they're well thought out) and even those turn-based addicts who may have actually bought Shadowrun in it's original incarnations shouldn't find fault with this action outing. A classic.

BTW. If you have played the Sega version of Shadowrun then please contact me. I haven't seen it and I understand it's completely different to the SNES game. Thanks.

Story 9 Combat 9 Puzzles 9 Gamelife 8 Graphics 6 Sound 6 OVERALL 9

Shining in the Darkness

Sega Megadrive Japan/US/UK
8 Mbit cartridge
Turn based combat
Review by Steve

One of the older RPGS on the M/D but it holds its own today as one of the most accessible on the machine. You must rescue the Princess of Thornwood from the Labyrinth of Dark Sol. There are three main locations within the realm, the Castle, the Town and the Labyrinth itself.

The game is a mix of Japanese style character interaction with a good dollop of traditional dungeon hacking. The graphics are excellent throughout with some imaginative monsters patrolling the lower depths. Combat is turn based but doesn't offer much in the way of strategy-just attack, defend, run, cast spell and use item. The music and effects are very good but nothing outstanding (well it is three years old now).

The storyline moves at a fair pace but offers no real surprises. Anyone who has played a few RPGS will be right at home. One thing in its favour is a good line in humour which is sorely lacking in many an RPG.

As an introduction to the genre this is hard to beat but veterans may find it too limiting in its scope and combat.

Story 6 Combat 5 Gamelife 7 Graphics 8 Sound 7 OVERALL 7

Shining Force

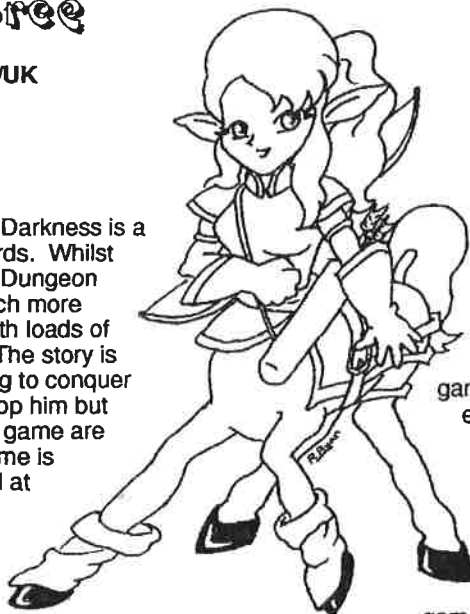
Sega Megadrive Japan/US/UK
1993 Sega
12Mbit cartridge
Turn based strategy RPG
Review by Steve

The sequel to Shining in the Darkness is a very different kettle of pilchards. Whilst the original was a traditional Dungeon Master style romp this is much more of a tactical combat game with loads of different characters to use. The story is the usual evil so and so trying to conquer the world and you have to stop him but the individual sections of the game are far more interesting. The game is split into chapters with a goal at the end of each one.

The game is viewed from a birds eye perspective for the majority of the game. When a fight breaks out though it changes to a 3-D perspective which is quite superb. Sound is, on the whole, rather disappointing with weak spot effects and some truly awful music.

A game that will not appeal to everyone with its tactics heavy approach and bewildering array of characters it is a personal favourite of mine. Having completed it four times with different teams I have no reservation in giving it top marks.

Story 8 Combat 10 Gamelife 8
Graphics 8 Sound 6 OVERALL 10



Shining Force II

Sega Megadrive Japan/US/UK
1994 Sega
Turn based strategy RPG
Review by Rachel

I knew it! I haven't recieved Steve's review of this yet, and as I absolutely had to get this 'zine out this week then you'll have to make do with mine. We'll feature Steve's comments in next issue, he's played this more than me.

First things first, the gods are certainly smiling on me lately. Get to know me and you'll learn that I *loove* animal/human hybrids and anthropomorphs. There are loads in this game. Not that I'll be biased, oh no. Shining Force II is genuinely excellent.

If you've played any strategy wargames, then you'll be familiar with the type of combat employed here. Battles are played over an area of ground (often larger than the screen), basically this means that you have to position a character before a move. So there's more tactics involved, you can surround the enemy and take out each fighter in a more specified order - I love this type of combat. Indeed, this game was the answer to my prayers - I'd been looking all over for a strategic game with a proper story to it. It looks like I was looking in the wrong place, as there is nothing like Shining Force out for the SNES.

The story concerns a young boy called Bowie, who sets off to rescue his princess after she is sucked into another dimension by a devil. When you start out on your adventure, your party consists of 3 characters, all with different abilities. Start the game on hard mode (there are four settings) and you'll face some challenging fights, which are really involving. Every move you make results in a simple but effective animation - and it's so rewarding when you strike a fatal blow.

Anyway, more of this game next issue from Steve, who should have completed it by now. It is an essential purchase though, take it from me.

Story 8 Combat 9 Gamelife 9 Graphics 8
Sound 7 OVERALL 9.5 (unconventional I know)

Soleil

Sega Megadrive Japan/US/UK

1994 Sega/Nextech

Action RPG

Review by Rachel

Soleil actually plays a lot like Spike McFang on SNES, it even has the training course at the start. It's also very cutesy and similarly full of Japanese weirdness. But, for owners of both machines Soleil represents a better buy.

You play as a young hero who receives a sword for his 14th birthday and sets off to become a brave swordfighter like his late father. Okay, older players may be bemoaning the fact that this is another game with an early-teenaged hero, but this doesn't make any difference to the gameplay. The little guy is actually very appealing - and nicely animated in the way he turns and swings his sword.

Many aspects of Soleil are borrowed from other games. For example, it has a map screen which is reminiscent of the later Mario adventures, you move from place to place by a fixed path and press A to enter that location. Once in a playfield, you can chop at bushes a la Zelda to obtain coins - but here the coins always reappear in the same place! In fact there are a lot of comparisons to Zelda, this is probably the closest you can get to that game on the Sega. Imagine a cross between Zelda, Spike McFang and Soulblazer (there's a lot of interaction with animals) and you can't go wrong. Sega fans who haven't played those games can just imagine what a great ARPG would be like, and they'd be fairly close.

Yes, I really liked Soleil. It's everything I expected and more. The puzzles have been designed well, and are mainly "push the block, hit the switch affairs" rather than item-based. You need to talk to everybody, and be prepared to go back to places you've already been to in order to solve some of the problems. The animals in the game can actually fight with you - though their animation is lousy and they don't actually do all that much other than help with some of the tasks. But never mind, it doesn't spoil the gameplay. What did spoil Soleil a bit is that it's not long enough, but then I suppose good games never are.

If you have a Megadrive, then buy this game. It isn't as good as Zelda though, so here's a piece of advice, if you don't own a SNES then obtain one as soon as you can! Failing that then there ARE a few good Megadrive RPGs, and this is one of them.

Story 7 Combat 8 Puzzles 8 Gamelife 7 Graphics 6 Sound 7 OVERALL 8

Soulblazer

Super Nintendo Japan/US/UK

Enix 8 Mbit cartridge

Action RPG

Review by Simon

I had heard great things about this game. I'd hear that it was a landmark. A cult classic. I'd heard that people had started playing it and gone straight through the night to complete it. I don't know... maybe my expectations were a little too high because I found it very flat. The levels were all samey. You could only travel in four directions. The premise of the game, a hero that could talk to the souls in any life form from goats to cupboards was great... but they never really used it to full effect.

Anyway, a few months later I went back to the game having run out of RPGs to complete. This time I came to the game unassuming and laid back. And, in my relaxed state of mind, I had a prolonged moment of clarity and started to notice things about the game. The communing with souls thing, for instance; it really got quite fun after a while. Some of the puzzles involved zipping in and out of people's dreams. As you killed more and more monsters, you freed more characters to go back and forth between. There were, in fact, a wealth of hidden items and although the levels were linear you had to travel back and forth between them to find all the items.

Most of all, I realised something about the characters and the world itself. The animal village on level 2 - it wasn't tacky, it was quite sweet. The mermaid city was eventually beautiful, and I could have stayed in Dr Leo's house (where all life forms from mice up to potted plants live in happy commune) for hours. All in all, the game possessed CHARM. In bucketfuls. It OOOZED it. It was action RPG meets Alice in Wonderland, and a happy, colourful time was had by all.

There may be little plot surprises, but it's all done with such a sense of... loveliness. You fight on coral reefs, in swampland shrines and (shrunk down to the size of a teacup) against toy soldiers in a model town. I became so embroiled with the spirit of the game, I think I ended up liking it more than Secret of Mana, despite it's apparent age, and if you're willing to forget yourself for a moment.

Oh, and I finally got to bed at three in the morning with the happy feeling of a man who knows that while he'll be shattered the next morning doesn't have to lose any sleep over what's past that next boss.

Story 5 Combat 6 Puzzles 8 Gamelife 6 Graphics 7.5 Sound 7 OVERALL 8

The Story of Thor

Sega Megadrive Japan/US/UK

24Mbit cartridge

Action RPG

Review by Steve

Okay so this is not really a full on RPG but it is a great game. A cross between Zelda and Streets of Rage this is one of Sega's finest hours.

The story is cliched as always and involves hunting down an armling to stop demonic megalomaniacs from taking over the world. The big difference here is that you use Streetfighter style special moves to kick monster butt and special weapons like fire spewing crossbows. Magic is available in the game but only after you find the guardians of each specific type of magic.

The game plays exceptionally well with the combat moves being easy to learn. Graphically this is outstanding with a huge amount of nasties and Boss monsters to beat the living daylights out of. The music and sound effects are also excellent.

So this is probably the best looking game on the system and it plays better than most too. It does, however, have a few faults. Firstly, it is linear so you have to play in a set path with little deviation. More importantly it is quite easy to get through with only one or two stumbling blocks. Criticisms aside it is an excellent game and comes heartily recommended.

Story 5 Combat 9 Gamelife 7 Graphics 10 Sound 9 Overall 9

The Twisted Tales of Spike McFang



Japan/US Super Nintendo
1994 BPS/Naxat/RED
Japanese title - Dracula Kid
8 Meg cartridge
Action RPG
Review by Rachel

Spike is an old acquaintance of mine, me having played his old PC Engine outing 'Son of Dracula' (a platformer in the PC Kid vein). He's a vampire with a taste for tomatoes and a penchant for mobile phones. How odd. Indeed, I was looking forward to this one, being a big fan of RED's 'Engine releases.

Spike McFang will certainly appeal to connoisseurs of Japanese animation.

This game is WEIRD, from Spike himself to his mode of transport, and the very inhabitants of the isles of Vladamasco. It's all unmistakably Japanese, big bold and bright with gorgeous locations and lovable little characters - Spike walks (waddles) along like the cutest ever games sprite that he is. Bar moogles, ooh, I'm going daft again. Combat's a treat, Spike has a hat that he throws at the nasties, and spell cards (raifus?) with a wide range of effects.

Despite the obvious plus points though, I can't really recommend Spike McFang as a game worth buying. Don't get me wrong, it has pounds of appeal, but is not without it's shortcomings. That's actually the whole problem, it's just too damn short. Whether this is due to it's 8 bit size I don't know - but literally, you could finish this in an afternoon, and no doubt you'll be cursing at the fact that you can't physically go in the houses (Remember Lagoon? Ys?) The plot's bad- linear and giving little incentive to continue. But you will plod on, and you'll complete this too - which is no great feat.



Story 4 Combat 8 Gamelife 4 Graphics 9 Sound 8 OVERALL 6

Warriors of the Eternal Sun

Sega Megadrive US/UK
Western style RPG
Review by Steve

Based on the Eye of the Beholder style computer games this multi character RPG is a fair attempt to convert the game style to console. Combat is a little weak however with a single character being easier to win the game with than the four you are supposed to have. Graphics are quite good but there is a distinct lack of variety in the monsters. The story is convoluted to say the least but just about holds your attention.

If you enjoy the computer based versions of this game then you will certainly enjoy this. Unfortunately this game will only take a maximum of a week for any experienced player to polish it off with little in the way of puzzles or interaction. A good stepping stone into the genre but not essential.

Story 5 Combat 5 Gamelife 4 Graphics 7 Sound 6 OVERALL 6

Ys Book I & II

PC Engine/Turbo Grafx CD
1987, 1988 FALCOM US Version 1989 Hudson Soft
Action RPG with logical puzzles
Review by Rachel

While regarded as a classic and a landmark in action role-playing (even Zelda III borrows aspects from it), this excellent and huge CD based game won't be an option for most players because you need a PC Engine to play it. It's actually two games in one, comprising the first two games in the Ys series.

Adol Christin (the hero throughout the saga of Ys) arrives in the town of Esteria only to be given a challenge by a mystic named Sara. His mission is to find the six lost books of Ys, and to return them to six statues of the prophets, in the holy land of Ys itself. The first game concerns itself with the collection of the books, and after you have defeated the demon 'Dark Fact', an impressive 'ending' transports you to Ys Book II, set in the mysterious land of Ys.

Zelda aficionados will love this game, with it's puzzles and strategic ways of dealing with bosses. It's less concerned with pure action than Zelda is though, you'll find yourself building up your experience levels and counting those hit points like you would with any good turn-based game. Combat is a bizarre hybrid of genres, you walk into an enemy and the outcome of this depends on your level of experience and weapon equipped, also the strength of the foe. All in real time though, and all using just the D pad. However, monsters attack back and some will even chase you. You don't get any magic spells until the second game, but even then there's only one offensive spell (Toba's Fire Magic).

The story is a basic but highly enjoyable and often gripping account of good versus evil, with religious overtones. I especially liked the bit in Ys II, where you can use Gemma's magic to change into a 'Goon' (A member of the Evil Forces), and talk to all the other goons that you were fighting before. An awful lot of people swarm around the villages, check out their reactions when you confront them in Goon mode! The narrative is quite linear, but everything fits together so well that you don't notice. Graphics are very basic but effective, and the animated interludes when you meet a key character, and also the start and end sequences will be pleasing to fans of Japanese anime. Although the animation isn't as good as say, Cosmic Fantasy II. What will impress though, is the CD music played in locations such as dungeons, temples and forgotten mines. From ambient and harmonious melodies to the dread- inspiring chords played in dangerous locations, Ys delivers every time. A classic, but maybe not worth buying a sadly dying games platform to play it on- unless you're a fanatic.

Story 8 Combat 7 Puzzles 8 Gamelife 7 Graphics 4 (not including anime interludes) Sound 8 OVERALL 8

N E W R E L E A S E

Now to hand over to Simon Dominguez, who's been baying away at Ogre Battle

Ogre Battle - The March of the Black Queen

New US Super Nintendo release

1993 Enix

Japanese Title - Ogre Battle 5 - The March of the Black Queen

Turn based strategy wargame

There's few things I like better in life than the popular phenomenon. You know, Tetris, Final Fantasy, Lemmings, the usual stuff. When I look at games like Final Fantasy VI, it's nice to look back at games that my friends and I lost equal amounts of sleep over (one family I knew finally gave up on Lemmings at about two in the morning only to have Dad back down at five). Ogre Battle, I was led to believe, was one such phenomenon.

The first blow to the ego that Square and Enix fans will have to deal with is a lack of direct control over each character. Don't be put off, though; you can choose the team's target and it would be unrealistic to control every fighter as they are much less complicated than RPG major characters. Once you get used to this fact, you travel about a small map and beat back a small army before taking on the end of level boss. Different creatures travel over different terrains, and strategies can be built up to lure the opposing army away then pop round the back and nuke their boss. Various hidden cities can be found containing characters who will fight with or against you depending on their personal motives.

The trouble is that each level is small. So small in fact that you go through a level, fight battles, form plans, solve puzzles and meet people, then you're immediately confronted with another level looking pretty samey. Can you be bothered to do it all again? Not for long, I predict - the puzzles are just too much effort for too little reward. Out of the fourteen levels I played I found little variation and only one in which a puzzle was necessary to access the boss.

This was a great disappointment to me. I was prepared for a straight wargame with Enix-crafted story elements. The characters ARE beautiful and carefully crafted, but they are never developed. Once recruited they disappear into the ranks. They are also introverted - once you liberate their map the emergency is over and most of the puzzles disappear, killing dead the wonderful "come back and do it later" puzzle element that makes Japanese RPGs so super.

The wargame side of the game is far from perfect, too. Small scaleness is a recurrent problem throughout the game - there is so little room to manoeuvre on the map that it's all you can do to run around the other units, and each level usually ends up as a stand-up fight until one side is obliterated anyway. Mo-no-to-nous.

Another problem is that the system takes the term "skirmish system" to ridiculous extremes. After a few combat rounds, the game decides upon a winner and the losing side is thrown back - even with bosses! There are no fights to the death straight off in Ogre Battle; by order.

Also, the game features a "reputation meter". This needs to be full to finish the game properly. You lose the "rep" by fighting units weaker than you because - get this - "People don't like a bully." Oh I see. There's this evil empire who murder, conquer, torture maim and exploit the people for their pleasure. Still, better than a government that use unbalanced wargame banners, eh! It's SO frustrating; it punishes you for building up good characters. It goes against the whole grain of wargames - I don't want to withdraw my heroes because a few soldiers are coming any more than I want to spend an entire game getting beaten up for the sake of honour.

The instructions seem a trifle vague on this point. They claim that rep can be recovered by liberating cities using characters of high alignment, but I found no evidence of this. The only thing I found that consistently affected it was drawing bad cards from a random pack, which ALWAYS seriously damaged it.

Ogre Battle could have been great, but it's spoilt by some horrendously badly conceived rules of engagement. I can't help feeling that the hard core wargamers and the hard core RPGers who buy this game will both feel that they have been sold short.

| | | |
|-----------------|------------|--|
| Combat | 6.5 | Sure. It's great while it LASTS! |
| Story | 3 | Maybe it gets moving about level 20. Not quickly enough for me though. |
| Gamelife | 6.5 | You may lose your patience quickly. |
| Graphics | 7.5 | The characters are GORGEOUS. |
| Sound | 7.5 | Marvellous grand battle anthems. Play it on a stereo. Now. |
| OVERALL7 | | Half an RPG and half a wargame don't make a full title. |

Thanks Simon! After playing this myself I'd agree, it is a half and half game and devotees of either genre should try before they buy - they may just find it excellent but then again.... I did like some of the ideas in Ogre Battle though, like how at the start it gives you a moral questionnaire in order to build up your in-game personality. I also liked the tarot card system, but I'll admit it could have been done better. But the game IS getting on a bit, it just goes to show that we should get these classics translated more quickly! I'd rather have had the Dragon Quest compilation than this one though - are we EVER going to get this game Enix?

Reader Ads

Right! Here's something I'm hoping to run on a permanent basis, to enable readers of Role Call to advertise free. Adverts accepted in the following categories- For Sale, Wanted, Swaps, Contacts. No trade ads, unless companies are prepared to offer Role Call some help in the way of free game loans etc. For now though, here's some of my own ads (my number's at the front of the fanzine).

Wanted

50/60 Hz Amiga screen grabber, pref. AGA. Must be reasonably priced.

Wanted

Any PD Pagestream material of use to Role Call, fonts especially. Must be free, will return disk.

Contacts

What do you think of Warren Tokuda's art then? He deserves some credit for it, and if you'd like to drop him a note, then I'll forward any mail - I'm sure he'd appreciate it. Send letters, also a first class stamp to the address at the front of the fanzine. Which will cost you less than posting a letter directly to the US!

Wanted

FF1, the original US NES version to run on a Tristar. Also, if you have any other such games of interest, call me now. Manual/boxes not totally necessary.

Wanted

Japanese tutors, software, for Amiga - PD or otherwise. Will pay good price for commercial software.

Global Standards

A guide to playing imported games

Right, here's the scenario. You see a great new RPG in a magazine and think "Well that's just my type of game." You rush off to your local shop to buy it, only to be told that it isn't out in the UK. Ever happened? Some of us would give up there, others (owning a converter) would ring up the grey import shop and order an imported copy. Now suppose that's what you did. Suppose that when you got the game, and eagerly plugged it into your machine, you discovered that it still wouldn't work - having been encoded to detect your adaptor. This may have happened to you, and basically you're faced with the choice of sending the game back, or buying the latest adaptor - "Guaranteed to work 100% with all new imports!" But that'd mean more expense, and an array of glitches associated with these things. It just isn't on, is it? And neither is your machine - until the next UK release that is.



This little guy is chuffed with his new import game - and rightly so.

All is not lost however, just consult this guide. It's practically all you need to know about unauthorised RPG gaming, we can't let those corporate empires get us down can we? Look at the general guide, then the guide to your machine - or the one you're thinking of buying. Hopefully it'll provide the best help available.

Japanese RPGs

There are hundreds of RPGs in Japan. The genre is extremely popular there, the games are sold in their thousands. The trouble is, the Japanese have got this idea that Westerners just don't like RPGs, which until recently was true as a whole. Now though, RPGs are catching on - indeed the gaming trend at the moment is roleplaying. We want those RPGs, and we're starting to get them - one by one they are going through the long process of translation. The trouble is, we won't ever see the old classics (such as Dragon's Quest) that started the popularity of the genre off. I'm sure some of you more avid fans out there have tried wading through a raw Japanese language RPG, but then you lose the storyline. So how about learning Japanese? Indeed, this is an avenue I myself am looking down, albeit an incredibly long one, it could take me ten years to grasp the language. And will I really care for those old games then? Also there's the problem of finding the right course, most only teach Romanisation of the language and not the actual Japanese forms of writing. Generally learning Japanese is fraught with problems and it's best to make do with translated RPGs - though even this can prove difficult for the British gamer. In fact, even if you did speak Japanese, you still be faced with the same problems as those of us wanting to play the US versions of games. So how can we overcome the difficulties caused by incompatibility, indeed why are our British machines incompatible with those used in Japan and the US?

NTSC vs PAL

The system that is used for all video equipment in America and Japan is called NTSC, and runs at 60Hz (the refresh rate of the screen). Our system (PAL) is slightly slower, running at 50Hz. Consoles too run at these speeds, the 50Hz rating on a UK machine means that it's 17.5% slower than it's US/Japanese counterparts. PAL is technically superior though, due to it's higher definition - but you won't be thinking that when you're trying to use an NTSC cart on a PAL machine.

One problem we have with UK consoles, even with official games, is borders. These borders - at the top and bottom of the screen - make all the graphics look squashed, for example, circles appear as ovals. Borders are due to the UK PAL system having more horizontal lines than NTSC - there are lines left over when any console (with US/Japanese origins) running in PAL is being used. This applies to all official UK Segas, Nintendos etc. There are ways of getting rid of borders, for example, certain makes of TV (eg. Sonys) and computer monitors have dials that turn to alter the size of the screen. There isn't any point in buying one of these for this purpose and only though, as you'd still want to play the latest US games - and your PAL console would still refuse to work with them. Even with converters some games still won't work - as I said, newer releases are encoded to detect a PAL signal or the existence of such a device. The companies don't do this just for a lark, they do it because they're bast- er, to make money. You see, with all electrical equipment and generally, everything else costing more in Europe than in the rest of the modern world, European gamers will pay more for their games than consumers in Japan and the USA (mugs aren't we). When you buy an imported game you are lining the pockets of the importer, and Nintendo/Sega don't get as much as they would if you'd bought the UK version - so obviously they want to curb unofficial gaming. You'd think a solution would be to release the PAL versions earlier, trouble is most European gamers only ever buy two or three carts, hmm I wonder why? Because of this though, the corporates can actually make vast amounts of money by releasing a lot of games but only a few different titles, more in fact than if they were to release more titles - and for less effort, see what I mean? So generally we only get what sells in the US, popular stuff like Mario and other platformers. But rules were made to be broken and the system is there to be kicked, why should we go without perfectly good games anyway?

How to get the most out of a console.

Basically, new NTSC cartridges check for a 60 Hz signal before working. If the machine is 50Hz, you'll probably get a message stating that the game will not work on it. How do you get round this?

One solution, a sensible if extravagant one, is to buy a US machine. This will ensure full compatibility with every game out in the States, and running in a full screen display too. However be warned, you do need to have the right TV for such a console, ie. one which will run at 60 Hz. These TVs are available officially in the UK, if you ask for a TV with a SCART socket then you can't go far wrong - but try it with your console first as some SCART TVs can't read a 60Hz display (I wish that somebody had told me this before I bought my PC Engine). You'll also need a SCART lead for your console, and a UK regulated power adaptor to run it from the mains.

The best solution though is to get a conversion done to your existing machine. A few importers provide this service - find a reputable one though! During conversion the machine's display is speeded up to 60Hz and any protection that detects import carts is bypassed. With a converted console you can use any US/Japanese cart and never need to change your adaptor, you'll also enjoy a borderless display. Some conversions incorporate a switch that flicks the display back to 50Hz so that you can still use any PAL carts, and it's also possible to switch the machine on at 60Hz and flick it back to 50Hz- which fools the cartridge and means that you can still use a 50 Hz TV.

For a more specialized view of the situation, read the guide for your particular machine.

Super Nintendo

The best choice for RPG players. There are more RPGs on this machine than any other, and a lot of the best of these have been translated into English. And on the shelves now - in America. We hardly get any RPGs for the SNES in the UK, and those that we do get are always action based. What do we have to do in order to play the American games?

Firstly, you could buy a converter. The best options here are those by Dattel, they are always up to date, and I personally have never had any problems with the company. The latest adaptor from Dattel actually works with Final Fantasy III, the best RPG ever (hardly any others do, so be careful). But you still get glitches, due to the fact that you are still running the game on a PAL machine, and you have those awful borders to contend with. Plus the fact that Nintendo are the worst company for encoding new games with protection - you haven't any guarantee that future games will work.

This also goes if you buy a US console, in the case of UK games anyway. Nintendo actually encode new British cartridges so that they will not work on an American machine - if you wanted to buy UK games for your SNES, then tough luck, it'd serve you right for buying an imported console (this is Nintendo's attitude not mine).

Where actual hardware conversions are concerned then this is probably the best road to take with the SNES. A lot of companies do SNES conversions, try those that sell imported games. Oh yes, as I said in the game review, Final Fantasy III will work on a converted SNES - I know this because my SNES has been converted! I would like to know though, if anyone has had any problems running FFIII on a converted SNES at 50Hz, if so (or indeed if not) then give me a ring.



...Oops! Looks like an allergic reaction to PAL.

Sega Megadrive

Sega are really slow for translating Japanese games, there are hardly any on the machine. However, those that are released in the States are generally released over here at the same time, in fact, I would only recommend buying a 60 Hz machine to somebody who wants to play Sega CD RPGs, these NEVER get released over here. There are a few out in the US, most notably Lunar and Vay, and Lunar 2 and Shining Force CD are due out soon! These games WILL work on a Mega CD, but only using a CDX adaptor - available from importers. Also, there's the problem with the sound, it's played at the right speed from the CD, while the images run at the PAL speed of 50Hz. So nothing is in sync, which is a real problem with dubbed animation.

I would recommend getting a conversion done on a Megadrive if only to speed it up and get rid of borders. But - the converted system I'm using at the moment has an AWFUL display, I have to use my PC Engine colour enhancer with it! Which brings me to that machine, a favourite of mine.

PC Engine

NEC's top little console has the worst ever record of UK releases, NO UK games have ever been released on it because the actual console has NEVER been released over here! This is due to it's bad track record in the States, I don't understand why they didn't like it over there as most people I know with a PC Engine have fallen in love with the machine. You can spot an 'Engine otaku a mile off, they do things like compare ground-breaking new releases to PC Engine classics, and inevitably say "This is an old 'Engine game" when presented with a conversion. Oh yes, and cover the ageing console in their fanzine. Who, me?

Generally, to RPG players wanting to buy a PC Engine in order to play the first incarnation of Ys, I would say "Don't bother, borrow mine." This is certainly the case if you are prepared to write (or draw) something of interest for this fanzine, and also pay for the postage. Otherwise, get out your wallet and hunt down an American Turbo Duo (US PC Engine with CD ROM), often these machines come with the US translation of Ys and some other games in the package. Make sure the machine has a SCART output though, or it won't even work on a 60Hz SCART TV! You'll also need a colour enhancer - a SCART lead which alters the palette of the PC Engine display to how it should be (the 'Engine doesn't like running on a UK TV). Of course, you'll have to have a 60 Hz TV, converted 50Hz 'Engines are rare and suffer from the same speech sync problems as with the Mega CD (outlined above).

Hell, this is getting complicated, give me a ring for more details if you're interested in this machine as it defies textual description.

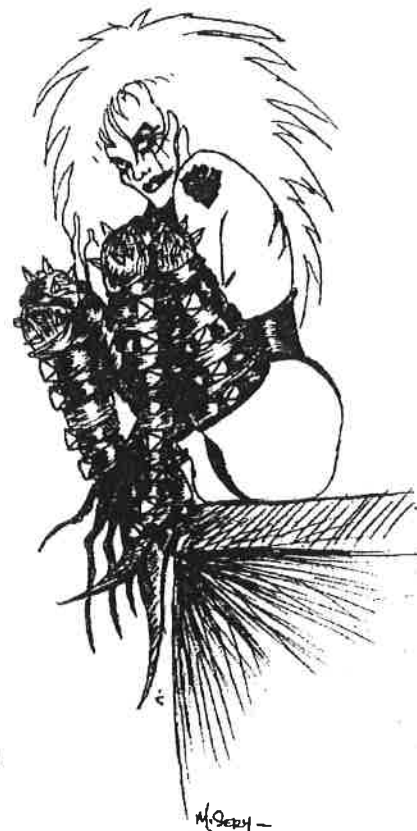


Poor guy - he should have got his SNES converted.

Right, well that just about wraps it up. If any of you out there are interested, I'm going to try and get the details on how to do your own 60 Hz conversions, to feature in a future issue of Role Call. Let me know what you think - my address and 'phone number are on the inside cover of the fanzine. Also, if you need to know anything else about playing imported games then I'd be glad to advise you.

Glossary of terms

- - Generally offered in conversation to demonstrate lack of response from a character. Or in combat to indicate silence status.
- Anthropomorphism** - A term to describe the use of animals demonstrating human behaviour.
- Antidote** - Cures a poisoned character. In some games an antidote acts as a cure for all adverse status, such as Zombie etc.
- Black Magic** - Usually means evil magic. But can mean offensive magic performed by the party on a foe, obviously for good reasons.
- Calm** - See silence.
- Chocobo** - A cute ostrich-like bird which occurs regularly in Final Fantasy games as a means of safe transport.
- Confused** - A state which causes a fighter to attack all other characters, including him/her self and fighters on the same side. Usually brought on by a spell.
- Cursed** - When a weapon or item is cursed, using it will have an adverse effect. A fighter can be cursed, resulting in their actions causing harm to their party.
- Defend** - To ward off attack. Some games allow the fighter to defend another character.
- Elixir** - A potion which recovers HP considerably, usually up to 100%
- Evade** - To randomly evade a blow. Evade is also a factor in the measurement of a fighter's general prowess, your evade rating shows how likely you are to dodge an enemy attack.
- Experience** - As you fight, you will gain experience points resulting in progression through the levels of experience. Reaching a new level automatically means an increase in total HP and other measures of prowess such as Intelligence, Vigor etc.
- Fighter** - Any member of your party, or the assailants'. OR a title given to a character who is proficient in physical combat.
- Herb** - Generally accepted name for an item which recovers HP.
- HP** - Abbreviation for Hit Points OR Health Points, which denote the amount of life force you possess.
- Luck** - The factor which decides what percentage of your attacks will succeed (depending on the Evade levels of the fighter on the receiving end).
- Mana** - A magical force which exists for good purposes only.
- MP** - Can be taken as - Magic Points, Magic Power or even Mana Points. Whichever, this indicates the amount of magic you have left.
- Metamorph** - A character, like Karn in Breath of Fire, who can change into another form. Or the physical act of changing to another form.
- Moogle** - A bear/cat type creature occurring in certain Square games. Vb. To moogle - to change (a character) into a moogle using a spell. Moogle status - (In Secret of Mana) generally incompetent in battle.
- Muddled** - See confused.
- Mute** - See silence.
- NPC** - Non Player Character, ie. any character in the story who you have no control over, such as villagers and shopkeepers.
- Parry** - To defend (yourself).
- Party** - Your team of adventurers.
- Paladin** - A holy and highly revered knight.



- Priest** - As an NPC, a character who cures the unconscious, lifts curse and (in some games) saves your position. As a party member, any user of white magic only.
- Reflect** - To cause a spell to bounce back and hit the user/user's side. A character can have a reflect status, which is usually temporary. Sometimes reflect will only work with a type of spell, such as fire magic etc. Sometimes, items of armour can offer reflection against certain spells.
- Spells** - In most RPGs any spells cast use up a given amount of MP. Some games also offer weapons which will give the effect of a spell without using MP.
- Status** - Your current condition, ie. healthy, unconscious, poisoned, transmorgified etc. Or your position, given by your current ratings.
- Silence** - A fighter with silent status can't perform magic until the condition is cured. Silent status itself is usually brought on by a spell.
- Stunned** - Unable to move. Or can mean unconscious, depending on the game.
- Transmorgify** - To change into another form, usually through a spell
- Turn based** - A term to describe an RPG or strategy wargame which offers battle where the characters each have turns, and the moves are specified by commands given by the player. A turn based game can be either a video game or paper and pen based like the TSR adventures.
- Unconscious** - Technically dead, a state from which a character can only recover by the use of a spell or item. In some games an unconscious character can be revived by sleeping or a visit to a priest. When all party members are unconscious then the game is over and you will usually be returned to the last save point.
- War game** - A game with turn based combat and extra strategies such as the placement of armies etc.
- Western RPG** - Any RPG produced in the English speaking world, generally characterized by the lack of a pre-defined story line.
- White magic** - Any good magic, generally used to heal characters. Usually white magic has adverse effects on undead foe such as ghosts and zombies.
- Wizard** - A male or female, good or evil magic user.
- Zero HP** - Unconscious status.
- Zombie** - An undead, evil character. Also a condition, where the player loses their control over the party member affected.



Next issue...

Hopefully next issue we'll have some reader input, this means we want your letters! If you don't ask we can't provide. Write to the address given at the front of the 'zine. Anybody actually wanting to contribute an article, games review or artwork to Role Call should call me first, and tell me what it is they can do. I would especially like some game tips to go into the next issue, preferably unpublished ones, so if you think you've found a secret bit in any game than don't hesitate to write or call me - I'd be really interested. Requests for help are also welcomed and will be answered in our advice section, unless we get stumped too!

Definitely going in Issue 2 of Role Call are all the latest game reviews, and maybe some previews of the latest Japanese games, should anyone be prepared to loan us these. Already underway is a guide to Sega CD games, which were omitted from this issue due to lack of equipment - ie. I've only just bought my Sega CD last week! Hopefully this guide will include a review of Lunar II, if it gets released in time.

Next issue will also see the real start to the Sembazuru saga, possibly a full A4 sized story will feature. We may be seeing more work from Warren Tokuda also, and perhaps some other artists will see fit to contribute.

Anyway I hope to hear from you soon, I really am hoping that you enjoyed this issue of Role Call as much as I enjoyed putting it together, and that you are looking forward to the next. Support Role Call and it will go from strength to strength, perhaps even resulting in more RPGs being released in the country - well that's the intention anyway.

So, farewell for now, until the next issue - and thanks for reading.

SEMBAZURU

Prologue

Sembazuru 1995 Role Call All stories characters and artwork by Rachel Ryan

