

ROGUE CALL

Issue 4



LUNAR

Eternal Blue

EDITORIAL

The Phantasy Stars

In order of admission....

- Rachel Ryan** - Editor, writer, artist,
- Warren Tokuda** - Artist, lone warrior..
- Steve Leadbeater**- Where are you now? Steve'll have more in next issue. Sorry Steve!
- Simon Dominguez** Our favourite roguish comedian.
- Dave Sanders** - Artist, writer, the Sage of Infinite knowledge..
- Alan Chang** - Artist, Dealer in Useful Relics
- Emmeline Dobson** - Indispensable, and enthusiastic artist, writer.
- Planet hoppers*
- Alan Watson** - Writer
- Laura Watton** - Artist, writer
- Hidden Characters*
- Bob Ryan** - Printing duties
- Becky Ryan**- Back from Germany. Rats.

This publication is produced in Pagestream 2, running on an Amiga 1200 with measly 60 meg HD and knackered internal disk drive. Thanks to all concerned... wherever you may be. Role Call is devoted to the love of Final Fantasy III, and indebted to microwave dinners, caffeine, and Social Security,

Thanks to the subscribers out there. If you won't subscribe, please let us know where we're going wrong! This is YOUR fanzine remember (grief what a cliché) and we are non-profit making, so don't regard us as unapproachable.

Hi fans! (Well, fans of the genre and not of me personally). Welcome to another issue of Role Call. It will not have escaped your attention that we have a colour cover this time (hope you like it!) Bear in mind that this is a SPECIAL EDITION. We can't guarantee this will happen again, especially as we are producing this issue at a loss. The reason for the special edition is RecontanimeTed '95, the anime convention that we will be attending, where we hope to get the fanzine seen and sold. Er... so it's a publicity stunt, I admit it, okay? I'll be meeting Simon and Alan at the con, perhaps we'll have some comments on each other in next issue (no, I've never met ANY of my regular contributors in my life! Don't know what they'll make of this particular fantasy completist...)

Well, the seconds are slowly ticking down to Recon, and it's fair to say at this point (29th Oct) we nearly have things finished. I am now in the stage of suffering the usual Last Minute Desperation Attack, text is to be formatted, articles to be edited and the final amendments to be made. Oh well, when you read this, it's fairly obvious we'll have finished.

It's certainly true that reality can be stranger than fiction (or fantasy, for that matter...). This last month, there has not been a single game released for the SNES! BUT there were three new releases on Megadrive, and decent ones too. Sorry if you only own a SNES, perhaps you'll find our tips and the features helpful/interesting/both! We WERE even considering to skip an issue this time.... then people started inviting me to Recon. So you got your issue, thank the anime buffs!

One thing you will notice is lack of a news section. We ran out of space, I am sorry. Anyway, what we can say here is that Secret of Mana 2 is now out in Japan. We tried to get a review copy, but it was very last minute. Perhaps we will publish a special supplement if we do acquire the game (I'll have to nag Simon for this), or something anyway, needless to say that Issue 5 is a definite This-Monther, because of Secret of Evermore getting released any minute now in the States - and also Breath of Fire 2. Incidentally, both these games are to cross the pond in early '96, so things are looking up for those of you with PAL machines. There are still no plans to release Final Fantasy III, so your only option is still to get a conversion done. (This is not a plug!) We are still, of course, pressing for a UK release of Final Fantasy III and Chrono Trigger. We MUST have these games!

Other stuff.... the curse has struck again. My Final Fantasy music CD volume 2 (reviewed this issue - and you can see the design in the background) has got the Plague of the Eternal Judders. I think I can blame the high precision CD player, as it doesn't jump on my sisters naff Amstrad... oh well. Yeah, and my Megadrive rendered itself redundant again - I bought a new one that refused to work with my CDX. More expense.... The only machines I never have any trouble with are Super Nintendos, and I am in the profession now of taking these apart on a regular basis. Which reminds me, Super Play are going to plug my conversions. It's going to rain SNESs any minute, and I guess this will happen while I'm at the convention!

Anyway, I'm gonna leave this with you now. Enjoy this month's foray into the realms of fantasy....

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Prices - £1.20 each issue
£7.00 six issues

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Insure your machines, right?



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Okay..... here we are with Issue 4! Some admissions of guilt first, we did not have much material this time due to lack of new releases. We also made sure this ish had more artwork in it to give our artists a good outlet to be displayed at the convention. You'll notice that Sembazuru has a two-page spread, this is also due to lack of subject matter. HOWEVER. We are still producing a somewhat larger 'zine than our original Issue 1, and you have my guarantee that our page count will never go lower than 24. We STILL have work left over, but it tied in too much with our coverage this month, those who sent work and were guaranteed publication can expect their articles, etc to appear in a future issue.

Again, if you send work, it's preferable that it's typed and IF POSSIBLE on a PC (720K) or Amiga disk (I hate resorting to secretarial duties!) Artwork is always welcomed, but must be in ink. Still no colour, please! All originals will be sent back, but you must be prepared for a delay here!

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Observation of the month - Our Warren should be working for Square.....

New Release

Lunar : Eternal Blue

Sega CD Japan/US
1994 GameArts 1994/5 Working Designs
Turn based combat
Review by Rachel, art by Emmeline

"Oh my Hiro, not far away now..."

Yes, and finally, after Role Call has been through two Megadrives and THREE Mega CDs, set 1000 years after the War of the - oops, I mean Alex's quest, Lunar II is with us. But I've a feeling I've been down this road before. Yes, I do believe I'm standing at a crossroads now - somewhere between it's predecessor and Final Fantasy III, is Eternal Blue the icing on the cake which will convince you to splash out on that redundant Mega CD? Will you savour its delights, or gag on the 'witty' translation?

The first thing that will strike you about Eternal Blue is it's animation. Finally a Sega-CD game which hits the heights attained by the PC Engine in it's heyday. Look at this intro, it's 'Ys style hieroglyph credits meets (mild) demon anime' - foreboding indeed, are we sure this is Lunar? We are met with a holy vision, a beautiful girl - this is Lucia, and Lucia is Terra right from the moment she floats out of her crystal abode. Cue horrifying vision, the world of Lunar (the Silver 'Star') is crushed in a cascade of blood. Straight from the Blue 'Star', Lucia is determined to put things right - but why are so many people against her?

Then meet Hiro. Hiro is the central character here. We get the feeling that Hiro is a carefree kind of guy, by the way he makes his formal introduction while being chased by 10 foot fireball demons. Floating ominously above his shoulder is another little fireball - his little pet dragon, Ruby. What's that sensation? I do believe it's deja-vu. But Ruby is female, ribbon clad, and you could say that this makes her even more annoying than her predecessor, Nall. Nall himself is in this game - prepare yourself for a superb plot twist here. The story itself follows a fight against many evils - or are they evil? We have Commander Leo (hunting Lucia down, but his intentions might be for the greater good), the Cult of Althena (pah!), Althena herself (why has the goddess seemingly switched sides?), and this malevolent character called Zophar. And others. Sometimes this story gets quite complicated and you lose the gist. The awful Americanisms don't help.

But, back to the explanations. I'm sorry I'm hinting so much at the similarities to FFIII, but it was bound to be said, I mean, Commander Leo? Lunar II though, is actually a quite different, still brilliant, game. Look at it this way, our front cover copies its graphical style, with it's bold colours. Where FFIII boasts an opera, Lunar II has a carnival, that says it all really. It DOES methinks, parody FFIII on purpose, with a comic approach (though serious plot) which isn't entirely due to WD's nonsensical Western scripting. Some of the animation scenes are superb. There's a scene at the carnival where Hiro and Ronfar are jostling for a look at Lucia getting changed, karate queen Jean appears and cracks 'em a blow that sends them both into orbit at the same time. My kind of humour, I'll say. You'll have to ignore the American text/dubbing, because it is,



to understate, not good. Read your own story into it, and if you're a purist - beware. We can do without the references to Prozac and American gameshows, thanks WD.

Moving on to the combat. Basically, it's in the style of Lunar, the original - but improves on it to good effect. Of course there are the position-influenced battles like in the first game, but the spells are better. You have the obligatory elemental magic, like Lemina's array of spells. You have 'technique' magic (a la Chrono Trigger) such as Hiro's extremely useful Poe sword - which is available from the start of the game. You have area-orientated magic, like Hiro's Squall (random dispatch over a set range). Then there's Chance magic from the gambler Ronfar - which I used about as much as I used Setzer's chance attacks in FFIII, ie., not much. The gimmick here is that certain magics can be powered up to your own personal specification, magic EXP points learned from every fight can be 'spent' on whichever spells you want to boost. Boosting older spells results in the spells being upped a level, and ultimately in the character learning new ones. Admittedly it's all inspired by FFIII, though battles are not as well thought out. Are those pincer attacks MEANT to be easier than standard face-to-face fights? Because they are, due to our heroes having a closer range to hit the foe within.

So what of Lunar II as a whole? Is it worth buying that Mega CD for? As you can probably guess, I personally enjoyed this game. Because its so heavily anime inspired, and because its dubbed, my peers will probably be surprised at this. You see, and I'll say this because it has to be said, and these points can be applied to games like this - I'm a purist, and I think that American dubbing spoils things to an extent. Admittedly this is a video game, and because it's not (for the American market) aimed at anime obsessives, to be credible it had to be dubbed. So the

L-R Mystery Boy (play on and seal), Ronfar (the gambler), Lemina (the magic guild premiere), Commander Leo (of Althena's guard), Lucia (the 'mysterious' girl), Hiro (the Hero, natch), Ruby (the token fluffy thing), and Gwyn (Hiro's grandfather). Behind - Jean (the carnival dancer cum kickboxer)



Americans would enjoy it, y'see. Unfortunately the need for such games to appeal to a Western audience appears to be a license to re-write the script, and textual story. Way to go, get the gist? This is the real tragedy I hinted at before - the story of Lunar II has practically been ruined with largely ad-lib dubs and text, amateurish voiceovers (criiinge) with unacceptable US accent. Why they had to rewrite the script I don't know, there really is no excuse, and even Manga aren't this bad. My Lord, I remember reading an interview with Victor Ireland, head of WD - he said the 'writing' in Final Fantasy 'sucked', and how he'd liked to have seen it with a better writer to appeal to a US audience. Can you imagine? If Square had been this stupid? Thank heaven for small mercies. But it doesn't solve this particular tragedy - Lunar II is even worse than the original for its bad translation. The beautiful, underlying story here is spoiled by WD's script. Yes, Ireland, it sucks. I'm still going to give the game a high mark - because I can overlook the travesty and I'm appreciative of what the game is underneath - that's how I enjoyed playing it through. Also, I'm aware that the translation won't bother some people half as much as it bothered me - I know that Dave for instance would ignore it. And all in all, the gameplay is still there, the animation is top notch and Game Arts ought to be applauded.



I'm going to learn Japanese, now.

- Story** 8 In theory. But spoiled by ad-lib translation.
Combat 9 FFIII style, with a twist - strategic positioning.
Gamelif 9 Provides a lengthy quest.
Graphics 9.5 The most gorgeous bitmap animes yet. Colourful in-game landscapes define a unique style.
Sound 8.5 Nice in-game tunes. Good transition of song lyrics to English - shame about the barely audible words. Dubbing ain't great.
OVERALL 9 Ideal for anime fans? Damn shame that anime fans are the most likely people to find the translation intolerable.

Non-game Reviews

Final Fantasy VI Original soundtrack - Japan Only
3 Audio CDs
1994 Square
Review by Rachel

Firstly, I'd like to say thanks to Alan for getting hold of this for me. I'll also make the point that this is a real collectors piece, for die-hard fans - though no doubt all will love listening to the tunes on these CDs. At over forty pounds though, consider if you would really be best served with a new game (or getting that conversion done so you can play FFIII itself properly!)

What I have in front of me here (and now blaring on my CD player) is a boxed set which comprises 3 CDs encompassing all 61 of the tunes in Final Fantasy VI (or FFIII, to use the game's Western name). This is not the only CD collection of Final Fantasy VI - there is another set of 3 CDs which boasts orchestral renditions of the popular themes. This particular set though is the original SNES soundtrack digitally preserved on the silver disc. Naturally it's a real treat. Inside the shiny card sleeve we have a 'double' CD box holding the discs, plus a booklet giving the titles of all the tracks (in English and Japanese), thoughts from the minds of the composers (ditto) and original art. Perfectly presented. The CDs themselves are high quality visually, each displaying the same Final Fantasy design (in slight relief) in different pastel colours. Sorry to go on, but I did pay over £40 and the sight of this wondrous little package certainly registered no disappointment.

As for the music - what can I say? You should know by now just how exquisite the tunes in FFIII are. For SNES music, this is the best there has ever been. It doesn't even SOUND like SNES music - it sounds like it's been produced with proper instruments. And the CDs are all full - that's what you get for your money with Square. It makes me wonder though, how they crammed all this and the rest of the game into a 24 Mbit cart! And all those so-called HUGE CD-ROMs out there too.



ORIGINAL SOUND VERSION

You might be wondering what point there is in buying CDs full of in-game music. The truth is, this is a joy to listen to, and it's possible to be more appreciate of the music when it's easy-listening and you're not in the middle of what is often a high paced game. It's also very relaxing to be able to sit back and listen to all the music played back to you, whatever you may be doing. I'm one of those people, I'm afraid, who leaves FFIII on 'attract-mode' just to listen to the theme music while I work (on this fanzine). What a treat to be able to hear ALL the tunes in order, and to be able to program in my favourite tracks! They're all here, the Chocobo theme (Techno de Chocobo) the Opera (comprising four tracks - I was karaoke-ing along here, ashamed to admit), Cayenne's theme (whistled this one) and of course Forever Rachel (la-la-ed it to the sheer distraction of everyone).

If there's any criticism to be made it's the fact that the sound quality does seem to be better coming from the SNES through a stereo set-up, but that could be due to visual aesthetics heightening the mood. From the CD, the rain in the Zozo theme (it's called Slam Shuffle) sounds rather like bad hissing. Certain high notes cut out in places, but it could be that my stereo is on the blink again. However, it's true that the best sound always comes from the source, the source in this case is the SNES - but being CD recordings these are the best you are ever going to get. Consider this - when your FFIII cartridge has long since perished (it will happen, if only to the battery backup) these CDs will provide you with the best nostalgia for many years to come.

Final Fantasy III. Live it. Breathe it. Play it. In more ways than one...

New Release (UK)

Phantasy Star IV

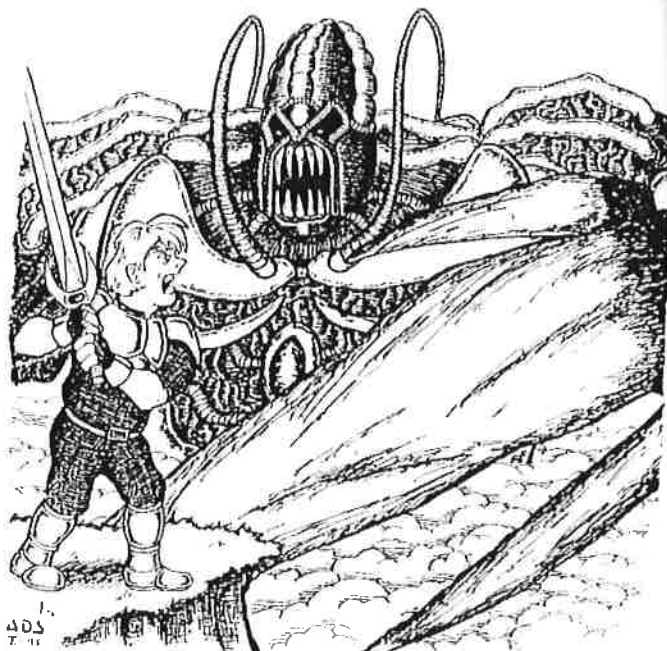
Sega Megadrive Japan/US/UK

Sega 1993/94/95

24 Mbit cart

Turn based combat

Review by Dave



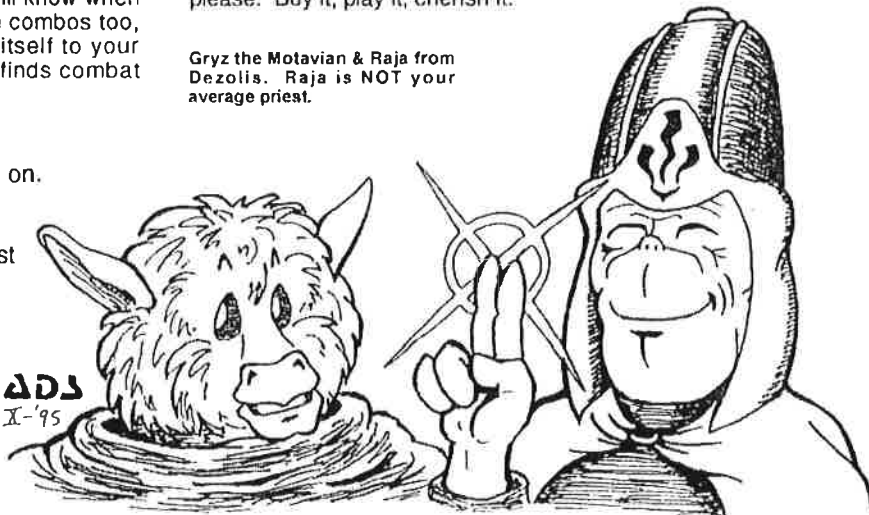
vehicles as the game continues - hop into the Land Rover and mow down everything that gets in your way. Totally brilliant!

The sheer scale of the story will also take your breath away as everything that happened in the first three games has been a training exercise up until now. Phantasy Star IV is not afraid to completely re-write the Algo history books with all the new information that gets dredged up, and it's to the writers' credit that it all hangs together so well and doesn't conflict with what has gone before. The game also takes great pride in its heritage as so many plot elements from the other three episodes turn up here as important plot points (Wren the cyborg, Lutz and the Espers, even the meercats - the big winged one was a surprise!), and are woven in so seamlessly it's as if Sega knew how the story would turn out when the series was conceived back in 1987. Although there are a few points of pure convenience in the story: "Aha! By sheer coincidence, I happen to know where to find the previously unheard-of object that will solve all our problems!" Quite. One or two of the subquests are also a bit inconsistent and illogical; how hard, should it be, for example, to find a nutritious meal on three bloody planets?

And so the game goes on, battle after battle, sub-plot after sub-plot, always leaving you hungry for more right up to the inevitable confrontation with Dark Force. And it is inevitable as Sega, in their infinite wisdom, broadcast the fact all over the box. Now I know that any Phantasy Star player with half a brain would guess at this anyway, but this is something that bugs me about a lot of RPGs. If the characters haven't a clue what they will ultimately face - and in the best games they generally don't - why on earth should the player? Though even here you're in for a shock; the time-honoured RPG device - the false climax - has been used to the full. "Oh Christ, there's even more!"

The bad news is that as the finale to a long-running saga, Phantasy Star IV may well be the last pureblood turn-based RPG the Megadrive will ever see, alas. On the other hand, the game has definitely worked its way onto the official UK release schedule - the sooner the better if you ask us. Oh, and better packaging too, please. Buy it, play it, cherish it.

Gryz the Motavian & Raja from Dezolis. Raja is NOT your average priest.



Story	9	A lot, lot more than the box lets on.
Combat	10	Dig those combos! And those vehicles! Coo-ell!
Gamelif	9	Only one ending, but the biggest game of them all.
Graphics	7	The stills and battle animation will impress you.
Sound	8	Great music, but sometimes not wholly appropriate.
OVERALL	9.5	The perfect end to a popular series.

New Release: Light Crusader

Sega Megadrive Japan/US/UK
Sega/Treasure 1995
Isometric RPG
Review by Dave

This is going to make a few people rather unhappy, as the mainstream console mags have gone 'ooh' over Light Crusader's 3D and given it really good marks. Part of our job on the other hand sometimes involves sticking pins into sacred cows, and as an RPG devotee I reckon I'm justified here. Light Crusader is good, but it ain't that good.

It does look terrific though. Bright colours, convincing animation, well-designed monsters and some awesome bosses - the giant scorpion is amazing. The 3D works even better than Landstalker's ever did, because every sprite casts a shadow. Now you can judge where those floating platforms really are, and the finely-tuned control lets you push yourself just that exact distance to land on them. Unfortunately the shadows flicker badly if there are several on-screen, and that's a little off-putting when it comes to finely tuned jumps. Combat is certainly plentiful with a wide variety of magical attacks close to hand and monster tactics to suss out, while the plethora of puzzles easily matches up to any you'll find elsewhere. All manner of brain teasers are here, from simple block-pushers to Simon-says memory tests; some of them look impossible, but there's always a way and usually it's the one you've overlooked as it's been staring you in the face. Prepare to curse yourself many, many times as you play.

So why am I not raving about Light Crusader the same way everyone did about Landstalker? I can put up with minor faults like the flickery shadows, the fact that objects can be pushed in only four directions when you can walk in eight, or the good half-second it takes to pause the game, giving enemies time to hit you. What is a lot harder to forgive is the dodgy response of your attack button - sometimes for no obvious reason it decides to play up. This is very annoying, particularly when facing an enemy with a timed attack pattern; if the sword comes in that fraction late - or not at all - you'll take damage., full stop. Still, the game looks fab,

plays mostly well, it's addictive and you'll be hanging on in there until you beat it. Which will only take about a couple of days or so. It's too damn short.

Light Crusader has been designed to appeal to more general game players by dispensing with a complex plot and being action, action, action all the way. A lot of good RPGs can happily exist without much of a storyline, but it's left this one with little to break the chain of puzzle after puzzle after puzzle, and before you know it, that's a floor cleared. Neither are you ever terribly far from a teleporter, healing fountain or save point, so death is usually avoidable with the merest of mapping skills. And because the challenge is so heavily puzzle-based, the game holds almost no replay value once it's over. And it's fifty quid. Moreover, Light Crusader culminates with the feeblest end-of game meanie I've seen in an eon; an immobile lump of lard that just sits there and only occasionally gobs out a fireball or a pathetic laser beam. It's too sad for words.

In the end, Light Crusader is rather like a Terry's Chocolate Orange; lavishly wrapped and irresistible, but too expensive and you'll wonder where it's gone before very long.

Story	4	Er, not a lot. Some padding would have been nice.
Combat	8	Loads of it, but doh, that dodgy response!
Puzzles	9	As good as any you'll ever find.
Gamelife	6	Not half as big as Landstalker was.
Graphics	9	Well-crafted 3D, clear and colourful.
Sound	8	Fairly typical Megadrive sound for the most part.
OVERALL	7	Nice try, Treasure. Nearly, but not quite.

Accused: Dave Sanders. Accuser: Steve Leadbeater Crime: Sword of Vermillion review



The setting: A small East end pub. Two men are sat around a table discussing things of great importance.

1st man: *What do you think of "SANDERS"*

2nd man: *Oh I admire "Sanders", he has an amusing literary style and give his opinions in a clear and interesting manner.*

1st man: *But wha if he slagged off Sword of Vermillion eh, Frank?*

2nd man: *I'd say "OY! SANDERS! NOOOOOOOO." You may be an amusing writer/artist but you do not slag off this game. This still stands today as one of the Megadrive's finest hours with its intelligent mix of styles and engrossing storyline. And just because it has a small memory space doesn't mean it's crap. Okay, the graphics may not be up to scratch compared to today's efforts but it still plays well and is a pretty stiff challenge. And as for there being many better types available..name four. Landstalker, Thor, Soleil... gets difficult doesn't it. You have to be machine specific you see as not everyone has multiple consoles. If Mystic Quest on the SNES is worth 7, then this is worth 9. It just makes me mad.*

1st man: *Alright Frank, alright, calm down. I've not seen you this angry since that French bloke gave you a kicking at the football.*

We leave the pub with the sound of breaking glass and obscenities ringing in our ears.

Dave:

That bloke's a nutter.

Okay, from the top. Vermillion's gimmick was of course, the mix of styles. But that's all it was; a gimmick. And gimmicks come and go, each one forgotten when the next comes along. No RPG can survive on mere gimmickry any more.

Engrossing storyline? Well I suppose bits of it are. But with the plot points broken up by a trog through a forest of three million identical trees, followed by a dungeon built up of three million identical stone blocks, I'd be inclined to forget bits of it.

Your claim that I slagged it off purely for its small five meg memory is untrue. One of my all-time favourite RPGs is Final Fantasy Legend II, which has only two megs. But that was and still is enough for the job, whereas by today's standards, trying to squeeze so many styles onto a five meg Megadrive cartridge clearly is not. Standards have rocketed since back then. What's more, a new game of that nature would have to do that much extra work to keep up as it's trying for the same ground as so many other games - Story of Thor, for example, is both a good RPG and a good beat-em-up. In order for

Sword of Vermillion to be worth the marks you claim, the 3D would have to be as good as Dungeon Master's, the story as good as Phantasy Star IV's, the action combat as good as Zelda's and the side-on bits as good as Mystical Ninja's. In not one of those areas is that anywhere near the case. That's why nobody does this sort of thing anymore.

Light Crusader - handy new release - is your fourth one. Or Wonderboy in Monster World, if you're prepared to stretch definitions a bit. I assume you are talking solely about Sega-produced action RPGs. You must be, as it would be rubber room time, with a tranquilizer dart up the bum for good measure, if you were suggesting that Vermillion was in any way better than either of the Shining Forces. Anyway, 4 RPGs at today's prices cost 200 quid. Most gamers won't have multiple consoles, but also won't have the cash for many games. And then there are third party games too.

But when it boils down to it, all this action/turn based/strategy malarky doesn't matter in the end - coz oi loikes aaarmadillos!!!

Game Tips

Chrono Trigger

As promised, here is the second part of our guide to Chrono Trigger. I've done my best to search out all the game's secrets, but one still eludes me. I don't suppose anybody out there can help? Oh well, here goes.

More trivlalities

For some reason it is possible to make clones of EVERYBODY in the Tent of Horrors. After Chrono dies (temporarily, don't worry!) you can go to Millennial Fair with anybody in front and clone everybody on your team. Quite why I don't know, the reason must be there somewhere in the mists of time...

Nu

Oh yeah, more fun with Nu. Go to the Laraba ruins in the last half of the game to meet a Nu. This Nu will let you change anybody's name, but if you talk to him more than once he'll give you a Silver Rock

Remember to pick up items in the future before you get them in the past...

Those secrets

To complete the game fully you must discover the secrets. Here's our guide, but we're missing one. Ah well, nobody's perfect.

1. Go to the Geno Dome (on an Island in the post-apocalypse) to meet up with Robo's clan (use Robo to access the computers). Oh yeah, to kill the Mother Brain, leave one monitor alive (and cast stop on it) then keep hitting Mother Brain with high combos. Hard? Yes, but not impossible.
2. Get Toma's Pop off Toma in the cafe in 600 AD. Pour it over Toma's grave in 1000 AD, for the secret of the Rainbow Shell. You'll have to fight through a cave (in 600 AD) to get it. When you have the Rainbow Shell, go to Guardia Castle 1000 AD for a new trial and confrontation. After this fight, Melchior will make new items from the Shell. Don't forget to return to the court later for the Yakra key to free the Chancellor from the chest.
3. Go to the Sun Palace in the Post-Apocalypse to fight Son of Sun for the Moon stone. Have Red Mail equipped. To kill Son of Sun, you need to attack the right fireball. Hit each in turn 'till you get it right. Place the Moon Stone in the Sun Keep in 6500000 BC. If you go back to 1000 AD, the mayor in Porre (I hate my Dad, y'know the one) will have taken it. But, if you (or if you HAD) give(n) Jerky from the Cafe to the woman in the same house in 600 AD (give don't sell) the mayor will give you the Moon Stone. Put the Moon Stone back in the Sun Keep, then go to the future (with Lucca) to collect it. It's now a Sun Stone. Lucca will make some useful items from it, but if you take it to Melchior (in the castle) he'll alloy it with the Rainbow Shell for the best weapon (for Chrono) in the game, and also the best attack booster in the game.
4. Kill the desert monsters in 600 AD so that Fiona can restore the forest. Then go to Fiona's villa with Robo, and let him stay there. You'll miss an entire scenario if you don't - this is all the key to Lucca's past. In FFIII it is possible to save Cid - in Chrono Trigger you can save Lara, Lucca's mother. Ever wondered why she always sits upstairs on her own? Changing the past involves entering a password on the keypad, but you can work out the rest for yourself.
5. Talk to the man in 600 AD - in the cafe, south of the haunted ruins - and he'll tell you about his lost tools. Then go to 1000 AD (same place - Chora's Inn), talk to the man there and then get the tools off his wife in the Residence. Go back to 600 AD, give the tools to the workman, he'll repair the northern ruins. Now you must defeat all the monsters in



the ruins before returning to the worker. He'll repair the holes left to allow you to traverse the area properly. The point of this is numerous items to be found (take from 1000 AD first) and also (in 600 AD) the chance for Frog to meet Cyrus for a final time, and charge the Masamune to full power (best weapon for Frog).

6. Defeat Ozzie in the Middle Ages to end his evil rule. He's in a fortress much like Magus' castle.

Other points - Chrono's Lumiere magic is very useful and you can defeat almost any enemy by casting it over and over.

The best fighters are Chrono and Frog, if you power them up well - they are fast and efficient. Marle is a must-have on the team in almost every area because of her Cure magics. Cure spells are very important in this game, and you must learn to plan when each will be cast.

Do not overlook Red Mail, Blue Mail etc. even though other suits may have higher defense ratings. Colour coded armour absorbs certain magic attacks, and in Chrono Trigger strategic planning of which items to wear is very important.

Now, a challenge to you. The only secret I couldn't find concerns one of the party helping somebody who is close to them. From the end sequence, I would judge that Magus (Janus) must find Schala. But where is she? If anybody can help, I'd be grateful.

Breath of Fire

Our Breath of Fire problem was kindly solved by Andrew Lucas, who wrote in with this help. Basically, if you are stuck at Scande with the I. Claw, you won't be able to dig the tunnel yet, FIRST you need to go to Agua (the floating fortress) and work your way up there, then on to Pagoda to complete this area. Then fly back to Scande, which is now Obelisk (I remember now!). Use Mogu to dig in the first room and a tunnel will appear. Thanks for that, Andrew!

Phantasy Star IV (tips by Dave)

Fancy an interesting diversion from the main action? Pop into the Hunter's guild in Alys' home town of Aiedo and talk to the receptionist. She will hand you a list of jobs - 8 in all which become available during the game, they provide a modicum of experience and satisfaction, plus extra cash when you return to Aiedo. Take each job at a time, if you get stuck you won't be able to progress down the list. Here's how to do them all.

The Ranch owner (5000M): Simple. Talk to the ranch owner in Mile, who will tell you that his sand worms are out of control. Then wander round the ranch until one attacks you. Beware, it's a toughie.

Tinkerbell's dog (2000M): First encountered in Krup, before the job is even announced. After you take it on, Tinkerbell's mother in Aiedo says that the dog loves sweet things. Walk round the Aiedo town boundary to reach the building at the very top-left; here you can buy shortbread from the bakery in the cellar. Return to Krup, you'll find the dog has moved on - north says a villager, but it's actually north east - in Monson. Feed it shortbread and it will return with you to Aiedo.

Missing Student (3000M): One of the students from the dorms in Piata has been subverted by a strange religion. To find her after Zio is defeated, and after talking to the caretaker in the Plata dorms, visit Zio's church in Kadary where the student is wandering around in a daze. She is looked after in the Kadary Inn, but you need something nutritious to feed her with, go to the tourist shop in Termi (looks like any other item shop, it isn't) for Perolytate and an Alis sword. Offer the Perolytate to the student, she'll go back with you to Piata.

Fissure of Fear (5000M): Talk to Eddie in Monson, go down the hole and walk right until you meet the giant slug. Take care, it attacks hit everyone at once. Zol slugs and Jr. Oozes also lurk here; Zol Slugs fuse into larger Meta Slugs if you let them. Nothing of value is down here, to the left is a stairway out if you run into difficulties.

Stain in Life (zero): Grrr! This one is a complete fraud! The chief of Uzo's two daughters have gone missing and a hefty 50000 meseta is offered for their return. The chief's wife tells you that the girls went to the mainland to do shopping and didn't return. The logical place to look is the market in Aiedo, but the girls don't appear to be there. In fact, the two got so carried away that they couldn't afford to pay for things, got caught sneaking away and are now serving a ten-year sentence in Aiedo prison, near the back of the town. The only way to get them out and back to Uzo is to pay their bail. Guess what - it's 50000 meseta. We wuz robbed!

Dying Boy (10000M): Another cinch. Go to the Culvers family house in Torinco with the Alis Sword you bought from the tourist shop in Termi, and show it to the boy in bed. Money for old rope.

Man with Twist (zero): Ultimately, no reward for this one either. Everything is explained by the man in question in Torinco: enter Rappy cave nearby, earn 20000M for removing the birds (Recognize them? Yup, it's the chirpers from PS3!) Watch out; the King Rappy may look soft but can pack a wallop. Once it's gone, Mr. Sekreas reveals his true reason for hiring you. Chaz is so narked he doesn't even press for the cash. What a sap.

Silver Soldier (80000M): Strange machines have been roaming around Zema, and the townsfolk want something done about it. What are they searching for? It appears to be Wren, they prove it when three Servants attack you the moment you arrive. But where did they come from? If you've been exploring in the hydrofoil, you may have come across a large island NE of Zema with a building - the Vahal Fortress - that prevented you from entering with a force barrier; after talking to the town elder, this is where you have to go. This Fortress is one of the most vicious places in the entire game - Life Deleters in particular cannot be retrieved from - but do take the time to fully explore the place to find the best weapon Wren can use. The chaos is being governed by a nasty surprise left over from the Mother Brain legacy, but with your best group attacks at the ready it'll soon fall. Return to Aiedo, and the reward is yours - you'll have earned it.

Combinations

These gorgeous attacks are the most well-hidden secrets the game has to offer. Combos are very hard to find, because of their difficulty to perform; in order for one to work, characters involved must attack in order, strongest to weakest, without another character interrupting the pattern. As characters tend to attack from round to round with differing

speeds, combos will not work every time; so when testing a new sequence, be sure to keep at it until they attack in the required order. Theoretically, certain combos could prove to be virtually impossible to perform if the speed ratios from the character growths don't allow it.

Combos are broken into two types, technique and skill; as far as we are aware, no combo mixes the two (though we could be wrong). Technique combos are the most flexible as more characters share the same ones and different degrees of technique can be used (eg. Foi, Gifoi and Nafoi). Skill combos are to be found closer to the end of the game and are vastly more powerful. As well as two-way ones, at least one three-way combo exists - the Tri-blaster is displayed in the manual, but how to perform it is not given. Fifteen combos exist in all; here are the five that we found.

Techniques: Zan + Foi = FIRE STORM
Zan + Wat = BLIZZARD

Skills:

Burst Rocket (Wren) + Flaell (Rune, Kyra) = SHOOTING STAR
Airslash (Chaz) + Phonon (Demi) = SILENT WAVE
Crosscut (Chaz) + Efess (Rune) = GRAND CROSS

General tips - extra useful information may be gathered in Zosa by doing the 'Dezolis Penguin Walk' and talking to the man at the top-right of the town.

Hidden items can be found in the Hunter's guild in Aiedo. Visit the dance room at the back, walk left through the wall into the reception area and then left again to discover some secret chests!

After the plague on Dezo has been cured, return to the zombie town of Meese which is now being rebuilt. From the shop here you can now buy Moon, Star and Sol Mist. Very useful indeed!

Light Crusader (tips by Dave)

A quick guide to some of the more obscure puzzles.

Red Orb Room: Find the nearby music box, then return to the orb room and use it. Now strike the tuning forks so that they play the same notes as the box.

Yellow Orb Room: No stars allowed, the sign says. Move the star statue out of the way, then push the others together so that the top-to-bottom order is moon, earth, sun (the moon orbits the earth, the earth orbits the sun).

Blue Orb Room: Move the compass so that it points in the directions N, E, W, S. Don't let the compass stop while moving it.

Green Orb Room: The letters on the floor stand for red, yellow, green and blue. The completed scroll will tell you the order to press them.

Feed the Cat: The hidden room at the north edge of floor B1 is uncovered by lighting 4 torches. A cat surrounded by fish sits here. All it says is 'Miaow', but answer 'yes' and you can then sell some of your food, drinks and potions to it. This is very useful when your item list is filling up with junk.

Goblin Arena: On floor B3, don the costume and talk to the soldier goblin in the same room as the raised yellow floor, for a challenge: knock three goblins out of the area without falling yourself and win 180 GP. This can be done any number of times by re-entering the room, any lost life will be given back. To make things really easy for yourself, cast Guardian spells beforehand. Easy money.

Iron Gate: Also in B3, in the room with the IRON GATE tiles, step on them to spell 'GARRIOT' to open the door.

Seeing Double: One room in B4 is split into 2 mirror images, including a doppelganger of yourself, whose movements mirror yours. You must make him kill the zombies to open the doors. If you move so that the pair of you are standing together below the blocks in the centre, you'll be warped to another room with a hidden chest.

Wizard's Guild: In B4 is a magic shop where various potions (not in the manual) can be bought. The green one boosts all your magic elements to 99, useful as running out of magic is the biggest danger in the game. The black one is poison - avoid it. The yellow 'odd' potion turns you invisible for about 5 minutes! You can see where you are by watching your shadow, but monsters can't. You can also run around the shops and steal things, nobody can stop you!

Animated Armour: After the fireball room on B4, the only way to kill the ghostly armour is to aim at the shadow which moves independently of it.

BACKTRACK

There's still life left in this section yet! On with the retrospective reviews, and this issue, we're looking at RPG wargames...



Inindo Way of the Ninja Warsong

Super Nintendo Japan/US
KOEI Corporation
Strategy wargame RPG
Review by Alan Watson

Sega Megadrive Japan/US
Tresco/MCs Masaya 1991
Strategy wargame RPG
Review by Dave

Quite amazing what you can pick up at a Car Boot sale - I purchased an American Super Nintendo plus Top Gear 2 for £35.00 a few months ago. Then by the greatest of fortune I found Inindo, which I can guarantee most of you will never have heard of?

Inindo is a 1993/early '94 release and is a complete hybrid in playing terms. Graphics are a little stylized and pleasing, but the scenery is definitely 8 bit circa 1993... The general movement is time orientated (truncated) and day/night appear in the changing colouring on the screen. Combat however is generally turn-based, but can be influenced by factors within the game (which I won't try to explain...) Choices are made from menu driven options and inventory, which all add to the frustration and quaintness of the game - no instant hand to hand combat 'ere mate! The combat results are all computer controlled, albeit you initially call the shots (or weapon strikes as the case may be...)

If you haven't "switched off", let me tell you that this game is no push over! I guarantee that it will have you howling with frustration even 70 or 80 hours after starting it. Many of you will excuse yourselves by declaring it boring - boring it ain't! Not even the "fisherman's tale" types among you will finish it in an afternoon...!

Inindo is set in Japan in 1581, during the violent warring States period (historically factual). The mighty Lord Nobumaga has conquered a good number of States and ruthlessly aims to sweep away all opponents in his ambition to become Shogun of all Japan. Throughout the game, the programme time clock indicates the beginning of each game month by newflashes of changes in alliances, conflicts and assassinations of Dalmos - adding to the realism and indeed the authenticity of the period.

You enter as a young Iga Ninja - your goal is to learn skills, gain magic and allies, ultimately to defeat Nobumaga in developing skills, you search through the land for training sites, caves and dungeons. You'll fight monsters, be attacked by robbers, rival Ninja, other powerful foes - some with magic and mystical powers - can you defeat them? Retrieval of the special treasure at each dungeon will provide you with a magic technique. Experience points and gold are awarded for victories, leading to advancement in levels. Visit the many towns throughout the land, speak to the people and regain strength at the Inn; purchase weapons, armour, medicines, amulets and above all try to make friends (not always easy). The main classes of people are Ninja; Sages; Wizards and Warriors, each with about four sub classes. (It gets very complicated trying to explain this aspect).

As the game develops, you and your colleagues become stronger and more skilled. Build up alliances with Daimos (State Rulers), you may be called on to spy for the ruler, commit acts of sabotage, all in the interests of gaining his support until your army is strong enough to take on the might of Nobuaga. The final conflict is quite spectacular with mythical beasts, magic, treachery and good ol' honest battling! What more could a girl want.....?

This may not be to the liking of the purist Fantasy role player, nor to the instant confrontational and highly reflex orientated slash 'em and beat 'em up brigade. No, this one is for the more cerebrally inclined and the real strategists and wargamers. I just wonder if some of you have the staying power for this one? I keep coming back to it time after time - but there again I also enjoyed Mystic Quest, eh Rachel Ryan? (Pah. - Ed.)

How many MD wargames can you name other than the ubiquitous Shining Force? Have you even heard of this smart import game? Buck up and pay attention then. It may look chuff, but as with all wargames, combat is paramount and Masaya certainly haven't done a bad job.

Warsong begins with a castle invasion, and twenty battles stand between here and the encounter with whoever or whatever is ultimately responsible. As you make headway through the game a typically ragbag collection of characters will add additional forces to your own, and their different strengths and weaknesses are pretty acute; cavalry soldiers will mow down infantrymen but make excellent target practice for archers, while grunt troops with fire torches are effective against blob monsters but nothing else whatsoever. Unlike S-Force, none of your team-mate commanders are expendable - once dead they damn well stay dead leaving you at a disadvantage - and with little incentive - to carry on. This of course is what your reset button was made for.

The game impresses you most with the scale of the combat and the tactics involved. Instead of single fighters as in Shining Force, you control whole legions, where one icon depicts a squad of ten soldiers each with one hit point (as opposed to a commander with ten. So lots of little soldiers go 'aarrgh' a lot. The obvious disadvantage to this sort of scale - up to a dozen commanders controlling five or six squads apiece, on a suitably-sized map to hold them - is that one battle can take absolutely ages, and the sickening realization of having to start again after having wasted hours of your precious time is tantamount to binary masochism. War is hell, boy. So Masaya have thoughtfully added not one, but two independent backup saves; a standard one for after each battle, and a snapshot save that can be used at any time - helpful beyond words if you're planning a new and risky gambit. But use it wisely; the game makes no allowances if you snapshot save right before you end up on a loser and nothing can save you.

Plot? Well yeah, there is one. This being a wargame, the story will naturally not come into it much, being one basic background thread with a small piece of throwaway text in between each scenario. Having said that, some plot elements do manage to make their way into the battles themselves, and not just in the standard expository dialogue fashion either. In one scenario for example, the battlefield is littered with statues. Could the basilisks have something to do with it? (Duh). And is there any way to thaw them out? Or those occasions where the enemy summons up a giant monster and an item or person must be found to sort the mess out. And then there's Lance.

Lance is the black sheep of Warsong, first encountered round about battle five or six, and his main gimmick is to come on at the last minute and save the day with a cavalry charge. The only minor problem is that he fights on the opposing side. And the son-of-a-bitch adamantly refuses to die. You will learn to hate this bloke as he comes on time and again; not merely the mild irritation associated with a kid brother or similar pain in the backside, but to truly loathe and despise him as if he were the very offspring of Beelzebub himself. Just when you think you might possibly be rid of him... "Charge!" "Oh bloody hell, him again!" However, in one or two three-way fights it's possible to make use of Lance by leading the enemy into position so that when Lance and his mob show up, both enemy forces will happily smeg each other into oblivion. That'll teach him. And when - finally - he joins your side, you might be able to forgive him. A little.

If it's a good strategic fight you want, you could certainly do worse than this. Perhaps not a plausible choice instead of the Shining Forces, but a worthwhile addition if you need another fix.

Story 8
Graphics 4

Combat 7
Sound 3

Gamelife 9
OVERALL 7

Story 5
Graphics 4

Combat 9
Sound 5

Gamelife 9
OVERALL 6

Get A Life!

by Simon Dominguez

or if you please...

How to turn your life, or lack thereof, into a Japanese RPG!

Okay. You've got your airship and you're fluent in Moogles. What's that you say? This is your first issue and you missed the airship blueprints and the moogles dictionary? Oh DEAR. Time to order those back issues... In the meantime it's time for the loyal readers to start kitting out. A blade is the weapon of choice for RPG characters, so head for the cutlery drawer. Meat knives are best, and can be adapted with minimum fuss. The reverse is true of breadknives, which look silly no matter how many bits you glue on.

As possession of said knife will get you nicked outside your own property, if you want to go further afield you'll have to make a clever wooden replica. Be careful, however; the plaintiff only has to FEAR that you're going to stab them for the assault charge to stick (Offences against the Persons Act). Meanwhile, smash your Hoover. Or unscrew it. Whatever, rip the cogs out of your Hoover - they're great shuriken. If you can learn to throw them properly you'll look great. If you want a Setzer Gabbiani style character, don't. Want to know why? Right. Take out your cards. Take a hand out. Fan them out. Good. Now throw them with a quick, even flick of your wrist. Okay? Good. Now pick them up and put them back in the packet.

Relics and magic items are going to be quite tricky. That's not to say you aren't going to have a lot of fun trying. Eventually you'll get bored having raided your mum's jewellery box and start wanting artifacts that actually do things. There aren't actually any substances that can make you all-powerful. There are however plenty of illegal substances that can re-create the feeling. Obviously we can't be seen to be condoning use of drugs, but if Chrono Trigger can use "Magic Tabs" and "Speed Tabs..." (Ducks. Checks case files. Prepares for lawsuit from Squaresoft.)

In a similar fashion, we haven't got the room or the inclination to publish lists of which household substances to mix together so that you can start hurling divine fire. We'll leave that to your imagination. DO be cautious though, and bear in mind



As we head towards November 5th, with some EXPERT knowledge in pyrotechnics you could come up with some great weapons...

that ideas such as using a Roman Candle as a fire wand are NOT CLEVER. Seriously, you'll be lucky to drop it before it gets hot enough to hurt you gravely.

Your best bet to put all this kit together convincingly is with a big flappy cape. Hell, you could even have some surgical gloves like Magus to obsessively tighten. It'll also hide the fact that you haven't been able to come up with any armour, and with nothing more than a few shoulder pads too. The only other piece of kit you'll need is a walkman, for that personal theme tune effect. As a final thought, my personal technique is to use speakers as the shoulder pads with the cape draped around them. Sorted.

More lunacy....

RPG Top Ten

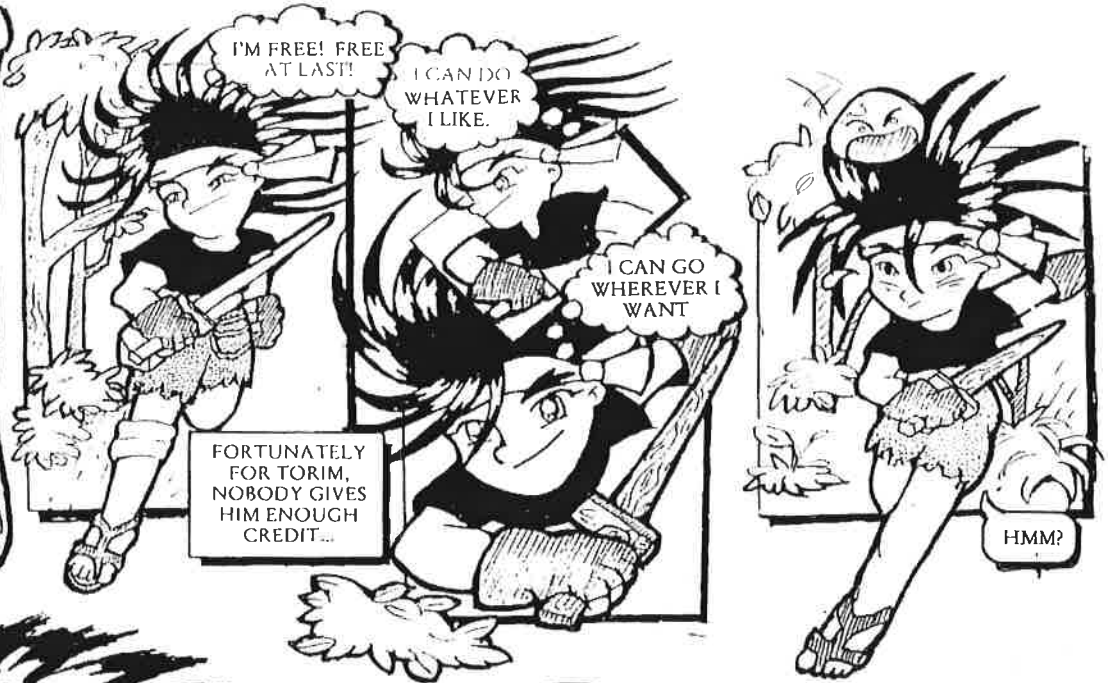
by Dave Sanders.

This issue, as a bit of a contrast from the music CD feature, it's Top of the Pops! Or, some notable pieces of RPG music that for one reason or another... got our attention.



1. **Name Entry (Earthbound)**
Oh wow man! Genuine Nintendo trip out music! (hand over the mushrooms... -Ed.) Freaky! All this lacks is a voice in the background going "number nine.. number nine.. number nine..." Pass the skins, Itoi!
2. **Piano Player (Light Crusader)**
Imagine the ethereal keyboard-and-strings theme tune from Secret of Mana bashed out by a tone deaf two year old with no fingers and no talent. You'll piss yourself.
3. **Chocobo Theme (Final Fantasy)**
Everybody knows this one. If the Final Fantasy games were cartoons, this piece would be 'The Merry-Go-Round Broke Down'. Pure Warner Brothers.
4. **Big Chocobo Theme (Final Fantasy II)**
My old chemistry teacher did trombone impressions like this. They were terrible.
5. **Ballad of the Wind Fish (Zelda -Link's Awakening)**
Shut up Marin! ShutupshutupshutupshutupSHUTUP!!
6. **Intro Tune (Mystical Ninja)**
The bit where it all goes droopy and grinds to a halt, now that was funny. Well it made me laugh.
7. **Heroic Tune (Final Fantasy Legend II)**
It isn't.
8. **All of Them (Might and Magic II - Megadrive)**
Look, medieval-style tunes sampled from what sounds like a cardboard zither made by Valerie Singleton and strung with cheese wire do not work. Trust us.
9. **All of Them Again (Dungeon Master - SNES)**
The original did not have lift music. Neither was it played on milk bottles. And it certainly wasn't played whenever you stood in front of a 'secret' door. Go figure.
10. **Mambo's Mambo (Zelda - Link's Awakening)**
Sad.

SUPPOSED LEGENDARY HERO TORIM (HE OF THE USELESS WINGS AND EQUALLY RIDICULOUS HAIRCUT) WAS UNFORTUNATE ENOUGH TO BE FOUND AND RAISED IN A VILLAGE OF HALF WIT CENTAURS. OVER 16 INSUFFERABLE YEARS, HE WAS CONVENIENTLY NEVER TOLD HE COULD LEAVE. UNTIL NOW THAT IS. LOUDMOUTH VILLAGE FOOL NIKOS IS WARNED THAT HE'D BETTER STOP TORIM BEFORE HE GOES, OR FACE THE CONSEQUENCES.



I'M FREE! FREE AT LAST!

I CAN DO WHATEVER I LIKE.

I CAN GO WHEREVER I WANT

FORTUNATELY FOR TORIM, NOBODY GIVES HIM ENOUGH CREDIT...

HMM?



YAAH!

HEH THAT WAS TOO EASY

OOPS.

MEANWHILE....

YOU'D BETTER GET HIM BACK...

DON'T COME BACK YOURSELF UNTIL YOU DO.

BACK TO OUR HERO...

NOW WHAT DO I DO? I CAN'T FIGHT WITHOUT A SWORD.

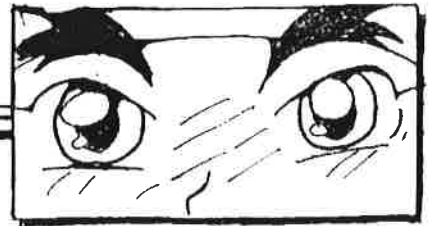
NIKOS, THIS IS YOUR FAULT

MAYBE IF I JUST STAND HERE I WON'T GET ATTACKED.



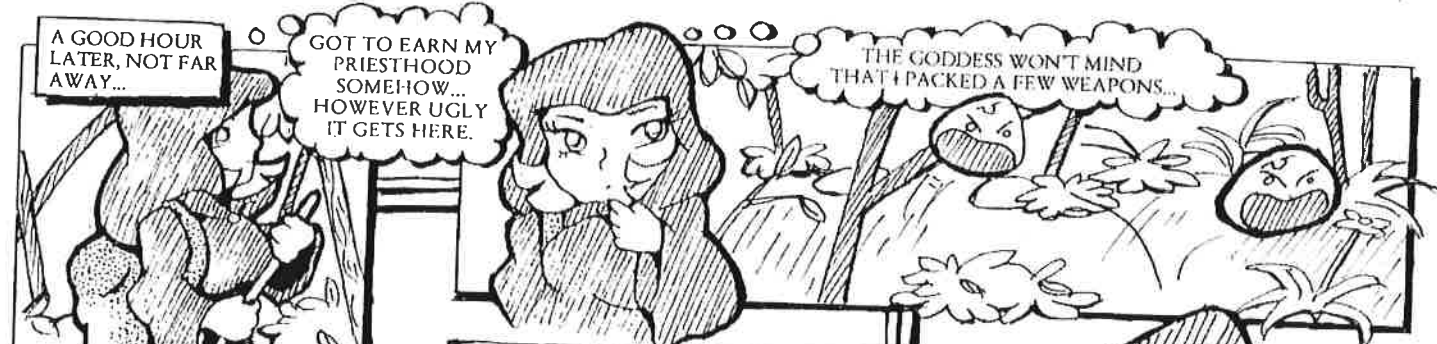
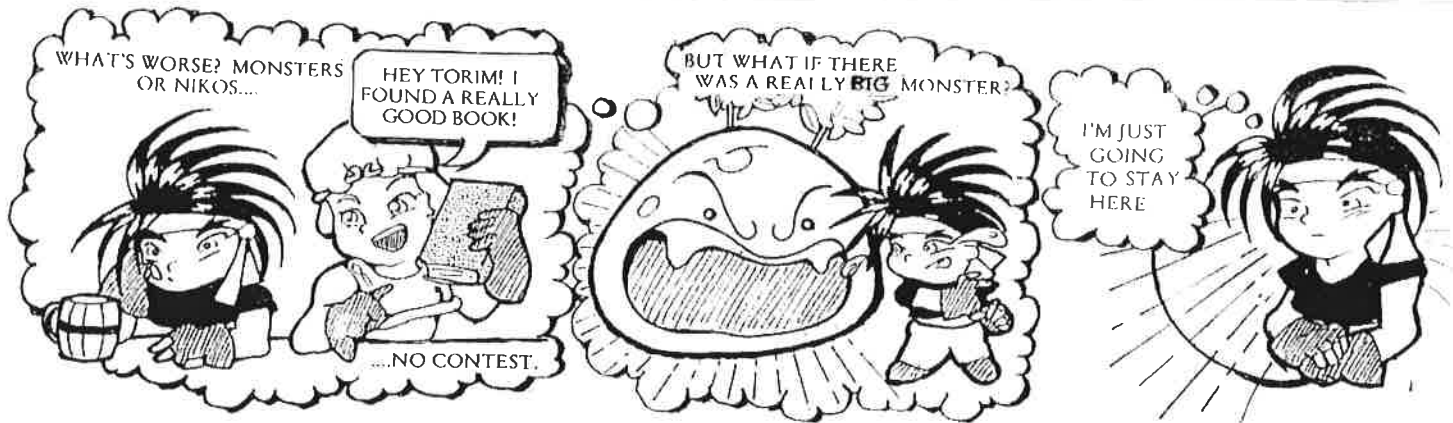
OH NO! OH,NO!

10 MINS LATER...



IT WORKS! I'M NOT GETTING ATTACKED!

BUT NIKOS WILL COME LOOKING FOR ME ANY MINUTE...



RECORD OF LODOSS WAR



Fantasy anime review. Subtitled series - 13 parts. Available unofficially on PAL video tape

Right, okay - this is an RPG fanzine and I appreciate that not everyone reading it is into anime (why not?) But if you can get hold of subtitled tapes of this series (I'll try to provide as soon as I can) which has not been released officially in Britain as yet, you're in for a real treat if you like RPGs. And if Lodoss War IS ever released in the UK, those of you with prejudices toward 'cartoons' ought to drop their views and buy this one. Especially if you are into D&D and if you want to see the Japanese interpretation (come on, you know it'll be good, look at RPGs like Final Fantasy!)

Record of Lodoss War chronicles the events in a HUUUGE fantasy world which leapt from the imagination of one Ryo Mizano, a D&D obsessive who has been creating such scenarios in his mind since he was in high school.

The Japanese are not total strangers to D&D and it's ilk. In fact they have their own versions of the games, and often their products reflect on the original role-playing games which surfaced in the West. The Shining Force series of games on the MD features characters which fit into the standard D&D classes of clerics, rangers and the like. Though they make their own imaginative interpretations - with centaurs as knights and Wolfmen as barbarian fighters!

Anyway, I'll hand over to Emmeline Dobson now who's taken time out to watch the entire series (as if I'd have the time!)

An Introduction to Lodoss War

This is *the* anime for RPG fanatics - and it's also the most wanted anime in the UK (it beats even Ranma, says it all...)

Lodoss War is... I really cannot think of a suitable adjective to describe it. It really is the ultimate in fantasy anime at least. The Japanese series may be getting on a bit now, but it still holds its ground in the hearts of many fans. Pouring praise upon it is easy:

Storyline: The story could rival that of Final Fantasy III....



Ashram: the Dark Knight

Visual: Somebody's addicted to airbrushing! Lush backgrounds and detailed foregrounds almost make me forget those pastelly colours, but that's all a matter of taste... **Animation:** Not too smooth, but the battle sequences are wonderfully realised (complete with enchanting magic special effects- sorry.) **Characters:** Beautifully drawn and each with their own selection of battle traits. Despite being the Dungeons and Dragons stereotypes they have loads of background and character. **Atmosphere:** Hey! I was on the edge of my seat all the way through the last few episodes, even the second time through while making review notes and having to put up with the unwatchable quality of my tape! (Bad 'unofficial' copies - Ed.) **Sound:** I want to record those intro and end tunes, the ones played during the series are good too, it's a shame they're repeated so much. Inevitable with such a long series. Still lovely music though.

If I have any quibbles with it (apart from the quality of my recordings - GRRRR!) they'll be to do with it's length (6 hours!) and the inevitable drawbacks this brings. The first time round it did seem to drag on a bit and I don't like seeing the same battle / sword clash / blood spurts / lycanthropes charge forward scenes over and over. I've already commented on the music doing the same thing... Don't let any of this put you off though, watching telly for 6 hours making notes probably makes me notice bad points to pick at - I effortlessly fell in love with part 1 when I first saw it under more relaxed conditions!

Availability

And now the bad news: Lodoss War is pretty scarce in the West. The only option (for owners of PAL VCRs - ie 99.9999 per cent of people - Ed.) is getting hold of subbed copies from anime buffs, through a club may be easier, the problem seems to be however, that most don't have all 13 parts - and if so only in poor condition. Part 1 seems to be the most widespread, and in good quality too - fortunately it also stands well on its own and is great for whetting the appetite. Do make sure that your copies are subtitled, unless you're a fairly confident Japanese speaker - I meant it when I said it's story rivals that of FFIII!

It's a difficult situation, but I feel sure that someone will pick it up sooner or later for release here. Hopefully the rise of RPG fanzines such as this one will put pressure on the powers that be to release this (I doubt it - Ed.) - let's hope it's not butchered and dumped on the shelves with a crap dub like too many other releases. But for now I say that if you can get your hands on at least some of it for a not-extortionate price, then do so - I deny anyone to anyone reading this fanzine and not love Lodoss War!

The Editor says...

I really must butt in here, sorry - I'm like that. Just to say I have the equipment to copy videotapes, and if people show an interest I'd be quite prepared to track down decent copies of the series and supply it for a nominal fee (cost of tapes and postage). Anything to help the cause! Write in to the usual address and let me know what you think.

If he's Beld then who's that with the magic sword?
How not to be as confused as I was when I saw Lodoss

History Lessons

Once upon a time there was a good god called Falis and a bad god called Falais. They didn't like each other so they ganged up for a big fight. After a couple of centuries they were both dead, but two of their best mates survived, Marfa liked making things and Kardis liked breaking them again. And they didn't like each other, so they had a scrap. By the end of it all they were so beat up that all Kardis could do before going to sleep was curse Anacryst forever. Marfa didn't like that because Anacryst was the only continent in the world. So the last thing she did was to break off the chunk that Kardis had cursed before the curse spread.

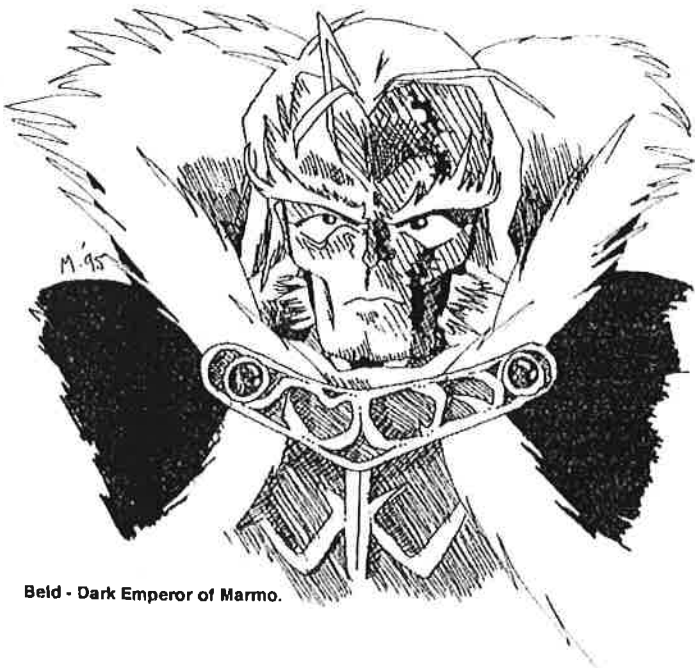
Some of the characters:

6 New Heroes:

- Parn** - Son of Tethus, a now dead knight under King Faunn, Parn dreams of following in his father's footsteps. Fights with his father's sword and armour, a reckless and emotional fighter.
- Deedlit** - Don't go out with her, she's 200 years old! Deedlit and Parn are in *lurve*, but neither wants to admit it. A very capable High Elf warrior, she fights with a needle-thin sword and can call upon various fairies in battle (you may recognize Sylph and Quandine!)
- Eto** - A young cleric of Falis (Hey! He's dead isn't he?) who helps out in the healing and undead-bashing department. Parn's friend.
- Gim** - An experienced dwarf warrior searching for Lairia, the daughter of the priestess Neese who was mysteriously spirited away... Notable for his mighty axe technique.
- Slavn** - An old pal of Gim's well versed in magic. A typical lawful wizard.
- Woodchuck** - A thief who doesn't know how to stay out of trouble. Master with the knives.

The baddies

- Beld** - Arch baddie till part 7, one of the old Heroes turned bad, he lives on Marmo which he controls through the power of the Demon Sword - Soul Shatterer.
- Karla** - Present throughout the series and unrivalled in power save Kardis', Karla is a 500 year old grey witch, possessing mortal after mortal in a bid to keep Lodoss safe from destruction forever. Was her last choice of body a mistake?
- Vagnard** - Beld's sorcerer with his own dark ambitions more evil than anyone else's.
- Ashram** - The Black Knight of Part 3's title, Ashram nicks Soul Shatterer after Beld's defeat. However, he is never much more than a pawn for Beld and Vagnard.
- Dark Elves** - These creatures crop up often in the series, masters of dark fairies who fight with black magic and numerous razor-sharp throwing knives. The most notable Dark Elf is:
- Pirotase** - In love with Ashram, yet still another of Vagnard's pawns



Beld - Dark Emperor of Marmo.

More good guys to the rescue!

- King Faunn** - Wise old king, one of the old heroes. He wields a nice glowing sword.
- King Kashue** - Lord of a band of desert raiders, a good friend of Faunn's.
- Prince Jester** - An enigmatic flying lord who pops up now and then to give Kashue a hand.
- Orson and Sherris** - A pair of mercenaries. Orson is a berserker and likes chopping up cliffs.
- Fianna** - Faunn's daughter. Not to be confused with...
- Lairia** - Neese's daughter, who has straight hair. Otherwise they're the same, y'see
- Wort** - Another Old Hero, a sage who may know something about Karla...



Deed gets mad!

Record - Keeping: The War of Heroes Parn's travels

Parn is a young villager who dreams of being a hero. One day these dreams will come true...
(Part 2: Blazing Departure) Parn is outside the village when he hears a call for help. He rescues a girl from goblins, but the villagers get worried. Parn has visions of his father walking off into the distance. He and Eto decide to attack the goblins in their lair, but only a few sentries are there. Slavn and Gim help in the fight, but Parn is banished from the village. He takes his armour and his leave. **(Part 3: The Black Knight)** Gim tries to train Parn, who wanders off and meets Deedlit. They are attacked by a Dark Elf, then ambushed by Alanian soldiers and imprisoned by mistake. They discover the source of the evil happenings, which concern Marmo. The captain of the guard, Jebra offers Parn the opportunity to train, but catastrophe ensues. The heroes escape, adding Woodchuck to their number. Parn meets the eyes of Ashram, and decides that he doesn't like him one little bit. **(Part 4: The Grey Witch)** The heroes decide to travel to Valis through the Forest of No Return. Opportunity arises in the appearance of a carriage charging along the same way, apparently Princess Fianna is in the carriage. Determined to score Knightly Brownie Points, Parn races after it. Karla returns the princess as a token of respect to Parn's reckless bravery. But Gim is more shaken than others. Why? **(Part 5: The Desert King)** Upon arrival in Valis, Parn+co are treated like heroes. Kashue arrives, but a strange man disrupts the party, whispering Kashue's name as if in a trance... It is suspected that Karla is behind it... maybe Sage Wort knows something about her? **(Part 1: Prologue to the Legend)** The heroes travel to Wort's place through a disused dwarf tunnel, and are waylaid by a selection of traps and monsters - what's going on? Meanwhile, Marmo advances like a roller coaster. Parts 6 (**The Sword of the Emperor of Darkness** (Phew!)) and 7 (**War of Heroes**) follow, and the battle is well underway.

I'm not going any further, but I will point out that we're not halfway through the series. The strange order of the Parts is intentional - they're like that. Happy anime hunting, fantasy fans!

CD-ROM: A new revolution

A new age is upon us. Or is it? While it's true that we have never seen technology the likes of which we can now affordably run in our own homes, it's also true that CD ROM RPGS have been with us for over 5 years now. Nothing new then, or so we would hope. I've actually been waiting to write this article for a few months now, people were keen to hear my opinions on the future of the RPG, which ultimately lies in CD ROM - and now, upon the release of Lunar 2, I've decided to put my mind to paper and enlighten you on the life of the medium, it's contribution to our favourite genre, and what it could mean for the future.

The birth of CD ROM, and the animated RPG

CD ROM for the home first became a reality in 1988, with the Japanese release of the PC Engine CD unit, an add-on - perhaps the most successful console add on of all time - for the existing 8-bit PC Engine console. An NEC/Hudson Soft collaboration, as was the 'Engine, the CD unit paved the way for the future, and created a base for a new wave of RPGS that became a whole new genre in their own right.

Lunar 2: Eternal Blue is one such RPG. Although it's available only for the underspecced Mega CD, it's perhaps the most impressive, and sadly it's probably the last of it's kind. You could call the genre 'Anime RPGs'. Like all good RPGs to surface in the East, these CD-based games have a set story, and that story is backed up visually by gorgeous animation, played at intervals during the game. It's not what you'd expect from Final Fantasy, like I said, CD ROM has brought with it a different RPG category. Unfortunately this category is one almost exclusively enjoyed by the Japanese. There are so few Western releases of these games, but if the PC Engine had made more of an impact in the States, you can bet that things would have been different. Imagine, all the games that would have been translated. I'm going to sit in the corner and cry, now.

CD literature?

Perhaps the first, and certainly the most influential of the new CD ROM fantasies were the famous Books of Ys (pronounced Eas, as in Easter). Ys Book 1 and 2 made it's Japanese debut on the PC Engine in 1989. The popularity of this release - "two games in one" to use the debatable sales pitch - ensured a US translation for the Turbo Graphx (the US PC Engine that quite spectacularly flopped). Ys was groundbreaking in that it was the inspiration for many CD ROMs to follow. Although the animated interludes in Ys were few and far between, and oh, those in-game graphics! In many ways Ys' excellent intro - with it's gorgeous character portrayals backed by the best RPG anthem bar one (no explanation needed) - belied what was to come. However, the gameplay was what mattered, Ys had it byte for byte and the series is now up to part 5, recently released for the Super Famicom in Japan. Besides I and II, the only other Western release was Ys III (Turbo Graphx CD, also on cartridge for SNES and MD) which is basically a platformer, and isn't terribly good. And English speakers are unlikely to see the likes of flame-haired hero Adol and his peers, ever again. Sob!

Another Falcom/HudsonSoft collaboration we won't hear about again is Dragon Slayer. This PC Engine CD ROM game was also released in 1989, and is part of a series. Don't ask, I haven't the faintest idea how many Dragon Slayer games there are - as far as I know this is the only one that was translated into English. Unlike Ys, Dragon Slayer is turn-based, but the similarities are apparent - both have tiny in-game sprites, mazes and a boxed-in game world. DS though, has even less animation than Ys.

Of course, there were many, many other PC Engine CD ROMs we never got to see. We only had Dragon Slayer and Ys translated to English because of Hudson Soft's ties with NEC. So there you have it - an entire genre almost completely missed out on. However, Working Designs were to change the outlook somewhat, Mega CD owners will know Working Designs for their conversions of Japanese Mega CD games, but the company has been around for longer than most would think.



How can you lose an entire country? Adol wonders what happened to Ys, and just why he's been delegated to find it.

Working Designs

Headed by Victor Ireland and Sylvia Schmitt, this company was formed in 1989 on Ireland's pledge to bring good PC Engine games to the States. Ireland was motivated by his appreciation of the PC Engine more than anything, and WD's first translations of Parasol Stars and Cadash for the Turbo Graphx were as well received as they could be. However, the real challenge lay in translating a pure Japanese CD ROM game and in 1992 Working Designs released the turn based RPG Cosmic Fantasy 2 for Turbo CD. Yes, you read right - the first game was never translated. Cosmic 2 though, had far more animation than any game the West had seen to date. Though the interludes peter out somewhat as the game progresses, even nowadays it's a real feast for the RPG fan, and the anime fan to boot. If both pursuits motivate you, you'll get a real kick out of Cosmic 2. The animation in this game has rarely been bettered.

Working Design's next PC Engine release, Exile (ARPG) has a very morose feel to it. And WD tried, as they so patently do, to spruce it up a little. It didn't work. It ain't impressive to have your hero spouting one-liners when all his companions have snuffed it. And it's not particularly uplifting to complete a game and find you've just spent the best part of an afternoon (yeah Exile's not long either) searching for salvation only to be told you can't have it, it never existed and humanity is crap, anyway. Not good. And as for WD's final PC Engine game, Vasteel - more action RPG, I can't comment, I've not played it! Sorry.

No, not Mana's Neko, but Space Cadet Pico from Cosmic Fantasy 2



The New moon - Lunar emerges

Victor Ireland and his team reluctantly abandoned the PC Engine on the release of the Sega CD, as NEC's machine never took flight in the States (ironic seeing as it clocked the MD in the popularity stakes for a good few years in Japan). Ireland blamed the death of the Turbo Graphx on lack of marketing. I'll blame it on our American cousins' lack of common sense, but never mind. The result of the switched loyalties - Lunar (The Silver Star - reviewed in RC issue 2) - was the first Sega CD role player to reach the US, and was Working Designs best seller yet. Though the animation still wasn't as good as the PC Engine's more average releases, can you credit it? Well, the 'Engine WAS designed with CD-ROM in mind. But Lunar was the best that Japan had to offer on Sega's machine, and fortunately it was more playable than Cosmic Fantasy 2. It was also more playable than WD's second MD translation - Vay - a distinct 'Why bother?' effort. Both were turn-based games, unlike the recent Popful Mail - a completely wacky Japanese comedy which, like Exile sports side-on action. Another one that I haven't played (I'm not made of money!) but Dave reviewed it in Issue 2 of Role Call. Lunar II - Eternal Blue is reviewed in this issue. Although Working Designs had hoped for a simultaneous US/Japan release on this one (they were translating during the games development) it was delayed and delayed. The Japanese version appeared in 1994, so you can see how late WD were on this one!

If there's one thing Working Designs have taught us, and most lately with the release of Lunar II, it's that there is still life to be squeezed out of even the most obscure technology. Mega CD and PC Engine owners can find comfort in the fact that there are some great RPGs out for their now decrepit machines - I'd even recommend buying these consoles to people without, just to play these games. However, every cloud with a silver lining is still a cloud, after all. Working Designs releases are full of the kind of 10 cringe-a-minute American scripting that makes you think Ted Woolsey of Square is the patron saint of accuracy. Literally, a case of 'ignore the NPCs, they all have something stupid to say'. No exaggeration. I mean, after playing WD games straight through, I'm desensitized to the kind of 'witticisms' that crop up in Square games. Square aren't tooooo bad, but WD ought to look at their stupid culture references and give every single one the axe. Pleeese.

The end of an era

From all this information, you would think the future was bright in CD ROM. But what can we expect from the next gen machines? We won't be seeing any more CD ROMs for the old machines - Working Designs and Sega themselves have abandoned the Mega CD and are looking now at converting Saturn games. Eternal Blue will be the last ever RPG you see on this format. So, what's the problem? Let me explain.

The thing about the PC Engine and Megadrive CD units, was that they offered limited technology, but massive storage capacity. It was still only possible to display the same graphics as before, but games could be larger and there was the added possibility of animation. Thus, a genre was born. The games that followed were the result of skilled game design, and skilled animators. Some were even based on popular anime series themselves. The story interludes were the result of PROPER computer animation, and not blurry FMV.

A few people, certainly Westerners - scoff at animation. 'What's the point?' they say. To me though, and many others - the RPG category defined here is well loved. Nobody who has played these games could ever convince me that they have not been filled with anticipation when the CD drive kicks in with a whiiiiirrr, the screen blacks out and another piece of animation is about to play. NEVER liken these games to Space Ace and it's ilk, either. They are, by definition, proper RPGs with much welcomed eye-candy.

What the future means though, is new technology bringing with it new techniques. Now software publishers are beginning to ignore animation, and traditional graphics. "Any clapped out machine with 512 colours can do that" they say. It isn't impressive enough. And animation fills up CD space. CD space that SHOULD (apparently) be spent on 'enhancing' the in-game visuals with rendered graphics, and all that palava. If you thought that the new crop of official CD based machines was going to bring with it traditional style RPGs with a touch of animation, you can think again. What we will see, is more software along the



Alex (Lunar - the Silver Star). The original Lunar was aimed at mid-teens (Alex himself is 15) but the game appealed across the board.

lines of Arc the Lad (Sony Playstation - reviewed issue 2) and Shining Wisdom (Sega Saturn - reviewed issue 3). The public expects wonders from the new machines, and therefore traditional art is on the way out. We have a right to be perturbed. Can you imagine the furore that would break out if all the video animators in the world decided that they were through with cels and exquisitely painted backgrounds, and that all the animated programmes released would be in the style of Lawnmower Man? I know that won't happen. But it will happen to computer game RPGs. If there is any film to be expected, it's digitized film to show off the new FMV techniques. Look at Virtual Hydellide. Bleeeugh!

Again though, some people will scoff. To certain individuals, gameplay is all that matters. Who cares about losing our old traditional graphics? Who wants to be like the 'sad lot' still exclusively playing D&D, with nothing but disdain for new technology? But you can argue that (on the new systems) video game RPGs just aren't what they used to be. They feel different. Can you imagine FFIII, rendered? I don't think. And are we just going to be fobbed off with games the likes of Powers Kingdom, and Arc the Lad? The developers in this case have spent so much time on the visuals, they've abandoned gameplay. Games have become manufactured. They seem to be much less than the works of art the genre has boasted before.

I'd like to see your views on this subject. What do you think of the new machines as a whole? What would you like from CD ROM, and is there a place for animation in your view? Write to the normal address, and we'll print your opinions.

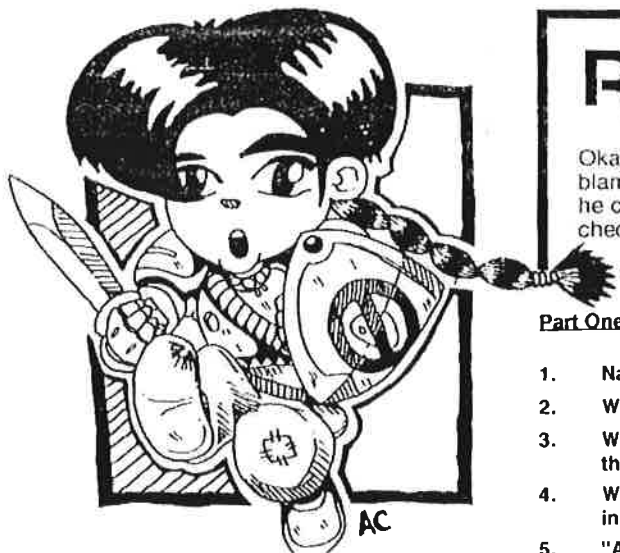
Game Details

Title and description	covered in
Ys Book I and II (1989 Falcom/Hudson Soft) PC Engine CD ROM2. Action RPG with puzzles	Issue 1
Ys Book III (1991 Falcom/Hudson Soft) PC Engine CD ROM2. Platform RPG with puzzles	Issue 2
Dragon Slayer - Legend of Heroes (1989 Falcom/Hudson Soft) PC Engine Super CD ROM2. Turn based RPG	Issue 1
Cosmic Fantasy II (1992 Telenet/Working Designs) PC Engine CD ROM2. Turn based animated RPG	Issue 1
Exile (1992 translation by Working Designs) PC Engine CD ROM2. Action platform RPG	Issue 1
Lunar - The Silver Star (1992 Game Arts/Working Designs) Sega CD. Turn based animated RPG	Issue 2
Powers Kingdom (1994 Micro Cabin/Panasonic) 3DO. Turn based strategic wargame, rendered 3D graphics	Issue 1
Arc the Lad (1995 Sony) Sony Playstation. Turn based strategic RPG	Issue 2
Shining Wisdom (1995 Sonic Team) Sega Saturn. Action Zelda-style RPG	Issue 3
Lunar - Eternal Blue (1994 Game Arts/Working Designs) Sega CD. Turn based animated RPG	Issue 4

Article and artwork by Rachel Ryan.

Role Call Quiz

Okay... we've got a little quiz together for you to do. If you don't like it - you can blame Dave! Dave is a master of the diverse. If anyone can write an RPG quiz, he can...and did! So answer the questions below, then see how you fared in the checklist. But why do these things always warrant introduction? Why?



Part One: Games

1. Name the arcade company that found success with *Breath of Fire*.
2. Which RPG series by Falcom chronicles the adventures of Adol Christin?
3. Which Konami game earned itself an 18 certificate when it was officially released in the UK?
4. Which famous D&D based game, as seen on both computer and console, takes place in the Forgotten Realms city of Waterdeep?
5. "A Link to the Past" is the subtitle to which game?
6. The Sega Saturn has ushered one of the first 32-bit next-gen RPGs to be released in the UK. What is it called?
7. Which long-running RPG series is set in a realm governed by Lord British?

Part Two: Characters

1. Which Sega star makes a guest appearance in the Megadrive game *Soleil*?
2. Who is the only character to appear in both *Secret of Mana* and its Gameboy prequel, *Mystic Quest* (Jap: *Seiken Densetsu*)?
3. How are Goeman and Ibisumaru more commonly known in the West?
4. What is the name of the dog that repeatedly appears as a running joke in *Quintet*/*Enix* RPGs?
5. What is unusual about the *Shining Force* characters Pelle, Arthur, Ken and Ernest?
6. What do the following characters have in common: Celes (*Final Fantasy III*), Lance (*Warsong*) and Lemon (*Shining Force II*)?
7. One of the main characters from the original *Phantasy Star* went on to become the founder of the Espers, and his mind and memories are handed down through the generations, ready for whenever Dark Force threatens the Algo system. Who was/is he?

Part Three: Odds and Ends

1. What is it that the Squaresoft characters Julius, Cid (FFII), and Setzer all possess?
2. Name the famous sword of British legend that pops up all the time in just about every Squaresoft RPG.
3. Which anime and manga artist designed the characters for *Chrono Trigger* and the *Dragon Quest* games?
4. In *Shining Force I* and *II*, how many Force members are allowed to fight in any one battle?
5. Also in *Shining Force*, the warrior Guntz moves around in a rather unusual form of transport. What is it?
6. The *Legend of Zelda* had its own brand of breakfast cereal at one time. True or false?

Answers

Part one: Games

1. *Capcom* 2. *Ys* 3. *Snatcher* 4. *Eye of the Beholder* 5. *Legend of Zelda III*
6. *Virtual Hydelde* 7. *Ultima*

Part two: Characters

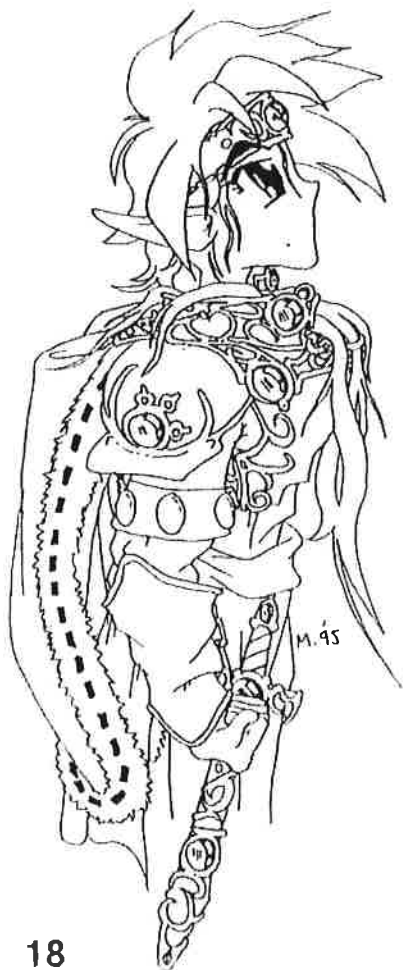
1. *Sonic the Hedgehog* 2. *Watts, the dwarf miner* 3. *Kid Ying and Dr. Yang* 4. *Turbo*
5. All of them are centaurs 6. They all start as enemies but join your side later on. 7. *Lutz*. He also appears in *PS-II* and *Rune* acquires his mind in *PS-IV*

Part three: Odds + Ends

1. They all own airships. 2. *The Excalber* 3. *Dragonball Z's Akira Toriyama* 4. *Eleven-ten plus the hero* 5. *A steam-powered Assault Suit* 6. *It's true.*

How did you do?

- 0-2 : You may not have a clue, but at least you've come to the right place to start learning
- 3-5 : At least you know that HP doesn't stand for 'Hire Purchase'.
- 7-10 : You probably own just one machine and haven't sampled the delights of the import market yet. Get yourself a converter and see what you're missing.
- 11-15: Yeah, you're a good experienced player. All the best new games get your attention.
- 16-19: You could write your own fanzine with the knowledge you have.
- 20 : So which game do you come from then?

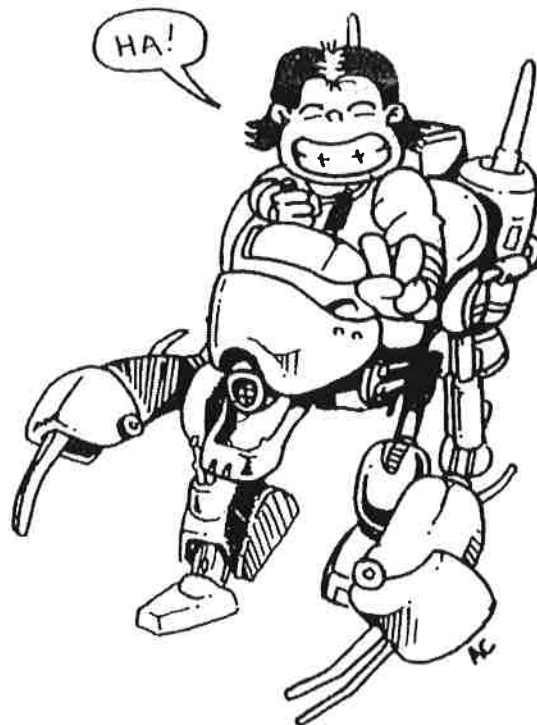
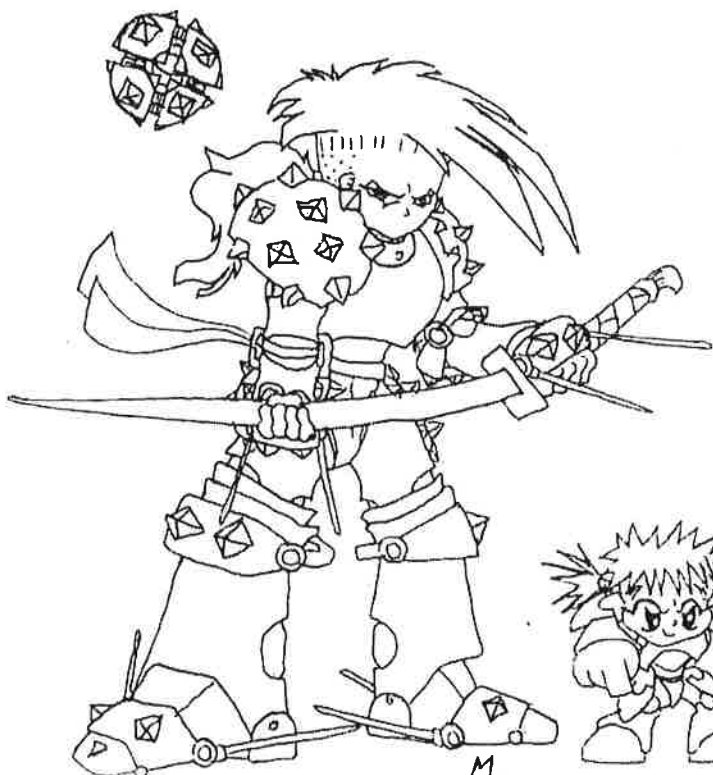


23 perfectly good reasons why.....

Reality Stinks

Why fantasy otaku would like to say 'Sod it all' and go and live in an RPG - given the chance that is. Because in RPGs....

1. No matter what day it is, there's always something to do.
2. And no matter how many people hate you, anybody who's anybody thinks you're great.
3. Nobody ever says "RPG fans are nerds".
4. You gain experience from any fights. In real life, the only kind of experience you get is how it feels to have a black eye.
5. You can take GBH an unfeasible amount of times before you expire. There's no messy little situations like this - "Get up! You still have 90 HP left!" "- I can't! I've got a punctured lung!"
6. You can restore your place, if, when and before you screwed up. It'd be so nice in real life... imagine, to go back to 'before I flunked college' or 'before I got involved with that total git.' This you CAN NOT DO.
7. It's night when you feel like it.
8. It's day when you feel like it.
9. It's life when you feel like it, in palatable chunks.
10. Shops are open all the time, they don't close on Sunday, because there's no real time scale. Unless the world you're in has a day-night system, in which case they'll probably remain open anyway.
11. Heros are heros, heroines are heroines, romance is romance. You'd never get traded in for a better model.....
12. ...because there aren't any better models.
13. You can actually retaliate to attacks to your person. With weapons. Oh joy. Do this in real life, and you're for it.



Um, make that 24 perfectly good reasons for living in an RPG. Thanks for that, Alan!

14. You can dispense with as many obnoxious individuals as you see fit, without a sense of guilt. Though this also applies to reality, people WOULD NOT SEE your point of view.
15. Because of the recognized existence of a 'Dark force', it is perfectly acceptable to nick stuff from them.
16. Authority, ie government, royalty and that are almost always of bad alignment. What a perfectly justifiable, gratifying excuse to kick the system.
17. It's the done thing to walk around with a ridiculously offensive weapon and not get questioned. Imagine the scenario.. "Excuse me sir...but what is that exactly?" "Oh that, officer? That's just my Red Dragon Katana."
18. It's also the done thing to wear ridiculous armour. No more "Your clothes aren't in fashion." NOBODY'S clothes are in fashion.
19. You always know when somebody fancies you, because of the insepit music playing out of nowhere.
20. You always know who your mates are. They're the people who you literally can't attack
21. Your friends would all die for you...
22.because you could revive them if they did.

However. Perhaps the most valid reason of all....

THERE IS A POINT TO YOUR EXISTENCE

Do the skeptics out there need any more convincing?

Okay... a new, perhaps continuing feature. Old games. What's that you say? We already do old games? No, I mean oooooold games. Simon Dominguez takes a look at a classic Specky favourite...

Lords of Midnight A legend examined

Here's a quick test for you. If when I mention Beyond software your eyes go all hazy then you're on the same wavelength as me. If I've lost you already, you haven't had a computer long enough. Beyond were, in my opinion, the first of the super-houses where software is concerned (a la Squaresoft, Rare, etc.). They were responsible for many classics. There was Psytron where you had to stop the alien bugs disrupting your supply lines and I always lost because I was about seven and kept beaming up supplies because it looked pretty. There was Shadowfire, the first ever icon-driven RPG including General Zoff's Invisible Pet (ie. your HP just started dropping for no apparent reason). And of course there was Lords of Midnight.

LoM has recently undergone an 8-meg overhaul and re-release. It might be good. I don't care, because I just want to talk about the original. The story is laid out in a slimish novella that comes with the game and rips off every Tolkien cliché in the books (a GOOD thing) and runs thus. There are three races: the Fair (humans) the Fey (elves) and the Foul (monsters). Doomdark, the Foul lord has loosed his armies on the land of Midnight, using his special weapon the Ice Fear which crumbles the morale of men.

You begin with a party of four characters. Luxor the Moonprince is the hero and uses the ring in his pocketsssssss to control those loyal to the cause of defeating Doomdark. His job is to rally the Lords of Midnight. There's Corleth the Fey, Luxor's old comrade, whose job it is to rally the elves. There's Rothron the Wise who gets on well with old wizardry types. And there's Morkin, Luxor's half-elf son, totally immune to the Ice Fear. The land is viewed from a first-person perspective astonishingly advanced for the time of writing, and each character can move solo or with an army several moves per day, or choose to camp and fight one of Doomdark's battallions.

The game can be played three ways. Firstly, rally the lords and play as a straight wargame. This is extremely compulsive and gets very complicated as you ranks grow larger and larger. Secondly, Morkin can go it alone and attempt to destroy the Ice Crown, the source of Doomdark's Ice Fear. Thirdly and best of all

SCREEEE - BEEP! SCREEEE

-BEEEEP!



Drag out that Spectrum. If, that is, you can still put up with some of it's eccentricities.

you can do the whole epic thang together. Some of you may wonder about the merits of using your PC to play a shareware game with two colours, no sound and the simplest game system you've ever seen. To that I say "I may have Final 3 and Chrono Trigger, but I don't stop playing Final 2."

Lords of Midnight is a gaming experience. It's a beautiful echo of a gaming renaissance when every week someone would stand up and proclaim that the machine had finally been pushed to it's limits. And most of all, it's better than 90% of all western games released in it's wake. Track this one down - it's the most fun you'll have with 48K.

Graphics	6	Ahead of their time by far.
Sound	0	Not a sausage, mate.
Combat	6	Purely strategic.
Story	7	I love it. Dig that ring and that Golem-a-like thing.
Atmosphere	7	S**T!!! Where did those Black Riders come from?
OVERALL	8.5	Hold your head, Enix. This is better than Ogre Battle. (That's enough corpse-kicking - Ed.)

And, if you want to go even further back...

This piece of text was sent to me by Alan Watson, who ran a wargaming magazine back in the '70s, a fanzine that went professional. The following was written 24 years ago, by a Peter J. Evans and was published in said magazine, *Sword and Lance*. 24 bloody years ago! That's older than me! Anyway, this is interesting for the very fact that all the wargamers back then got on their high horses (replete with weaponry!) about the article, saying that fantasy had no place in the hobby. Pretty funny when you consider that fantasy has more or less took over! And what's this about "tailor-made" rules? Has it took us THIS long to progress to where we are now, with the likes of Final Fantasy? Ironic really...

A Touch of Fantasy

"Led by savage trolls, the evil beings closed menacingly on their quarry. Only the total extinction of Sevel's band of warriors would quench the lust flowing through the primitive minds of these macabre creatures. Sevel sensed the feelings of desperation in his men - drawing his sword, fighting back the inner panic as his pulse raced, he quietly reassured his companions that all was not lost. There was a pause, broken by the agonising screams of a man as he fell to the ground, a creature at his throat. A Troll almost man sized ran at Sevel, swinging a huge axe - Sevel side steps the clumsy lunge and cleaves the skull of the Troll with a mighty sweep of his double-edged sword."

Fantasy? Yes, but this kind of battle could be taking place at many larger wargames in England and even more regularly in the States and Canada, where Fantasy is growing in popularity at a fair rate of knots, despite what the purists may say.

Read on...

Fantasy wargaming is not new, but it is only in recent times that figures have been created especially for the playing of such games. I

understand that The Society of Ancients have played several Fantasy games based on Greek mythology (one of these was the Quest for the Golden Fleece), using the W.R.G. ancient rules.

The now popular "Middle Earth" range of figures by Minlature Figurines and games are based in part on the books of the late Professor J.R.R. Tilkein (sic) "Lord of the Rings" and "The Hobbit" both fascinating studies in themselves. When asked how he wrote the books, he is alleged to have accredited the germ of the ideas to have occurred to him whilst examining a pupil's exercise book. On finding a blank page, Tolkein wrote "In a hole in the ground, lived a Hobbit..." and from this statement, the entire idea flourished. Professor Tolkein however never intended his books to grow into a "cult" and such was his dismay, that he dissociated himself of any connection with the trend.

I'd better make it clear at this juncture that I am not a wargamer myself, albeit I understand the rules used and the games played, but I look forward to the not too distant future when Fantasy have "tailor made" rules instead of the improvisation of existing rules, but which do not really cater for the actions of Trolls, Orcs and Hobbits.

If you have persevered with my article this far, perhaps you may be sufficiently interested to consider reading other works worthy of closer inspection. Robert Howard, Michael Moorcock, Andre Norton and Carter. Moorcock in particular vividly describes the battles in his works - in particular, I recommend the "Runestaff" books. The villain in this book belong to the Empire of Granbretan, each soldier belonging to Orders of the Wolf, The Pig, The Goat, The Skull, The Fox and The Fly. I won't give further description, as it may spoil your reading. I only hope that this introductory article may give at least an insight into what Fantasy is all about. If the editor doesn't get too many letters of complaint, perhaps I will pen further articles of news and modelling of Fantasy creatures.

COMPLETE A-Z ENCYCLOPEDIA PART 3

Dragonball/Dragonball Z Long before Ken and Ryu appeared on the Streetfighter scene, Akira Toriyama's spiky haired protagonists were blasting continent-sized fireballs at each other. At one time the most popular manga in Japan, Dragonball-Z has at least four SNES games to its credit, including three versus beat-em-ups (you were expecting something else?) and an RPG - though how you can derive an RPG from this sort of concept I've no idea. But given Toriyama's long-running character design work and the huge Japanese appetite for RPGs, we shouldn't be that surprised.

Dragon Quest: Like Square's Final Fantasy series, Dragon Quest has been around since the glory days of the NES - it's up to part 6 now. Dragonball-Z creator Akira Toriyama has worked prominently on the series for a long time as a character designer.

Dune: Frank Herbert's chronicles of the spice traders of Arakis. The Dune film has been on TV a number of times now, and is generally regarded as either a classic or totally incomprehensible. Two strategy RPGs were also produced for computer formats which later migrated to the Megadrive and Mega CD.

Dungeon Master: The rule-keeper or 'umpire' that keeps order and tells the story in a Dungeons and Dragons game. Also...

Dungeon Master: Would you believe that Dungeon Master first appeared way back in 1986? That's how ground-breaking it was. The quintessential 3D RPG and the most popular one - still the best, some say - of all time. As much of a hit in its day as Streetfighter II was in the arcades, though thankfully DM wasn't milked to death; one update (the data disk Chaos Strikes back, in 1989) was released for it. Dungeon Master II is now available on CD formats and looks set to revive the phenomenon all over again. Hopefully it will steal some of the fire and RPG influence from the hoard of Doom clones doing the rounds.

Dungeons and Dragons: Way back in 1973, E. Gary Gygax had an idea - a fantasy adventure system which players could interact with. Who could have predicted that twenty years later, the D&D game could have been responsible for such a massive industry and itself grown to the scale it is today? To list all the D&D associated products would take pages (everyone has seen the D&D cartoon series). A large number of different D&D game worlds exist, from the 'standard' ones such as Greyhawk and Dragonlance to more off-beat realms like Dark Sun (a harsh desert world), Ravenloft (dark fantasy and gothic horror), Al-Qadim (Arabian adventures) and Spelljammer (fantasy space travel - a bit silly this one). Ultimately it was D&D that became the guiding star behind all the console RPGs we get to play today.



Artwork by
Warren Tokuda



"SIGHTLESS"
QUIET

Dungeon Explorer: Sorry Dave, can't keep a good 'Engine fan down, I'll have to include this one, if not anywhere else - Ed. The Japanese answer to Gauntlet, that was perhaps more of a (displaced) influence on Mana than the original Western game was, Dungeon Explorer was also a multi-player overhead arcade jaunt featuring characters of D&D style alignment. First appearing on the diminutive PC Engine on a 2 Mbit (standard credit card sized) cart, way back in 1988, DE earned a huge following in Japan - which spawned a CD ROM sequel. Later, both games were ported over to the Megadrive - it took them until this year to port and translate DE2! The original Dungeon Explorer could also be played on the compatible PC Engine handheld, but it induced nightmares on the GT's tiny screen.

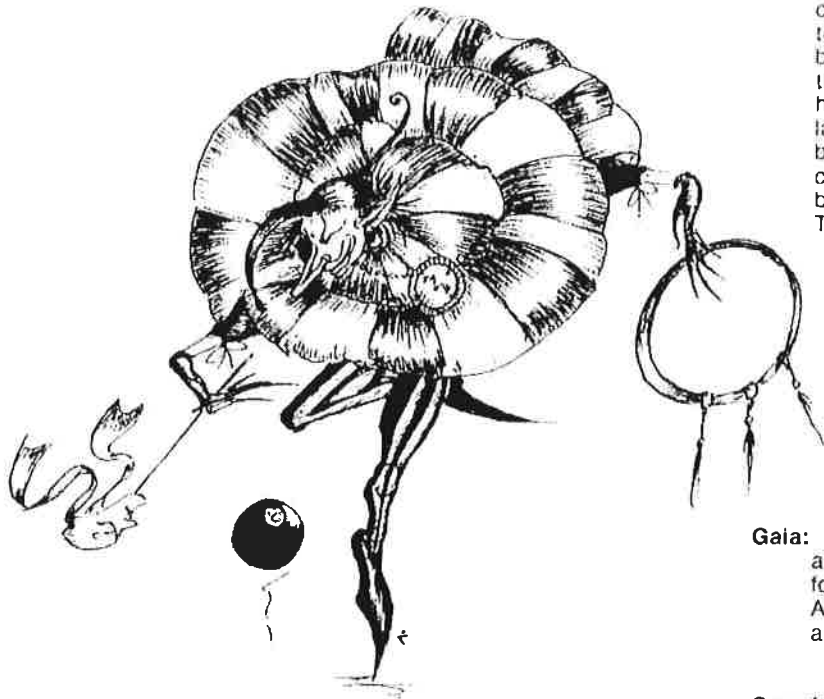
Dynastic Hero: Hudson Soft's Western PC Engine release of Wonderboy V, also on the Megadrive; same game different name.

Electronic Arts: In the early days of the Megadrive, EA were the most prominent specialists in Western-style RPGs for the machine, many of which were Amiga or PC portovers. EA amassed quite a list which ran the full gamut from the exceptional (Might and Magic II was a real classic in its day) to the execrable (Faery Tale Adventure, Rings of Power). Now mostly concentrating on the PC, EA struck a deal to produce computer versions of Game Workshops product like Space Hulk (although Mutant League Football was a thinly disguised Blood Bowl rip-off).

Enix: Another long-standing software house that specializes in Nintendo-only RPGs. Enix (and their development team Quintet) are currently number two in this field, behind Square (Enix were with us first though! - Ed). The Dragon Quest series has run since the days of the NES, but Enix has also produced a myriad of other individual games, including Soulblazer, Robotrek and Illusion of Time; like EA, their catalogue also ranges from good to bad. It was Enix who were first to create a 16-bit SNES RPG (Actraiser in 1990), but it looks as if Square will beat them to it this time with the Ultra-64.

Escom: The new owners of the ex-Commodore Amiga. Escom intend to re-launch the entire Amiga range.

Excalibur: The mythical sword of Arthurian (Camelot) legend, and possibly the most famous weapon in the whole of the fantasy genre. Certainly Square seem to think so anyway, judging by the number of their games the Excalibur has featured in.



Eye of the Beholder: After *Dungeon Master* appeared and made the new Atari ST and Amiga owners go 'ooh', it was four years before anyone else plucked up the courage to copy the format. Step forward SSI, who under license from TSR (for the D&D city of Waterdeep) created this beauty, where a party of adventurers were entrusted with the task of destroying an underground criminal organization from within. The sequel was even better; some prefer it even to the original *Dungeon Master*. The console versions have not been terribly successful as the Japanese don't go for this sort of RPG very much.

Falcom: Not such a household name amongst current 16-bit owners, but Falcom and the PC Engine go way back, with delights such as *Popful Mail* and the *Ys* series. The SNES and Megadrive have been poorly supported by Falcom up to now; *Ys III* and *Brandish* really aren't too hot, although the Mega CD does boast a fine version of *Popful Mail*. Let's see if *Ys V* can redress the balance a bit.

Famcom: The Japanese name for the old 8-bit NES.

Fanzine: Short for 'fan magazine' or one of those flings wot you are reading now. Seriously, a fanzine is often the only place to find information on a particular subject; very few of the mainstream console magazines cover RPGs to any degree at all, for example.

Fenrir: Or Fenrls, the wolf of Norse legend. Just one of the countless mythological references that find their way into Square games.

Fighting Fantasy: The popular, long-running series of gamebooks published by Ian Livingstone and Steve Jackson. At one point, text adventures based on certain books were available for home computers.

Final Fantasy Legend: The Gameboy series of Square games that proved once and for all that the humble little handheld could handle RPGs as good as those on it's big brothers, the NES and the SNES. Named *Sa-Ga* in Japan, they aren't really true *Final Fantasy* games as they utilize a different combat system.

FMV: Stands for Full Motion Video, a term that freezes the blood of many RPG fans. FMV is precisely what it sounds like; video or animation footage added to a CD game for intro sequences or between-level plot exposition. A bit of FMV can really enhance an RPG in this way. Nothing wrong with

that...until you start basing whole games around it. CD consoles the length and breadth of the country have been tortured by software manufacturers jumping on the FMV bandwagon and producing cheap, badly acted shite with all the interaction and depth of play as a colouring book. What has this done to enhance the standing of CD based was the laser disc coin-op *Dragon's Lair*, and while it was popular back then, the game style was deemed too costly and time-consuming to make it truly commercially viable. That was back in the '80s. It is now 1995. I mean, come on, guys! Take the hint already!

Forgotton Realms: One of the D&D game worlds, set on the planet of Faerun. Prominent places include the Moonshae Isles and the city of Waterdeep.

Front Mission: The Japanese love their Assault Suits. They also love their wargames. So a SquareSoft offering that combines the two really isn't all that surprising. It's a good one, this.

Gaia: The ancient spiritual name for Mother Earth (it's Greek, and they spelt it Gaea, unlike the Japanese! - Ed.) and the forces of nature believed to be sentiently governed by her. Also as used in *Illusion of Gaia* (*Illusion of Time* in the UK) and *Gaia's Navel*, the dwarf location in *Secret of Mana*.

Gameboy: What was it about the Gameboy that had developers falling over themselves to write games for it right from the word go? Most likely, the novelty of the thing. Millions of Gameboys disappeared off the shop shelves before you could say Nintendo. RPGs were a natural for the handheld, as technical wizardry was unnecessary and a good game could be played for hours at a time - ideal train journey fodder. Square were the undisputed masters of the Gameboy RPG (big surprise) with four classic games to their credit, including the original *Seiken Densetsu*, the forerunner to *Secret of Mana*.

Game Gear: And on the other end of the scale we have the poor old Sega Game Gear. Wha hopen? Nobody other than Sega themselves was prepared to give the Game Gear so much as the time of day when it came to RPGs. And the ones that it did get, well... *Ax Battler* in particular must rank as one of the very worst RPGs of all time. Even *Defenders of Oasis* couldn't make up for that.

Game Mechanic: A derogatory term for the gamer that likes to pore over character statistics, working out, maxmizing, and making full use of the best advantages his character can have, often to the detriment of his roleplaying. Western-style RPGs, being more predominantly rule-based than Japanese ones, offer more possibilities for the game mechanic to employ his trade. *Might & Magic II* is a fine example.

Games Workshop: The biggest desktop roleplaying games company in Europe. Originally just a distribution company for other manufacturers' products, GW finally severed all ties with them in the late eighties as its own stable of RPG hits were doing very nicely by themselves. The move could be seen most graphically in the GW magazine *White Dwarf*, which quickly went from a diverse production into the GW catalogue it is now, which itself disenchanting some GW players. Games Workshop successes have included *Blood Bowl*, *Talisman*, *Heroquest*, *Space Hulk* and *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay*.

Ganbare Goeman: The Japanese title for the brilliant *Legend of the Mystical Ninja*. The fourth game is due out soon in Japan; any chance of an English translation of *Goeman II* or *III* please?

Gen-Bu: The black turtle from the Chinese horoscopes, and a boss from *Final Fantasy Legend*.

Genesis: The American moniker for the Megadrive.

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(“UNYAA”)

Sharon
Laura '95

Song of the sorceress R. Ryan '95

Words are the window to my bitter soul,
Actions speak louder, more clear.
Forget that I said it, forget that I did it -
Forget I was ever here.

I want to leap from the sea of my dreams,
To ride a white dragon with you -
Forget that I said it, I don't think I mean it -
I don't see my words coming true.

*I'm not a victim to run to your side,
Pride clouds my judgement and thoughts that I find
Pride like a web spinning straight through my mind,
Preventing the words coming through.*

*I am the sorceress of the sublime -
Of magic so deadly, and bitter, and blind,
Forget that I see it, that I didn't find -
The premier magic in you.*

Words become actions when spoken in time,
And spells are all I ever knew.
Forget that I said it, forget that I did it -
For spells cannot change what is true.

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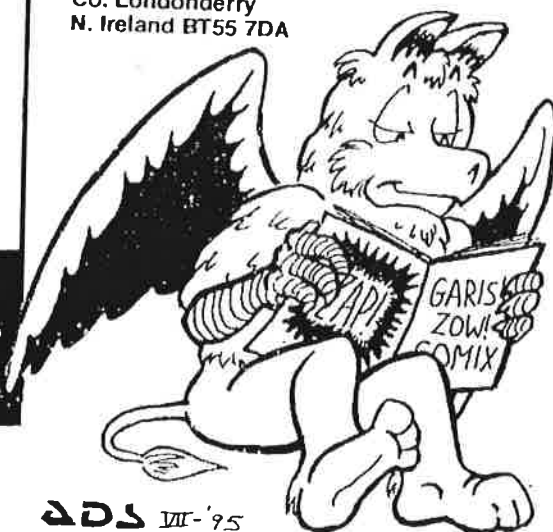
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ADS III-'95

SIGN OFF

Well, here we are again - another issue wrapped up. I hope that it was once again informative! If you are reading this at the convention, I guess you are probably a beginner and picked this up to see what it was all about. Maybe we've converted you, I hope so!

Anyway, this being the last thing I ever write in the fanzine, I'd like to relay the usual sigh of relief, and the thanks to all our readers, contributors and others who have supported us from the start. I'd also like to say a big NON-THANKS to those who have pestered me, and tried to make my life difficult. Me being a stubborn git, you will NOT succeed. This comment is not aimed at those of you who ring for game tips, as really I can only apologize to these people for my not being able to remember key points in games. Sorry I'm so vague!

Oh yeah, I forget, if you must ring - keep the background noise down. This is a plea made by one who is 'sonically challenged'. Again, I apologize to people who rang and I couldn't hear a word they were saying. It's always best to write! Especially given the fact that I am busy ALL THE TIME now. Still, I welcome your calls, I just am not terribly great on the 'phone.

Next issue... we are hoping to cover Secret of Mana 2, and also Breath of Fire 2. Sequel city! Secret of Evermore should be out too. No, I am not expecting much. No, I am not biased (well maybe a little by the fact that Japanese games are always better than American ones).

So - farewell again, and I'll be with you next month, as will the rest of the team. Thanks for supporting Role Call!

Role Call



Seeing double? Lunar II meets Final Fantasy III!

Role Call #4, November '95. Special Edition for RecontanimeTed '95. Colour Art by Rachel Ryan.
Back cover by Emmeline Dobson.