

It's... It's...

THE GAMEROOM BLITZ

DANCE,
PUPPETS, DANCE!



ISSUE #05

\$1.50



FAN-ED FRACAS

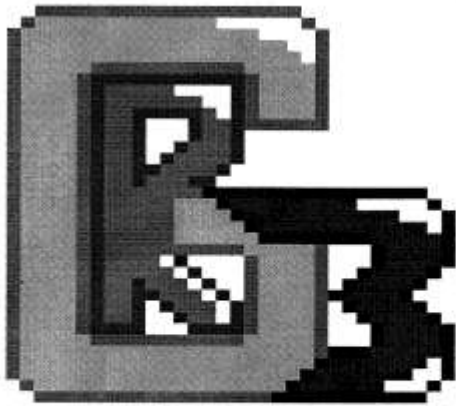
ULTIMATE CUTENESS ATTACK

In This Syrupy Sweet Issue...

What Is Cute? (tell me, tell me)
"Fan-Ed Fracas" Revealed!
Reviews of Abhorribly Adorable Games
Uston: The Ken-spiracy Lives On
Your Guide To Bad American Cartoons
...and more! If It's Cute, It's In Here!



Jess CREATIONS, Co.*
PUBLISHING



The Gameroom Blitz #05
Summer & Fall 1998

Guest Editors...

Byron J. Lisamen
Jypsyky Shirnian

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Jess Ragan

Letters By...

Chris Dyer
Eric Longdin
Josh Lesnick
Pat Reynolds

Other Stuff By...

Jess Ragan
Bill Suszynski
Chris Kohler
Josh Lesnick
Chris Dyer
Greg Wilcox

Never, EVER Eat At...

Wienerschnitzel (the name says it all)

OnFile

MEMBERS INCLUDE...

Jess Ragan
Russ Perry, Jr.
Tom Donoho
Al Riccitelli, Jr.
Chris Kohler
Rick Florey
Jared Jones
Lance Rice
Jon Ratcliffe
Ed Finkler
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Ben Leatherman
Chris Dyer
Matt Lotti
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Jeremy Statz
Pat Reynolds
Brian Pacula
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Eric Longdin
Scott Boehmer
Josh Lesnick

The Cover...

...depicts an all-out battle between dozens of fan-edds in a tribute to both "Fan-Ed Fracas" (that corny fighting game I've been working on for who knows how long) and the On-File project (web site coming soon to a theatre near you). I'll list the names of every single one of the l'il buggers elsewhere in this issue. For now, though, just keep guessing...



Well, are you ready, Byron?

I guess. Just one thing... isn't this going to look a lot like Josh Lesnick's column from the double issue?

C'mon... who's gonna remember back that far? Besides, just because we're fictional, and we're talking to each other, and we have virtually the same opinions on everything...

See?

OK, OK, you made your point! But hey, at least this has nothing to do with talking lizards. Just a genetically engineered bear cub and a resident of the planet Sarvarious.

Yeah, like that makes all the difference.

You're not thinking positive here...

All right, all right. This conversation isn't like Josh's at all and we're having loads of fun doing this! Is that better?

I said think positive, not dillusional.

Oh.

Anyways, the bear and I were given clearance to do our very own issue of "The Gameroom Blitz". Jess said it would work well with the cute issue, even though I look more weird than anything else and Byron's too obnoxious to be cute.

That reminds me... I've got to shred all the furniture in his room before he gets back.

Anyways, the time shifter I use to get from my plane of existance to yours is on a rental, so for the time I'm here I recruited some of the mascots from "Project: Ignition" and "Concept". This is Bashi Tanook...

KONNICHIWA AND A THOUSAND HAPPY GREETINGS!

I believe you're Sergio Toratelli, right?

Yep, the one and only. Byron, I can't believe you're still wearing those! You got a spastic colon or something like that?

Shut up. And leave Kohler out of this.

And this is Elle Sanders, the ursine formerly known as L. Gradia Sanders. Elle... Elle! Wake up, Elle!

Uh... can't I sleep for just one more week, mom?

Rise and shine, sleepyhead! I'm not going to write all of this myself. Besides, this is starting to sound like the beginning of "Shining Wisdom", and we don't want that.

Yeesh! Hell no!

What was that about a crappy RPG now?

Oh good. You're finally up. Anyway, there's one more member of the staff... I'm not sure just what he's doing here, but I'm hoping he'll be of some use. Introducing Molotov, the official "Gameroom Blitz" cockatiel!

RRAWK!

Um, I think he prefers Molotov, the psitticine phoenix...

I think I'd prefer him on a skewer drenched in sweet and sour sauce, with onion rings on the side...

<FLAPPA FLAPPA FLAPPA>

Now look what you did! You scared him away, you... you... carnivore, you!

On the plus side, at least he's crapping all over Jess's couch...

You really know how to hold a grudge, don't you, Byron?

What can I say? I'm the best at what I do.

Getting back to the subject... <ahem> Jess isn't going to be absent through the entire issue-

There just HAD to be a catch!

Byron, stop interrupting!

I can't help it... I'm obnoxious, remember?

You most certainly are...

He's doing a lot of the reviews and editorials, and has asked a few other humans to help him out...

There goes the neighborhood.

Like I was SAYING... they're Josh Lesnick, Chris Kohler, and Bill Suszynski. They've all done stuff for the fanzine before and everybody seems to like what they do, so here they are. There's supposed to be some letters from a few returning fan-edds like Chris Dyer and Pat Reynolds in here, too... Jess seems to think that's a big deal, so dig around for those if you get the chance.

I hate to tell 'ya this, but we're almost outta space...

Oh, uh, sure. Thanks for listening. Let's all cross our fingers and see how this works out...

For you RPG fans out there, we're calling this...

The Staff of *Might*

(Gives The User ++ Constitution & Luck)



Byron J. Lisamen

Byron was created by the editor to kill time in an otherwise uneventful journalism class. This embodiment of Jess' inner child later became the unofficial mascot of "Project: Ignition", then went on to share the spotlight with two other characters in the fanzine you're reading now.

LIKES: Sweets (NOT honey), the NES
DISLIKES: The bears on Conan O'Brien



Jypsky Shirnian

Jypsky hails from the year 7999, where genetic engineering has turned simple creatures from other planets into sentient beings and video games have been all but replaced by the full-immersion, holographic "Rooms of Illusion". He's editing this issue of GRB alongside Byron... don't ask us how.

LIKES: Salad, ancient Terran disco music
DISLIKES: Always being broke



Elle Sanders

Known as L. Gradia Sanders in the early days of "Project: Ignition", Elle has returned from a four year hiatus to assist the guest editors with this issue of "The Gameroom Blitz". Elle wears a spectacle to correct her vision in one eye and loves 3D games (much unlike the rest of the staff...).

LIKES: Sony's Playstation, Sailor Moon
DISLIKES: Fighting game "bimbos"



Sergio Toratelli

Sergio was the mascot of Jess' ill-fated "Concept" for four years but disappeared when the Vectrex special was released. Serg requested that he return for the cute issue of GRB, claiming that he's "older, smarter, sleeker, and better" than ever before.

LIKES: Girls, girls, girls!
DISLIKES: Siegfried and Roy



Bashi Tanook

Bashi left his homeland on a makeshift raft, ashamed that he disgraced his *tanuki* brethren by leaving them trapped in a cave-in created by Japanese land developers. He has come to the United States, searching for "the one". Nobody's sure who this is or even what that means.

LIKES: A belly full of sake!
DISLIKES: Being called "Raiden Byron"



Jess Ragan

Jess has been in EG fandom since it began in 1990 (?) with the utterly horrible, carbon-copied "Power Up". He later graduated to the improved (using "improved" as a relative term) "Project: Ignition", then went on to edit the fanzine you're reading now.

LIKES: Chinese food, 2D fighters
DISLIKES: Sega of America (don't we all?)



Chris Kohler

The spastic one managed to punch out a review for GRB between various high school concerns and long sessions of "Final Fantasy Tactics". Chris also edits "Video Zone", one of the best EG fanzines still in circulation. Never mind the fact that it's also one of the ONLY fanzines still in circulation...

LIKES: RPGs, Treasure
DISLIKES: The immense stupidity of Nick Rox



Josh Lesnick

Josh is the editor of the AnePRO web site (URL: <http://anepro.anime-archive.com>) and generously supplies server space for this fanzine's on-line counterpart (slap a /Jess/ on the aforementioned URL). You can thank him for the review of the hyper-cute Capcom game "Puzzle Fighter".

LIKES: Anime!
DISLIKES: 3D in all its wicked forms



Chris Dyer

Chris is the editor of the wacky (and soon to be revived) fanzine "Sub-Zero". He sent Jess a feux portfolio a while back containing some of his very best work. While not cute by any stretch of the word, his "Enigma" drawing was just too good not to print. You can find that near the back of the issue.

LIKES: Underlining, bolding, and italics
DISLIKES: Pretentious Saturn demo discs



Bill Suszynski

Bill's a game collector... y'know, one of those guys who scours the countryside looking for Emerson Arcadias and other torture devices no one in their right minds would ever willingly play. Look around a bit and you'll find his Nintendo64 editorial, swear words and all, in this very issue.

LIKES: Doom64
DISLIKES: Scammers (one word: Polosky)

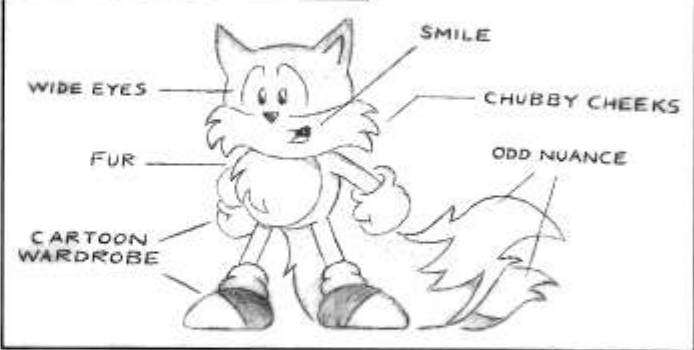
What Is Cute?



Esteemed electronic game fanzine editor and self-proclaimed higher intelligence Thaddeus F. Lintley defines cute as...
 "Any one of a number of characteristics which elicit a maternal response, or, in simple layman's terms, things that make you go 'Aww...'"

Um, ignore that. You *could* pare the concept of cuteness down to a one sentence definition, but there's really much more to it than that. The essence of cute is everywhere... from cartoons to comics to late night newscasts (you've gotta love that Asha Blake!), you just can't escape it. But just what makes something "cute"? What is that magical formula that makes you warm up to certain characters... and what makes others downright irritating? We'll attempt to answer this by looking at the concept of "cute" ... what it is, how it's evolved, and its impact on video games over the years.

THE ANATOMY OF "CUTE"...



SO... WHAT IS CUTE, ANYWAY?

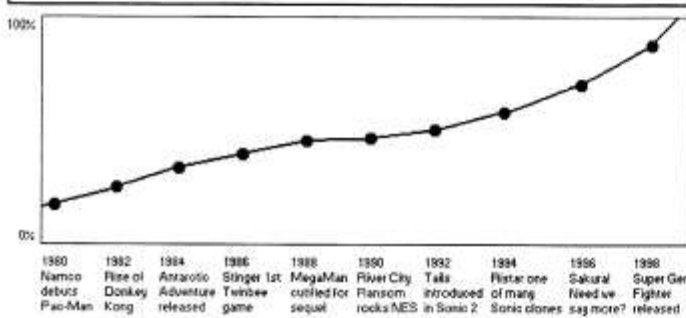
CUTE IS... UNASSUMING. Cute video game stars don't set out looking for adventure... the responsibility of saving the world is usually dropped into their laps. Take a look at Kirby, for instance. He's actually pretty powerful, but doesn't become confident of his abilities until after defeating the last boss in "Kirby's Adventure".

CUTE IS... YOUTHFUL. Let's face it... kittens are cuter than cats, puppies are more lovable than dogs, and young video game characters are more adorable than older ones. You're just more inclined to feel for Mega Man and the Gunstar Heroes than you would the stars of "Contra", although they're the ones who die almost constantly.

CUTE IS... EXPRESSIVE. Mario is considered a cute video game character, but he never really was until the debut of "Super Mario Bros. 2". In all the games before it, he had this unchanging, glassy-eyed stare that made him look like a robot... compare this to "Super Mario 64", where he actually reacts to given situations.

and finally... **CUTE COMES NATURALLY.** There's a fine line between cute and obnoxious, and it's easy to cross if you try too hard. The character who tries to be adorable (ie Ristar) is more likely to just turn people off. Cuteness is something you've got to let happen.

CUTENESS IN VIDEO GAMES: A TIMELINE



A HISTORY OF CUTENESS IN VIDEO GAMES

Oddly, the history of cuteness in electronic entertainment dates back to the 1950's, long before video games were even invented! Osamu Tezuka is fondly remembered as the father of Japanese animation. Inspired by the work of Max Fleisher, Tezuka created "Tetsuwan Atom", an early black and white cartoon starring a little robot with huge, expressive eyes. This animated series was renamed "Astro Boy" in the United States, where it created a passion for anime that was later satisfied with such classics as "Speed Racer", "Star Blazers", and "Robotech".

This brings us to the 1980's. Namco debuted "Pac-Man" at the 1980 Consumer Electronics Show, where it was criticized by industry leaders for being out of touch with the science fiction fad so prevalent at the time. Namco ignored its critics and released "Pac-Man" in the United States, where it became a runaway hit with both men and women. From that point on, cute Japanese characters became an inseparable part of the video game culture.

As technology improved, the stars of video games became more personable. The faceless icons of "Pac-Man" and "Frogger" were replaced with more detailed characters like the ones from "Bubble Bobble", complete with wide eyes and rosy cheeks. The NES introduced us to Mega Man, a direct descendant of Astro Boy, and the 16-bit revolution spawned dozens of furry mascots, led by Sega's own Sonic the Hedgehog.

This age of computer rendering and polygonal manipulation seemed to put the future of cute video games in jeopardy, but titles like "Klonoa" and the sugary sweet "Diddy Kong Racing" proved that gamers had nothing to fear from the latest technology. Like it or not (and not everybody does!), cute video games are here to stay!

HISTORICAL DATA COURTESY OF "TIPS & TRICKS" & "PHOENIX"

THE TEN CUTEST VIDEO GAME STARS OF ALL TIME!

- BOMBERMAN:** Forget the new character designs in the PC version... the classic blue and white Bomberman is still the best. Not to mention the cutest.
- MARIO:** Of all the stereotypes folks had about fat Italian plumbers, "cute" was probably not one of them. Until Mario came along.
- MEGA MAN:** Actually, Mega Man is nowhere near as cute as his sister Roll. Maybe it's time she had her own game?
- PENGUIN (?):** He never had much of a following in the States, but "Antarctic Adventure" is still the cutest game in the entire ColecoVision software library.
- TAILS:** Here's a character who had to work at being cute. Tails didn't really do much of anything in "Sonic 2", but became more endearing in later "Sonic" releases.
- ELLIS:** "Toshinden"'s knife-wielding gypsy was almost too adorable in the Saturn version's kooky cinema scenes. Grab those earplugs!
- BUB:** This bubble blowing dinosaur only gets more and more lovable with every "Bubble Bobble" spin-off released.
- KIRBY:** Cute as a button, if not much more detailed. Kirby's a perfect example of how simple could be simply adorable.
- CAMMY:** She captured the hearts of gamers everywhere, making the otherwise disappointing "Super Street Fighter 2" a hit.
- SAKURA:** Not much of a fighter, or particularly original, but let's face it: few things are cuter than a Japanese schoolgirl in a miniskirt.

Squeezins JET

"Marvel vs. Capcom" is out now, and all I can say is this: IT'S ABOUT FRIGGIN' TIME. I had to wait even longer than everyone else to try it, because some genius at my favorite Tucson arcade saw fit to put the game in a "Tekken" cabinet. Only half realizing his mistake, this microbrain set the machine out for display, but put screws in the token slots to prevent anyone from playing it. It's not that I don't appreciate the poetic justice of the situation... "Tekken" has been ousting superior fighting games from their cabinets for years, so its own eviction at the hands of a side-scrolling brawler, a member of a genre it had supposedly obsoleted, was a delicious irony. Regardless, it wasn't fun to have the game dangling just out of my reach like a carrot on a stick. I returned to the arcade a week later and found "Marvel vs. Capcom" still in the "Tekken" cabinet, but fully playable and with the standard "Street Fighter" button layout. Better yet, the machine was practically deserted, giving me the chance to dump nearly five bucks of tokens into Capcom's best use yet of its Marvel Comics license.

Actually, the Marvel characters aren't what make this game a classic... not by a long shot! Capcom's own inspired creations like Strider and Captain Commando are what had me coming back for more... and more... and more. They've adapted surprisingly well to the fighting game format, and Capcom's attention to detail will just blow your mind. The gameplay's evolved noticeably since "Marvel Super Heroes vs. Street Fighter", too... you can call in reinforcements from Capcom sleepers like "Forgotten Worlds" to aid you in a pinch, or even control both members of your team briefly for attacks that do insane damage.

I felt almost magnetically attracted to "Marvel vs. Capcom", but I eventually pulled myself away from it to complete my experience with Namco's Classic Collection games. Much to my extreme horror, "Galaga Arranged" turned out to be pretty lame... the new, spastic enemy formations don't do justice to the original "Galaga", and the graphics are light years behind "Galaga '90"'s. That makes it 0 for 3 for Namco's second collection... Surprisingly, "Rally-X Arranged", which I thought would be the worst redux on both machines, turned out to be a blast! It's not exactly stunning visually, but the graphics work, and the scrolling playfield gives it a more tense feel than "Pac-Man". You just never know what's around the next corner...

Any rush I'd gotten from "Rally-X" vanished after playing the ill-conceived "Fatal Fury 3", however. I don't even know why I bothered, really... I wasn't especially fond of "Fatal Fury Real Bout Special", and this uses an unrefined version of its engine, complete with utterly lousy control (if you're waiting for that

special move to come off, don't hold your breath) and a cast of idiotic characters. Worst of all, THEY TONED DOWN MAI!!! Even Bill Clinton couldn't make Mai suck, but somehow, SNK has... I hope the eunuch who designed her less-than-revealing new outfit was fired, or worse.

Oh, well. At least SNK came to its senses with the "King of Fighters" games. Besides, "Metal Slug" always seems to put me in a good mood. I didn't even know a sequel to this intense side-scrolling shooter was in development, so you can imagine my surprise when I found it staring me in the face when I'd walked past a pair of Neo-Geo machines. I was less pleasantly surprised to discover that "Metal Slug 2" isn't the classic that its predecessor was. Sure, there's a few more weapons, four commandos to choose from (including two cute female soldiers!) and stages that span the globe, but the inspiration of the original just isn't there. On top of that, there's excessive slowdown (actually, "excessive" is putting things mildly...), and the extremely graphic deaths made famous in the original just clash with the game's cartoony atmosphere. Slug 2 is certainly worth playing, but it never achieves the level of greatness that made the first Slug a hit.

I'd mentioned last issue that I was pretty impressed with "Tekken 3". Not anymore! Believe me when I say that "Virtua Fighter 3" wipes the floor, ceiling, and walls with Namco's second rate clone. Those graphics... oh, man. If it weren't for the constant perspective changes, you'd SWEAR the characters were computer rendered models. Everybody in the game is shaded and detailed to perfection, especially the thinner, more agile fighters like Pai and Lion. The levels are amazing, too... calling them "backgrounds" just wouldn't do them justice. Best of all, the game plays as well as previous VFs, and costs just a quarter to play at my favorite Tucson arcade... can life get any better?

"Shock Troopers" sure as hell could be. This overhead blastathon plays well enough, but its graphics are a full grenade's throw behind "Metal Slug"'s, and look practically prehistoric in comparison to a visual powerhouse like "Virtua Fighter 3". This "Ikari Warriors" descendant is kinda sorta fun, but it's just too retread for its own good, and the difficulty level is a complete joke. Don't be surprised if you walk away from this one before your quarter's up... I did.

I'd taken a trip to Phoenix recently, and was able to check out a variety of games I hadn't played before with Ben Leatherman (yep, that "Fanarchy" guy). Among them was "Vampire Savior", the new "Darkstalkers" sequel with a handful of new characters and a noticeably darker edge. I already expected it to be a step down from "Night Warriors" (both "Tips & Tricks" and "GameFan" clearly illustrated that Felicia- my favorite character!- was weakened considerably in the new release), but the sped up gameplay and "Killer Instinct"-inspired round system made it even more disappointing. But since it's "Darkstalkers", you know I'm going to pick up the import version when it's released. I'll fill you in on my visit with Ben in a special crossover issue of GRB, but until then, the arcade is closed...

GEAR UP!

When people think of portable game systems, the Game Gear is usually the last one to come to mind. When Rick Florey mentioned the system briefly in one of his fanzine's editorials, the normally polite "Overkill" editor had nothing nice to say about it. If the statement "Rick Florey not being nice" doesn't give you an idea of just how unappreciated the Game Gear is, I don't know what would...

I'm sure you've heard a lot of nasty things about the Game Gear. If you were a "Project Ignition" reader, you may have heard some of them from me! Well, try to ignore them. I didn't realize this at the time, but Sega's portable is a powerful system in its own right, and contrary to popular belief, not all of its games are watered-down Genesis releases. Take "Mortal Kombat", for instance. Oddly, Probe did a far better job converting this game to Sega's portable than it had the Genesis (that version was lackluster at best) and Sega CD (that version just plain SUCKED).

Apparently, the Game Gear fared even better in Japan... at least that's what the imports I managed to find at a Tucson bookstore seem to indicate. There's an entire series of games based on a popular Japanese cartoon... of these games, "Ninku Hiroyuki" is the best. Sega's own Game Gear translation of "Pengo" left much to be desired, but this makes up for it with sharper graphics and more attention to detail (even the intermissions where the penguin walks offscreen- and trips!- have been preserved). Further behind but still notable is "Ninku 2", a reasonably impressive fighting game with a zoom feature (no scaling, though) and strong visuals. Finally, there's the first "Ninku", a combination fighter/RPG where you're constantly attacked by thugs (think "Last Battle" for the Genesis).

If you're still into the portable scene (and very few people are), you could do a lot worse than the Game Gear. Hey, just look at game.com, for example.

<MAD GEARS>

Ten of My Game Gear Faves...

10. Mappy. A solid conversion, plus there's a head-to-head mode!
9. Pac-Man. A wonderful translation... far better than the NES version.
8. Ninku Hiroyuki. This Japanese release is closer to the arcade version of "Pengo" than Sega's "official" Game Gear conversion!
7. Mortal Kombat 2. It amazes me what Probe was able to do with the Game Gear hardware. An excellent arcade port.
6. Shinobi. A good, solid side-scroller worthy of the "Shinobi" license.
5. Galaga '91. Better than the Turbo version, if not as spectacular visually.
4. Fatal Fury Special. Yet another strong arcade port... of a Neo-Geo game!
3. Frogger. Not many people will get to play this one. Pity them.
2. Gunstar Heroes. Who knew?
1. Sonic In Triple Trouble. The best Game Gear Sonic, hands down.



Indifferent Reader
82 Aggravating Way
Neverite Attol CA 90101

RETURN TO SENDER

With The Emphasis On, Well, Everything...

Jesstopher,

Just got the newest GRB- great job! It was twice as good as the past three issues [um, thanks... I guess... -ed.]. The "lightened up" feel was a necessary improvement and very welcome. It was like the icing on the cake, the butter on the popcorn, one of those awkward situations when you're using the poop swallow machine and find whole peanuts and kernals of corn [WTF!?!?! -ed.]. Er, not... Seriously though, GRB #4 was an excellent effort on your part and it came so quickly (or perhaps I was the last person to receive issue #2/3. Jess!)

I'll take it from the top. The cover was a little lacking [well, not the top half... -ed.], but it was humorous enough to make up for it. Page 2 has a nice look to it, especially the fonts used and the neat-o pic at the top. The "Letti"-whatever was fairly interesting, but I have to argue a point. The fact that you can even buy "so many great games... at such cheap princes" at all is every reason to pass up the Saturn! Bargain bin software generally signifies the end of its respective hardware. Why put any money into the Saturn, as it no longer has (or soon won't have) any software support, which means no new games, and a waste of money? Sure, the Saturn is a horrifically underrated system (I used to own one...) which is more than capable of handling some kick-ass software, but think about it economically. It's a bad investment.

Speaking of the web [were we? -ed.], I checked out your site- WOW! Great animated .GIF title! I absolutely loved the miniature Simon Belmont whipping the shit out of the title, and Mega Man is drawn perfectly. Didn't have time to read much, though, but I did download the FFCHAN.EXE file to disk. Your 20x20 and 40x40 animation programs were excellent, and I absolutely adored the cute l'il Gunstar Red sprites! But anyways, don't bother with the disk I asked you for (if you were even planning to send it at all). The Top Ten Reasons The Saturn Failed was dead-on. Did Sega really think they'd sell Saturns at \$400 with only poor software like "Virtua Fighter" (original, Remix rocked), "Daytona USA" (way too damned generic), and

"Bug!" (Yeech!) to justify the lofty purchase? And that "Choice Cuts" CD, eech! I wanted to return my Saturn as soon as I saw it, as it literally caused me to regret my purchasing one. It should have been called the "Cuts That USED To Be Choice, But Were Left Out In The Sun To Rot" CD! It was absolutely horrid.

I disagree about "NiGHTS" being a cause of the Saturn's demise. Of course, a really wicked 2D (and I stress 2D) "Sonic" game would've been great, but if "NiGHTS" did anything, it made a few Saturn owners (including myself) a little less regretful for purchasing one in the first place.

Arcade Squeezins was great (loved how you jumped from the Namco Collections to Capcom's game). I could just hear the "Legomania!" in the "Street Fighter EX" review! But how could have passed up "Galaga"!??

Post Office Paranoia was really, really good. I especially enjoyed Nate Hine's letter. An excellent example of pure idiocy. Make sure to let Nate and his friend Mark know that not only have I been in rehab, but four consecutive psych wards, and I'd be happy to help them both with any problems they may need solved. What's their addresses!?!? WHAT'S their addresses!!!!!!? See, I'm "torturing" them out of you. I guess it appears, Mr. Hine, that you have in fact made a SINGLE enemy who's more than capable of handling ALL the "enemies" Jess has supposedly made.

Now on to a subject more worthy of my ink. I especially like the 'Zina review section. The star system was a welcome and uniquely innovative way of rating the reviewed 'zines, though you really should explain what value x number of points on the star are worth. Is five points average, below-average, poor, or what? Either it's a valid suggestion, or I'm just being anal [a little from column A, a little from column B... -ed.].

Yeaagh! Reviews!!! Nice overview of the Saturn's software. Do you really own all those games? Half-Ass and Game Over were simply astounding, if only for the fact that I got to see my name in print for the first time in ages (why yes, I am obnoxiously egotistical). I found the second Top Ten list to be somewhat perplexing, as I believe that I saw all of those things in 1997.

I second Mr. Springer's promotional title (and for him, the name "bastard" IS a promotion!). All he, and a million other talk show hosts, do is

feed off and further the angry dispositions of their guests to the point where blows are swapped, and "precious" chairs are broken. And it's all just for the ratings!

Keep watch for issue eight of "Sub-Zero" very soon. You will enjoy it (or else...). It's nearly complete, and not bad at all. I'll write you again soon enough. Sayonara!

Sincerely,
Chris Dyer

Well, I just thought I'd let everyone know that I've run out of underlining for the next five years. Way to go, Chris! I suppose there's always bolding and italics...

But all seriousness aside, thanks much for the letter. I would have sent you the double issue of GRB sooner, but you happened to have been one of the last people to respond to the premiere. I've adopted a "first come, first served" policy for readers... folks who send letters of comment about the issues they receive get the next issue first. Those who don't bother to respond (yes, even fan-eds) have to wait a while longer, and people who send me nothing GET nothing, period. Sorry, but as Bieniek says, "Jess absolutely THRIVES on mail", and if people don't send it, they're pushed down or off the mailing list. That may be callous, but I'm not doing this for typing practice.

Of course, the point is moot in your case since you've been sending me mail on a regular basis lately. I just thought I'd make it clear to those chuckleheads who feel perfectly justified in ignoring GRB, for whatever reason. I won't mention any names... you know who you are.

Anyhoo, the letter. I wouldn't bother harassing Master Nathan if you were indeed serious... I'm pretty sure that he and his profane crony Mark have been booted out of fandom anyways. Since Nate was never terribly "tolerant to criticism" despite his insistence to the contrary, I'm sure Chris Kohler's negative review of "Dominion" was that fanzine's death blow. Good riddance, I say. I've been known to beat such topics into the ground so I'll do the mature thing for once and just let "Dominion" die with dignity... that is, if it had any to begin with.

Getting off that subject, let me answer a few of your questions... first off, the Top Ten list was of things we DIDN'T need to see in 1997. They did happen that year; they just shouldn't have. And the 'Zina ratings system from last issue worked like this: five points on the star is decent, six is very good, and twelve is the best rating possible. Hope that clears things up. It's for reasons of confusion that I'm not sure the fanzine rating system will remain as it is.

Finally, the Saturn is obviously a bad investment, but it is a great game system, and it won't be on store shelves for long. If people don't get theirs soon, they won't be able to get one at all! I'm still kicking myself for not picking up one of those \$50 Turbo-grafx16s Toys "R Us was selling in '92. To think I bought "Ecco the Dolphin" instead... yeesh! Um, next letter, please.

Insert Dopey "Long" Pun Here...

(from a response to issues #2/3)

Dear Jess,

Hi there. Sorry it's taken me a while to get back to you. Been a bit busy reorganizing and stuff. I got GRB like two weeks ago but only got around to reading it last night, finally. I reviewed it right after doing so as well, so it'll be in the next "Splat!", whenever that's released.

I enjoyed the issue of GRB quite a bit. For the now-average size of 24 pages it seemed quite lengthy, so it's a testament to you for being able to stuff an issue with lots of material, and good material, too. No wasted space, or cheap inserts to fill the pages. I like the mix of classic and current gaming; you do it quite evenly and you don't burden the reader with lots of facts and nostalgic information in the classic departments, which I liked. I'm not that into the classic gaming era; I mean, I was there and played those games, but I don't read all the intimate details and histories of them. Your approach of mainly just reviews of classic games is good; I don't mind reviews of the classics but anything deeper kinda bores me.

Nice to see Josh Lesnick in your 'zine also. I skipped his 'rant' column for last but enjoyed it more than I expected to; he does a great job of keeping the fictional conversation entertaining and fairly believable.

I liked the mix of classic and new games in your reviews. Good reviews; some of the better I've seen, and you (and others) get a lot said in a short time, which I wish I could do. But I can't... I am of the breed that writes page-length or longer reviews that expel every detail about the game... yet they're not quite as in-depth as Mike Palisano's. :)

The 3D gaming article was good, though "Tekken" does use the button for each limb model as you suggested... just not to the extent that you describe. Also, I noticed in your Top 100 games (I couldn't quite understand your inclusion of "Super Mario 64" when you seemed to damn that game to Hell everywhere else) that you said "Duke Nukem 3D" is as its name implies true 3D. This is wrong. It is known as 2½D. This is not true 3D... you cannot have floors above floors where you may look up and see directly into the next floor. Try designing a level; if you do floors above floors so you can see the top floor from below you get the dreaded "Hall of Mirrors" effect where it's all blurred. The programmers and mappers use tricks in the Build engine that make Duke 3D seem as if it's truly room above room. "Quake" 1 & 2, and the forthcoming 3D shoot-'em-ups like "Unreal", "Prey", "Half-Life", etc. are all true 3D, but again most use either the "Quake" or "Quake 2" engine with their own modifications and that engine is a true 3D engine.

Your letters were all great and lengthy, which I love to see. I'm a bit annoyed, but none

the less grateful, for the shorter ones. But it's the long, drawn-out ones with lots of criticism and pointers that I like best. Maybe it's because you know the writer really read your 'zine? Anyway, really enjoyed the letters section, though that area is my fave of all 'zines and mags (well, not "NEXT Generation" for some reason).

The emulator article was great to see, and the best one too, yet it's older than the rest I've read! Heh... that's a good sign... you do a thorough job when you do something, and that's cool. You think the Virtual GameBoy is slow? I believe that is what I use as my GB emulator as well, but it runs fine on my machine (admittedly faster than your 486, since it's a Pentium 90 with 32 megs of RAM). MASSAGE was my first SMS emulator and it truly is a great one. I don't know which Coleco em I have but it works well, and the front-end I have is great, too. I believe that is all I have and have had... I think I had one more but got rid of it... Oh yes, the Vectrex emulator... run way too slow. :(I think though it would've been much more complete an article if you included the web addresses to obtain the emulators... it's one thing to read about 'em but another to go and get 'em for yourself.

El Libro² was decent, but not too much of an interest to me. And what was up with that "Wood Pulp Fiction" piece? Weird. Half-Ass was enjoyable though what was up with your "Gex" rant? Gee, I see worse on a lot of 'family' sitcoms, like "Married... With Children", "Roseanne", etc. Also, I found your etching out the word God confusing as well... what's with that? How is God offensive? If I didn't know any better I'd say you were easily offended by things... so your 'zine mentions and such lead me to believe. Oh well, to each his own. Lastly, the 'zine reviews were as well done as the game reviews... again, good job.

Overall, I liked GRB a good deal. Sure, I think some other 'zines have more enjoyable reading, and others have stronger layout, but you're one of the best middle of the road 'zines out there... fun, good layout without the extra mile, and well organized. Lots of opinions and great reviews. Thanks for sending it to me and I hope to see more soon. Take care!

Sincerely,
Eric Longdin

I should point out that Eric also sent a response to the last issue of GRB, and made the excellent point that the feature article, "The Ten Reasons The Saturn Failed", seemed rushed toward the end. There's really nothing I can say in my defense, except that the focus of the issue was on the Saturn and not the Playstation. Still, it would definitely have been more complete if I'd expanded upon why the Playstation should have failed. Y'know, I could always contribute a spin-off of the feature to another fanzine...

But back to this letter. Your comparison of "Gex" to "Married... with Children" is a fine argument, but there's one crucial difference... Married is rated appropriately. It's not that I mind the crude sexual references in "Gex"; but let's face it, if

you're going to have a ratings system for video games or anything else, try to make it accurate. It seems to me that the ESRB is sleeping through the ratings process, arbitrarily giving side-scrolling platformers a K-A rating while slapping T ratings on anything where two people shove fists in each others' faces. If the schmucks at the ESRB had spent just fifteen minutes actually playing "Gex", they would have realized just how stupid basing ratings on a stereotype really is. And the worst part is, nothing's changed since that game was released three years ago! I'd bet demons to diamonds that the home versions of "Super Gem Fighter Minimix" are going to get a Teen rating, JUST because the word 'fighter' is in the title. Just watch and see.

The rest of your letter pretty much speaks for itself, and I'm presently too distracted by the Internet to respond to your other points, so I'll just jump to the next response. Thanks for the letter, by the way... not everybody bothers to keep in touch with me on a regular basis, and I really do appreciate the efforts of everyone who does.

As The Saying Goes, Lesnick Is More...

AAAAH! It took me much longer to finish this "Yumi-Chan" page than I thought it would, but I'm done! That's right, I'm done! Mwhahahahaha!

Sorry... anyway, where was I?

You're not the only one who finds his old 'zines hard to look at. "Video Apocalypse" just... doesn't seem that great to me! ^^; And the really rotten thing is that it seems that my writing has gotten MORE annoying with each new issue... like, the exact opposite of "Infestation". And "Dokuritsu" reminded me of the Johnny Fan-Ed piece in "MasterMINDS". Wait, did I capitalize that correctly? With VA #7 and "Dokuritsu", it looked like I adopted a brash and sarcastic demeanor before I was ready for it. See, now at age 20, I have sarcasm down to an art form. ^_^

Not sure why everyone was so pleased with VA #7. I suppose it WAS a decent example of a fan-ed stripping down his 'zine all the way to his innermost thoughts, or something like that [when I figure out what the hell that means, I'll let you know... -ed.]. Maybe I'm indifferent because I've had to live with my own attitude every day, and can't get a clear idea of what it's like for someone else to see it in print.

Hey! A SENSIBLE review of "BioHazard"! And of "Tomb Raider", too! I know I could count on you to actually notice that these games DO have bad points... and a LOT of them! ^_^ If you thought the control in "BioHazard" was bad, try playing the sequel... feh. I've had glimpses of a "Rockman" 3D game, and it looked pretty bad. "Rockman" just wasn't meant to be 3D, in my opinion. I hope it's not too annoying; my insisting on using the Japanese titles for these games. =P

Did the PlayStation sequel to "Destruction Derby" ever arrive in the US?

And you mentioned Sega's bad advertising was one of the causes of their downfall. True enough, and I have to hand it to Sony for quickly dumping their original ad campaign, which was even worse. You know what I'm talking about, right? "YOU ARE NOT READY!" Sheesh... the ad they're running now are pretty much exactly like the ads Japan has used since the PlayStation's initial release. Pretty much random, except they always end with "Pureeei-steishon".

Capcom's game apparently isn't all that forgotten, since one of the Supersoldiers shows up in the "Marvel vs. Capcom" game. "Marvel vs. Capcom" sucks, by the way, but it's fun to watch. Michelle Heart from "Legendary Wings" is in there, too, as well as that Tonpoo chick from "Strider", and... Arthur? Ooo... a trip down memory lane!

Okayokay... ummm... that's about it for now. I'll be workin' on them game reviews, and... uh... try to keep in touch more often. ^^;

Josh

Y'know, now that you mention it, there IS one thing I miss about "Project: Ignition"... all that crazy pencilled artwork. Sure, it was a little primitive, and most of it didn't even copy all that well, but it has a more free-spirited feel than those reserved dry ink drawings I usually do for GRB. Since the issue already resembles P:1 in so many respects, I decided to go for broke and do some of its drawings in pencil, particularly the caricature of Pat on this page. I've even pre-copied the artwork, so you can actually SEE it for once!

Glad to know SOMEONE feels the same way I do about "Resident Evil". Polygons or no, that overrated pile felt flatter any of Capcom's 2D fighting games. I'll reserve judgement for "Marvel vs. Capcom" until I actually play it, however. It looks like a lot of fun, but I hope Capcom seriously considers retiring the "X-Men vs. Street Fighter" engine before things get way out of hand. I mean, what else can they DO with it? "Battle of the Pop Culture Icons"? I could live a full, rich life without watching Leonardo DiCaprio and Ryu battle Rosie O'Donnell and Venom aboard a steadily sinking Titanic, thank you very much.

And To Your Right Is Pat Reynolds...

Jess,

You're finishing up ANOTHER issue of GRB already?!?!? I must have gotten issue 2/3 REALLY late, but I am assuming I received issue 4 on time... that means you are running on a 1-2 month publication schedule, at least for those two issues! I'm just gonna have to call you Jess "Rick Florey" Ragan from now on. I was literally working on issue ten of "Fantazine" for 3 1/2 years! The cover for issue eleven is one I started about four years ago but never finished, and the

cover for issue twelve... an aborted cover which introduces a new "Fantazine" logo which I started on about three years ago. Talk about a work in progress.

Anyhow... I have been toying with some ideas for "Fantazine". Since issue thirteen, as originally planned, will be the final issue, I have big plans for the remaining three issues. I was thinking of focusing each issue on one of the "big three" systems. I don't know if this will pan out or not, but I am definitely going to have a full-page review of each system, one per issue- Saturn, N64, Playstation. The planned schedule for the next three issues works well for "The Game Collector" as well- SNES, NES, then Saturn for the last issue. The NES one should prove fun- there are a lot of 99 cent games available at Funcoland. \$149.00 should go a long way.

I used your letter in the lettercol, as well as your Optimum Performance column. I bet you'd forgotten about that one, eh? I also have a humorous column titled "Ask Dr. Lara"- advice for female game characters...

And, on a positive note for you, Tim has already provided me with not one, not two, but THREE top ten lists- top ten jobs Clinton would screw up, top ten jobs Clinton couldn't screw up, and top ten benefits of sleep deprivation. Funny, funny stuff, Ed.

Speaking of Tim, don't get upset if your name should appear in a future "Hey Intimidator!" or "Intimidating" column, or both... he's been kicking around the idea of giving you a bit of a ribbing for your comments about "Hey Intimidator!". Just take a deep breath and remember- it's all in good fun.

If you care, the March issue of T&T is out now, and it has my (bad) picture in the colophon. Yippee. Next month, I have a whopping eleven pages of the magazine... that's like, 10% of the mag! Not including ads, of course. In May, I'll have 3-4 pages on that "Street Racer" game (not much of a strategy guide there; it's a racer), and then in June, "Quest64". I haven't received the game yet... I am starting to regret committing to it... I have nightmares of T*HQ... T*HQ... T*HQ... NO!! NOOOOO!!!! You're not my father, T*HQ!!! I'LL NEVER BELIEVE YOOOUUU!!! er... sorry... um... er... I hear "Ghost in the Shell" was

actually a pretty good game, though. But I've made a commitment to never play another T*HQ game unless someone pays me to.

Jim Loftus twisted my arm and forced me to buy an N64 so I could do that guide for "Quest64" (he had a really hard time of it, I assure you...). I rented "Goldeneye", "Diddy Kong Racing", and "WaveRace64" to put the machine through its paces. "Diddy Kong Racing" is waaaaay too cute for its own good. It's a solid game, and it looks great, but I just couldn't play it for more than ten minutes at a time- I kept getting a mean sugar buzz. "WaveRace64" is as cool as everybody said it was. Kind of tough, and multiplayer mode is really hard with the half-sized screens, but damn if those waves aren't the real thing. The game is beautiful! By far, my favorite of the trio is "Goldeneye". This game is great. It out-Dooms "Doom"!!! There are as many weapons in the game as there are in "Doom", "Doom 2", "Quake", and "Quake 2" put together. The fogging actually works wonders in one particularly atmospheric outdoor Siberian scene, in which you can use your trusty sniper rifle to pick off patrolling guards in the haz distance. All of the indoor scenes have no fogging whatsoever and move along at a high frame rate, with graphic quality which would make most 3D card-enhanced Pentium owners green with envy. And the attention to detail! Bullets hit walls and leave holes, which smoke briefly, enemies react to gunfire and come running, and when you gun them down, they react to where you hit them. A head shot is usually an instant kill, while it takes 2-3 body hits to bring them down. I could go on, but I'll save it for my review. Of all the N64 games I have seen, 007 gives me hope that it will start catering to an adult crowd.

Later,

Pat

I guess that makes me the only fan-ed on earth that didn't like "WaveRace64"... I do agree with your opinion of "Goldeneye", however. It's an utterly amazing game, although the way they'd texture-mapped the faces on some of the characters... yeech. Jaws in particular looks like he'd be right at home in "Funky Head Boxers"...

As for being forced to play T*HQ games, my condolences. It's amusing how many times they've used pseudonyms to fool unsuspecting customers... remember Black Pearl Software? How 'bout Kokopelli? At least they've made some effort to distance themselves from their "Toy Headquarters" origins. The whole concept of toy manufacturers making video games has never rubbed well with me... anyone who's played LIN's old NES disasters would probably agree.

YOU CAN MAKE "POST OFFICE PARANOIA" EVEN BETTER! JUST SEND A LETTER TO EITHER OF THESE ADDRESSES:

POST OFFICE PARANOIA!



BAC IS BACK!

Your Guide To
Bad American Cartoons

By...

Jess Ragan

From An Idea By...

Josh Lesnick



Uston, We Have A Problem...

Some kids grew up adoring rock stars. Others idolized sports figures. I was one of the few who looked up to professional blackjack dealer and video game expert Ken Uston, but apparently, I wasn't the only one. Here's a piece from Ralph Barbagallo's "RalphSpace" website (URL: <http://www.cs.uml.edu/~rbarbaga>) detailing the tragic death of one of EG publishing's forefathers:

Ken Uston was a world-class gambler and video game enthusiast who had written several books on gambling techniques and some of the earliest in-depth video game strategy books at the dawn of the '80s. He even managed to combine his love for games and gambling with his own gambling video game, "Ken Uston's Blackjack/Poker".

When I was in grammar school, I picked up a copy of "Ken Uston's Home Video '83" at the school book fair. This was my bible. It provided detailed information on all the available game systems and key strategies for popular games on a wide range of platforms. I read it constantly. For this third grader, it was the greatest volume ever written since the invention of human communication.

Anyway... according to the rec.gambling.blackjack FAQ, Ken Uston died in 1987 when his corpse was found in a Paris, France apartment on September 19th of that year. Apparently they cremated the body before an autopsy could be done, so there is no real evidence as to what the cause of death was. According to the FAQ, friends of Uston suspected drugs and alcohol to be the culprit. Well, hey, if you had to write huge books about Emerson Arcadia games, you'd probably hit the sauce too.

For those of you who don't remember this from "Video Apocalypse", here's the deal: I'm going to take a look at some of the animated series designed by Americans, for Americans. At the end of each description, there'll be a rating in the form of a question: "Is This Worth Watching?" Since these are after all American cartoons, you can probably already guess that most of them will suck, but I'm giving them all the benefit of the doubt with the ratings since a few of them are classics. Got it? Good. Let's go...

The Simpsons, new episodes (Fox)

Make them go away... somebody PLEASE just make them go away! "The Simpsons" just hasn't been that funny since producers Al Jean and Mike Reiss left the show to work on "The Critic". The newer episodes are just too damned full of repetitive jokes, preachy object lessons, and cop-out endings for me to be even remotely interested. Even Russ Perry, "Simpsons" lover that he is, grudgingly admits that the show's quality has been slipping lately. If that doesn't tell you something's wrong, I don't know what would.

WORTH WATCHING?: Not if you can help it

Freakazoid (Cartoon Network)

This short-lived offspring of the wildly successful "Animaniacs" croaked for the same reason that "The Critic" did... it was just too strange for fans of the show that inspired it. The early episodes were really funny (love that "Jonny Quest" send-up!), but somewhere along the line "Freakazoid" just ran out of steam. It's still good for a few laughs, though.

WORTH WATCHING?: Sometimes; not always

101 Dalmations (ABC)

I just KNEW I was going to hate this one when I watched an obnoxious chicken whine about the evils of excessive video game use. Add primitive, stylized artwork and some of the most annoying characters ever and you've got one helluva bad cartoon. Somebody needs to get these dogs spayed and neutered.

WORTH WATCHING?: Put Cadpig to sleep and I'll think about it

BRUNO the Kid (syndicated)

BRUNO isn't the first cartoon created solely to boost the ego of a self-absorbed celebrity, and unfortunately, it won't be the last. Bruce Willis is the voice of an eight year old brat who foils the plans of those always nasty industrial polluters, with the aid of an ugly computer generated bust (of... who else? Bruce Willis) and Tony Jay, the villain from Disney's "The Hunchback of Notre Dame". If it weren't for Jay, I would have changed the channel in five minutes, and even with him, this still sucks.

WORTH WATCHING?: No way, no how

Rugrats (Nick)

Surprisingly, this... this... THING has been around for as long as "Ren & Stimpy", and even more surprising, it's gotten pretty popular in the last three years. I guess a cartoon from a baby's point of view is a unique idea (if you discount the crappy DC comic which did the same thing), but who the hell cares? Besides, the characters look like they've been dragged through a toxic waste dump. Nickelodeon should have aborted this one a long, LONG time ago.

WORTH WATCHING?: Only as an alternative to drinking battery acid

Johnny Bravo (Cartoon Network)

Well, you can't call the concept unoriginal. Johnny Bravo's a womanizing bonehead who tries desperately to get a date, and constantly fails despite his sturdy physique (hey, it's the 90's... anything's possible). His raging hormones and empty head get him into all sorts of wacky situations, and you'll be laughing your butt off whether he's solving one last mystery with the Scooby-Doo gang or fighting crime with Alan West. Great idea, and a great cartoon.

WORTH WATCHING?: Whoa, marmal (that's a yes)

Cow & Chicken (Cartoon Network)

Everything about the cartoon is stale... it feels like it was cooked up in a board meeting in a blatant attempt to leech from the success of "Ren & Stimpy". Let me ask you this: how popular has R&S BEEN lately? It's nice that Hanna-Barbera can afford great voice-over artists like Michael Dorn from "Star Trek: Deep Space Nine", but his booming voice is wasted on a piece of crap like this.

WORTH WATCHING?: Once, but never again

King of the Hill (Fox)

This meandering redneck chronicle seems really boring at first... and usually stays that way. Yet, it's hard to pull yourself away from an episode once you've gotten into it. It's that weird "I don't want to watch it, but... uh, give me five more minutes" quality that made Mike Judge's previous shows ("Beavis & Butthead", "Daria") such hits. Getting past that, however, there's not really much Hill does that "The Simpsons" used to do better.

WORTH WATCHING?: Yes, but get a drool rag

Space Ghost Coast To Coast (Cartoon Network)

Like "Beavis & Butthead", this show is painful to watch, but strangely enjoyable. Imagine what would happen if The Tick was addicted to acid and got his own late night talk show and you'd get the general idea. The scripts by Sarah Dyer and Evan Dorkin are reasonably clever, but the animation is lousy (intentionally so, I think) and the show is, well, pretty dumb most of the time.

WORTH WATCHING?: "The Tick" is better

Giving It Some Thought...

I was thinking about doing a special edition of "Zina: Warrior Newsletters" titled "My Issues With 'Digital Press'", which described in brutal detail what I thought was wrong with the latest issue of Joe Santulli's long-running fanzine. After some contemplation, however, I decided not to bother. I tried to take my complaints directly to Joe in a brief (and admittedly late) phone conversation, and was met with a hearty and heartfelt "fuck you!". Uh, I'd rather not. His suggestion to "piss off" does seem like sound advice, however. DP just doesn't interest me as much as it once had... its ties to this fandom have been loose at best for the last two years, and I'm not sure if I want to trade with someone who completely disregards my input. Look, I'm not so naive as to think that Joe Santulli even has the time to listen to myself or other fan-ed's... his paying readers just don't care about our hobby, and since he has a thousand of them to answer to, it's understandable (although no less disheartening) that he would consider them a higher priority. Still, I dearly miss the times when "Digital Press" was a more humble- and open- forum for gamers. I have to acknowledge that those times are long gone, and move on.

'Zina Warrior Newsletters



- ★★★★★ Absolutely Incredible!
- ★★★★☆ Great! Worth Checking Out
- ★★★☆☆ Pretty Decent
- ★★☆☆☆ Not So Hot
- ★☆☆☆☆ Lousy
- ☆☆☆☆☆ Uh... No Comment

THE (INDECISIVE) FANZINE RATING SYSTEM



ISSUE #10
Pat Reynolds

\$2.00
RATING: ★★★★★

Well, that issue of "Fantazine" is in my hands now, and I still don't believe it. Pat hasn't lost a step after four years of fandom inactivity, returning with a thick, intelligent, and up to date read that surpasses even the best fanzines still in publication. It's actually better than Pat's previous issues of "Fantazine", with pinpoint accurate reviews and editorial content that makes "Game Mag"'s dull commentaries seem woefully inadequate. My only suggestions would be to axe "Hey Intimidator!" (there's no point in even trying to top Tim Priest's hilarious response to the low-grade "Superman" replacement Steel in issue eight... it just ain't gonna happen), and somehow convince Adrian Proctor to write more game reviews for future issues. Break out the cattle prod and iron maiden if necessary. Otherwise, "Fantazine" is, as the title suggests, a fantastic 'zine.



ISSUE #36
Joe Santulli

\$2.00
RATING: ★★★★★

If you thought Joe Santulli was overexposed before, now he's a hidden character in "Marvel vs. Capcom"! At least that's what the cover seems to suggest... Anyhoo, this



ISSUE #5
Ben Leatherman

\$1.50
RATING: ★★★★★

Yes, this is the fanzine I wasn't crazy about back when I was editing "Project: Ignition". I don't know what I could have been thinking, because "Fanarchy" is loads of fun, with plenty of devil-may-care editorial content and a CES report that's anything but ordinary. The one thing that makes "Fanarchy" truly memorable is the 'Idiot Factor' rating at the end of each game review... this tells you how a complete moron would react to the games in question. Of course, you could get roughly the same effect from reading "Die Hard Game Fan", but with "Fanarchy", you get a real review in addition to a stupid one for less than half the cost. Plus, there's a lot of stuff here that most fanzines wouldn't have the gonads to print! "Fanarchy"'s a refreshing change of pace from the fandom status quo.



ISSUE #1
Matt Leone

\$3.00
RATING: ★★☆☆☆

I was a little apprehensive about reading "Game Over", and for good reason... the premiere issue is spiral-bound, and editor Matt Leone aspires to have a color page in the next one. Fan-

eds who do this tend to get a little full of themselves, but fortunately, Matt doesn't seem to be suffering from any delusions of grandeur... yet. But I digress. "Game Over" has promise, I'll give it that. Matt's a good writer with a strong grasp of grammar, and his layout sense is surpassed only by Jon Ratcliffe's. On the other hand, "Game Over" smacks of pseudo-professionalism... the vast majority of the reviews are of grossly overhyped games, and there's next to no personality or humor in any of the articles. I'm afraid I can already see what Matt intends to do with "Game Over", but there's a slim chance he'll turn things around if he's sent some less starchy fanzines to use as a point of reference.



ISSUE #13
Al Riccitelli, Jr.

\$1.50
RATING: ★★★★★

Man, is it good to have Al back... after a long wait, and then another long wait, and then another slightly less long wait, Riccitelli returns to fandom with his best issue of "The Dark Side" yet. Everything you remember from previous issues of TDS- the sharp layout, the casual writing, and the comprehensive wrestling coverage- has made a return engagement, along with two great articles and an amusing cover illustration by Al's close friend Chris Kohler. I'm not sure what to think of the new poetry page, however... this is really more "Splat!"'s forte', and the space that it occupies could have been put to better use with more game reviews. This is still a video game fanzine, right? A letters column would have been nice, too, but its absence is understandable given the year-wide gap between issues. Still, I've gotta say that TDS #13 is one of the most entertaining fanzines I've gotten since, well, the last issue of "The Dark Side"! I just hope I won't have to wait quite so long for TDS #14...

If you'd like to see your fanzine reviewed in the next issue of "The Gameroom Blitz" (trust me, it'll be better than this one...), send it to this address:

THE GAMEROOM BLITZ
JESS RAGAN, EDITOR



THE RE-VIEW MIRROR



In this issue, guest editors Jypsky Shirnian (the big nosed thing on the left) and Byron J. Lisamen (the smarmy bear on the right) head up the reviews, assisted by Sergio Toratelli, Elle Sanders, Bashi Tanook, and Molotov the GRB Cockatiel. Human "Gamerroom Blitz" regulars Jess Ragan, Chris Kohler, and Josh Lesnick will offer their two cents as well.



VIEWPOINT

American Sammy
Genesis
Jypsky

Quality: ●, Cuteness: ●



Tiny Toons Acme All-Stars

Konami
Genesis
Sergio
Q: ●, C: ●

This has nothing to do with the theme, I know, but Jess mentioned it last issue so I thought I'd follow up with a full review in this one. The only thing "cute" about "Viewpoint" is that someone was stupid enough to make a Genesis version. Everybody loved "Viewpoint's" great special effects in the arcades, and everybody knows that the Genesis doesn't have the hardware to handle those special effects. Yeah, yeah, there were exceptions, but those were by good programmers, and none were involved in the making of this piece of intergalactic crap. Want proof? Take a look at the graphics for starters. The characters are all supposed to be made out of polygons, but they're really sprites, so they're both choppy and ugly. The bosses barely animate, and the same goes for the backgrounds, which are supposed to have that wavy effect from "Thunder Force III" but don't. I guess I should expect as much from the people who brought us that dumb "Super Mario Bros." done "Amagon" on the NES. The gameplay bites, too. You can't change altitude like you could in "Zaxxon", so it feels more like a flat, diagonally scrolling "R-Type" than anything fresh or exciting. If you liked the arcade version a lot- a WHOLE lot- and want to play it at home, buy this for your Nomad and pretend it's a so-so Game Gear game. And forget about the Playstation version... I heard that's pretty lousy, too.

BYRON SEZ: I remember seeing pictures of "Super Zaxxon" for the Genesis a long time ago. It actually looked better than this, and it was on a cartridge with two other games! "Viewpoint" has really bad slowdown and flicker, and most Genesis shooters don't have that, so buy those instead.



Syd of Valis

Renovation
Genesis
Byron

Q: ●, C: ●

I never really understood why people liked this game, or any of the "Valis'es. The girls are cute, but that doesn't hide the boring gameplay and stupidly designed levels. If you ask me, "Valis'es 1, 2, 3, 4, AND Syd combined don't have the magic touch that made the "Castlevania" games on the NES so much fun. "Valis 3" has nice cartoon scenes, but that's really the only nice thing I can say about the series. Um, anyways, "Syd of Valium" takes the characters from "Valis" and squishes them down into chubby little kids. In a good game, this would've been a great idea, but it just makes "Valis" even suckier than it already is (gee, I guess it IS possible...). Jump around, hack away at enemies, stumble across a boss who'll cream you with one shot... yawn. Everything in this game has been done better in "Chiki Chiki Boys", so buy that and leave this one in the thrift stores where it belongs.

ELLE SEZ: I like the idea, but it was done a lot better in "Virtua Fighter Kids". Besides, the characters aren't really that cute... they're more super-disfigured than super-deformed. Syd's still better than some games with big-headed characters, tho... remember "Wayne's World"?



I could do without most sports games... even the very best ones leave me cold. So it's no surprise that I wasn't big on "Tiny Toons Acme All-Stars". It does have a few neat features which kept me interested for longer than usual, though. On the top of that list is the bowling game. There's nothing quite as fun as hurling a twelve pound wrecking ball into ten suicidal pins, and although no video game can ever capture that feeling, this comes closer than most (the weird thing is, it doesn't even try to be realistic...). The soccer game is pretty good, too; limited, but there's not much flicker and the special moves are fun to do. Other than that, everything else on the cartridge is kind of ho-hum. The basketball game in particular really rots. I'd say go ahead and buy it, but only because used Genesis games are so cheap.

JYPSKY SEZ: Good sports game, but I'd rather be watching the cartoon. And I've gotta call Serg on the bowling thing... In my time, simulations are all anyone ever plays!



Chiki Chiki Boys

Sega (Capcom)
Genesis
Elle
Q: ●, C: ●

I never played this in the arcades when Capcom was calling it "Mega Twins", and after giving it a whirl on my Genesis, I have to wonder why. This is a GREAT side-scrolling action game, kind of like a "Cadash" or "Magic Sword" for younger players. You can choose one of two brothers- a fighter and a junior wizard- and guide them through four colorful stages. Beat 'em all and the door to the final battle with Rohpotman is unlocked. Simple stuff, and it's all been done before, but that didn't stop me from enjoying it (so there, "NEXT Generation!"). Everything from the delicious candy-coated backgrounds to the awesome music just makes you want to keep playing. And the characters are so adorable you'll wanna reach into your TV screen and hug 'em. Great way to break a nail, by the way. This game may be old, but these boys still know how to have a good time!

BYRON SEZ: Fun, fun, fun, 'till your daddy takes your joypad away. I really like the cameo by the Late Night Pea Boy and beating up on that enormously fat clown Amkatzman... er, Rohpotman, I mean.



Tower Toppler

Atari (Hughson)
7800
Jypsky
Q: ●, C: ●

Ooooookay... I'm not sure I'd call this cute; just plain weird is more like it. You're this little green thingee named Julius, and you've

got to climb to the top of seven towers to destroy 'em and reclaim your planet. Now, the owners of the towers obviously don't want this to happen, and stockpile them with enemies and traps to keep you from completing your righteous quest. None of them can kill you outright, but if they knock you from the tower and into the water below, you're fish bait. As if that weren't bad enough, you've gotta scale the tower from the outside, so it rotates almost constantly. It's a nice effect, especially on the 7800, but it's sooo confusing! The only time it doesn't happen is during the bonus rounds, where you shoot at fish while navigating your trusty submarine to the next tower. So there's good things and bad things about "Tower Toppler". If you can find it for a buck like Jess did, it's easy to ignore the bad things. On the other hand, if you're thinking about buying the NES version, "Castlian", you might want to just pick up "Battletoads" instead. It's got one round that plays a lot like "Tower Toppler", and a lot of rounds that don't.

JESS SEZ: A groundbreaker for this otherwise unnoteworthy system, but it's much too difficult. It's a good thing there's a level select, or nobody would have ever seen the last few towers. I wonder how the NES version turned out...?



Ugh! This was an even worse idea than "SIDS of Valis"! I mean, smashing the Valis characters down into squishy little midgets made a little sense, but geez, whoever heard of a cute Superman? That's like Hello Kitty getting rabies or something! Anyways, this is one of those older NES games that makes less and less sense the more you play it... y'know, kinda like "King's Knight" or "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde". Superman's got a lot of powers, but you've got to find 'em to use 'em (because Superman's too dumb to figure out when to use 'em by himself?), and he gets knocked around by the bad guys a lot more than you think he would. Plus, it's real hard to finish rounds 'cuz you can never figure out what to do. Everything about this game was a bad idea... I'd rather have the worst diaper rash of my life than play it again.

MOLOTOV SEZ:
SHRIIEEEK!!!!
REEEEEEK!!!!



Wacky antics! Loose-boweled birds! A private eye who looks like Dan Quayle! You get all this and more in "JJ & Jeff", the Turbograftx16's first attempt at a "Wonder Boy" clone (eventually, the system got another, "New Adventure Island", just before it was pulled from store shelves). Oddly, "JJ & Jeff" was an altered version of a game based on the Japanese television show "Kato & Ken", which in turn inspired our own "America's Funniest Home Videos". No, the characters never get hit in the groin with any sporting goods, but there are trace amounts of dumb humor spread throughout the game. Sadly, it's never enough to keep you interested, and even if there were, it wouldn't disguise the fact that "JJ & Jeff" is, at its heart, just another "Super Mario Bros." wannabee without the complexity and technique of that series. Nevertheless, I would like to see an update... maybe replace the title characters with John Fugelsang and Daisy Fuentes, and add bonus rounds where you toss Bob Saget off a cliff, or into traffic, or maybe in the big cat house of the San Diego

zoo...

SERGIO SEZ: What the... is that DAN QUAYLE?! I guess it makes sense, I'm pretty sure I saw Bill Clinton as the star of the 7800 version, "Scrapyard Dog". And yes, I would maul Bob Saget if I had the chance. Throw in the Olsen twins, too... I could use a snack.



Mr. Nutz
Ocean
Genesis
Jypsky
Q: Ⓞ, C: Ⓞ



SUPERMAN

Kemco
NES
Byron
Q: Ⓞ, C: Ⓞ

I think about the jerk who called himself Mr. Nutz and I just have to laugh. This guy liked to barbecue other peoples' fanzines

and send them back with death threats, yet he named himself after what could quite possibly be the wimpiest video game character ever. Some rebell! Getting back to the review, here's the deal. You're a fluffy red squirrel in a typical side-scrolling mascot game, trying your very hardest not to get the living crap beaten out of you by ladybugs, bluebirds, incontinent porcupines, and fairies who look like Kurt Cobain. "Mr. Nutz" was designed in Britain, and it definitely feels that way, but it's much, much better than



Mr. Nutz forges ahead in his dangerous (well, dangerous to him, anyways) quest

most games by European designers. The graphics are surprisingly good on the Genesis- everything is in vibrant colors, and the animation is funny and really smooth. "Mr. Nutz" plays well, too... when you jump for a platform, you actually land on it instead of tumbling into a pit forty seven million times. This game's a four star class act all the way... why Ocean didn't release the Genesis version in the United States is anyone's guess.

BYRON SEZ: Looks like "Sonic", plays like "Super Mario Bros.", and has better graphics and bigger bosses than both of 'em put together. I wonder how long it'll be before we see Dennis Crowley as a dust mite in another one of these hop 'n bop action games...



JJ & Jeff
Hudson
Turbograftx16
Jess
Q: Ⓞ, C: Ⓞ



Mighty Final Fight
Capcom
NES
Jess
Q: Ⓞ, C: Ⓞ

I've always been, and still remain, a huge "Final Fight" fan. I'm probably the only person who preferred the stellar Super NES version of the game to "Streets of Rage" on the Genesis... even the excessive slowdown and omission of Guy didn't bother me too much. So, just how downscaled would a "Final Fight" translation have to be for me to prefer similar games to it? Hmm... about this much. "Mighty Final Fight" is fun, and it's a kick to see the old cast reincarnated as a bevy of bare-knuckled five year olds, but it just doesn't compare favorably to NES classics like "Double Dragon 2". You're given a choice between all three of the title characters from the arcade original, but like "Final Fight" on the Super NES, you're forced to go it alone without the benefit of a second player. Worse, the play mechanics revolve around an experience point system (one of the things which made the first "Double Dragon" such an annoyance on the NES), and the playfields, once filled to overflowing with weapons and breakables, are almost completely barren this time around. MFF is a fun diversion that's worth downloading and even renting, but one thing it's not is

the full "Final Fight" experience.

JYPSKY SEZ: I like, I like! Much more slickly done than "Double Dragon", and the conversations between characters were really cool. A great introduction to the "Final Fight" series if you haven't already played the other versions.



Ah, will the follies of Japan's hellish game design firm Pony Canyon ever cease? I will give "Dogtown" due credit for improving upon the company's previous failures, but it is still by no means a classic. You assume the role of a mother cat dropped into the inexplicable chaos of modern suburbia. To emerge victorious, you must artfully dodge a pack of wily hounds (hence the name) and appeal to your maternal urges by rescuing your long lost son. "Dogtown" could very well have captured the time-honored gameplay of "Blueprint" while improving greatly upon its spartan graphics, but it's far too frustrating, and the visuals really aren't that much better than Bally/Midway's sleeper hit. It's just as well that this dog was confined to the idyllic land of the rising sun... nobody in America would have wanted to play it anyhow.

JESS SEZ: Actually, he just said "Rawk, chirp, squeek, peep peep peep, wheet wheew", but I think I captured the essence of his review, don'tcha think? Anyways, you can easily find a ROM of this game on the Internet, but you probably won't want to bother... it is kind of crappy.



Aw, Ristar's just so cute! That's a pretty good trick when you're just an 8-ball with arms and legs... Now that I think about it, this "Sonic" clone is just full of tricks. Ristar can grab on to things-ladder rungs, enemies, tree branches, you name it- and use 'em to his advantage in a variety of ways. This makes the game feel almost as much like "Bionic Commando" as it does "Sonic", and I appreciate that because "Sonic" clones have been done to death on the Genesis. The graphics are well done- the bad guys are nicely shaded, and the backgrounds are loaded with detail. "Ristar" even has some smartly designed levels, especially in the Game Gear version (the Genesis game's got more things going on in the levels, like rising lava and a memory testing game where you've got to bop enemies in sequence to move on). If you liked "Sonic" but want to play something just a little bit different, both versions of "Ristar" are just what the doctor ordered. I can't wait to try "Tempo" next!

JESS SEZ: One of my favorite "Sonic" clones from the 16-bit era and still the only game that inspired me to write a FAQ for Andy Eddy's web site. If you need help with "Ristar" (and I doubt that you will), use a search engine to track it down and check it out!



I don't know why everyone makes such a big deal about Capcom. Yeah, yeah, I know, "Street Fighter" this, "Street Fighter" that.



Dogtown

FCI (Pony Canyon)

Famicom

Molotov

Q: ●, C: ●

I really don't care. Truth is, most of Capcom's NES games weren't all that great. Remember the super hard, super grainy "Ghosts 'n Goblins"? Or the shooter that never ends, "Section Z"? How 'bout not-really-Strider "Strider", or the king of overdone games, "Mega Man"? "Little Nemo" is another Capcom loser that's all hype and not much else. The graphics are terrific; they're almost as good as "Super Mario Bros. 3"'s, but the game is still annoying. Nemo never seems to jump high enough, the bad guys are too hard to kill, and you've gotta repeat a lot of parts over and over again 'cuz the screens are full of holes. So are the programmers' heads, I think. The "Super Mario Bros." games are a lot better, and I know you have them already, so why bother buying this?

JESS SEZ: Wait a minute... I liked "Section Z"! The first two "Mega Man" games were great, too, but the series has gotten just a touch stale since then (although I can think of one person who would probably disagree, even now...).



Air Zonk

Hudson

Turbografx16

3/5ths Man

Q: ●, C: ●

Lookie, folks! I'm baaaaack... and I'm here to talk about "Air Zonk". Nope, it's not that pair of sneakers you paid too much for, but a wacky wild shooter from the makers of such Bonkallicious hits as "Bomberman" and (what else?) "Bonk's Adventure". You're Zonk, a funky 'droid who looks like a cross between Charlie Brown and Jack Nicholson (I wonder if he beats Lucy Van Pelt's tricycle with golf clubs in his spare time? Hmm...). At the behest of your creator Bonk (how the heck did a caveman invent a robot, anyways? All this and more on the next... "Unsolved Mysteries"), you've got to travel to the future and take on King Drool III and his band of merry thugs. Pick up enough smiley faces along the way and you can merge with a friend to become (drum roll, please!) an UNSTOPPABLE SUPER MECH! Yeehaw! There are plenty of partners to choose from (Bill Clinton knows what that's like!!!), but the dweebs at Hudson took one out because she turned Zonk into a transvestite! Aw, come on guys! If Springer can get away with it, why can't you? Otherwise, "Air Zonk" is a superb shooter, punctuated with huuuuuge bosses, colorful graphics, a colon, and some question marks. If you've got a Turbograpfx16 (did'ja pay \$200 for one? HA! Leeeeeewser!!!), pick up a copy and blast to your heart's content! Now, what else was I gonna- uh, howdy, Jess! Long time no sealife! Whaddaya plan on doing with that grenade? No... don't put it THERE! I just had these pants tailored! Wait- is that the PIN???

!kaBOOM!

JESS SEZ: Dammit, I told him not to come back! Byron, be a pal and bring me the shop vac. Get the attachments, too- this looks really messy...



Little Nemo

Capcom

NES

Byron

Q: ●, C: ●



Kid Icarus

Nintendo

NES

Byron

Q: ●, C: ●

Here ygo... Eeew, you're right! I guess he's Three One Thousand Twenty Fifths Man now, huh? Oh well. OK, where was I? Oh yeah, "Kid Icarus". The NES has always been my favorite video game system, but if Nintendo would have made this the pack-in

instead of "Super Mario Bros.", things would have been a lot different than they are today. I have no idea why the old Nintendo Fun Club Newsletter bragged about "Kid Icarus"... I wouldn't have admitted to making it. As you can tell, this is a pretty crappy game. It wants to be part "Metroid" and part "Super Mario Bros.", but it ends up being 100% dumb. All you do in the game is just climb up endless screens, shooting crappy little arrows at crappy little enemies. If you fall off the bottom of the screen, it doesn't scroll along with you; you just die. Where the heck does the rest of the screen GO, anyway? Of course, that means that you can't really do any exploring, not that you'd want to since the game is so cheesy. After all the hype, "Kid Icarus" was a real letdown.

JESS SEZ: Oh, man. Forget what you've heard in Nintendo's early press releases... Icarus isn't even in the same galaxy as "Super Mario Bros." There's a reason there were no sequels on the Super NES or N64, folks. There was a GameBoy version, but after years of making everyone's eyes bleed, that system had it coming.



LAST BLADE

SNK
Neo-Geo
Elle
Q: Ⓞ, C: Ⓞ

Ok, guys. "Samurai Shodown" used to be a cool game with great new ideas, but the blade's gotten a little dull since 1994, don'tcha think? Ever since the cheesy third Shodown, I haven't really been that interested in the series... It's hard to imagine why anyone would want to make rip-offs of it. I mean, "Dark Legend", "Ninja Masters" (the Ninja Masters' WHAT?), "Last Blade"... give us a break! I just don't see what's so great about "Samurai Shodown" that it inspires the normally creative Japanese to make done after done boring clone of the game. Oh, yeah, the review. You've got twelve fighters with swords, chopping each other into convenient bite-sized pieces. It's set in Japan so all the characters are Japanese. You've got three strengths of slash, a kick, and some dorky deflect that takes too long to actually do you any good. There are super moves, and super duper moves, and who knows what else. The end. Three cups of coffee wouldn't keep you awake during this game, and I'm talking about that extra strong stuff with the funny Italian name [capaccino... -ed]. Aside from the deflect which is worthless anyways, there's nothing new about this game. It's "Samurai Shodown" with a different name and slightly different characters. Heck, it's even worse than "Samurai Shodown" 'cuz the weapons don't break and the super duper attacks are impossible to do. Wake me when they replace the cartridge with something decent like "Metal Slug" or "Bust-A-Move".

SERGIO SEZ: There are good things about "Last Blade" if you look hard enough. Some of the characters are neat (the psycho psychic girl is funny! I like the Japanese post-it notes she sticks on her opponents' foreheads!), but I'm sure this really will be the last blade.



TomOlympics

Um, it's Japanese!

Game Gear
Byron
Q: Ⓞ, C: Ⓞ



There's really not all that much to these sports games with different events, but man are they fun! It's nice to just pound away on the joystick to beat the computer, and when you get tired of one event, you can switch to another and play that 'till your arms get sore. I can't get enough of "Winter Games" and "Summer Games", and "Decathlon" is fun, too... sure, the systems they're for (the 2600 and ColecoVision) are older and crustier than Bob Dole, but I don't mind dragging 'em out of the closet if I can play these games for a while. There's only one problem with these, uh, Olympicky games... they're just not cute enough! The last one that was, "Track and Field",

was released way, way, back in 1983, and all the other ones after that, including the otherwise good "Track and Field 2" for the NES, just took themselves way too seriously. I guess that's where "TomOlympics" comes in. I think this is based on a Japanese cartoon, but I'm not sure... you play a cute cat, and do fun things on a playground like climb up slides and jump as far as you can off swingsets. This is really neat 'cuz you can do all the neat things you've ever wanted to do at a playground without getting in trouble for it! Some of the events are kinda frustrating (I don't like climbing up the slide much), but the others make up for it and the graphics are really, really cute. You've just gotta play it!



Tom attempts to break the world's record in the 100(c)m swingset vault

Some of the events are kinda frustrating (I don't like climbing up the slide much), but the others make up for it and the graphics are really, really cute. You've just gotta play it!

ELLE SEZ: Just absolutely adorable. Playing this game makes you feel like you've walked into a Sanrio Surprises store. It looks like it's for really young kids but it's a lot harder than you'd think it would be.

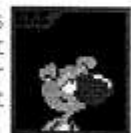


Super Buster Bros.

Capcom
Super NES
Jess
Q: Ⓞ, C: Ⓞ

Looking back, it's difficult to understand why I was ever so hard on the Super NES. Sure, several of its games were utterly plagued with slowdown, but that never really seemed to hurt gems like "Super Buster Bros." Capcom's releases are always loads of fun (we'll pretend they weren't responsible for "X-Men vs. Street Fighter" and "UN Squadron" for just a second), and "Super Buster Bros." is no exception. You're on a safari, and your prey is an assortment of deadly bouncing balls, ranging from the seemingly harmless red balloons to the especially dangerous polygonal spheres which ricochet off the edges of the playfield. Your weapon? A metal cord with a harpoon on the end. To eliminate all on-screen threats, you must break down the balls by firing cords (or, if you're really lucky, mini machine gun bullets) at them. Problem is, the more you fire at the balls, the smaller and more plentiful they get... you're really in trouble if you accidentally pick up a stick of dynamite and blow them all into tiny, unmanagable bits! Ah, the memories... Oh, and did I mention that the graphics are fantastic? Well, they are. Some of the backgrounds will just blow you away, if the balls don't get you first. And to top it all off, the Super NES version of "Buster Bros." includes a training mode that'll allow you to sharpen your bubble-busting skills. Here's the bottom line. If you want an old-style gaming experience without the painfully dated graphics, bust out your wallet and pick up a copy of this fabulous game at your nearest pawn shop.

JYPSKY SEZ: Wow... not bad at all! The gameplay is simple enough to pick up but much too intense to put down. But c'mon, with the Saturn and Playstation "Buster Bros." collections around, why the heck would you want to settle for a one game, one player Super NES version?



I WANT MY MOMMY

Zimag
2600
Byron
Q: Ⓞ, C: Ⓞ



I never even knew my mommy, but if she looked like this,

that would probably be a good thing... Anyway, there's not too many games with bears as stars, and this isn't even one of the better ones. It's still kinda sorta fun, though. You've gotta climb up two screens to find your mom, or whatever that brown blob with a red triangle on it is. To do that, you have to make ladders to platforms just out of your reach and kill the little demon things that are running around on them. Reach mommy and you win. That's it. Since they're two really different games, it's probably not fair for me to say this, but I'd rather play "Crystal Castles" instead. The bear is cuter, there's more to do, and it plays a lot better.

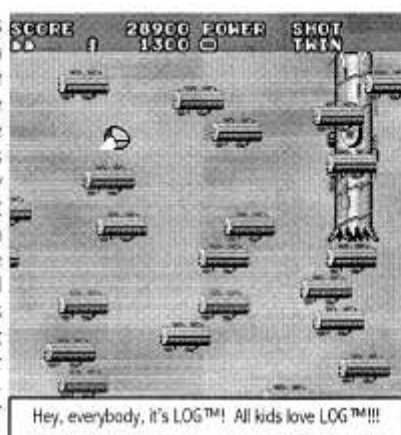
JESS SEZ: Not as good as Gary "My brother is now my sister" Kitchen's 2600 version of DK, but head and shoulders above DKjr. I always wondered why Fyush Finkel replaced Mario in the 2600 "Donkey Kong"s... perhaps Gary was a fan of "Fiddler on the Roof"?



FANTASY ZONE 2

Sega
Master System
Jess
Q: Ⓞ, C: Ⓞ

I never felt that I was missing out on much when Master System exclusives like "Phantasy Star" and this were released. My rationale at the time was this: "If these games were so great, why were they all at clearance prices in most stores?" Ten years later with the miserable failure of the otherwise excellent Saturn, I can see just how ridiculous this logic really was. I'm still not a huge fan of the Master System, but games like "R-Type" (oh, yeah... DEFINATELY "R-Type"), "Rampage", and the "Fantasy Zone" series do make the system worth playing every once in a great while. "Fantasy Zone 2: The Tears of Opa-Opa" is sort of an expanded version of "Stargate: Defender II" with some "Super Cobra" thrown in for good measure... you've got to scour the levels of each stage, hunting down stationary targets while avoiding an almost constant stream of bizarre enemies (geez, that condom almost smoked me! So much for safe sex!). Destroy all targets and you're allowed to enter the red warp octagon for a battle with a gigantic boss. Nothing terribly new, but the great pastel backgrounds will make you forget that you're basically just playing "Stargate" with cuter characters and far less play technique. The level design is, true to the Master System prototype, woefully simplistic, with the same four formations of baddies coming out at you over and over and over again, but you won't mind visiting the Fantasy Zone time and again, if only to take on the outrageous bosses.



BASHI SEZ: My. And it was to my understanding that drugs had been outlawed in my homeland... I've certainly never had sake" do that to me, except for that one instance in the outskirts of Kyoto... that was a memorable experience.



Urusei Yatsura: Wedding Bells

Jaleco
Famicom
Sergio
Q: Ⓞ, C: Ⓞ

The whole Tamagotchi thing just caught on recently, but I get the feeling that the whole circle of life idea has been popular with the Japanese for a long, long time. Take a look at "Panzer Dragon

Zwei, or this game, for instance. At the very beginning of "Wedding Bells", you don't play as the curvy Lum we've all grown to love (or at least stare at a lot)... you're a baby, at the bottom floor of a day care center! It wouldn't be much of a game if that's all that happened, but somehow the day care center has caught fire, and you've got to reach the roof and get to the motherhip before you become E.C.T., the extra-crispy terrestrial. If you make it, Lum grows from a baby, to a toddler, to a pre-schooler, to a grade schooler, to a bodacious high schooler, to a totally hot adult! And yep, all of the schools are on fire, too. Don't ask me how it all happened, 'cuz the game is in Japanese. So, after you've gotten a job at a flaming television station and make it to the top of THAT building, you move on to a wedding chapel (luckily, one made from GeoBond™, since it doesn't burn to a crisp like the other buildings), pick up something borrowed, something new, etc. etc. etc., and meet your unwilling husband-to-be Ataru at the altar, where he faints. So in a way, "Wedding Bells" is pretty faithful to the cartoon since it's weird, funny, and doesn't make a lick of sense, but on the other hand, the characters are too small and the game is too hard. You'll get a lot of third-degree burns trying to win this one. I'd rather play "Urusei Yatsura" on the Sega CD, since the graphics are better and Lum stays legal through the entire game.

ELLE SEZ: For a tiger, you really are a pig, you know that? Hmmp. Oh well. "Wedding Bells" isn't that great, and I never liked the cartoon much (although everyone else on the staff does... I personally think it's because of that bimbo Lum), so I wouldn't bother with it.



New Atomic Punk: Global Quest

Romstar (Hudson Soft)
dedicated coin-op
Byron
Q: Ⓞ, C: Ⓞ

I like this game. A whole lot... That might not be saying much, because I like all the "Bomberman" games (no, not the first one on the NES. Even I have my limits!), but "New Atomic Punk" is ever better than they are. It's the only "Bomberman" game that's as good as "Bomberman '94" was on the Turbograhawhatever game system. Why? I kinda think the graphics have something to do with it. They just look better than the older versions... the characters are less squishy and more realistic than in the other "Bomberman"s, yet they don't look really stupid like they did in that awful computer version by Neverplay or whatever that company's called. It's more than just that, though. The bad guys are real inventive and real smart; for example, there are chickens who will charge you if they see you. If you can blow 'em up, they turn into roasted, fresh-out-of-the-oven birds you can pick up for extra points! Great idea, and really funny! Others can mess with your bombs and turn 'em into duds, and there's even a pair of lips that eats bombs, then goes nuts and tries to blow you up along with him! Most people hate the adventure part of "Bomberman", but in "New Atomic Punk" it's just as fun as the versus modes everyone likes to play. I hope someone emulates this one for computers, and soon... otherwise, I don't think too many people will get to play it.

JESS SEZ: A terrific game, no doubt about it. I'm not holding my breath for an emulated version, but if Bloodlust can do "Street Fighter 2", why not this as well? In the meantime, just play "Bomberman '94" on Magic Engine.



GUNSTAR HEROES

Sega (Treasure)
Game Gear
Elle
Q: Ⓞ C: Ⓞ

Now you can take the ultimate shooter with you wherever you go! Um, if you were lucky enough to find this without going to

HEY, KIDS! LET'S PLAY "COUNT THE TYPOS"!

japan, I mean. Otherwise, you'll have to play it on your computer just like everyone else. Jess can say what he likes, but I never thought in a million years that the Genesis could handle a game like "Gunstar Heroes". I really didn't think the Game Gear could, but here's the proof, staring at me from the top of this page. Of course, a portable "Gunstar Heroes" couldn't possibly be as good as the home version, but I'd say this comes as close as possible to the original as a four meg, eight-bit game could. Let's compare 'em to give you an idea... GG "Gunstar" has the opener from the Genesis version, the same colorful title screen (no cool flipping logo tho), the transforming super 'bot Seven Force, and most of the rounds that were in Genesis "Gunstar Heroes". The dice maze is gone, and that is kinda depressing, but that would have taken another meg of RAM, and the programmers had to work with four because that's as large as Game Gear games can be. The graphics are grainy, too, and there's flicker, but it's not really bad. Otherwise, I'd say "Gunstar Heroes" was an amazing Game Gear game, just like it was on the Genesis.



JESS SEZ: Now even reclusive hermits have no excuse NOT to play this bona-fide classic. There are, contrary to popular misconception, a ton of great titles on the Game Gear, and "Gunstar Heroes" is one of the very best. Let's hope a game.com version never surfaces...



This is one of my all-time favorite video games, and no, it's not just because of the obvious (although that helps!). It's sort of a cross between "Marble Madness" and "Pac-Man" in case you haven't played it. You're a bear (that's the obvious part), and you run around picking up gems while all different kinds of things come after you. That's my second favorite thing about "Crystal Castles"... there's a lot of things happening at once, giving you a lot to do. You can either clean up the gems as fast as you can, OR scare a gross one-eyed catapillar to death while he's gulping down a jewel, OR get the honey pot to keep the bees away, OR grab a bouncing hat and chase after the witch for a little while. What can you do in "Pac-Man"? Run away from ghosts. Big whoop. Plus, the graphics are lots better in both the 2600 and arcade "Crystal Castles" than they are in the "Pac-Man" games, and they're much faster, too (then again, glaciers were faster than 2600 "Pac-Man"...). Like I said, "Crystal Castles" is one of my favorite games of all time. Play it and you'll see why!

SERGIO SEZ: Byron is nuts. That's all I can say. "Crystal Castles" is pretty fun, but since the screen doesn't scroll, there should have been a two player mode. Benty's too spazzy, and I hate how you have to go behind walls to collect gems. "Pac-Man" this game most definately is not.



Crystal Castles

Atari
dedicated coin-op, 2600
Byron
Q: Ⓞ, C: Ⓞ



I'm done. I didn't do too much crying when Jess got rid of his, as you can tell... some people like to say that it's more powerful than the 2600, but if hand-cramping dial controllers and incredibly slow games equal power, I'd rather go for the wimpier game systems of the 70's. Oh well. There are just four games on the Intellivision that keep me coming back even after my paw pad has been rubbed raw on those awful controllers... "Tron Deadly Discs" is one of them. I don't care what anyone says! That movie was great, and this game puts you right in the middle of it. "Burgertime" is another hit that the system didn't deserve. It's kinda funny, I know, but I actually like it better than the NES version. "B-17 Bomber" is da nuclear bomb, too. It's extremely complicated but that's what makes it interesting... well, that and having Gomer Pyle as your co-pilot. Lastly, there's "Loco-Motion". The game was designed by Konami, so you know it has to be good. The object is to keep your train from crashing on this big railroad track that's kind of like those dumb sliding puzzles. You control the piece of the track that's missing, and shuffle around the other pieces to keep the train going. Pass through all the depots and you get a harder round. It's really really fun, but there's one problem... the controls are reversed, so pieces slide in the opposite way you'd expect them to. No biggie! Just flip the controller upsidedown and that problem is solved! Part of what makes this game great is the whole train theme, which is why the sequel, "Junction" for the Genesis, er, wasn't so great. So buy this instead and hope someone comes out with a decent Intellivision emulator for home computers.

JYPSKY SEZ: I haven't seen this much pixelation since I played "Doom" on the 32X! Oh well... that game was still pretty good, and so is this one. The lower than low resolution does hurt "Loco-Motion" appeal- a lot- but it's still pretty fun keeping that train from derailing.



Ranma 1/2

HTMC
Super NES
Chris
Q: Ⓞ, C: Ⓞ



In retrospect, I really shouldn't have bought this game. After the brouhaha fan-eds made about "Street Combat", the idea of an untouched "Ranma" game sounded pretty good, so I went ahead and picked it up. Unfortunately, this is basically one of the many cheesy Japanese fighting games with lousy control and horrible implementation. Fans of the anime series will love battling it out with Ranma, Genma, and Shampoo... for about three minutes. The control sucks (you only have two attack buttons, and unless you configure it differently, you have to press X to jump), and the gameplay is just horrible. The voices... eeeeuugh... have been changed for the American version and are absolutely horrid. It's not that they're badly sampled or anything, but the voice actors were probably homeless people. The cute factor, sadly, does not save this game. "Cybermorph" is better. A migraine in a box.

JESS SEZ: Aw, come on! "Ranma 1/2" wasn't that bad! Yes, the control wasn't standardized and the game felt a little staccato, but I personally don't feel that the sequel (released only in Japan) was much of an improvement. At least there were four attack buttons in "Super Battle"...



Mr. Do's Castle

Universal & Parker Bros,
dedicated coin-op, ColecoVision
Jess
Q: Ⓞ, C: Ⓞ



Loco-Motion

Mattel
Intellivision
Elle
Q: Ⓞ, C: Ⓞ

Yknow, I don't even like writing reviews of my favorite games... I never feel I can pay adequate tribute to classics like "Night Warriors" (which naturally didn't appear in the last issue) and this outstanding release. Think about it: after giving you endless hours of

How do I love the Intellivision? Let me count the ways... OK,

entertainment, what could you possibly say to thank them? All I can really do is just cross my fingers and hope for the best... "Mr. Dol's Castle" is the sequel to "Mr. Dol", a sort of "Dig Dug" done with expanded play mechanics. As a child, I far preferred "Dig Dug's" more casual pace to the intensity of "Mr. Dol", but Castle was a different story (and a different game) entirely. It was actually better than "Lode Runner" and "Space Panic", the games that inspired it, with tighter control and a more brisk, arcade-quality feel. As an added bonus, Castle has a more light-hearted atmosphere than other "climb ladders and drop the bad guys into holes" contests... both Mr. Dol and the unicorns he's sworn to squash seem to be having one hell of a good time. You would be too if you were lucky enough to live in a game this good! This may be the nostalgia talking, but both the arcade and ColecoVision versions of this classic are strongly, strongly, STRONGLY recommended.



BYRON SEZ: It's old, but the graphics are great and you just can't stop playing it. Really well thought out and just plain good. I wish someone would do a remake, but I know that won't happen and it'd probably be a crappy 3D game anyways. Oh well.



Super Puzzle Fighter II Turbo

Capcom
Saturn

Josh
Q: Ⓞ, C: Ⓞ

This is Capcom's first attempt at a "Tetris" type puzzle game, where adorable super deformed characters from their fighting games duke it out by using strategy. A lot of people consider this a derivation of "Columns", but it's actually more similar to "Puyo Puyo" than anything. For some reason, that game is infinitely more popular in Japan, but it rarely shows up in North America; the only "Puyo Puyo" game I remember that was released here was "Dr. Robotnik's Mean Bean Machine". So it makes sense that no one recognizes the play mechanics. Like "Puyo Puyo", "Puzzle Fighter" always involves competition with an opponent, dropping blocks in sets of two on the playfield in an attempt to match colors and punish him. But in "Puyo Puyo", matching a certain amount of the same color is what clears the blocks, whereas in "Puzzle Fighter", only special "crash" gems can break the blocks, so the strategy changes entirely.

At first, the game kinda turned me off because it struck me as cheap. But I eventually decided to go ahead and get the Saturn version, and after playing it a few times I realized that the game isn't THAT unbalanced, and it is possible to develop strategies. The game can still get cheap at times when the other player comes up with a 5-chain super-gem combination that sends 76 gems to your side of the screen. Heh heh... if you ask anyone who's played against me, they can verify this.

Yes, I suppose one of the reasons I like this game so much is because it's the only puzzle game I've gotten good at. Even when I play as Dan, I can still win around half my games!

The super deformed characters that are the eye candy of the game are, of course, adorable. When you destroy gems and perform combos, they'll attack. When you're doing really well, they'll start posing, or laughing at the other character, or in Felicia's case, get tired and nod off. The voices for the female characters have been cutlified to the Nth degree. The two cutest voices are Hsien-Ko's and Felicia's, both by Araki Kae of Chibi Moon and Miaka ("Fushigi Yuugi") fame. And the voice actor for Dan is just hilarious! My favorite characters would have to be Morrigan (who does an impersonation of Sakura

when you get a 4-chain combo) and the crazy princess Devilot, originally from Capcom's "Cyberbots" game, which I doubt any of you have heard of (Jin from "Marvel vs. Capcom" is also from this game).

"Puzzle Fighter" isn't really as good as "Puyo Puyo", but it's definitely impressive from a company which normally doesn't release these kinds of games.

JESS SEZ: I swear, "Puzzle Fighter" drives me nuts. I know it's great (although I haven't played it yet... does ANY arcade in Southern Arizona carry it?), yet I'm not sure if I want to pay \$50 for what amounts to a glorified "Columns" spin-off. Decisions, decisions...



Virtua Fighter Kids

Sega (AM2)
Saturn
Jypsky
Q: Ⓞ, C: Ⓞ

I've gotta tell you, I'm usually pretty impressed with Sega's "Virtua Fighter" translations, but Kids just doesn't cut it. Sure, the graphics look fine, and half of the characters are cute, but contrary to what you've heard, the fighters' large heads just absolutely DESTROY the gameplay. You're almost never able to land punches even when you're right next to your opponent, because their bodies are always too far away! There's only one good thing about VF Kids—anyone who got a free copy of "Virtua Fighter 2" from Sega will finally have instructions for it. Other than that, yeeech.

ELLE SEZ: I take back everything nice I'd said about this game. "Virtua Fighter Kids" was a bad idea from start to finish... there's just no point in buying it if you already own "Virtua Fighter 2" or "Fighter's MegaMix". Even the cartoon cinemas make no sense at all.



Keioh Guerilla Squadron

JVC
Japanese Saturn
Josh
Q: Ⓞ, C: Ⓞ

Keioh Yuugekitai (pronounced "Kay-oh Yoo-geeki-tie") is a Saturn classic! It's the platform sequel to the Mega CD shooter "Keioh Flying Squadron". Yep, yep; say what you will about Working Designs, but they were mighty cool to bring that game to the US, and it sure is too bad they never did the same with this one. It's cute and hilarious (sporting character designs from Japanese Doujinshi artist Oh-chan), and has pretty decent gameplay to boot!

The story revolves around a young gal named Rami, who lives with her grandparents and her pet dragon Pochi in a secluded spot in the woods. One day, as Rami and her family are about to start bangohan (dinner), someone knocks a hole in their house. A charming girl named Himiko hops off her machine, grabs the family's crystal from off a chest, and runs off. Then, allsudden, a huge flying fortress appears and attacks Himiko's machine. The crystal is then taken by the nutty raccoon Dr. Pon. Rami changes into her magical bunny outfit and chases after him. Eventually she learns that there are more crystals like the one her family has, and Dr. Pon needs them to resurrect some big demon head which he plans to use to dig up a treasure. Of course, Dr. Pon never thought about the repercussions of raising an evil deity, so Rami has to stop him before he does something really stupid.

"Keioh" is packed with stuff ranging from slightly silly to downright hilarious. Sometimes, you have to wonder if the designers were smoking something while making this game... some of the bosses had me rolling on the floor. ^^ There's also lots of cute dialogue in the game, and some nicely animated scenes that take place at the beginning and end. It's always nice to have a game that looks this good AND plays well, too. If you have a Saturn which can play Japanese games, you MUST buy this if you can find a copy!

AND THAT'S THE END.

The Top 100 Games Of All Time

Another fanzine, another top 100 list. Not everybody likes them, but since I'm already nearly half way through this one, I might as well forge ahead and list another twenty games worthy of consideration as the best ever released. I wonder... if Treasure released one hundred games, would they all be here? Hmm...

Mega Man 2 (NES)

The second game in Capcom's unending series was most notable for taking an entirely different artistic direction from the bleak, chrome-plated style of the first "Mega Man". It's debatable as to whether this was an improvement, but the more vibrant graphics and goofier robots did make the series a commercial success in the United States.

Tron: Deadly Discs (Intellivision)

The film seems hopelessly outdated in this age of "Jurassic Park" sequels, but the games it spawned- particularly "Tron: Deadly Discs"- are timeless classics.

Terra Cresta (arcade)

There's nothing like a transforming fleet of star cruisers to give an otherwise obvious "Xevious" rip-off a life of its own. Nichibutsu's quirky style of game design didn't always click with me personally (remember "MagMax"? Oy...), but this is definitely an exception.

Goldeneye (N64)

Back in the 80's, the Bond films were terrific, but Parker Bros's use of the license in the ColecoVision bomb "James Bond: 007" left much to be desired. These days, the 007 games are classics, but the movies stink! Go fig.

Guardian Heroes (Saturn)

Although not without its flaws, "Guardian Heroes" should be commended- and purchased!- for its wild special effects, strong visuals, and solid "Fatal Fury"-meets-"Golden Axe" gameplay.

Gauntlet IV (Genesis)

Practically an emulation of the groundbreaking coin-op. The voices obviously aren't quite as clear, but the impressive musical scores more than make up for that. You won't know whether you put this in your Genesis or a copy of "Conan: The Barbarian" into your VCR!

B-17 Bomber (Intellivision)

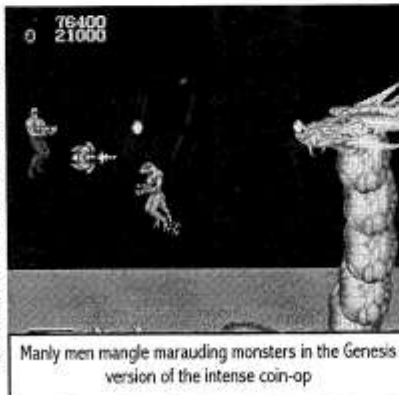
The best flight simulator of its time remained the best on video game consoles until the release of the Super NES. Incredibly complex and engrossing for an Intellivision game... and you've gotta love that co-pilot!

Virtua Cop (coin, Saturn)

After playing this, you'll wonder how you ever got by with "Lethal Enforcers". Both the arcade and home versions are terrific.

Forgotten Worlds (coin, Genesis)

Capcom broke the shooter mold with "Forgotten World"'s human title characters and 360 degree targeting. It also deserves credit for having a black character who isn't ludicrously stereotyped or painfully slow. Best of all, the Genesis version still holds up surprisingly well, even though it isn't an exact arcade translation.



NIGHTS (Saturn)

This game may have been partially responsible for the Saturn's demise (at least I think so... nobody I've talked to agrees!), but it's good, mindless fun, with surreal visuals that stretch the Saturn's capabilities to their limits.

Final Fantasy (NES)

The only RPG series which ever really got my undivided attention had a great start on the NES. Even the first "Final Fantasy" has no trouble beating all four "Phantasy Star"s in terms of sheer entertainment value.

Shadow Dancer (coin, Genesis)

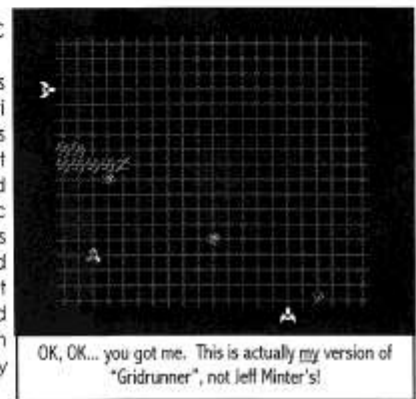
Two words describe the arcade version of this "Shinobi" spin-off: UTTERLY AMAZING. The Genesis remake was good, but seems sort of watered down and sloppy in comparison. At least Sega knew enough to leave the "ninja dog" intact...

Super Mario 3 (NES)

In 1989, the stores were literally CLOGGED with people, all trying to get their greedy mitts on this wonderful sequel to the original "Super Mario Bros." Retailers were even luckier that almost nobody came back to return it...

Gridrunner (VIC-20, PC Engine?)

Jeff Minter's interpretation of the Atari coin-op "Centipede" is actually superior to that game, with hard-edged graphics and eerily realistic sound effects which fit its intense action-packed gameplay like a glove. Let the buyer beware: the "Grid Runner"s on the Playstation and Saturn are totally different games.



Mario Bros. (coin)

You'll wonder why Nintendo left the word "super" off this great precursor to the game that took America and Japan by storm. "Mario Bros." has some of the best two player action this side of... well, sex.

Kirby's Adventure (NES)

This side-scroller has a more airy feel than "Super Mario Bros. 3", but it's a classic in its own right, with a cute star and weapons that are both wacky and extremely useful. My personal favorite is "Throw", which turns Kirby into a pro wrestler. Look out, Macho Man!

Landstalker (Genesis)

A meticulously designed isometric alternative to "Zelda 3: A Link To The Past". The 3/4ths perspective is somewhat of a hassle, but you can't deny that the game's got charm.

Yar's Revenge (2600)

This "Star Castle" offspring is one of the most impressive games in the 2600 canon. Could anyone ever forget the mesmerizing colors in Yar's Neutral Zone, or the frighteningly unexpected attacks by the relentless Quotile? If you could, uh, go back to playing "Tekken".

Street Fighter 3 (coin)

Not as big a step up from "Street Fighter 2" as I'd expected, but it does the job, with solid control and characters that are really well animated... almost too well animated, if you ask me. If you value your sanity, steer clear of the crappy rerelease, "Street Fighter 3: Second Impact".

BASIC (various)

This simple yet powerful programming language allows you to make your own video games. Enough said.

It's the N64 as we know it... ...but Bill feels fine

BASTARDS!!! ALL of them BASTARDS!!!

Here's the GRB staff's choices for the Bastards of the Month...

My opinion of the Nintendo 64 has been a mixed bag lately. I realize I have yet another "technologically superior" system on my hands, but let me tell you this (Atari? Sega?): you don't have a pot to piss in if you don't have the software to support it. Software, you say? Okay. Let's take a stroll down the aisle of my neighborhood Toys 'R Us, shall we?

Okay. To my knowledge there are just shy of 45 carts out in stores for the N64. I myself have only picked up "Doom 64" because either I don't really care for what's out there, stores in my area don't carry it yet, or I just don't feel like paying seventy bucks for a "flounder" that'll rot on my shelf for the next millennium. It doesn't help matters that I live in a hick-town where the N64 is just now becoming popular and easier to rent... yep, I learned a long time ago to rent before buying thanks to the NES and the 5% playability rate of its games. Anyhow... let's start with MY opinion of these five popular N64 softs.

Turok: Dinosaur Hunter: Um, yeah, whatever. I realize this game WAS a million seller, but I pity those one million miserable assholes out there that actually BOUGHT a game by Acclaim [hey! I bought "Battle Monsters" last week! And, uh, it sucks... good point. -ed.]. Insane button controls and no way to remedy it. Cheesy graphics. TONS of flicker while fighting the so-called bosses... I could go on, but I won't. In my book, this is a rental, and even that's pushing it.

Doom 64: This should be one of your first purchases, hands down. Not only is the "pixel-man" syndrome done away with, but the graphics are pretty damn scary, at least with the lights off. Monsters are more scary and pissed off than before. And the sound effects are right out of a "HellRaiser" movie! While the basic gameplay is a little on the easy side, the end boss is a major bitch... literally! This is one of those "you like it or you hate it" type of games. I have become addicted to these first-person shoot 'em ups lately, but trust me, this game is well worth the \$29.99 it's selling for now in Electronics Boutique!

Duke Nukem 64: Awesome, purely awesome! Not only is this a step above the PC version, but they didn't remove Duke's so-called "filthy" mouth like I thought they would. Also throw in sayings patterned after Bruce Campbell's in the "Evil Dead" series, and they make a great game that much better! At least if you've seen those movies. While this game doesn't seem to be selling all that well around here, it is more than worth your while.

Mario 64: 3D Mario... hmmm... comes off pretty good. Long quest, but nothing that hasn't been done before in a Mario game. My only bitch is that Bowser is a complete p\$%&y! Your first encounter with him should be a snap as kicking his ass is relatively easy. There's that difficulty factor again... I would DEFINATELY rent this game before I'd buy it, even if it DOES have Mario's face slapped on the box cover.

StarFox 64: Okay, can we say too easy again and too short? I rented this game this past weekend and finished it in just four hours! Come on already, Nintendo! I mean, the graphics are some of the best I've seen so far on the system, but what's with the difficulty? Hell, it took me twice as long to finish the SNES version. I thought more memory would mean a longer game, harder levels, and bosses that would kick your ass just by looking at you. I don't know; maybe it's just me. But then again...

I'm not trashing this system like every other person seems to be doing lately. I won't lie; I love my N64, but there is one other thing besides the lack of games that bugs me. What's this I'm now hearing about Nintendo targeting the 6-13 age group? <click, click, BOOM!> I just hope I won't have to see "Mario Is Missing 64" any time soon. I tell you, with myself and others I know who own an N64 hearing stuff like this, it could be beddy-bye for this 64-bitter. Then again, Nintendo has persevered in the past, so they MAY know what they're doing...

BILL SUSZYNSKI

JESS picks... **Bill Maher**

I am just so sick of this smarmy little twit. Whether he's stockpiling the panel of "Politically Incorrect" with guests that share his twisted views, mercilessly attacking the few conservatives foolish enough to appear on his show, or just kissing extreme presidential ass, Bill Maher proves that he is, even more so than Jerry Springer, worthy of the title "bastard". His overwhelming narcissism and perverse sense of morality (using the term loosely) makes you wonder if he's ever left Hollywood once in his life. Shut the fuck up already, you freak!

SERGIO picks... **Victor "Victoria" Ireland**

Yes, folks, millions of horny otaku CAN be wrong, and Victor Ireland proves it. His company Working Designs has always been the leech of video game companies, latching on to weak Japanese RPGs and sucking them dry on their way to the United States. Say what you like, but adding dumb dialogue by bone-headed surfer dudes doesn't change the fact that games like "Lunar" and "Albert Odyssey" don't hold a WET MATCHSTICK to the "Final Fantasy" series. And for such an "underground" company "concerned with the welfare of its customers", Working Designs sure wussed out on Saturn owners fast. Did you know that there's a Saturn version of the awesome shooter "RayStorm" in Japan? You probably didn't, because good 'ol Vic didn't bother to bring it to the States! If he doesn't port over the Saturn version of "Silhouette Mirage", and SOON, there's no hope for this lousy excuse for a video game company.

ELLE picks... **Naxat Soft**

I've seen it, and I still can't believe it. The company that gave us the best pinball game of all time, "Dragon's Fury", actually made a "Mortal Kombat" clone so bad, it makes "Way of the Warrior" look like a masterpiece! Oh, in case you couldn't guess, I'm talking about that cheesy Saturn game "Battle Monsters". It's \$10, but that's pretty expensive for a drink coaster 'cuz that's all you'll use it for after you play it a few times.

BYRON picks... **Nick Rox**

Like you didn't see this coming... I wouldn't call anyone a "bastard"; a jerk, maybe, but not a bastard. And Nick Rox is definitely a jerk. What other game reviewer pretends that a game is good, and attacks anyone who tells the truth about it?

ELIBRO

With Your Host, The Just Slightly Passive-Aggressive Chris Kohler!

Hey, kids! I've returned with another giant stack of books to review for your favorite column! (Right?) Actually, I'm a little apprehensive about even doing this article since Jess edited the hell out of my previous submission, but... well, it wasn't exactly the most articulate piece I've ever written anyway. A little note before we begin: I've dug into the pile of NES-era books for this one. I was afraid to, because so many have been written it'd be like opening up a can of worms... but what the hell. I'm sure GRB will run long enough so that I can cover them all one way or another. And no, I haven't even *thought* of pulling out the Jeff Rovin collection... that's an article in and of itself. (Thank you, Thinly Veiled Foreshadowing Man.)

How To Win At Video Games

George Sullivan

Scholastic

176 Pages

"This fact-packed book will show you how to be a winner and score big when Kong threatens your jumpman".

Boy, these old books just had the most original titles, didn't they? Anyways... for the first 160 pages, "How To Win At Video Games" is exactly like every other boring book you'll encounter from this time period. You have page after cheaply printed page of useless strategies and ugly screen drawings. As a strategy guide, it's horrible. However, the last sixteen or so pages give this book some (but not a lot of) collector's value with a video game trivia section (did you know that video games were outlawed in the Philippines?) and a (relatively short) video game timeline. Not bad, although I wouldn't recommend you pay more than a quarter for this should you find it.

Screen Play: The Story of Video Games

George Sullivan (yes, that George Sullivan)

Frederick Warne and Co.

88 Pages

"The E.T. game based on the movie was not a big success."

Unlike George's other attempt, this book has potential. As I started getting into this hobby, I was amazed at how many books were written about the history of video games. This one isn't as good as "Phoenix", of course, but does offer enough in the way of interviews with game de-

signers, factual tidbits, and pictures of everything from the Vectrex to Nolan Bushnell (even scarier than Jess!) to the Intellivision music keyboard, this book has a lot going for it. A must-read if you're a real video game history buff—hey, it even has the story of that crazy mom from Long Island who tried to get games banned.

Gamester's Guide To Arcade Video Games

Paul Kordestani

Tab Books, Inc.

376 pages

"A video game is any game that has an electronic visual display."

This is a BIG book, and not just in page count—it has the dimensions of your typical computer manual. It looks foreboding, but inside are some great descriptions and strategies for 41 different arcade games. Specific instructions are given for each game, along with descriptions of the action and onscreen objects. Otherwise, this guide is just one of the many lookalike arcade books out there, with ugly (but passable) screen drawings. Nothing special, but probably helpful.

Mastering Nintendo Video Games

Robbins and Robbins

Hayden Books

156 pages

"Picket Man will throw pickets at you."

This book, which the authors admit is written for small children, isn't that great. The tips section is sparse, the type is huge, and the help given is usually provided in the games' instruction books. The ONLY pictures in the whole thing are of the various warp zones in "Super Mario Bros." The tips are literally lifted from other guides, and the whole thing just smacks of cheesiness. Don't go looking for this one.

Ultimate Unauthorized Strategies

Corey Sandler and Tom Badgett

Bantam

Varies, about 250 pages each

"Have you ever wanted to shoot your TV?"

These are the books you're likely to see at tag sales and used book stores. I believe there were a total of six: three NES, one SNES, one GameBoy, and one Genesis version. The interesting thing about them is, aside from the games they cover, *they're all the same*. Each section is basically a reprise of the game's instruction manual, with one or two hints thrown in. Obviously, they're worthless from a strategy standpoint, but as a huge collection of game instructions, they're useful.

Compute!'s Guide to Nintendo Games; Compute!'s Nintendo Secrets

Steven Schwartz

Compute! Books

About 225 pages each

"Only the grey stalactites can hurt you."

books don't even come close to offering the depth and strategy your average instruction book has. Hell, I've seen stickers on rental game cases that go into more detail. The book has an average of maybe one useful tip per game. Utterly useless and profoundly boring.

Nintendo Strategies (and its various sequels)

The Editors of Consumer Guide

Beekman House

About 64 pages each

"If it took you ten hours to figure out 'Zelda', plan to spend 100 hours on 'Ultima'."

This is a series of five magazine-style books that I bought when I was in fifth grade at various "book fairs" held at my school. You can tell what kind of books they are. While they're pretty pathetic in that they offer no hints at all (what's with these damned books, anyway!), they're good for the target audience. Lots of full-color pictures, probably to prevent kids from making bad purchases, but nothing else in them is particularly useful.

The Game Counsellor's (sic) Answerbook

The Game Counsellor (sic), Inc.

Microsoft Press

300 pages

"How do I beat the Red Lobster Thermidor in the World of Hel?"

Even if they can't spell, The Game Counsellor Inc.'s book is interesting for one reason: it covers about as many games as there are pages in the book. Over 250 games are covered, and while the depth of the coverage obviously leaves something to be desired, there's a good chance you'll find the game you want inside. Unfortunately, you won't find much about it.

Before I end this article (finally!), a few notes:

☆ I planned to review some of the more obscure Nintendo guides. What happened is obvious: they were all bad. There were some good books out there, which may show up in a future GRB. They include Jeff Rovin's books, which were pictureless but good, and Prima Publishing's early efforts.

☆ I always wondered while playing "Super Mario Bros. 2" why turnips were used as weapons. Now that I work in a grocery store, I know: turnips are *huge* and *heavy*! Like bowling balls, almost.



See above. No, wait a minute. These

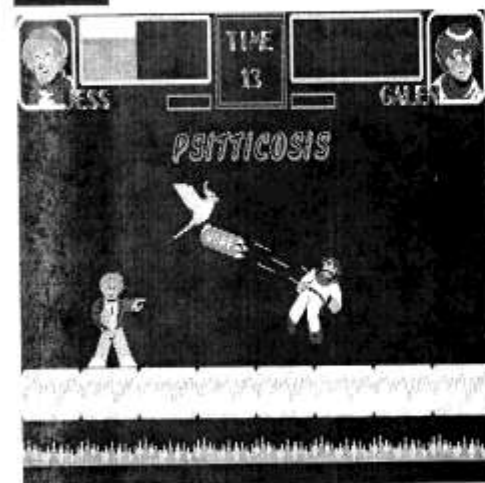
FAN + Ed FRACAS

NEWS AND VIEWS

People have been asking me about this, so I can't think of a better place to discuss it than in my fanzine. Here's the deal... "Fan-Ed Fracas" is a side-scrolling fighting game starring the editors of video game fanzines. I've been dithering around with the concept for around four years now, but the game has only entered the design phase in the last year, and there's a strong possibility that it will never be finished.

The original design for FanFrac had included such memorable 'zine editors as Brian Pacula, Pat Reynolds, Arnie Katz, and myself. Over the years, I've removed fighters like Dennis Crowley and Mr. Nutz (you remember, the pyromaniac who was an endless source of annoyance for Josh Lesnick?) and replaced them with newcomers like Chris Kohler and Galen Komatsu (not technically a fanzine editor, but he does do a lot of funny strategy guides for Andy Eddy on the internet). To either side of this column are the current cast members of "Fan-Ed Fracas". On the left is Chris Kohler brandishing a playing card, Ben Leatherman in MK meets S&M gear, Brian Pacula burning up, Byron with his paw outstretched, Galen Komatsu warming up a fireball, and Arnie Katz. To your right is a shackled Joe Santulli, "Fantazine" columnist Adrian Proctor, Pat Reynolds clutching the Sol Sabre, Russ Perry, Jr. in "Star Trek" garb, Josh Lesnick taking a breather, and myself.

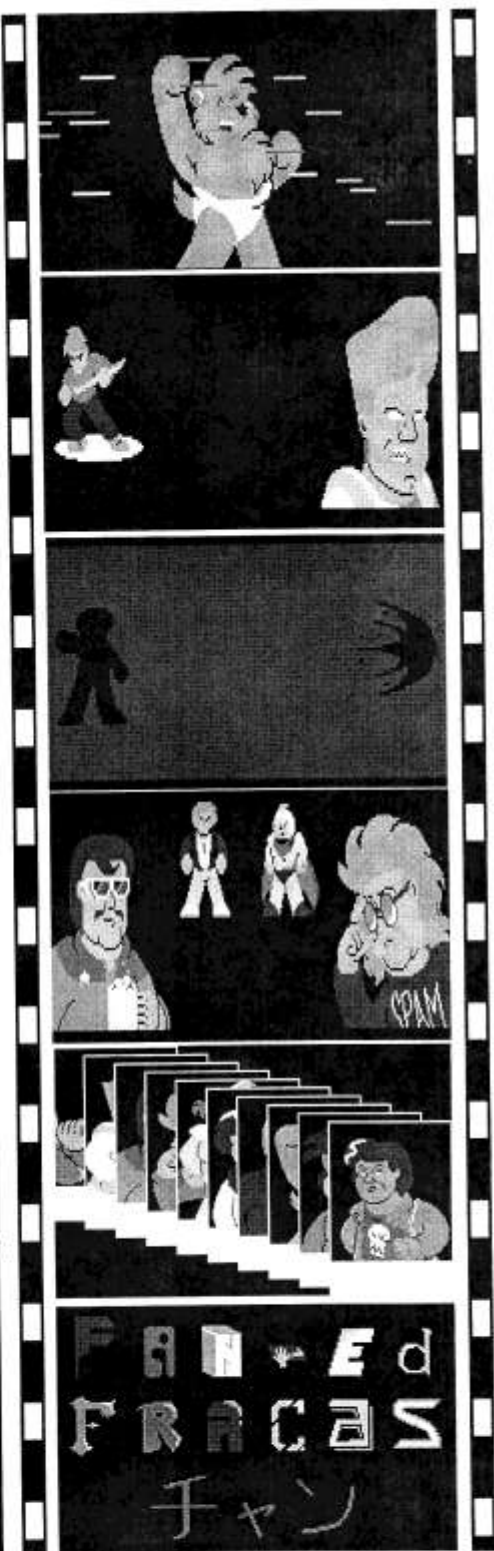
I've had other ideas for fighting games with fan-eds as the stars, too... among these are "Mighty Fighter '99", starring characters from fanzines (ie Byron, Ryuken, and Jacko) battling in teams against parodies of the characters in bad Playstation games (like Vera Stacccki, who graced last issue's cover). Then there's "The Holloweiners", with fan-eds celebrating the spooky holiday in bad costumes (think "NightWarriors"). Finally, there's "FandomNation", which pits fan-eds and their characters against each other in a two on two battle royale... this, of course, was inspired by "X-Men vs. Street Fighter". If you have other suggestions, send 'em in!



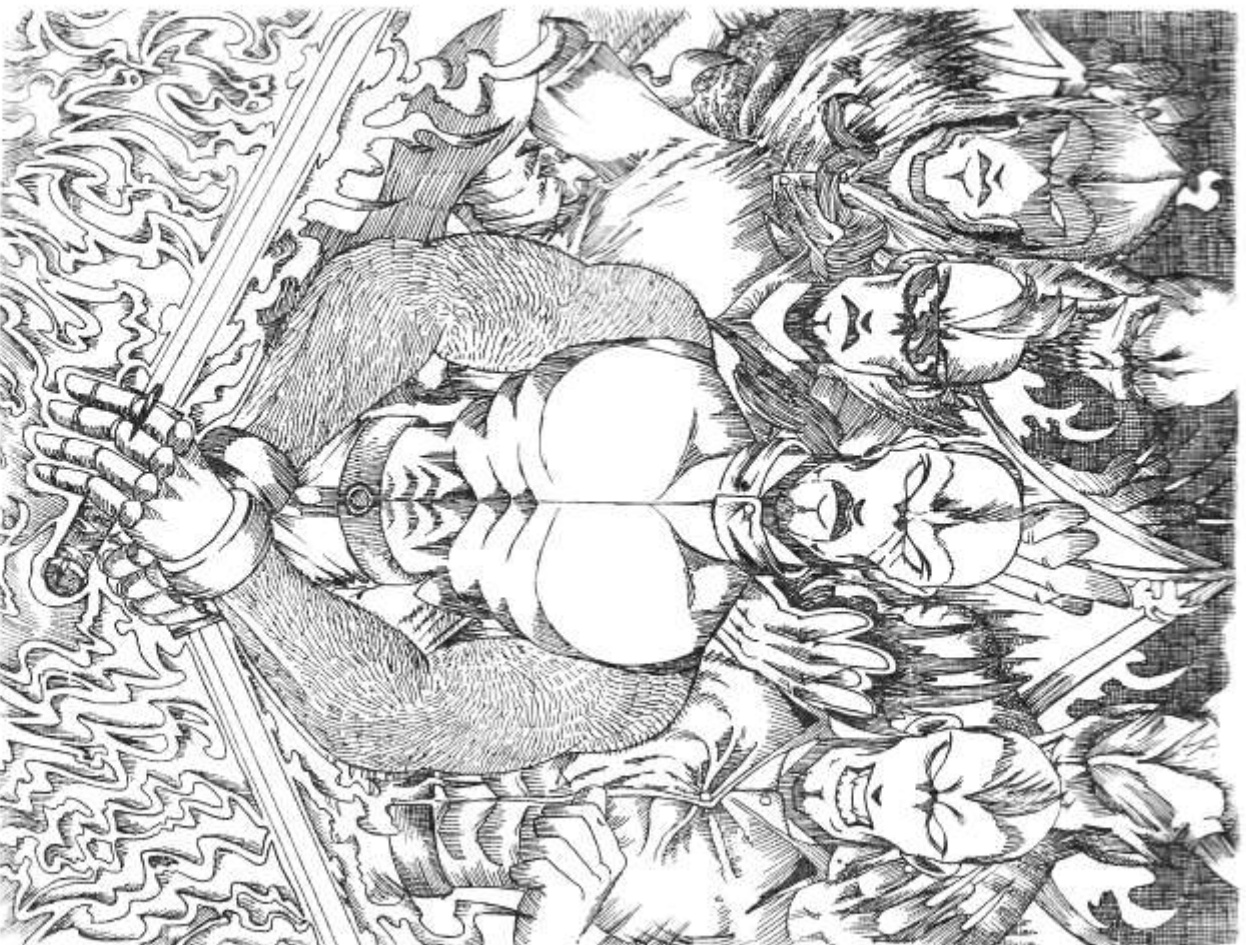
A mock-up of a "Fan-Ed Fracas Chan" game screen. Jess sticks it to Galen with the aid of his pet bird in this mighty super attack, appropriately titled "Psitticosis".



A picture from the "Fan-Ed Fracas Chan" player select screen. Above is Jeff Bogumil, aka Talon. Since he's more or less vanished, he probably won't be in the updates.



The above pictures are from the "Fan-Ed Fracas Chan" opener. Top: Byron makes his prerequisite appearance. Next: Chris Dyer spots his mortal enemy Pat Reynolds. After That: Galen Komatsu performs the deadly Komatsu-Ken. Then: Various other fan-eds strike a pose. And After That: Snapshots of the characters. Finally (whew!): The "Fan-Ed Fracas Chan" logo.



continue

The GRB Art Gallery

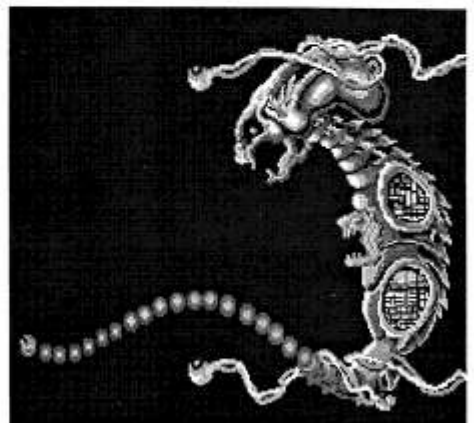
Here's a little something I thought would be fun... two incredible drawings by two of fandom's best artists! The creepy one on the left is "Enigma" by "Sub-Zero" editor Chris Dyer. It's based on a "Seven Brothers of the Apocalypse" comic he's been working on... let's hope this finds its way into issue eight of Chris's newly revived fanzine. The hilarious picture of Sonic and Tails is by fandom newcomer Greg Wilcox. His combination catalog/newsletter "Continue?" is due out soon, that is, if you haven't already gotten it. This farcical depiction of Sega's mascots is the planned cover for "Continue?"'s third issue.



So... Who's On The Cover?



Well, I did promise I'd tell you, didn't I? From the top, we have... Inuzamurai (Todd Lintner as a ninja) gets squished by Josh Lesnick's cow, Jared Jones gets the jump on Scott Boehmer, Dennis Crowley's blasted by Galen Komatsu, and Lance Rice holds (what else?) a lance. Next row: Ben Leatherman and Sean Pettibone square off, Matt Lotti hurls an anvil, Chris Kohler tosses a playing card, Chris Dyer and Pat Reynolds trade death blows, and Adrian Proctor throws a fireball while Rick Florey looks on. Third row: Paige and Tim Priest stare bewildered, Nick 'Rox' DesBarres gets what's coming to him, Greg Wilcox gets hammered by Matt Lotti's anvil, Tyrone Rodriguez has no idea what's going on, Jeff "Talon" Bogumil dives in for the attack, Noah Dziobecki makes a cameo appearance with Alan Lanoie directly underneath, and Al "Gatekeeper" Riccitelli puts the hurt on Greg Meyers. Fourth row: Brian Pacula faces off against Ara Shirinian, George Wilson just passes through, Nathan Hauke worries if he'll be attacked, Arnie Katz actually is attacked while Mike Palisano watches, Russ Pery deflects Adrian Proctor's fireball with a *bat'leth*, Aaron Buckner is thwarted, and "Mr. Nutz" sets fire to a fanzine. Last row: Carlton Rahmani is the victim of Byron's industrial strength fan. Near the title and thirsting for blood: Chris Bieniek. At the bottom and hoping not to get his butt kicked: Jess Ragan. Hope that clears things up.



IN ISSUE SIX...

Aw... poor lil' guy...

I always knew Mr. Nutz was a loser... that picture just set my opinion in stone! Get it? Don't 'ya get it??? Oh, never mind, then.

We got it... that's why we're not laughing.

Besides, who the heck remembers Mr. Nutz the fan-ed, anyway?

Well, besides me and Josh Lesnick, anyways...

I guess you're right... as you can tell, this is the end of the issue. Enjoy it! You're not getting another one for a long, long time...

I can think of at least one person who won't be shedding any tears over that.

Not that anyone here disagrees with what you'd said about Joe Santulli.

And you were a lot nicer than you were in that "Dizzed & Confused" column you wrote in "Project: Ignition"...

Ugh. Don't remind me.

Of the column or of "Project: Ignition"?

Probably both!

<Byron & Sergio high-five>

Yeah, yeah, go ahead and nyuk it up, you little morons. At least we got rid of 3/5ths Man for a while...

What? You mean you didn't kill him?!

I tried... believe me, I tried! Oh, well; he'll be too busy picking scrapnel out of his butt to bother us for a while. Maybe he'll get the point and leave us alone entirely! Yeah, right. Look at me, I'm dreaming!

You know, speaking of 3/5ths Man's butt, I wonder if he has a three-fifths moon?

I really, really don't want to think about it.

Actually, I've seen him in the shower. The 3/5ths stands for inches...

HOW... UNPLEASANT.

Yeah, I agree. Can we change the subject?

We should probably let everyone know that "The Gameroom Blitz" will be out of circulation for a while.

It's not dead... just hibernating.

Kinda like what I did for the last five years. Somebody's really gotta make alarm clocks with a month hand, y'know that?

So, for the three of you who cared, that's why Elle wasn't in most of the issues of "Project: Ignition" and none of the previous issues of GRB. Of course, since she just filled a niche for this issue's theme, it's not entirely likely that she'll return for GRB #6.

That's OK. I need to catch up on my rest anyway... <yawn>

Y'know, I just thought of something. Yogi and Boo-Boo are the bear versions of Amos and Andy! I mean, not ALL of us run around acting like dopes stealing pic-a-nic baskets or whatever. Look at me! Have you ever seen me in a tie before?

A completely pointless observation by Byron. Give him a hand, or a paw if that's all you've got.

<everyone claps sarcastically>

Hmm... so THAT'S what sarcastic clapping sounds like...

IN ANY EVENT, I FEEL THAT OUR READERS SHOULD NOTE THAT THE NEXT ISSUE, WHEN IT SURFACES, WILL BE ABOUT THAT EVER POPULAR STAPLE IN VIDEO GAMES, BOSSES.

Hey, are we going to have that cool alien thing from "R-Type"... you know, the alien Irem stole from the artist who created all those slimy, drippy aliens for that film about aliens? What was that aliens movie called again...?

I resent being called slimy and drippy. Only during cold season, thank you very much.

Or how about Devilot from "Puzzle Fighter"? Or maybe Karai from the Ninja Turtles game? Tough fighting game girls who actually WEAR CLOTHES for once! Now there's a concept!

Speaking of clothes, we really do have to take off. I'd like to thank Josh Lesnick, Bill Suzsynski, Chris Kohler, Chris Dyer, Greg Wilcox, and Ralph Barbagallo for the contributions. I'd like to MAIM Puff Daddy for violating one of my favorite "Police" tunes. I mean, come on, turning "Every Step You Take" into a love ballad! Arrgh... Anyhoo, we'll see you all next issue.

Jess Ragan Byron J Lisamen Elle Sanders Sergio Toratelli Jypsyk Shirnian **BASHI TANOOK**

ANITA!

The Creepy Kid From
"NightWarriors" Makes Her First
Appearance In A Marvel Licensed
Game. Here's How To Find Her...

Here's the deal. Anita's that creepy little girl with a headless doll who follows Donovan, the rather obvious Simon Belmont parody, around in the Saturn fighting game "NightWarriors". Around the time that "Marvel Super Heroes" was released in the United States, "GamePro" printed a code that would allow you to play as her in the Japanese release. Sadly, the code was removed in the American version of MSH, but Anita wasn't. You can still play as video gaming's equivalent of Christina Ricci if you own a Game Shark or Action Replay and enter the following codes:

MASTER: F6000924 FFFF
PLAY AS ANITA: 3609C853 0018

Now Donovan's tag-along is permanently assigned to player one in the arcade, versus, and demo modes. Anita's moves are all parodies of Donovan's, and she even has a little Kilshred sword which attacks for her. She doesn't seem especially powerful at first, but her Infinity (which can land up to 98 HITS!) more than makes up for her shortcomings.

ANITA'S MOVES:

- ↓↘, P... Flame Spirit, starring Akuma?!
Anita's sword turns red and flits upward, while Akuma looks on.
- ←↓↙, P... Lightning Spirit, starring Lei-Lei
The best of Anita's special attacks. This can hit up to twenty times!
- P+K... Plant Kilshred (repeat to throw)
Anita plants her sword into the dirt and can toss it from just about anywhere.
- ↓↘→, 3P... Infinity: Love For You
Anita's doll spits out dozens of heads. Excruciating damage even if blocked.

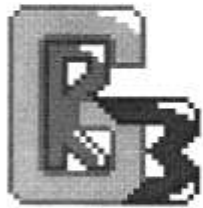


From The Law Offices Of Grabb, Moore, and DiNiro

You may have noticed that Jess Ragan, the editor of this fanzine, failed to include legal information in last issue's colophon. We certainly did. Due to this oversight, we were able to file a class action lawsuit on the behalfs of Gerald Springer, Nicholas DesBarres, Nathan Hineline and hundreds of others who felt damaged in one way or another by Mr. Ragan's slanderous comments. Mr. Ragan is now toiling away in an iron mine deep within the Arizona mountains, slowly paying off the thirty four million dollars awarded to our clients. Don't let this happen to you. Be sure to always include this information in your newsletter as follows:

This fanzine is not to be held responsible for damages done to any party. All copyrights in this publication are trademarks of their respective holders. All rights reserved.

The law offices of Grabb, Moore, and DiNiro would like to thank you for your time.



The Gameroom Blitz

Oh, come ON!
That was a
postage stamp!
Did you really
think anything
would happen
if you tore it
off & licked it?

"Mmm... Incapacitating..." — Homer Simpson

