



# Rolling right along

Katamari Damacy rolls with its weirdness in stride, **17**

# AFRO SAMURAI



# 22

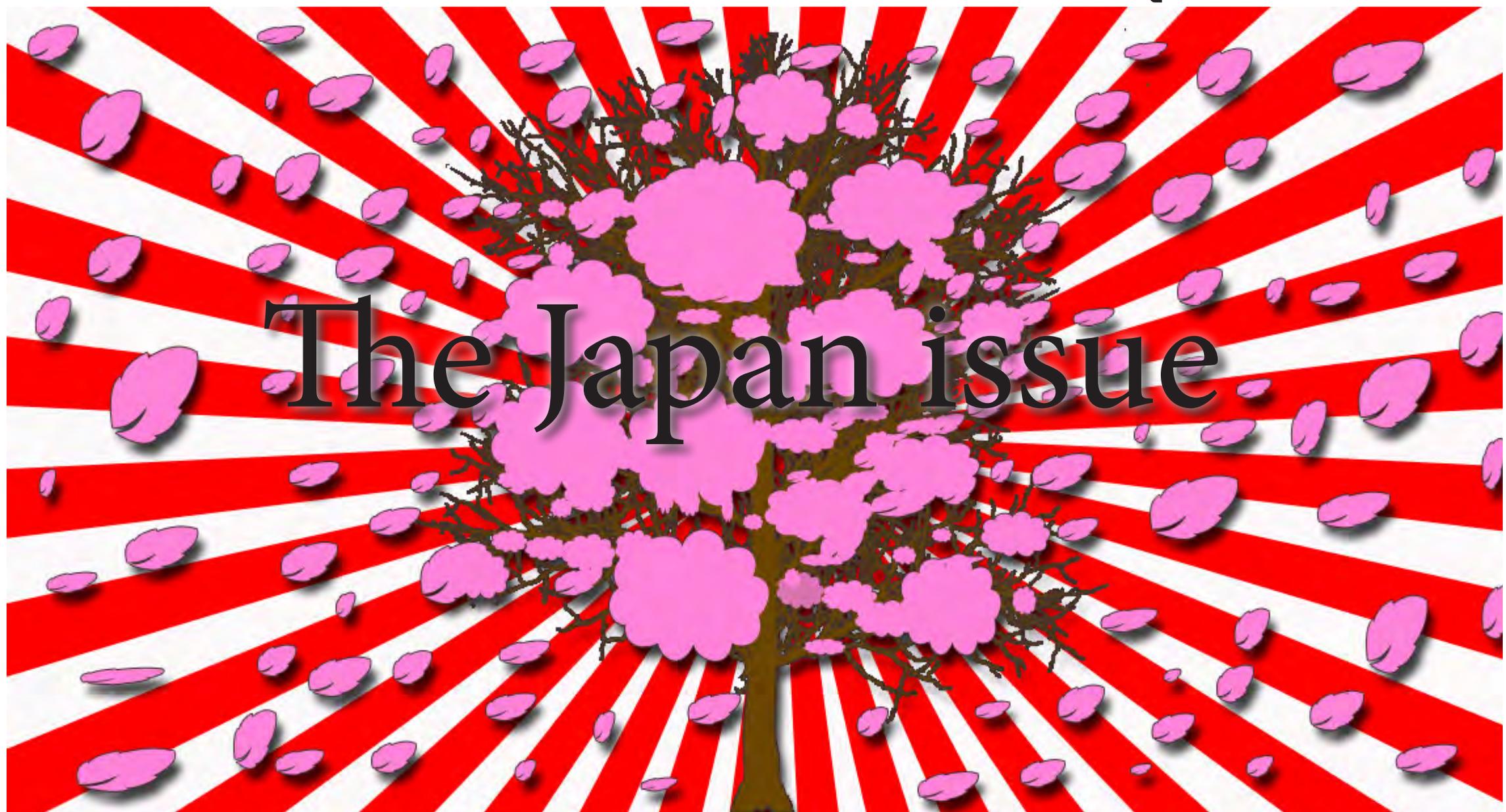
# GAMING INSURRECTION

For gamers, by gamers

YEAR 06, NO. 22

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# Second Quarter 2013



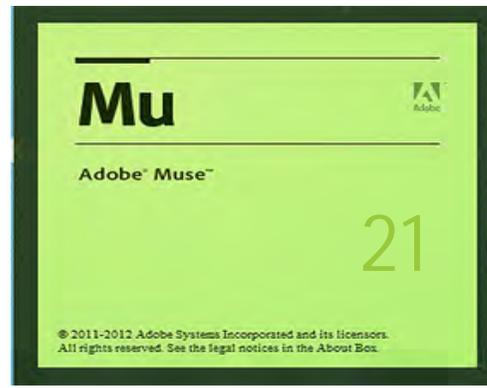
# The Japan issue



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## Samurai Shodown 6

The concept of samurai has tended to be a controversial one in Japan, but not in fighting games. Just about every series worth its salt has a samurai among its ranks. Samurai Shodown is an entire series based on that fact. Find out why it's awesome with our review of the latest game in the series.



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## Tech Geeks

So, you call yourself a Web designer, yet you don't know HTML or understand CSS? How sad. To cheer you up, we give an option to alleviate the problem: Adobe Muse. P.S. We're just as sad because GI is in the same boat, and we're even less prepared when it comes to making a sparkling site for the masses.



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## Torture of the Quarter

Rare is terrible. For every game they put out, somewhere kittens were being shaved and declawed. The situation is that horrible. And how did it get to that level of terrible so fast? Well, if you weren't born in the '80s, count your blessings because you would have been subjected to trash like Battletoads.

## the usual suspects

23 otaku corner

Speaking of terrible, Editor-at-large Brandon Beatty had the utter and complete gall to subject readers to the fantastic failure of an anime opening in Tenjho Tenge. Aside from that setback, the anime is actually pretty good and is the subject of our quarterly look at manga/anime properties.

31, 32, 33 pokémon knowledge center

We ramped up our Pokémon coverage with analysis on several fan-favorite creatures of the Nintendo persuasion. We look at Jigglypuff/Wigglytuff, Vulpix/Ninetails and Clefairy/Clefable. The Normal-type Pokémon in this grouping aren't necessarily all that useful, but Vulpix/Ninetails is an excellent Fire-type addition.

37 continue screen

Editor-in-chief Lyndsey Hicks talks about her life and growing up with a fascination with the Far East. It may not have been just Japan (China was thrown in there, too), but because most video games came from there in the '80s and '90s, you can guess why she learned to love the area.



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## GI REVIEW POLICY

Scale is from 1 to 5 as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

# Wishing for a way to the Land of the Rising Sun

It's been a longtime dream of mine to visit Japan and China, and maybe one day I will get there. For now, though, playing games of yore and sampling Americanized versions of the cuisine will have to suffice. Believe me when I tell you that living on a journalist's salary means traveling abroad is a pipe dream of the Mario Bros. variety.



Lyndsey Hicks  
**CRY OF WAR**

One day, maybe I'll be able to watch sumo wrestling matches live. One day, maybe I'll take a trip to Mount Fuji.

One day, maybe I'll be able to go to a real Japanese festival. One day, I might be able to go shopping at Comiket or Akihabara to commune with my fellow otaku.

And maybe one day I'll be able to visit Hong Kong and the Guandong Province that I've learned so much about.

I say one day for all of those things because I'm no closer to the nations now than I was five years ago when I first came up with the plan to save my money and travel.

For now, I appreciate from afar, as any good otaku can do, and I realize that the quickest way to get there from here is to read, learn the history of the region, fumble my way through dinner with chopsticks and enjoy the Americanized versions of the cuisine. And play games that I love from the area.

So, this quarter, I'm willing to go on the record about my love for the region of the world that drew me in as a preteen, despite having never been.

We're exploring unique games and anime, talking about our favorite

“ One day, maybe, this column will be written from the best seats in the house of a national sumo tournament. Maybe one day, I'll take the trip of my dreams. ”

samurai and even taking a mini-trip to a few of the restaurants I've traipsed into over the years in search of a good meal.

One day, maybe, this column will be written from the best seats in the house of a national sumo tournament. Maybe one day, I'll take the trip of my dreams.

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

## Katamari rolls in musical form

Katamari Damacy, while strange in its premise, rocks in the sound department. It's not in the same category as its Namco brethren Tekken or Soul Calibur, but it's still a phenomenal soundtrack. It's got energy and polish that, if you didn't know it was from a video game, makes you think it's a Grammy nominee of some sort.

These are my favorite tracks that I like to listen to while rolling up the world around the Prince of All Cosmos.

**Que Sera Sera** — The singer on the track makes this song. It's interesting and fun, and if you listen to the lyrics, they make perfect sense. The jazz and lounge influence also make the song one of the best on the soundtrack. The choice of instruments also makes sense and creates nice pacing.

**Angel's Flavor Present** — This turned out to be one of my favorite



Lyndsey Hicks  
**BEAT.TRIP.GAME**

tracks after a few listens. It's eclectic and innovative in its use of voice, beeps and other sound effects. And, actually, it sounds like it could easily be used in a Tekken game and it'd be right at home.

My favorite part of the song comes after the mid-break down. The drums used are really cool and invoke a 1980s flavor.

**Katamari Stars** — The song used during the section of the game used to look at the different constella-

tions created was one of my favorites immediately. I love the R&B feel to it, and I tend to think of real stars when hearing it now.

The beat is solid and the use of real violins makes it seem like a very heartfelt song.

**Nanananan Katamari** — A very plain introduction to the game, it works on every level.

What makes the song work is the placement. It's on the start screen and when the King of All Cosmos is introduced.

One would think that a grandiose song would need to be used to introduce a character such as the King, but that's not necessarily so and it works here.

I also love the harmony achieved in mixing the main refrain at different octaves.

*Lyndsey Hicks is editor-in-chief of Gaming Insurrection*



By LYNDSEY HICKS

There's an adage you need to know when you think about video games, especially those of the retro persuasion. It goes something like, "To know your past is to know your present and future." As it relates to video games, Western developers had to understand this statement when it came to conquering the video game market, but while they were figuring it out, a lot of quirky and great games came out of Japan. While some that we're highlighting are famous, there are some that flew under a lot of folks' radar when released. All in our spotlight, however, are titles that should be played at least once. And don't let the sometimes-weird humor fool you; sometimes, it's the more strange titles that you can have the most fun with.

When you see this symbol throughout the rest of the issue, it means it's part of our Japan coverage!



# The Japan issue

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# The Dancing Revolution



## DANCE DANCE REVOLUTION 1ST MIX

The music game craze kicked off in Japan in 1998 with the first mix of Dance Dance Revolution and peaked in the United States around 2004. At that point, eight main mixes had been released and at least 300 songs stepped to on four dance panels in the shape of arrows. We'd heard of DDR about 2001, so the first mix was special in that these songs were now considered antiquated. The origin of Trip Machine and Paranoia was popular but really only increased the thirst for knowledge since the next four mixes until Max and Max 2 were never released in America. Protip: Butterfly is one of the most annoying early DDR songs but it's a song that lets you know you've arrived when you can AAA it on the Heavy difficulty and you've completed your first Butterfly turn.



## DANCE DANCE REVOLUTION 2ND MIX

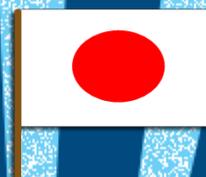
The follow-up to the massively popular 1st mix of DDR wasn't too bad in terms of giving more songs to dance to for your buck. Still an import-only buy, 2nd mix is known for its newly lengthened song list and attempt to add more "danceable" tracks to the game. So, you get things like "Tubthumping," which was popular around that time. Despite 2nd mix's penchant for lengthening the song list, it did a lot of good things. It managed to get two new Paranoias in through the Link and Home versions, a new Trip Machine was created and classics such as Brilliant 2U and Brilliant 2U Orchestra Groove were introduced. Also, the artist known as 2MB began his contributions to balance out sound director Naoki Maeda, so not all was necessarily lost.



## DANCE DANCE REVOLUTION 3RD MIX

If you're going to stick with the first three mixes of DDR, skip right ahead to this mix or better yet its update, 3rd Mix Plus. Captain Jack, one of the best DDR artists in the first seven mixes, makes its official debut appearance here with Captain Jack (Grandale Remix), In the Navy '99 (XXL Disaster Remix) and The Race. That would spell great things for the DDR mixes, but the song list is actually pretty good and there's a lot of danceable tracks. The song list was up to nearly 90 songs and better Konami originals were being added. In this version, Naoki isn't relying so hard on remixes and aliases, though there isn't a new Paranoia mix (officially). However, of the original three mixes, this is the one to try if you want the pure old-school experience that was DDR before the advent of speed mods and when footer labels still meant something.

# Fighting game prospects



## SAMURAI SHODOWN

It doesn't really matter if you've played Street Fighter your entire gaming life. It doesn't matter if you don't know anything about Japanese history. If you've got a pulse and can appreciate aesthetic perfection, you can learn to love the Samurai Shodown experience. Despite some pretty heavy censoring in North America, the SS series is still one of the most gorgeous fighting games to come out of Japan. Even with tiny SNES graphics, the series still managed to look beautiful and the soundtrack is fantastic. The character designs are interesting and the story is convoluted yet understandable. The first game set the tone for deviation from the Street Fighter formula and is one of the better fighting games from 20 years ago that should be played today in its older forms as well as its newer incarnations (one of which we review later in this issue, Samurai Spirits Tenkaichi Kenkakuden). It's even better if you buy the translated Samurai Shodown Anthology, which features all of the main games in the series.

## STREET FIGHTER II

The legendary fighting game series has its roots in Japan, though it's worldwide after several spinoff series and main entries that introduced the general population to Ryu and Ken. But surprisingly, for a game that is so homebound to Japan, there are few strictly Japanese characters in the SFII series of games. You have the aforementioned dragon punch crew, E. Honda, Akuma and ... that's about it, really. But it's a truly Japanese game that has influenced other fighting games with its mere existence. Nearly every fighting game thereafter owes something to the godfather of fighting games. Whether it's the creation of a versus fighting system, combining character themes with a fleshed out storyline for each character or even in the fact that character attributes shown during the attract mode include birthdays and blood types, two important aspects of compatibility in Japanese culture. Say what you will about modern fighting games being extremely cookie-cutter but SFII was responsible, good or bad, for the emergence of the genre in the minds of the public.



# Platforming prowess



## OKAMI

Capcom subsidiary Clover Studio knew how to churn out interesting games that could be hits. Before their demise, they managed to bring two titles over that became classics in their own rights, establishing them for the better once they became Platinum Games. The first was Viewtiful Joe. The other was Okami. Everything about the game is beautiful, and the aesthetic nature of the game (using a paintbrush to complete actions for protagonist Amaterasu) makes it a joy to play. Throw in the fact that it incorporates several Japanese myths and legends of folklore and you've got a game that not only looks and sounds beautiful (the soundtrack is epic), but also teaches in the process. The game apparently didn't sell well, but that's a shame because it's got everything going for it.



## MYSTICAL NINJA STARRING GOEMON

If there's anything on this list that's considered weird, Mystical Ninja Starring Goemon would probably be in a strong fight for the top spot based on its premise and execution alone. The basic plot involves giant mecha robot battles in outer space at one point, a group called the Peach Mountain Shoguns and a wise old man who invents robots and collects pornographic magazines. And, if that weren't enough to entice you, it's all set during the Edo time period (pre-1868 for the uneducated in Japanese history). Easily, the storyline is the draw because you want to see just how weird it can get, but stay for the awesome soundtrack and the party favors in the form of the Super Mario 64-like gameplay.



# The oddball and the fighter



## KATAMARI DAMACY

So, you know how we said *Mystical Ninja Starring Goemon* would be battling for the top spot on the weird chart of games we're looking at this quarter? Well, *Katamari Damacy* would be its opponent and it might just win handily. *Katamari* is, quite frankly, the strangest game most of us at GI have ever encountered. The King of All Cosmos is a drunkard who managed to screw up the constellations and requests that his son, the Prince of All Cosmos, fix his problem. How does he do that? Well, he's sent to Earth to collect different objects to stick to a katamari — which is a magical adhesive ball that grows larger with more objects stuck to it — which he will then launch in the sky. The absurdity of the plot is pretty much the draw of the game, though the gameplay is easy to get into and the soundtrack is, hands down, one of the best in the games industry.



## RIVAL SCHOOLS

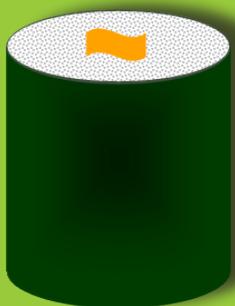
At first glance, you'd be OK in thinking that *Rival Schools* is just a *Street Fighter* knockoff. But, actually, Capcom managed to find a way to turn the *Project Justice* series into something more than that. By infusing it with its own sense of style and system, Capcom created a series that can stand on its own merits of play and be worthwhile. *Rival Schools*, which is the first game in the series, wasn't an instant classic. It takes a little getting used to understanding the combo system, how *Tardy Counters* work, the rock-paper-scissors aspect of the game mechanics and even the storyline and characters. But once you've got the hang of how schools fighting each other because of misunderstandings and confusion, you've got *Rival Schools* down pat. The story is a bit convoluted and the graphics are very early PlayStation 3D blocky models, but it still manages to be fun and still look a little interesting on looks alone. It's very Japanese school-centric so if you're into that sort of thing, you like Capcom's fighting style and can appreciate an announcer who yells "Touchdown" after a round, you'll probably dig *Rival Schools*.



# food roadtrip!

## THAT GI CREW SURE IS A HUNGRY BUNCH ...

We at Gaming Insurrection love to eat. It's a well-known fact that members of GI are either good cooks or are willing to try multiple places in search of a good meal. We also love Asian cuisine. So, if we can't make it ourselves, we'll go out and try it so that you don't have to. If you're ever in the central parts of South Carolina and North Carolina, try these places at least once for yourself.



## HONG KONG — BURLINGTON, N.C.

One of our favorite Chinese food establishments, Hong Kong has extremely fresh food and is quick for takeout. The food is extremely good but is a bit pricey. The lo mein is great and the rice is flavorful. The teriyaki chicken is extremely good, too.

## RED BOWL — COLUMBIA, S.C./ BURLINGTON, N.C.

By now, it seems like everybody who likes Asian cuisine has been to Red Bowl at least once. If you haven't, you're not really missing much, to be honest. It's got the standard fare of Japanese dishes like sushi and Chinese dishes such as fried rice and sesame chicken. It is the first place that Lyndsey ever tried sushi, so it has something special going for it. The food is OK, but nothing special to call home about.

## SEASONS BUFFET — BURLINGTON, N.C.

We tried Seasons Buffet in December 2011, and it wasn't that great. The sushi was OK, despite not being all that fresh, and the quality of the fried rice was marginal. The eggrolls were overly greasy and the Wonton soup was extremely salty.

## SATO JAPANESE STEAK- HOUSE — COLUMBIA, S.C.

Sato is a longtime Japanese steakhouse in Columbia, and it's pretty much got the market cornered on the Southeast side of town. It's the usual Japanese steakhouse experience, and it's quite pricey. However, you do get a lot of food for your money.



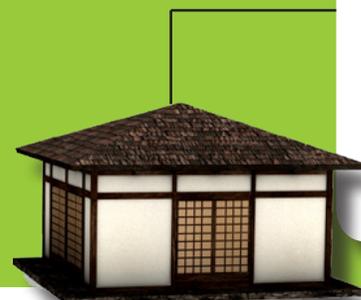
## LITTLE CHINA BUFFET — COLUMBIA, S.C.

A longtime favorite, Little China recently reopened. The food was OK, but it will be a while before it reaches the height it previously occupied. The food was marginal at best and there were very few items to try on the buffet. However, you can still get takeout.

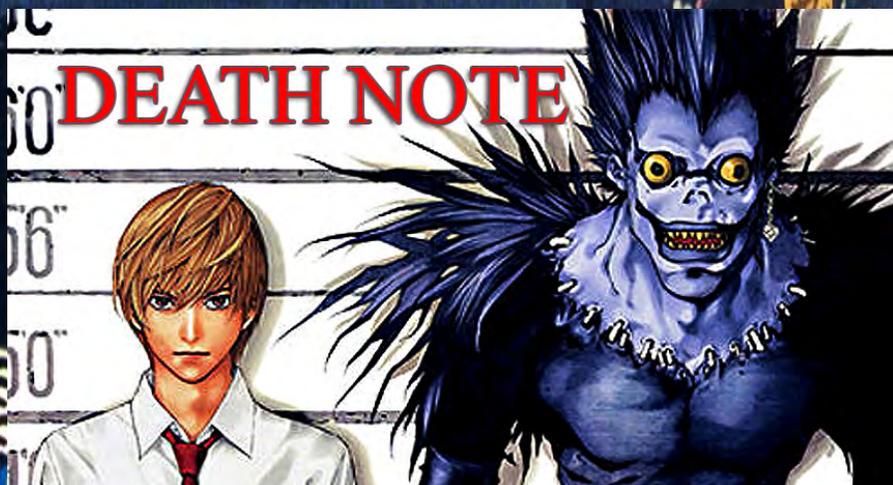


## MENKOI RAMEN HOUSE — COLUMBIA, S.C.

A new place to go in Columbia (it opened sometime in 2012), Menkoi offers real ramen and it's open late. The food is cheap but filling. The soups are hearty and flavored just right without too much sodium.



# Manga and anime



## DEATH NOTE

There's death and then there's Death Note. Some call it overrated and others say it's one of the best manga/anime ever created. At GI, we tend to err on the side of best ever. There's something about the machinations of human shinigami Light Yagami that we can't understand but makes him fascinating to watch and re-watch. Everything about the series is high-quality, from the story to the visuals and the music choices. But what's fascinating about Death Note is trying to figure out just where Light will go just when you believe he's been cornered. The twists and turns and obvious corruption of Light is, quite frankly, the draw of the series. And once Light's been cornered for the final time, you kind of feel sorry for him. Well, just slightly. He is, after all, a murderer who had no remorse and would have killed his own family if not for the chance of suspicion immediately falling upon him. But, that's how you know something is well-written, and Death Note is that a million times over.



## RUROUNI KENSHIN

If you care anything about samurai, you should have at least watched Rurouni Kenshin at some point in your anime-watching career. Kenshin is pretty good, and the characters are so likable that you come to love them after about 10 episodes. The main draw is the eventual love story between Kenshin Himura and Kaoru Kamiya. Well, and the fact that Kenshin has to redeem himself from his time as the hitokiri battousai. Wandering samurai attempting to redeem themselves during the Warring States period is enjoyable, and the long-running anime (95 episodes!) is a favorite because it's well done in just about every sense.



## SOUL EATER

The most interesting thing that can be said about Soul Eater is the premise: Weapon meister Maka Albarn is the daughter of a death scythe and attends a school called Death Weapon Meister Academy. She trains to forge her weapon partner, Soul Evans, into a death scythe and together, they go on missions to capture souls. Now, that's a basic description of the series, but what we love the most about Soul Eater is the fact that it's fun. It's a lot of fun to watch Maka and Soul interact and grow together as well how the pair interact with their friends. The concept of an academy devoted to what amounts to training to become a shinigami is also pretty interesting. It's also one of the few English dubs that's done incredibly well, by the always capable Funimation. We picked it up in 2009 during a trip to NashiCon and we haven't dropped it since. It's 51 episodes and it's a blast from the beginning to the end.

# Manga and anime



## KARESHI KANOJO NO JIJO (HIS AND HER CIRCUMSTANCES)

When Kare Kano first hit the market in 1996 in manga form, most of GI were but wee ones in high school. How apropos that a series focus on one of the most stressful times in a teenager's life and we fall in love with that series. Kare Kano depicts the lives of two teenagers, Yukino Miyazawa and Soichiro Arima, how they meet, fall in love and grow together. It's typical shojo manga fare, but it's incredibly well done. The anime version is pretty good up until halfway through (episode 14) when the original director, Hideaki Anno, leaves. After that, there's a couple of recap episodes with a little new material but not much. Despite that, and the fact that the anime ends prematurely, the series is still fun.



## BLEACH

One of the most divisive anime on our list is Bleach. If you don't know the story of Bleach by now, here's a short recap: Ichigo Kurosaki receives Soul Reaper powers accidentally, or on purpose depending how you look at the situation. Upon losing them and watching his newfound friend Rukia Kuchiki be returned to the Soul Society by force, he decides to go get her. He's joined by his friends Orihime Inoue, Yasutora "Chad" Sado and Uryū Ishida with a little help getting in from Soul Society exiles Yoruichi Shihōin and Kisuke Urahara. Because Bleach lasts for 366 episodes, that's just a small description of the first 20 episodes or the Substitute Shinigame arc. But despite Bleach's penchant for filler arcs and dragging out fights a la Dragon Ball Z, it's a fairly solid shonen anime that's partially responsible for further popularizing anime in the United States. Sure, you can probably find better-paced work out there, but the key to watching (and reading) Bleach, it turns out, is knowing what to mess with and what to skip.

# Manga and anime



## COWBOY BEBOP

Like Death Note, there are a few anime that come along that change your perspective about just what it is you're watching. If you're like most Americans, Dragon Ball Z, Trigun, Tenchi Muyo, Cowboy Bebop, Sailor Moon and Big O were probably among your first experiences with anime, thanks to Cartoon Network running and re-running the hell out of those shows in the late part of the '90s and early 2000s. Out of that group, Cowboy Bebop seemed to have the most appeal. And, upon further viewings, GI has determined that it should be among your definite to-own properties. Let's be straight up from the beginning: The soundtrack by Yoko Konno is one of the best ever created in anime. Even if you aren't a fan of jazz, it's still one of the best listening experiences created for animation. Jazz seems to go very well with the exploits of Spike, Fay, Jet and Ed. And those characters we just mentioned? You're going to care about them by the end of the story. And the final battle? We won't spoil it, but let's just say you're going to care about the outcome of that, too. See you, space cowboy.

An illustration from the anime N.H.K. showing a young man in a brown coat and a young woman in a white dress standing together against a purple and blue sky with a cityscape in the background.

## Welcome to the N.H.K.

### WELCOME TO THE N.H.K.

An anime about a guy who's paranoid and stays in his house all day? Sign us up. Actually, N.H.K. is extremely good. It's a typical 26-episode show, but that's where everything normal ends. The premise involves a guy named Sato Tatsuhiro who is a hikikomori. Now, you'd be likely to ask next: What's a hikikomori? But more on that in a minute. Tatsuhiro is addicted to anime and manga but NEVER leaves the house. Getting him out the door takes practically an act of God. So, the fact that he meets a young girl, Nakahara Misaki, and begins interacting with her is miraculous. This is, however, where the hikikomori part comes in. Tatsuhiro believes in conspiracy theories as he was indoctrinated by his sempai in high school. He later comes to believe that the Nippon Hoso Kyokai, a main Japanese broadcaster, is setting him up to fail by brainwashing him into becoming a hikikomori. In essence, the hikikomori don't do much all day and their existence is a fragile and suicidal condition. So, basically, the entire series revolves around whether Tatsuhiro can fix his problems and how his neighbor and friend Kaoru Yamazaki and Misaki play into his change. Oh, and the dancing character that represents the N.H.K. is adorable.

A close-up illustration of a character with black hair, wearing a black hooded jacket and dark sunglasses. The character has a serious expression.

## NASHICON 2013!

Columbia, S.C.'s premiere anime convention is happening April 13 and 14, and we're going to be there. Taking place at the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center, NashiCon will have a multitude of events including panels, cosplay contests and a formal ball. Visit [nashicon.com](http://nashicon.com) for more information and look for our coverage online at [gaminginsurrection.com](http://gaminginsurrection.com)

**GAME OF THE QUARTER**

**ASSASSIN'S CREED 3**

A fantastic history lesson with a few hiccups, the Revolutionary era is a fitting end to the saga of Desmond Miles, **PAGE 14**

I never took you for a coward, Edward

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**INSIDE**



Fatal Frame 1-3

Want something to scare the beejesus out of you? Do it with a creepy camera-focused series like Fatal Frame. 15, 16



Katamari Damacy

If you look up weird in the dictionary, the King of All Cosmos would be throwing a welcome home party for Katamari Damacy. 17



Call of Duty: Black Ops 2

The future is now. Well, that is according to Black Ops2. And don't forget the time jumps from Cold War to 2025. Man, that's a jump. 18



DDR Extreme (JP)

If you want the pinnacle of DDR and we're talking the best of the best, play the Japanese version of Extreme. 19



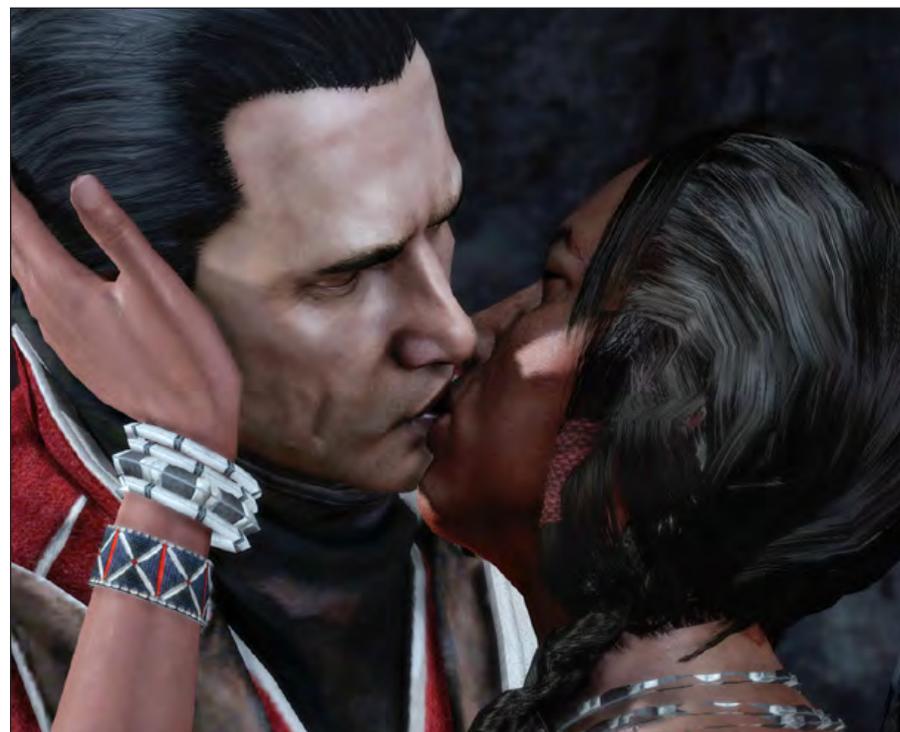
Samurai Shodown 6

Haohmaru is the man. Why? Because he's never lost a duel, except for that time in Capcom vs. SNK. But he makes up for it here. 20



Photos by Daniel Gibbs/Gaming Insurrection

I never took you for a coward, Edward.



Developer: Ubisoft Montreal, Release: 2012

## ASSASSIN'S CREED III

# A time of revolution and rebellion create new creed

By DANIEL GIBBS  
GAMING INSURRECTION

Desmond Miles just can't catch a break. After running away from home at the age of 16 to escape the life of an assassin, he went off the grid. Living by cash and an assumed name, he thought he was on his way to living his own life.

He was wrong.

Our protagonist was found working at the bar Bad Weather and was abducted by the Abstergo Corp. Via the Animus, Desmond was forced to relive the past memories of his ancestors, with the purpose of providing information that could mean the difference between the life and death of the entire human race.

Escaping from the corporation, Desmond eventually reaches the Central Vault, which holds the key to everything. As time grows short, Desmond steps into the shoes of another ancestor in order to save the world.

**SCORE:  
3.5 OUT  
OF 5**

Desmond shifts into the life of Haytham Kenway in the year 1753, on his way to assassinate his next target. After a small chat to confirm who he is after, he makes his way through an opera house and to its upper-level viewing boxes. Taking a seat behind his intended victim, Haytham stabs him in the back with a hidden knife and relieves him of a jewel on his chest.

Once he makes his way through the crowd and escapes our assassin is shown in a clandestine meeting during which he is ordered to go to America to find a hidden storehouse built in the distant past. Departing for Boston aboard the merchant ship Providence, Kenway begins his search.

Quite a mouthful, isn't it? And the best part is that's only about the first 20 minutes of the game.

The appeal of Assassin's Creed 3 lies in its very title. In order to complete your required objectives, you will have to kill people. A LOT of people. But unlike your Call of Dutys and Devil May Crys, a straight-forward approach to combat will probably get you killed. Like Tenchu: Stealth Assassins before it, you must make use of surprise, silence and shadow.

No silent killer is complete without an arsenal of knives, swords and pistols (because sometimes even the best silent killer is discovered). In addition to the tools of your trade, you have a variety of acrobatic skills that will have you moving around like a parkour runner one moment and blending into a crowd to escape pursuit the next.

Another interesting detail to remember is that like past entries in the series, AC3 takes place in a real era of history. This time around, the game is set in the 13 colonies that eventually made up the United States of America. In fact, some of the missions of the game will require you to cross paths with some key figures in American history.

But sometimes, the chase doesn't always go as planned. For as great as the game is, there were times when things seemed to not go right. For example, in an early portion

of the game you have to chase a man down, with both of you on horseback, on the condition that you fail if he gets too far ahead. The first time I played, it went fine but on a replay of that mission, the target kept starting so far ahead of me that as soon as the chase started, I was getting the warning he was getting too far away.

Also with the name of the game being watch and wait and take out people in creative but stealthy ways, I would run into obstacles that I think should not exist. Case in point: I was trying to sneak up on a guy to knock him out and take his clothes for a disguise. However, if you move 10 feet in the wrong direction, you get a warning that you're going into a restricted area. It seems like the developers chose to put in arbitrary borders and limitations to keep players from thinking too far outside of the box.

### LET IT SLIP AWAY IN THE CROWD OR HUNT IT DOWN?

With this being my first foray into the Assassin's Creed franchise, let me just say that I intend to go back and pick up the earlier titles in the series so that I can see the full story. As a first timer, I was taken in by the visuals, the story is interesting, and the history buff in me really enjoyed playing a role in a defining moment in America's past. Learning a new play style was a bit tricky but not impossible.

Not only is the main game pretty captivating but the downloadable content has some intriguing offerings as well. For example, one DLC pack actually poses the scenario, "What if, after the American Revolution, instead of establishing a democracy, George Washington had set up a monarchy and declared himself king?"

Even with the mystery borders (nothing in front of me but I can't walk) and glitchy performances, I recommend it. This is a title you should not let slip away.





Photos courtesy of GameSpot.com



Developer: Tecmo/Grasshopper Man., Release: 2001

## FATAL FRAME

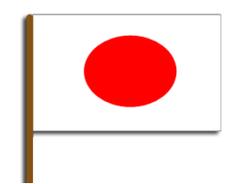
# Tecmo's survival horror in a flash

By **WILLIAM HARRISON**  
GAMING INSURRECTION

Hello there, and welcome to part of my three-part Spooky Game Review Extravaaaaaaaaaganza! Now, a lot of you may have heard of this game and a few may have even played it, but this game holds special meaning for me as this is honestly one of those game to not play alone in the dark. I say that and lots of people will say 'no, this can't possibly be true,' but I assure you that I am not crazy... well, I am crazy but that has nothing to do with this. The entire Fatal Frame series is one of those games that comes along once in a while that makes you rethink survival horror and what it really means to frighten the living hell out of the player.

Fatal Frame sends you into a mysterious Hirumo Mansion, which people believe is haunted and once you go in, you don't come back. So when Miku travels to the mansion in search of any trace of her missing brother,

**SCORE:  
4.5 OUT  
OF 5**



the only thing she finds is his favorite camera discarded on the floor. This is where all of the fun starts. The game mechanics center on some of the familiar ones as far as movement, but a lot of the uniqueness comes from the idea of a camera system that is used as your main weapon. I really commend Tecmo for their ability to integrate folklore as a means for you to see and fend off the ghosts, as well. They put a lot of detail into the camera and how it works. There is even a focus feature that builds; the more it builds up, the more damage it does. The type of the film it takes can cause even more damage as well as save pictures.

Now it's time to talk about the scare factor, and I'm going actually give this series its own rating system. Consider that the game comes a warning on the back that says — and I'm not making this stuff up — “Do not



play this game in complete darkness.” I thought it was a joke. About 20 minutes in my lights were on because every little noise freaked me out. I don't scare that easily but I love this game and the entire series. So, for my rating as a overall game, it gets high marks with a little detraction, only because the warning takes a little away from scariness. The scare factor, however, is 10 out of 10. I recommend this to everyone not scared of the things that go bump in the night.



Photo courtesy of GameSpot.com

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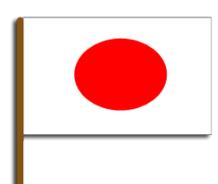
Developer: Tecmo/Grasshopper Manufacturing, Release: 2003

## FATAL FRAME II: CRIMSON BUTTERFLY

# Photographing spookiness captured

By **WILLIAM HARRISON**  
GAMING INSURRECTION

Welcome to part two of my Spook-tacular Extravaaaaaaaaaganza. So, I can't really blame myself for doing all three games in roughly a week's time. If I seem a bit quirker than usual ... hell was that noise ... it is because I only have myself to blame because as you know by now ... I'm nucking futz. So, eventually scaring myself into a coma



should be nothing new to anyone. Like I said, the Fatal Frame games all come with warnings to not play alone in the pitch-black dark, but who listens to warnings anyway unless it requires looking up the cure in an MSDS (look it up).

FFII: Crimson Butterfly takes place in an abandoned village that a pair of twins Mio and Mayu stumble upon while out playing. They begin to see crimson butterflies appear then disappear, leading them on a trail. Mayu is suddenly drawn by the butterflies and begins to chase after them.

Mio begins to go after her and loses sight of her, but then they appear again in front her so she follows her to the village. Here, she finds her sister entranced by the butterflies and then by what looks like a spirit in a ceremonial robe guiding Mayu to her and blocking Mio from passing. As she begins to look around the village for any sign of either of

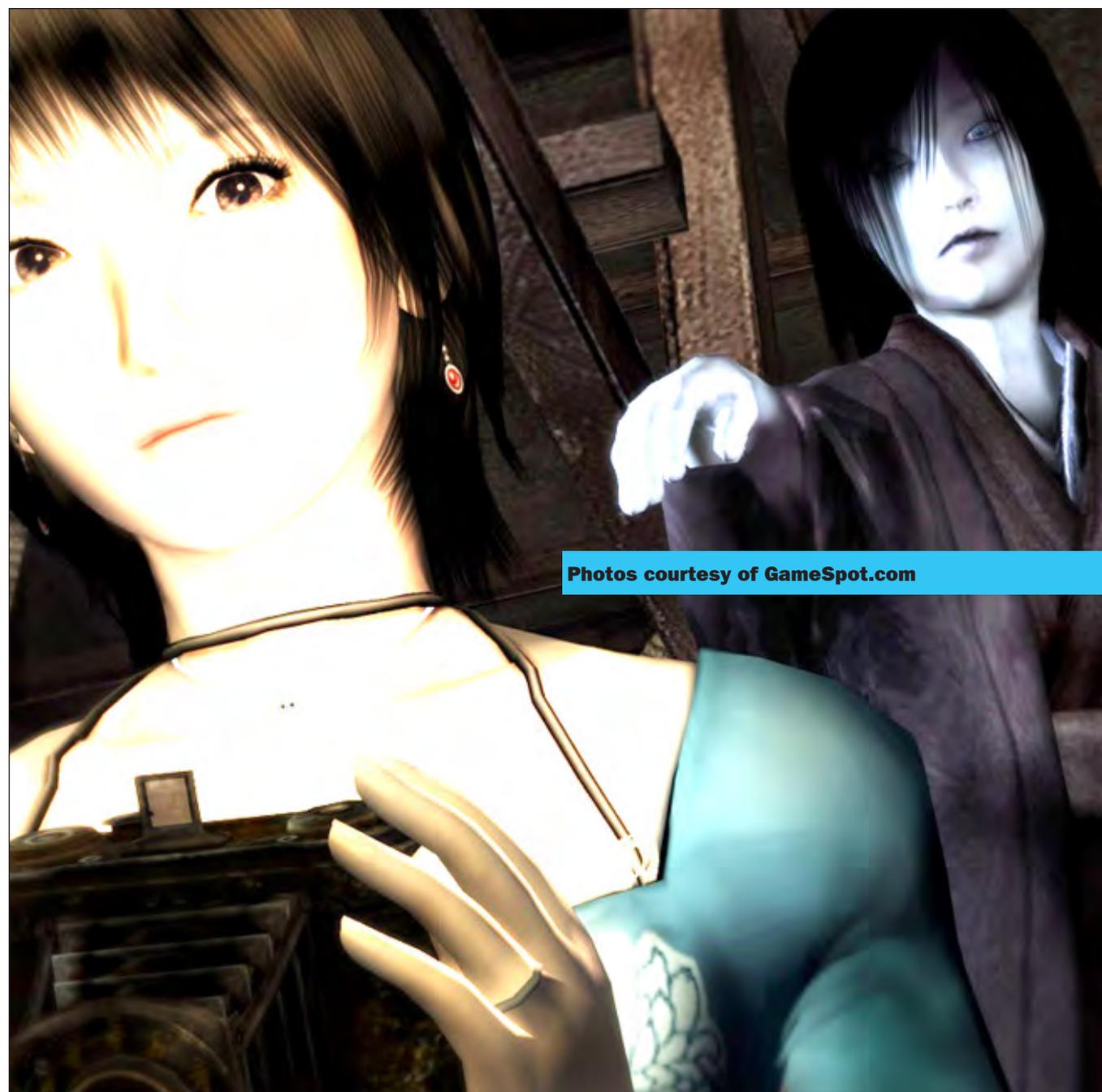
“ ... it's a whole lot of eye candy and extra modes that don't really do much but give you other ways of scaring the T-total hell out of yourself.”

them, she stumbles upon a mysterious camera.

This has got to be one of my favorite games in the series. Tecmo improves on the controls and the characters movements, as well. It is such a fun game, and once again, genuinely scary even in a fully-lit room. The movements are sharpened when controlling Mio, and the camera controls have been sharpened, as well. They literally pull out all the stops, and the camera works great as a way to scare you once you switch to it. The first-person view it gives adds to the scare factor. Speaking of scare factor it gets 10 out of 10. The game has been remade for the OG Xbox, a “Director's Cut,” if you will.

The remade version came with a lot of extras like enhanced graphics, a new ending and a few more things. It's a whole lot of eye candy and extra modes that don't really do much but give you other ways of scaring the T-total hell out of yourself. I mean, sure, first-person mode sounds like a lot fun, but who really wants to take that kind of challenge? What? Why are you guys looking at me ...

**SCORE:  
4.5 OUT  
OF 5**



Photos courtesy of GameSpot.com



**Developer:** Tecmo/Grasshopper Manufacturing, **Release:** 2005

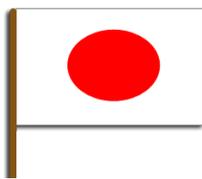
## FATAL FRAME III: THE TORMENTED

### Saving the scariest near the end

By **WILLIAM HARRISON**  
GAMING INSURRECTION

I was wondering how the Fatal Frame series could improve and get anymore frightening. Apparently, it's by adding tortured souls and stuff along the lines of demons to the mix. Not scary enough you say? Well, how about a dream state that allows you to switch between two other characters that experience what main character Rei does ... that's what I thought. The camera obscura makes its grand return for this last installment of the Fatal Frame series released in America for the PlayStation 2. The game introduces a new character, Rei, who is tormented by her dreams for years and then one day begins to see the apparitions appearing in real life.

Rei starts to believe that she is going crazy but two of her friends begin to share her visions. The interesting and yet funny thing is that Tecmo gave up on the warning that usually appears on the back of the CD case. That's odd because there are times when the horror factor is turned all the way to 11 and stays there until it decides that you've had enough ... sort of. Tecmo revamped the graphics and several of the game mechanics so that your controls are a lot more crisp and touched up the camera controls as well so you can immerse yourself in the atmosphere and relieve yourself



of urine and other bodily functions when it decides it's got you right where it wants you. I'm going to end

this one a little bit early and say this because I have to sum up the whole series in this, The Final Word.

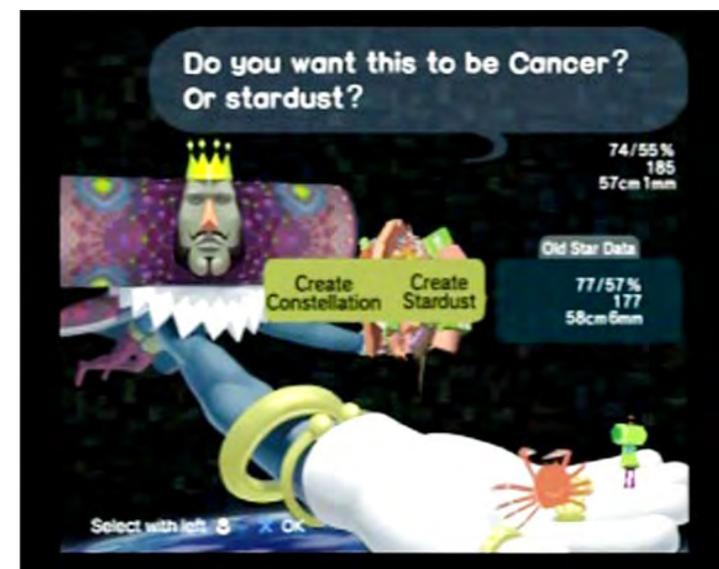
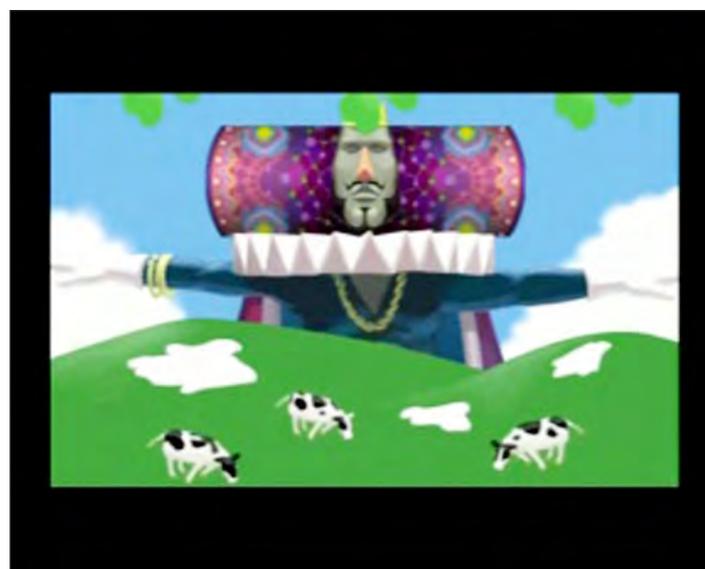
While the survival horror genre of games originally started with Zork and then was restarted with games like the Resident Evil series, none of them have really offered that much of a genuine scare factor as the Fatal Frame series. Sure, Resident Evil (biohazard in Japan ... much better name, too) revamped it with the zombies and the jump-out-at-you scare tactics that made more than its fair share of people scream

"Oh frack." The release of Dino Crisis did the same thing, but the atmosphere of the sequels in some cases was just off-putting and lost its horror feel.

The Fatal Frame series did none of that and plays on the human fears that we all have and can relate to. This is especially true in the places that seem to make the atmosphere really work with what Tecmo is trying to do. From the creepy mansion to dream state, the Fatal Frame series took a genre and breathed life back into and stopped when they reached the top of what they felt did what they were looking for.

I and my bladder thank you. My scare factor stays at 10 out of 10.

**SCORE:  
4.5 OUT  
OF 5**



**Developer:** Namco Bandai, **Release:** 2004

## KATAMARI DAMACY

# Roll up a classic title featuring the King of All Cosmos

**BY LYNDSEY HICKS**  
GAMING INSURRECTION

There's weird games and then there's Katamari Damacy.

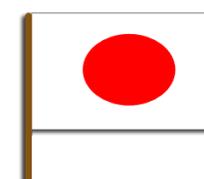
Let's just get this out the way, shall we? There's nothing wrong with playing Katamari Damacy. In fact, your gaming career as it stands is probably better because you bothered to play it. It's that level of fantastic and strange, wrapped up in a nonsensical story that makes the game better immediately.

We'll start with the story, probably the strangest part of the game out of the Olympic-sized pool of weird. The King of All Cosmos is a drunk and a neglectful father to his son, the Prince of All Cosmos. The diminutive young prince is tasked with fixing his colossal father's colossal screw up after the King spends a night of drunken carousing that manages to destroy the stars in the sky. So, that's where you come in: As the prince, you roll up a magic ball, a katamari, that gets larger with the more things that are attached. The more things attached, the more objects that can

be attracted to the ball. The King basically gives you a time limit "in which he can believe in you" to get the job done by reaching a certain size for the katamari. There's not much more to the story other than children in the real world start to notice the prince's activities. It's interesting and funny to watch the prince struggle to measure up to his father's expectations even though it's just one more sad indication of the King of All Cosmos' terrible parental tendencies.

Once you get past the story, there's some interesting gameplay involved here. Moving the katamari around can be a beast, and if you don't know just what can be picked up, there's a lot of trial and error involved. It's OK, in that I expect the katamari to be hard to use. However, the camera angles are what make this a difficult trial from time to time, and that's annoying. Also, when there's off-screen bumping from objects that move around, it's more than a little obnoxious to be bumped and have to pick up objects that have been thrown all over.

And though I struggled at times with the controls, once I got the hang of those, I was able to take time to notice the world of Kata-



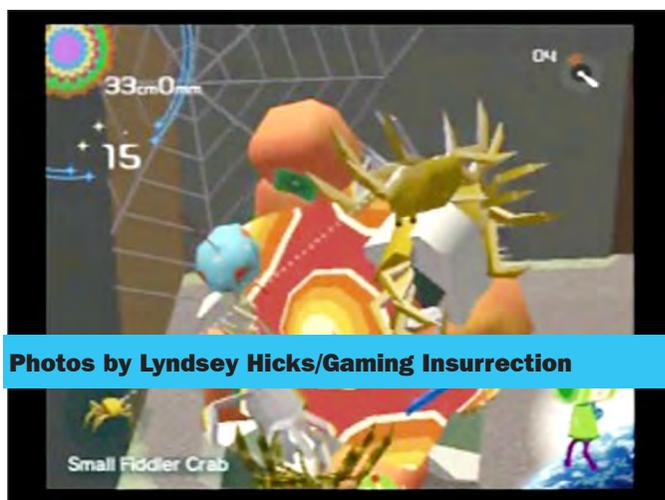
mari. This, folks, is one of the most uniquely created games I've ever played. Everything about the game screams creative art style and décor de-

spite being slightly blocky models.

But that blockiness doesn't detract from the overall aesthetics, and it's a joy to actually wander around in the game and experience the creativity at work. And the best part of that creativity is actually the soundtrack. Katamari's soundtrack virtually makes the experience all by itself. It's one of those rare soundtracks that you could listen to outside of playing the game that makes you want to stop what you're doing, pick up a controller and play the game right then and there. The sound is an eclectic mix of rock, jazz, R&B, pop and lounge that works on every level. There's something for everyone, and it's one of the best albums put together for a game.

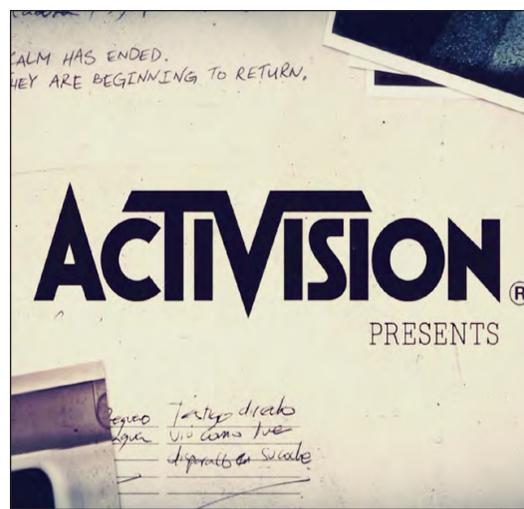
Playing Katamari is, at best, a highly unique experience. You're either going to get it and enjoy it, or maybe it's not for you and you don't see what the fuss was all about. I'm suggesting trying it and let the weirdness that will probably ensue roll off your shoulders.

**SCORE:  
4.5 OUT  
OF 5**



Photos by Lyndsey Hicks/Gaming Insurrection





**Developer:** Treyarch, **Release:** 2012

## CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS 2

# The future is just a headshot away

**By DANIEL GIBBS**  
GAMING INSURRECTION

The year is 2025. David Mason, son of Call of Duty: Black Ops main protagonist Alex Mason, and his U.S. Special Forces unit arrive at the location of Frank Woods, believing the aging veteran has information pertaining to Raul Menendez. While the world knows him as the leader of the populist movement Cordis Die, he is a suspected terrorist with plans to turn the world's super powers against each other.

Following up on the 2010 hit, this sequel continues the spinoff franchise filled with plot twists, betrayals and high stakes.

You can tell that the folks at Treyarch aimed to go for the gold. Did they achieve it?

In the first Black Ops, you were pretty much limited to whatever weapons you were given at the time.

This time around, however, we are introduced to a load out system that allows you to choose a custom set of gear to start each mission. Initially, you start off with only a few weapons but as you finish stages and complete objectives, you will eventually have quite the virtual arsenal to pick from. And what an arsenal it is.

Not only are you using a wide range of guns and grenades, but you also have the ability — if you equip yourself right — to hack flying drones and use therm-optic camouflage (in the 2025, missions of course). In addition, you also have a few opportunities to pilot vehicles. Did I mention that in one of the first missions of the game you get to jump off a cliff and do some really fun gliding?

As per the established norm for first-person shooters, Black Ops 2

does have multiplayer aspects. Online matches range from basic team vs. team death matches to capture the flag to terrorist vs. counter-terrorist modes. And, not only has the Zombies mode returned from the previous Black Ops, but also it has been fleshed out quite a bit.

But I think the greatest improvement that David has over his dad's adventure is what they've done with the single-player campaign.

With a lot of the shooters that have been released in the last several years (and I'm also talking about you, Modern Warfare) when it comes to single-player campaigns, the experience

is usually lackluster or fleeting while the real effort is put into multiplayer. As a

result, the single-player experience feels like it's an add on to the multiplayer. Treyarch has gotten around to doing something about that.

In one of the later missions, a world-class hacker is kidnapped by terrorists and you are tasked with saving her. Well, let's say that instead of getting to her in time to rescue her, the bad guys manage to get away. You don't get a Mission Failed notice and aren't sent back to do it until you get it right. No, if you manage to save her then you move on and you are congratulated for your efforts. Fail to save her and you get chewed out by your commander, and the story continues.

What's going on is that there are key points in the game where, regardless of the outcome, instead of having to replay only the storyline changes. Along with the standard single-player assignments, you also have a series of Strike Force missions. In these missions, you are not fighting in the usual first-person perspective,



Photos by Daniel Gibbs/Gaming Insurrection

but rather from a strategic one where you direct assets on the battlefield rather than being an asset on the battlefield. Completing or not completing these missions will also have an effect on the progression of the story. Remember the hacker I mentioned previously? If you fail to rescue her, then one of the Strike Force missions will be to launch an operation to get her back from the enemy.

This ability to actually continue the story after failing an objective and having special side missions that influence the main story allow for something that most shooters lack.

Black Ops 2 has several different endings depending on the results of your missions through out the game, giving you motivation to replay missions for varied outcomes.

### HEAD SHOT OR FLESH WOUND?

With an entertaining multiplayer, which has several additional DLC packs of maps to play, an engrossing storyline, and a change in the single-player that gives a much-needed boost in replay value, I would say that this is definitely a head shot.



**SCORE:  
4 OUT  
OF 5**

# DANCE DANCE REVOLUTION EXTREME

## The best on the dance floor for Konami

By **LYNDSEY HICKS**  
GAMING INSURRECTION

My first experience with Dance Dance Revolution came around the same time as the release of the Extreme in arcades. I'd had experience with the U.S. releases, and the arcade releases of 4th Mix Plus and Max 2. By the time I played Extreme, it was 2003 and there were so many songs that I hadn't even heard of let alone played that I was a bit overwhelmed. Thanks to a friend, however, I managed to receive the Japanese releases of Max, Max 2, Party Collection and Extreme for PlayStation 2, and thus began my love affair with Extreme as my favorite DDR mix.

If you haven't played DDR by now, let me bring you up to speed. The basics

to play require stepping on four arrows on a dance pad that correspond with four arrows moving upward

onscreen within a song that's given a rating on a scale of 1 to 10 (20 in later versions). If your life bar runs out, you fail. If you clear the song, you're given a grade based on the number of well-stepped beats. That's all there is to it, unless you want to get advanced and technical. DDR is basically high-impact aerobics for gamers to songs that you may or may not know.

Once Extreme hit the market, 10-footers were a common occurrence and freeze arrows became commonplace. For a longtime DDR player, Extreme represents the peak of the series. After Extreme, there's a few songs that are worth something, but very few considering the arcade version of Extreme had 240 songs compiling material from previous mixes and other series. What I love about Extreme is how polished the series felt by this point. Finally, it seemed like all of the pieces were in place and it was as sleek and perfect as the series was going to be. The grading system is finally right, song timing was pretty good and the music selection for the home version, with very few missteps, finally hit the right balance. And, I love the fact that you're finally able to select your own Extra Stage, if you do well enough to unlock it.

Graphically speaking, I love the



look of Extreme. The light/dark green theme works pretty well and is kind of a welcome change from the red/grey/yellow theme of Max 2. The bright theme looks better for DDR, and I've always thought that it looked fresher. Everything seems to move a little faster and a little more smoothly than previous releases. Soundwise, the game is better than everything that came before it, which is the nature of most DDR games. This time around, there's a lot more songs selected from the cross-over category and while the Bemani originals could use some more work, a lot of them aren't bad. Extreme has the distinction of being my favorite mix because of the sheer number of songs to choose from and the introduction of Paranoia Survivor, my favorite DDR song. If you're going to play any of the pre-SuperNova mixes, stick with Ex-

**SCORE:  
5 OUT  
OF 5**

treme because you're more than likely going to get more bang for your buck in terms of songs offered.

DDR Extreme has a credible claim on the throne of best DDR mix.

The vast number of songs in the arcade version, the quality of the music, and the polish and feel of the game all work together to make a slick package that's worth importing for PS2.

The Japanese version of Extreme was the last of its kind: A decent dancing game that worked on several levels before Konami became threatened by competitors' success. It's the last before the company began throwing things at the wall in hopes of it sticking in a race to create the hardest dancing game known to man. Consider Extreme the last call at the dance hall before the doors are shut for the night.





Photos by Lyndsey Hicks/Gaming Insurrection



Developer: SNK Playmore, Release: 2005

SAMURAI SHODOWN VI/SAMURAI SUPIRITTSU TENKAICHI KENKAKUDEN

A samurai clash of epic proportions

By LYNDESEY HICKS  
GAMING INSURRECTION

I'm not entirely sure why Samurai Shodown isn't mentioned in the same conversation as Street Fighter when it comes to great fighting games. Maybe it's bias or maybe it's the fact that the game system isn't like the traditional punch/kick setup established by the Samurai Shodown. Whatever it is, Samurai Shodown deserves more credit and the most recent entry in the series more than pushes the case that Street Fighter wasn't the only credible ancient 2D fighter.

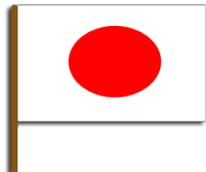
Forget for a moment that Samurai Shodown 6 is still hand-drawn sprites. The game still looks gorgeous and it's still a marvel to behold in terms of color and art style. If ancient Japanese drawings are your thing, look no further because that's the backdrop to the story and setting. The plot revolves around warriors and their drama, and their dreams and desires in relation to ruling the world. The game features Andrew Jackson, in a serious role, fighting with his musket at the White House, so it can't be taken all that seriously. However, where the story lacks depth, the fighting system picks up the slack.



In typical SNK fashion, there are several different fighting styles to choose from. If you've played either of the earlier crossovers of Capcom vs. SNK, then you should be at least slightly familiar with how the game systems work. My familiarity with the games helped me to jump right in and pick up the mechanics, but if you aren't familiar with the controls, it's not that hard. Though, it'd probably help to have a translation guide handy because if you're playing the Japanese version of the game, there's not much English spoken,

if at all, and the menus are all in Japanese. What I love about Samurai Shodown is the atmosphere. Sure, it's not Street Fighter but it doesn't need to be necessarily. Sometimes, it's the change in pace that makes a series or game worth trying if only to see what you may be missing out on. Other times, it's the refreshing creative differences that make a series worth testing. In Samurai Shodown 6's case, it's a combination of all of the above that make it aesthetically and mechanically sound and pleasing.

**SCORE:  
4 OUT  
OF 5**



## ADOBE MUSE

We have high hopes as part-time Web coders. Adobe has finally released its newest attempt at making website design easier, Muse, and GI has fiddled around with it. Eagerly at first and then not so eagerly, GI's experience with the application wasn't as smooth as should be but we can still recommend it if you're like us and not up to speed with CSS5 or HTML 5.

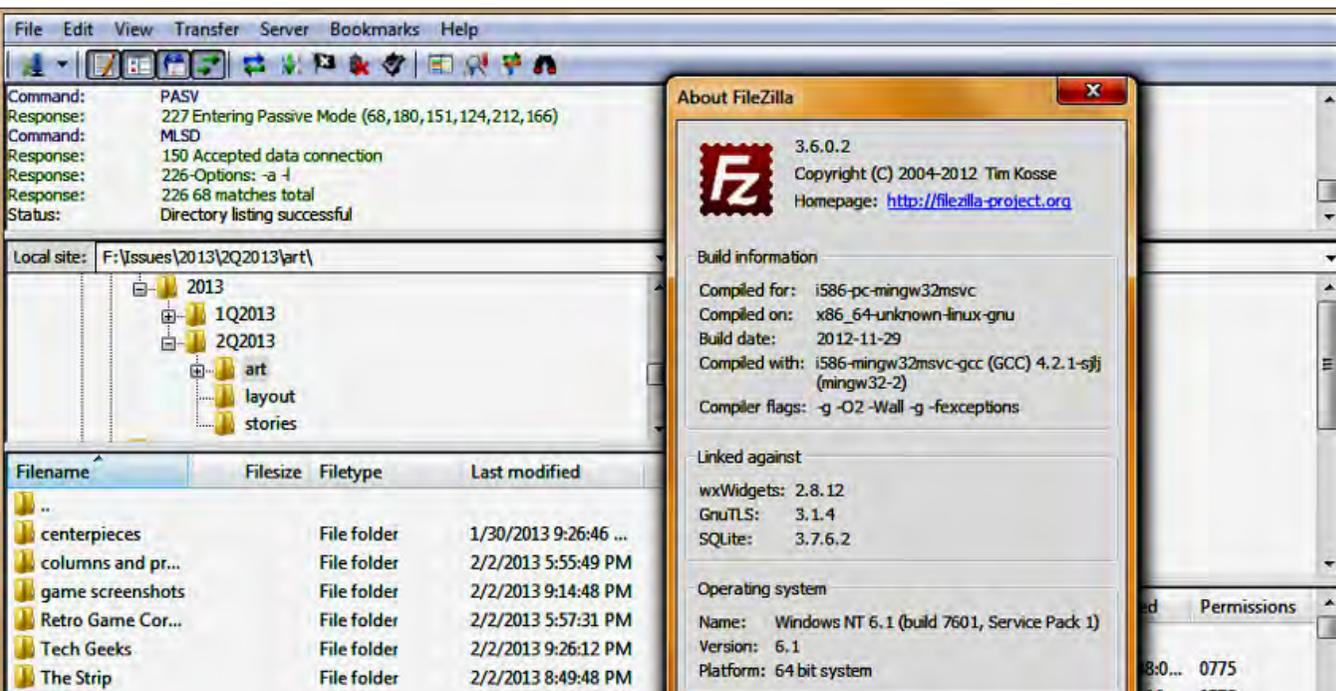
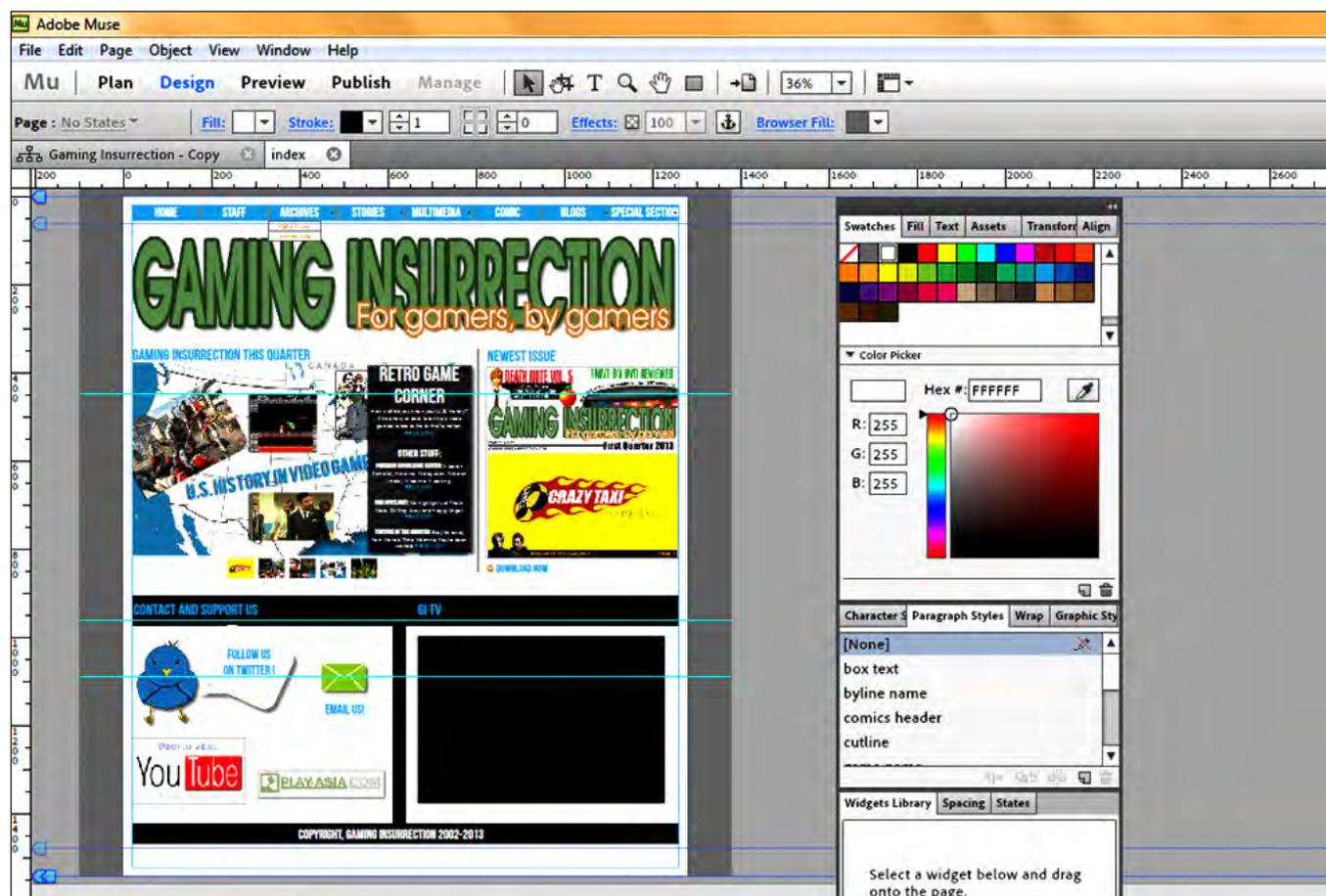
Muse works on the basic level as advertised: Making a website with modernized additions is extremely simple. All of the options offered are explained reasonably well, despite Adobe's penchant for making things harder than they need to be. Font type kit options are abundant and varied nicely, and it's easy to publish to your existing site or integrate what you're creating with various elements. If you want interactivity, that's easy, too. We've been able to create a better-looking site in GamingInsurrection.com solely because of the interactivity features offered.

Here's where we have the problem with Muse: Sometimes, just getting started is problematic. A number of times, when we've attempted to load our Muse document, the program simply won't load it on the first try or third. We finally have to force the program to shut down and restart it. It may or may not work the next few times we try it, but eventually it does and it works fine afterward. Be forewarned: Starting out is rough, and it shows as this was in beta testing for quite some time.

A professional-looking site can be created quickly and easily, if you can get into the application and past the left-behind beta testing quirks.

**Cost:** \$14.99 per month (as part of a one-year commitment to a Creative Cloud subscription plan only)

**Where to buy:** Adobe.com



## FILEZILLA

With the fall of FireFTP — temporary or not — those of us who rely on FTP to update sites need something in place as a backup. Enter Filezilla. While it's not as glamorous as say FireFTP, it works just as well and is a perfectly good replacement client.

Filezilla is something of an enigma. If you're into what FTP clients actually do

and how they work, you can probably use it and learn a little something. If you just need something to input your settings, connect to your site and transfer files, Filezilla can do that for you, too. It's easy to get started with it, and to be perfectly honest, you could use it for years without having to get into the nuts and bolts of why and how it works. Just

be sure to save a profile so that you don't have to re-enter your site credentials. We're almost certain that it's a pain to do that constantly, given the hassle it is to sign in and find FTP information.

**Cost:** Free

**Where to download:** filezilla-project.org

## tech bits

### Dell goes private in \$24 billion deal

Dell announced in February a deal to take the company back to private status. The No. 3 PC maker in the



Dell

world, Dell has been struggling for some time. **Michael Dell**, founder and CEO, has agreed to lower his asking prices for his shares and 16 percent stake in the company. Software giant **Microsoft** has stepped in and is sweetening the deal with \$2 billion in financing.

### Google stock jumps to \$800

Google's stock price hit the \$800 mark in February after previously hitting \$700 in 2007. The company met the newest mark with co-founder **Larry Page** as CEO. Page has been in the position since April 2011, replacing **Eric Schmidt**. Google has been in head-to-head competition with

**Apple**, positioning its **Android** software against its rival's **iOS** platform.

### AT&T purchases Alltel for \$780 million

Mobile phone giant **AT&T** is snapping up cell provider **Alltel** for \$780 million. Alltel is well-known in the Southeastern U.S., with customers mostly in North Carolina, Georgia, South Carolina, and in the Midwest in Ohio, Idaho and Illinois. The deal was announced in January, and AT&T is planning to purchase only the U.S. portion of the business.

### Microsoft does away with Hotmail

Even though email addresses will stay the same, Microsoft is dropping the name **Hotmail** in favor of **Outlook.com**. Hotmail, which launched in 1997, has been a Microsoft mainstay but will receive an upgraded look and feel with the change over to the new name. The design is reminiscent of the recently released Windows 8 operating system. Users will be able to upgrade through messages sent from Microsoft to their inbox.

Sources: Yahoo Technology, ArsTechnica

On tap this issue:

### STRIP TALK

Editor Lyndsey Hicks talks the connection of comics and anime

### REVIEW

Afro Samurai combines beauty, gore

### MARVEL CHARACTER

Everything you ever wanted to know about the Silver Samurai

### OTAKU

Brandon Beatty looks fondly on Tenjo Tenge

### ANIME LOUNGE

Junjou Romantica is happy love

### TOP 5

Japanese superheroes take the spotlight

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## PROPERTY REVIEW

**Afro Samurai**

Funimation Entertainment, 2007



## Afro Samurai a concerto of high-quality hack and slash

**T**here were never that many black samurai in history. Save for their fictional counterparts, let's just say diversity wasn't the thing in ancient Japan. But for all of that lack of attention to historical detail, Afro Samurai manages to evoke sympathy and more than enough interest with its protagonist and story.

One of the things we've come to love about Afro Samurai in the years since its first release and airing are the characters.

True, Afro doesn't say too much but Ninja Ninja more than makes up for that. Afro is your classically stoic protagonist who doesn't say much and chooses to let his actions speak louder than his words ever could. Ninja Ninja is — spoiler alert! — his consciousness, saying the things he wishes he could say out loud and looking like a smaller, more cool version of himself. The dynamic between the two characters, both voiced by the incomparable Samuel L. Jackson, is the meat of the plot and carries the story, though Afro's quest to own the No. 1 headband and be the No. 1 fighter in the world is important as well.

Make no mistake, though, the duo roaming around chopping people to death in that quest is the draw of the story.

And while the characters are interesting, it's their stories and history that make the show. How exactly Afro comes into possession of the No. 2 headband and his quest to run from his

### HOW WE GRADE

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

past of violence and death is riveting. Within five episodes the Empty Seven Clan is introduced and the fights for the No. 2 headband are detailed. The art style of the fights is gorgeous and the soundtrack, composed by the RZA, is worth replaying. Though everything isn't wrapped up nicely and neatly, the five episodes tell the story at a nice pace and put the action at the forefront where it should be.

We even appreciate the naturally developed ending, which leads to Afro Samurai Resurrection, though it isn't quite as good as the original. But with a stellar voice cast, beautiful animation and a pretty good plot and soundtrack, Afro Samurai is worth starting from the beginning.

**Plot:** 10

**Animation quality:** 10

**Casting:** 10

**Score:** 30 out of 30 or 10

## My love of anime began with comics

**M**any a time, my origins as a comic book nerd has come up in this column. And it's no surprise, given that I spend a lot of time researching my favorite franchises and characters as well as playing various video games involving superheroes and villains teaming up. But what's a little less well-known

about me is my love for anime.



Lyndsey Hicks  
**STRIP TALK**

True, you can see some of that fervor spilling over in the Anime Lounge, the newest addition to The Strip. As I've pointed out before, I watched a lot of anime when I was in college and didn't really pick it up again until after the

end of my marriage. But, my love for anime really began with comic books. I loved to imagine my favorite characters in cartoon form and what better way than to read manga or watch anime? As it turns out, I preferred my adventures in animated motion form so I stuck with anime mostly, but I have been known to read a little manga in my day.

Comic books paved the way for my love, though, because it was printed material and I loved to read. I still do. Believe it or not, I parlayed my love for samurai and their history into a love for the X-Men that still stands today. That love of the X-Men turned into a need to watch the legendary Fox animated series, which in turn lead me to other series that became anime in the form of Cartoon Network's Toonami. The long, convoluted chain of like breeding love actually got its start even further back because I originally got into comic books through Archie Comics and the printed tales of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.

So you see, this relationship with comics and roundabout relationship with anime merely began with a simple exposure to mutated amphibians, mutated people with special powers and kids living in Riverdale. How I managed to move from samurai to the X-Men, I'm not sure, but I do know that I equated the group with samurai being farmed out on retainer from a lord — that'd be Charles Xavier — who wanted his interests respected and protected in the world. My fondness of the romance between Archie, Betty and Veronica led directly to my preference for romantic comedy anime and just about any anime dealing with the start of relationships.

It's amazing how young love can shape future viewing habits.

Lyndsey Hicks is editor-in-chief of Gaming Insurrection. She can be reached by email at [gicomics@gaminginsurrection.com](mailto:gicomics@gaminginsurrection.com)

# Don't miss a great fighter anime

Welcome back, readers, to another edition of Otaku Corner. I know that most of you wanted to get back to the battle between Ryuzaki and Light in "Death Note," but in this edition, I think we all need to take a mental nap from that EPIC battle. For now, let's take a break from an EPIC game of cat and mouse and enjoy a nice high school anime filled with romance, comedy, and yes, my fellow fighting otaku, plenty of beat downs. Grab some popcorn, get your other favorite anime-viewing snacks and refreshments together and kick back for the first volume of Tenjho Tenge (Heaven and Earth).

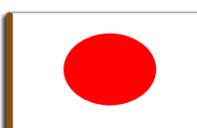
Based on the worldwide smash manga series originally appearing in Shuiesha's V Jump comics by Oh! Great, and produced by Geneon Entertainment, Tenjho Tenge focuses on 15-year olds Souichiro Nagi and "Bob" Makihara (aka the Knuckle Bombs) who are newly enrolled students at Todou Academy with plans of conquest as they did with their previous schools. However they soon discover that Todou is not some ordinary Japanese high school, but is really a school that was founded to teach and preserve various martial arts. After DESTROYING the senior class, Souichiro and Bob are single-handedly defeated by Maya Natsume, captain of the Juken club and her second-in-command Masataka Takayanagi. Souichiro is then hunted down by Maya's sister, Aya, who instantly falls in love with Souichiro because of a Natsume woman's tradition. This sets off events in which the Juken Club is involved in a decades-old feud.



Brandon Beatty  
OTAKU CORNER

The first four episodes have a strong background story, especially with Souichiro after he was defeated by Masataka Takayanagi that reminds him that losing is never an option. In between the romance and chase of Souichiro by Aya, we learn more about the sisters Natsume who are strong willed but have their own unique abilities. Here's a heads up: Tenjho Tenge nearly goes beyond the standards of fan service with the panty shots, views of the Natsume sisters' breasts and the usual tough guy talk and battles that will make its viewers think it's a cross of Fist of the North Star and Battle Royale but in an acceptable viewing format.

Besides the four episodes, the DVD includes, in addition to upcoming Geneon titles, clean openings and closings with the two main songs. I especially enjoyed having Lyndsey listen to TT's opening song EVERY episode ( yes, my evil plan did work. **Editor's note:** No, it didn't. He thinks it did.



That opening — Bomb-a-Head — is one of the worst songs I have ever heard). I want to commend Geneon Entertainment's U.S. branch for producing and dubbing alongside BangZoom! Entertainment and for choosing the great

cast that included Johnny Yong Bosch, Stephanie Sheh (Bleach) and Wendee Lee (Cowboy Bebop) playing their respective roles. In short, Tenjho Tenge Volume 1 gets a 4.

Tenjho Tenge is, without doubt, a mix of all anime high school dramas, but with more kick. I'm very excited that this series will re-release its awesomeness soon thanks to the good folks of Discotek Media since Geneon USA is no longer in business. But for good laughs, martial arts action, high school romance (minus the overused clichés) and fan service, TT is good for you. Now to give the HBJ group their new official theme song, Bomb-a-Head.



**Series:** Junjou Romantica

**Episodes:** 1-12

**Premise:** Junjou Romantica is broken up into three storylines: Romantica, Egoist and Terrorist. Romantica is the story of main couple Misaki Takahashi and Akihiko Usami, who are brought together by Misaki's older brother, Takahiro, so that Akihiko can tutor Misaki for college entrance exams. It happens that Takahiro announces at the meeting that he is getting married. Akihiko and Misaki are upset for different reasons: Misaki, because it means he is losing his brother somewhat after the death of his parents; Akihiko, because he is in love with Takahiro. Romance commences, with a reluctant Misaki along for the ride. Egoist focuses on Nowaki Kusama and Hiroki Kamijou's developing relationship. Nowaki is considerably younger than Hiroki, who is a classic Japanese literature professor. Thus, their relationship centers on their everyday struggle to be a couple on equal footing. In Terrorist, Yo Miyagi and Shinobu Takatsuki become reacquainted after the end of Yo's marriage to Shinobu's sister. Shinobu is in love with Yo, but Yo doesn't take him seriously. The resulting relationship between the two is interesting and deals with their pasts as brothers-in-law and their age difference. One protagonist in each couple knows of another in another couple. For example, Akihiko was in a relationship with Hiroki and Hiroki works with Yo.



**Is it worth watching?:** Yes. If you love romantic stories, this is probably for you. A word of caution, though: If you do not like yaoi, do not watch because the series' relationships are all between men. If you can get past that, you'll come to love the characters and their relationship struggles.

**Breakout character:** Akihiko Usami. I love how the character moves from strange to endearing as he struggles to get Misaki to realize that he loves him and that their relationship is destined to be. He's funny yet smart, and he's equal parts strange with an obsession with bears in general.

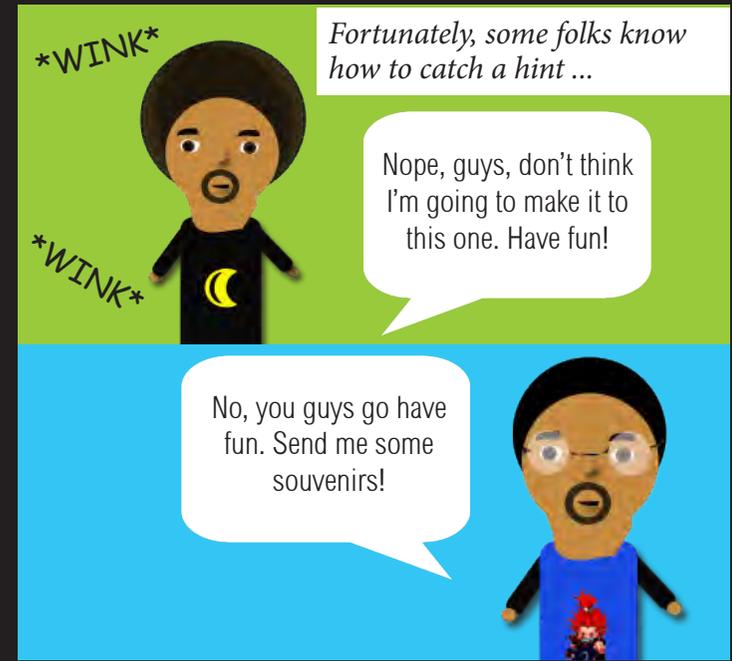
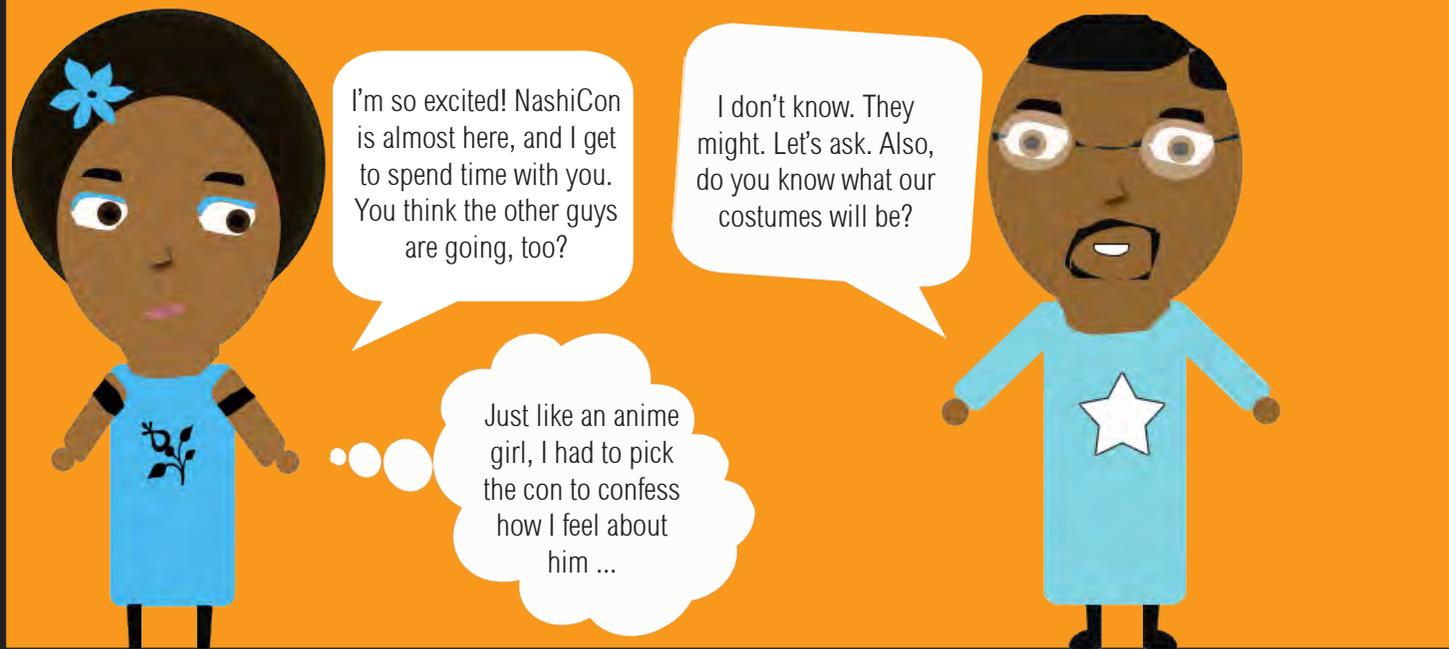
**Funniest episode:** Episode 4 — "Fear is often greater than the danger itself" — Misaki gets drunk off chocolates and falls asleep cuddling Akihiko's shirt. This shows Akihiko that Misaki loves him but isn't ready to admit to it.

**Where it's going:** The second series focuses on the trials and tribulations of the three couples and introduces other characters that will become the focus of spinoff series.



# Strip Life

BY LYNDSEY HICKS



*At NashiCon, we go to a love confession already in progress ...*



# MARVEL CHARACTER HIGHLIGHT

**Name:** Kenuichio Harada

**Affiliation:** HYDRA, Big Hero Six, Viper, Mandrill, Yashida Clan

**Special abilities:** Silver Samurai has the ability to generate a tachyon field through himself, though he can project the energy through anything he chooses. Frequently, he chooses a katana, which can cut through virtually any substance known to man (excluding adamantium). Silver Samurai is also a master of Kenjutsu — the art of wielding a katana — and Bushido.

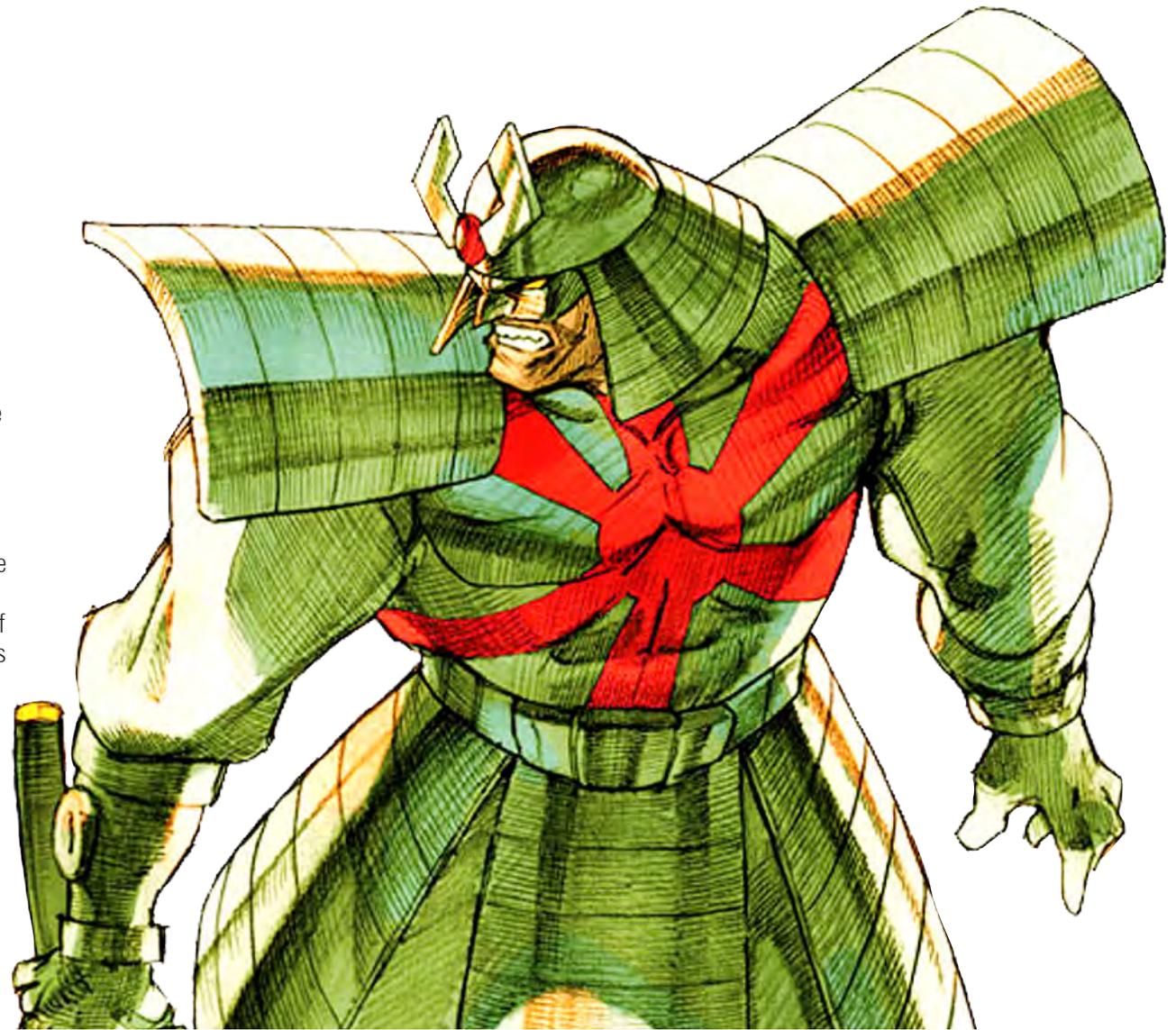
**Background:** Kenuichio Harada began life as the illegitimate son of Yashida clan boss Shingen Harada. He began his criminal career with the Mandrill then moved on to working with HYDRA's Viper as her bodyguard. Harada then looked to take over the Yashida clan after the death of his father but came into conflict with his half-sister, Mariko Yashida, and Wolverine. When Mariko was killed, he did claim leadership of the clan but lost it to a Mongolian warlord. After losing his leadership position, he returned to criminal activity and was brainwashed by the mutant Blindspot to forget his dalliance into super hero activities. Harada then returned to HYDRA and fought Elektra. He was thought to be killed but survived and turned up again trying to take over the Yakuza. He worked briefly as the head of security for the prime minister of Japan and then fought Wolverine after the events of M-Day. The two fought until Wolverine cut off his hand at the wrist. Silver Samurai was later killed by ninjas in an attack on his home. His son, Shingen Harada, later took up the mantle.



**Relationships:** Shingen Harada (father), Mariko Yashida (half-sister), Wolverine (James Howlett, former brother-in-law), second Silver Samurai (Shingen “Shin” Harada, son)

**First Versus game appearance:** X-Men: Children of the Atom

**Appearances in other media:** X-Men (animated, 1996), Wolverine and the X-Men (animated, 2009), X-Men: The Official Game (multiplatform, 2006), Marvel vs. Capcom 2 (2000, multiplatform)



## TOP 5 ON THE STRIP — JAPANESE SUPERHEROES EDITION



**Psylocke**

Betsy Braddock wasn't born Japanese. No, that didn't happen until she switched bodies with Kwannon, a Japanese assassin. Braddock's original body was compromised by the Legacy Virus, and Kwannon died. The six-armed mutant Spiral the cause of the mind switch to start with, and whenever Spiral is involved, things never end the way they're supposed to.



**Doctor Light**

Kimiyo Hoshi was an astronomer who happened to be observing a subtle battle between the Monitor and Anti-Monitor. The Monitor activated her as part of his plan to keep the positive universe ahead. Bright, sexy and a doctor? Sign us up for positive sexual healing.



**Silver Samurai**

Kenuichio Harada is the illegitimate son of a Japanese crime boss. He learned he was a mutant and then applied his skills to further his crime aspirations. You can't say he didn't put them to good use as a criminal because he later managed to turn over a new leaf and stay on the straight and narrow. Well, until Blindspot forced him to forget that he was a superhero.



**Naiad**

In her human life, Naiad was a protector in Alaska that was set on fire and killed. After that, she became a powerful elemental force in the DC universe. Not too much can be said about someone who's basically a part of nature itself. She makes waves wherever she wants. Sea what we did there?



**Sunfire**

Shiro Yashida comes from the same clan as the Silver Samurai, but is significantly less criminally inclined. He's neutral, though the fact that he can generate plasma from his body and was listed as one of the “Legendary Twelve” mutants (as an elemental) is important enough that his presence is necessary in quite a few fights. Most of the time, however, he chooses not to get involved in the X-Men's affairs despite being a member.



Developer: Konami, Release: 1998

## MYSTICAL NINJA STARRING GOEMON

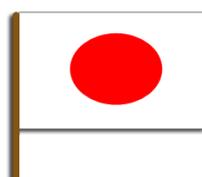
# There's an educational lesson to be learned with the Peach Shoguns

By **LYNDSEY HICKS**  
GAMING INSURRECTION

About the time that I first encountered *Mystical Ninja Starring Goemon*, I was in high school. By then, my formerly burgeoning interest in Asian history and geography was nearing its peak.

Specifically, I could point out the four islands of Japan, and I understood at least the basic differences between the Chinese and Japanese language. And because I was a gamer, my interest shifted to Japan, where most of what I was playing came from. I also held Blockbuster rental nights on Fridays where I would pick out something new to play. *Mystical Ninja* just happened to be one of the titles I decided to try, and immediately, I saw the reason why there have only been three titles to come to this side of the world to date. With that caveat, I do love *Mystical Ninja*. Everything about it ties together to make a compelling, if not weird, package.

Set in picturesque Edo-period Japan, series heroes Goemon and Ebisumaru set out to stop the Peach Mountain Shoguns from conquering the world. They're joined in their quest by a giant mech-robot Goemon Impact and friends Yae and Sasuke.



The fact that the Peach Mountain Shoguns, run by a duo named Spring Breeze Dancin' and Kitty Lilly, demonstrate

their menacing plans by transforming castles, blowing up an old pervert's house and teleporting the island of Kyushu into outerspace just scratches the surface of weird.

You can't really take a game seriously with antagonists who have names like those and ask for cosmetics while demanding the deaths of the heroes. Similarly, it's hard not to laugh when visiting the fortune teller who yells

"Plasma!" as hulu-dancing men gyrate next to him in his overly large tent.

And, lest we forget, there's also a random laugh track.

At its heart, it's an adventure game that controls a lot like *Super Mario 64*.

Moving and attacking is like running around with Mario and the game takes obvious pride in borrowing a lot of elements from the groundbreaking N64 launch title. And that's where it succeeds. There's really no shame in borrowing from the best, especially if you know you're going to get good results by following the formula down to the letter. The only problem, however, is the camera system.

Much like *Mario 64*, the camera



Photos by Lyndsey Hicks/Gaming Insurrection

**SCORE:  
5 OUT  
OF 5**

moves around the action subject, but in this case it's obnoxious. More than once, I took some unnecessary hits from enemies because I couldn't see them, or in the case of the Festival Temple Castle level, became stuck for months because the camera created platforming problems.

But when I did get stuck, the chance to appreciate the surroundings and the scenery was present, and appreciate I did. The game is gorgeous. It's an N64 title so be prepared for blocky graphics, but take notice of

the fact that there's beauty to be had in ancient Japanese scenery. This is an area where the developer shines.

Just about every section in the game is based on a real-life counterpart, and it's geographically accurate, too.

The game's soundtrack also shines. It's easily one of my favorite video game soundtracks, though I expect as much from Konami. The music actually outshines some of the areas in the game and virtually fits every situation in the game. Even the maligned

laugh track is funny. It's unexpected and, like the story, kind of makes you go, "What? Where'd that come from?" but it's a cute touch.

*Mystical Ninja Starring Goemon* isn't the best N64 game ever made. It's not even close.

But it is one of the more fun titles for the system. And it's an interesting and quirky title that laughs at its uniqueness. It doesn't take itself too seriously, and yet, you can still get a serious adventure out of it, weird inside-Japanese jokes and all.



A woman...?



The lights on the plant's struts are functioning. I won't have to use the IR goggles.



Photos courtesy of MobyGames.com and GameSpot.com

**Developer:** Konami, **Release:** 2001

## METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SONS OF LIBERTY

# Metal Gear Solid 2 slips into discussion of great spy games

**By BRANDON BEATTY**  
GAMING INSURRECTION

What do you get when you cross sleek adventure worthy of James Bond, a storyline filled with political conspiracies, social engineering and tactical action worthy of Tom Clancy, and a hero who was created in the vein of Snake Plissken from the John Carpenter cult-classic film "Escape from New York"? The answer is Snake, Solid Snake.

For 26 years, Konami's very own super spy has captivated gamers worldwide with his never-ending battle against the doomsday machine known as Metal Gear and those who would attempt to use it for absolute power. During this series' reign over various consoles, gamers weren't just introduced to one but two men worthy of the title bad asses in video gaming: Snake and Hideo Kojima, the series creator. As Metal Gear continued its reign into next-gen consoles, Konami upped the stakes on its popular franchise by diving Snake into new territory: the PS2. The result was the popular but polarizing Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty.

MGS2 continues where MGS left off on the PS One. While the main goal is to stop the latest incarnation of the destructive mech weapon Metal Gear, MGS2 has a few new surprises. Dubbed a Tactical Espionage Action game, you will need to think more

as well as conserve ammo to survive. The storyline is somewhat fractured: In the first half, Snake is assigned to obtain evidence of a new Metal Gear codenamed Ray, while the second half of the game goes three years forward where you take control of Raiden, a new agent of the newly reformed Foxhound counter-terrorist group whose mission is to rescue the U.S president and to destroy another Metal Gear codenamed Arsenal.

With these events in play, Snake, Raiden and their small band of allies must stop the Metal Gears and the organization behind them, the Sons of Liberty before the organization's plan for world domination becomes reality. The control of Snake and Raiden — including the abilities of each character to sneak around in noisy areas, hang-over walkways and leap on or over rails — were excellent. I especially enjoyed the chance to either rob enemies for ammo, various weapons and health or just dispose of them in ways convenient to me. When I used the first-person aim feature, I loved the way I could go for headshots or shoot out enemies' radios up close or far away.

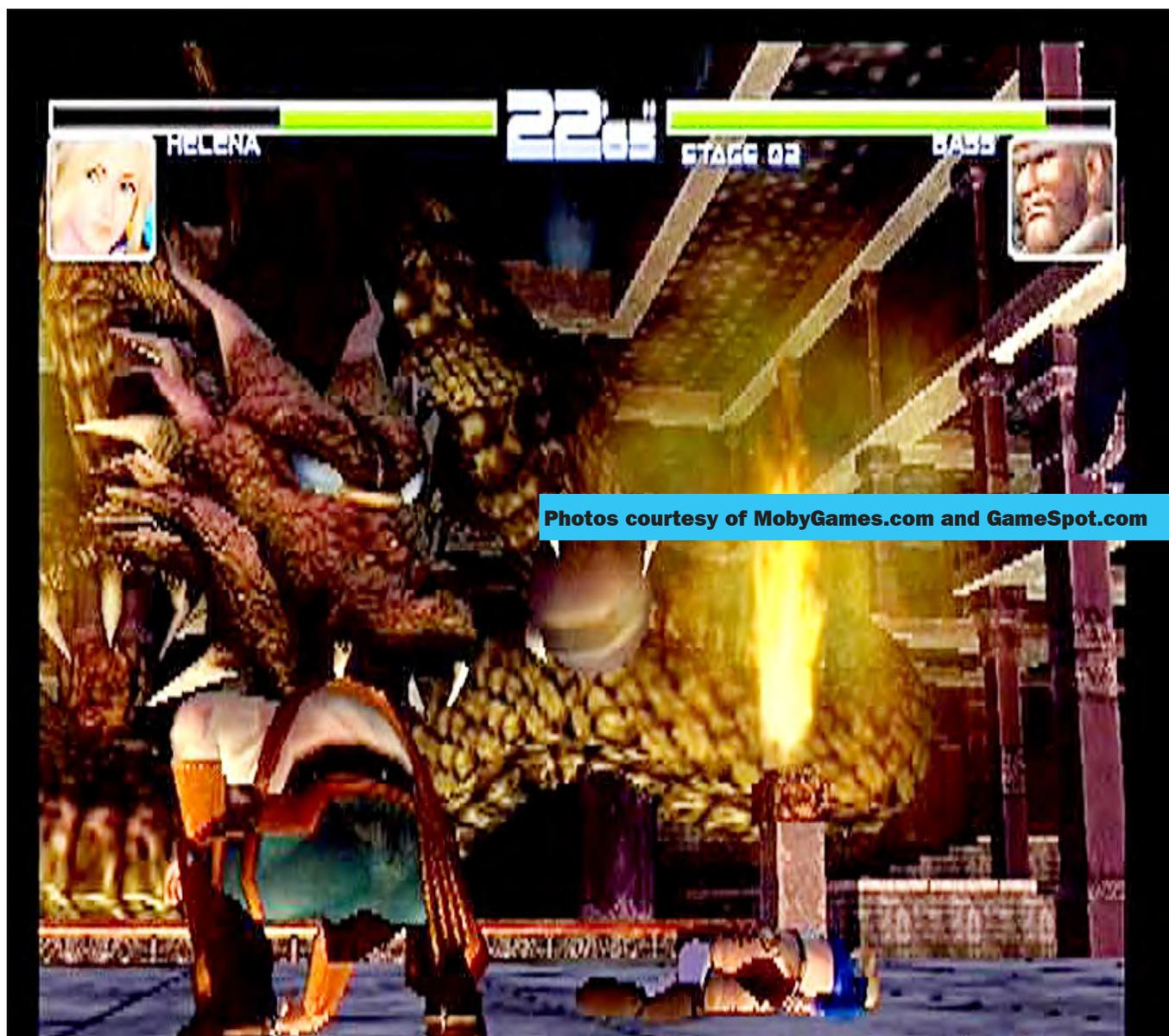
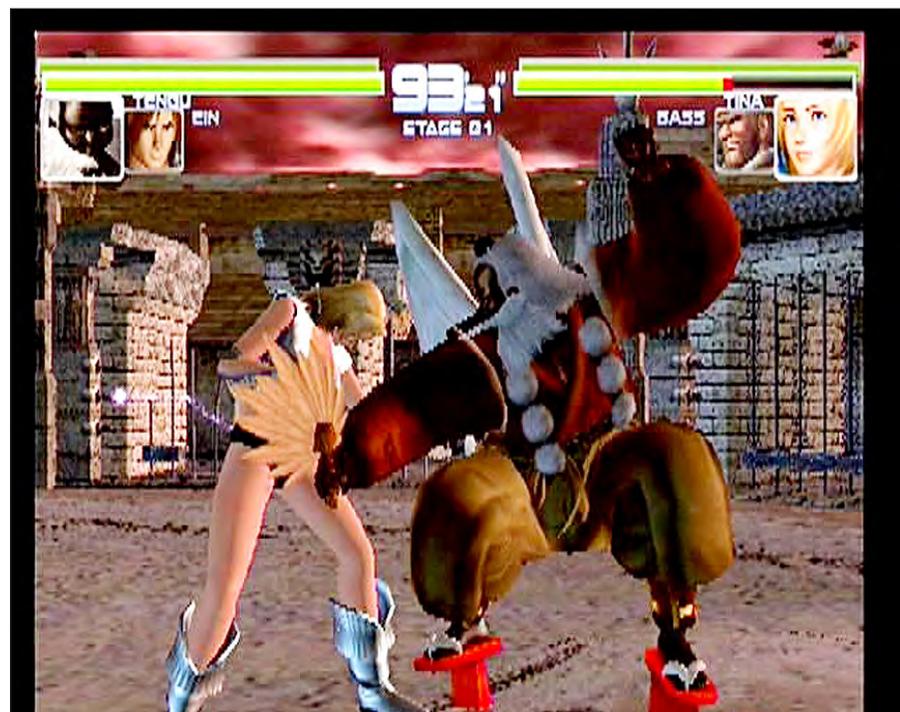
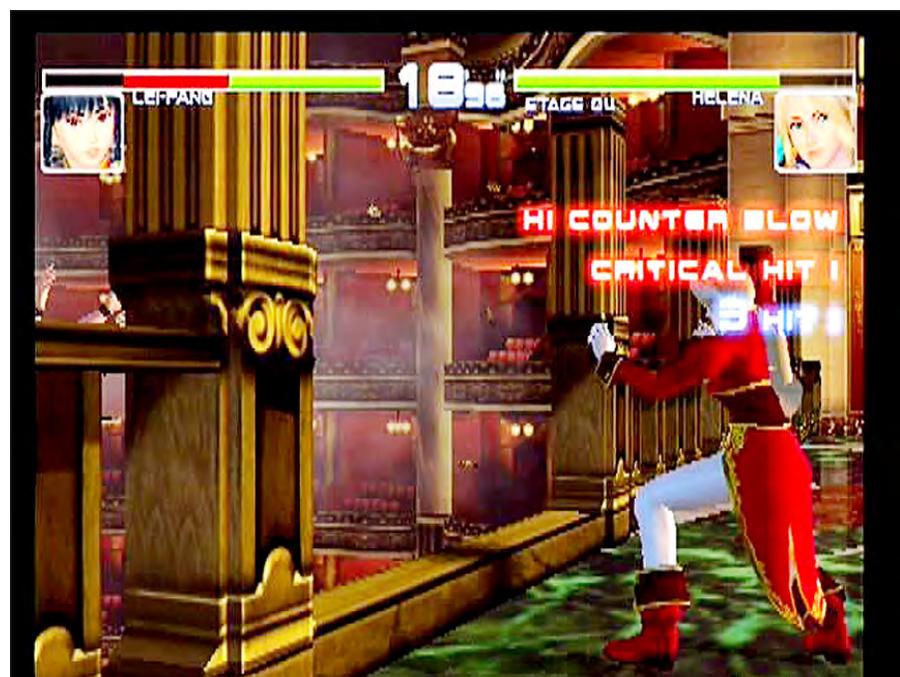
The environmental factors in MGS 2 such as weather, atmosphere and temperature plus the enemies' ability to utilize tactical skills such as working in squads and communicating with each other via the game's new artificial intelligence gave equal balance to prevent gameplay imbalance of. The various weapons, ranging from flash

grenades, assault rifles, and tranquilizer guns, are perfect for letting you choose your method of attack. I also liked the Sons of Liberty members individual skills such as bomb expertise, immortality and cheating death through supernatural methods. The music is excellent thanks to Kojima's idea of hiring renowned film composer Harry Gregson-Williams, which added true theatrical quality to the game via a mixture of orchestral, choir music and electronic music. The voice acting in MGS2 was outstanding. The talent, which included David Hayter as Snake, Quinton Flynn (Kon from Bleach) as Raiden and Phil Lamarr (MAD TV, Justice League), gave each character credibility.

I was ready to give MGS 2 a high grade but despite the awesome elements of gameplay, there were serious problems that screamed out for a lower score. Despite the high points in gameplay, voice acting and music, the main problem was the constant change of characters, which caused a battle for the spotlight.

While I liked Raiden and his cool ninja skills, Snake was the guy that carried the MG franchise since 1987 and rightfully should have had top billing throughout the game. MGS2: Sons Of Liberty, despite its battle for supremacy between the main characters, is still a game that action-adventure gamers should play and a perfect game for any MG fan to have in their library. Rest assured, Solid Snake WILL return. In the meantime, I'm wondering if Konami can get Adele to do a version of "Skyfall" for the next Metal Gear.

**SCORE:  
3 OUT  
OF 5**



Photos courtesy of MobyGames.com and GameSpot.com

**Developer:** Team Ninja (Tecmo), **Release:** 2000

## DEAD OR ALIVE 2

# Retro fighting game masterpiece sets new standard

**By BRANDON BEATTY**  
GAMING INSURRECTION

Ayane. Bass Armstrong. Kasumi. Ryu Hayabusa. Zack. Itagaki. You know the names. You played the fighting series.

For 17 years, Tecmo's world-renowned smash fighting series has captivated gamers via its characters, numerous fighting styles and original concepts, raising the bar for fighting games. It is also known for establishing not only Tecmo's triumphant return to its place within video gaming history, but also unleashing into the gaming world a man who without any apology returned gameplay to a basis in gaming through an excellent sequel. This sage of gaming?

He's Tomonobu Itagaki, formerly of

Team Ninja, and his masterpiece in fighting was Dead or Alive 2.

The game's plot starts off with Fame Douglas, a renowned world leader and sponsor of the original DOA tournament, assassinated by an unknown-but-evil individual who has cast a shadow of horror across the world, resulting in horrific chain of events unless the surviving contestant wins the tournament.

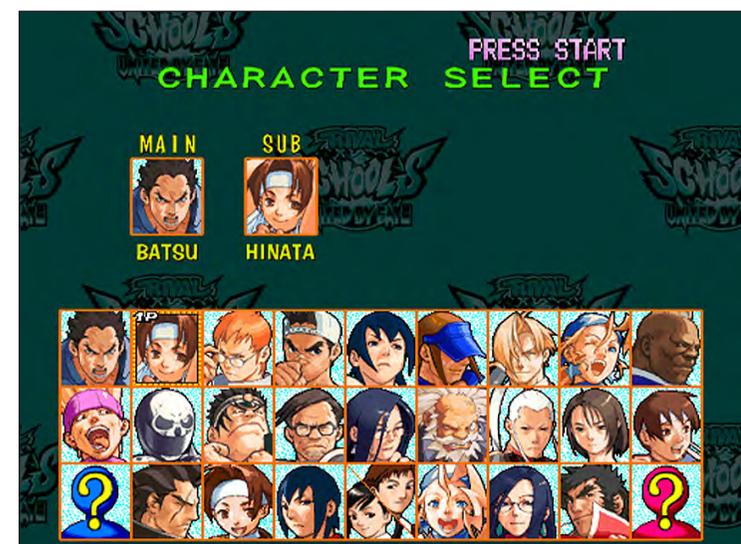
Controls are basic without little difficulty to pull thanks again to the improved game engine. The series' fighting system is not just about the amount of punches and kicks landed on opponents; it also involves holds, throws and combinations of both that result in stun attacks that cannot be blocked. Another feature I enjoyed was the tag-team option (a la Tekken Tag). Here, the characters were more fluid thanks

to the improved game engine. Also, all of the stages appeared more realistic thanks in part to attention to graphic detail.

DOA2's gameplay was inspired by Sega's Virtual Fighter series, but developed two features. Each stage is stacked on top of one another. If an opponent is knocked off, he or she will take fairly high damage, but won't be knocked out. The second feature is the classification of each character to a certain weight category that could be an advantage or disadvantage depending on that character's response to being launched.

The music in each stage is set to the stage's actual environment, preventing any repetition of the themes. The replay value is high, guaranteeing that DOA2 will not be a disappointment at the next late-night fighting game tournament, something that fighting game fans (especially DOA series fans) will be appreciative of.

**SCORE:  
3.5 OUT  
OF 5**



Developer: Capcom, Release: 1998

## RIVAL SCHOOLS

# Teachers, students clash among weirdness in Capcom fighter classic

By LYNDSEY HICKS  
GAMING INSURRECTION

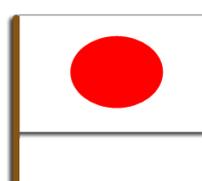
There are times that I'm in love with Capcom, and there are times when I am not. I like to refer to the company as my on-again, off-again boyfriend because of my love affair with its various productions. I also like to refer to the company as my nagging old man who doesn't know how to stop shooting himself in the foot because he just doesn't get that I want to go out to the club ... and well, you get the picture. But the reason for my disjointed love/hate relationship with Capcom is simple: For every great thing it does such as Rival Schools, for example, the company stumbles massively with some ill-thought-out concept that hurts itself, i.e. any of the Resident Evil spinoffs and side stories.

**SCORE:  
5 OUT  
OF 5**

But mostly, I love Capcom because of Street Fighter and Rival Schools, and that's where we find ourselves now: Wrapped up in the warm embrace of Japanese school children fighting.

Rival Schools can be considered a blatant ripoff of the Street Fighter formula, except that in a lot of ways, it's more fun and maybe even a better game. The concept is similar: Fight until one of you is no longer standing, whether it's the CPU or another human, it doesn't matter. There's super combos (called Burning Vigor here), launchers and Team-Up Techniques in the vein of the Versus series and Tardy Counters that instantly call to mind parrying in Street Fighter 3. Basically, if you can play Street Fighter and understand the combo system, you can probably play Rival Schools because it's easy to translate and pick up the system similarities.

But the draw of the game lies in the story and the general absurdity of the



entire situation. In a nutshell, students across the Japanese city of Aoharu have been attacked randomly. No one can figure out why until Batsu's mother is kidnapped. He joins forces with other students in his school to find out where his mother is and who took her. In the course of the game, you can play as Batsu and his comrades or others from five other institutions of higher learning, including teachers from Justice High School, the perpetrators of all of the madness. It turns out to be a much larger plot concerning the domination of Japan from within and students (and teachers, too) learning to summon the courage to fight back when it's called for. Now, don't get me wrong, I love the story. The message of teamwork and fighting for what's right is admirable, and it shows that Capcom tried. But there's a certain level of cheesiness to it that is slightly off-putting.

However, despite my eye rolling, the game is fantastic to play. While the graphics are extremely blocky, I look back at the game and am reminded that it was 1998, so it's to be expected. What I love about playing Rival Schools, though, is the fun that ensues when getting a like-minded group together that enjoys the characters and play style. The play style is smooth and fluid, with attacks happening as fast as you can input the motions. One of the better additions to the Evolution Disc that comes with the console version is the Lesson Mode. Want to learn how to Ditch n' Spin? Play the mode. Need to learn how to Lightning Crush? It's got that, too. The mode is deep and really teaches everything you need to know to do well in Rival Schools.

Even though I love the mode, though, it's one of the few things I actually dislike about the game and the series as a whole. Capcom, in its infinite wisdom, decided to cut the Edit mode from the U.S. release of the game and its sequel,



though it's normally unlocked in the Japanese version through 100 percent mastery of the Lesson Mode. This makes the game seem incomplete, to be honest. Though you can get the created characters that would have been made in the Edit mode through normal play, Capcom cut a major part of the game that is fun. I can make that statement with confidence because I also own the "sequel," Nekketsu Seisyun Nikki 2, which is a Japan-only release that has the mode. I've played through it with the help of translation guides and it's really a shame that Capcom didn't take the time to translate it.

But despite the cuts to the game, Capcom had a winner on its hands with Rival Schools, which should have been a bigger property for the company with the right marketing and ideas. However, after Project Justice's quiet release for the Dreamcast in 2001, there hasn't been much noise out the RS camp. That said, this is a classic must-own title, and you owe it to yourself to fight in something besides the world of Street Fighter.

## ARCADE AND EVOLUTION DISCS

The two discs that are packaged with the console version of the game are slightly different in content. However, both discs contain a Watch Mode under the Extra menu option.

**Arcade disc:** This has the basic content from the arcade release as well as a training mode. Secrets to be unlocked include the good and bad endings, and staff roll. Also, the sound test is present, but you cannot change the default Burning Vigor stock gauge.

**Evolution disc:** This can be considered the extra disc of the package.

The Group, Tournament and Lesson modes are here and multiple mini-games have to be unlocked.

The mini-games are Roberto's Target and Shootout Modes, Kyoko's Office, Natsu's Service Mode and Shoma's Home Run Mode. Characters that would have been created in the cut Edit Mode have to be unlocked through playing through the Arcade Mode as well alternate versions of Kyoko, Natsu, Hinata and Tiffany. The staff roll also must be unlocked. Finally, any character who had an air-combo Burning Vigor loses that in favor of a new Burning Vigor.



## Samurai in history

By Lyndsey Hicks  
Gaming Insurrection

So, you want to be a samurai, huh? OK, maybe not all of you want to be a samurai, but there were some cool warriors in the vein of the ancient class of Japan. If you

study Japanese history and play most fighting games, there's bound to be a samurai in the group somewhere, despite the fact that the Japanese people do not care for them.

Learn about some of the more famous samurai in video games.



### Haohmaru

**Game series:** Samurai Shodown  
**Based on a real-life person?:** Yes  
**Real-life basis:** Miyamoto Musashi

Miyamoto Musashi was a duelist who claimed to have never lost a fight, founded the Hyōhō Niten Ichi-ryū swordship style and wrote the The Book of Five Rings. The tome on tactics, strategy and philosophy is still used today in some circles of Japanese society. Haohmaru, as a character, has appeared in every Samurai Shodown title to date and has appeared in crossover titles such as Capcom vs. SNK 2: Millionaire Fighting 2001.



### Jubei Yagyu

**Game series:** Onimusha  
**Based on a real-life person?:** Yes  
**Real-life basis:** Yagyu Munetoshi

Yagyu Munetoshi is the father of Yagyū Jūbei Mitsutoshi and an accomplished legendary swordsman in his own right. Munetoshi mastered the Shinkage-ryū style and later taught it to the Tokugawa clan. The character of Jubei Yagyu is based off Munetoshi, as he is a very popular character in fictional works involving samurai. His line of the Shinkage-ryu is still passed down and taught today in Japan.



### Heishiro Mitsurugi

**Game series:** SoulCalibur  
**Based on a real-life person?:** No

Mitsurugi isn't based on a real person, but is widely known for his contribution to the SoulCalibur roster. Mitsurugi has appeared in every game in the Soul series, beginning with Soul Edge. He's known also for being an excellent choice in SoulCalibur for beginners. His backstory involves his life as a son of a farmer who encountered foreigners with guns. He manages to develop his skills far enough that guns aren't a problem and then travels the world to fight series antagonist Nightmare.



### Oda Nobunaga

**Game series:** Various, including Nobunaga's Ambition, Onimusha, Ninja Gaiden II, Total War: Shogun 2  
**Based on a real-life person?:** Yes  
**Real-life basis:** Oda Nobunaga

Oda Nobunaga is the quintessential example of samurai in videogames. The man responsible for the unification of Japan is mentioned or directly represented in no less than 20 games, and has his own series. Most versions portray him negatively or neutrally, though he has been shown as a positive figure who moved the nation forward with his conquests and civilization. History records that Nobunaga was killed during the Battle of Honno-ji on June 21, 1582. All battle accounts agree that he was killed when an arrow pierced his throat. Leadership then fell to the Tokugawa clan, which fought with Nobunaga's descendants for control of the country. The rest, as they say, is history.



### Yoshimitsu

**Game series:** Tekken, SoulCalibur  
**Based on a real-life person?:** Yes  
**Real-life basis:** Yagyū Jūbei Mitsutoshi

Yoshimitsu's real-life basis, Yagyū Jūbei Mitsutoshi, is one of the most famous samurai in history. Mitsuyoshi's father trained three future shoguns — Tokugawa Ieyasu, Tokugawa Iemitsu and Tokugawa Hidetada — and Mitsutoshi served at court. He disappeared for years and reappeared having acquired various master-level skills in swordsmanship. Yoshimitsu was first introduced in Tekken and is one of four characters that has appeared in every main entry in the series as well as every SoulCalibur main entry. According to Namco, the Yoshimitsu found in SoulCalibur is an ancestor to the version found in Tekken.



### Samanosuke Akechi

**Game series:** Onimusha  
**Based on a real-life person?:** Yes  
**Real-life basis:** Akechi Hidemitsu

Akechi Hidemitsu was a loyal retainer under Akechi Mitsuhide, vassal to Nobunaga Oda. Hidemitsu served at the Battle of Honno-ji, during which Nobunaga was killed. Hidemitsu later killed his family and committed suicide after the loss at the Battle of Yamazaki and death of Mitsuhide in 1582. Takeshi Kaneshiro is the CG model and voice actor for the character in Onimusha by Capcom.

# Pokémon

## RED & BLUE

### KNOWLEDGE CENTER

#### POKÉMON ON TAP

035: Clefairy  
 036: Clefable  
 037: Vulpix  
 038: Ninetails  
 039: Jigglypuff  
 040: Wigglytuff

Special thanks to  
 Bulbapedia for artwork.



No. 35 — Clefairy

EVOLVES USING  
 MOON STONE



No. 36 — Clefable

| ATTACK | TYPE         | LEVEL   |
|--------|--------------|---------|
| Start  | Pound        | Normal  |
| Start  | Growl        | Normal  |
| 13     | Sing         | Normal  |
| 18     | DoubleSlap   | Normal  |
| 24     | Minimize     | Normal  |
| 31     | Metronome    | Normal  |
| 39     | Defense Curl | Normal  |
| 48     | Light Screen | Psychic |

| ATTACK | TYPE       | LEVEL  |
|--------|------------|--------|
| Start  | Sing       | Normal |
| Start  | DoubleSlap | Normal |
| Start  | Minimize   | Normal |
| Start  | Metronome  | Normal |

#### WHAT TO KEEP AND DELETE

##### Moves to keep

Sing  
 Minimize  
 Double Slap  
 Metronome

##### Moves to delete

Pound  
 Growl  
 Defense Curl  
 Light Screen

#### EDITOR'S NOTES:

Clefairy and Clefable are useful Pokémon if you want a set that can learn quite a few tools for defensive tactics and can be taught TMs and HMs for offensive maneuvers. They are two of the more Normal Pokémon in the game and don't really have anything special, other than Sing and

Metronome. Sing is good if you need the sleep status effect, and Metronome can randomly use moves that may or may not help. Metronome has potential but the random chance of it hurting is too great.

Other than those two moves, without the TMs or HMs, neither of these two are going to do anything particularly special.

# Pokémon

## RED & BLUE KNOWLEDGE CENTER



No. 37 — Vulpix

| ATTACK | TYPE         | LEVEL  |
|--------|--------------|--------|
| Start  | Ember        | Fire   |
| Start  | Tail Whip    | Normal |
| 16     | Quick Attack | Normal |
| 21     | Roar         | Normal |
| 28     | Confuse Ray  | Ghost  |
| 35     | Flamethrower | Fire   |
| 42     | Fire Spin    | Fire   |

EVOLVES USING  
FIRE STONE



No. 38 — Ninetales

| ATTACK | TYPE         | LEVEL  |
|--------|--------------|--------|
| Start  | Ember        | Fire   |
| Start  | Tail Whip    | Normal |
| Start  | Quick Attack | Normal |
| Start  | Roar         | Normal |

### WHAT TO KEEP AND DELETE

#### Moves to keep

Confuse Ray  
Flamethrower  
Fire Spin

#### Moves to delete

Ember (until a Flamethrower is learned or Fire Blast is taught)  
Tail Whip  
Quick Attack  
Roar

#### Moves to teach

TM 38 — Fire Blast

### EDITOR'S NOTES:

The fire Pokémon Vulpix and Ninetales are excellent substitutes on a team that needs fire Pokémon. Sure, they aren't as great as Charizard but they still get the job done. Vulpix learns enough Fire-type moves to more than handle the job, and it learns them fairly quickly with seven levels between its final four moves. It also starts out with a more-than-effective move in

Ember, which makes it immediately useful.

The only problem one may have is finding a Vulpix if you're playing Red (it's a Blue-exclusive Pokémon). As always, let Vulpix learn as many moves as possible before evolving to Ninetales. In this case, it's especially important to practice this because Ninetales will never learn Confuse Ray, Flamethrower or Fire Spin otherwise. Vulpix and Ninetales come highly recommended.

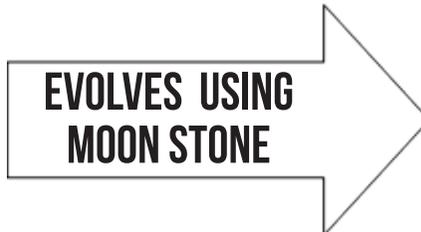
# Pokémon

## RED & BLUE KNOWLEDGE CENTER



No. 39 — Jigglypuff

| ATTACK | TYPE         | LEVEL   |
|--------|--------------|---------|
| Start  | Sing         | Normal  |
| 9      | Pound        | Normal  |
| 14     | Disable      | Normal  |
| 19     | Defense Curl | Normal  |
| 24     | DoubleSlap   | Normal  |
| 29     | Rest         | Psychic |
| 34     | Body Slam    | Normal  |
| 39     | Double-Edge  | Normal  |



No. 40 — Wigglytuff

| ATTACK | TYPE         | LEVEL   |
|--------|--------------|---------|
| Start  | Sing         | Normal  |
| Start  | Disable      | Normal  |
| Start  | Defense Curl | Normal  |
| Start  | DoubleSlap   | Normal  |
| 24     | Minimize     | Normal  |
| 31     | Metronome    | Normal  |
| 39     | Defense Curl | Normal  |
| 48     | Light Screen | Psychic |

### WHAT TO KEEP AND DELETE

#### Moves to keep

Sing  
Disable  
Defense Curl  
Double Slap  
Body Slam  
Double-Edge

#### Moves to delete

Rest  
Pound

### EDITOR'S NOTES:

Much like the aforementioned Clefairy and Clefable, Jigglypuff and Wigglytuff don't really bring much to the table outside of Sing. Like the previous two Pokémon, the duo is also capable of learning a lot of different moves through the use of TMs and HMs.

If you're desperate for a Normal Pokémon to anchor your team, Jigglypuff/Wigglytuff are probably better considering they don't have the annoying Metronome to deal with.

# SONG SPOTLIGHT

By Lyndsey Hicks



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



**Artist:** smile.dk  
**BPM:** 135  
**Difficulty:** 3/4/5/8

The quintessential DDR song, Butterfly's Heavy steps are a true test of mastery of DDR concepts. If you can pass the Heavy steps, you can play DDR and are probably ready for advanced play. Butterfly is the basis of the term "Butterfly turn." In a Butterfly turn, the steps cause 360-degree turns. If you can master turns, you can master DDR. The song isn't that hard on the Heavy difficulty and is also the standard for determining if you're ready to tackle the early series catas. Mostly, the steps consist of the aforementioned turns, triplets and jumps. The song moves at a steady clip and is easy enough to take your time making the turns.

**Suggested speed mod:** x2  
**First appearance:** DDR 1st mix



**Artist:** Re-venge  
**BPM:** 180  
**Difficulty:** 4/5/9

Matsuri Japan is an interesting song. It combines speed and off-stepping, and it can easily cause fatigue midway through. That leads to the most difficult part of Matsuri Japan's Standard steps: the middle section, which features 1/8th single notes within 16 measures. Trying to stay on beat is hard here if you haven't memorized the note patterns or learned the song, but the great thing about the section is that it provides a sort of resting period from the triplets and jumps found early in the song. The 1/8th note section doesn't slow down but it's a great way to regain stamina for the end portion, which throws quite a few triplet runs at you.

**Suggested speed mod:** x1.5  
**First appearance:** DDR 5th mix



**Artist:** RevenG vs. De-sire  
**BPM:** 94.90 - 165  
**Difficulty:** 3/6/9

The Standard steps are among my favorite to step to in DDR and are quite fun. It's not a hard set and once you've memorized the song, it's easy to understand how the pattern works. First, take advantage of the long freeze in the middle of the song to prepare for the galloping section that is coming up. The gallops have the tendency to throw you off if you aren't paying attention. Second, remember that the song stays on beat mostly, even in the Standard steps, and it's not hard to re-catch the beat by listening. Finally, remember that the gallops are the hardest part of the song. If you can get past the gallops, you can pass the song.

**Suggested speed mod:** x1.5  
**First appearance:** DDR 7th mix



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



## UPCOMING SONGS

- Paranoia Rebirth
- Trip Machine Climax
- Irresistiblement

# SONG SPOTLIGHT



**Artist:** a.s.a  
**BPM:** 184  
**Difficulty:** 4/5/8

Happy speed is the business of Mahou no Tobira, a blistering song that combines a lot of jumps and triplets in the Heavy steps. It's hard to keep pace and not run out of steam about one-third of the way through the song. With a max combo of 366 and 296 steps, the best advice that can probably be given would be to build stamina and be ready to jump a lot. Try to use the sections where there are more single steps than jumps to conserve energy, and if you're brave enough, use a speed mod to spread the steps out so that they're more readable.

**Suggested speed mod:** x1.5  
**First appearance:** DDR Extreme



**Artist:** RevenG  
**BPM:** 14-320  
**Difficulty:** 5/8/10/9

The first 10-footer that really wasn't a 10-footer, Sakura is a controversial speed boss song. Later inclusions of the song have the Heavy steps re-rated as a cata, the same as its Challenge steps. Personally, it's not as hard as the other 10-footers/boss songs, so I agree with the re-rating. However, it's still hard. If you're not used to the speed and aren't prepared for changes in speed, you will not pass cleanly, if at all. Easily, the trickiest part of the song to deal with is the slowdown and what I like to call the "32nd arrow of doom." The lone 32nd arrow in the song occurs at the middle part of the song within the lone freeze step, and it's pretty obvious that it's coming. However, most players will not time that note perfectly, and usually wind up getting a Good on the step, if not missing it completely. And, more than likely, despite memorizing the step pattern and song isn't going to help with anticipating the note. Also, while I'm suggesting a speed mod here, don't use one if you're not used to the speed. Keep in mind that by using a speed mod, the song jumps to 480 BPM at one point, so it will hurt.

**Suggested speed mod:** x1.5  
**First appearance:** DDR Extreme

## DDR GLOSSARY

**Butterfly Turn** — Steps that originally appeared in "Butterfly" in 1st mix that caused players to turn.

**Perfect Attack** — Attempting to get as many perfects as possible. Most tournaments are based on this method.

**Catastrophic** — Song ranking given to 9-foot song rankings. These were the most difficult songs before DDR Max. "Passing a cata" refers to this.

## ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

**E-rotic** — A duo featuring several different combinations of a male rapper and female singer, E-rotic originally began recording in 1994 with members Lyane Leigh and Richard Michael Smith (aka Raz-Ma-Taz). Leigh and Smith left the group in 1999. They were replaced with Jeanette Christensen and Terence D'Arby in 2000. Christensen left in 2000 and was replaced by Yasemin Baysal and Lydia Madawjewski. D'Arby was replaced by Ché Jouaner and Robert Spehar. The group remained active until 2003. Members of the group have also recorded under the name Missing Heart, contributing a cover of Moonlight Shadow for DDR 5th Mix.

**Captain Jack** — The band began recording in 1995, with several lineups. The most famous of the lineups — which were the bulk of the songs used in DDR — were led by Franky Gee, who served as the lead vocalist until his death in 2005. Captain Jack is known for several songs in the DDR lineup such as their eponymous hit, Drill Instructor, Little Boy (Boy Oh Boy Mix), In the Navy '99 (XXL Disaster Remix) and Dream a Dream.



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



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

# Battletoads should have never left the Rare swamp

I love animals. I feel like they share space with us upright walkers and should be respected as such. But there comes a time when all of the Almighty's creations have to be put down. And, sadly, that edict extends to digital form. I hate to see any creature euthanized, but somebody should have put Battletoads down before the game saw the light of day. This ain't murder but it should be.

The problem with Battletoads is a multi-pronged issue. The first immediate topic is the lackluster graphics. Yes, they're 8-bit and cuddly and cute. But I can't really make out that my character is supposed to be a toad that walks upright, really. I'm not expecting a masterpiece, but if I can't tell that it's supposed to be an amphibian, something's wrong. About the only way I realized it the first time I played was when I managed to make Rash stick his tongue out to catch flies that give extra lives. And while we're at it, the music is terrible. I wanted to escape the music but no matter where I turned I just couldn't find a way to get away. There's no imagination to it, and it really doesn't inspire me to save a princess with a stupid name.

While we're on the subject of names, the game's juvenile humor does it no favors. Seriously, did we need to name the heroes Rash and Zitz and Pimple? Really? It's right on par with Earthworm Jim and Boogerman from the 16-bit days, and somehow I get the feeling this was the start of it.

And let's not forget the main reason why Battletoads is a plague forced upon the masses: The difficulty is crazy ridiculous. In the many (too many) times I've picked up Battletoads, I've managed to make it past the cavern level without cheat codes a grand total of once. Why? Because Rare decided that if you're going to be stupid enough to play this, they might as well get something out of it. Somewhere, Chris and Tim



Stamper chuckle every time someone plays one of their overly difficult games and decides to quit playing games. It's the video game equivalent of kittens being killed.

Rare, in general, is terrible but somehow, somehow, Battletoads is a confirmation of all that was wrong with the world then and now and was an unfortunate realization of letting one of the worst companies in history come into existence.

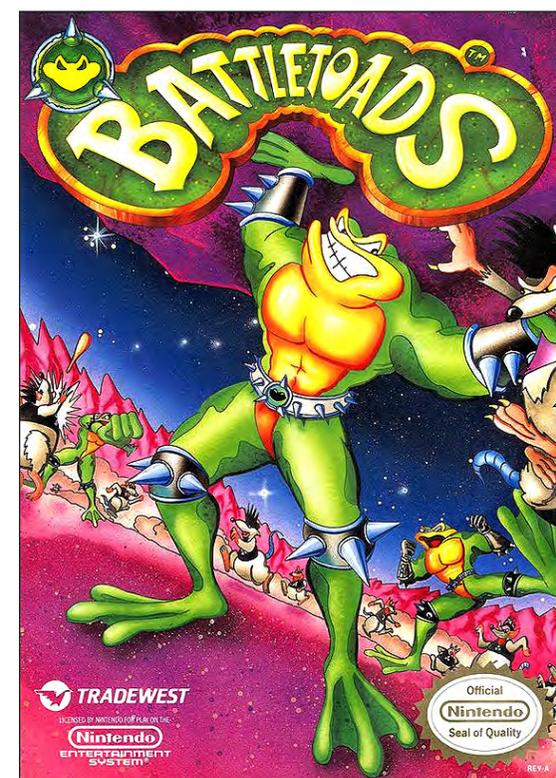
Yes, you read that correctly and I didn't stutter:

I do think Rare is terrible. Battletoads is the prime example by which I make my proclamation. I don't think I have ever encountered a company more overrated than Rare — except for maybe Capcom — though it seems the glow around Rare has finally washed off with more garbage games like Battletoads being released in the modern era.

Do us all a favor and stop killing kittens and precious toads, and don't play Battletoads.



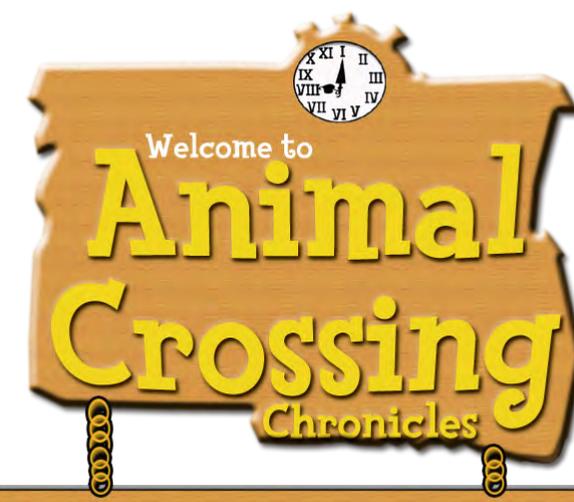
with Lyndsey Hicks



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## CLASSIC FOCUS

### GI ANALYZES RETRO FAVORITES



Population: Gaming Insurrection editors!

## An American woman in love with Japan

**W**hen I was in the seventh grade, in the heady days of 1993 and 1994, I fell in love with a nation. That's not an easy feat, let me tell you. I am a red-blooded American woman who loves herself some of the good old U.S. of A, but my love for video games was unmatched, and it didn't take long for me to figure out where they came from mostly.

In those halcyon days, I was an ignorant little wretch, playing what I could when I could with little money. All I could depend on was my mother getting paid every two weeks so that I could have a pittance of what she earned in the form of an allowance. I received \$25, and the ink on the Treasury Department stacks was barely dry before I'd find a way to blow it on my favorite hobby/habit. Why, I could have saved millions by now probably if I hadn't bought countless issues of GamePro and EGM that were summarily read at dinner-time from cover to cover. The gaming news of the day was most important

for me, and I learned the behind-the-scenes nuts and bolts of the trade and gaming journalism all at once. Call it a supplementary education if you will.

While I received a quite proper game education and academic merits in Columbia, S.C.'s public institutions of learning, at the arcade I was becoming cultured in the ways of the people speak. And at home, I was learning subtly about a country I'd never seen and still haven't ventured forth to in the ensuing 20 years: Japan. My first glancing blow with the Land of the Rising Sun was through



**Lyndsey Hicks**  
Editor-in-Chief

Street Fighter. Now, I realize like most people who play the series that there are several nations represented in the World Warrior tournament. Japan is one of many. However, the primary language spoken among all of the characters in the original version of Street Fighter II — with the exception of Zangief, Dhalsim and Guile — is Japanese. And yes, even Ken Masters, who is half Japanese, speaks Japanese fluently.

So, when I booted up the game after ignoring it in favor of Mortal Kombat, I realized there was something going on there and it wasn't the good old English I was used to hearing. The shock of hearing the language for the first time was akin to being set free to roam in the world for the first time: I didn't know how to act. I soaked up the language, enthralled with E. Honda's stage and the concept of sumo. I'd never even heard of

I was aware of China and some of the food that I thought came from there (Americanized Chinese food is among my favorites), I had no idea about the history, customs or culture of either China or Japan. All of that changed when I did a shoryuken for the first time.

I dove into the world of a land I didn't know with abandon. By the time my eighth grade year rolled around, I knew more about samurai and sumo than most 13-year-olds and I finally understood that Japan, at that point, was the place I needed to be because every game that I'd ever played had come from there. And thus began my lifelong dream of traveling. I also had to learn two concepts at that point: Cultural sensitivity and open-mindedness. As a black teenage girl and now as a black woman, I had to learn that there are other people in the world besides myself and my own race of people. At the same time, I realized that there are people

out there in the world that have preconceived notions about who I am and what I love. While I have a deep appreciation for Japanese culture, it is impossible for me to ever become Japanese. I can't think Japanese, I certainly can't speak it and I would never claim in any way, shape or form to understand the country's way of life. However, I can indulge myself in what it has to offer and open my mind to it as well. So, when I've heard someone say that I am trying to "turn Japanese" because I happen to love geisha or watch a lot of anime or play a lot of video games, I shut that nonsense down.

That's what this entire issue of Gaming Insurrection is about this quarter: We appreciate.

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