

MARCH 2026 - ISSUE #2



# MAGE

THE MAGAZINE TO DISCOVER SOMETHING NEW



# IT'S ALL ABOUT THE GAMES

For eight years, The Thirsty Mage Podcast has been devoted to the idea of sharing personal experiences within the community in an effort to enhance everyone's appreciation of video games. Whether it's shining a light on lesser known titles, or helping to shape the perceptions on misunderstood games, the podcast works towards helping everyone enjoy video games to their fullest.

With hundreds of thousands of titles spanning over multiple decades, it's impossible to play every single game out there. This magazine is another medium for the hosts of the podcasts to share their experiences to either point those towards good experiences, or maybe even warn against not-so-great ones.

No stone goes unturned in our pursuit of fun video game experiences. From the early days of Atari, all the way to modern releases on the Nintendo Switch 2, our writers share the good, the bad, and the ugly as they set out on a journey to document every great experience they come across.

As a small indie magazine, word of mouth is key. Our only ask of all our readers is that if you enjoy reading about video games, old and new, please share it with a friend. Maybe even post about it on social media.

We hope you enjoy this issue!

## STAFF

**David Lloyd - Editor in Chief**

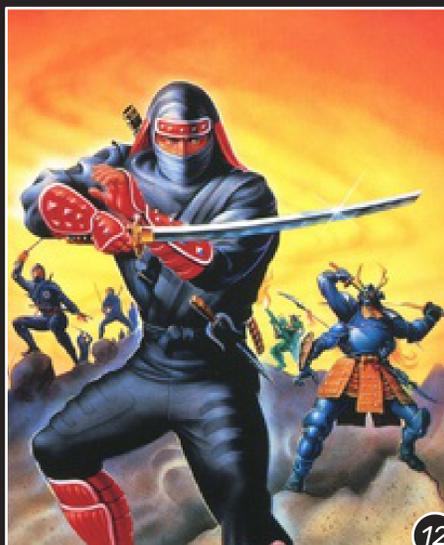
**Paige Chamberlain - Writer**

**Casey Gibson - Writer**

**Brian H - Writer**

**Jordan Rudek - Writer**

## CONTENTS

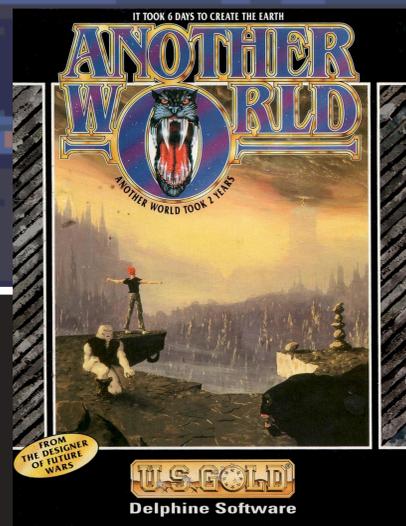


# ANOTHER WORLD

COMMODORE AMIGA



© Bill Bertram 2006, CC-BY-2.5



## HOW LONG TO BEAT

~ 3 HOURS

## DEVELOPER

DELPINE SOFTWARE

## RELEASED

1991

## RECOMMENDED VERSION

Another World has been ported in one form or another to most platforms over the past 35+ years, though some folks in North America likely know the game as Out Of This World.

The 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition is available on all modern platforms and features both the original and remastered HD graphics.

WRITTEN BY DAVID LLOYD

My "PC snob" rebellious years didn't truly begin until the mid-to-late nineties, well after the heyday of the cinematic adventure game, Another World. Developed by French designer Eric Chahi for the Amiga and Atari ST over a two-year period, the game launched in 1991 unbeknownst to my teenage self. While its design was hailed as revolutionary and largely holds up today, the gameplay is undeniably a product of its time. Progress requires a level of patience that one can't reasonably expect from a modern audience.

The game sets the stage with a cinematic cutscene introducing a hotshot scientist experimenting with an electron collider. When an accident occurs, he is teleported to "Another World," a place teeming with danger, from bloodthirsty monsters to roaming guards looking to vaporize intruders. The goal is simple: run. You escape from a prison, sprint through tunnels, and even "pilot" a tank to find some semblance of safety in this strange land.

The gameplay is more puzzle-based than twitch-reflex reliant. The world is broken into small segments, requiring you to figure out how to escape each one alive. This often means memorizing the exact order of tasks or hunting for the hidden secret that opens a path forward.

Some areas are more intuitive than others; I'll admit I reached for my phone for a walkthrough in a couple of instances (though I probably could have figured it out eventually). The game isn't devoid of action. Early on, the scientist disarms a guard and takes control of their laser gun. The laser has both defensive and offensive capabilities, allowing the scientist to both shoot at his captors and create energy shields for protection from enemy fire. The controls are a little bit stiff and finicky, kind of expected given the limitations of the original hardware.

Failure means death, and the scientist dies repeatedly. I considered keeping a manual tally of my deaths, only for a Steam achievement to twist the knife by rewarding me for my 100th demise. My resolve was tested, but I ultimately prevailed after about three hours.

At a sale price of \$2, the 20th Anniversary Edition on Steam is an easy recommendation. One piece of advice: skip the "updated" graphics. The new visuals, while more colourful and sharp, really lose the character from the original art design. A quick setting change restores the original pixel artwork, which remains far more visually appealing and atmospheric.



*The old graphics might be less detailed, but they've got more character*





 N E X T  
F E S T  
IMPRESSIONS

**WRITTEN BY PAIGE CHAMBERLAIN**  
**INTRO BY DAVID LLOYD**

The first Steam Next Fest of 2026 ran from February 13<sup>th</sup> to March 2<sup>nd</sup>, and our wishlists are now a whole lot longer because of it. The multi-week event showcases some of the biggest new games coming out this year, and a whole lot of indie games you probably haven't heard of but will likely want to.

Instead of a one time video presentation like a Direct or State of Play, Valve instead highlights a number of demos so that fans get to see firsthand what this year's upcoming line of games is going to be like.

The standout hit among Steam users (based on unique players) appears to be Marathon, the new survival extraction FPS from Halo and Destiny developer, Bungie.

Since FPS games generally aren't our thing, we instead went on the hunt for interesting looking options and a few lesser known titles hoping to find some hidden gems. Many of the games listed are multi-platform releases, so the console-only crowd will have a lot to look forward to as well.

**MONSTER HUNTER**  
**STORIES 3**  
TWISTED REFLECTION

**RELEASE DATE**  
**MARCH 13, 2026**



The latest in a spin-off series that I'm happily surprised to see containing any legs, is stepping out. The Monster Hunter Stories games are monster (or in this case monstie) collecting games set in the Monster Hunter world but the people are riders who fight with their monsters ... against other ones. The turn based gameplay is intact and even including the rock-paper-scissors system, although the enemies do vary up their abilities more often. I'm already wanting to skip more of the battle animations though, after having to redo the last fight of the demo because I attacked the monstie's right leg instead of the left so it didn't trigger my com party members to attack the legs with me.

I pivoted from playing the demo on Switch 2 to PS5 due to the awful handheld experience as walking around the castle town felt awful and sluggish. Sadly, the Playstation version of the game still experiences high levels of pop-in, but at least I'll save some money now that I'm only buying one version of the game.

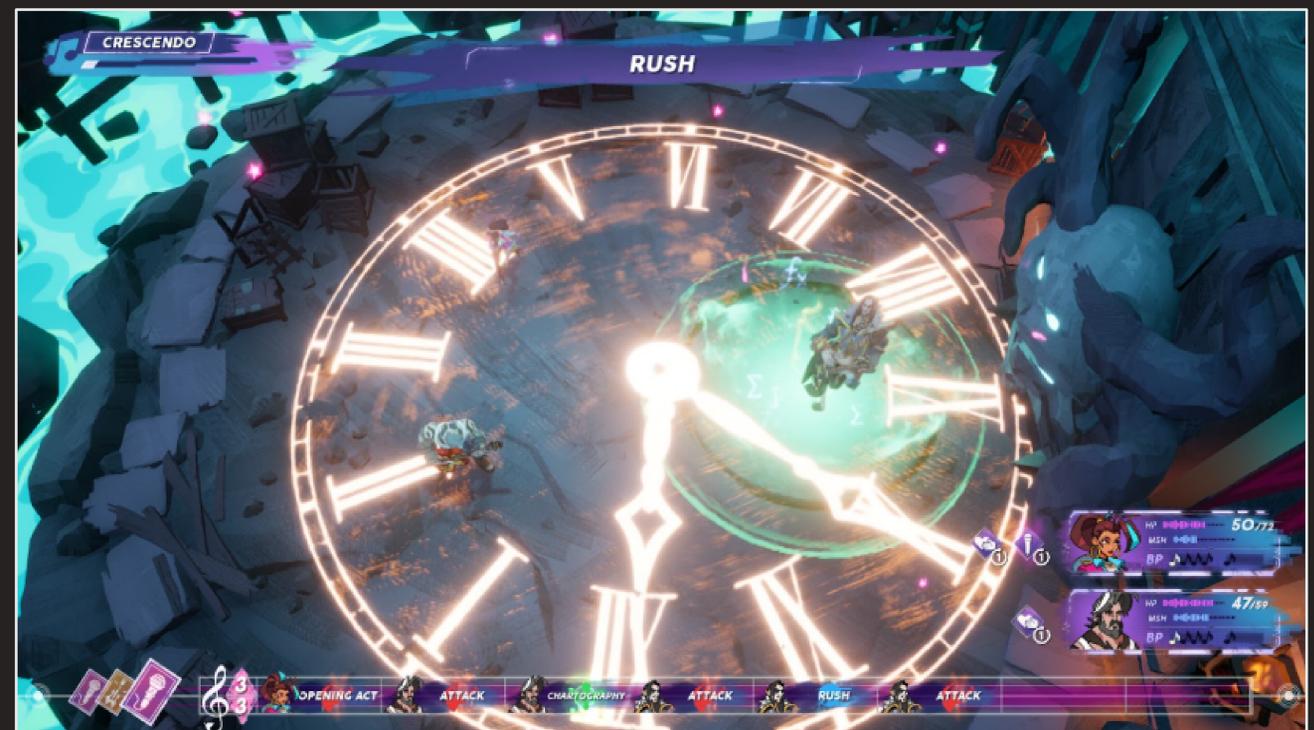
Another disappointment is the lack of Monster Hunter language in the game, something that's already begun to happen in the mainline series. I'm still stuck on not being happy no matter how much I change my appearance as I need to look good for those precious few screenshots I have with my best friend who is mysteriously lacking any day 1 DLC costumes.

It's clear from the demo alone that there was a lot more budget put into this one, with super over the top attack animations and overall cutscene production. This also goes hand in hand with the story featuring not a typical rider, but a member of royalty dealing with an oncoming war and the same mother issues as one Homer J. Simpson. I'm somewhat interested to see where it goes and by that I mean the areas we've been shown in the many many trailers are rather promising.



One new feature of this game is changing the overall population of an area, as you can choose to release your monsters into the wild and they will thrive and multiply, giving you better chances of quality eggs and mutations. Since you can only go in one area in the demo I'm not sure the extent to which I can upset the natural balance of the world.

If you play enough of the demo to decide you want the full release, I'd recommend putting the demo down because the EXP cap is very low and you'd be better off playing the full game instead of wasting side quest rewards. Unless you just really want to make the most busted Nerscylla then of course I couldn't blame you. I'm looking forward to it.



## RELEASE DATE

**APRIL 7, 2026**



People of Note is a game that I looked at the trailer of and thought "Wow those are the blandest stylized characters I've ever seen, we'll see what reviews say." Now that I've played the demo for just over an hour, the only review I need is a performance one.

People of Note is a musical themed turn-based rpg where the world is divided up into different music genres with seemingly no tolerance for different grooves. The combat is input based (albeit without no blocking commands) and the better timing you have the better your attack or skill lands.

It's one of those floating circles that closes-in style of rhythm games. A type system in the form of music types exists so certain turns (called stanzas in this game) will be pop styled giving our main character Cadence a boost.



All skills have to be equipped so there's certainly variety in how you tackle things and even some limitations. Managing BP and picking the right skills are essential, I definitely had to make use of that knowledge in the boss fight since it took me a few tries but putting on the ability that gave me extra moves for a turn I had the advantage for was the key.

The world was a bit bothersome to navigate initially, mostly because I can't move the camera around so I didn't notice an exit at first. I wish I could run. The world is full of things like trivia owls *hoo* you'll have to answer the question correctly to beat, I've encountered multiple and failed them all. There are challenge battles where you'll have to beat an opponent in one turn or more. I also had to contend with some puzzles placed throughout the dungeon of the chapter. An additional currency, that is vinyls, can be earned through battle and can be used to initiate a random battle as otherwise there are but a few static encounters.

Graphically the world looks really neat with some brushstroke effects on the textures, I thought the NPCs were mannequin styled at first but I think that's just it running for a low-end PC.

Existing in this world are other little details of interest such as an accorgion (a corgi accordion if you couldn't tell).

The production value was a bit all over the place with most cutscenes being in a minimal sprite visual novel style. Unfortunately, it also has one of the stiffest in-engine style cutscenes I've seen with less movement than a motion comic that then transformed into a fully developed and fantastic cutscene.

This game is set to release awfully soon so hopefully this demo is based on an earlier build and they can fix some of that up. So far the music is good enough, so hopefully they make something really awesome as you sort of need to when everything is about music here. Of course there's voice acting which is probably something you'd assume given the characters sing at times.

My computer ran it pretty fuzzily although there weren't many if any performance issues because of that. I'm not sure how I feel about it coming to the Switch and am holding out for the PS5 version.

# TRIVIA FANTASY



## RELEASE DATE

**"COMING SOON"**



Trivia Fantasy is a turn-based trivia game largely ripping from Final Fantasy 1's style but if you edited it in MS Paint. In order to make your move, you have to correctly answer a trivia question, although there is still the rare possibility to miss. If you aren't familiar with anime, I probably wouldn't play it as that seems to be a frequent category. It becomes a bit more interesting further on as you unlock spells and can finally afford the upgrade and equipment. So far every floor of the tower (that you only see as a graphic on the side) seems to be a single encounter but that might change past the demo's limitation, I had the ability to place dolls on a floor but I didn't lose so my assumption is that I will start again from that floor rather than the bottom.

It feels like it'll be a fairly short game but depending on the pricing I'll probably pick it up.



# Titanium Court



## RELEASE DATE

**"COMING SOON"**



In another round I had to try to position rocks around me without voiding them out so that I could be protected from catapults. Different fields might have special shops or resources to collect but you have to keep them on screen until the next phase to make use of them.

Titanium Court is a match-3, tower defense, diet-rogue combination of a game. Why Paige, that sounds like all the genres you hate! Why yes it does Paige, but you see, it's also turn-based and therefore all the inadequate puzzle moves are made under somewhat less pressure. Basically, you've ended up as the Queen of the Faeries who are being swept up by tides and must progress your castle so that you might maybe make it home, wherever that is. In the high tide phase you match-3 the landscape around you to either entirely eliminate enemy spawn points, or to collect the resources which you'll need to deploy your soldiers or gatherers. Then in the low-tide (or battle and shopping) phase the landscape affects how you and enemy soldiers move (except for the jerks that can fly) so I once had an enemy completely trapped by water who couldn't do anything. I will say your own soldiers aren't particularly smart and no-one sticks around to defend the base so you'll have to keep that in mind.



I'm not sure what computer gaming era to liken the visuals to, so have a look at the one screenshot I'm giving you and you tell me. I do like the sporting animations that play whenever you successfully take down an enemy fort. Now if you don't like silly writing then well don't play a game where you're in charge of a bunch of faeries in war, because there's a lot of it. I'm definitely picking the full release of this up and then almost certainly never beating it.

## RELEASE DATE

**TBD**

While technically a demo, Darkhaven is much more down the road than the other games covered here. We've included it mainly for Diablo fans, as this game is being made by developers with a pretty impressive resume: Diablo I - IV, Nox, Hellgate: London, Marvel Heroes Online, and Torchlight I and II.

The demo is a snapshot of the game, with no set end point, just a level cap. Players can experience one type of class with 6 skills spread out over 3 skill trees. The dark-fantasy isometric RPG has strong Diablo vibes and should likely be on the wishlist of fans of the series. The one reason for pessimism, the developers launched a Kickstarter to "accelerate and expand" development. With 10 days to go, they were still 30% of their goal. Here's hoping they can make it across the finish line.

## OTHER STEAM GAMES TO CONSIDER WISHLISTING

- Dosa Divas
- Roguecraft
- The Blood of Dawnwalker
- Tactics Returners
- Runa
- Sacrifire
- Legends of Astravia
- Guns Undarkness
- Bloodstained: The Scarlet Engagement
- Moonlighter II: The Endless Vault

WRITTEN BY DAVID LLOYD

# SHINOBI III

RETURN OF THE NINJA MASTER

SEGA GENESIS



**HOW LONG TO BEAT**

~ 3 HOURS

**DEVELOPER**

SEGA

**RELEASED**

1993

**RECOMMENDED VERSION**

The most accessible version is likely included in the Sega Genesis Collection on the Nintendo Switch Online Service. The Nintendo 3DS port by M2 also does some pretty amazing things with its 3D capabilities, that is of course, you can get your hands on an affordable copy.

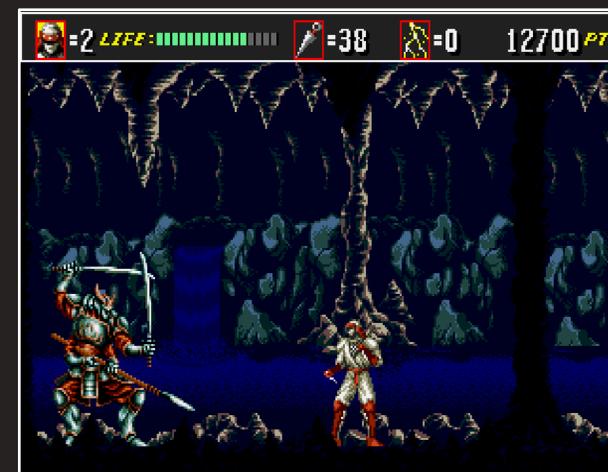
He is stronger than steel and moves faster than a whirlwind. Joe Musashi returns for a third adventure in Shinobi 3: Return of the Ninja Master, a hack and slash game widely considered one of the best games for the Sega Genesis. Shinobi is a franchise synonymous with Sega, maybe as much so as Sonic the Hedgehog. The franchise was so important to the console maker that Sega delayed the original release of the game after it received a lukewarm response from reviewers and early previewers. The extra time seems to have been well worth it, as Shinobi 3 is an absolutely wonderful game, excelling in both its beautiful art design and crisp and responsive combat mechanics.

Playing out over 7 different levels, Joe Musashi fights through a number of different environments, from forests crawling with enemies, to flying fortresses filled with killer robots and platforming that test your patience. As a Nintendo kid, I often don't gel with games that are considered "Sega Classics", they always seem to feel different and awkward. Shinobi 3 is the exception. The combat is very fast and fluid, with responsive controls and cleverly designed levels with no cheap deaths.

What cannot be understated, is the top tier level design. Shinobi 3 features some of the best parallax scrolling you'll find in a 16-bit game. The 3D effect really pops from the screen, especially in the levels that feature Joe riding on a horse or surfboard. The colours are vibrant and small details like leaves blowing in the forest just add to the experience. Enemies are placed perfectly, adding just enough difficulty but never in a way that punishes the player. The highest level of challenge is reserved for the final stage, where a sequence of wall jumping really puts your patience and eye-hand coordination to the test.



*The power of blast processing...*



*Why'd everyone have 4 arms in the 90s?*

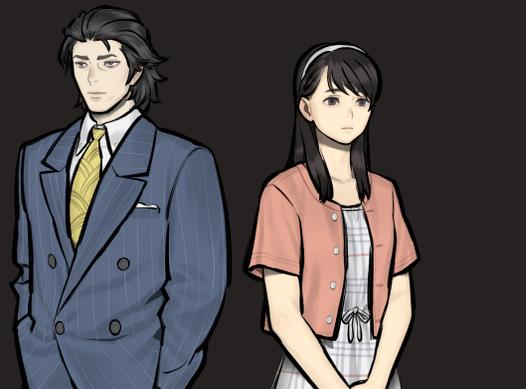
Shinobi 3 is a title that almost always appears on a Sega Genesis top ten list, and for good reason. It's a fantastic hack and slash experience that features the perfect amount of difficulty. At seven stages, Shinobi 3 doesn't wear out its welcome, you get just enough martial arts action without feeling repetitive. Often, looking back at games of this generation can often be clouded by feelings of nostalgia, but in the case of Shinobi 3, the praise is completely warranted.



WRITTEN BY PAIGE CHAMBERLAIN

# PARANORMASIGHT THE MERMAID'S CURSE

NINTENDO SWITCH



PARANORMASIGHT™  
The Mermaid's Curse

**HOW LONG TO BEAT**

~ 11 HOURS

**DEVELOPER**

SQUARE ENIX

**RELEASED**

2026

**RECOMMENDED VERSION**

Paranormasight is only available on Nintendo Switch 1/2, and through Steam (and mobile I suppose). This is a visual novel which runs perfectly fine on any of the aforementioned platforms, it all comes down to personal preference.

If you told me that Paranormasight was getting a sequel I wouldn't believe you. If you told me it was releasing two weeks after the announcement, I would've struck you for your foolishness. That said, it's here and I've played it.

If you're not familiar with Paranormasight, it is a series of visual novel adventure style games with a lot of reading and a bit of scanning your panoramic environments and puzzle solving featuring sinister curses. The Mermaid's Curse is set mostly on a small island, you start as Yuza Minakuchi, a man who five years prior survived an accident at sea. You've come back to your home island to look after your grandmother but many of the locals aren't too happy, especially when you've decided to become a diving fisherman. However, you are extremely pressed to find a mermaid and it seems like you're not the only one.

Being such a fan of the first entry, I didn't need any reviews to make my purchase but I had heard that there was less of a focus on horror. I wasn't especially surprised since The Seven Mysteries of Honjo did turn more into a thriller halfway through. When I did get to the very small amount of horror, I was disappointed there wasn't more. Another change is there are not many segments where you're actually in any timed danger and have to worry about getting instantly eliminated. It's a bit more about rifling through your many many files. Supposedly, this is also because people complained about the jump scares in the first game and that is really sad. Hopefully, a third entry can swing the other way and we can achieve full balance. The Mermaid's Curse definitely lost some of its tension because of that and perhaps because the story was a little more put together from the get go. I felt like it took me a bit longer to warm up to some of the cast, especially the two foreigners, but that's mostly because their story was a whole lot of exposition dumping. The sense of humor is definitely still there although I think they might bring out the "kissy" pouts a little bit too much.

One change in gameplay is the fully 3D underwater diving segment where you are trying to collect sea creatures to rack up a high score without running out of breath.

Once you upgrade your levels, it becomes a bit easier, although I found the faster swimming could make it hard to aim for gathering. I honestly thought there was going to be more to this part of the gameplay and assumed it was part of the reason for the higher price, but once you max out your levels there isn't much of a reason to return. The game features a good soundtrack but re-using the same sound effects felt a bit weird as the shock and horror noises were constantly accompanying perfectly normal things. I had to play on my Switch 1 and it ran perfectly fine.

Some of the changes seem a bit more of a miss, and other times it seems they're trying too hard to redo some of the popular things from the first entry. Regardless, the story is enjoyable and interesting besides the large extra historical reading (or skimming) inserted. The story does piece together as you play it but the impact of things hits a bit harder once you get the entire picture. There still is just the right amount of meta gameplay that slides into the paranormal themes.

Paranormasight: The Mermaid's Curse is a must play for fans, but for other people maybe try the original first. That said, these are good traditional style Japanese adventure mystery games and I'll recommend them 1000x over any Famicom Detective Club game.



The "kissy" face returns



**WRITTEN BY PAIGE CHAMBERLAIN**

# DRAGON QUEST VII

**REIMAGINED**

**NINTENDO SWITCH**



**HOW LONG TO BEAT**

**~ 50 HOURS**

**DEVELOPER**

**SQUARE ENIX**

**RELEASED**

**2026**

**RECOMMENDED VERSION**

The jury seems to be hung when it comes to whether or not Reimagined is the definitive edition of Dragon Quest VII. Many that played the 3DS remake swear to its quality, while others say that Reimagined sands off the edges of the handheld version. Regardless of the version, most will say the best version is the one you play.

I hadn't gotten around to playing Dragon Quest VII because I'd heard it was quite long, and I only recently warmed up to the idea of playing lengthy RPGs every so often. However, I managed to beat this version in 41 hours and 41 minutes. So, it wasn't actually that long, for an RPG, anyway.

I know for a fact, as it was publicly stated well before release, that some of the islands weren't going to make it into this version. Given that the entire premise of the game is discovering that yours isn't meant to be the only island in the world, and traveling into the past to save others from doom so they reappear in the present, it seems like an odd choice to decide some of them don't deserve to exist at all. Luckily, I have no basis of comparison to know what those stories were like, although there were a few times I could feel the trimmings. On one of the earliest islands, I was asked to retrieve an item I already knew of, and in fact, already had because the game made me get it prior to arriving there. I figured that was definitely a change.

Initially, I thought the episodic/vignette style didn't give me enough time to actually experience the emotions of these islands, but it was mostly just the first few that felt short. What I and others mean by the game's "episodic nature" is that the stories of the islands are mostly unique calamities, one place might be fighting an automaton army, while another deals with the sins of its past. Some stories surprised me. I didn't always get the resolution I was expecting.

For a first-time player, this was all fine, and the game was plenty enjoyable. However, I feel that with the general adjustments to gameplay, they didn't really need to cut the islands. I saw a 3DS trailer the other day and found out there was a whole monster-raising area, and now I feel a bit cheated. I wouldn't have minded spending another twenty hours there. One island allowed me to make an actual choice that changed what happened in the present. Obviously, I tried both outcomes thanks to saves, but I somewhat preferred the initially sadder one.



I feel like there could've been more of that, which makes me suspect that even the original version of the game didn't do everything it wanted to.

The typical turn-based combat is very fun. I stuck with the normal difficulty, which many complained was too easy. I did find that towards the end of the game, the bosses weren't complete cakewalks like the earlier ones. When I decided to try "Hard Mode," I unfortunately chose one of the hardest optional monsters, so I made a retreat and didn't try it again later.

The only time I used auto-battle was during a segment where skills were disabled; it made more sense to use that than to press the exact same button several times. Other reasons this game feels easier include more frequent healing points and the fact that you instantly revive with 1 HP outside of battle. For me, the lack of "coffin dragging" is a loss of what makes Dragon Quest what it is. Pair that with being able to use Zoom anywhere (a change made back in Dragon Quest Treasures), and while the game isn't devoid of the series' usual charms, it's enough to make me worry. Far too many series are doing this lately, and now I'm sounding like a broken record.

Regarding the job system: you can equip two jobs at a time, titled "Moonlighting," which really helps unlock advanced jobs faster. I changed jobs frequently but sometimes had to rearrange them for boss fights when I realized I didn't have any good healing spells or specific attacks. I don't have much experience with RPG job systems, but I thought it was strange that I couldn't keep any skills from the jobs once they were unequipped. Apparently, in prior versions, you could keep skills from lower-ranked jobs but couldn't "moonlight," so I guess they didn't want to make it ultra-easy.

Enemies appear on the overworld, though once you run into one, a few more buddies will join the fray.

I found this helpful when fully exploring dungeons, especially since some had puzzle elements. Aside from being able to run around some foes, the respawn rates let me explore a bit before they reappeared.

Further into the game, however, enemies respawned much quicker, making it hard to tell where I had already been. I liked the variety in dungeons, ranging from long and stressful to very short. One of the later ones was entirely different in how you navigated it; I wasn't expecting that at all, especially so close to the end.

As for the party members, there weren't any I disliked, although I did rejoice when I could remove Ruff from my party as his winning animation was grating. I grew attached to the characters and unexpectedly got emotional when recruiting a particular addition. I liked having party chat, but half the time they were just telling me what to do instead of reacting to events, which was lame. Without spoiling anything the promotional material didn't already cover, one of the new segments felt unnecessary, more like fan service for returning players.

The main appeal of the remake, other than being on modern platforms, is how beautiful it is. With a diorama-style look featuring 3D models based on handcrafted dolls, this blend of tangible art with digital models has been popular lately, and I don't mind it. I do, however, mind the loss of different outfits for jobs. I know that was a feature in the 3DS version, and given there are only five party members and a limited number of jobs, it feels lazy—especially when they made paid DLC outfits.

The environments look wonderful, and certain enemies look great, especially the metallic ones. One thing I noticed was the lack of monster variety; certain mini-bosses were just turned into generic units. Those bosses apparently had unique models in other versions.



There are also some obviously new or re-done cutscenes where the perspective changes. The sideways view used when recruiting Ruff seemed like it would be a recurring style, but it never happened again. We also have voice acting here and there, which is good, though they were definitely slacking on the Princess's lisp.

This game doesn't really feel like a replacement, and it's certainly not a "Definitive Edition." I'll be trying out the 3DS version at some point in the future but maybe not the PS1 original though, as it's a bit too ugly for my tastes.

While this is an enjoyable way to play for newcomers or veterans, there are still minor gripes that a first-time player might pick up on. Regardless, the characters, world, and dungeons are all fun to experience. If you like Dragon Quest, you should play it.



WRITTEN BY DAVID LLOYD

# KING'S KNIGHT

NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM



## HOW LONG TO BEAT

~ 1 HOUR

## DEVELOPER

SQUARE

## RELEASED

1986

## RECOMMENDED VERSION

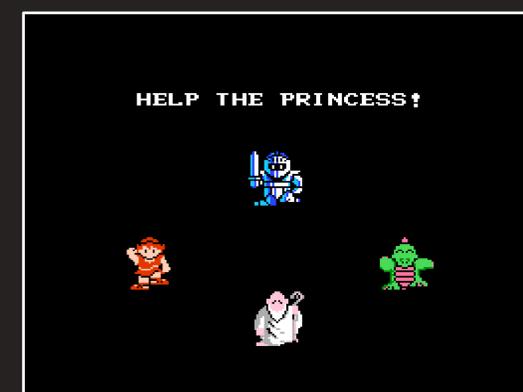
King's Knight was originally released on both the Famicom and MSX in Japan of 1986. NES cartridges are fairly easy to find and go for rather cheap. In 2017, Square Enix released a remake of the game to mobile devices as a spin-off to Final Fantasy XV. It didn't survive for long, ultimately shutting down in 2018, less than a year from its release.

My affinity for Square Enix is no secret, they are, far and away, my favorite video game developer. Because Square's 8-bit library is relatively easy to track down at local retro shops, the NES became my first "complete" Squaresoft collection. However, owning them is one thing and finishing them is another. Most of their pre-Final Fantasy titles are tough as nails. One afternoon, I finally sat down with unrelenting determination to get through the vertical-scrolling shooter King's Knight. After a couple of doomed playthroughs, and the help of a guide, I finally managed to see the end credits of one of Hironobu Sakaguchi's first video games.



King's Knight is one of those early NES games that reading the manual is absolutely a necessity to understand anything in the game. As described in the manual, the premise of the game is that a Princess has been captured by a Dragon and 4 brave warriors need to rescue her (sounds familiar eh). The gameplay unfolds across five auto-scrolling levels, one for each character, followed by a final stage for the full team. As the screen moves upward, you blast everything in sight, from enemies to the landscape itself. You'll need to uncover power-ups hidden under trees, shrubs, and buildings just to keep your health bar from hitting zero.

And that's one of the most important things. The manual doesn't implicitly say that the final boss cannot be defeated without all 4 characters. It also doesn't tell you that the final dungeon has a wall that cannot be bypassed without the Thief collecting 4 elemental pieces in their level, and then not preserving the one time use magic for that wall. And it really doesn't tell you that in order to damage the final boss, you need to collect all 3 pieces of a sword while making your way through the final dungeon. Back in 1989, I'd probably have never figured any of this out after having played the game a few hundred times. Thankfully, after 3 botched runs during a long evening, I was able to find out online exactly what I was doing wrong so that my Sunday night could end on a positive note (I finished the game at 2am).



A little retro jank aside, my lasting feelings after playing King's Knight are surprisingly positive. It's neat to see that even before Final Fantasy, Squaresoft was dabbling with RPG elements, even in a scrolling shooter style video game. Unfortunately, King's Knight has mostly been forgotten, but remains an interesting curiosity for those who want to experience a game made by a young Sakaguchi and Uematsu.





## BY PAIGE CHAMBERLAIN

As I sit here thinking about how lame the latest **Pokémon Presents** was, aka the standard experience, I think about how Pokémon has been with me throughout my whole life...minus five months. Well the trademark is always 1995, so it's confusing enough for me and I've got almost seven months to be the same age alright?

It's the first TV show I can remember at all. Sitting on a bed in a room of a house no-one in my family has anymore, I distantly remember an episode on a bridge involving a Cloyster. The nostalgia instantly makes it one of my favorite Pokémon by default. The only other episodes I regularly watched were a three pack on VHS which added Venonat and Rapidash to that favourite Pokémon list.



*I wanna be the very best...*



The first time I played a mainline Pokémon game was my Uncle's copy of Pokémon Gold. In short order, I was struggling and had to be told how to catch and train more than the starter. So put that in your complaining-about-the-tutorials-pipe and smoke it. Around that time, I'd play the heck out of the Pokémon Stadium 2 mini-games in that classic four player N64 fashion. I'd enjoy my own time with other spin-offs like Pokémon Channel, but I never kept up with news so I only played every second generation. The only reason I even had Pokémon Pearl was because I begged my younger sibling to spend their own money on getting me a copy so we could enjoy the underground tunnels "together." As a sibling pair (up until 2011 anyway) we always had to get the opposite game. Later generations would turn this into an argument that was usually resolved by me buying both copies and thus getting first choice. It was thanks to their trading that I finally beat a mainline entry in Pokémon X as I borrowed their Venasaur (not a version exclusive) to carry me through a particular member of the Elite 4. Before that, I was absolutely steam-rolling the game with the mystery gift Torchic that OHKO almost everyone. From then on, I rarely skipped a generation, although it sometimes takes me longer to get to them and I have yet to beat any DLCs, so I didn't even bother purchasing it for Z-A.

The first music event I went to was the Pokémon: Symphonic Evolutions concert in Adelaide back in 2015. This also happened to be the first trip I took my now-husband on. Speaking of, not many girls can say they married someone with the same name as their first anime crush. Now I'm getting to enjoy watching more of the original Pokémon anime with my daughter and gifting her some of my little Pokémon figures to go into the playset Santa got her for Christmas. I'm looking forward to when she can really read and we can enjoy Let's Go Pikachu together. At least some of the MonPoké books that are releasing in English actually have stories now.

Currently I'm nursing my first ever Pokémon tattoo (rainbow swirl Alcremie btw), which is possibly my last because I like too many Pokémon designs to commit to more.

One of the biggest merch dealers can simultaneously delight me with the mostly Japan exclusive things being good, and then disappoint me when I want to wear a Pokémon 30 shirt and my only option is to have Pikachu's cheek pouches show you where my nips are. Even as I amass a collection of girl Pikachus and more unessential goods, I'm not enough of a sucker to buy that mini music player that loads forty something cartridges. That's the stupid line in the Palossand I draw.

There's a lot to be said about the quality and design of the games, and the fact that they print so many sets of Pokémon Cards I haven't tried to keep up for over ten years, or what they did to poor Palworld but Pokémon is part of my life. It sits in the same personal category for me which is even if they never make a good game, or a game at all ever again I'll still love what I have played and all my memories and experiences I get to share with the people in my life. They'd have to be pulling some J.K. Rowling style post-work made up details (don't google wizard bathrooms). Pokémon is bigger than the games and it always has been.

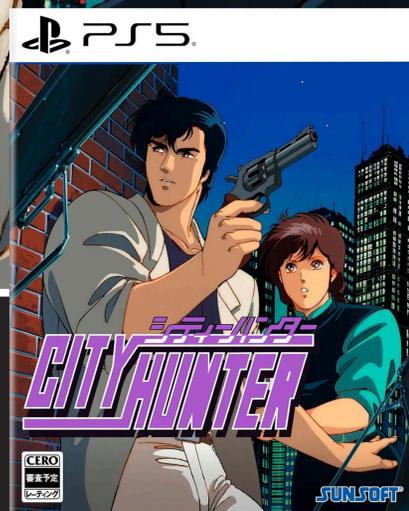
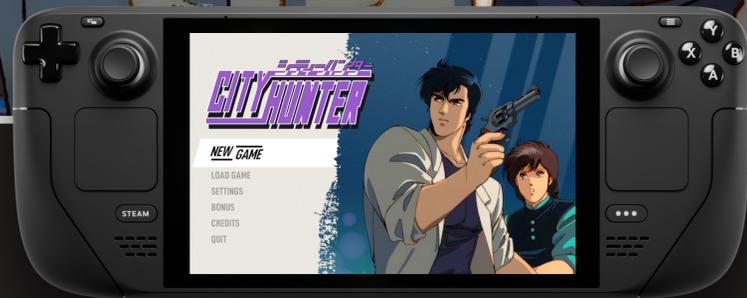


Anyway I'm off to play Pokémon LeafGreen because I'm a little bit smarter than I was as a child and have already escaped Mt. Moon.

P.S. If you're the person who's Pokémon game I still have please contact me, I'm not gonna say which one it is but y'know.

# CITY HUNTER

STEAM



## HOW LONG TO BEAT

~ 1 HOUR

## DEVELOPER

SUNSOFT

## RELEASED

2026

## RECOMMENDED VERSION

City Hunter was originally released for the TurboGrafx-16 way back in 1990. This latest version is available on all platforms and includes both the original game and a remastered edition which improves the enemy AI and gameplay. Performance is not an issue, so it basically comes down to your choice of platform.

WRITTEN BY DAVID LLOYD

Many folks may know City Hunter from the manga that ran for six years from 1985 to 1991 in Shueisha's Weekly Shōnen Jump. Others may know it from the anime that ran during the same time period. More likely watched one of the three theatrical releases, or its live action theatrical adaption in the early 90s. And myself, I simply saw the beautifully drawn box art and wanted to play a title from a platform in the TurboGrafx-16 which to this day is still my largest blind spot.

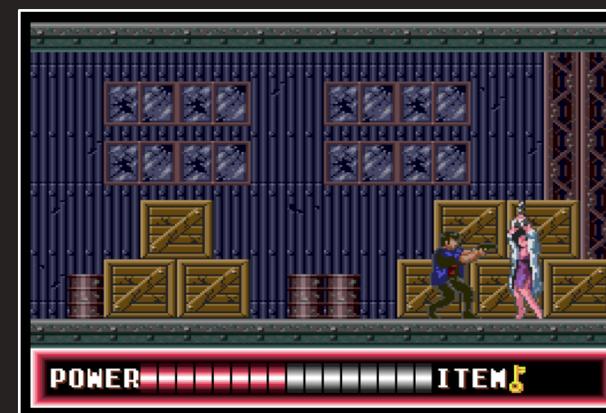
The anime may look terrific but expectations need to be tempered going into this video game originally released in 1990. The action-adventure game has the player control Ryo Saeba, the legendary crime-fighter (and handsome devil holding the big gun) of Japan. Ryo takes on jobs that him running through buildings while getting shot at, grenades throw at, and even torched with a flamethrower. Ryo begins with a simple pistol but can collect a few different weapons throughout his missions.

The gameplay is fairly fluid, Ryo can duck and shoot, enter rooms and accidentally walk into a room with a lady changing to regain health (shoulder shrugs).

The objective of each mission is explained in a short intro and then it's up to Ryo to explore the area to find a solution. In the first mission, Ryo is contracted to locate a missing person at a tech company. Exploring the area, Ryo collects keys to access locked areas, track down an engineer to turn off an electric field, and finally chase the CEO up to the roof in a showdown with a cyborg bodyguard. The difficulty isn't too bad, City Hunter is fairly generous with health and enemy difficulty slowly ramps up the further you get into a level. Some environmental traps need to be avoided but nothing out of the ordinary for this type of game.



*A story still relatable 30 years later...*



*The damsel in distress has a doctorate*

City Hunter is an interesting curiosity. It's by no means a must play title as the gameplay is pretty ordinary for the time period. The biggest draw is the subject matter. Fans of Ryo Saeba don't have a whole lot of options if they want to play as the titular character. It's either this game, or a Japanese mobile title that's likely no longer available. Besides that, Ryo has been included in two Shōnen Jump crossover games, one from 1989 and the other being Jump Force, the 2019 fighting game from Spike Chunsoft.

★★★★☆

# MEMORABLE BOOTY

BY CASEY GIBSON

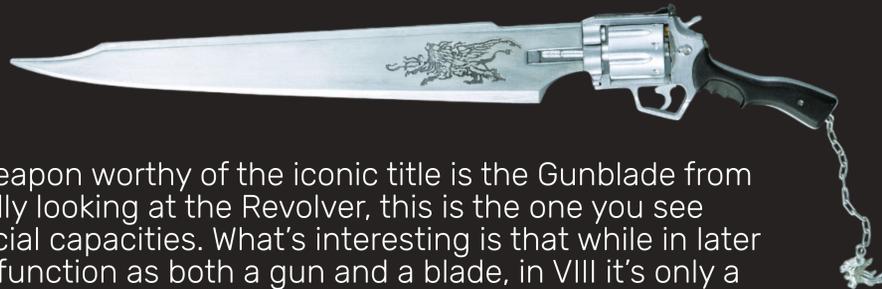
## BRIAN'S STAFF

When you think of iconic weapons, often they're paired with timeless classics and that's certainly the case here. We're looking at the legendary Quest 64 and our protagonist Brian's Staff. I saw it called the Wooden Scepter somewhere online, but I can't be certain and C'mon, it's a wooden staff at best. The beauty of this bad boy is you'll use it the entire game given there is no equipment to find. And honestly, who can blame them for that decision when they give you the Mona Lisa right off the rip.



## SQUALL'S GUNBLADE

Jokes aside, looking at a weapon worthy of the iconic title is the Gunblade from Final Fantasy VIII. Specifically looking at the Revolver, this is the one you see Squall wielding in most official capacities. What's interesting is that while in later entries the Gunblade does function as both a gun and a blade, in VIII it's only a melee weapon (Technically, you can trigger a blast during a melee attack). So yes, the gun aspect is purely fraudulent and a complete ruse. However, that doesn't stop Squall from handing out punishment when the time comes.



## LEON'S SHOTGUN

I just wrapped my Requiem playthrough (amazing), so the series has been on my mind a lot. Thus here we are and I couldn't help but think of a more memorable weapon than the shotgun in the original Resident Evil 4. You find it during the opening village sequence where things become insanely overwhelming. It's scary, especially when the sounds of chainsaws can be heard revving their engines in the near distance, but finding that shotty helps to make things a bit easier for our boy Leon.



## RATE MY FIREPLACE

For centuries, the fireplace was required in every home in the northern hemisphere to keep its occupants warm during the winter. Even though they are less common in homes today, we still see them in countless video games.



For every developer, it's a battle between form and function and in this fun feature, we rank how well they got it right.

### SUIKODEN 2

Suikoden 2 features very practical and utilitarian fireplaces that are built for cooking and little else. No fire code violations are present, and the masonry work looks pretty solid. I'd love to cook dinner with this fireplace, but it doesn't provide comforting vibes.



7 /10

### OCTOPATH TRAVELER

Square Enix continues to prove that they are the best in the business when it comes to succeeding in both form and function. All fire codes are met, no flammable objects are close to the open flame. A grate protects wandering children from falling in, they thought of everything. The angles on the stone work are a thing of beauty.



10 /10

### SEA OF STARS

This fireplace gets full points for presentation. It's got everything: columns, tapestries, beautiful stone work and a display over the fire. What it doesn't have is a flue. Where is the smoke supposed to go? I really hope the homeowners have multiple carbon monoxide detectors, and a full and robust insurance policy.



6 /10

# YAKUZA KIWAMI 3

NINTENDO SWITCH 2



**HOW LONG TO BEAT**

~ 20 HOURS

**DEVELOPER**

**RYU GA GOTOKU STUDIO**

**RELEASED**

2026

The Switch 2 launch year has been a good opportunity to re-familiarize myself with the Yakuza series, games that have always been enjoyable to me even if I didn't always see them through. The middle entries, namely Yakuza 3 through 5, are a bit of a blind spot for me; I've really only dabbled with them as limited time offerings on PlayStation Plus.



Kiwami 3 caught my attention not only for the chance to finally finish the third game for the first time but also because of the bundled-in side game, Dark Ties, which follows the exploits of the central antagonist for Yakuza 3. I had the chance to focus my attention on Dark Ties in the Yakuza Kiwami 3 review for Nintendo World Report, but now I want to hone in on Kiwami 3 specifically, which charmed me with its simplicity, conciseness, and sunny new setting.

Not to dwell too much on the narrative, which is an element that doesn't always hold much of a draw for me with this series, but a major plot thread is Kiryu retiring from the Yakuza to care for the children residing at an orphanage in Okinawa. When the orphanage's land is threatened by a new development, Uncle Kaz leaps into action. The beach-y keen Downtown Ryukyu serves as a wonderful foil to the familiar urbanity of Kamurocho; it's fun to see folks walking around in Hawaiian shirts and casualwear instead of formal suits and skirts. Ryukyu is much smaller than Kamurocho, but it was a nice change of pace to be able to sprint across town in seconds instead of minutes.

I couldn't get into the new weapon-based fighting style that's introduced when Kiryu leaves Tokyo, but I found myself in a Pokemon-inspired trance trying to collect all of the LaLaLa Friends by exchanging phone numbers.



Even the bounty hunting mini-game, where tough opponents wait on street corners for your challenge, enticed me with its major cash rewards. I did enjoy the early biker brigade brawls due to the sheer number of participants, but eventually I fizzled out on them.

There was so much to do at the Morning Glory Orphanage that I could see myself losing dozens of hours to doting on the children and tending the grounds, but for this playthrough I largely skipped these activities. Once again, Yakuza Kiwami 3 has managed to offer something for everyone in terms of its optional content, which has always been a point of pride and a strength for the series. Kiryu might not choose his own grueling, fisticuff-filled adventure, but you certainly do.



Given the largely excellent performance of the Switch 2 releases of Yakuza 0 through Kiwami 3, I've really been glad to be able to play these games both on TV when possible and portably when my kids want to watch YouTube or Netflix. The steady stream of ports and day-and-date releases has me hopeful that at the end of the day, we'll see every game in the franchise, including the Judgement duology, come to Nintendo's latest platform. With Studio RGG announcing Kiwami 3 as the last remake, I am curious what the future holds specifically for Yakuza 4 through 6 in terms of a Switch 2 release.

I can't speak to whether the remake is worth another go around if you played the original, but given how much content there is to experience, including the very worthwhile Dark Ties expansion prequel, I'm definitely recommending the whole Yakuza Kiwami 3 package for fans of the series. When there's no shortage of old and new games to discover and rediscover, this veteran gamer tends to really appreciate a streamlined adventure with lots of optional content. And I can usually find a solid 20 hours to smash a bicycle on some gangster's face, sock a few dingers, or catch up on classic Sega arcade games.



## END OF AN ERA

BY DAVID LLOYD

My heart dropped into my stomach upon reading the news that Super Sentai would be ending its 50 year run as a media franchise. My affection for the series is rooted in the American adaptation, Mighty Morphin Power Rangers, a show that aired for 3 seasons between 1993 and 1995. As an 11 year old, this show became my life. I refused to miss an episode, if I couldn't watch it live, my Mom would make sure to record it using our VCR. Mighty Morphin Power Rangers had everything I wanted in a TV show: Action, Adventure, Comedy, Heroes, Villains, and big Robots fighting each other.

Before you could just drop by a Party City to pick up any costume you can think of, I begged my Mother in 1994 to be my favourite Power Ranger (Red Ranger) for Halloween. The costume was wonderful, it even included a custom mask made out of my hockey helmet. Later in my life, I was overjoyed when my kids loved watching the show via Netflix streaming, so much so that they chose to spend a Halloween as Rangers themselves.

The magic of Power Rangers is that every new generation of kids got a version to call their own. For me, nothing really hit as hard as season one. Power Rangers burned brightly, but quickly fizzled out as they introduced new lead villains and I entered my teenage years.

The closest comparison in terms of multi-generational cultural impact is Pokémon, another franchise born out of the early ninties. While Pokémon shows no signs of slowing down, Super Sentai unfortunately has reached the end of its run. Here's hoping the rumours of a rebranding are true, because every kid deserves a multi-coloured team of heroes to call their own.

### REST IN PEACE



JASON DAVID FRANK



THUY TRANG



## MY FAVOURITE POWER RANGER THINGS

### VIDEO GAME

#### POWER RANGERS ON GAME GEAR



Arguably not the best Power Rangers video game, but the one I played the most (on an AC adapter of course). The game was a bit of a hybrid between Beat 'Em Up and one-on-one fighter. You pick your favourite Ranger, fight your way through Putty Patrollers, Goldar, and the level boss until Rita uses her magic wand. The stage is over after you defeat the monster with the MegaZord.

### ZORD FINISHER

#### ULTRAZORD

I still get goosebumps thinking about the Ultrazord finally defeating Lokar and Cyclopsus at the end of the Doomsday story arc in Season 1.

### SONG

#### WE NEED A HERO

Look up Ron Wasserman on Spotify if you want to listen to all the great, late season one fighting redux music. It's still what I listen to when I need a pick me up.

### ZORD

#### DRAGONZORD



Yes, I was one of those kids who got a Dragon Dagger for Christmas, driving my parents crazy playing the flute. Dragons are cool, and this one could shoot missiles from his fingers and had a drill for a tail. Not only that, but the Dragonzord always seemed to be bailing out the MegaZord when it got overpowered.

### STORY ARC

#### GREEN WITH EVIL

Picking just one was tougher than I thought. So many great storylines to choose from: The Island of Illusion, Doomsday, and the Green Candle all are standouts during a fantastic first season. The introduction of Tommy Oliver as the evil Green Ranger stands out as my absolute favourite. The 5 part series has some of the most harrowing moments that kept me on the edge of my seat. At the end of the series, a new Ranger joined the team.

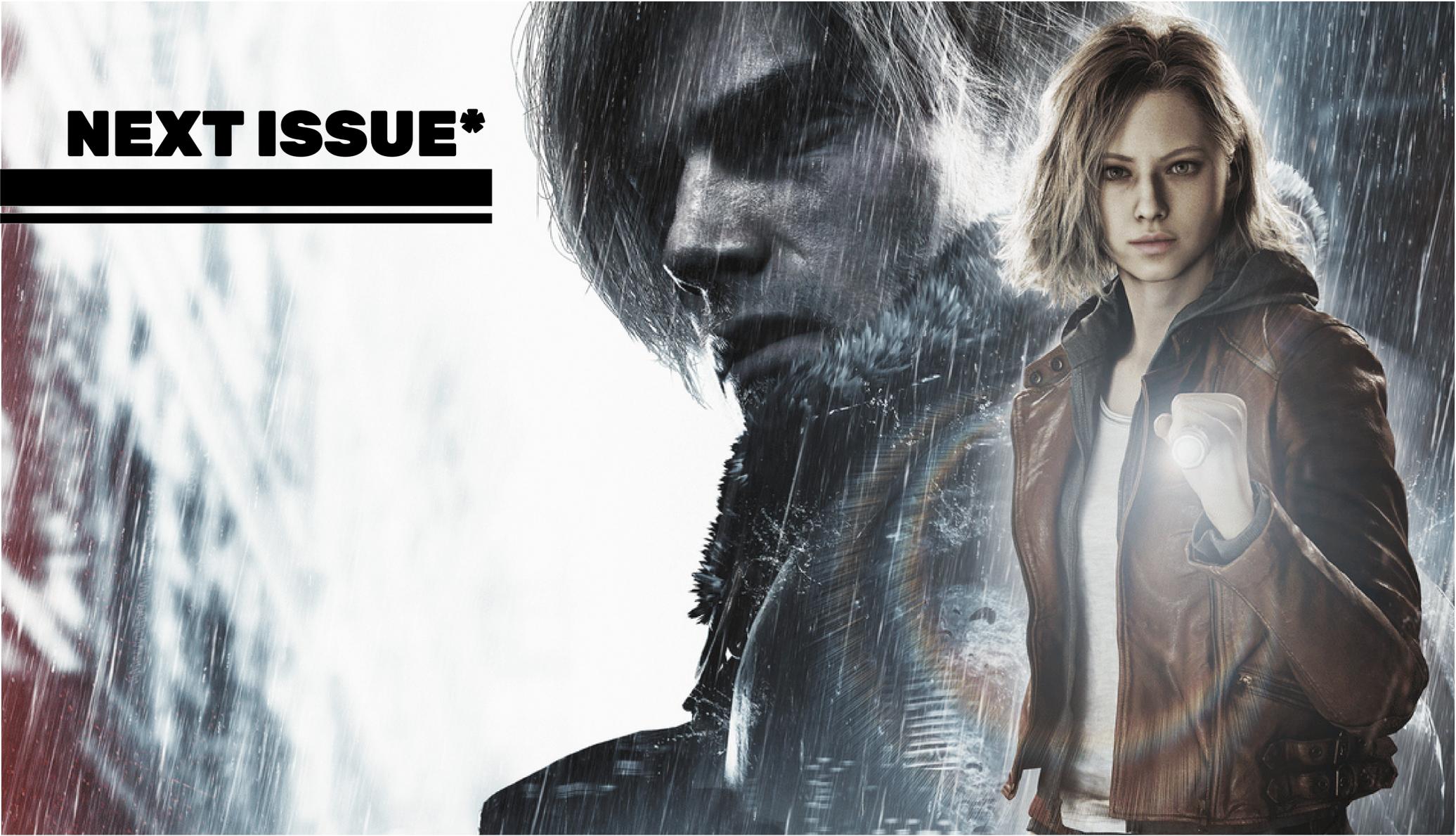
### MONSTER

#### KING SPHINX



Countless others could have been here, but this episode focused on the Red Ranger.

# NEXT ISSUE\*



## BACKLOGS ARE MADE TO BE IGNORED

Please Understand... We make plans and intend to stick with them, but then, Square Enix shadows drops a Paranormasight sequel. Stuff happens. No matter what, next issue we'll have a lot of games to share with something interesting to say about them.

In the meantime, if you made it this far, maybe let a friend or two know about this great new magazine. Or if you really enjoyed it and want to ensure more get made, consider supporting us at [Patreon.com/TheThirstyMage](https://Patreon.com/TheThirstyMage).

See you next issue!  
- David

## NOTIFICATIONS

### BEEHIIV

Register your email to receive a monthly notification as soon as the latest issue is available.

[THETHIRSTYMAGE.COM](https://THETHIRSTYMAGE.COM)

### REDDIT

Join our subreddit to talk more about the games featured in the magazine.

[r/MAGEMAGAZINE](https://r/MAGEMAGAZINE)

## LISTEN TO THE THIRSTY MAGE PODCAST



Available on your podcatcher of choice

