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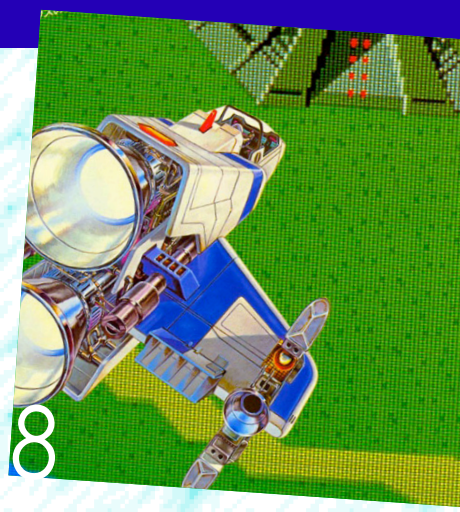

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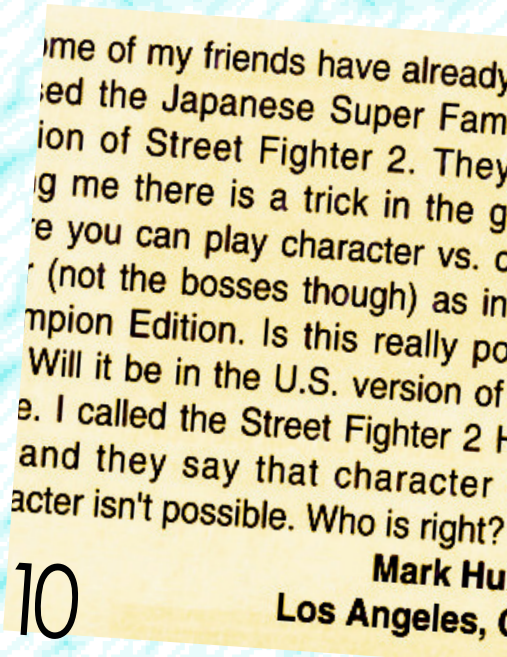

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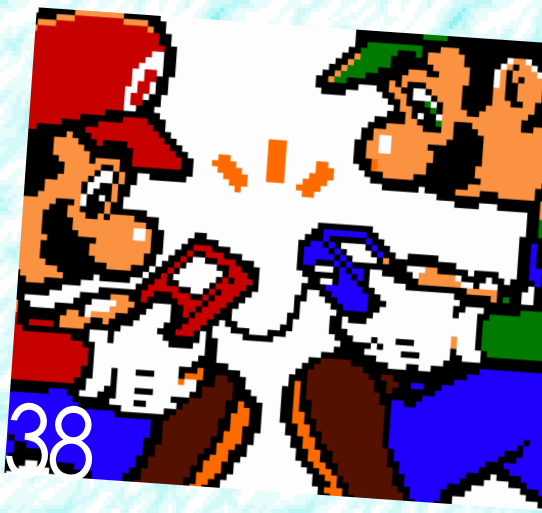

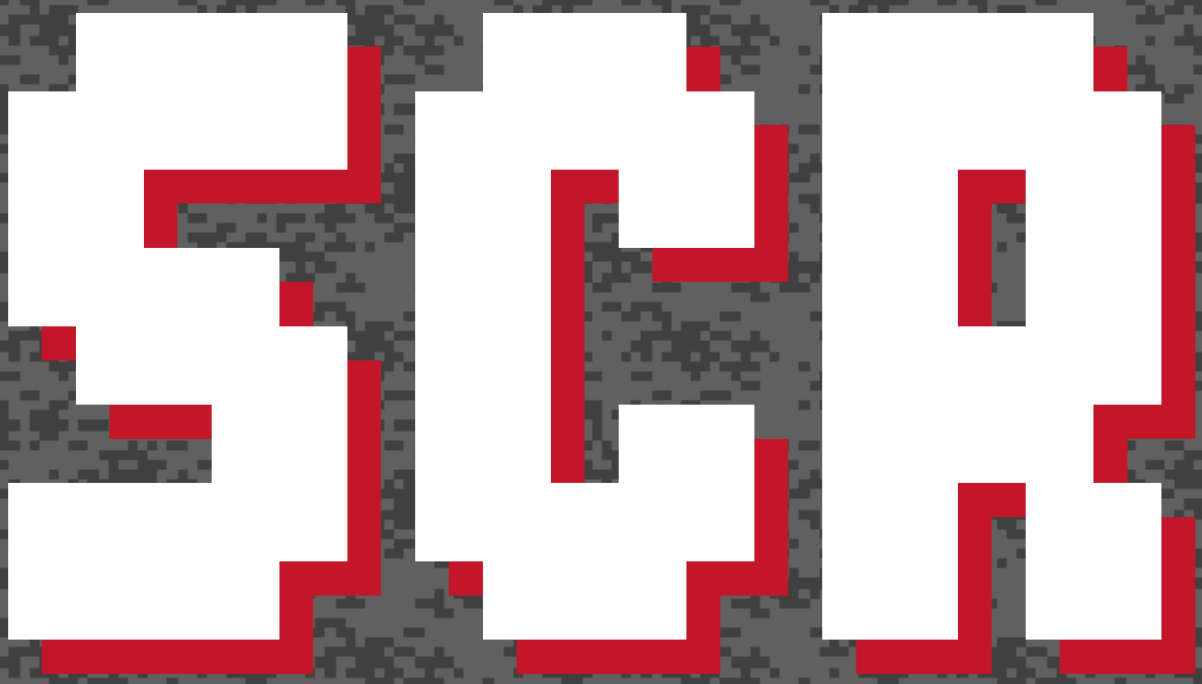
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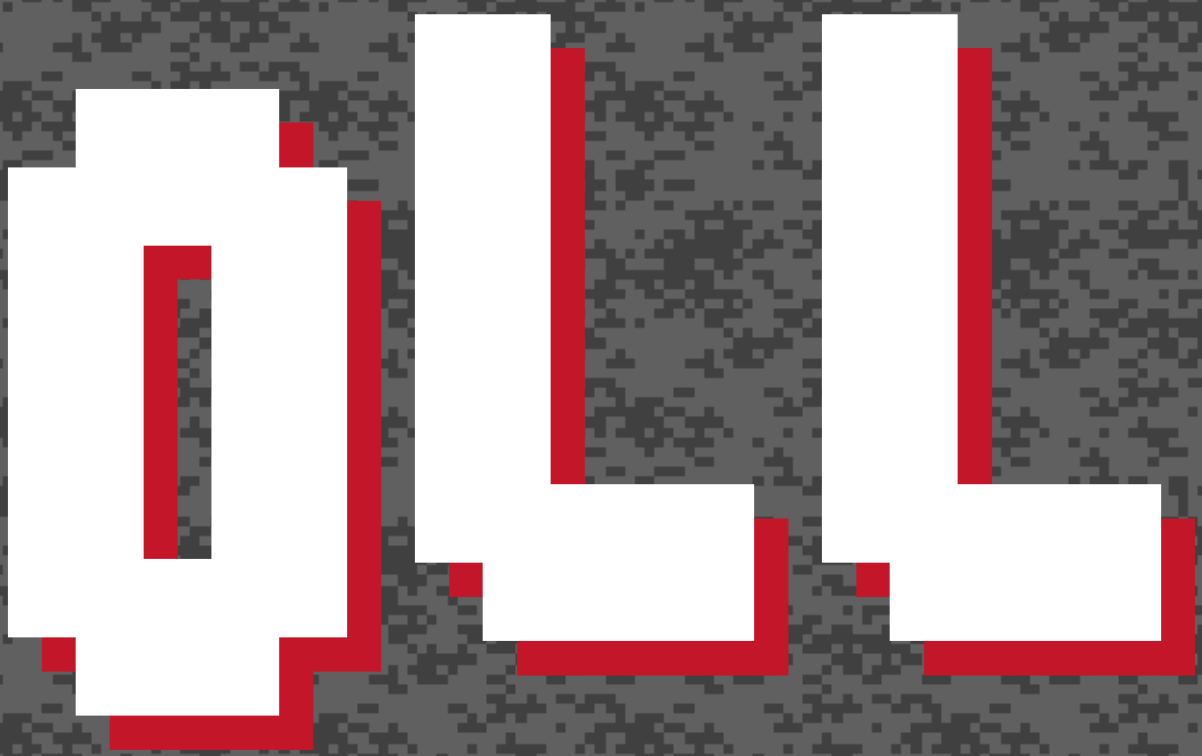


MONSTER MASH

THE MONSTER WORLD FAMILY MAY BE A LITTLE DYSFUNCTIONAL, BUT IT'S DONE SOME GREAT WORK. SEGA'S RE-RE-INTRODUCTION OF THE SERIES HITS CONSOLE DOWNLOAD PLATFORMS WITH AN EXPERT TREATMENT THAT PUTS THE "WONDER" BACK IN WONDER BOY

With some Sega games, we ask "whatever happened to that?" Sometimes that can be rhetorical; we know what happened to Alex Kidd, and we all have an opinion on what *is* happening with Sonic. But with *Wonder Boy* (or *Monster World*—honestly, take your pick), it's not quite as cut and dry. What started as a simple action game that invited players to endure its challenges quickly morphed into a side-scrolling action-RPG series (and a brief detour back into platformer territory) that put itself on the fringes of the genre—an unmistakable Sega tradition. Because of changes in gameplay and a confusing way of naming sequels, it's likely that *Wonder Boy* didn't capture the biggest audience it could have.

Nevertheless, developer Westone maintained a high bar of quality in the series, and it became one of the top favorites among die-hard Sega nerds. Play one and you'll soon discover why: the second game, *Wonder Boy in Monster Land* was the first instance of moving away from pure action to a deeper game with RPG trappings like hunting for keys and hopping from dungeon to dungeon, along with trying to beat dastardly bosses. From there, the games became something like *Zelda II*: a mix of exploration and twitch gameplay, but more colorful, with more gradual difficulty curves, and a hell of a lot less repetition. Not to mention all the little touches, like the way coins rocket out of enemies, or how doors are visibly connected to buildings when you enter them instead of just changing the whole screen on you. It may not sound like much, but these games were doing things differently enough that few competitors copied them—maybe, in

hindsight, to the series' detriment.

In 1994, things were brought to a close with *Monster World IV*, a further refinement of the *Monster World* formula that reduced menu clutter and featured a female hero and her cute monster companion, both of whom trot along their world with the occasional super-adorable animations (just one part of the game that put it in *SCROLL* 03's "Cute Masterclass").

In 2005, Sega took its largely awful "Sega Ages 2500" series of retro remakes for PlayStation 2 and rebooted it as collections of classics as they were remembered—just pure, honest retro gaming portioned out by series. *Wonder Boy* joined the group with the *Monster World Complete Collection* in 2007, which emulated all six games and almost every hardware conversion between them, including existing English versions, on one CD. These refreshed Sega Ages were done by coding house M2, who quickly became known as the place for top-notch, no-nonsense ports on Virtual Console and other retro packs. M2 does amazing work, and when you play any of their conversions, it's clear that they just really give a damn. Even when they're responsible for baffling revivals of terrible Game Gear games for Nintendo 3DS, they make sure the games run as close to the original hardware as possible, and then they throw in extra options like various screen tweaks and a music player.

In May, Sega Ages appeared once again, this time for the digital age with the "Sega Ages Online" series (outside Japan, they're under the "Sega Vintage Collection" label). The new iteration brings some of those same classics to Xbox Live and PlayStation Network, again with M2's white-glove treatment. It's a welcome change from the much-maligned ports by Backbone in the original Vintage Collection. The *Monster World Collection* gives you *Monster Land*, *MW III* and *MW IV*, either all at once on XBLA or separately on PSN. Either way, *Monster World IV* definitely shouldn't be passed up, because it's now in English for the first time ever (officially), and it's worth playing for its straightforward gameplay and overall artistry—and, of course, to see just what happened.

XEVIOUS THE FIRST 30 YEARS

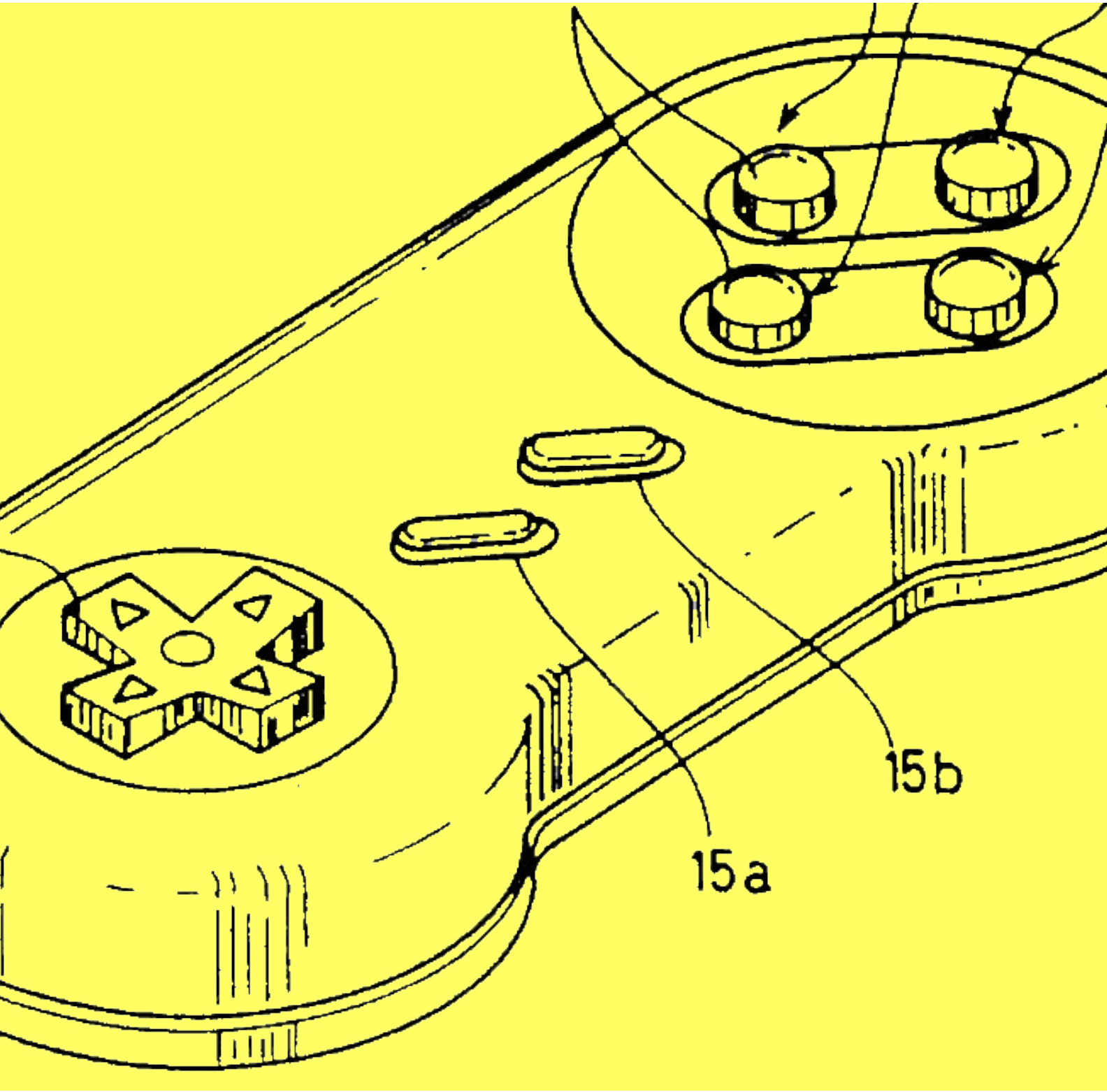
When Matsunobu Endo started work on *Xevious*, he probably thought he had something special going on. "Space shooting" games were given new life by *Space Invaders* in 1978, which set off an avalanche of copycats and other variations on the genre that rolled across the world for a few years. But they couldn't last forever, and indeed didn't—single-screen shooting games were long in the tooth by the start of the 1980s, as scrolling-screen games like *Defender* and others in arcades and homes began to demonstrate. Namco, however, held fast with *Galaxian* and *Galaga*, which were clear steps above *Space Invaders*, but weren't exactly lighting the world on fire in the same way.

Then *Xevious* appeared. Not only did it feature a scrolling background, but you could drop bombs on ground targets, move almost everywhere around the screen, and face enemies far more clever than any *Galaga* drone. And it was "smart," too: if you start kicking major butt, the game will throw tougher airborne enemies at you where they wouldn't appear by default. Besides *Zanac*, it's a difficulty system that hasn't really been used in shooters since, let alone other kinds of action games.

If not the gameplay, then *Xevious* is most notable for bringing the space shooter down to Earth. The Solvalou ship zaps and blasts through a never-ending gauntlet of enemies over land, sea, and air—a colorful landscape where you never once see a black void or starfield. Instead you get trees, streams, deserts, an impressive rendition of the Peruvian Nazca lines, as well as the overbearing presence of the Xevians and their lifeless slate gray ships and structures. The relative nothingness of space can spark imagination, but there's something pretty cool about fighting on a decent 8-bit rendition of your home turf.

Xevious maintained popularity in arcades for a couple of years, possibly because its home conversions could barely match its fidelity. It took until 1984 when the Famicom port of *Xevious* brought something that looked and felt the closest to the original, and even then it wasn't *identical*. It was 1990 when the fully faithful PC Engine version of *Xevious* arrived, developed by Compile, who also included their MSX-borne semi-sequel *Fardraut Saga*, a more challenging stage-based take on *Xevious* where you can pilot different ships of the anti-Xevian forces.

30 years later, *Xevious* remains in the Namco pantheon alongside *Pac-Man*, *Dig Dug*, and its other pivotal games. Partly because of that, it's hard *not* to encounter *Xevious*—it shows up on virtually every compilation of classics that Namco makes, and most recently, it was an advergame tie-in with Sprite soda in Japan. Though it never reached the level of pop culture penetration that *Space Invaders* did, *Xevious* drew a new dot on the shoot-em-up graph, one from which the rest of the genre regrouped and extended out. Now the question is, where will the next dot show up?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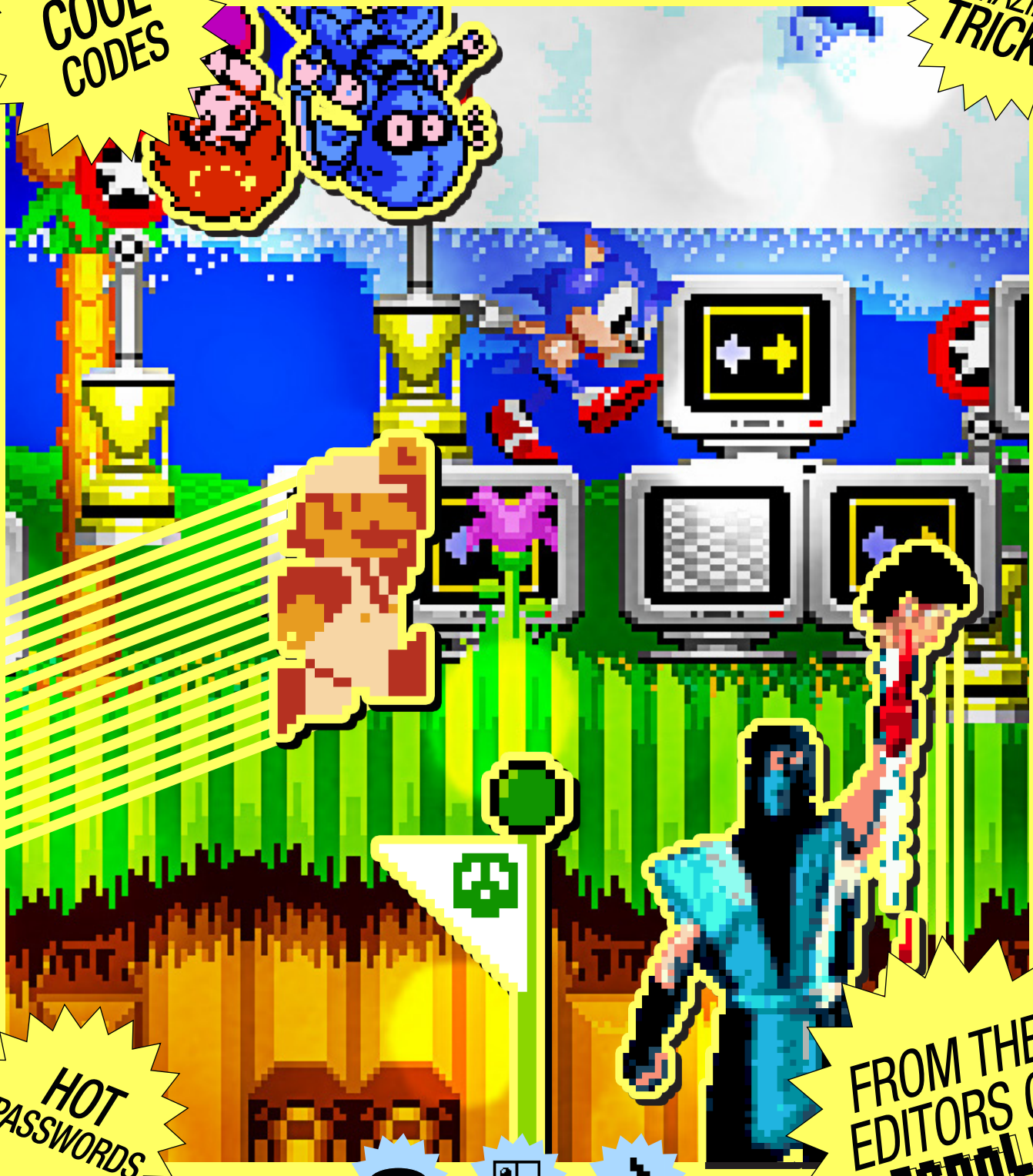
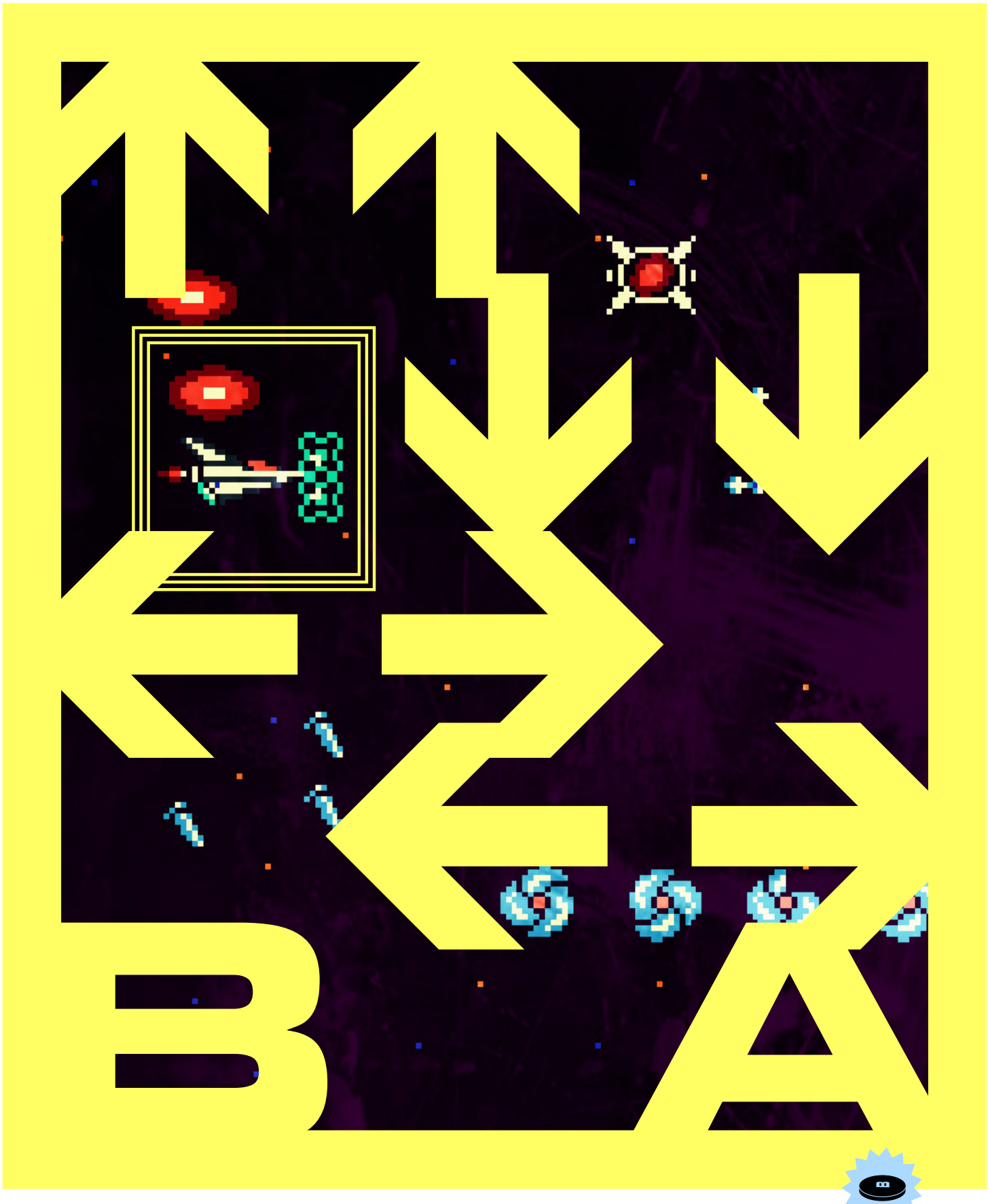
[CODES OF OUR LIVES]

VIDEO GAMES MAKE POWERFUL IMPACTS ON ENTIRE GENERATIONS OF PEOPLE. IN MOST CASES, IT'S NOSTALGIA THAT FUELS THEM, AND SPECIFIC MEMORIES OF GAMES FILL OUR HEADS AND STICK WITH US. BUT WHEN WE AREN'T PLAYING GAMES, WE QUITE OFTEN TALK ABOUT THEM—STRATEGIES, RUMORS, ANALYSIS, HYPE, AND SO ON. IN YOUTH, WHEN THERE WEREN'T ANY MORE BOSS FIGHTS OR LEVEL TIPS TO TALK ABOUT, THERE WERE ALWAYS CODES. CODES THAT HELPED US WIN, MADE US BETTER, OR SHOWED US AMAZING HIDDEN STUFF. A TREASURED MEMORY ABOUT A GAME IS ONE THING, BUT CAN WE JUST AS MUCH TREASURE A CODE? AND IS IT STILL WORTH TALKING ABOUT? CONSIDERING HOW MANY CODES OF YORE CAN STILL BE RECITED OFF THE TOP OF A GAMER'S HEAD—YES. AND IT'S ESPECIALLY WORTHY TODAY, BECAUSE FOR ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES, THE CODE IS DEAD. **THESE ARE THE CODES OF OUR LIVES.**


COOL CODES
AMAZING TRICKS
HOT PASSWORDS
FROM THE EDITORS OF SCROLL
BUTTON CODE
PASSWORD
GAME GENIE


BEAT

[A Command to Remember]

THE KONAMI CODE

Let's just get this one out of the way. Everyone knows the Konami Code. You, me, your mom and dad, your therapist—everybody. And for 26 years, it's kept a spot in the zeitgeist.

But *why*? What was it about a simple string of button presses that made it the well-recognized, oft-repeated piece of gaming lingo we still know? Why is it the go-to thing for uninspired gamer apparel? Why do programmers embed it in commercial web sites? And how did it come to be known as the "Konami Code?"

Like many memes, it was mostly about good timing. Konami's innovative arcade shoot-em-up *Gradius* was ported to the Famicom/NES in 1986, and its programmer, Kazuhisa Hashimoto, needed a quick and easy way to get through the game's stages when testing and debugging, because he wasn't that great a game player. His solution was easy enough: just pause the game and press **Up, Up, Down, Down, Left, Right, Left, Right, B A**, and the player's ship would immediately be granted with a powerful laser weapon and a couple of "option" satellites that tripled firepower. A great many cheat codes are created with the same purpose of skipping ahead just to make sure everything works correctly, but this one had a clever enough pattern that, once it was publicized,

was used early and often by Japanese gamers, and eventually came to be known in Japan as the "Konami Command."

Elsewhere, it was a slightly different story. *Gradius* was released in America as one of Konami's first NES releases, but it was a non-starter—most of the country was still getting acquainted with the NES and would soon be captivated by other, more unique games. Still, Konami was on the rise, and nearly all of its post-*Gradius* titles in the '80s were hits, including the run-and-gun action game *Contra*. *Contra* remains one of the better-remembered NES games, and it too had the Konami Code. Using it on the title screen granted the player 30 lives when starting the game, which is why many people include "Start" at the end of the code, because it started the game, of course. Like in *Gradius*, the code's purpose in *Contra* was just "good enough;" depending on how skillful you were, you could probably spend those 30 lives before finishing the game, but it also provided a good pool of lives for two-player games.

Again, a big part of the Konami Code's penetration was timing. In 1986 and '87, both the Famicom and NES rocketed to new levels of popularity, and Konami's games were recognized as some of the absolute best. Big games plus a cool code equals word getting around. Plus, there's something to be said for the fact that gamers—especially the youngest ones—love to cheat. When you were a kid, you may have dedicated yourself to finishing a certain game and succeeded without any codes, but there were ten more kids who didn't care as much. They turned on *Contra*, got their 30 lives, and then turned it off when they spent them all.

For what's approaching three decades, people have known the Konami Code as that cheat code that... made you invincible, was that it? Or gave you a bunch of lives, or something? Left left right right A B? Couldn't beat *Blaster Master* without it! ...Well, the point is, even if you didn't know the Konami Code, you still "knew" the Konami Code. It became as synonymous with video games as sexism and violence. Along with that good timing, the undying recognition of the code may also be due to the "catchiness" of it. It's not really an arbitrary sequence of buttons; it has a rhythm to it—it's a choreography that many gamers of a certain age can pull off effortlessly.

These days we don't, or can't, have something like the Konami Code used to be: a code without consequence, a trick that was expected, not criticized. In many ways that's fine, as the rise of online gaming erased the acceptability of cheats, but even when playing offline, codes and cheats are rewards for finishing the game, not a means to get there faster—everything else is an exploit video on YouTube, and only memorable if you left it in your favorites list.

Even if you didn't know the Konami Code, you still "knew" the Konami Code

GONE VIRAL

Konami's further usage of the code became their calling card of sorts, and as such was put in tons of games it's released in the years since *Gradius*, from *Metal Gear Solid* to multiple Bemani music games. Sometimes they got a little too playful—in *Gradius III*, it ironically destroyed your ship. But the biggest affirmation of the code's popularity is its placement in dozens of *non*-Konami games from around the world: *Daytona USA, Tales of Phantasia*, *Mercenaries 2*, and in 1989, Asmik's Famicom shooter *Cosmic Epsilon* (pictured), which seems put off that you'd even compare it to some "Konani" game.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[AIR IN G(ENIE)]

MOON JUMPING IN **SUPER MARIO BROS.**

Nintendo was not a fan of the Game Genie. Probably because it was an unlicensed product and they couldn't make any money off of it, but in public, their stance was a little different.

When they took Game Genie distributor Galoob to court in 1991, Nintendo argued that the Game Genie violated the company's copyrights by creating a derivative work via the device's game-changing codes, even though the process was temporary. Inside and outside of court, they maintained that the Game Genie siphoned the challenge—and therefore the fun and lasting value—out of games. And it didn't have the Seal of Quality and could damage your system, yada yada yada.

As Galoob eventually successfully argued, the Game Genie was not a tool for evil. Yes, it modified games beyond what they were intended to do, but not permanently. And yes, it fit in the NES weirdly and went against Nintendo's own accessory certifications, but it was still a compatible cartridge that wasn't going to fry the circuits. Besides, regular NES games could ruin the connectors with enough abuse anyway. And it certainly wasn't devaluing games wholesale, at least not to the degree Nintendo suggested. Galoob somewhat covered their butt in the beginning by never using the word "cheat" in any Game Genie marketing. It was a "game enhancer," which was pretty true.

IT WAS THE GAME GENIE USED FOR GOOD

After one too many appeals, Galoob was allowed to continue selling the NES Game Genie—just shy of a million, all told—and a good chunk of the Western gamer population plugged all of their games into it, including good ol' *Super Mario Bros. SMB* is the de facto NES game, after all, and also one of the most torn-apart ones, with enough intentional and unintentional secrets that it's no wonder people write theses on it. As for the Game Genie, few codes demonstrated the potential of the device as immediately as *Super Mario Bros.*' "moon gravity" codes: **YAZULG**, **YAZUIG**, and **YAZUYG**. They each activate the modified gravity in different contexts; standing, slow jumping, or running jumps, letting Mario and Luigi soar over whole portions of stages and taking a few moments to come back down. Essentially, the codes turned the jump physics inside-out. Normally, tapping the "A" button would make Mario hop and holding it down would extend his jump, but with the codes, a short tap of the button would send Mario straight up and off the top of the screen.

Sure, you could use the Game Genie to play *Super Mario Bros.* with infinite lives or permanent invincibility and dash right through it faster than it would take you to slowly moon-jump over every stage, but by 1991, an NES fan had pretty much done that anyway. They saw all there was to see in a Mario game—beating Bowser, maxing out the score counter, and practicing accessing the Minus World enough times to make it muscle memory.

But one thing they couldn't do so easily was get over the flagpoles. *Super Mario Bros.*' iconic end-of-stage beacons were tall enough to catch you at any height you approached them, but they left a visible space at the top that you *knew* you could get over if you just tried hard enough. Unfortunately, and more often than not, the invisible magnetic pull just above the pole plopped you straight on top of it every time (but hey, at least you got 5,000 points). Younger, more imaginative kids wondered what, if anything, was beyond those poles. Maybe the game will seamlessly take you to the next stage. Maybe there's whole *new* stages on the other side, ones bigger and better and more rewarding than the Minus World. Maybe it turns into "Super Duper Mario Bros." Maybe Princess Toadstool was naked on the other side! The Game Genie helped in answering this speculation, but to no one's satisfaction: beyond the flagpoles were infinite paths of absolutely nothing, because the game didn't

store any objects past the designated level layout. Running past the flagpole was no different than swimming through the Minus World: an endless loop until the clock counted down to your death.

Nevertheless, the gravity-mod codes added a few more grains of fun to a game that was siphoned dry by most power players. Cheating was one thing, but the ability to mess with *SMB*'s equally messy physics was engaging. It was the Game Genie used for good, not evil, and anybody who bothered to experiment with the simple codes instantly opened themselves to an intriguing new world that Galoob's official codebooks weren't documenting—though often for good reason, as the gravity codes at least kept the game *stable*. As it happened, *Super Mario Bros.* was not only the de facto NES game, but the de facto Game Genie game. And on other systems, too: the SNES and Game Boy Game Genie became conduits for other Mario insanity on those systems, where moon jumping was just the tip of the iceberg, and Nintendo could only sit and watch.

JUSTIN BAILEY

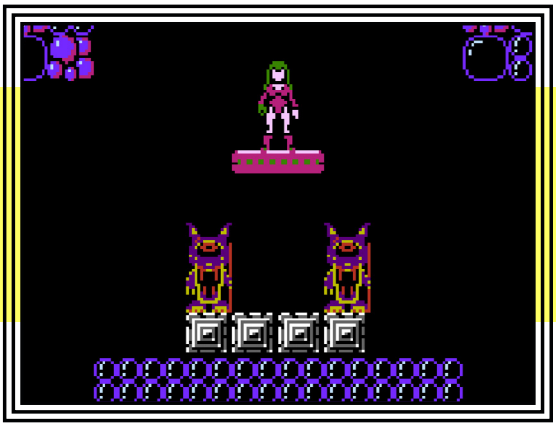
[Parse and Parcel]

METROID'S SUPERPOWERED SAMUS

What's in a name? A hell of a lot, it turns out. Password-based games usually encoded their passwords in jumbles of characters that made no earthly sense, but some would have plain English words or acronyms to take you straight to the stage you wanted with the stats you wanted. In a way, *Metroid* supported both.

The original Japanese version of *Metroid* was for the Famicom Disk System (FDS), and as such didn't use passwords at all—instead, it wrote player progress to the game disk and used a file select screen like *The Legend of Zelda*. Outside Japan, a hypothetical NES Disk System wasn't around, so FDS games had to be rejiggered as cartridge games, which in 1986 and early 1987 meant fitting in password systems for lengthy games like *Metroid*.

Metroid's passwords were an accepted form of saving progress, and most players used them as intended; you paused or died to bring up the password, wrote it down, and used it to pick up where you left off without really giving it a second thought. But in the event someone did give it a second thought, they found that the passwords were much more flexible beyond what the game gave them. And one of the earliest "creative" uses of the passwords



became the most impactful on our memories of Metroid. That was **JUSTIN BAILEY ------ ------**, which took players to the middle of Norfair with a well-stocked Samus who happened to be wearing nothing but her leotard, green hair flowing behind her. For many players, this was their first discovery that Samus wasn't a man or robot, but a woman. And once the shock washed over, many of those same players knew "JUSTIN BAILEY" as the only way to play as Samus out of her power suit with the added bonus of starting in Norfair, but that's just because so few people would bother to do it the honorable way by beating *Metroid* in under two hours to reveal—and then enable play as—the dressed-down Samus.

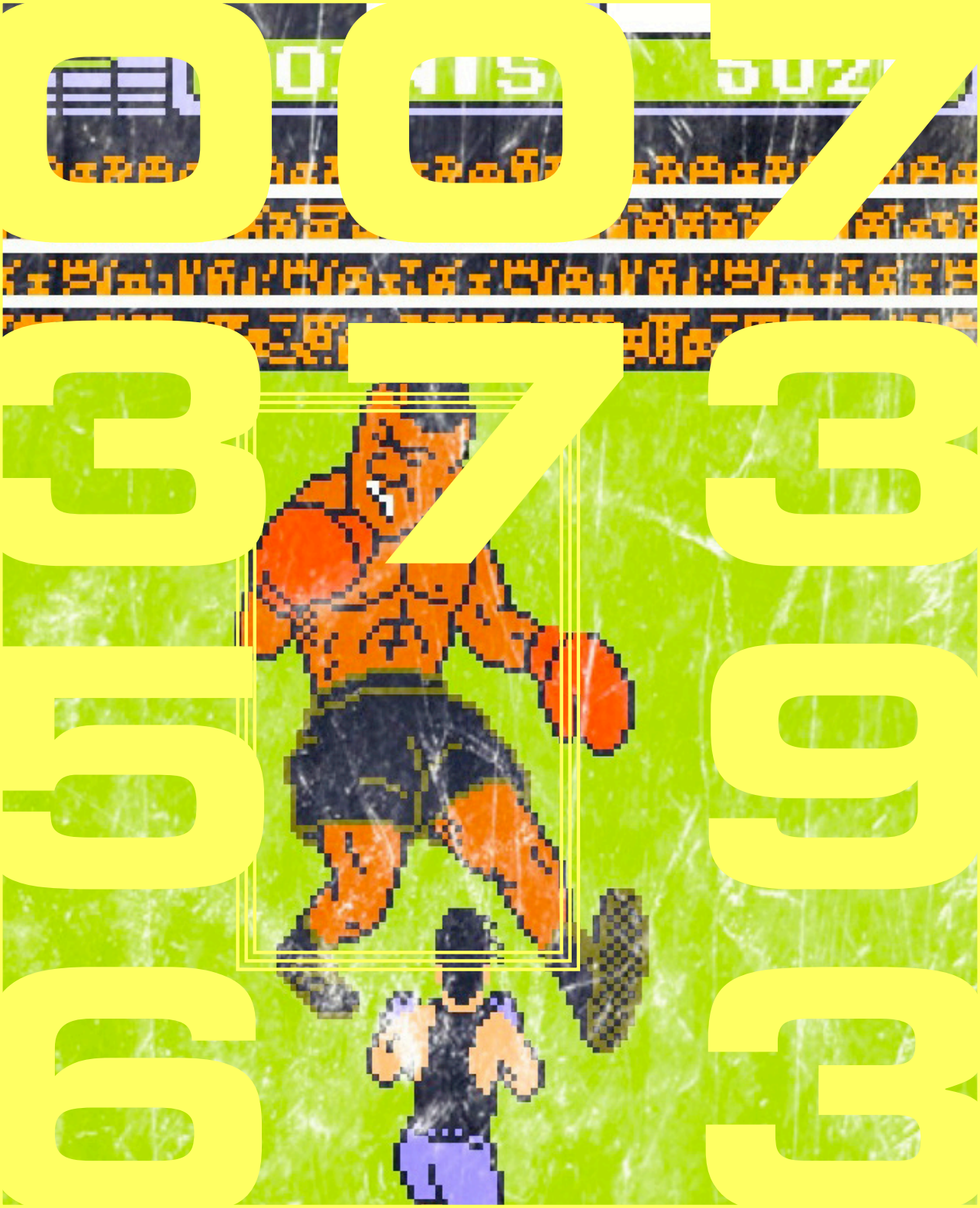
Nevertheless, people associated JUSTIN BAILEY with Metroid's big secret, and that left a few unanswered questions. Gamers exercised their brains early and often with JUSTIN BAILEY origin theories. It's entirely possible the "real" Justin Bailey was just a regular gamer who decided to plug his name into the password screen and see what would happen, but the reasons why it was *that* name that gave *those* results is more likely rooted in the game's rickety password compiling. It's easy enough to determine that each character in the password screen carries a certain value when it's entered into a certain slot, but it just so happens that the game will almost accept anything regardless if the password is all numbers, letters, symbols, words or phrases. Compare that to other password-based games on NES and beyond, where making up passwords off the top of your head mostly leads to "invalid entry" errors than it does taking you somewhere you've never been before.

It's likely that the password system was coded into the Western version haphazardly, with just "enough" checks and balances within it to make sure its variables put gamers where it said it would, and not a more rigid system that recognizes only what it usually outputs. If that were the case, then the passwords would likely be shorter or pre-determined, and at that point in video gaming, that sort of brevity wasn't a thing yet. Plus, *Metroid* had to be adapted for the NES in a timely fashion, and as mentioned, there was no Disk System to simply record progress with. Considering an identical issue with *Kid Icarus* (see below) which had a similar password screen, it's pretty clear that Toru Narihito, the Nintendo engineer responsible for Metroid's cartridge conversion, made a general purpose password system for such conversions without putting much forethought into it. Not to diminish **NARPAS SWORD0 000000 000000**, a hard-coded password discovered more than a decade later, which gave Samus nigh-invulnerability and other powerful goodies. Like the old joke goes, "It's not a bug, it's a feature."

THE PASSWORD SYSTEM WILL ALMOST ACCEPT ANYTHING

SPEAKING GREEK

Metroid's password cousin *Kid Icarus* also had an easily exploitable system, along with a powerful password that made the rounds just as quickly as JUSTIN BAILEY. By filling *Icarus*' password screen with **ICARUS FIGHTS MEDUSA ANGELS**, you're warped to the castle of the second world. Another password, **8uuuuu uuuuuu uuuuuu uuuuuu**, takes you to the final boss stage, only you *can't die*. Other combinations of words and phrases would net all sorts of wild results. With such fun to be had with the codes, it's no wonder both *Kid Icarus* and *Metroid* became so beloved in America. That or they were just fun.



[Ticket to Dreamland]

SKIPPING TO THE CHAMP IN **MIKE TYSON'S PUNCH-OUT!!**

Many gamers were introduced to the story of Little Mac's climb to the top of the boxing world in *Mike Tyson's Punch-Out!!*, the NES version of the arcade game that added the likeness of Tyson, one of the best real-life fighters of the day. An instant classic, *Punch-Out!!* remains one of the more fondly-remembered games for the NES.

The thing is, not every player had the stamina for it. *Punch-Out!!* is a veritable gauntlet of bouts, going from circuit to circuit in a struggle that, if you're impatient, feels like it never ends. Oftentimes, players will hit a wall at one opponent who just seems impenetrable no matter how many times you go up against him. It was a long road to facing Mike Tyson, whose huge imposing frame and smug grin was just waiting to be punched off by the players representing Little Mac.

Help arrived when the password ("pass key") for the final bout was revealed—the one that sends you straight to Mike Tyson in the game's Dream Fight: **007-373-5963**. The beginning of the password invokes James Bond, and maybe you did kind of feel like a genius secret agent when you entered it on the title screen, because in a few seconds, you're up against the Champ with no muss and no fuss. Forget those other made-up losers--it was time to show Mike who's boss.

Sort of. Those who found the earlier opponents trouble were effectively knocked upside the head once they faced Tyson. True to his old nickname "Kid Dynamite," he was explosive in the *Punch-Out!!* ring, slinging punches left and right in fractions of a second, and able to give you a TKO before Round 1 was even over.

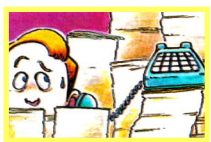
Of course, that scenario was more likely *if* you skipped to Tyson after completing only a part of the game rather than getting there the hard way. It speaks volumes to the kind of game *Punch-Out!!* is: the aforementioned gauntlet in a pure arcade style that grows harder in incremental, yet very obvious steps. When you go from one circuit to the next, the first opponent isn't going to be as simple as the first opponent of the last circuit. In other words, it was best for you to play the game as intended: starting from zero, going up through the ladders, practicing, and building up your skill until you eventually—hopefully—reached Tyson. Sure, even a pro might be taken off-guard by Iron Mike's moves at first, but properly-honed reflexes and a sense of the game's feel could only lengthen your survival.

Nintendo tried to offset the thousands of players left in Tyson's wake by offering a page of strategies in the first issue of *Nintendo Power*, and that was the best they could do. Get your timing down, know when he's going to throw which punches, and like Doc says: stick and move.

To be fair, the password *was* a good way to practice trying to beat Tyson, seeing as you could go right to him whenever you wanted ad infinitum until you achieved victory. And in a game where practice and loads of patience were of the utmost importance, having a little password to fall back on was more of a tool than a cheat, because when it comes to taking on the Champ, preparation is key, because you're on your own.

IT WAS BEST TO PLAY THE GAME AS INTENDED

GOT YOUR NUMBER



An interesting note about *Punch-Out!!*'s pass keys is that the 10-digit codes were displayed in the same format as phone numbers, which apparently wasn't lost on Nintendo. Try entering **206-882-2040** or **800-422-2602**—local and national variations of Nintendo of America's consumer help line at the time—or **075-541-6113**, which was the company's consumer line at their headquarters in Japan. In return, the game gives you a unique dial tone for each one. Cute, but unfortunately they don't do anything else. Too bad; a bout against a bulked-up Howard Philips would be awesome. (Granted, Little Mac already resembles him.)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[Painting the Town]

THE **SONIC THE HEDGEHOG** DEBUG MODE

These days, the inner workings of *Sonic the Hedgehog* games have been ravaged like the spread at a church function. Virtually no mysteries remain in them, with fans extracting every bit of data they can and oftentimes building whole new games out of them. But there was a time when enjoying—and digging into—a *Sonic* game was much more innocent.

The first *Sonic the Hedgehog* had at least one good code in it: the stage select code, which was activated simply by pressing Up, Down, Left, Right, A and Start at the title screen, which would bring up an elegant select menu that let you try any stage in the game. But even better than that was the "debug mode" code, similarly activated by pressing **Up, C, Down, C, Left, C, Right, C, then A and Start**. When the game begins, it looks the same as usual, except part of the score display has been replaced by hexadecimal values. Furthermore, pressing the B button transformed Sonic into a ring that could then fly around the

screen, and indeed the whole stage—walls could not impede you as you zoomed all the way to the end, quickly and effortlessly cheating your way through the game... until the boss fights, that is.

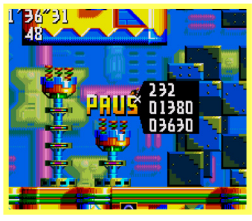
But the cheating factor of the debug mode only scratched the surface of what it could do. Continued pressing of the B button cycles through all of the principal object sprites loaded for that stage, and pressing the A button would place the objects right into it, like a stamp. In other words, you could simply make a mass of rings to collect to stay alive, set down a parade of enemies to destroy, or surround Sonic in spikes. You could break the rules of the game just by entering a stupidly simple code at the title screen. The possibilities were endless, but not limitless: you could place a voluminous, yet finite number of objects on the screen. If, for example, you started placing power-up monitors all over the screen until a threshold was reached, eventually they would start to disappear as new ones were added, and would often slow the game to a crawl until they moved offscreen. And you couldn't save any of your modifications—after all, this was the final retail version of the game, and your piles of sprites would be gone when you finished the stage or turned off the game.

Nevertheless, the debug mode was a crude if rare glimpse into level editing for console games. Editing in most video games has always been done in external tools on the development machine, and though it's clear that *Sonic 1*'s debug mode wasn't exactly for building stages, it was a cool thing to play around with. Chances are you can thank Yuji Naka for it: the programmer of Sonic and soon-to-be head of the series made all sorts of magic happen with the game, and even kept working on it after it was released in America, adding more tweaks here and there. Like many codes that have roots in QA testing, it's possible the debug mode was used for the same reason it makes a good cheat code: zooming to any desired point on the stage map, placing an object, and then plopping Sonic back in just to make sure it all worked fine. After all, that is the macro goal of debugging. And as it was borne from a button code, it's a great example of extending replayability with something that wasn't a password and didn't need a Game Genie to work.

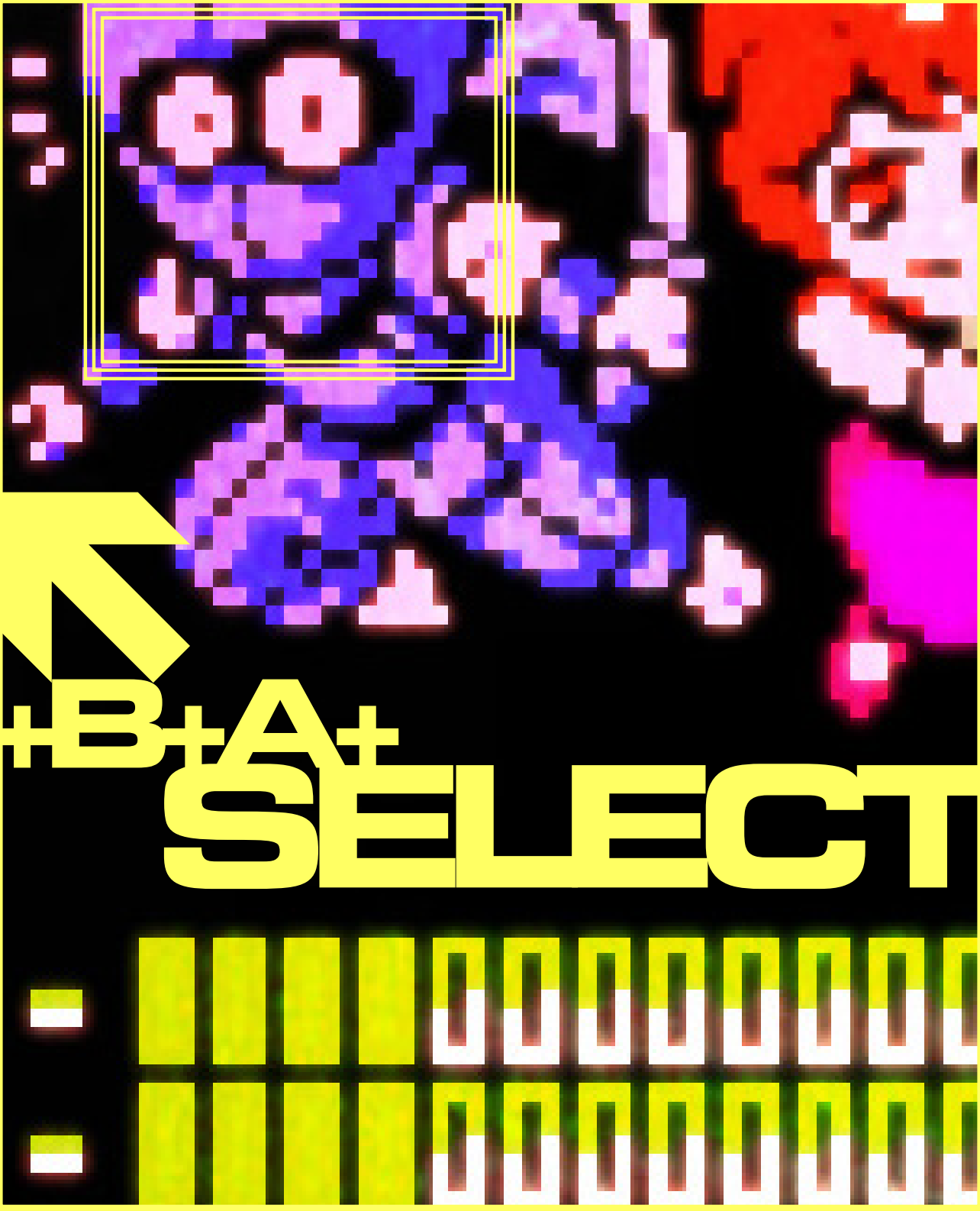
THE POSSIBILITIES WERE ENDLESS, BUT NOT LIMITLESS

Even if "replayability" means constructing a gauntlet of red springboards that catapults Sonic straight through a stage.

DEBUGALOO



Almost every Genesis *Sonic* game features a debug mode, though none are as simple to access as the original. In *Sonic 2*, you have to access the sound test first, play certain sound numbers in sequence (19-65-09-27; Yuji Naka's birthday) to access the stage select screen and then play *another* sound sequence. *Sonic CD* is similar, requiring you to play sounds to bring up the secret Tails picture to trigger the mode. Even *Knuckles' Chaotix* has a debug mode (pictured), but instead of sounds, you have to carefully pick certain color values from a hidden color test mode, though all the mode does is let you fly around and show you character coordinates. At least you can't accuse them all of being uncreative.


+B+A+
SELECT

[Sailing on Sound]

NINJA GAIDEN II'S MUSICRUISE

Sound tests are pretty boring. Most of them are a couple of lines on a blank screen, because they were meant for the developers to organize the music and sound effects and ensure they worked. But at least a sound test works as advertised, and for players, games that had sound tests offered the best way to record the music on your parents' cassette recorder and listen to it later.

The first *Ninja Gaiden* game for NES was one of those culprits: its sound test code was dead simple, and only brought up the word "SOUND" and the track number right in the middle of the existing title screen. At least the track numbers were stylized, but still, it was nothing but a utilitarian, unexciting little trick. *Ninja Gaiden* was a big worldwide hit, and when Tecmo took the wraps off of *Ninja Gaiden II: The Dark Sword of Chaos* a couple of years later, it was a much more polished, better-playing game, with a greater soundtrack to boot. And it turned out that once-simple sound test was also spruced up for the sequel.

Ninja Gaiden II's sound test, dubbed "Musicruise," is one of the more elaborate sound tests of the NES era. Admittedly, that amounts to nearly jack squat, even in 1990, but it demonstrated that a higher-than-usual level of care was put into it by engineers who probably knew how kick-ass their game and its music were.

The process to accessing Musicruise wasn't easy, just as it's not

You had to do a bit of work to get to it

easy beating a *Ninja Gaiden* game on the first try. Though at first, it's simple: just **hold Up-Left, A, B and Select at the title screen and press Start**. Immediately that takes you to the sound test, which includes the sound selector, the game's logo, and a cute caricature of hero Ryu Hayabusa looking like he just saw a ghost. Ah, but that's only *one* sound test; a still rather barren, run-of-the-mill feature, and you haven't even begun to scratch the surface. Exit that sound test screen by pressing Start, then go back to the title screen and wait for it to fade out. Press Start to bring it back, and input the same code again. The game gives you the same sound test, only this time you get a cartoony representation of heroine Irene Lew, who fires her gun every time you play a sound. Still cute, yet still unremarkable.

Exit to the title screen for what is now the third time, wait for it to fade, skip back to it, wait for it to fade *again*, and then go back and put in the code. If all worked according to plan, you'll have brought up the full-scale Musicruise. And what's the big deal? Well, not only do you get both Ryu and Irene, but now most of the music tracks have unique names, and you get a series of life meters repurposed as VU meters for the system's sound channels. Thrill as you play a music or sound effect and watch the meters pulse alongside. Irene still fires her gun every time, too! And laugh as you come across broken-English song names like "Robert the Army."

Maybe Musicruise wasn't some revolutionary way to approach sound tests, of all things, but what helps it stand out is the nature of the code itself: having to go a few layers deep before you finally hit paydirt. With most codes, you put it in once, it works, and most of the time you need to do it again when you start the game again. But with Musicruise, you had to do a little bit of work to get to it, because the first times just give you a serviceable sound test not unlike the ones in every other game. It all but proves that its makers meant for it to be hidden from gamers, but to be a nice little reward when they found it.

Like the Konami Code and others that appear in this feature, we can remember them quite well, and sometimes we find out how they came to be, but rarely do we find out how they got out there. So how the hell did anyone figure out that you had to do the *Ninja Gaiden II* sound test code three times to get the *real* sound test? The (probable) truth is that "figuring out" had

nothing to do with it. Oftentimes, game companies had existing knowledge of the codes in their games ahead of their release, as well as maps and art that could be used in magazines and hint books. As those codes would be filtered out to magazines (usually only in Japan, though *Nintendo Power* probably got its fair share of exclusives), other magazines around the world would lift those and put it in *their* pages, and even more magazines would lift the codes from them. So, word could spread pretty fast.

Though some of us may have found out about one code and then began mashing on the controller to try and find one in every other game we owned, the odds of that working are not great. Again, something like Musicruise was deviously simple to get, to a degree where somebody must have wanted us to know about it. Because after all, Dad's blank tapes weren't going to record themselves.


R
LY

[Double Whammy]

THE **STREET FIGHTER II** SAME-CHARACTER CODE

If you're looking for the definitive game of the '90s, you can't go wrong with *Street Fighter II*. It was a pivotal mega hit in arcades, and was about to be even more of one in homes. Capcom started preparing a home version of *SF II* for the Super NES when the system was still fairly young, and in the fall of 1992, it was released, and snapped up by almost every gamer caught in the wave of *Street Fighter* hype. It was practically a killer app, and even though it sold at a higher price than most other action games, those who were serious about *SF* didn't care. It was an important game in arcades, but *Street Fighter*'s speedy move into the home contributed plenty to the game's overall prominence.

There was just one problem: *SF II* arrived on SNES months after the first arcade upgrade, *Street Fighter II Champion Edition*. In *Champion Edition*, two players could choose the same character to fight as, and could also play as the four "boss" characters. It was great, and kept players coming back to the arcade, but it made the SNES version obsolete before it even came out. And just a few months after that, Capcom would further enhance the arcade version with *Street Fighter II Turbo*. Despite all that, *SF II*

on Super NES was still incredibly faithful to the original, and went on to get rave reviews and became one of the best-selling games on the platform, dovetailing perfectly with the meteoric rise of *Street Fighter* mania. But with it just being "vanilla" *SF II*, and no clear answer from Capcom if the other versions would arrive later, console gamers were somewhat left in the cold.

Or were they? As all those *SF II* players were plugging away at the game since they got it on release day, they had no idea that they could have been adding some flavor to that vanilla. Soon after the game's Japanese release, a secret code was revealed: turn on the game, and when the Capcom logo appears, press **Down, R, Up, L, Y, B** as fast as possible. After a confirmation sound, the screen fades, and the normally black title screen turns blue, signifying that it has a touch of *Champion Edition* in it. In other words, two players in Versus mode can select the same character instead of being forced to choose another, and the "clone" character will appear in their alternate costume color from *CE*. Suddenly, the list of pros and cons for the SNES version swung over to the positive.

Thanks to the several weeks' lead time offered by the original Japanese release, overseas game media picked up on the code when it was revealed there and republished it just a little bit after most people in America would buy the game (the Japanese code was longer by two buttons, but pressing them in the American *SF II* didn't affect the outcome). It was a surprise, to say the least. Even though the same-character code didn't transform the entire game into *Champion Edition* proper—no playable bosses, for starters—it nevertheless opened up a whole new facet that rejuvenated the game before it was two months old. The competitive nature of *Street Fighter* was brought closer to the level of its arcade standard, and it didn't feel as painful to wait for a new version (unless you were in the Genesis camp).

The only real question is why Capcom bothered hiding the feature behind a code in the first place. If they foresaw that *Champion Edition* wouldn't make it to Super NES and went ahead and added its biggest selling point to the port, why not put it in by default? On the surface, there was no good reason *not* to: the game was going to sell tons anyway, but if consumers knew well ahead of time that it would have light *Champion Edition* features, it probably would have been much more desirable and ultimately purchased by more people (and no doubt more of their friends). Then again, that's *if* Capcom knew what to expect. Another possibility was that they knew the SNES version was going to slip, so they quickly put in a same-character feature and hid it behind a code just in case. Considering that no other features or tweaks from *Champion Edition* made it in, the code may have just been a safety maneuver to prevent confusing people who might think the game really was a full-blooded version of *Champion Edition* out of the box. And then Capcom could just let the press know about the code, as they no doubt did, and give people a pleasant surprise.

IT WAS A SURPRISE, TO SAY THE LEAST

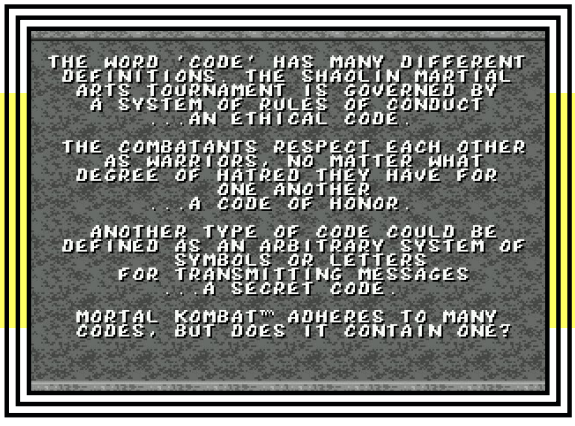
While the history of *Street Fighter II* on home systems started out a bit rocky thanks to the game-and-a-half of the SNES version, it all worked out in the end—to some degree. Just a year later, Capcom killed three birds with one stone: they had a version of *SF II Turbo* for Super NES, and finally delivered on a Sega Genesis version, *Special Champion Edition*, which, despite the name, included all the features of *Turbo*. From then on, there were no codes, no secrets, and no more bullshit. Until *Super Street Fighter II*.

[BLOOD, SWEAT AND (NOT AS MANY) TEARS]

THE **MORTAL KOMBAT** BLOOD CODE

No other code in history can claim the kind of power ABACABB **did. While the Konami Code had the power to influence pop culture, *Mortal Kombat*'s blood code turned the tide of a conflict.** In September 1993, the ongoing marketing battle between Nintendo and Sega was raging. A year prior, Nintendo scored the first home version of *Street Fighter II*, earning the Super NES serious cred among fans of the arcade game, though the Sega Genesis got its own version in 1993. But in the arcades, a new fighting game was sweeping across America. Midway's *Mortal Kombat* was a mess of martial arts movie tropes combined with a level of blood and gore rarely seen in mass-market games, but it was a good enough fighting game to stand on other merits. On the other hand, decent gameplay wasn't what was raising the eyebrows of parents and moral crusaders during *MK*'s rise to prominence.

It took almost no time for *Mortal Kombat* to go from arcade to home, but there had to be a way to deal with all that goopy blood, those decapitations, and those disembowelments, no matter how silly it all looked. Because home video games reached a wider spectrum of gamers—particularly adolescent kids—Acclaim, who



licensed *MK* for the home, was simultaneously encouraged (by Sega) and forced (by Nintendo) to tone down *MK*'s characteristic spurts of blood and graphic "Fatalities." None of the home versions had any of the arcade version's violence, at least by default. An opening message in the Genesis version describes the role of "codes" in the *MK* mythos, summing up with "*Mortal Kombat* adheres to many codes, but does it contain one?"—The coyest of gestures to the player, suggesting that something was inside that would really make their purchase feel worth it.

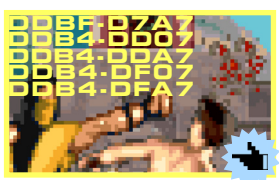
However, like with the *SF II* code a year earlier, the tease had some of the wind taken out of its sails. September editions of game magazines were available weeks before *MK* was released, and in them was the ominous code "contained" in the Genesis version: **ABACABB**, a simple made-up acronym that unlocked a much more, let's say, visually faithful version of the game. All it took was someone to peek in the latest *EGM* and spread the code like wildfire. Reviews of *MK* in those same magazines also made sure to mention that the code wasn't in the Super NES version. Thanks to that lead time, Sega and Acclaim broke off a huge chunk of mindshare before the game was even out. Even the Game Gear version had a blood code, which rubbed the salt in the wound of the Game Boy port, which had no choice but to be bloodless *and* colorless.

The perceived advantage of ABACABB was rooted in the desires of kids who got a kick out of the blood and little else. Divorced of the gore factor, the Genesis version was shoddy and lacked the detail in the SNES version. *Mortal Kombat* was the most arcade-accurate on Nintendo's hardware, with its thousands of more colors and more accurate sound. It was worth lauding, but with all of the violence taken out, it wasn't *cool*, and it was made very clear that cool kids had the Sega versions, who would get more gory games after *MK*, too.

One part of this episode that usually goes unmentioned is that the Genesis *MK* was rated MA-13 by Sega's own rating system, but given that the extreme violence was merely cloaked, it could have easily earned an MA-17 under their guidelines. Still, ABACABB went public and the rating never changed. In effect, Acclaim undermined Sega's ratings, perhaps even with their acknowledgment. But by then, Nintendo's blood was already shed.

SEGA BROKE OFF A HUGE CHUNK OF MINDSHARE BEFORE *MK* WAS EVEN OUT

WATER INTO WINE



As mentioned, the Super NES version of *Mortal Kombat* wasn't so fortunate. The bloodless, Nintendo-approved edition earned mostly negative attention by gamers young and old despite being the superior version on every other level. The mud-gray "sweat" that flew off characters felt a little insulting, but those who were stuck in the Nintendo camp got some assistance: with a Game Genie, players could enter the code above, which did nothing to the game but color some of the sweat pixels red. And on a regular tube TV in 1993, it looked enough like blood to be passable. In the eyes of the public, if Nintendo couldn't accept a 100% accurate *Mortal Kombat*, then maybe they should have blocked the game altogether. The backlash, coupled with the subversive power of the Game Genie, seemed to spur Nintendo's total one-eighty in policy for *Mortal Kombat II* a year later.


SONIC
THE HEDGE HOG

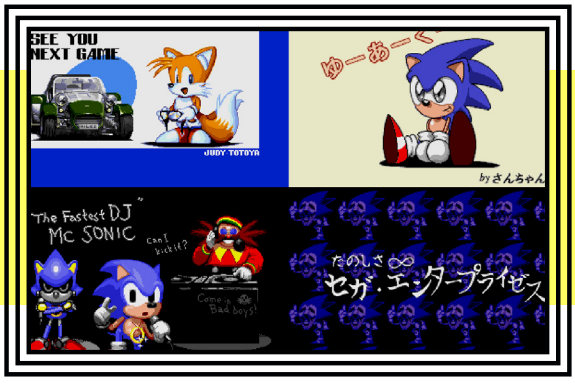
[ILLUSTRATIVE]

THE **SONIC CD** ART GALLERY

As mentioned a few pages back, if you were to cobble together all the codes and secrets from the Genesis *Sonic* games, most of them would revolve around a sound test mode, where a specific sequence of sounds needed to be played to trigger additional hidden features. To no one's surprise, 1993's *Sonic CD* also had its secrets hidden behind a benign sound test, and for what was already a wild little game in the *Sonic the Hedgehog* series, its secrets were rather off-center, too.

But of course, you can't reach any of them without getting to the sound test first. Fortunately that's a cinch: just press **Down, Down, Down, Left, Right, A** at the title screen, and you'll see the sound selector and its cloudy background. The sounds are categorized by "FM," "PCM," and "DA," representing the three main sound channels. You can just play the sounds and music if you want, or you can set different combinations of the three values to activate things like the debug mode or a secret Special Stage featuring a giant Robotnik head.

But neither of those are all that interesting compared to the small gallery of illustrations made by the game's artists and secretly placed in the game. The first one can be accessed by setting **FM No. 40, PCM No. 12, and DA No. 11**, then pressing Start. The result is a cheerful illustration of Tails next to a classic car, and a message—or thinly-veiled threat—saying "see you next game." This is actually the code that activates the debug mode, as well, so you can exit out of there, go back to the main game, and play around with placing sprites all over the stages.



FM 44, PCM 11, and DA 09 bring up a picture of a super-cutesy Sonic, with big doe eyes, sitting a bit like a rag doll. Another text message, written in Japanese, reads "You Are Cool." It's pretty plain otherwise, but does line up with *Sonic CD*'s general message of inspiration (as the original Japanese theme song says, "believe in yourself!"). The picture that appears with **FM 42, PCM 03 and DA 01** is another pretty cute piece: a scene of Sonic under a spotlight and on the mic, with Metal Sonic backing him and Robotnik on the turntables. "The Fastest DJ: MC Sonic" reads the title text. Just how fast can he spit rhymes, anyway?

With **FM 42, PCM 04 and DA 21**, things start getting weird. The scene this time is a dark, foreboding portrait of what appears to be a muscle-bound humanoid Sonic. It's an apparent spoof of Batman, as Sonic's ears resemble the long and pointy "ears" on Batman's mask. Since *Sonic CD*, *Sonic* games have slowly crept towards being "mature," but those attempts crashed to the ground in flames—plus the overwrought Archie comics, though those have continued apace. Hopefully Sega keeps Sonic far away from the stylings of the Dark Knight in our present world of brood-y reboots.

The fourth hidden picture is undoubtedly the most chilling. **FM 46, PCM 12 and DA 25** bring up a screen filled with a repeating pattern of an odd Sonic caricature: leaning forward holding his finger up, the hedgehog's face seems to have taken on a ghastly moustached look, not unlike *V for Vendetta*'s iconic Guy Fawkes mask. The text in the foreground doesn't explain this; it simply says "Infinite Fun: Sega Enterprises." Not the friendliest way to promote your company.

Although you needed a code to get the sound test, the nature of the hidden images may fall closer to the realm of Easter Eggs than "codes," because they're pieces of art drawn up by the staff (three of the four are signed by their respective artists) and surreptitiously put in the game. And they're definitely not something you'd find in a *Sonic* game before or after: again, many Sonic secrets have been exposed, and they almost all amount to unused sprites or other traces of content from the normal development process that fell by the wayside. That the *Sonic CD* team gathered their artists to contribute a few original pieces is unique among a franchise that, on the outside, seemed to be about business as usual. And it makes *Sonic CD* as a whole more unique, too.

THEY'RE DEFINITELY NOT SOMETHING YOU'D FIND IN A *SONIC* GAME BEFORE OR AFTER

COMING UP DRY

For the 2011 rebuilt port of *Sonic CD*, developer Christian Whitehead threw in one more secret image for the sound test: a picture of what was to be a brand-new zone for the game, Desert Dazzle. Work on the zone was cut short due to time constraints and Sega wanting the port to be as identical to the original as possible. From the look of it, Desert Dazzle seems like an homage to Dust Hill Zone, a planned zone for *Sonic 2* that didn't make the cut in that game, either.


SACRAM
1
CLINTON
DIVAC

[HAIL TO THE CHEAT]

NBA JAM'S SECRET CHARACTERS

Midway always had a mischievous streak to them. The exaggerated sensibilities of some of their early games like *Robotron 2084*, *Tapper*, and *Arch Rivals* informed their hits later in the '80s and '90s, like *NARC*, *Mortal Kombat*, and their licensed sports games like *NBA Jam* and *NFL Blitz*.

Of course, that mischief was rooted in the guys that worked there. Rattle off names like Eugene Jarvis, Mark Turmell, Sal Divita, Ed Boon and John Tobias, and it's hard not to think of a game of theirs that wasn't a little bit funny, subversive, or over-the-top. Fortunately, a lot of them were fun, too, and those other qualities weren't always on the surface. The number of codes, secrets, and urban legends surrounding the first three *Mortal Kombat* games exponentially grew with each one until the franchise got too full of itself—in multiple ways. And with Midway's entrance into licensed sports games via *NBA Jam*, a two-on-two basketball game that rivaled *Mortal Kombat* and *Street Fighter* in terms of arcade dominance, there was plenty of cool things to dig up and share. We expected nothing less.

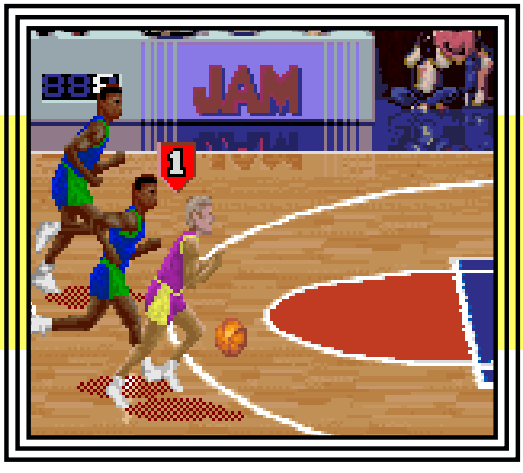
NBA Jam had no shortage of codes in the original arcade version. At the "Tonight's Match-Up" screen, several combinations of holding buttons and directions on the joystick granted things like enhancing defensive power or ensuring better interceptions. One button combination activated "Big Head" mode, which literally inflated the player characters' heads. On top of that, there was a hidden 3D first-person tank game; a simple maze-based shooter that, once you died in it, could disappear as soon as you summoned it.

MASCOTS? GUYS IN THE OFFICE? ANYONE WAS FAIR GAME

Big Head mode was a highlight of the game that turned into a staple of every *NBA Jam* sequel and iteration since, but what really stole the show was the presence of hidden characters. By entering certain initials and birthdays in the game's record-keeping screen, you could unlock members of the *NBA Jam* development team and hit the court with them. Put in **MJT** and March 22, or **SAL** and February 1 to get the aforementioned Mark Turmell and Sal Divita. It was a simple process of digitizing their photographed heads, mullets and all, and sticking them on the regular player bodies, so it was—from the outside, anyway—a cinch to fill the game with any number of secret characters. A shame for anyone who may have shared the staff's initials or birthdates, though.

When it came time to produce home versions of *NBA Jam*, the roster of crazy guest characters was given a shot in the arm. Along with the Midway staff from the arcade game and some staff from the console versions' developers, a pile of new names and birthdays brought in even more odd choices, like P Funk (musician George Clinton) and the odd-for-another-reason inclusion of football player Warren Moon. But there were characters more notable than that: enter the initials **"AR," then hover on "K," hold down Start and L, then press X**, and up comes then-President Bill Clinton. If you wanted Vice President Al Gore, you entered **"NET"** in a similar fashion. The two heads of state were arguably the biggest celebs out of all of *Jam*'s bonus characters, and Clinton was the standout for other reasons beyond simply being the president: it's not every day you can see a salt-and-pepper-haired white man take it to the hoop on a regular basis. That, topped with some of his real-life silliness—the *Arsenio* saxophone jam, in particular—added to the appeal of playing as him. If only his stats weren't so average.

NBA Jam could get away with it because it was *NBA Jam*; four-player basketball that allowed greater physicality and superhuman feats like turbo running and setting the ball on fire. It was like an overwrought Gatorade ad made interactive, though it was naturally more in tune with the Midway "voice." Mascots? Politicians? Guys



in the office? Their kids? It seemed that anyone was fair game.

In *NBA Jam Tournament Edition*, the home versions added even more celebrities. Prince Charles made the cut, Hillary Clinton joined her husband, plus some NBA team mascots and a bevy of rappers including Will Smith, Jazzy Jeff, Heavy D, and all three Beastie Boys, to name but a few. In the original arcade version, Midway included some characters from *Mortal Kombat II*, but they were taken out of later revisions, allegedly because the NBA didn't want any association with the family-unfriendly MK games. Pretty much everyone else stayed, though, making for the largest and nuttiest roster of hidden characters in a *Jam* game. EA kept the spirit alive in their 2010 *Jam* reboot, getting the Beastie Boys back, along with throwing in more politicians on both sides: Not just Barack Obama, but John McCain, Sarah Palin, George W. Bush, and Dick Cheney. Oh, and Mark Turmell, of course.


0%
ARMS
ARMOR

[I Melt With You]

THE **DOOM** NO-CLIPPING CODE

You're not alone in what you're thinking right now: "That's not God Mode." No, it's not, but when you take a moment to think about it, all of the codes in *Doom* and *Doom II,* not just God Mode, are memorable. After all, *Doom* was the biggest computer game franchise of the '90s (barring Ambien substitute *Myst*), and with tons of people playing it over and over again, its cheat codes are doubtlessly going to enter more than a few gamers' vocabularies. So, yeah, we know God Mode: IDDQD; full inventory: IDKFA, and the instant level warp: IDCLEV. And while any of those could have made great entries here, when it comes right down to it, no *Doom* code can really match the entertainment value of **IDSPISPOPD**, the no-clipping toggle.

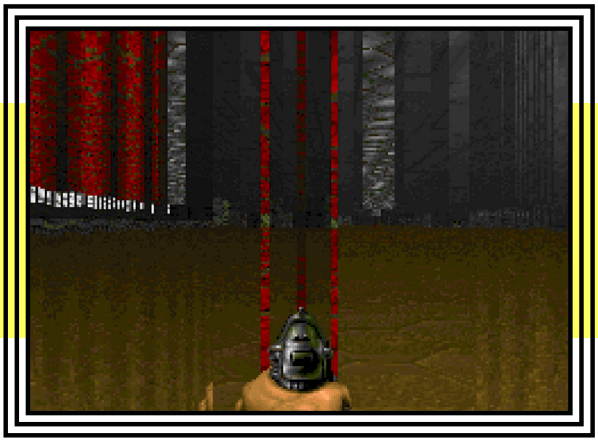
Start the game and type "IDSPISPOPD" at any point, and besides a confirmation message, nothing obvious happens onscreen. To see what IDSPISPOPD really does, run into a wall. Actually, you run through the wall and either enter a connected room, or more likely, a trippy void where the graphics duplicate and flicker all around the map geometry. The code may have been helpful for the guys at Id Software who wanted to double-check maps in-game, but it was a killer cheat for players. Activate "no clipping" and you can speed through the map and float yourself into any room, especially the secret ones. Enemies will continue to walk around (or stand in the shadows waiting), but they're oblivious to you unless you deactivate the code.

SOMETIMES, FREEDOM ISN'T A CASE OF PARTICIPATING IN A MISSION OR NOT

Calling the effect "no clipping" is a bit of a misnomer, because the most obvious thing it does is turn off collision, which is really what lets you move through walls. "No clipping" would suggest that the game is rendering the entire map and objects even when you can't see all of it, and maybe it is, but it still has nothing to do with breaking the game's physics. Nevertheless, "noclip" became the de facto term for acting like Casper the Ghost in a PC FPS.

If you're not actively trying to cheat your way through the maps, you can still chill out in the negative space, turn left and right a few times, and easily transform your screen into a swishy, melty, abstract mess. Or if you're the exploratory type, you can head out from the map for a nigh-infinite distance, turn around to look at it, fix your eyes on a point and head back towards it—maybe you'll be in a room you never entered before. And if it's filled with imps and pinky demons or whatever, you can just back up to where you came and into the void of safety. It feels like magic, and it can make a lasting impression. You don't get that when you turn on God Mode and blast through a map in three minutes.

So why is it called "IDSPISPOPD" anyway? In the grand tradition of Id and Apogee/3D Realms games, it's a nerd joke adopted by jokey nerds, only this time, the makers of the game weren't the source. In December 1993, just days before the monumental uploading of the final shareware version of *Doom*, the fervor surrounding the game was at a fever pitch—especially on Usenet, where discussions in newsgroups were amounting to several dozen variations of "When the hell is *Doom* coming out?" or "Where can I get *Doom*? Is it out yet?" One of the bigger venues for *Doom* talk, comp.sys.ibm.pc.games.action, was apparently getting the bulk of the excitement, annoying or not. In that week before the game hit, a regular on the "action" group, Eli Bingham, posted a thread joking that to cool down the hype next time, Id should give their next game a title that's longer and not as "cool-sounding," like, say, "Smashing Pumpkins Into Small Piles of Putrid Debris"—SPISPOPD. As with any Internet meme, even in 1993, SPISPOPD hit in the right place at the right time. It didn't exactly spread like wildfire, though a parody FAQ about the hot new game "SPISPOPD" was passed around, and it caught the attention of Id, who made SPISPOPD the



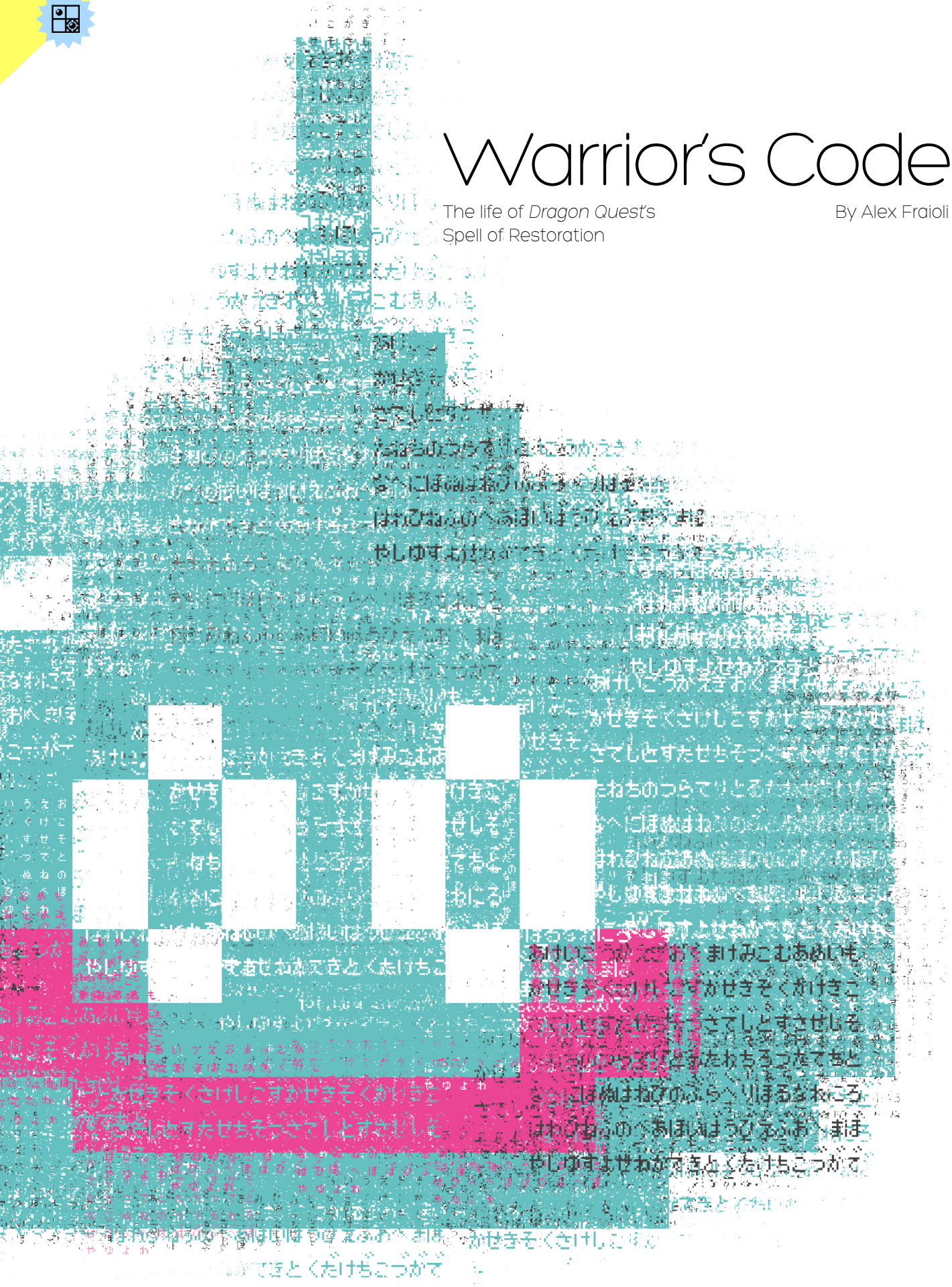
name of their no-clip code, for no apparent reason other than to acknowledge it. In *Doom II*, the code was revised as the simpler and more obvious "IDCLIP," which could have easily been what it was in the first game before the change.

"Freedom" in video games is something that's put on a pedestal an awful lot, and talked about the most when trying to validate the medium to non-gamers. That was especially amplified in the last decade when open-world games grew in number, but sometimes freedom isn't a case of participating in a drive-by shooting mission or not, nor is it always about hoofing it from one end of Skyrim to the other. In the case of IDSPISPOPD and some of the other codes that have been presented here, freedom is a total breaking of the rules, to the point where you do things that the makers of a game didn't expect. And unlike real-life freedom, there's never a real detriment, because it's always the act of playing with ones and zeroes that can disappear and reappear in a flash.

Warrior's Code

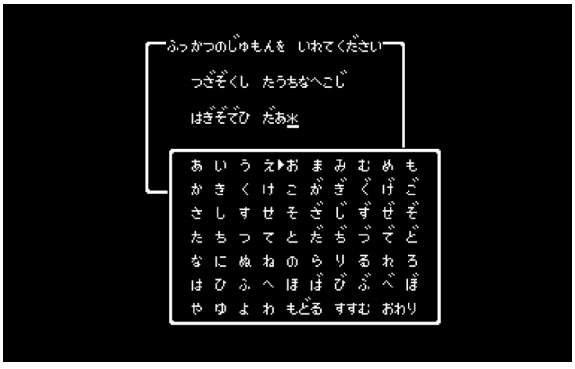
The life of *Dragon Quest*'s Spell of Restoration

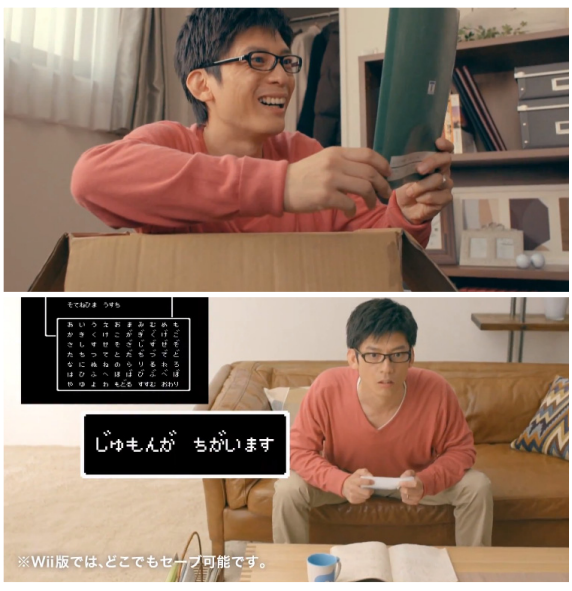
By Alex Fraioli



"I hate having to walk all the way back to the king to save my game!"

"Oh, shush. Right now, a little boy in Japan has to write down a huge password just to save."





With a robust line-up of titles on Nintendo DS, the *Dragon Quest* series is easier to play than ever for gamers on a tight schedule. Need to take a break? Just close the system or make a quicksave. But for those who were in on the ground floor of *DQ* mania in 1986, recording one's progress in the Imperial Scrolls of Honor was a touch more DIY.

The *fukkatsu no jumon* ("Spell of Restoration") introduced in the original *Dragon Quest* and handed down by His Highness at the end of each session incorporated all of the player's stats, possessions, and plot flags up to that point, forming a 20-character password using regular Hiragana characters that looked like a gibberish-filled magic chant. The concept of using a password system in an RPG seems ludicrous now, but such were the limitations of the time. This feature was only in the Famicom and MSX versions of *DQ I* and *II*, just a year or two shy of the advent of battery backup. And that advent came just in time for the overseas audience: when Nintendo was preparing *Dragon Warrior* for North America, the Spell of Restoration was translated as the "Mantra of Resurrection" before the game was finished and battery support was added.

Compared to *Dragon Quest II*, 20 characters to write down is no big deal. The sequel came hot on the heels of its predecessor in 1987, expanding the size and scope of the quest while throwing in dozens of additional parameters: a three-member party and a wider array of equipment and spells, for starters. Winding down after an evening of *DQ II* involved transcribing a beefy 52-character cipher, leading to a ritual of double- and triple-checking that likely fostered obsessive-compulsive tendencies in an entire generation of Japanese adults.

Today, password generators for both games are readily available on the Web, with customizable variables for the characters' names, gold, experience, items, and equipment, enabling fans to jump to any point in the games under any circumstances they wish—an allowance of control not often seen in RPGs of any era. Even in the '80s, Enix recommended trading passwords with friends for added fun, allowing tedious hours to be skipped as easily as one skips to Dr. Wily's fortress with a *Mega Man* password.

The games and their password systems were retained in the *Dragon Quest 25th Anniversary* compilation on Wii, though the archaic codes are rendered useless thanks to an interim save option. But Square Enix was still wise to the Spell's cultural effect: TV commercials for the compilation featured one nostalgic father's personal quest to find his old "Spell of Restoration" notebook in a closet—the button on the commercial being that his younger self had incorrectly copied down the password, natch. While the manual for the compilation recommends using the quicksave option to ensure preservation of data, it also advises present-day gamers to "take a photo [of the Spell] to ensure you record it correctly." Password copying for the iPhone generation.

The Spell of Restoration is one of the few things to be discarded from a series that prides itself on keeping with tradition, but Enix managed to have a little fun with it in its time. Fans of *Dragon Warrior* on NES may recall that accepting the Dragonlord's duplicitous offer before the final battle results in death, but Japanese players were given a special Spell password from the boss. True to the Dragonlord's fiendish character, the password is a fake; it merely starts a new game after being entered.


ABCXYZLR

The ISLAND of Misfit Hardware

ARTIFACT #DCT101

Divers 2000 CX-1

Undersea dream

Televisions with built-in game consoles are always favorite items among collectors. They're interesting if just plain cool, but they were often so obscure that you had to own one to know they existed. Console makers have traditionally been focused on selling just one console model, leaving the all-in-one systems or other offshoots to the companies that get the license for the tech. However, the all-in-one gaming TVs were pretty much all Nintendo-based, and a relic of the cartridge era regardless—once CD-based systems became commonplace, novelty combo consoles were a rarity, unless they were boom boxes (see *SCROLL* 01).

Appropriately enough, that changed at the turn of the 21st century, when Sega and Fuji Television developed and released the Divers 2000 Series CX-1, a 14-inch television with Dreamcast functionality: a disc tray on the top, and four controller ports below the screen. If that weren't enough, it also included a Dreamcast keyboard, the DreamEye webcam, and the "Ch@b" video-calling software and headset in the box. From the look of things, it seemed Sega and Fuji were pitching the CX-1 as an all-in-one infotainment unit for young go-getters living on the edge of tomorrow. Keep in mind this was right after the end of the '90s, in the days when the notion of the "Internet appliance" was still thought to have legs.

Speaking of legs, the CX-1 design is unorthodox, to say the least. It evokes the shape of a tadpole or sideways teardrop, to say nothing of the weird emerald green antennae poking out from it, with the bottom pair serving as legs for when the set is detached from its stand (it then leans back on the "tail"). And when it's turned on, an arc of LED lights on the sides light up. It's all but emblematic of the late-'90s or early-2000s "roundness" of industrial design; in other words, it looks like something an old iMac mates with. It's most often compared to the look of the bumbling Morolian enemies in *Space Channel 5*, who also have weird antennae and screens for a "face."

Console combo TVs were obscure luxury items, and the CX-1, as the first such unit in a while, and one with a powerful console inside, didn't come cheap. The unit sold (only via order on the Internet, by the way) for 88,888 yen, or approaching $850 USD. A regular Dreamcast cost 19,900 yen in Japan at the time, and a 14-inch TV presumably the same price, at best. Granted, the smorgasbord of included hardware and software was a valid attempt to bolster the perceived value of the CX-1, but everything about it gave off the sense that it was a "concept" item, and couldn't really serve a practical role in someone's home. (The only thing it didn't come with was an actual game—*Space Channel 5* is the obvious choice, but *ChuChu Rocket* would have made a great companion to all the other Internet stuff in the box.) Divorced of the Dreamcast part, the TV itself wasn't future-proof, either: a 14-inch tube that didn't even have component video jacks wasn't exactly screaming "lasting item."

Wikipedia

The Dreamcast came in some odd colors and forms, but its inclusion in the guts of the CX-1 television has to be one of the oddest. The tiny set looked like a cute alien guppy, but its high price, low distribution, and ridiculously brief period of relevancy sidelined it in record time.

Take one look at the CX-1, and you can get a sense for why some people hold on to their feelings for the Dreamcast like it was a dead lover: nearly everything about it and *surrounding* it was incredibly unique, including weird licensed TV sets. The CX-1 arrived almost a year before Sega pulled the plug on Dreamcast, and among the many rarities that were borne from it, it's one that you probably won't pay out the ear for—maybe only a couple hundred dollars less than its list price. Even so, it may only be a worthy showpiece if your game room happens to be in an acrylic dome under the Adriatic Sea.

Icons: www.ix.sakura.ne.jp/~yoshi/

SUPER MARIO BROS. DELUXE

NINTENDO • GAME BOY COLOR • 1999

There was some talk of potential when the Game Boy Color was released in 1998, but one of its biggest expectations—an influx of NES ports—barely got off the ground. But, hey, it's the color Game Boy! It's 8-bit! We should have all sorts of NES classics coming our way! The reality? The resolution was just too damn small. The original Game Boy had only a smattering of NES conversions itself, but plopping NES games onto the GBC with one-to-one graphics, even if they *were* in color, wasn't a simple set-it-and-forget-it situation—more of a square peg/round hole sort of deal.

Nevertheless, Nintendo themselves wanted to make the best of the situation in making *Super Mario Bros. Deluxe*, a full-featured rendition of the NES original for GBC, plus a few extra bells and whistles like minigames, original game modes like a multiplayer race, and custom illustrations to print on the Game Boy Printer.

But even *Super Mario Bros.*, as great as it was, didn't make total sense on the Game Boy. In *Super Mario Land*, Mario was shrunken to the size of a baby's fingernail compared to how he looked in *SMB*, because, again, the resolution was just too damn small: in *SMB Deluxe*, you can hardly see anything in front of Mario. You could press Up or Down on the control pad to move the view, but it was still like playing it on NES after covering the TV in a black sheet with three-inch square cut in the lower. It was a portable *SMB*, which was great, but it was a little hampered, and the play view became the biggest issue among reviewers and players.

On the other hand, if Nintendo saw fit to release *SMB Deluxe*, it couldn't have been *that* big a tragedy. And it wasn't. One just has to ease up on their battle-hardened, amateur-speed-running, *Super Mario*-playing ways. A little extra caution here and there didn't completely sap the fun from the game. It was a tiny window to play in, but it was workable, and by the time you unlocked the (somewhat tweaked) Lost Levels, you were trained to deal with the blind spots. It turned out that *Super Mario Bros.* holds up pretty well.

It is however funny that a game that made history on NES would make a very different kind of history on Game Boy Color. *SMB Deluxe* was a neat novelty, and paved the road for the *Super Mario Advance* series a little while later, but it begat only a handful of less impressive NES ports, such as *Ghosts 'N' Goblins* and a retooled *Blaster Master*. Plus, it reached Japan months after the US version, and as a downloadable kiosk game, to boot. Lesson learned? Not quite—the next year, Nintendo released a GBC version of *Donkey Kong Country*. Talk about square pegs.

Touched in the head

All the writing about codes and button sequences in this issue had me tangentially thinking of the hardcore crowd's rather ferocious kneejerk dismissal of smartphone and other touch-screen, button-less gaming. I'm not entirely sure where it all comes from, but the belief that touch and motion is "killing" gaming has persisted for the better part of a decade now, and we're still getting plenty of new games in the genres we like and on the systems we pledge allegiance to. For the love of god, it's 2012 and we have *2D fighting games* based on *RPGs*. Apple isn't going to put a dent in that stuff for a *long* time.

For some people, as long as there's an App Store, their rage boners will never subside. Other, more articulate folks take the long-term approach, insisting that it's only a matter of time before touch screen games will dominate society so much that no one will want to make any game-playing devices with buttons. From that position, it's a valid concern, and they're right; it *is* just a matter of time—just not that big of one. We're still several decades out from the eradication of buttons in any electronics, and there's a good chance that by then, you'll either be too old to care about video games, or dead.

The real issue is that like all kneejerk reactions, it's an innate fear of change. With gamers specifically, it's a change that leads to losing something—a tactile button—which is to some degree tied to nostalgia. We used to hold controllers and press buttons all the time when we were little, and still do. And in time, we'll all be holding flat, rectangular, glass-covered *things* that show pictures of buttons at best. But that will be part someone else's nostalgia, and tomorrow's hardcore gamers may hold a certain fondness for a game or two they used to play on the family iPad, and with any luck, they'll be able go back and enjoy it again. Nice memories? Genuine fun? It's not just for Generation Y anymore.

I'm not trying to say "deal with it," because man, I love buttons, too—big, fat ,colorful ones, and loud, clicky joysticks. But I also love the advances that video games are making, and I'm positive that as our particular generation of video game purists becomes more marginalized, the communities will actually become stronger, more celebratory, and ultimately longer-lasting. Think of it this way: we still have photo shoots of people posing with Atari 2600 joysticks in an ironic fashion. You'll be fine.

rdb

SCROLL

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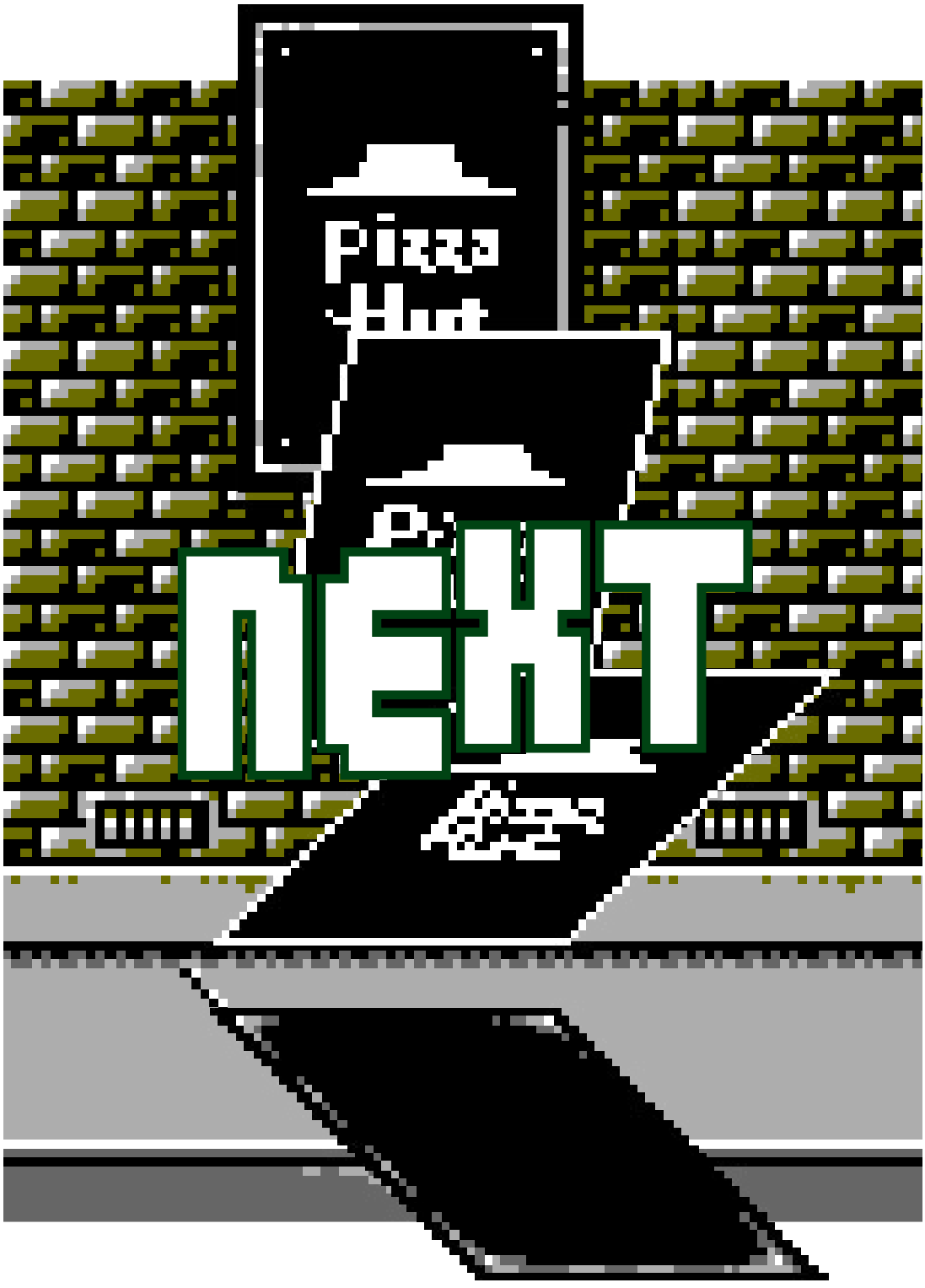
Online

The SCROLL web site is **scroll.vg.** Find out about old (or new!) issues there, and check out whatever things I find on the Internet that are germane to the whole SCROLL... thing.

You can also follow the SCROLL Twitter account, **@scroll_vg.** It's good for an instantaneous alert as to when something new is published.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Hut
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