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Is that factory? (Part 3)

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Wait ... who?

The Worst NES Game

You have no idea



Initial Impressions:

eBay's revised fees and practices Editorial by Dan Langevin

On February 20th, eBay will institute sweeping changes to its auction and store policies. The announcement, made January 29th, came under the guise of a rate reduction, and promises incentives to both sellers and buyers. But how much of this is marketing baloney, and how much is a real, bottom-line benefit?

For buyers, the difference is clear – no more negs or neutrals! Buyers cannot be left anything but positive feedback (or nothing at all). You no longer need to fear retaliatory negs from bad sellers whom you wish to leave a neg for. I can hear the outcry now from sellers everywhere – “That’s our only bargaining chip!” Well, it’s always been a purely psychological one. Negative feedback, simply put, doesn’t affect buyers at all except on the most exclusive and expensive of purchases. For the VAST majority of eBay purchases, buyer feedback doesn’t even come into play once it’s in the positive.

There are a few important things to note. While you may still leave positives, there’s no control over the text content of your message. You may still be as scathing as you wish, although be mindful that after it rolls off the top few entries, there’s virtually no chance that it will ever be read by inquiring minds. Also, this protects resellers who purchase items on eBay

from their same sales account – never fear, bad feedback won’t impact your seller rating if you need to spank a bad seller for a sour lot you received.

Additionally, this all but eliminates the need for sellers to “wait and see” before leaving feedback for buyers. In some cases, this may actually increase positive feedback volume – speaking personally I have over 250 items waiting in my “Paid and waiting to leave feedback” folder...that’s potentially 250 positive feedbacks that I won’t realize until there’s some break in the stalemate. But still, I’d rather have the option than be forced...so what else is in it for sellers?

Well, eBay has promised to make repeat business finally count – so long as feedbacks are left more than a week apart from the same user, each one will count towards your overall FB total and percentage. For those with many repeat customers, this will serve to “wash out” small quantities of negatives affecting your percentage. Also, while feedback more than a year old will count towards your quantitative FB total, it won’t count towards your percentage – so keep on selling, no resting on your laurels! Feedback aside, keep in mind that sellers already have multiple tools with which to back out of a bad deal with buyers, including unpaid item reminders and FVF credit claims, and the new expanded Paypal protection policy. So I don’t think this bold change is truly unfair to sellers (or over-fair to buyers!). Speaking of Paypal...

For years now, the Paypal seller protection policy has strongly favored unverified buyers, especially those overseas. Paypal has now planned to modify this policy, allowing tracking numbers from the recently-renovated USPS international mail system to count to-

wards most foreign claims. Moreover, any unverified address may still be claimed against, so long as your delivery confirmation number matches the shipping address.

These protections alone are worth their weight in gold, partially because foreign buyers are often willing to pay more to acquire a hard-to-find item from another country, but also the added protection will mean fewer non-receipt claims against sellers will result in misery and loss. It hasn’t been announced yet whether some of the most problematic countries will be included among the 190 countries which Paypal will protect sellers who ship to (Italy and France spring to mind), but more info is sure to be revealed in a few short weeks.

The much-maligned 5-star “DSR” (Detailed Seller Rating) system will finally become an integral part of the seller system, in fact so much so that it will directly affect a seller’s bottom line – how much they pay versus how much they make. These dimensions have currently only been loosely related to whether or not a seller may remain on eBay to do business, but the new plan employs them as a factor toward awarding PowerSeller status, as well as potentially qualifying sellers for rewards in the form of Final Value Fee discounts!

Before I get into the discounts, let’s talk about some more basic financial changes. eBay has promised free gallery and lower insertion fees (I love saying “insertion” in a serious article, BTW). This sounds great, but what does that mean for our wallets? Are we really saving money? Hidden amongst the announcements are also increases in FVF charges for both eBay Stores and Auctions. Yes, I’ve done the homework for you. Here are the charts.

(cont. on next page)

Pre-February 20th fees: auction listings w/gallery				
Price	Listing	FVF	Tot.Fees	Fee %
\$0.99	\$0.55	\$0.05	\$0.60	60.8%
\$9.99	\$0.75	\$0.62	\$1.27	12.5%
\$24.99	\$0.95	\$1.31	\$2.26	9.1%
\$49.99	\$1.55	\$2.12	\$3.67	7.3%
\$99.99	\$1.55	\$3.75	\$5.30	5.3%
\$199.99	\$2.75	\$7.00	\$9.75	4.9%
\$499.99	\$3.95	\$16.75	\$20.70	4.1%
\$999.99	\$5.15	\$33.00	\$38.15	3.8%

Pre-February 20th fees: store listings w/gallery				
Price	Listing	FVF	Tot.Fees	Fee %
\$0.99	\$0.06	\$0.10	\$0.16	16.1%
\$9.99	\$0.06	\$1.00	\$1.06	10.6%
\$24.99	\$0.06	\$2.50	\$2.56	10.2%
\$49.99	\$0.11	\$4.25	\$4.36	8.7%
\$99.99	\$0.11	\$7.75	\$7.86	7.9%
\$199.99	\$0.11	\$12.75	\$12.86	6.4%
\$499.99	\$0.11	\$27.75	\$27.86	5.6%
\$999.99	\$0.11	\$52.75	\$52.86	5.3%

Post-February 20th fees: auction listings w/free gallery					
Price	Listing	FVF	Tot.Fees	Fee %	% change
\$0.99	\$0.15	\$0.09	\$0.24	23.9%	36.9%
\$9.99	\$0.35	\$0.87	\$1.22	12.3%	0.5%
\$24.99	\$0.55	\$2.19	\$2.74	11.0%	-1.9%
\$49.99	\$1.00	\$3.06	\$4.06	8.1%	-0.8%
\$99.99	\$1.00	\$4.81	\$5.81	5.8%	-0.5%
\$199.99	\$2.00	\$8.31	\$10.31	5.2%	-0.3%
\$499.99	\$3.00	\$18.81	\$21.81	4.4%	-0.2%
\$999.99	\$4.00	\$36.31	\$40.31	4.0%	-0.2%

Post-February 20th fees: auction listings w/free gallery					
Price	Listing	FVF	Tot.Fees	Fee %	% change
\$0.99	\$0.03	\$0.12	\$0.15	15.0%	1.0%
\$9.99	\$0.03	\$1.20	\$1.23	12.3%	-1.7%
\$24.99	\$0.03	\$3.00	\$3.03	12.1%	-1.9%
\$49.99	\$0.05	\$4.50	\$4.55	9.1%	-0.4%
\$99.99	\$0.05	\$8.50	\$8.55	8.6%	0.7%
\$199.99	\$0.05	\$13.00	\$13.05	6.5%	-0.1%
\$499.99	\$0.10	\$25.00	\$25.10	5.0%	0.6%
\$999.99	\$0.10	\$45.00	\$45.10	4.5%	0.8%

Letter From the Wizrobe-in-Chief (cont.)

5% power seller bonus			
\$0.22	22.7%	38.1%	
\$1.16	11.6%	1.1%	
\$2.60	10.4%	-1.4%	
\$3.86	7.7%	-0.4%	
\$5.52	5.5%	-0.2%	
\$9.80	4.9%	0.0%	
\$20.72	4.1%	0.0%	
\$38.30	3.8%	0.0%	

5% power seller bonus			
\$0.14	14.3%	1.8%	
\$1.17	11.7%	-1.1%	
\$2.88	11.5%	-1.3%	
\$4.32	8.6%	0.1%	
\$8.12	8.1%	-0.3%	
\$12.40	6.2%	0.2%	
\$23.84	4.8%	0.8%	
\$42.84	4.3%	1.0%	

15% power seller bonus			
\$0.20	20.3%	40.5%	
\$1.04	10.4%	2.3%	
\$2.33	9.3%	-0.3%	
\$3.45	6.9%	0.4%	
\$4.94	4.9%	0.4%	
\$8.77	4.4%	0.5%	
\$18.54	3.7%	0.4%	
\$34.27	3.4%	0.4%	

15% power seller bonus			
\$0.13	12.8%	3.3%	
\$1.04	10.5%	0.1%	
\$2.57	10.3%	-0.1%	
\$3.87	7.7%	1.0%	
\$7.27	7.3%	0.6%	
\$11.09	5.5%	0.9%	
\$21.33	4.3%	1.3%	
\$38.33	3.8%	1.5%	

First things first – this is a Ceteris Paribus chart. This is a term used in finance to say that “all other things being equal,” this chart is correct. What about shipping and handling charges? How about packaging, postage and Paypal fees? For the purposes of this chart, we assume that your shipping and handling charges are EQUAL to all other non-eBay expenses and revenues you have after the sale...to keep these numbers clean and to distill the true information from the fee hike.

The prices used in the left column to calculate all fees are the maximum you can charge before hitting the next fee plateau. What this means, is I’m “mini-maxing” – if your items are to get the best value, they should try to hit these price marks, just a penny below where you’d be charged additional insertion fees. Note that all figures include gallery (for comparison’s sake – although it was always a better idea to use gallery for items over \$1) and end in a percentage figure to make comparison more simple. Just don’t forget to upload a picture! :)

Most of the numbers are self-explanatory, but there’s a lot of them so let’s get to the analysis. The “% change” figure compares the current (“old”) fee percentage (How much of each dollar you make will be paid out in fees to eBay) to the post-Feb-20th fee percentage. You can see for both eBay Auctions and eBay Stores, there are quite a few negatives. This means overall, you’re losing money with the new fee schedule (no surprise!). You can expect an average percent loss per dollar of between a half-penny and two cents for most items over \$1.00 that you sell. You’ll note that it’s become a significantly better deal percentage-wise with the abolition of gallery fees, to list items priced

at \$0.99 or less at auction – this is because the old \$0.35 charge was an immediate 35% fee!

There is one solitary FVF reduction built into the new fee revision – if you’re listing an item at eBay Stores for \$500 or more, most of your FVF will be a percentage point less than it used to be. It’s important to note, though, that you’re still paying about \$5 more upon closing than you’d pay at eBay auctions if your item sold the first week you listed it. Although this chart doesn’t specifically enumerate such comparisons, you can see that most eBay Stores fees are greater than eBay Auctions fees for all but the cheapest of items, in both pricing structures.

This doesn’t necessarily mean that eBay Stores are a bad deal – keep in mind, listings stay up about 4x longer than auctions, and to relist an auction you’ll have to soak your listing fee again and again. With the new fee reductions though, this is much less of a financial concern than it was when a \$0.99 item cost you \$0.55 to relist with gallery each time it didn’t sell!

Finally, take note of the discount percentages schedules below the main charts. These take into account a PowerSeller with high DSR “star” ratings. If you can keep all of your DSRs over 4.6, you’ll earn the 5% discount...and for the impossibly high goal of all stats 4.8 or greater, a 15% reward. As you can see, this is the dimension that actually “takes the cake” and why I can give the new revisions an overall thumbs-up (or, shall we say, a positive feedback?). Most reputable sellers have no problem maintaining a 4.6 or better in all categories, so long as they ship fairly and quickly, and are attentive to customer’s questions. This reward offsets the lion’s

share of the additional “jacked-up” eBay fees, most notably erasing them altogether at higher levels for eBay Auctions. For eBay Stores, sellers actually get a discount over most of the OLD rates if they maintain good DSRs.

In the unlikely event that you maintain a 4.8 or better in ALL categories, almost every item except those priced between \$10 and \$25 will earn you enough in rewards to “beat” the old fee structure. It remains to be seen whether the DSR ratings will be calculated as an average over each month, or a one-time “snapshot”, but it seems that eBay has set some fair goals that will keep sellers honest, and reward honest sellers. Also noteworthy, the majority of items sold on eBay fall between this \$10-\$25 range... so even in the worst-case scenario that a great number of sellers maintain the best discount, they’re still making their money.

There are a few other minor changes to the search engine, Paypal-option requirements for high-risk sales, Picture Pack add-on fees, and physical removal of feedback entries from suspended users or users with unanswered UPI reminders. These all are nice in their own way, but will only affect business on eBay in a very minor way. Still, all of the literature is available at the following link so you can be completely informed.

<http://pages.ebay.com/sell/update08/overview/index.html>

Stay tuned next month when I cover opening your own eBay store, and keeping it profitable. -Dan

This Month's Member Spotlight: JIMPOLESHUK

Name: Jim Poleshuk
Age: 29
Location: Omaha, Nebraska
Occupation: Quality Compliance Auditor for a Biological Manufacturer
Children? My son turned 1 year old on January 31st.
Why did you get in the collecting scene? Last summer to make extra cash, I was buying and reselling video games. I went to pick up a NES with games for \$25. I showed up and was handed a CIB Action Set with 16 mint CIB games, including both Zeldas and Fire 'n Ice. I had to make the choice of reselling it or collecting. It's clear which one I picked.
Favorite NES Game: Metroid
Least Favorite NES Game: Super Mario Brothers 2. Not the worst game, but I remember as a kid buying it when it first came out for \$54 at Witco Toys and being totally disappointed. \$50 was a lot for a 10

year old kid.
What would you spend your money on if you didn't collect for the NES? Motorcycles. Restoring bikes is also a major hobby for me. Check out www.torchscustomcycles.blogspot.com

Fondest Memory of Video Gaming: When I was a kid, getting my name in Nintendo Power for a high score on Airwolf.
Anything you'd like to say for all the world to see? I'm grateful for the friends I've made on here and how many people



are so helpful and encouraging to new collectors like myself. Oh and GO PATRIOTS!
Collection goals for 2008? I'd like to complete the unlicensed AVE subset. Also, I wouldn't mind getting or making some sort of Nintendo sign to put up in my Nintendo room.

Want to be featured?
 Hang out in the chat room. Or bribe mewwithoutYou52. Either one.

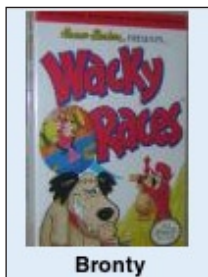


How was it sealed?

Part 3

Article by Dan Maresca

(For those of you that may have missed the last two e-Zines, I have started documenting which NES games were sealed what way, keeping in mind that sealing variants exist and that this list is bound to have a couple errors. A few titles have been left off the list until such time as I can double check my copies).



So we've touched on the licensed manufacturers and turned our attention to the unlicensed. As I alluded to last time, Color Dreams (and Bunch/Wisdom Tree) was

all over the map in terms of which sides of the boxes had seams. However, there are a few constants. Three sides of the perimeter are sealed. The fourth is not; the back has no seam. Licensed seams, on the long sides of the box, "pucker" near the end of the box - the plastic raises away from the box slightly and the pucker is always just before the end of the box. On the other hand, with Color Dreams and other unlicensed manufacturers, the three sided seam has the same pucker effect but it sometimes extends around onto the next side. Furthermore, many times (due to the plastic and/or sealing apparatus that appears to have been used) the plastic on the front or back of the box or both has adhered slightly in small patches to the box itself, unlike with licensed games. Not a hard and fast rule, but often there. This usually occurs in a stippled pattern, kind of like a tiny diamond shaped pattern.



anomaly. Almost all unlicensed games had flatbacks, but many Tengen games do have a seam on the back (a vertical overlap seam). It's very similar to the vertical overlap seams on licensed games, but with one slight twist - the licensed overlap seams are sealed on the top and the bottom but the overlap itself is often not. It's sometimes possible to even place a finger between the overlap. These Tengen overlaps are sealed to themselves though; it is not possible to place a finger inside and touch the box itself.

AVE - most titles, as you will note from the excel pages, are TBR flatback. A few are vertical overlap or other, but most appear to be TBR flatback. It's possible that sealing variants may exist, but this is just what I have seen. At least there is some level of consistency, unlike Color Dreams.

Until next time.....

Tengen - Some boxes have an interesting

(See chart on next page)

Nintendo NES Factory Release Info Letters L-R

Legend:

Flatback – No horizontal or vertical seam.

L – Left Seam

R- Right Seam

B – Bottom Seam

T – Top Seam

Laser Invasion	Horizontal	Metal Gear	Horizontal	Platoon	Horizontal
Last Action Hero	Horizontal	Metal Mech	Horizontal	Play Action Football	Horizontal
Last Ninja	Horizontal	Metal Storm	Horizontal	P'radikus Conflict	LRT flatback
Last Starfighter	Horizontal	Metroid	Horizontal	Prince of Persia	Horizontal
Lee Trevino	Horizontal	Michael Andretti World GP	Horizontal	Princess Tomato	Horizontal
Legacy of the Wizard	Horizontal	Mickey Mousecapade	Horizontal	Popeye	Horizontal
Legend of Kage	Horizontal	Mickey's Safari-Letterland	Vertical overlap	P.O.W.	Horizontal
Legend of Zelda	Horizontal	Mickey's Adventure-Numberland	Horizontal	Power Blade	Horizontal
Legend of Zelda 2: Link	Horizontal	Might and Magic	Horizontal	Power Blade 2	Horizontal
Legends of the Diamond	Horizontal	Mighty Bomb Jack	Horizontal	Power Punch 2	Horizontal
Legendary Wings	Horizontal	Mighty Final Fight	Horizontal	Pro Sport Hockey	Horizontal
L'empereur	Horizontal	Mike Tyson's Punch Out!!	Horizontal	Pro Wrestling	Horizontal
Lemmings	Horizontal	Mig 29	LRB flatback	Punch-out!!	Horizontal
Lethal Weapon	Horizontal	Millipede	Horizontal	Punisher	Horizontal
Life Force	Horizontal	Milon's Secret Castle	Horizontal	Puss n Boots	Horizontal
Little League Baseball	Horizontal	Mission Cobra	LRB flatback	Puzzle	TBR flatback
Little Mermaid	Horizontal	Mission Impossible	Horizontal	Puzznic	Horizontal
Little Ninja Bros	Horizontal	MLB Major League Baseball	Horizontal	Pyramid	LRB flatback
Little Nemo, Dream Master	Horizontal	Monopoly	Horizontal	(Kabuki) Quantum Fighter	Horizontal
Little Sampson	Horizontal	Monster in My Pocket	Horizontal	Q*bert	Horizontal
Lode Runner	Horizontal	Moon Ranger (black & blue variants)	LRT flatback	Qix	Horizontal
Lone Ranger	Horizontal	Monster Party	Horizontal	Quarterback (John Elway's)	Horizontal
Loopz	Horizontal	Monster Truck Rally	Horizontal	Quattro Arcade	LRB flatback
Low G Man	Horizontal	Motor City Patrol	Horizontal	Rad Racer	Horizontal
Lunar Pool	Horizontal	Ms Pac Man (namco)	see right	Rad Racer 2	Horizontal
Mach Rider	Horizontal	MULE	Horizontal	Race America	Horizontal
Mafat Conspiracy, The	Horizontal	Muppet Adventures	Horizontal	Racket Attack	Horizontal
Magic of Sheherazade	Horizontal	M.U.S.C.L.E.	Horizontal	Rad Racket	vertical overlap
Magician	Horizontal	Mutant Virus	Horizontal	Raid 2020	LRB flatback
Magic Darts	Horizontal	Mystery Quest	Horizontal	Raid on Bungeling Bay	Horizontal
Magmax	Horizontal	NARC	Horizontal	Rainbow Islands	Horizontal
Maniac Mansion	Horizontal	NES Open	Horizontal	Rally Bike	Horizontal
Mappy Land	Horizontal	NFL	Horizontal	Rambo	Horizontal
Marble Madness	Horizontal	Nigel Mansell	Horizontal	Rampage	Horizontal
Mario Bros	Horizontal	Nightmare on Elm Street	Horizontal	Rampart	Horizontal
Mario is Missing	Horizontal	Nightshade	Horizontal	RBI Baseball (licensed)	Horizontal
Mario Time Machine	Horizontal	Ninja Crusaders	Horizontal	RBI Baseball (unlicensed)	LBT flatback
Master Chu Drunkard Hu	LRB flatback	Ninja Gaiden	Horizontal	RBI Baseball 3	Vertical overlap
Maxi 15	LRB flatback	Ninja Gaiden 2	Horizontal	RC Pro-Am	Horizontal
MC Kids	Horizontal	Ninja Gaiden 3	Horizontal	RC Pro-Am 2	Horizontal
Mechanized Attack	Horizontal	Ninja Kid	Horizontal	Remote Control (MTV)	Horizontal
Mega Man	Horizontal	Nobunaga's Ambition	Horizontal	Ren & Stimpy	Horizontal
Mega Man 2	Horizontal	Nobunaga's Ambition 2	Horizontal	Renegade	Horizontal
Mega Man 3	Horizontal	North & South	Horizontal	Rescue	Horizontal
Mega Man 4	Horizontal	Operation Secret Storm	LRB flatback	Ring King	Horizontal
Mega Man 5	Horizontal	Operation Wolf	Horizontal	River City Ransom	Horizontal
Mega Man 6	Horizontal	Orb 3D	Horizontal	Roadblasters	Horizontal
Menace Beach	LRB flatback	Othello	Horizontal	Robin Hood	Horizontal
Mendel's Palace	Horizontal	Overlord	Vertical overlap	Robocop	Horizontal
Metal Fighter	LRB flatback	Pacman (tengen green box unlicensed)	LBT flatback	Robocop 2	Horizontal
		Pacman (tengen licensed)	Horizontal	Robocop 3	Horizontal
		Pacman (namco)	see right	Robodemons	LRB flatback
		Pacmania	Vertical overlap	Robowarrior	Horizontal
		Palamedes	Horizontal	Rocket Ranger	Horizontal
		Paperboy	Horizontal	Rocketeer, The	Horizontal
		Paperboy 2	Horizontal	Rock n Ball	Horizontal
		Peek a boo Poker	B flatback	Rockin Kats	Horizontal
		Pestermator	LRB flatback	Rocky & Bullwinkle	Horizontal
		Peter Pan & the Pirates	Horizontal	Roger Clemens	Vertical overlap
		Panic Restaurant	Horizontal	Rollerball	Horizontal
		Phantom Fighter	Horizontal	Rollerblade Racer	Vertical overlap
		Pictionary	Horizontal	Rollergames	Horizontal
		Pinball	Horizontal	Rolling Thunder	Vertical overlap
		Pinball Quest	Horizontal	Romance of the 3 Kingdoms	Horizontal
		Pinbot	Horizontal	Romance of the 3 Kingdoms 2	Horizontal
		Pipe Dream	Horizontal	Roundball	Horizontal
		Pirates	Horizontal	Rush n Attack	Horizontal
				Rygar	Horizontal



Nintendoholics Anonymous

Article by Matt Bellingshire

Hello, all. My name is Matt, and I am addicted to video games. I am sure you have heard this line thrown around before, but I am also sure you can count on one hand how many times it has been true. I will try not to go too far into personal details, but recently, I had a bit of an argument with my fiancée over my not having enough money to buy some things. It got me to thinking... have I overspent myself again, as I had done previously on several occasions? How much money do I have in the bank after all, and where did all that money go? To tell you the honest-to-God truth, the only answer I could come up with that was right or anywhere near right was video games. I was spending out nearly \$300-\$400 in cash every week, and I only get paid \$525 every 2 weeks. I was spending the money before it was in my hands (which is never a good habit to pick up). Therefore, I always managed to end up broke, sometimes a few days before being paid. I had resorted to selling bits and pieces that I otherwise wouldn't have ever considered selling just to afford one or two higher-end NES games...I sold my Valkyrie Profile Limited Box (for the Japanese PlayStation; 1000 made, worth around \$200), I sold my Sachens (which did garner some attention at NintendoAge, though for the most part they still ended at less than I paid for them), and I sold several other things as well. And somehow...somehow...I was still broke all the time. Recently, I decided I would put my foot down and change this.

Before I began collecting video games in July of '02, I was known for being somewhat tight with a buck; I could go out to eat and somehow get a fairly filling meal for around \$3 (two tacos and a cup of water from Taco Bell). Now that those cheaper days are gone (along with my smaller appetite), I have set a sort of spending limit on each restaurant at which I eat in order to maintain my

cash flow. For instance, at McDonald's, my spending limit is \$7 per meal. If what I eat costs more than \$7, I've paid too much, and I will either not be able to finish what I eat, or I will eat everything and end up not being able to move to get up when I am done. I no longer eat at Subway, as their prices have recently skyrocketed (\$11 for a sandwich? Give me a break already!). Also, I have managed to cut back spending in other areas, as well. I cut back my phone plan to the bare minimum (which with AT&T is still a bit pricey at \$39.99 a month, though the plan itself fits me just fine). I make sure my bills (the few I have) are paid on time and in-full, so as to avoid late fees (and on my student loan, I have been making double and triple payments to pay it off faster). But most importantly, and this is the part most collectors hate to ever have to realize -- I stepped back from buying games almost altogether. Yes, money is nice, and yes, it is nice to know that at any moment, I can fork out a ridiculous figure for some random rare game. However, I have started to realize what matters in life. Games, if you make a business out of them, can put a roof over your head. But if they are just a hobby to you, which for many of us is the case, you can't just go and spend yourself into the poor house all because you wanted that one complete copy of Caltron, that Stadium Events, that complete Flintstones: Surprise at Dinosaur Peak. You have to set forth a budget... you have to know what you have available to spend at a given time.

For me, up until I started collecting NES games in March '07, I never really had to worry about a budget. I had money, spent a little, saved a little, spent a little more, saved a little less, and then as the cycle went on, eventually my savings dipped, and I was spending everything (and this was about the time I decided to go big and start buying the higher-end NES games, mainly starting with a purchase from Jeff that consumed the extra money from three paychecks in advance).

You hear it all the time in football, you go big, or go home. Well, I went big...and a bit too big. I had bitten off more than I could chew, and I kept biting off more, eventually purchasing Stadium Events and a few other high-end games. I had become an addict, perhaps not so different than a common dopehead. Video games were my drug; buying them was my escape from

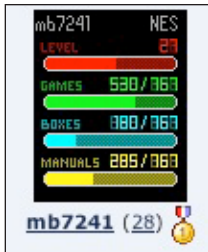
reality. It was as if I lived in a different world from everyone else...I had (have, really) over 500 different NES games, which instantly set me apart from most other people around here, and my thoughts were almost always on the next purchase. If I got a game for cheap, I was happy



for a good couple days. If I missed out on getting a game cheap, though, I would usually be angry for a few days. I had developed a bit of an alternate persona, based on how well or how poorly my purchases were developing. One day, I finally got up the balls to sit down and reason with this alternate persona...this devil... that I was no longer going to just buy games on impulse and pay through the nose to get them.

At the time I had these fights (the one with my fiancée and the one with myself), I was talking with Chad (known better as NOFRIENDO) about purchasing his absolutely mint copy of Flintstones 2: The Surprise at Dinosaur Peak. Had I not overpowered myself in the second fight, who knows what I might have offered Chad next? I had bid up to \$800...I would probably have gone as high as \$900 or higher, but the man in me kicked out the devil in me. I will resolve the current large trade I have going, but after that, I will buy no more big-money games at market price. Why not, you ask? They will absolutely not fit in my budget. It would be easy for me to tell myself, "Heya...you could try getting payments on it, like you've done several times before, no?", but I am not that devil anymore. I am a man, 22 years of age, and I have responsibilities to the people I know and love, and no video game, no matter the rarity or level of enticement, will stand in the way. By no means am I stating that my collecting days are over, but I am stating that I will collect as I find them cheaply. As many others of you know, these high prices will not last forever, and some expect them to slide backwards a little bit. Therefore, I encourage all of you to enjoy NES collecting, and if you have the money available to buy, do so... but if you do not have the money to buy, do not buy. Budgeting is key. And from all of us at Nintendoholics Anonymous, enjoy responsibly.

[Note: The author of this article is purely unrelated to the Iup.com group Nintendoholics Anonymous. Any similarities to said group, be they factual or fictional, are purely coincidental.]





The Worst NES Game?

Article by Basil Timmins

Think to yourself now: what do you believe to be the worst game on the NES? I know that everybody out there is bound to have his own pick, but in a gutter of dozens, only one can be



the number one stink. And do you want to know what that number one, crappiest game in all of NES-dom actually is? Well I'll tell you in a bit, but before we hit the sweet spot, we should first consider some of

the major contenders (pretenders!).

Color A Dinosaur and/or Taboo The Sixth Sense: Contrary to popular belief, these are not bad games. Why, do you ask? The answer is simple: it is because they are not games at all. They are products designed to serve a purpose, and they do so quite adequately outside of the confines of a "game" being played. Taboo claims that it will give you a tarot reading of some sort and some lucky numbers, and that is what it does. Color A Dinosaur, meanwhile, lets small children experience the thrill of living out the game's dreary title on the TV in their parents' living room. It even says "For Ages 3-6" right on the front of the box, so it was clearly not intended for cynical guys in their late teens and beyond. So, sorry to say it, but these and any of the other non-games that exist in the NES library simply don't count.

Jaws: Here's a fun little game where you get to do some scuba diving and seashell hunting, all within the confines of good play control, bright and colorful graphics, and an obvious, epic objective. Seriously, what's wrong with this game? Actually, I might ask the same question about over half of LJN's lineup, which I find to be well worth my while despite the preconceived notion that this publisher was notoriously bad. Friday the 13th, Wolverine, T&C Surf Designs, Incredible Crash Dummies, and many more are highly enjoyable play-throughs. Getting back to Jaws though, no way in hell is it even in the bottom one hundred.

Cheetahmen II: If you know anything about this game, then you should be able to look at my name and avatar here on NA and put two and two together and realize that I've got a soft spot for this one. Yes, it sucks, but in all the right ways. Have you seen the intro sequence? Have you seen the COUNTLESS (not joking) remixes of the game's music by avid

Japanese fans? Hit up Youtube with a search and you'll find them. This game may suck balls, but man does it have character, and for that it can hardly be the worst on the NES. Unreleased, unbeatable, and already a legend...

Action 52: Ah, Active Enterprises' only other game, and yet they are both frequently mentioned as the worst of the worst. Well I'm going to make this short – how can it be the worst game when it has 52 separate games to laugh at (and I do mean laugh-out-loud for a lot of them) and especially with an intro like that? When I got this game I spent a solid hour going through them all, and if it could keep me going for that long, it's hardly the worst.

Bad Street Brawler: If this is your pick, then my only response is: you've got to be kidding me!!! While the play control does absolutely suck (whether one's using the power glove or his trusty standard brick) there is something to be said for a game with great cheese-factor. Like a "good" crappy movie, Bad Street Brawler is bad, but in all the right ways. He looks hilarious, his moves are hilarious, most of the enemies are hilarious, and the piece de resistance is the snippets of advice given out between levels. The first one (I think) is, "never trouble trouble till trouble troubles you," and they only get better from there. Honestly, if you haven't played this game yet, you do not know what you're missing. This may be my favourite of all the "bad" games.

Ikari Warriors II: Okay, this game really is bad, and I'm going to have a tough time sugar-coating it, but here goes... first of all, the music is catchy, and you can hum it along whilst playing two player co-op all the way to the end with unlimited continues using the infamous ABBA. Hey! That's three things right there! And to top it off, the "muscles" on your character are drawn so poorly that you look like a skin-colored, slow-motion, Michelin Tire Man, which, depending on your sense of humor, can provide a decent level of entertainment right off the bat (or you could just view him as an overweight, out of work, fat ass Rambo, who just happened to get the call as a last minute replacement for the mission at hand). So, worst game on the NES? Hardly, says I.

Deadly Towers: Not a chance. Great music, great theme, limitless secrets, wonderful atmosphere, and a really, really, really, weak hero add up to hours of frustrating fun. This is like a hardcore Japanese WTF?!? 80's game where they never throw you a bone and so every tiny victory you score is one you've earned on your own. Truly,

beating this game legitimately gives one a sense of satisfaction that few others can. Plus, take a look at the box art and then compare it to the fat, dumb, super-blue Prince Meyer you control in the game – that's some value for your money for just pushing start!

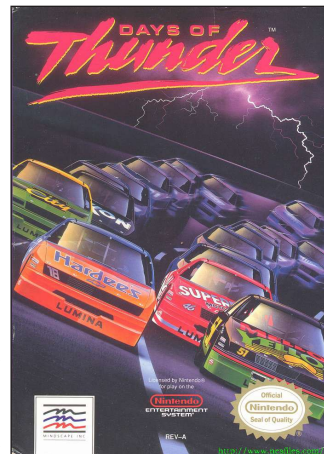
AD&D: Heroes of the Lance: Well this one may actually be the worst, but it is set in a dungeon, so it's intriguing right there, and I did find myself trying repeatedly to figure out what I was doing so terribly wrong that my characters had to die within moments of starting, so it isn't entirely terrible (close, though).

So, then, what is the worst game on the NES? In order to answer that question, you must think of a game that is so boring, so burdensome, so tedious, and so monotonous, that even the mere thought of playing it puts you right out of the mood to do any NES gaming at all. That's right – the answer is Days of Thunder. Does the idea of racing in a circle on a four-color course for dozens (sometimes up to 30!) laps sound intriguing to you? Me neither, and playing this game to the end of the first race was the most boring NES-related thing I've ever done in my life. Everything sucks about this game from the second you push start. It's like we were being treated to a brief glimpse of what "realistic" gaming would be like in the Sony PlayStation era a couple of years before it actually happened. The worst part is, though, that the game has no excuse. It is licensed – twice over, mind you – once by Nintendo, and once by the movie it's named after, so some big bucks went into it right off the bat. So then why is it so mundane? I'm sure you won't know the answer and, well, I don't know either, but if you ever do happen to find even one redeeming quality, won't you please let me know what it is?

Well, enough about that horrible atrocity. Honorable mentions for the top spot go to Super Pitfall and Athena, but I actually did get some enjoyment out of exploring the subterranean caverns of Super Pitfall many moons ago in my childhood, so that one's not entirely without merit. Athena, on the other hand... oh GOD... if it weren't for the funky enemies and background designs, it probably would've taken number one.

One last note: yes, of course

I know that a lot of the unlicensed games utterly stink, but comparing them straight up with the big budget bullies would be like pairing Einstein with his retarded kid brother – it just wouldn't be fair to go through with it. Besides, I've got a soft spot for Color Dreams anyway (winkity wink).



The box art looks fun, doesn't it?



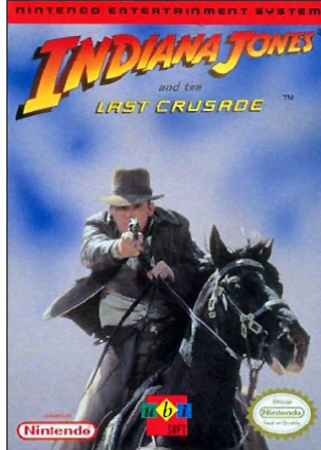
The NA Effect

Article by Erik Hopkins

To borrow a line from Buger, not to be confused with NA's own Burdger, in the classic comedy *Revenge of the Nerds*, "We've got NA Effect, we've got NA Effect." What is this "NA Effect" (NAE) to which I speak of? To be honest it's a double edged sword that we have been secretly and not so secretly grumbling about on AIM and PM's and NA threads for about a year now. The true question is should we thank NA's proud papa Dain for this or wish that his NES collection be accidentally flushed down the toilet by a certain baby girl?

To answer this question we need to understand the NAE. We also need to look at it from the two prevailing viewpoints most affected by it. The NAE is of course the NES game "flavor of the month" to which my fellow NA brethren know well. You may love it and you may hate it but be thankful you know of it. To many new comers to NA you might not yet know of this phenomenon. This article is definitely for you. As time goes on and membership of NA continues to increase I can only imagine that the NAE will be amplified to a larger level and encompass more titles in the NES library. I am sure that people solely on eBay and those not yet a member of NA see a game's price spike as random, this further leads to the extreme highs of the spikes as the non-knowing rush to buy that rare NES game they must have right now! It is at times like these when I am glad to have completed my CIB NES collection.

There are two main viewpoints I will focus on when looking at the NAE, that of the collector and that of the reseller. There are of course other viewpoints, investor, gamer, etc... but this article will focus on the two above as everyone on NA is most likely a collector as well as part time reseller. From the perspective of the total reseller, the flavor of the month games are great if they have the hot item in inventory, especially in quantity, so they can continually raise the price with the current market trend. It is of greater benefit to know which game may become that



*Dr. Jones in all his
Ubisoft glory.*

From that one can subtract the top 10-15 rares that almost everyone needs (See Nick's running totals of rare games thread). This will leave you with a list of 10-30 rare - uncommon titles that sometimes slip under the radar until someone mentions how rare they are on NA and the frenzy begins.

For my money these 2nd tier titles are where the collector should invest. It becomes very apparent when buying lots, what the super commons and the uncommons are. One should really watch the level of games right under the super rares. A lot of collectors have written off the super rares as games they might

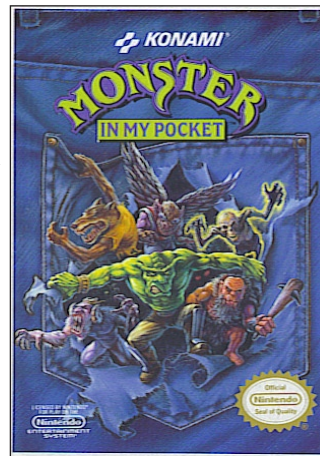
or will never own. However the 2nd tier games like Bomberman 2, Bonk's Adventure, Sqoon, Indiana Jones UBI Soft version, and M.U.S.C.L.E. are all games that a lot of people don't identify as all that rare. One author's note here before I go further, I am taking some author's liberty here in assuming everyone already knows this article is discussing complete in box games.

To the collector the NAE can be a huge burden or a great motivator to collect onward; it might even lead to new found monies when selling off doubles at the right time. A perfect example of this was the Bomberman 2 CIB double I had 5-6 months ago. I first listed my mint double for \$28 opening bid and got zero bids and the game didn't sell. Then 3 weeks later

next game to spike. One of the best ways to do this is to be an active member of NA and follow the discussions and watch the need lists posted by members. It is easily possible to accumulate a list of 20-50 NES titles that are common among the need lists.

after some discussion about the game's rarity on NA a CIB copy sold on eBay for \$238. I immediately relisted my double and it went for \$235. Then over the course of the next month the price fell back down to reasonable levels as the people who had to "have it now" obtained their copies. Similar situations have occurred on Gun Nac, Sesame Street ABC & 123, Pro Sport Hockey, and others. Currently we are in the midst of a Ninja Kid and M.U.S.C.L.E. spike, while a former flavor of the month, sealed Monster in my Pocket, is falling from grace. Prices on that one have gone as high as just under \$500 to sales in the sub \$200 area in just the last few weeks. The most recent copy for auction on eBay just ended 1/22/08 at \$157.51.

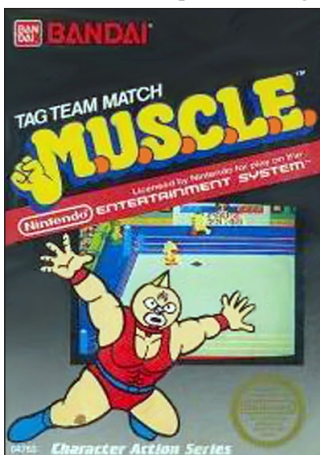
What will be the next game to experience the NAE? Good question, if you are asking that question by now then you get it. Follow the advice to watch those need lists. Participate in



*Monster in my Pocket?
That's so last week.*

the NA discussions and talk with your NA brethren and it will start to become clear to you which games will eventually have a spike of their own. If you do it well enough you will predict the spike before it happens which will either make or save you money. NGD and I discussed Ninja Kid as a title that goes under the radar about a year ago. It took awhile but here is its time in the sun. To a reseller stocking up on the next game to spike can lead to bigger profits. To a collector it can be beneficial in that you can pickup a game before it spikes and save yourself money or even make money in a good

trade or well timed sale. It could even lead to further motivate you to collect as you got your CIB M.U.S.C.L.E. for under \$15 three months ago. So to answer the question should we be grateful or spiteful of papa Dain's creation...? I guess it depends on where in a title's NAE cycle you bought or sold that copy of Bomberman 2.

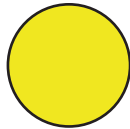


*Muscle Men. Boy do I
miss the 80s.*



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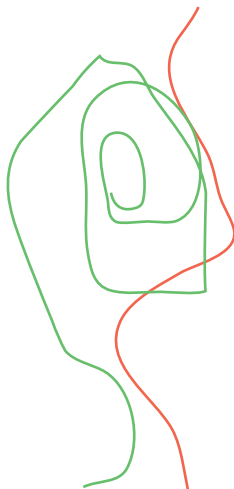
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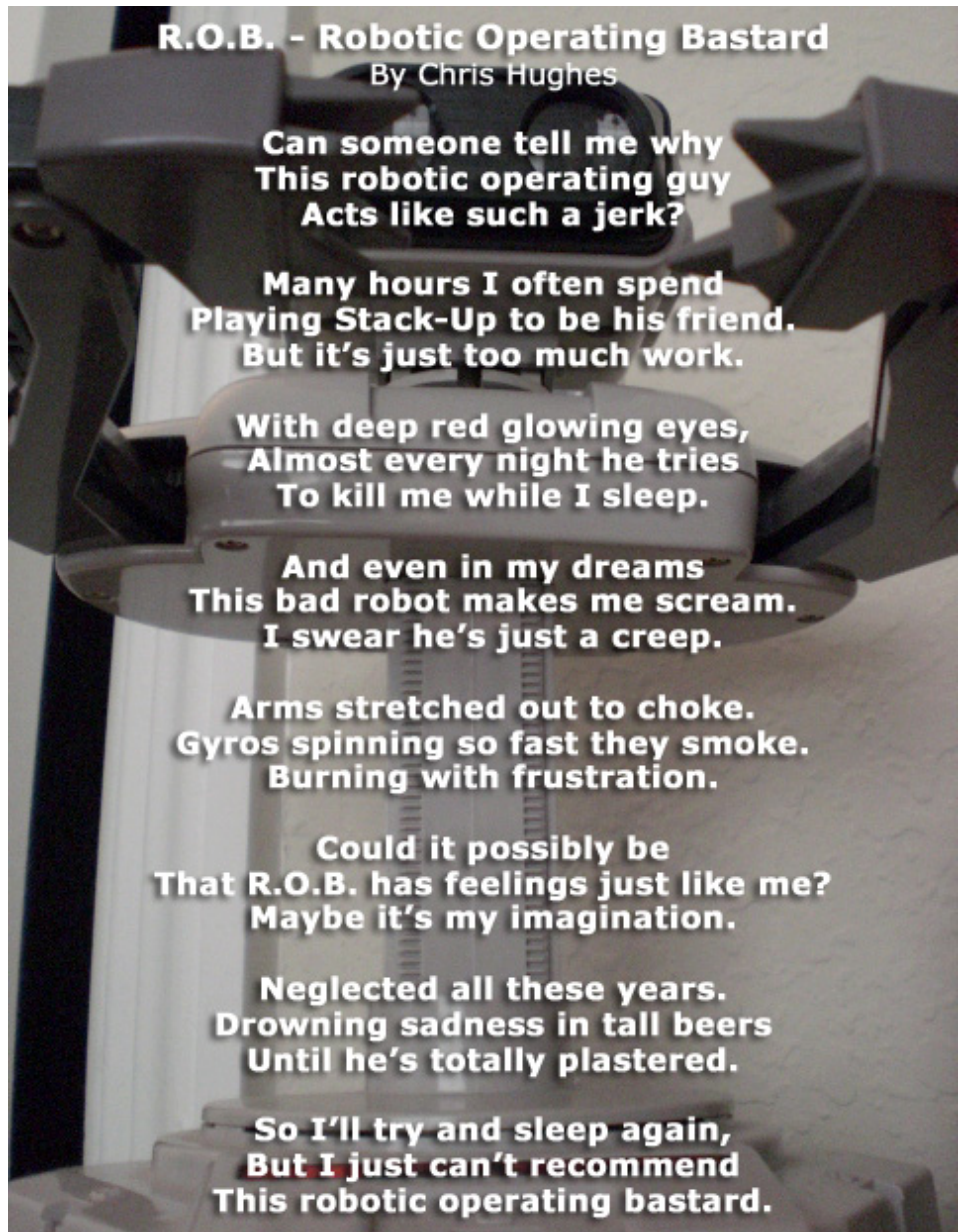
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Teacher: _____



Random Collection Feature

In lieu of there being no comic submitted this month, we are showcasing a random member's collection picture. Congratulations steven78.





Irem: Revealed

Article by Jason Smith

Irem is an obscure game company with a fascinating history that many of you probably aren't aware of. Be honest, how many of you can name at least 3 Irem games off the top of your head without cheating with the NintendoAGE database? Well if you can't think of very many that is because the company only published 5 games for the NES, and 1 of those was a PAL exclusive.



Company History

Irem was founded in 1947 in Hakusan, Japan but was named IPM at the time. IPM was in the arcade market (as many early game companies were), then made the jump into the home video game market similar to Atari. After about a year, IPM released its first arcade game and decided it was time for a name change. In early 1978 the company changed its name to Irem which was an acronym for "International Rental Electronics Machines." After realizing that the name they chose was way too specific and didn't leave them room to grow into other interests, they changed the acronym to stand for "Innovations in Recreational Electronic Media" by mid 1980. The company did quite well without causing too big of a stir, and yet still produced some high quality, innovative games. What is so interesting about this company is they had very early roots with Nintendo that I can almost guarantee that most of you didn't know. Irem was one of the earliest developers to get in bed with Nintendo. If you check the credits on some of the earliest black box games like 10-Yard Fight and Kung Fu you will see Irem's name there. That was quite shocking to me since the company seemed

to keep a pretty low profile and didn't produce that many games of its own. It would make more sense (at least in my opinion) to see your Capcom or Konami as companies in the early games, more so than a smaller company like Irem.

Even after a successful start, the company began to struggle in the early 90's as the video game market became congested with new companies and was forced to shut down. In 1994 the arcade division of the company broke away from the Irem brand to form a new company called Apies. This left Irem with only the ailing video game aspect of its development, which at this point pretty much left the company crippled. Several of the game designers actually left the company at this point and formed their

Irem Published Games for NES

- Hammerin' Harry
- Image Fight
- Kickle Cubicle
- Metal Storm
- Sqoon

own development house named Nazca Corporation (which later went on to develop the Metal Slug Series).

On April 15th, 1997 Eizo Nanao Corporation bought out the company and rights to all of Irem's previous releases. Nanao then founded Irem Software Engineering Inc (which is still around today) with what was left of the Irem Corporation development department.

However in 1998 the publishing department from the original Irem Corp was then sold off to the former Irem designers that had formed the company known as Apies. Currently Irem Software Engineering produces games for the PS2 and PS3 game consoles. <http://www.irem.co.jp/>

Another random tidbit about the company that is kind of quirky yet interesting is that they love to pull elaborate April Fools jokes. They like to produce mock web pages for new products that have little or nothing to do with their business plan. For instance one year's joke announcement was bottled water, another year was R-Type Sweets, and the most outlandish one dealt with them opening a burger chain similar to McDonalds (see pic). A company that has a sense of humor is pretty rare these days, I really enjoyed their mock joke sites which can be found on the Japanese portion of their website.



Games

Sqoon (1987) is an underwater side scrolling shooter in which the Earth has been invaded by the nasty Neptunians. You operate the underwater sub known as Sqoon (which is



equipped with missiles and the ice ball gun) and try to eliminate the alien invaders while saving your fellow human hostages. This

was Irem's first game on the NES console and you can definitely tell. The graphics and game play are pretty basic on this one and doesn't really hold my interest very long. The cart itself is pretty easy to track down, but finding the box and manual to this early release title is can be a tedious task, especially in good condition.

Image Fight (1990) for my money is the best Irem game, hands down. It is a great shooter similar to Gun.Nac or Galaga but with some cool add-on weapons. It also allows you to change the speed of your ship at will with 4 different settings. The add-on weapons are simply amazing—from rotating gun turrets to homing missiles, this game has a extensive arsenal from which to choose. It offers plenty of challenge yet is beatable if you put in some wrench time. Image Fight has some very catchy tunes with some nice crisp graphics as well. It is another big time under-rated game that most people haven't given much of a chance. Some of the later levels will really test your skill, even if you are a vertical scrolling game champ.



Kickle Cubicle (1990) is a quirky little puzzle game in which you try to destroy all the ice blocks by collecting “dream bags” to make ice break away. There are 4 princesses

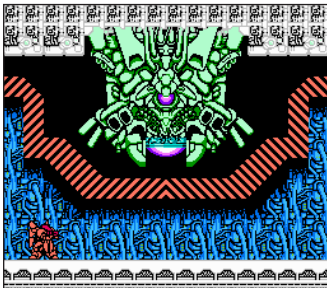


which you have to save in order to beat the game, stationed at the end of each of the four levels. Each level has numerous

boards; most are pretty easy to beat on the first run through. Other than being a bit easy this is a quality game that doesn't get near the attention of other similar style games such as Lolo or the Bubble Bobble series'. It's a good way to kill an hour and beat the game if you looking for a title to enjoy some mindless fun.

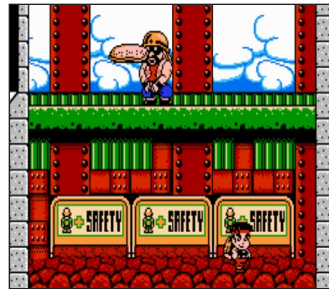
Metal Storm (1991) is a side scrolling platformer/shooter that is a pretty innovative little game. You play a gunner robot throughout the game, but the neat aspect of this one is the game play. The gunner can jump between walking on the

floor or the ceiling, and it is mandatory to get past certain aspects of the game and actually almost turns the game in a puzzle



game at certain points as you have to fight and solve the puzzle at the same time. The game boasts excellent sound and graphics as well, and it has one of the best death sprites of any game in the NES library!

Hammerin' Harry is a PAL exclusive title that was only released in Europe. It



is a side-scrolling platformer with some addicting game play and an easy-to-learn control scheme. The game can be quite challenging, especially at first. It is a real shame that this title didn't see a worldwide release because it is a quality game. The biggest downfall for the game, in my opinion, is the cheesy voice-overs. The game starts with a young Japanese man saying “let's get busy” in a really annoying

Unreleased Irem NES Games:

- Hammerin Harry (NTSC)
- Holy Diver
- Legend of Guardic
- Legend of Hero Tenma
- Rocky Rodent
- R-type
- Super Loderunner
- Zippy Race

voice, made more so because it repeats it every time you die and get a new man! If you have never played this one, track down the ROMs and give it a chance.

Hammerin' Harry was released in 3 known European regions codes -ESP, -FRG, and -FRA.

Even though they only released 5 games for the NES, they produced and developed games for a host of other consoles. (Arcade, SNES, Playstation 1/2/3, Turbogرافx 16, PC, and a few more obscure ones as well). They also helped develop a few other titles on the NES as well (listed on right). They were in on the early development of several other games



including sequels to games like Spelunker. The company is probably best known for the R-type game series. It was released on loads of systems all the way to the virtual console on the Wii. It just goes to show you that no matter how small or unknown a company is they can still have a major impact on the video games industry. Irem is a small, often overlooked company that has made some high quality games, especially in the “shoot-em-up” genre. The best news is that all of their titles can be found for less than 10 a piece, even at over-inflated eBay prices. If you haven't had a chance to play any or all of their games, then I recommend picking them up and giving them a fair chance.

Irem Helped Develop (NES):

- 10 Yard Fight
- Deadly Towers
- The Guardian Legend
- Kung Fu
- Spelunker
- Numerous Famicom titles

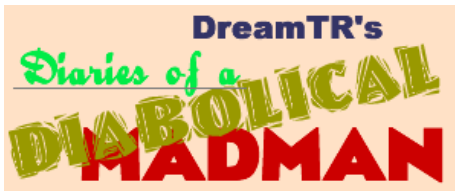


Holy Diver, an unreleased game by Irem.

The Real Decathlon Contest Totals Thus Far

Game 1: Pac-Man

1st Place:	10 pts.	Nismo33
2nd Place:	9 pts.	Little Samson
3rd Place:	8 pts.	Dutchboy
4th Place:	7 pts.	Uncle Tusk
5th Place:	6 pts.	Braveheart69
6th Place:	5 pts.	Mario's Left Nut
7th Place:	4 pts.	mewithoutYou52
8th Place:	3 pts.	Zzap
Tied for 9th Place:	2 pts.	Pedro!
Tied for 9th Place:	2 pts.	Dain
Tied for 9th Place:	2 pts.	Michael242



Prototypes ...

Article by Jason Wilson

What is a proto? It is a demo? A Sample? A ROM Cartridge? It's been called many things over the 8 or so years I've been collecting them. I kind of fell under their spell accidentally, you see. My buddy asked me to sell one of his NES prototypes on eBay for him. He figured not very many people would have these, or even knew about it much, and encouraged me to try and work them into a trade with someone for a 1990 Nintendo World Championship cart, which I lost in a newsgroups auction back in 1998. Hillsfar, the first NES proto I ever sold, ended up selling for around \$56 on eBay to Nesgod, who rarely makes an appearance on any Nintendo based forums these days.

I was fascinated by the carts, mainly because of the historical value of them. Since the mid 90s, there have been very few games that I have actually played for fun. Most games since have all been played for work, mostly un-



der difficult circumstances and under strict deadlines. I really did not want to play through each and every prototype I obtained, but I did want to keep them for historical preservation, which is different in my eyes than it was to many others. I had visions of a "museum" in my head, but everyone wanted the actual ROMS to be dumped for free play over the web. Considering I worked at a video game magazine, I would not exactly call that a smart move, especially since Nintendo really took some of that stuff seriously at the time.

Of course, those in the NES community involved with ROMS did not necessarily think of the repercussions. They believed it was their right to play these games for free, not thinking about how much money that was paid for the development of each of the carts. Plain and simple: the intrinsic value (especially with unreleased games), decreases dramatically when the game is freely available for download on the web. There were those in the NES community that even felt the need to play "pranks" on me for some reason. As childish as these people were, they aren't really involved in the scene as much anymore, and are more of an afterthought, or dinosaur in the community, as most of the NES scene has completely evolved in the past 10 years with many new faces now taking over.

Since there is such a gray area on prototypes, there are many questions that still remain unanswered. For example: are we even allowed to own them? What makes these any different than press/promo releases of CDs or DVDs that we see end up being sold at used en-

tainment chains? Technically we aren't even allowed to own emulators or ROMS from what I understand. And this includes even if you own the original copy of the game. If you don't believe me, check Nintendo's legal info on their corporate site. I've never actually seen an issue with prototypes that were sold or traded well after the production of the system in question has ceased. Half of the companies don't even exist anymore!

In any event, there are fewer prototype collectors now than there were five years ago. Since eBay does not really allow prototypes for auction, it is harder and harder to sell or purchase them. What I find really funny is that eBay throws these in the same category as beta software on a PC, which I do not think is the same thing at all. Yahoo Auctions Japan allows prototypes (more commonly known as Samples) to be sold regularly with no problem, making me believe there is no gray line whatsoever. I do not believe there is any sort of copyright infringement if the game is already released and you sell the game for collection purposes, but because this is such a legal dilemma, it's hard to tell if there ever will be a definitive answer as to what we can or can not sell. Development systems for PS2s and PS1s are sold on eBay from liquidation houses, but a random Joe behind his computer can report prototype/beta auctions to eBay even if they are false? As much as this irks me, it is expected in this day and age. Stay tuned next issue for how to tell the difference between a "fake" and genuine prototype.

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Staff:

Editor-in-Chief / **Dan Langevin (dangevin)**
 Layout Artist / **Kevin Hanley (mewithoutYou52)**
 Executive Supervisor: **Dain Anderson (Dain)**
 Staff Writers:

Jason Smith / **NationalGameDepot**
 Jason Wilson / **DreamTR**
 Basil Timmins / **Dr. Morbis**
 Dan Maresca / **Bronty**
 Matt Bellingshire / **mb7421**
 Erik Hopkins / **Braveheart69**

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