



THE VIDEO GAME GENERATIONS

NEWSLETTER

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Issue #42 – May 23, 2026

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Loading Screen

I decided to update the “cartoon me” (at least for this issue – we’ll see if he sticks or not) since I keep my hair really short, it’s getting thin on top anyway, and I’m not as skinny as I used to be. I haven’t fully come to grips with getting old, but who does?



This issue, although a little late, marks one year since I started the VGGN. I’ve written a three-page look-back at the first year. I hope you enjoy it.

The main feature is a follow-up to [issue #31](#), with more N64 game mini-reviews, a *Collection Inspection* showing the ridiculous number of N64 carts I recently wasted money on, and my updated impressions of the Analogue 3D console after a series of feature-adding firmware updates.

Recent Events

The Erosion of Physical Games

I've [ranted](#) about this before, but publishers continue to test the limits of what the market will tolerate when it comes to their physical game releases. The result seems to be that the market will tolerate anything. There simply isn't enough push-back from stalwarts like me or the folks at [DoesItPlay.org](#) to put a dent in those strategies. If anything, publishers seem more willing to skip a physical release entirely.

The latest victims of losing out on my pre-order are the imminent *007: First Light* (which I was very much looking forward to, but I'm not paying \$75 for a key disc) and surprisingly, the *Gothic 1 Remake*, which requires a patch before the game on disc will even boot up.

Source:

<https://kotaku.com/gothic-remake-rpg-day-one-physical-internet-connection-update-required-thq-2000698754>

Take-Two Insists GTA 6 Isn't Delayed

Based on an email sent out from some retailer (BestBuy, I think) to certain affiliates, a rumor had been circulating that *Grand Theft Auto 6* pre-orders would begin on Monday, May 18th. That didn't happen, and when it didn't happen, a new rumor began circulating that the game was being delayed to February.

The news here is that no, it isn't delayed, and the marketing/pre-order cycle will begin this summer. I just need to know two things: will there be a full 1.0 build on disc, and what's it going to cost. Like many, I'd *probably* pay more than \$70 if they choose to do that, but I'm on the fence as to whether a "fake" disc is a deal-breaker for me. There aren't many games I could justify buying that way just for the experience (not collectible), but it's one.

Source:

<https://www.videogameschronicle.com/news/take-two-boss-reaffirms-that-gta-6-is-planned-for-november/>

PlayStation State of Play on June 2nd, 2026

Unless it takes too long to finish the next issue of VGGN, one of my topics will likely be a recap and my thoughts on Sony's next PlayStation State-of-Play presentation. In fact, that's just before Summer Game Fest, which takes the place of what was formerly E3.

They've announced that *Marvel's Wolverine* will be shown (the next game from Insomniac Games), but with showings reportedly scheduled for the Alamo Drafthouse (now owned by Sony), it seems like they might have plenty of surprises.

Sony also trademarked the name *Break In*, which is rumored to be revealed at their upcoming showcase. Further, some have speculated that it's the new name for what was previously *FairGame\$*, a live service multiplayer game first announced in 2023, which too many internet trolls are already predicting will fail, launch entirely DOA, or never come out at all.

Sources:

<https://www.videogameschronicle.com/news/playstation-state-of-play-marvels-wolverine-announced/>

<https://www.videogameschronicle.com/news/sony-trademarks-break-in-state-of-play-showcase/>

Various XBOX Changes

With Phil Spencer and Sarah Bond out (this was news in [issue #39](#)), new CEO Asha Sharma is trying to get the brand back on track. GamePass Ultimate drops its monthly cost from \$30 to \$23 (and will no longer include *Call of Duty* on day one), Xbox will now be XBOX (all caps), the console gets a new boot-up sequence, and Microsoft's AI platform *Copilot* is being ditched. My pipe dream is that they'd go back to putting full games on disc again. I might actually start buying XBOX games again, if they did that.

Sources:

<https://kotaku.com/xbox-game-pass-ditches-day-one-call-of-duty-to-lower-the-price-2000689378>

<https://www.videogameschronicle.com/news/after-a-fan-poll-microsofts-new-games-boss-is-rebranding-xbox-to-xbox/>

<https://www.videogameschronicle.com/news/asha-sharmas-xbox-overhaul-continues-as-revamped-series-xs-bootup-revealed/>

<https://www.videogameschronicle.com/news/xbox-has-scrapped-its-copilot-ai-companion-on-consoles-asha-sharma-says/>

The UGGN Turns One Year Old

Technically, [issue #1](#) was published on May 10th last year, but I didn't get this issue out to coincide with that... birthday? Anniversary?



This is an AI-generated cake. You can't eat it. It would taste like slop.

I had a dream. Literally, I dreamt I was publishing a print magazine and woke up one night thinking I had missed a deadline and all my subscribers were going to revolt. That was what got me started making this newsletter. I thought, why not? I know a little about games. I used to podcast about games. I used to *make* games. I play games all the time and do my little mini-reviews afterwards. Why not?

VGGN [Issue #1](#) was a five-page prototype to introduce the newsletter, to introduce myself, and to begin exploring what kind of content I wanted to include. My first rant, titled *Nintendo Switch 2 Thoughts*, was all about my disappointment with their key card strategy. After that, I included two mini-reviews copied over from my social media posts, but I hadn't yet landed on my one-page-per-review format. In fact, I hadn't landed on very much yet.

Early on, I decided to make it personal. I probably apologized for that a couple times, but it seemed like a good outlet not only for my opinions (rather than just news), but also my own experiences with this hobby.

This resulted in issues dedicated to building up my game collection ([issue #3](#)), the podcast I did with my kids a decade ago ([issue #4](#)), the interactive fiction I wrote ([issue #7](#)), how I've approached co-op gaming ([issue #9](#)), all about my *Lunatic BBS* game and its follow-up, *Lunatic Online* ([issue #10](#)), and finally, a huge write-up about my TRS-80/CoCo games (in [issue #13](#)).

From time to time I've mentioned other games I made or injected something personal into a feature (as with linking to several of my DOS games, now playable online, when writing about solo developers in [issue #30](#)), but those are the ones that stand out as "all me" issue.

This is the format I landed on:

1. A cover page to introduce the issue with some silly AI-generated cartoon version of me (a decision I've stuck with, despite my own concerns and reservations regarding gen-AI).
2. *Recent Events* (news, but often with rants and opinions mixed in to at least make it interesting).
3. A main feature or topic, which I explore to some extent (the best space ships in video games, my favorite *Souls*-likes, food in video games, point-and-click adventures, ranking the weirdest games I've ever played, a history of shovelware, games featuring real actors, games based on a license).
4. *Collection Inspection*, which debuted back in October with [issue #22](#) and is primarily an excuse to dig through my physical collection and take a few photos. I suspect this is everybody's least favorite section, but hey, it's content.
5. *Mini-Reviews*, which is the easiest section to make because I'm just copying over what I already posted to social media.
6. A wrap-up, dubbed *The Final Stage*, where I put stuff that didn't fit into an earlier section, stuff I thought of too late, possible topics for upcoming issues, and an *End Credits* section with links.

Buckling Under Pressure

Toward the end of 2025, I started getting burnt out on writing so much. I had kept up a consistent clip of weekly issues (one every Saturday) and it was starting to drain me. I had far less time for gaming, and I missed it.

I tend to ruin these things for myself with self-imposed standards. I always start a project for fun, but I soon become less satisfied with just putting “something” out into the world. It has to be better than the last thing. It has to meet some mark of quality. That’s how it went with the VGGN, where I not only had that weekly release cadence, but also the idea that I couldn’t just write a couple random pages about whatever was on my mind that day and call it done. I put issue #1 together in a couple hours. My later issues were consuming long evenings and entire weekends.

I considered ending it entirely, but decided to keep it up on a relaxed schedule with no set deadline for each issue. That happened in January, and while I’ve only published 7 issues (including this one) since then, it’s far less stressful and has allowed me to keep going.

Highlights & Favorites

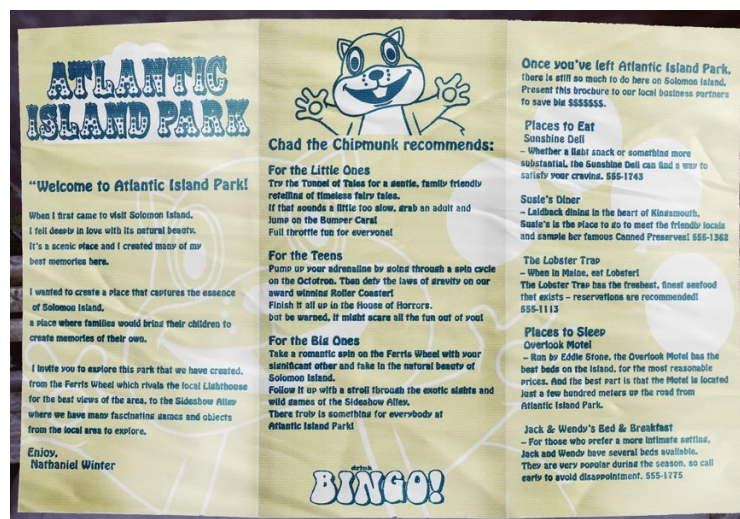
The biggest issue of VGGN was [issue #13](#), way back in August last year, and it remains my favorite to this day. It took the most effort and ended up at a whopping 62 pages (almost double even my longest issues, page-wise).



It’s 18-year-old me, early 1990, in a newspaper article about my games.

For that issue, I played every TRS-80/CoCo game I ever made (aside from a couple I lost) and wrote about each one. I included links to play each of them online in an emulator. This was me, looking back at my own work after 35+ years, and commenting on what was good and not so good about each one. I included screenshots, real-time thoughts as I played each game, and even tips and solutions for some of them.

Many of my other favorites are the issues that put a twist on the main feature formula. In [issue #15](#), I wrote about schools in video games for a “back to school” issue, as if I was some sort of school recruiter trying to bring in new students. I did something similar when writing about horror games in [issue #23](#). In the persona of a travel agent, I attempted to entice visitors into vacationing at some very sketchy (and horror-filled) destinations.



For [issue #24](#), my plan was to write about monster archetypes in video games (ghosts, witches, werewolves and the like). I turned it into a quiz by including a few screenshots from each game, with a clue/description. The goal was to guess the monster’s name and/or which game or game series they’re from.



My most recent non-standard issue is also one I'm particularly proud of. On April 1st, I released an "all-news" [issue #40](#) with no mini-reviews or additional articles. I posted it as normal and announced it on [Twitter/X](#), [Threads](#), and [BlueSky](#) hoping it would go viral and get a lot of views. No such luck, but I'm still really pleased with that issue.

I later updated the description at [my website](#) to say it was an April Fool's Day joke issue. I'm biased, sure, but I find it hilarious. Some of it may not make sense unless you keep up with the video game industry at large, but there are parts (like my *Ode to Gollum* and my plan for a VGGN monthly subscription fee) that require very little extra context.

In [issue #7](#), when writing about interactive fiction (text adventures), I included the entire content from a short *Choose Your Own Adventure* style story game my daughter and I made when she was only 7 years old.

Then there are my rants. Hot-button topics for me tend to be anti-woke internet chuds (the dorks who think the gaming industry is being poisoned by anything they deem "DEI"), the trend toward physical games that don't work at all without a mandatory content patch or download (Nintendo's "key cards" for example), and the social progress that's been set back decades by the current U.S. administration. It's those things, more than any other, that probably decide whether a person is going to vibe with the VGGN or not.

mention of a game you never played, because JoeJoe the Stinker Thinker on YouTube made a twenty-minute explainer video nit-picking the volumetric lighting and fog in a double-A game that by all other accounts punches above its modest budget.



At my younger daughter's suggestion, I wrote about LGBTQ+ video game characters for Pride Month in [issue #8](#). That was a fun one. It was also the point at which I started changing the logo and title images each week (also her suggestion). I updated the few prior issues with a different logo, so it looks like I was doing it all along.

Looking to the Future

Now that I'm not on a weekly schedule, I've become lazy in thinking ahead to a topic for the next issue. I still have plenty of ideas, including some suggested recently by my friend Bill (ex: games I'm embarrassed to admit I've never played – I forget exactly how he worded it, but it might be fun to write).

I've wanted to write an issue about games featuring cats. There are a surprising number of them (many in the indie space), but I haven't played enough of them yet to consider it article-worthy.

A recent topic I've been mulling over is about games generally considered to be bad (and I don't just mean unpopular or unfairly picked-on, like *Dustborn* and *Dragon Age: The Veilguard*). I mean *LOTR: Gollum*, *Superman* for the N64 (which I haven't yet played), *MindsEye*, maybe even *Resident Evil 6*. My angle would be finding the fun in them, if there's fun to be found. I've only been putting it off because there are a few more I need to play before I'm ready to take on that topic.

In testing my N64 cartridge haul, I came across *CarmaGeddon 64*, which starts out by proclaiming that Friday, June 6th 2026 will be known as "Red Friday", an apocalyptic event that ruins Earth's atmosphere. That's barely two weeks away. I hope they're wrong. On the positive side, it got me thinking about games set in a post-apocalypse. That seems like a good topic idea.

Even if I'm releasing fewer than one issue per month, I'd like to at least reach 100 issues. That's my goal. After that, we'll see where things stand.

My Nintendo 64 Journey Continues

Back in [issue #31](#) (December 6th, 2025), I wrote about my initial impressions of the new Analogue 3D, an HDMI console for playing Nintendo 64 cartridges (N64) with upscaling, performance boosting, and more.



I went a little crazy for a couple months, wasting my tax refund and my annual bonus from work on as many N64 games as I could get my greedy little hands on. My collection already had a modest 30 N64 games (all boxed and complete, most in excellent condition), but I decided to add more.

A lot more.

At first, I was looking for games I'd actually like to play – platformers, adventures and so forth. Once I started adding sports and racing games to the list – genres I'll never play – and realized the error of my ways, it was too late.

The entire set of North American releases for the N64 is close to 300. The most accurate count suggests there are 296. With these new pick-ups, I'm over half-way to having a complete collection. Thankfully, many carts are still affordable, even today, but several of the ones I bought were in the \$100 to \$220 range, which is about as high as I was willing to go. Of the pricier ones, I've not yet bought (and may never buy) *Worms Armageddon*, but I probably wouldn't play it even if I did.

The holy grail, from what I gather, is a variation of *Clay Fighter 63 1/3* (of which I now own two copies) called *Clay Fighter Sculptor's Cut*. It's unlikely to get any cheaper, but I just don't have a spare \$1200 to \$2000 lying around.

My source was eBay. There's a convenience to it vs. traveling the country to visit retro game stores, but also plenty of downsides. For one, eBay doesn't give a s*!+ about bootlegs – or as the bootleggers like to spin it, “reproduction cartridges”. They say they do, but I reported I don't know how many listings, and none of them were taken down. I mean, *Sculptor's Cut* for \$40, listed as Brand New by a seller in Hong Kong? Sure. Right. That's authentic.

It's tougher to spot the fakes when they're being sold by just a random person who picked it up at some point in the past without even knowing it was a bootleg. Thankfully, I didn't encounter too many listings like that. I was looking for carts without markings and stickers (when possible), and where I could see the little embossed batch number imprint on the back label. Without that, it's almost certainly not authentic, unless it's something much newer but legit like *40 Winks*.

To be sure, I inspected them upon receipt. To do that, you need a special Gamebit hex screwdriver to open the cartridge, and then a very tiny regular screwdriver to remove the metal housing and get to the circuit board. As far as I know, bootleggers haven't started branding Nintendo in gold on their boards, so authentic carts are easy to spot.



Amazingly, not a single cart among the dozens and dozens I ordered was fake. A couple had me concerned when I realized they used reproduction labels (so still not quite ideal for my purposes), but the boards were authentic.

Along with the games, I bought little protective resealable bags of the appropriate size *and* these little plastic cartridge coffins. That way, the carts don't get scuffed going in and out of those plastic boxes *and* the boxes give added protection and allow me to more easily stack them as I put them away on my shelves.

Some collectors like to put labels on the top. I guess you can buy complete label sets online, or even print them yourself.

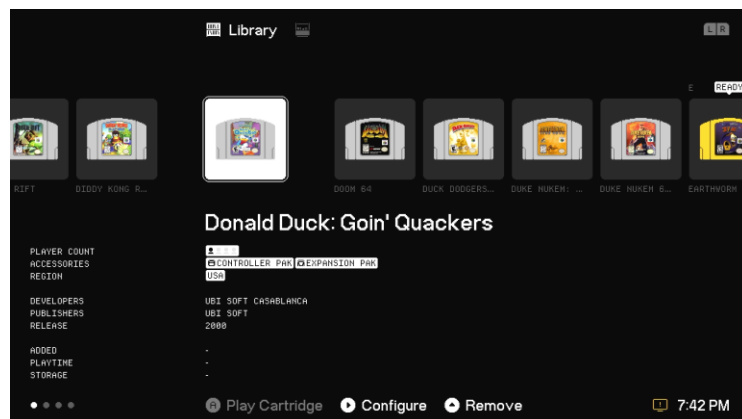


I've seen suggestions for putting the label on the plastic protective box rather than the cart itself, which seems like a decent idea. A new friend I met on Threads prefers half-height labels. That way, they don't cover the front and back of the shell (the way the full-sized ones in my picture above do), allowing you to open the cartridge if you ever need to.

I have no plans to apply any extra labels. The few I have came that way when I bought them.

For their part, Analogue has continued to improve their HDMI N64 with [new firmware updates](#) over the past several months. Many of my initial complaints have been addressed. The "Added" date (when you first put in the cartridge and it was added to the library) and the "Playtime" (the amount of time you've spent playing a game) were blank at launch, but now work. Neither stat was retroactive, though.

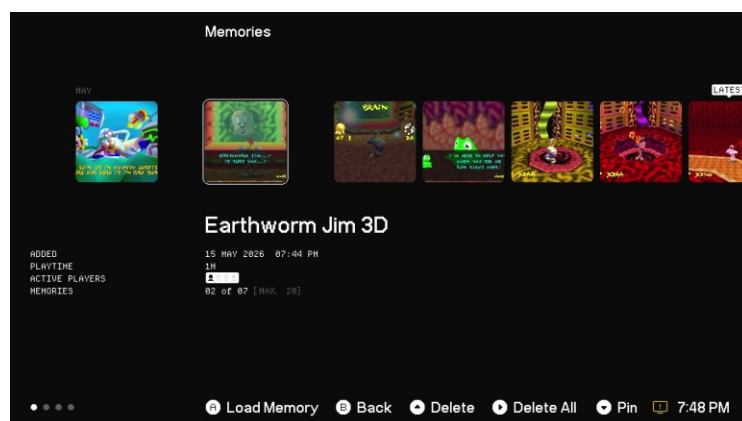
It seems to be more stable, too. I haven't had the Analogue 3D completely lock up on me when going to the system menu when inside a game, which used to happen quite a bit.



You can now turn off the console using the controller, although it requires going to the system menu and selecting to Power Off. Still, that's better than having to get up and walk over to it, which was previously the only way.

They haven't added screenshots yet, but I wonder if we'll see that soon. I'm still routing it through my ClearClick capture box for that.

They did, however, add save states, called "Memories". Basically you can snapshot the state of any game at any time by holding the HOME button + D-Pad Up. You can quick-load the most recent state (memory) with the HOME button + D-Pad Down. There's a different button combo for original N64 controllers that lack the 8BitDo home button. I'm bound to abuse this feature.



This would have been very handy before I gave up on *Rocket: Robot on Wheels* at the brutal final level. I may never go back to it, though.

Collection Inspection

Here's every game I bought for the N64 since getting the Analogue 3D, including most of the duplicates (which happened for various reasons). The only game with a box and manual is the first one, and only because I found a decent deal on it.

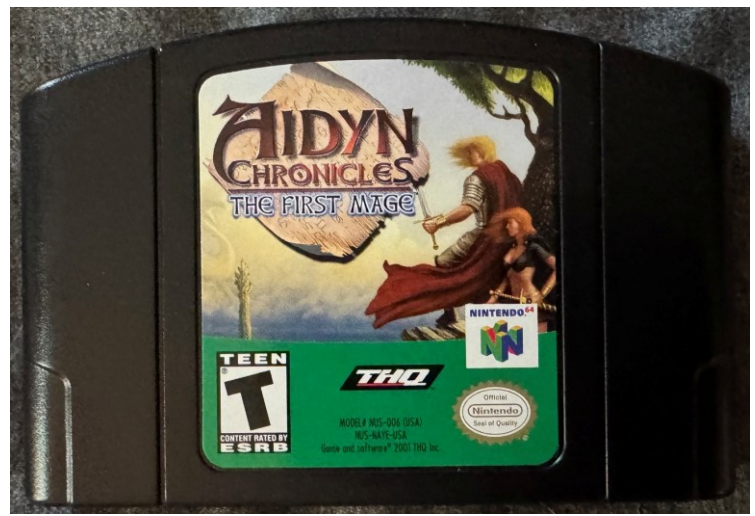
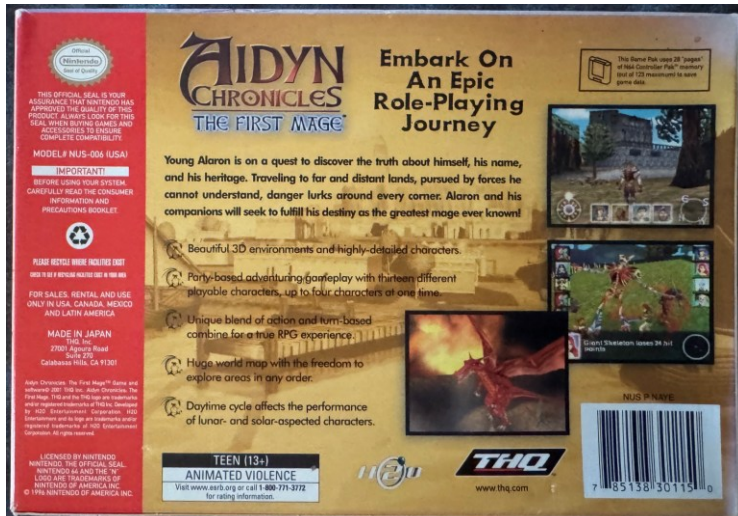
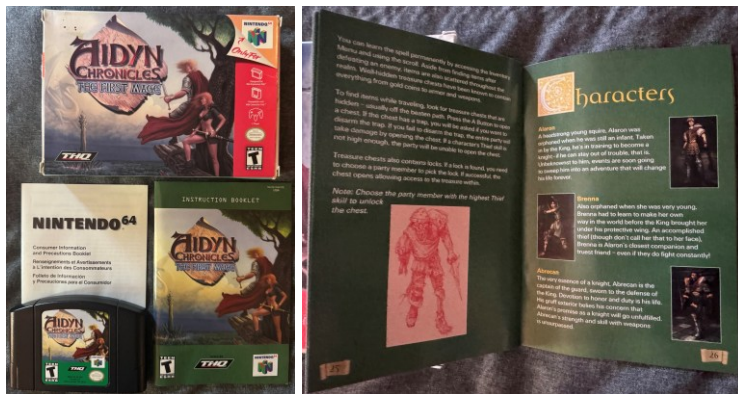
Surprisingly, I managed to play nine of these before getting sidetracked with other games. My mini-reviews for those (and for *40 Winks*, which I already owned) are later in this issue.

I'm not finished, though. I'd like to make it through several more (which is likely to be much easier now, unless I can muster up the willpower to not use the new "memories" save-state feature on Analogue 3D) and do a third N64-focused VGGN in a few months.

Aidyn Chronicles – The First Mage

Platform: Nintendo 64 / **Edition:** Standard

Comments: The manual and cartridge are both in excellent shape, but the box has seen better days.



Because I have a bit of extra space to fill, here are four more *Aidyn Chronicles* screenshots that don't appear in my mini-review later.



Every Other Loose Cartridge

Platform: Nintendo 64 / **Edition:** Standard

Comments: Even though I fell back into my collecting obsession briefly, I wasn't set on getting complete boxed copies the way I was with almost everything else in my collection. The carts alone will do just fine.





So far, I've played through 12 games on the Analogue 3D. My mini-reviews for *Shadowgate 64* and *Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire* appear in [VGGN issue #31](#). The other ten mini-reviews appear below.

Mini-Review: 40 Winks



Even though it was released in 2019 after Kickstarter funding (full disclosure, I was a backer), it feels like a product of its original era.

It released for PS1 originally.

It's a 3D platformer action game with a main hub (the house) split into 6 themed dream worlds that are unlocked in order, each with 3 levels that can be tackled in any order with keys to collect, "winks" to rescue, and pick-ups to refill health and special attacks.

I enjoyed it, despite imprecise platforming, melee combat that has such a short reach that I was often just floundering around not actually hitting enemies even if they seemed close enough, a couple frustrating boss battles, and having to grind for health (Zs) and extra lives before tackling a level to avoid running out.

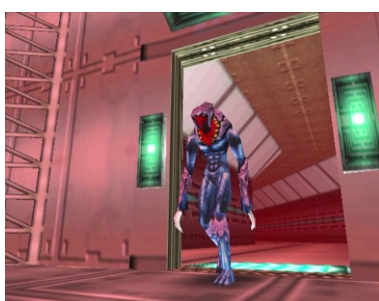
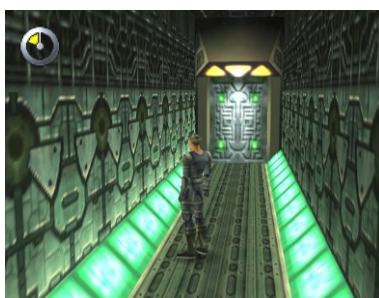
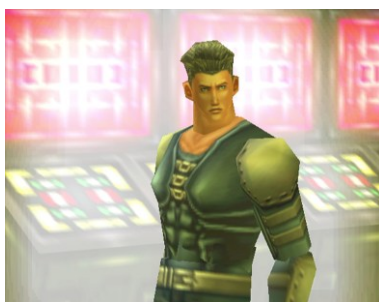
Fully voice acted.

Update:

Correction for my review. It's mostly just the cut-scenes that are voice acted. I don't think the alarm clock mascot and most of the level mini-bosses that taunt you at the start of a stage have spoken dialogue, now that I'm thinking about it.

*Nintendo 64 game played on Analogue 3D
Originally posted to social media: 12/07/2025.*

Mini-Review: Hybrid Heaven



Despite a relatively small library, there are games on Nintendo 64 I hadn't even heard of until I started adding a few more to my collection recently.

One such game is *Hybrid Heaven*, a weird but interesting RPG from Konami. The story is a mystery until partway in, when it's finally revealed what the heck is happening.

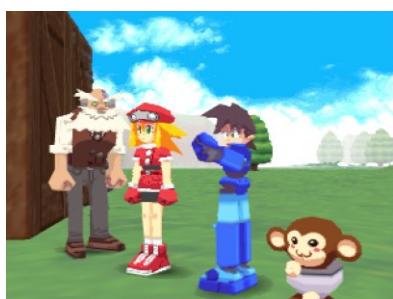
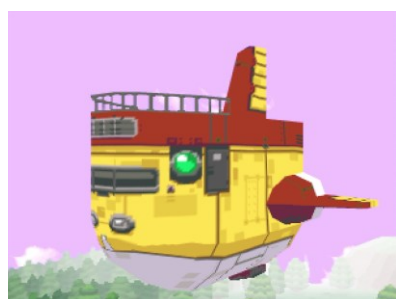
You advance through an underground facility with some action sections, but core combat is a mix of positioning and movement that pauses when an enemy takes a turn (or you do), giving a variety of turn-based options to attack, defend, counter, move, or use items.

Each body part is leveled up separately by using it for kickboxing and pro-wrestling style moves, which is fun and addictive, although it does get a little repetitive eventually.

I enjoyed this game.

*Nintendo 64 game played on Analogue 3D
Originally posted to social media: 12/30/2025.*

Mini-Review: Mega Man 64



Also known as *Mega Man Legends* (on PS1), I have to wonder if the designers of *MML* had ever actually played a Mega Man game before. I joke of course, but it's a 3D action adventure set on a world mostly covered by water where an old man finds a baby boy and, for reasons unknown, decides to name him MegaMan.

We get hints of a bigger story near the end (maybe more is explained in the sequel, which I intend to play after the *Tron Bonne* spin-off) but it seems a huge departure from the character and the story of the classic games.

Outdated controls and graphics that lack detail (even by N64 standards) detract some, but the game shines in atmosphere and cartoon-like animations and cutscenes.

It gets easier with practice and upgrades.

Shooting, exploring, bosses, dungeon diving, and fun.

*Nintendo 64 game played on Analogue 3D
Originally posted to social media: 01/02/2026.*



Aidyn Chronicles – The First Mage

 With my abilities as a warrior, And an arm raised as a knight, And you won't take a step further!	 I don't blame him, I don't blame any of them, But they certainly haven't made things any easier. And they might have taken twice as long.	 Here... take the key. This will allow you to enter the lighthouse.	
 I'm counting on it.	 Hello, handsome. You look like you need a friend.		

How can I be of service, sir?
I'll be right back.

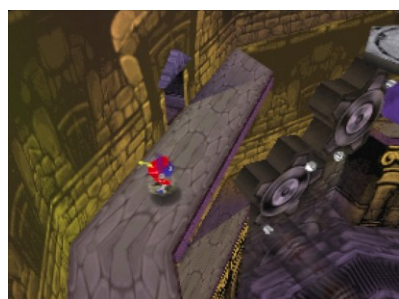
Do you run this great big inn all by yourself?

I reach out...

The image is a 3x3 grid of screenshots from the video game Final Fantasy IX. The top-left screenshot shows the 'DATE GAME' screen with a castle background and character portraits. The top-middle screenshot shows a text screen with a character's monologue. The top-right screenshot shows a battle scene with a large boss. The middle-left screenshot shows a 'Save Delete Call' menu. The middle-middle screenshot shows a 'LATE GARDEN SEASON' map of the world. The middle-right screenshot shows a 'REPORT' screen with a character's stats and inventory. The bottom-left screenshot shows a 'CAMP JOURNAL' screen with a map. The bottom-middle screenshot shows a character in a white and red uniform. The bottom-right screenshot shows a character in a red and gold outfit.

Originally posted to social media: 02/15/2026.

Mini-Review: Rocket - Robot on Wheels



Before *Ghost of Yōtei* (and *Tsushima*), before *inFamous*, before even *Sly Cooper* and their ties to PlayStation, Sucker Punch made this inventive mascot platformer where you play as a robotic unicycle.

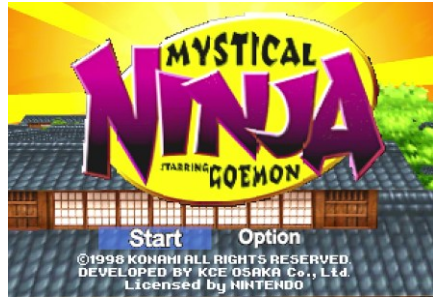
I was too optimistic after getting 100% completion in the first few levels, thinking I'd 100% the entire game. After several hours and dozens of attempts at the ring race in the Pyramid level, I gave up on that idea.

I then moved on to the Food level, realized I wasn't having as much fun as I had at first, realized I had more than enough tickets to enter the final level, and so I did that.

I made it past the paint guard and to the big fan, once, and decided to call it quits there. It's a great game with a lot of variety, but I don't have it in me to actually finish it.

*Nintendo 64 game played on Analogue 3D
Originally posted to social media: 01/24/2026.*

Mini-Rev: Mystical Ninja Starring Goemon



What a wild trip this game was.

It's easiest to describe as a *Zelda*-like with an interconnected world where enemies roam, with towns to visit and a few castles (dungeons) to overcome.

Eventually you have a party of four switchable characters, each with different weapons and ability upgrades that gate progression into different parts of the world until obtained.

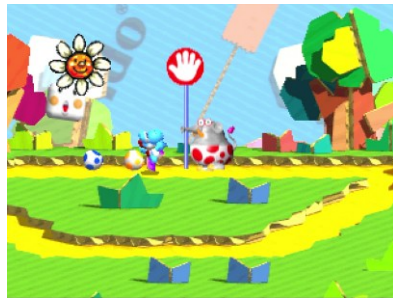
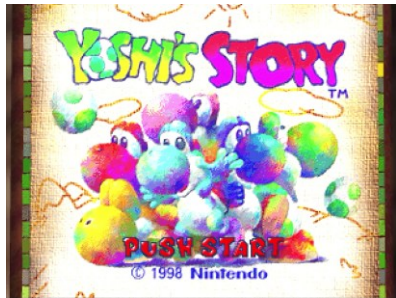
Cut-scenes play out like a sitcom with a laugh track.

The core exploration, platforming and monster-bashing get a break once in a while by first-person mech battles and various one-off mini-games (usually for obtaining new powers). Only the tower climb to earn the super-jump was a struggle. I swear it must be glitchy.

What a weird, colorful world Goemon and friends inhabit, and with a fun soundtrack.

*Nintendo 64 game played on Analogue 3D
Originally posted to social media: 02/24/2026.*

Mini-Review: Yoshi's Story



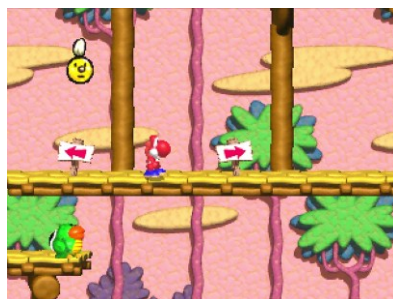
I was *not* prepared for *Yoshi's Story*. It's bizarre. They sing (off-key) between levels. Some of the characters they encounter look like they belong in *Rayman*.



There are 6 levels with 4 possible stages, unlocked by doing things I didn't fully understand (edit: there are 3 special large hearts to find, which unlock extra levels).



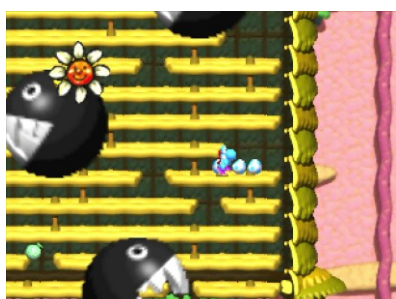
What I was least prepared for, though, is that it's basically a roguelike. You pick your path through the game by choosing one of the unlocked stages per level, plus one of six Yoshis of varying colors, and then proceed through the storybook stage with a goal of collecting 30 fruits.



They recover "health" by eating fruit, but lose all 6 and you have to start a new run.

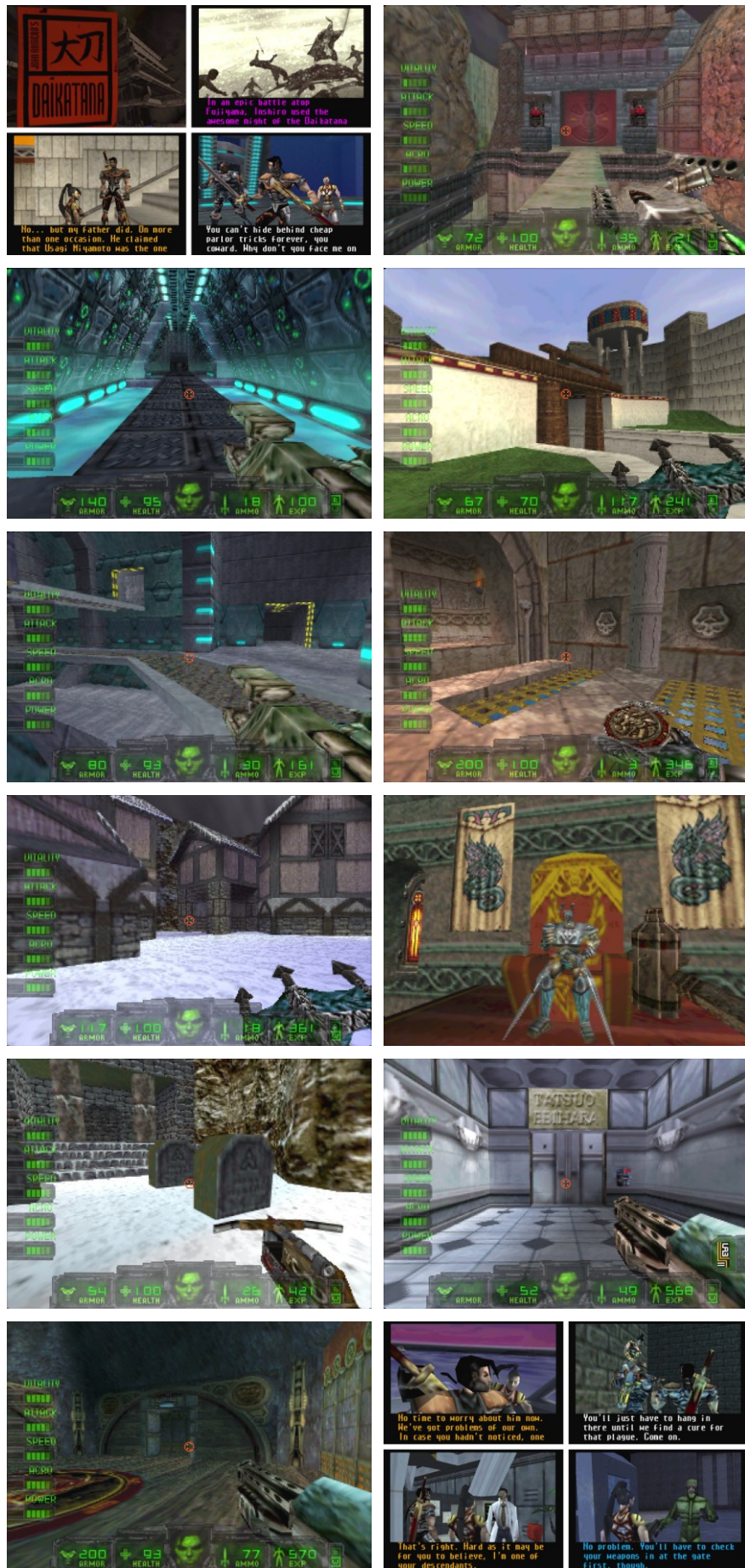


To finally beat it, I started exiting out when I lost a Yoshi. One successful run was enough for me, so there are tons of secrets and stages I won't ever see.



Nintendo 64 game played on Analogue 3D
Originally posted to social media: 03/22/2026.

Mini-Review: John Romero's Daikatana



In a slower-paced game like *Shadowgate 64*, having camera control on the left (and only) stick with movement on the right C-buttons worked fine for me. In a first-person shooter, though, I just couldn't.

So, I bought the BlueRetro adapter and used a DualShock 4, so I could move the left-stick to the right and map C-buttons to the left stick.

It works, but there's a little latency, so I struggled most with precise jumping (thankfully not often required).

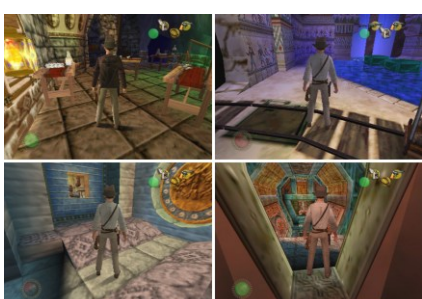
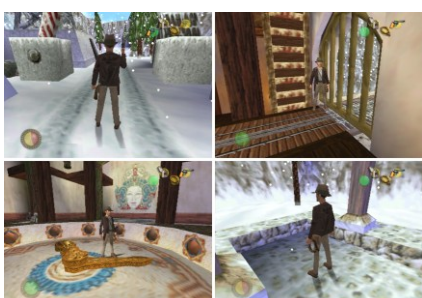
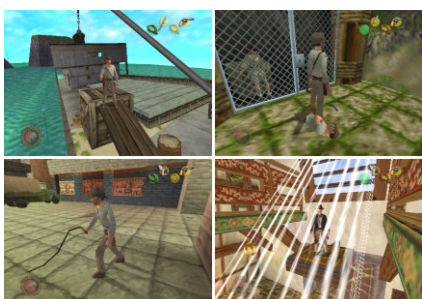
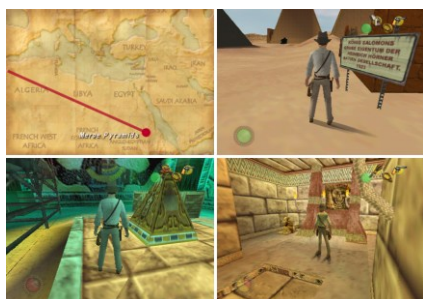
I had a blast with this game, and it's not as hard as I feared.

Replaying a whole level upon dying is a pain, but they can go fast. It was only a problem a couple times (a wizard boss, in particular).

It's not an immersive sim, but it's an interesting middle phase between early mindless shooters and later FPS games.

Nintendo 64 game played on Analogue 3D
Originally posted to social media: 04/04/2026.

Mini-Review: The Infernal Machine



Full Title:

Indiana Jones and the Infernal Machine

This globetrotting third person action adventure feels almost as epic now as it might have two and a half decades ago. What it lacks in polish, it (almost) makes up for in art and level design.

Sixteen lengthy chapters (plus a bonus post-game "Return to Peru" for finding all artifacts, which I didn't, but unlocked via cheat code) are much more puzzle-filled than I expected.

I got stuck at least a half-dozen times and had to look up hints. I never would have thought to back up the mine cart to reach a different path, for example.

It is, however, buggy to almost an unforgivable level. I got stuck in geometry, had numerous other glitches, and even had to replay the last chapter three times due to a progression-halting bug.

Still, I enjoyed it a lot.

Addendum:

After this, I played through *Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb* (Xbox version) followed by *Indiana Jones and the Staff of Kings* (the PS2 version). A long time ago, I played *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis*, a great point-and-click adventure game for PC. More recently (a year and a half ago) I played *Indiana Jones and the Great Circle*. It's tough to remember much about *Atlantis* now, but if I was ranking all five of them, it'd be *Great Circle* first, then *Infernal Machine*, then *Atlantis*, then *Staff of Kings*, and finally *Emperor's Tomb*. All are worth playing.

Nintendo 64 game played on Analogue 3D
Originally posted to social media: 04/19/2026.

Mini-Review: Gauntlet Legends



I always liked the concept of *Gauntlet*, but it never clicked for me. The NES game seemed pointless and difficult. I played *Gauntlet: Slayer Edition* with my son on PS4 years ago, which we enjoyed, but it felt generic and wasn't very memorable.

This is why I'm surprised at how much I enjoyed *Gauntlet Legends*.

This one did click. As N64 games go, it holds up incredibly well with easy controls and an automatic camera.

It never felt overwhelming or too unfair. In fact, with so many consumable items and powers and an RPG level-up system (plus the ability to buy stat points too), the challenge is more in gate/progression puzzles than in the combat.

Bosses are no problem if you find their special weapon first and you're sufficiently healed and leveled up.

This is an N64-era gem.

*Nintendo 64 game played on Analogue 3D
Originally posted to social media: 04/08/2026.*

The Final Stage

Musings on Save States

I've been playing through the *Legacy of Kain* series, and I'm nearing the end. I'll finish the fourth game (*Blood Omen 2*) tonight or maybe tomorrow, and then it's on to the remaster of *Defiance*. There is a recently-released side-scroller called *Ascendance*, but I'm not sure I'll play that as part of my series run. Maybe.

Neither *Blood Omen* has been remastered, but rather than pop in my PS1 disc for the first game and PS2 for the second, I'm playing the digital download versions on PS5. One thing has become abundantly clear (if it wasn't already after all the times I cheated at NES games on the Retron 5): I am weak-willed when it comes to built-in save states and the ability to rewind back from my mistakes.

This has made me nervous about my ongoing N64 diversion on the Analogue 3D, now that they just added the new "Memories" feature. Sure, I'm on an N64 hiatus at the moment, but I'll get back to it. When I do, am I going to be breezing through games because I can't help but heavily abuse the system. Take damage? Revert my snapshot. Fail a jump? Don't walk back up there, just revert my snapshot. Is the boss kicking my butt? We'll see about that.

In a way, I wish it had been there all along. I could have saved an hour playing through a level in *Daikatana* multiple times only to die at a wizard boss with a gravity power that would pull me down to my doom. Instead of giving up on *Rocket: Robot on Wheels*, I could have saved my progress in that final level and made it through to see the end in no time at all.

But, I know me. I'll abuse it. I always do. If the option wasn't there at all, fine. With it, there's no way I'll be able to resist using it, and I worry that it's going to spoil the true experience.

Bill's Top 25 Games of the Past Ten Years

After the [prior issue](#) (dedicated to my top 25 favorite games of the past ten years), my good friend Bill provided me with a list of his. If any of you were around in the [VGG Podcast](#) days, you might remember Bill from a few episodes.

Given the same 2016-2025 window, and given that (like me) there are a lot of great games he just hasn't gotten around to yet, this is his list.

1. Dishonored 2 (2016)
2. The Last of Us Part II (2020)
3. Horizon Zero Dawn (2017)
4. Life is Strange Remastered Collection (2022)
5. Kingdom Come: Deliverance (2018)
6. Days Gone (2019)
7. Prey (2017)
8. Cyberpunk 2077 (2020)
9. Return to Monkey Island (2022)
10. Marvel's Spider-Man Remastered (2020)
11. Marvel's Spider-Man: Miles Morales (2020)
12. South Park: The Fractured But Whole (2017)
13. Stardew Valley (2016)
14. A Plague Tale: Innocence (2019)
15. Hogwarts Legacy (2023)
16. God of War (2018)
17. Little Nightmares 1 + DLC (2017)
18. Little Nightmares 2 (2021)
19. It Takes Two (2021)
20. A Plague Tale: Requiem (2022)
21. Marvel's Guardians of the Galaxy (2021)
22. Stray (2022)
23. Dishonored: Death of the Outsider (2017)
24. Deus Ex: Mankind Divided (2016)
25. Vampyr (2018)

Honorable Mentions: The Darkside Detective (2017), Aperture Desk Job (2022) – a free game in the Portal universe.

Remastered classics: Day of the Tentacle Remastered (2016), StarCraft Remastered (2017), Warcraft 3: Reforged (2020)

End Credits

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Images of the physical games in the *Collection Inspection* feature are photos I took of games in my own collection and weren't sourced from the internet.

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