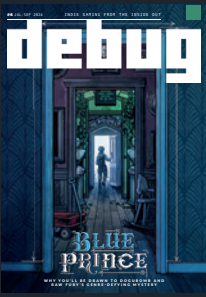


DEBOUO



BLUE PRINCE

WHY YOU'LL BE DRAWN TO DOGUBOMB AND RAW FURY'S GENRE-DEFYING MYSTERY



#6

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Everyone at Spelkollectivet who made our stay so special. James Barnes and the Raw Fury crew for their hospitality. Sean and the Evercade team. Sweden for being amazing — we'll be back!

The Fine Print

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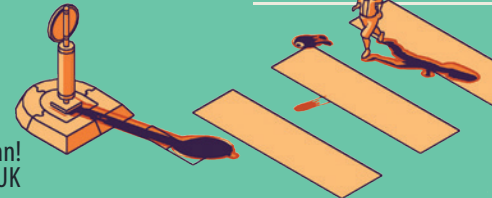
LET'S GET PHYSICAL

We have a smörgåsbord of physical items that you'll really want to get your hands on — from peripherals to bartop arcades!

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DEBUG DEBRIEF

We've been everywhere, man! Well, to a few places in the UK and Sweden at least... Join us as we take you on a whistlestop tour of the best events this quarter.



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A World War 1 set survival horror game with a PS1/pixel art style, where the monster is war itself? Sign us up. No, wait!

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WORDS BY ANDREW DICKINSON

BLUEPRINT FOR SUICIDE



*What happens when the amazing idea you had consumed
buckle under the immense pressure? The developer of B*

NTS CESS



“As someone just entering the industry, I was unaware of the concept of a roguelike in 2016 when the game’s design was cemented, so my approach to tackling the concept of progression didn’t follow any blueprints.”

...es you, takes up all of your time, and rarely leaves your thoughts? Do you rise to the challenge of creating your dream games, or do you
...ue Prince had just this experience, and here he discusses both the highs and the lows of long-term game dev.

SPIRITUAL SUCCESSORS

ARZETTE: THE JEWEL OF FARAMORE

2024
Seedy Eye Software



Nobody was particularly crying out for another take on the much-maligned Philips CD-i title *Zelda: Wand of Gamelon*, but Seedy Eye Software's (geddit?) *Arzette* shows that all the pieces for an enjoyable game were already there – they just needed to be rearranged into something coherent, clever and laugh-out-loud funny.

EX-ZODIAC

2022
MNKY



Nintendo's *Star Fox* (*Starwing* if you're nasty) is a masterpiece, but it wasn't until *Ex-Zodiac* that we saw a real follow-up. Capturing the frenetic feel of the SNES classic while injecting a silky smooth framerate and vividly colourful graphics, this homage often exceeds its brilliant source material in several ways.

BLOODSTAINED: RITUAL OF THE NIGHT

2019
Artplay



Known as "IGAvanias", *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night* or *Castlevania: Portrait of Ruin* have long awaited a follow-up that captured the maximalist approach to 2D adventures – and *Bloodstained* very much delivers. A massive environment awaits to explore, catalogue, collect and craft, alongside a brace of outstanding bonus modes to enjoy.

YOOKA-LAYLEE

2017
Playtonic Games



With a team of ex-Rare developers, you'd expect *Yooka-Laylee* to successfully honour the legacy of its clear inspiration, *Banjo-Kazooie*. Thankfully Playtonic did not skimp on the collectable tokens and knick-knacks, with its enormous worlds absolutely festooned with gumph to Hoover up. *Yooka-Laylee* is an old-school bundle of very silly fun.

MIGHTY NO. 9

2016
Concept



Yes, it's something of a gaming community punchline thanks to its distasteful marketing, but *Mighty No. 9* is superior to much of the *Mega Man X* series it clearly takes after. Now that the furore has died down, hopefully more players will form their own opinion of this underappreciated blaster.

TEN OF THE BEST

Tasked with producing a spiritual successor to his last Ten of the Best feature, **STUART GIPP** opted for a spiritual successor about spiritual successors. He's getting a bit too meta...

Sometimes they just stop making the games you like. That is, even long-standing series' eventually trickle to an end, despite your still champing at the bit for another instalment. When the official sequel just isn't forthcoming, however, sometimes the indies step up and deliver something that'll scratch that itch – admittedly with names changed to protect the innocent. You know, from lawyers. There are dozens of examples of these spiritual successors, but here are just ten of the most interesting. Who knows? Perhaps your long-lamented lost game has its own furtive follow-up out there in the great mists of independent gaming.

CHUCK'S CHALLENGE 3D

2020
Niffler Ltd



While predecessor *Chip's Challenge* and its previously unreleased sequel are now available on Steam, *Chuck's Challenge 3D* from series creator Chuck Sommerville is still well worth playing. An enjoyable visual upgrade of the tile-based puzzle solving that made the Windows Entertainment Pack classic such an enduring classic. Level editor included!

BUG FABLES: THE EVERLASTING SAPLING

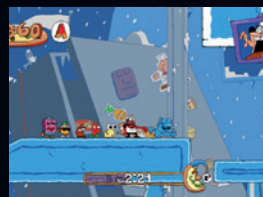
2019
Moonsprout Games



With Nintendo having fully moved on from the RPG style of early *Paper Mario* efforts such as *The Thousand-Year Door*, this insect-filled extravaganza aimed to offer a similarly charming experience, with all the serial numbers filed off. It's cute, challenging and doesn't outstay its welcome. Still, though, bugs. Euuurgh.

PIZZA TOWER

2023
Tour De Pizza



With the *Wario Land* series apparently dead in the water following the lacklustre Wii title *Shake It!*, *Pizza Tower* is a freshly-baked home delivery absolutely loaded with spicy toppings. Taking control of Peppino Spaghetti, you'll scramble through slick, stylised stages very much in the vein of Nintendo's avaricious anti-hero.

FREEDOM PLANET

2014
Galaxy Trail



It shouldn't surprise you that *Freedom Planet* began life as a Sonic fan game, given that it lifts much of its complex movement tech and sprawling level design from said franchise. While it's an incredibly dramatic title story-wise, the gameplay is fun and breezy, though some bosses are serious difficulty spikes.

ONE STEP FROM EDEN

2020
Thomas Moon Kang



Capcom's *Mega Man Battle Network* series may be over, but its brilliant action-packed battle system has been adopted by this thoroughly difficult roguelike deck builder that you won't be able to quit until it's finished. Before long, you'll be moving around the board at mach velocities, avoiding projectiles at hyperspeed.

JAMES TURNER, former *Pokémon* designer and *Pokémon Sword* and *Pokémon Shield* art director, introduces Debug magazine to his own, unique style in...





F

or over a decade, James Turner had a job that 10-year-olds across the globe could only dream of — he made *Pokémon* for a living. Beginning as a 3D graphic designer for Game Freak's *Pokémon Black Version* and *White Version* titles, Turner started with learning the ins and outs of map design and battle animation. Eventually, some of his own designs would make the roster with each subsequent generation, including Vullaby, Phantump, Buzzwole and about 30 others. In no other video game series is original character design

quite as featured and celebrated than in Game Freak titles, and, for a long time, Turner was content with his role in contributing towards this beloved series. However, once DLC had been wrapped up from his time art directing Game Freak's second best-selling title, *Pokémon Sword* and *Pokémon Shield*, Turner and past creative partner Jonathan Biddle (or Bidds) decided to enter 2020 with a major change for both of their careers.

They formed a new studio, called All Possible Futures. "It seemed about the right time for me to do something original, too, to set off on a new adventure," Turner said. "And so, that was about the time I left Game Freak, and we decided to form our company and make some new games."

Turner and Bidds first met during their shared time at the London-based studio Blue 52, working on a series of PlayStation 2 era titles. Both eventually left to pursue their own projects; *Pokémon* tie-in games for Turner with Japanese studio Genius Sonority (*Pokémon Colosseum*, *Pokémon Trozei!*, etc.) and original IP for Bidds in games like *The Swords Of Dittu* with development team Onebitbeyond, for which Turner contributed some art design. When he'd eventually transfer to Game Freak, Turner was taken under the wing of character design legend Ken Sugimori. Now, with some directorial know-how and tools of the trade at his disposal, Turner has ventured into creating his next game, *The Plucky Squire*.

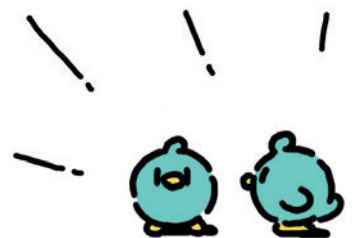
"My original tastes and the things I want to create haven't changed much, but the way I approach things, the way I think about things, has definitely been shaped by my time at Game Freak and the people there," Turner said.

Turner's earliest work on *The Plucky Squire* actually began with a webcomic. Like many illustrators and artists during the COVID-19 Pandemic, he looked to X (formerly Twitter) for a platform where he might still share his artwork and new character ideas, even when regular work seemed to be in flux. Turner's webcomic, called *Cosmic*, showcased two designs that'd eventually comprise the main character cast of *The Plucky Squire*; a young hero-boy and his wizard mentor.

Soon, other friends joined the team, including a troll named Thrash (originally Gnom) and a witch named Violet, ▶

The art of Making MONSTERS

WORDS BY ZACHARY AVERY





INDIE ON AN EPIC SCALE IN **EIYUDEN CHRONICLE: HUNDRED HEROES**

When *Eiyuden Chronicle: Hundred Heroes* crowdfunded over \$4.6 million in 2020, few could have imagined that Yoshitaka Murayama, game designer and *Suikoden* creator, wouldn't live to see this epic completed. Murayama-san's untimely passing adds weight to what is already a hugely anticipated and staggeringly ambitious title. Is it perfect? No. Is it good? It's magnificent...

At the heart of *Eiyuden Chronicle* is an expansive narrative set across the vast and vibrant world of Allraan, where war is looming and an unlikely band of heroes are about to change history. Like the best fantasy worlds, the pseudo-realism shown in the variety of locations makes the journey so much more believable, from the frozen mountain peaks of Skriss to the flat sandy expanse of Impersh'arc, **home of the Shi'arcs** [1]. Exploration is encouraged and curiosity and perseverance are rewarded handsomely.

The unlikely leader of this vast cast is Nowa, a 17-year old mercenary who, along with co-protagonists Seign and Marisa, form *Eiyuden Chronicle's* leading trio (left). As you traverse Allraan, you'll meet over 100 more characters, forming allegiances with some that will come to fruition much later. Miraculously, for a game with this many characters, many of them shine brightly in their own right. Every single one is beautifully drawn, from the purple and yellow majesty of Perielle, via the ruggedness of the battle-weary Garr, to the elven grace of the innkeeper Cassandra.

This masterful differentiation pays dividends in the **frantic battle scenarios** [2], allowing combat to become one of the standout features. Players can dive deep into the strategy side, assembling a

**LIKE THIS?
TRY THESE...**

Eiyuden Chronicle: Rising

The prequel chapter to this very game.



INFO

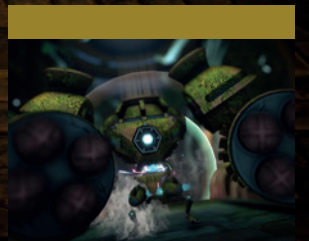
Developer
Rabbit & Bear Studios

Publisher
505 Games

Price
£44.99

Released
April 23

On
PC, PS5 (tested), PS4, Xbox Series, Xbox One, Switch



1



2



3

six-person party around characters that possess their favourite skills, in both physical and magical flavours, the latter of which are channelled through the game's many discoverable Rune Lenses. Beyond even this, battles offer powerful 'hero combos' if certain characters coincide in your party, and combat is further enriched by fantastical boss encounters that can challenge even the most experienced fans.

So why not perfect? Well, despite the combination of rich storytelling, dynamic combat and a beautifully crafted 3D world populated by gorgeous 2D pixel art characters, the experience can occasionally stumble. Some characters lack the development that could have made their arcs more compelling, and the pacing can occasionally feel disjointed, particularly on long trudges through areas that, for all their charm, feel like little more than play-length stuffing.

However, this isn't enough to overshadow the grand epic that Rabbit & Bear Studios have delivered — a memorable experience that's as **remarkable in its quietest moments [3]** as in its most grand, with a soundtrack every bit as sumptuous as the world it underscores. The game begins with the legend 'With our appreciation to all JRPG fans', and this sentiment is felt in every frame thereafter. With story DLC imminent and a warm reception within the community, *Eiyuden Chronicle: Hundred Heroes* is hopefully the start of something rather than its end; at once a celebration of its heritage, a worthy chapter in its legacy, and a fitting tribute to the genius of Murayama-san. [▶](#)

★★★★☆

Dan Morris



MORE INFO

THINGS TO DO IN ALLRAAN

Eiyuden Chronicle is bursting with variety. There's an awesome town building element that allows you to expand a dilapidated fort into a grand home for your followers as your numbers grow, with certain characters you meet along the way bringing their own specialities to the mix. The story is also punctuated by thrilling one-on-one battles and occasional large-scale war simulations that ensure there's always something new to experience. Too much variety in gameplay style? Maybe, but it generally remains fun.

Chained Echoes

For the full-on, top-down nostalgic 16-bit RPG experience.

Sea of Stars

This enchanting indie treasure scored 4.5 in issue #3.



THE BACK CATALOGUE

Rabbit & Bear Studios was founded to create this game, but key team members have worked on the much-loved *Suikoden* series.

FUNDED
IN UNDER 2 HOURS!

"THIS WAS ONE OF MY BEST EXPERIENCES WITH KICKSTARTER.
I'LL BACK ANY CAMPAIGN BY TALL STORY GAMES WITHOUT ANY DOUBT."

Lucy Dreaming Kickstarter backer

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HEIR OF THE DOG



KICKSTARTER

Launched on 16 July, our pixel-art point & click adventure, *Heir of the Dog*, funded in less than two hours, but it's not over yet! The campaign runs until 13 August and, now we're funded, we'll be accepting late pledges after this date too!

Scan the code or visit heirofthedog.co.uk/debug to check out our awesome digital and physical rewards, plus a plethora of stretch goals too.

X @tallstorygames

RETRO WORLD

Marc Jowett brings us a whole load of **new stuff** to play on **old stuff**



ZPF

Developer ZPF TEAM **Publisher** MEGA CAT STUDIOS **On** MEGA DRIVE **Released** TBC **Socials** @MEGACATSTUDIOS

Lead artist and creator Perry Grayson (Gryzor) gives us the low-down on ZPF, which is now on Kickstarter for funding.

How did the idea for ZPF come about?

I had been working on simple shmups for a while and ZPF was a sort of amalgamation of ideas and early attempts at my first horizontal shmup. It goes back as far as 2009 when a lot of the basic enemy and boss designs you see in the finished game were already present.

In 2019, our coder Michael had the idea to reuse those assets for something he was building. I was fixing various issues to make it usable for that purpose but it soon became something we were collaborating on.

What makes the game stand out from other shmup titles available for the Mega Drive?


I think the visuals, the colours, the combination of themes and an unusual mix of modern and

classic shmup features.

It's got medals, melee attacks, a shop, a level select, secrets. All the good stuff.

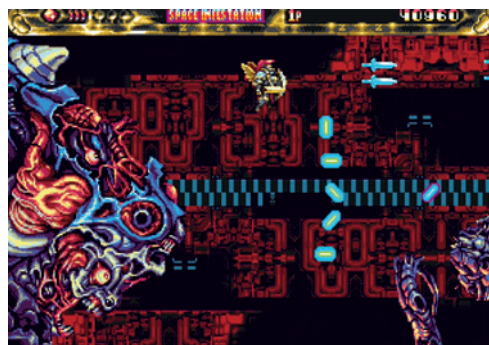
What are your plans after ZPF? Any cheeky exclusives you can give us?

I've accumulated many unfinished game projects over the years which I'd like to finish. That said, I've already tinkered with ideas for a potential sequel or spin-off. The story I've roughed out for a 'sequel' is kinda like the second half of *The NeverEnding Story* novel.

You can find the Kickstarter for ZPF by scanning the QR code to the right! 



WATCH IT





Robby Bisschop

YOUTUBE & TWITCH CATEGORIES ARE

IMPORTANT!



Robby Bisschop is a Belgian PR and communications expert at Pirate PR, a company he founded to help indie game studios with their marketing needs. It's a shame when great games get overlooked, so he's always happy to lend a hand (or a hook!) where possible to help them navigate the unruly waters of the internet.



An often overlooked aspect of releasing a game is thinking ahead about how it'll get covered. This includes not only written reviews, but also livestreams on Twitch and videos on YouTube and other platforms. You've likely seen Twitch streamers or YouTube creators tag their content with a specific game, and clicking on it brings you to all the other videos ever created for

that title. But how do you make your game visible to them so they can select it from an easy auto-complete field? This article will explain how. Having a category for your game is crucial. If many content creators play your game, it will appear in places like Twitch's Recommended Games, and you can immediately see how many streamers are live with the game at any given time. Depending on the game's genre tags, it will get recommended to people who have watched creators play similar games.

If your game category doesn't exist, some creators might pick an incorrect, similarly titled game or have to select a more general tag like 'just chatting' or 'games & demos' if they can't easily find your game's title. They are likely familiar with the box art from your press kit or online stores, so it's important to have the same one present on Twitch and YouTube.

Twitch and YouTube will keep a record of everyone who has ever played your game, making it easier for you to find their streams. Plenty of data collection sites use your game category to track data like total hours watched, average view count, and how many people have played the game. Additionally, it can be very useful to set alerts with various solutions when someone goes live with your game or uploads a video. We recommend using Gameplainer.com for this, which will give you notifications in Discord so you can hop in on a stream or log a video for your records to check later.

Now that we've established the why, let's move on to how you can add your game category to Twitch and YouTube.

Twitch used to be a hassle, requiring your game's info from GiantBomb and needing objective descriptive text to get accepted,

but luckily the process is easier now. Since Twitch/Amazon purchased IGDB.com, you can simply enter your game's data there. All you need is a Twitch account, and you can edit your game's entry like a Wiki page. It goes through moderator approval and is usually updated after 1-2 days. The most vital parts are your title, release date, platforms, genres, and box art (3:4 ratio).

Treat the entire IGDB entry for your game like a small press kit and add all the useful information that you can. IGDB is a community-driven database, so check periodically to ensure everything is still in order and use the opportunity to update your key art and screenshots if needed.

YouTube is a different beast entirely. You'd think a mega-corporation like Google would have an easy way to get your game category created or updated, but you'd be wrong. Typically, 2-3 months after creating a store page (e.g. Steam), YouTube will automatically create the category. If that's too long for your plans, you have two options: create an actual Wikipedia page (yes, really!) for your game yourself, which can help create the category in about a month and has the upside of adding the correct description. References at the bottom of the wiki from sites and magazines writing about your game will help. Another option is getting your video featured on IGN's YouTube channel, which can prompt the category to be created, even if your game is shadow dropped out of nowhere (this scenario has happened a few times for us).

Updating your box art on YouTube requires creating two visuals: a 1000 x 1400 box art with the title and a 2560 x 1440 background without the title. You then need to email these to YouTube's gaming team (yes, again, really!). We asked for permission to share this email in the article, but it was declined. So, please DM @pr_pirate on Twitter/X or reach out via piratepr.com/contact for the full details.

There are even many AAA games that lack visible box art in their YouTube game category at launch for this very reason.

Also, remember to tag your own game in your YouTube videos. It's a common mistake that's easily avoided by editing the video, selecting 'show more', choosing 'category', then 'gaming', and selecting your game from the autocomplete list.

Developer Mega Crit

SLAY THE SPIRE

Before *Balatro* came on to the scene, this was the king of the card games. Of course, *Slay The Spire* is a very different kind of game to *Balatro*. Build your deck and fight enemy after enemy on your roguelike journey through branching paths. This one has been so popular since its release in 2019 that a sequel is now in the works. We can't wait to play it, but in the meantime we'll be playing the original over and over and over and over and....

16
28/177



2
Envenom
Power

1
Strike
Attack

0
Masterful Strike
Attack

1
Deadly Poison

Can only be played...

21
335/420



18

debug



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