GP32:zine

LIVE LONG, AND PROSPER



Emulator Frenzy!

British GP32 Meet-up

Contents:

Competition
Commercial games
PCE games revealed
Focus on the Commodore 64
Official Carry Case is reviewed
Exclusive British Meet-up article
Top 10 things to have on your SMC
Homebrew programs extravaganza

ISSUE #2

> http://www.gp32zine.com

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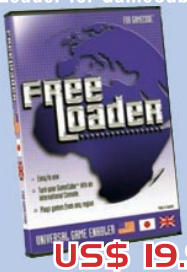
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GP32:zine

Introduction

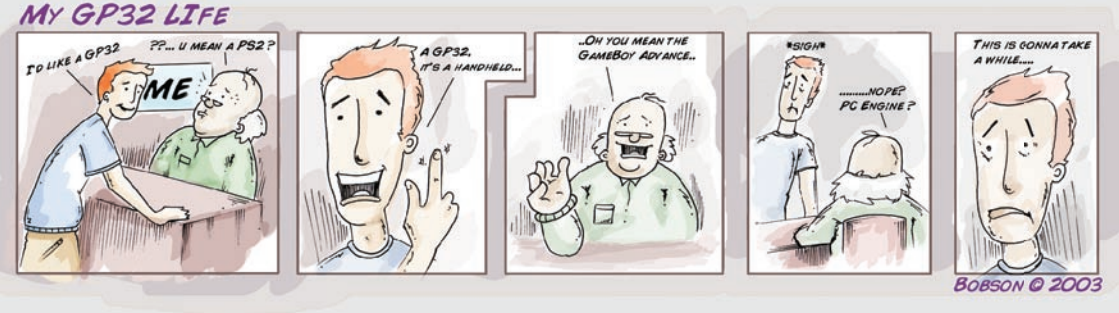
Wow, two issues already. It feel like it was yesterday we released the first one. Well, time flies I guess. This is noticeable in the things that has happened in the GP32 scene in the meantime. There's been a meet-up in Bath City in Britain (which was a blast, really), we've seen the birth - and death - of some of the best emulators around, including GenEmu from Zardoz Jones and fGen from Rlyeh. Truely both of them are wonderful emulators, and succeed in delivering what we've all been waiting for, a playable Genesis Emulator! Amongst the killed emulators, are the infamous Snes9xGP which was indisputably the best SNES emulator around. Its only competitor was the first version of Zardoz Jones' almost alphastate emulator, and a lot of people are wondering about what the scene would have looked like if ZJ had continued work on that emulator. The real answer is, that it would not have looked much different. Of course we would have had SNES at a more playable rate, but it would not had changed the scene in more ways.

The GP32 scene would still be the small amount of dedicated owners, who are eager to love, adore and cherish this wonder of a machine. This showed at the British meet-up in Bath, where the hardcore fans who were able to come, including myself, spent a whole day, just talking, playing and adoring the GP32.

I hope you will enjoy this second issue of GP32:zine, whether you are reading it online, or you are reading it in print. As you can see below, GP32:zine will now feature an exclusive comicstrip each issue. These strips are done by Bobson. Great work from his side, and we hope you enjoy his artwork!

If you have any questions, or just want to chit-chat, go to our boards at http://www.gp32zine.com/!

-zimba





Competition

Welcome to the very first, but not last, competition in GP32:zine. Our loveable sponsor Lik-Sang, have donated us these sexy and overall fabulous prizes, and all you have to do to win them is to answer these questions.

1) At what clock speed did the Commodore 64 run at?
2) What company developed Tanglees Magic Square?
3) Who the man behind Pipe Panic?
4) According to Taras, the cost of GP Cinema is the same as what?
5) How many levels does R-type 1 have?

The answers can be found in this issue, so read along to find the answers.

Here's what you can win:

1st place: GP32 Console
2nd place: Astonishia Story R
3rd-5th place: Official Carry Case

This is your chance to win one of these fabulous prizes! Just send a mail to **compo@gp32zine.com** containing the answers, your name, address and country and you're in the competition. Now you have the chance of winning these great prizes!!

Go ahead and play, you know you want to win this competition!

The contest ends on October 10th.

If you have any questions, please contact zimba at **zimba@gp32zine.com.**

On the scene news

News

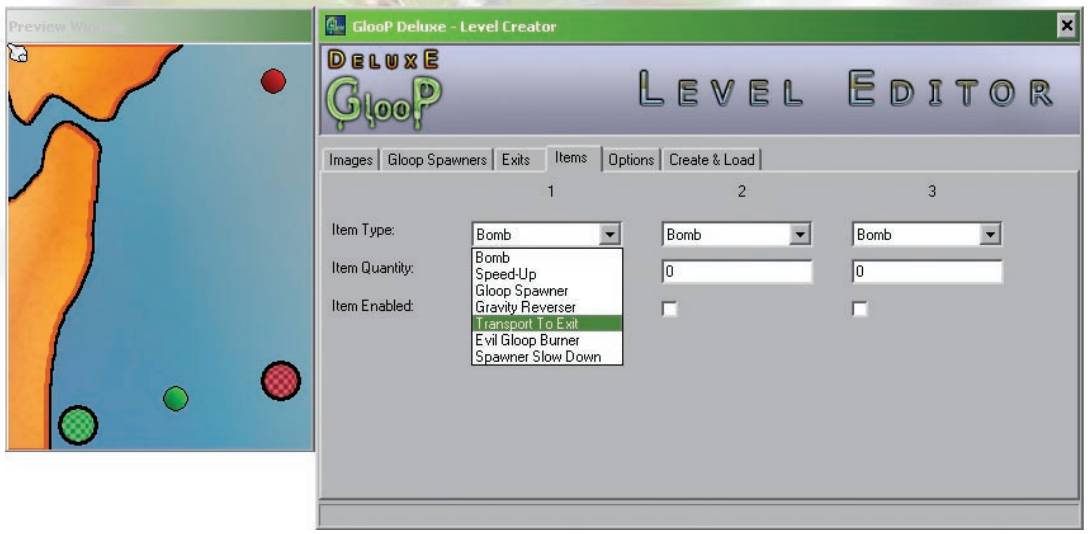
Gloop Deluxe under development!

All of you peeps might know about the GBAX.com coding competition winner, Gloop. This fabulous game, done by Combustion Studios featured nice graphics and a wonderful gameplay. Toris has just announced that he is working on an updated version of Gloop, called Gloop Deluxe, containing tons of exiting new features. While Gloop seemed perfect to most, it had some flaws that Toris seem to have fixed for this new version.

All the graphics are being redone by Combustion Studios, and Deluxe should feature some lovely visuals. Toris has furthermore improved speed and he has increased that irritatingly slow cursor to a more nifty level. Good news indeed! On top of that, Combustion Studios deliver us a bunch of new and exiting features such as level themes, scrolling levels and multiple campaigns!
I had a short talk with Toris from Combustion Studios, and he told me this: "I'm hoping to release it within 2 months, and it will feature items such as bombs to blow stuff up, bombs that change gloop to another colour, as there will be two colours of gloop, each with seperate exits".

Interesting news from the master of Gloop himself, let's see what the future will bring! Take a look at the exclusive level editor screenshots below!

-zimba



GenEmu released to the public!

Just in case you might missed the news, living in a cardboard box on the street, word is out that the famous ZardozJones has released his Genesis emulator to the hungering public. ZJ's wonderful baby runs at almost full speed in most games without sound, more than enough to enjoy the Genesis/Megadrive on your GP32. The emulator shows a promising future, as ZJ continues to develop it. While the program still shows some compatility bugs, the overall impression of GenEmu is great, and it is without a doubt the best first release any emulator has ever had.

The emulator was released after it was showed off and distributed at the Official GP32x Meet-Up in Bath on the 30th of August. There, it was received really well, and people got the chance to bring home their most favorite (and their only) Genesis emulator. GenEmu is now released to the public, and our man Rico has set-up a compatibility page, packed with info about the games that run on the GenEmu.

Take a look at the site on http://www.thaworx.co.uk/genemu/.

-zimba

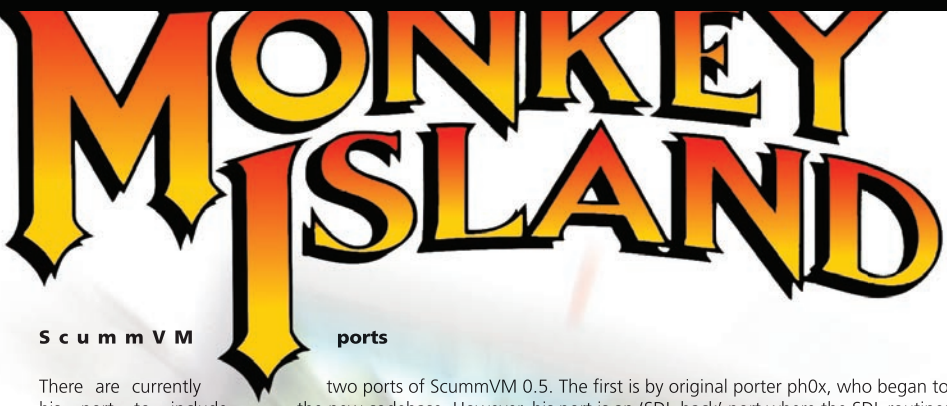


SNES emulator from Rlyeh?

According to Rlyeh, he is looking for a new project to port, and he stated in a discussion that he had found a very simple SNES emulator that looks promising! This could mean that we are going to see a port of an SNES emulator from Rlyeh in the near future. Stay tuned folks, sounds really promising!

?

On the scene news



ScummVM ports

There are currently two ports of ScummVM 0.5. The first is by original porter ph0x, who began to update his port to include the new codebase. However, his port is an 'SDL-hack' port where the SDL routines have been converted to native functions. The second port is by DJWillis, who independently began to modify the GP32 CVS branch to 0.5, using SDL routines from chui's SDL port.

The two efforts have been clouded in some confusion, however. It is still uncertain whether or not ph0x, who has recently become more active in Java phone game coding, will update his work on ScummVM. In the meantime DJWillis has already hacked the 0.3 source to run sound at 132 MHz without stuttering, and beta OGG support is in the works. His 0.5 effort doesn't currently run non-Lucas Arts games such as Beneath a Steel Sky at the moment. Nice job so far, though!

-rico

GP32:zine mail box

GP32:zine will include a mailbox section in future issues. Therefore we request to you, that if you have anything on your mind, GP32 related of course, don't hestitate to mail them to us. It could be anything questions, opinions, rants and much more, and the best ones will be put in here, and answered by the staff. The Mailbox feature will only be here if you guys have something to say, so if you got questions about the GP32, the magazine, the world, your life or anything else, just mail them in, and we will choose the ones that should be in the magazine. All mails will get answered, but only a few of them will get printed in the magazine.

This is your chance to get heard in the GP32 community, so send the mails to mailbox@gp32zine.com.

Jump'N'Bump in progress.

Mr_TRaNS is continuing work on a new version of Jump 'n' Bump, the classic multiplayer platform game. The main addition is music and sound through libmikmod. The library was originally ported by SMS Plus porter and well-known developer Aj0, but hacked to take in memory instead of files. So far 669, far, it, med, mod, mtm, s3m, stm and ult files are all working, with xm crashing and amf, dsm, gdm, imf, m15, okt, stx and uni untested. There's also a spiffy hand-drawn splash screen and minor extras coming.

-rico







Meet-up

British GP32 Meet-up

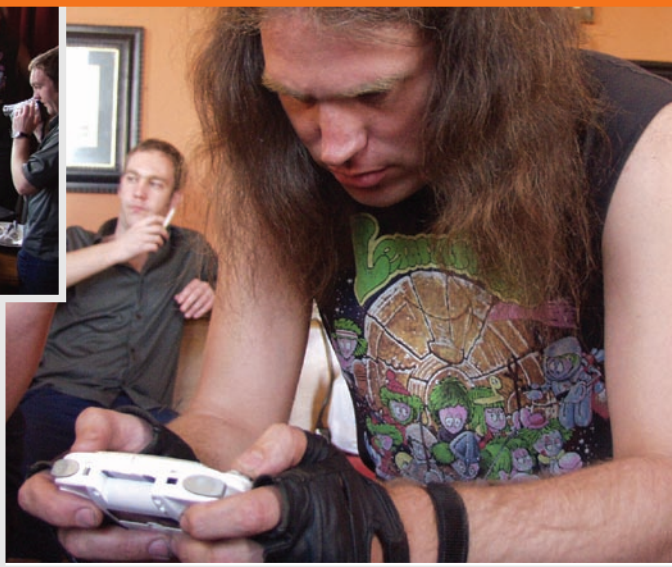
Well… There I was… sat in the Rummer Tavern in Bath at 12:15pm on the 30th August, Anno Domini 2003, beginning to wonder what the hell I had let myself in for. Two months in the planning, judgement day had arrived. I had met two people who claimed to be Rico and Zimba at the train station about fifteen minutes before, ambled up the road to find the venue for the meet, bought a drink and sat down to wait for the deluge of people. That's the odd thing about organizing something like this. People that you know so well from a forum almost always bear little resemblance to the image in your head when you first see them (I spent about ten minutes standing next to Rico before we even realized!). Now, fifteen minutes later, we were here, sitting, chatting and waiting for everyone else…

Thankfully, it was only around ten minutes before people started trickling in through the door off the street (These were, however, ten long, dark, harrowing minutes, when my online reputation hung dangerously on a single thread above a lake of snapping alligators). I've never been so happy to see a six-foot plus, crazy-haired rocker in all my life. Lurch was closely followed by others, all from the gp32x.com forum, some with partners in tow, but most alone. These included Zxeius, who walked in with the most curiously heavy aluminium camera case I've ever seen. On opening, this was revealed to contain almost every hand held gaming device known to man. All from the Portable PCengine-GT, to the Bandai Wonderswan, and everything in between were represented in this treasure-trove of nostalgia and curiosities - Things were getting decidedly interesting. As we were beginning to get comfortable, we were shunted to the room next door, which, in a fortuitous twist of fate, turned out to be a much better setting. The rest of the motley crew who made up the first GP32 British gathering arrived by around one o'clock, with each undergoing the bizarre ritual of a nickname introduction one-by-one.

The chat flowed as everyone showed off the wares on their Smartmedia cards to the massed crowd. Modded GP32s showed off people's creative sides, with CaptainFuture's neon-green eyecatcher being the most obvious. The first topic of conversation that grabbed everyone's attention was the distribution of GenEmu, written by Zardoz Jones. This had been promised as an exclusive for the meetup, and was duly delivered. It hit its target, followed by oohs and aahs from people as to the speed and impressiveness of a program still in heavy beta stage (this has subsequently been overclocked by third parties and become one of the most used emulators on the GP32!). Next in line came the first public testing of the long-awaited multiplayer version of GPengine, the GP32s own PC engine emulator. With RF units provided by Lik-Sang, several well-known titles were put to the test, the clear winner in popularity terms being "Bomberman", which played like a dream. Why is it that the oldies are almost always the best?

Rlyeh's infamous emulator betas got their first public outing at about 2pm. Nine betas in all were ready for all to see. Here we go… deep breath! fMAME32, fWSC32, fGen32, fMSX32, fOGG32, fNES32, fCol32,







fSMS32 and fPCE32… phew! Of them all, fMAME was the most interesting of the current crop, with "Ghosts n' Goblins" running extremely well. Properly portable Ghosts 'n Goblins has been a dream of mine for about 10 years – Sad I know, but hey! Who cares! – it looks like it's going to happen… This was closely followed by fGEN, which is looking like a serious contender to Zardoz Jones's Genesis emulator crown. For a full rundown of these betas, feast your eyes on Rico's article elsewhere in the magazine.

With the food and drink flowing almost as well as the files between SMCs, the event was decidedly underway. DJWillis showed off his new version of GPSCUMM, the program to emulate the Lucasarts SCUMM engine for the GP32. His hope is to have a version available in the near future on which you can include the sound files compressed in OGG format, to experience the whole splendour of the 'talkie' versions of these classics, yet still have room for plenty more on a single SMC. Having coders at the meet definitely put an interesting spin on what would otherwise have been just an all-out gaming session, and possible gave a few people at least an iota of an idea of how much work is involved in producing the stuff they are so impatient for!

With bellies full and everyone finally remembering everyone else's nicknames with some sort of regularity, talk turned to the planned RF tournament. There were some great prizes on offer. Everything from a black GP32 (case provided by Craig at gbax.com and GP32 provided by Lik-Sang), Black GP32 cases (again from Craig at gbax.com), DVDs, games and more (kindly provided by Lik-Sang) were up for grabs in the first ever - as far as I know - GP32 RF Multiplayer tournament. Thanks must go to both companies for helping to make this a day to remember. "Bomberman" again emerged as the battleground of choice for this particular clash of the titans. I was duly knocked out in the first round, managing to kill myself two out of the three times my opponent (Twimfy) needed to win. This doesn't seem so bad until you take note of the fact that he was nursing the mother of all hangovers at the time, when suddenly you realize I must have been really bad! The field gradually got whittled down (with only one pit stop for a change of batteries!) to the final, with Lurch and Zxeius stepping up to do battle for the final time. Lurch emerged as the final winner, after a monumental battle, to take the Black GP32 back to Stoke-on-Trent. Various other prizes were handed out to the runners-up, with most people (not DJWillis *sob* -ed) getting something out of the day to take home and play with.

With the sun getting lower in the sky, and pre-arranged transport times approaching, we decided to call it a day – and a very successful one at that! My feelings about the event? Couldn't be happier! There was a great turnout, with lots of familiar names now being associated with the correct faces in my head. It's something that I would definitely recommend to anyone who can get one organized in your own country. Thanks must go to everyone from myself for trusting me to get something like this organized. Thank you one and all for turning up (especially Zimba, who journeyed all the way from Denmark!) and making it a day to remember. Finally, gratitude goes to Lik-Sang and gbax.com for giving the day a truly 'competitive' edge and turning it into something special!

Cheers!
A tired but happy Axeman

The GP32

Past, Present & Future

It was like a handheld gaming enthusiast's dream; one of those things that gets rumoured about for ages, but never actually ends up emerging - a handheld gaming device that could not only play games, but also movies and MP3s, whilst at the same time allowing wireless multiplayer games and mobile connectivity. Add to this the fact that it used Smartmedia cards for storage and linked to a PC for file transfer, and it equalled the ultimate home-brew device. Top this off with the glacé cherry of a free Software Development Kit and open-source attitude from the manufacturers.

In 2000, various web forums were buzzing with the news of a potential winner in the handheld gaming arena – a challenger to the upcoming Nintendo Gameboy Advance, and a device to tap into potentially huge user base of home-brew enthusiasts and coders. The excitement mainly centred around the fact that, unlike Nintendo's upcoming baby, the new device would allow the development and free distribution of public-domain applications and games. On top of this, the specs were impressive – a large 320x240 screen capable of displaying 64000 colours, a 16-bit sound chip; all based around an Arm9 CPU, running at 67Mhz as standard, but seemingly overclockable to up to 166Mhz.

In 2001, that very device arrived on the scene; more with a splutter than a bang, but nevertheless, it arrived – unlike many other similar rumours. After several prototypes, a small Korean company called Gamepark had decided to do what many thought impossible – take on the might of the ever-present Nintendo and still be there to tell the tale several years later. The console was released with only a few games to play on it, but with the biggest potential of any handheld system ever made.



The main hurdle that the GP32 had to get over initially was its lack of availability outside its native Korea. This didn't last long. As demand for the console grew, salvation for the worldwide gaming community came in the form of worldwide video game sellers such as Lik-Sang and Play-Asia, and later Gbax.com in Europe. Thanks to these distributors, gamers and coders worldwide were now able to get their sweaty paws on that lovely bit of kit. The first thing they started doing was exploring their new toy, figuring out how far they could push it, and what it was capable of. The movie playing facility later became a reality with the release of 'Moviepark', an easily available and cheap video file player capable of playing twelve frames per second – a rate initially seen as disappointing by many, but emerging as perfectly good for encoding and watching virtually anything on the move (anime and TV episodes being the most popular choices).

It was soon obvious that another 'killer' use for the new device was to become the main reason for many people buying it. A new buzzword was doing the rounds in the emerging GP32 coders' community – that buzzword was emulation. The Arm9 processor in the GP32 was a chip that had already been used in many other devices – mostly PDAs. What that meant was that there was already a good selection of coders who were experienced in writing for it. It allowed relatively easy porting of code from other platforms, and soon enough, emulators began to emerge that showed a lot of promise. Most importantly of all they could be easily put on to the GP32 via a PC, along with the videogame roms needed. With the lack of many good quality commercial games for the system, Emulation is definitely the area of GP32 development that has been the most exciting (and controversial). People were soon



talk about the older games as 'abandonware' (software that is no longer being sold and is unlikely to be in the future), but copying of these is no more legal unless the companies/ coders involved have given their blessing.The legalities haven't halted the growth, and the GP32 now has a burgeoning community, with a healthy crop of coders working on projects for it. There are lots of new projects in development, including several emulators (the Genesis ones being the most eagerly awaited in most forums). Examples include an RPG creator on the way, and a port of Linux that is supposedly still in the works. Coders are constantly finding better ways to squeeze every last bit of power out of the GP32s circuits.

confidently predicting full speed emulators of almost every system imaginable, often with more enthusiasm than evidence. The 'promised' GBA emulator is yet to emerge (though it IS in real, even if its very slow). However, many other systems have been emulated, with varying degrees of success. It was good for everyone - a new generation of gamers was experiencing the joys of some of the best classic games released over the last 20 years, and older gamers were reliving those same games, but in a portable that you could stick in your back pocket. Emulators are now available for more machines than you can shake a stick at, with a load still in development (some seemingly in development limbo). Platforms as diverse as the Vectrex, Atari 2600, NES, Gameboy (and colour), Atari ST, PC engine and SNES (and a multitude more) have all been emulated, meaning the choice of games available to gamers is massive. Some of them have even begun to include multiplayer support over a GP32 RF link.

Gamepark have found themselves having to officially distance themselves from the emulation scene because of the legalities involved in the use of videogame roms. In theory you can use them if you own the game itself, but of course the easy availability of them on the internet has meant that much of the use ends up being technically illegal. Many gamers

The GP32s Flashable firmware has become another target for those wanting to enhance the unit, with Mr Spiv's Multifirmware (a firmware with several different operating systems on it) becoming one of the most popular. Suggestions are being made all the time of ways to modify the GP32 and add peripherals to it, from the sensible to the downright crazy. The release of the GP32 Frontlit unit a few months ago was another nice touch on an already extremely good handheld, with current GP32 owners upgrading to the FLU in droves.



On the commercial game front – development seems to have slowed lately. The latest piece of commercial software released was not a game at all, but an update to Moviepark, called GPcinema. This can now play 15 frames a second, with 20 frames being reported by some with heavy overclocking. There have been some very nice games released in the past (Astonisha Story R, Mill and Pinball Dreams being some of the most popular, despite the first two only being available in Korean!). The opening in May of the English version of JoyGP, the Entware GP32 software site, has made a lot more of the games available to worldwide users cheaply through a simple download. The plummeting price of Smartmedia cards has also meant that users can have a bigger reserve of storage on Tap all the

time, and can keep everything they want to with their GP32, rather than having to constantly swap stuff around depending on their mood.

So... Where does the future of the GP32 lie? Well… there are massive differences of opinion on this front. Gamepark themselves have tried branching out, with limited success. The GPi, a cross between the GP32 and a PDA/ Mobile phone was displayed at the 3gsm expo in Cannes in 2002. It was a clamshell-type handheld (in similar style to the GBA SP) with a built-in mobile phone and touch-screen capabilities, as well as a higher memory capacity. It has yet to emerge, and is now looking more and more unlikely. Its main problem would be its price. The price of the GP32 is one of its main selling points, with it being available from under $150. The fact that mobile phones are also cheap and regularly upgraded by most people means that there is probably only a small minority of people that would buy the GPi, and shows that digital convergence isn't always necessarily a good thing.

Gamepark are on the verge of an official European release. Whether this is going to help them is uncertain. If it's supported by some great new game releases, or at least good translations of the best current games, then it could be a resounding success. If not, then it could sink without trace and take Gamepark with it – a situation that no-one (except maybe Nintendo) wants to happen. Mobile connectivity via European cellular networks would also be a great bonus, as currently only Korean networks get a look in. A US release is definitely less likely in the forseeable future. Some believe this is because if the emulation legality issue. With the current RIAA clampdown on audio file-sharing happening, some think that maybe Gamepark would be seen as encouraging the swapping of copyrighted material, and be targeted accordingly.

The forums are already debating when the successor to the GP32 (fondly known as the GP64 by board members) will emerge. With the development of Smartmedia technology now ending at 128Mb capacity, it is likely that a new type of storage will be used. This could possibly be compactflash or a newer type like XD, both of which have the potential to store Gigabytes of data. The community's dream is of a more powerful but backwards compatible unit, so that all the current software can be used, with the slower emulators being brought up to speed by the new hardware.

Competition is definitely n the horizon in the way of new handhelds. Nokia's N-gage is looking promising (though not particularly high-spec) and Sony's PSP (Playstation Portable) is due for release some time at the end of 2004. Its likely that neither of these will make much of an impact on the GP32's sales, as both will be closed-source and will be targeting a different audience to Gamepark's followers. It's the mixture of new and retro that's the GP32s biggest draw, and one that's unlikely to be recreated by either of the new systems.



One thing's certain – the community for the GP32 will live on whether the console itself is a success or not. The community has a great spirit, and is one of the friendliest on the net. Everyone from total newbies to seasoned coders post together with very little problem. The first British GP32 meet-up happened on 30th August and is reported in this very issue. With events like this being proposed all over the world (Germany and the USA already have possible events happening), the future looks bright. See you all there, and enjoy the ride!

-Axeman

Focus on: Commodore

Focus on: Commodore

Germany, 1945. The second world war is over, and Jack Tramiel is released from the German Bergen Belsen death camp. Being jew – Tramiel was one of the lucky people who survived the German Holocaust. After the war, Tramiel travelled to New York with the dream of starting his own company. After a few unsuccesful tries – Jack finally found himself assembling Czechoslovakian typewriters. Jack quickly figured out the possibilities in this business, and he founded what was later to be known as Commodore International.

The name, Commodore, will ring a certain bell on most mid-age computer nerds today. To normal people, the commodore was merely a typewriter with a screen, but to us – it was the birth of a new era. When Commodore released their mega-seller, the Commodore 64, in 1982, they had no idea they were going to change history. Previous attempts at releasing a computer to the mainstream audience had failed, and optimism was basically a city in Russia. When the machine was released, it got a slow start in Europe because of it's rather high price ($500) compared to it's direct competitor, The Sinclair Spectrum. Later - when the costs of manufacturing fell, and games developers started to appear – the C64 changed from being a business machine, to a game machine. Games developers quickly found out about this machine and games started to appear. These games, alongside thousands of other games and applications, help made the Commodore as popular as it is today. From the birth in 1982, to it's death in 1993, the Commodore 64 had sold approximately 30 million units! Compare this to the standards at the time – and you have yourself a mega-hit.

The Commodore 64 offered a technologically superior machine, packed with a 16 bit color system, a crisp and realistic 3 channel sound chip (capable of producing heartbeating 8 bit sound) and a blasting 64kb RAM. The processor was running at the incredible speed of 1.02 MHz, allowing it to run games and application at a blazing speed. It came with a Non-standard ASCII keyboard, allowing it to be used as a business machine. People could write letters, books, manage their bankaccounts and lots more on this wonder of a machine. And with games like Elite, Impossible Mission, Bubble Bobble, Hitchhikers Guide and many more, the Commodore 64 appealed to the

Was Commodore really that good?

Here is a short bit of the innovations the guys at Commodore could brag about:

- Best selling computer in History (even today in 2003)
- 1st portable hand-held calculator
- 1st LCD Display
- 1st computer company to make $1 Billion dollars in Sales
- 1st Joystick controller
- 1st Sound Interface Chip - SID6581
- 1st company to develop "plug and play"
- 1st company to define the word "multimedia"



brand new gamers as well. This was their first chance to play the arcade games they used to play at Joe's Pizza, at home. The Commodore spawned a massive gamer community, and was one of the first machines to have a demo-scene.

During the '80s, the huge sales of the Commodore 64, left Commodore wanting more. As devlopment of successors to the C64 began, Jack Tramiel found himself controlling the company lesser each day. Fustrated about his lack of control over his company, forced him to leave the company in 1984. Jack Tramiel, who had just left Commodore, purchased Atari secretly, and was trying to get his revenge by buying Amiga Inc. He lent Amiga Inc. $1,000,000, to be payed back one month later. When the month was almost up, it became apparent that Amiga Inc. would not be able to pay him back, so he offered 98 cents per share for the company. Amiga Inc. thought that this was unacceptable, so they looked for someone else to buy them. Just 2 days before the deadline, Commodore came in. They offered to pay Amiga the $1,000,000 needed to pay Atari, on the condition that they would get to buy Amiga Inc. Shortly after – the Amiga 1000 was released, and quickly became a huge success. Even more fustrated, Tramiel released the Atari ST shortly after, at the price of only $600 compared to Amiga's $1500, allowing it to quickly outsell the Amiga 1000. Commodore started to fail again. The 8 bit scene had been doomed since the release of the Commodore 128, a huge flop for the company. And with other systems becoming more poplular than the Commodore, the company fell into a huge debt. Finally, in 1994, on Friday April 29, Commodore filed for liquidation, leaving fans and followers stunned.

To this date, the Commodore 64 is still loved and charished by fans across the world. It is emulated on countless of systems, including the GP32. 'Frodo', the only C64 emulator for the GP32 is evidentially the best. Delivering the best way to play Commodore 64 on the go, 'Frodo' succeds perfectly in bringing the experience back to life.

Sources:
http://www.commodore.ca/ - The Official Commodore Company homepage
http://www.lemon64.com/ - One of the best Commodore 64 sites around.

-zimba

The Commodore 64:

Internal
MOS 6510 processor @ 1.02 MHz
20 Kb ROM
64 Kb RAM
38 Kb available in BASIC
Commodore BASIC version 2.0

Keyboard
Non-standard ASCII, 62 normal style keys, 4 function keys. Two cursor control keys: one for up and down, another for left and right. Commodore special key, a few other special keys (RUN/STOP, CLEAR/HOME, RESTORE, etc). No TAB key.

Graphics
VIC II (Video Interface Chip)
40 columns x 25 rows
16 colors
256 characters, 62 graphic characters
Sprites
320x200 resolution

Sound
SID 6581 (Sound Interface Device)
3 channel 8 bit sound
9 octaves
4 waveforms
Programmable ADSR
Programmable filter

I/O Ports
RGB
Video Composite
Two ports for Joystick, Mouse or Lightpen
Cardridge Slot
Tape Port
Serial Port
User Port (RS232 compatible)
TV

Focus on: PCE Games

Focus on: PCE games

Done by Rico

So just what is the PC Engine good for?
It was a console that many had no idea about until the GP32 arrived. Thanks to Giffel and black-, GPengine was the first almost full-speed emulator for the GamePark. Compatibility was high, speed was top-notch and sound clear. Since then this emulator has become a benchmark for other aspiring developers to look up to. However, due to the relative obscurity of the PC Engine, many people confuse it with a PC. It's more of an arcade console like the Mega Drive/Genesis. For the same reason, people don't know what games to try out on GPengine. In this article I'll cover the most popular PC Engine titles:

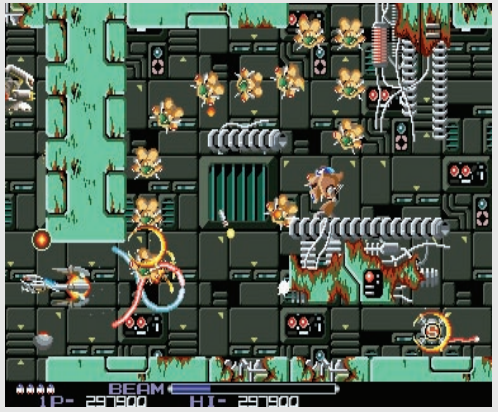


R-Type I

Without a doubt the most famous PC Engine game. Fast-paced shooting, dodging and blasting in a shooter that practically defined the genre with its features, including the Force-Device that allows backwards fire and upgradeable attacks from bouncing blue beams to swirling yellow waves.

An arcade conversion, graphics are mostly smooth and sound flawless - many will remember stage one's music as a classic tune. Unfortunately there are downsides. The game is incredibly hard (expect to be trying the first level dozens of times) but the emotional reward of beating each level is intense. Speaking of levels, while beautifully crafted and varied, there are only four, which lessens the replay value somewhat.

8



R-Type II

The last four levels of the arcade version were finally ported to the PCE with R-Type 2. Disappointingly there are no other extra features over the last version. Many agree that the level design and sound isn't quite as good as the first four. So why do I include this game? Simply because after trying the first four levels, you will thurst for more alien-blasting action. You can enter a code to start with the weapons and add-ons from your previous game, which helps the odds a little - but the levels are just as hard, if not harder. Prepare yourself for the same frustration enemy pattern memorising and lightning-fast reflexes.

R-Type 1 and 2 are available as one game known as R-Type Complete with new music and animated level intros, however, it's only available as a CD.

5



1943

The sequel to the world-famous 1942 shooter, 1943 boasts the same non-stop action and hectic gameplay. While in my opinion the graphics aren't as detailed, the music has certainly improved and remains some of the best the PCE has generated. You can also expect extra features over the arcade original such as more weapons and levels.

Some may find the game confusing, however, as the number of sprites on screen easily creates confusion. If you can get past this, you'll find 1943 rewarding and exhilarating to play.

9



The Legendary Axe

Like the similarly-named Golden Axe series, you slash and gash your way through enemies in this visually-impressive platformer. Unlike Golden Axe, you can explore the levels at your leisure. The backdrops, in particular are beautiful to see, although the music grates after a time. Finally, the game can easily get frustrating. Just wait until a large number of enemy show up.

Overall though, an enjoyable experience. Just avoid the sequel, which is significantly more dull and repetitive to play.

7



Parodius

While many praise Gradius as a classic shooter, it suffered from slowdown. Konami scored a major hit when they produced Parodius, a parody of the series with all-new crazy graphics. Spacecraft become penguins. Power-ups become candy. The music is a combination of great Classical tunes and music from the previous Gradius games (which is good already).

The levels steadily get harder but the difficulty curve controlled, the game fun to play at all times. I strongly suggest the 'Special' game mode which grants you pretty much every power-up within about ten seconds. One of the best shooters, for sure.

8



PC Kid Trilogy

Also known as PC Genjin or Bonk's Adventure, these platformers where also well-known games for the PC Engine. Every one a classic, PC Kid introduced new ideas to the genre such as the ability to change your size but explore the same level, and have special transformations (similar to Dynamite Headdy). Cheerful music and average graphics in the first game quickly improve in quality for the sequels.

At first, PC Kid seems like a regular head-butt based platformer. However, you will soon be swayed into other opinions by the imaginative sprites, crazy power-ups and ridiculous bosses. Each game has at least four hours of gameplay, including inventive bonus stages. Although the series gets repetitive after a while, I highly recommend it, particularly PC Kid 2 (Bonk's Revenge) which is the best of the three.

9

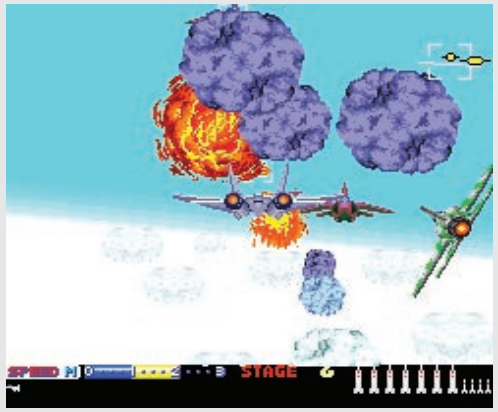


Bomberman '94

The last Bomberman game in the series for PC Engine, and boy is it good, on a global level. Very few other console versions of this game match up, except for the SNES (and at a slower speed, of course). Your mission is simply to blow up pillars in a level to progress to the next, avoiding or killing enemies as you go. With five themed zones, bosses and a password saving system, there is a lot of playability.

New features include riding kangaroos that can jump over blocks or kick bombs around, whilst protecting you. The music, graphics and animation of this game are top-quality, and the game very enjoyable. The only thing that detracts is the general monotony of the levels, but the themes make up for this.

8



Afterburner II

This arcade port isn't a complex game, really. The objective is to shoot everything, including what moves, and probably what doesn't. While the constant dodging and shooting wears thin after a while, you are only likely to have a quick play on this anyway, and it certainly lends itself to quickie games. While the sound is less than stellar, the graphics truly impress with a good rendition of the arcade's original pseudo-3D scaling sprites. The only exception is the canyon scene which is represented as a line of brown blocks, and doesn't look particularly real.

The game itself isn't particularly difficult, though fast-paced, and anyone can pick it up and play. If you want to let off some steam, I recommend this stress-relief from time to time.

7

Devil Crash

A polished, addictive and incredible pinball game. Many remember it as the sequel to Alien Crush, but they really cannot be compared. Devil Crash includes a massively high pinball table and many smaller sub-games to keep you amused throughout. The table has almost perfect physics with creative imagery like open jaws and pentagrams. Similarly, the enemies are creative and include ogres, skulls, druids and skeletons. The top-notch graphics are complemented by well-sampled sound effects such as the laughter of the enemies. Devil Crash provides a constant challenge whether you are saving your progress, or having a quick game

9

Galaga '88

Find out why Namco included this as an interlude when loading Ridge Racer - it's simple, quick to pick up and play, yet extremely fun. The graphics might be lacking, but the gameplay is as pure as Space Invaders. Dodge from left to right and blast incoming enemies. The shooting, which soon becomes confusing and hardcore, is a highly recommended experience for all GPengine users

7

Raiden

Clearly in the same vein as R-Type, Raiden combines a mix of stunning graphics, engaging sound and lightning-fast gameplay. While just as tough as its more famous 'brother', you'll probably find it too much fun to be frustrated. Unlike R-Type's side-view, Raiden is overhead and you have to attack targets both in air and on land. A classic.

8

Zero Wing

Thought I'd throw this one in after the 'AYB' craze of old. Zero Wing is in fact a shooter (like virtually any other PCE game worthy of mention), the gimmick being a Kirby-esque ability to suck in enemies and fire them back out. The graphics are fairly good, but the music even better. Both help make Zero Wing a fun game to play, but not quite a classic.

7

Jackie Chan

This reminds me of River City Ransom, with cutesy yet incredibly fun martial arts battling. The levels are long, but countered by the game's relatively high speed. There's also a good variety of scenes and sub-games to keep things interesting. Graphics are vivid and large with impressive scrolling techniques, and sound (especially the speech) is fun to hear.

Aside from jumping and basic fighting techniques, you can also grab power-ups to perform crazy moves like a spinning kick. Your mission is quite basic - you are rescuing your girlfriend from the clutches of some random villian - but don't let that stop you from enjoying what is arguably the best platformer on the PC Engine. It doesn't seem to work on GPengine currently, so try the NES version.

9

Focus on: Rlyeh

The man of a million emulators

Lucky as we are, GP32:zine has gotten the chance to preview all of rlyehs emulators currently under development! I've sat down and reviewed all of them, trying to give you an idea of what you can expect in the future from Rlyeh. Without further ado, I present to you, the man of a million emulators:



fGen32

fGen is definitely the emulator I'm most looking forward to out of rlyeh's selection. The big bottleneck at the moment is the 68k CPU core; rlyeh is currently using the slow musashi C core and is without many other C alternatives, let alone optimised asm cores. Graphics, on the other hand, are blazing fast, and the Z80 chip can be disabled for most games without problems. Due to these factors, an overclocked 156 MHz fGen runs full-speed at frameskip 3/4 most of the time (no sound). Although not automatic, the frameskip can be changed with R (from 1 to 8) at any time.

Although the same speed, fGen has advantages over Genemu with compatibilty and features. 3D effects such as the scaling used in Outrun: 2109 work like a charm, and figures show that almost 75% of games work without errors, compared to 40% on Genemu. That said I must add that the Genemu release is older than the current development version, which is most likely heavily improved. I guess the strongest reason for my liking of fGen is that it plays all-time classics I used to play as a kid. I never had the older 8-bit consoles, or a SNES, so this is my only chance for nostalgic revisits of old favourites. Sonic, Contra: Hard Corps, Alien Soldier, Streets of Rage and a lot more obscure titles run great, as well as the hilariously bad Moonwalker or Altered Beast. A top quality emulator all round, just a pity that there isn't much room for improvement at the moment.

fGB32

This is a new release; a ported GNU-BOY in two days. While the older builds I recieved only ran black and white roms without mapped controls, fGB has massively improved over a period of just a few days. Colour and mono roms both work with full controls and slightly stuttered, but working sound. Speed is exceptional in some cases (Mr. Driller, Zelda) but slows a little on some select games, and doesn't boot others. That said, Rlyeh reports that there are a few bugs left to track down, and once those are gone fGB will boast probably the best Gameboy compatibility there has ever been on the GP32. Rlyeh has already added his fileselector, but you currently have to reset to change rom. Nonetheless, seeing as GPVGB lacks a few features, like save states, RF multiplayer and emulation of a few games, a new GB emulator from the master himself can only be a good one.



fNES32

fNes has had a sporadic history. The original release was far from full speed, then rlyeh changed the graphics core, and now after a lot of rewriting the new fNes beta is close to release. Although the time gap between the two 'generations' of fNes has allowed NesterGP and LittleJohn to be developed, rlyeh's attempt is shaping up to superscede them with a blazing-fast, GoodNames/ZIP enabled file loader and emulation that runs comfortably at 1 frameskip (sometimes you can even get away with 0 fs). The sound is perfect and fNes even features multiplayer, if it was not for a nasty and even horrible bug that rlyeh is working his butt of to fix. The bug makes fNes32 go out of sync after a short while of play, rendering the game unplayable. Rlyeh is working hard to fix this (and more) bug in fNes32, and he deserves all the credit he can, for getting this far. Plus fNes32 features a really neat splash screen!

fSMS32

After working on fNes for a while, rlyeh understandably got a little bored, and on a whim ported SMS Plus in a few evenings. Two weeks and one public release later we have the 20/7 private release of fSMS, and it's as smooth as ever. Although Aj0 had ported SMS Plus a while back, this version features the ridiculously-fast file requester and GUI that rlyeh is rolling out over all of his projects. fSMS has plenty of extras, too, including variable-speed autofire, save states, movies, multiplayer via RF or USB, screen stretching and gamma correction! If it was not for the same bug that fNes32 has, we would all be playing SMS games multiplayer as we speak. There might be some compatibility problems with the likes of Sonic Blast, but really, what more could you want from a Master System emulator this good?





fMAME32

My knowledge of MAME isn't good; I'd never used it before I tried fMAME32. Under the recommendation of Axeman and rlyeh I tried out Ghouls & Ghosts and Commando. I was impressed with the speed of Commando in particular - basically full-speed. G&G ran at about 75%. Like fGen, fMAME uses the low musashi core, but performs a lot better with it. Simply select a game from the opening menu (using L/R) and, as long as you have the right drivers, you can play. Finding said drivers can be a difficulty. I put Commando files from three different dumps into a ZIP but the game still didn't load; rlyeh eventually told me what files to use. As I said, my MAME knowledge isn't good. I have a feeling this capable emulator will be a lot more enjoyable for someone who is an avid collector of arcade games.

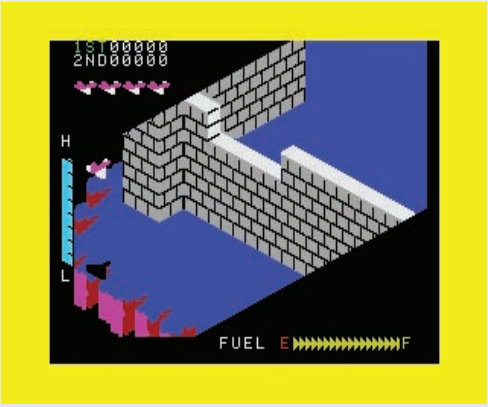


fMSX32

Another famous emulator and the port of fMSX for PC, as well as the source for rlyeh's future f-prefix for all his projects. I have played mostly Metal Gear 1/2 and Arkanoid on this emu, and it performs brilliantly. Months of rewriting, bugfixing and testing have resulted in this public release being rock-solid for both MSX1 and MSX2+. Add to this RF multiplayer, virtual keyboard and save states, and you have a rather complete package that runs games smoothly with clear sound. Not much more to say about this release.

fCol32

The Colecovision is a simple system that I'm not familiar with. Still, I loaded up the March beta to try it out, and found that it ran all the ROMs I had cobbled together. From Adventurium to Zaxxon, it was all there at full speed with sound (add another to the 'perfectly emulated' list). The 16-colour graphics aren't much for a modern gamer like myself, and I expect this is much better for a nostalgic player of Colecovision in his childhood. The older fileselector works fine, but the white on yellow dialogues are unfortunately impossible to read. Luckily, they are rarely used. One good feature is the binding of the '1' key to start 1-player games easily.





fPCE32

What is undisputeably the most 'controversial' release from Rlyeh, fPCE32 comes in from the shadows, into facing direct competition from its worst nightmare, GPengine. While GPengine is perfect to most, some are finding it lacking a lot of neat features. This is where fPCE32 is bound to come in. While rlyeh struggles to develop his countless emulators, I got a chance to try out the latest build of fPCE32. Right now, fPCE runs slow, no sound and has some graphical glitches. Although the beta is still in a really early alpha state, it really looks promising, and I'm sure we will see direct comepetition to GPengine very soon, with features such as GoodPCE already implemented. If rlyeh manage to incooperate savestates, fullspeed emulation, sound and workingmultiplayer, we might just have ourselfes a qualifier for the title!

Review

GP32 Official Carry Case Review

Why review something like this in such detail you may ask?. Well… judging from the amount of questions about it that we see on the various GP32 forums, it is something people want to know about. So here it is… the review to end all reviews…!

Receiving a parcel marked 'FRAGILE' that contains something that's primary function is to protect doesn't exactly inspire confidence! However – my intitial fears were unfounded, and upon opening the parcel, a nice little item soon emerged from the polystyrene chips…



The first thing that strikes you about the GP32 official carry case is that it's padded – very well padded. Due to this, it's a bit bigger than I expected, but not massively so. Another thing that strikes you is that it looks NICE! The pictures on any of the sites selling these really don't do it justice. It's black, with a nice black and grey woven closing flap. The GP32 logo is embroidered onto the front access flap and the whole thing looks well-built and not at all cheap. The whole thing is made from the tightly woven nylon-type fabric that is used to make good quality backpacks and the like, and is assembled with what seems like decently tough stitching.

Looking around the back reveals a Velcro belt loop with a big enough Velcro pad to hold it safely onto the belts of those inclined to put it there (not me I'm afraid!). The outside includes two chunky double zips, with enough bulk to take a lot of opening and closing with no ill-effects. The exterior is finished off with a carry-strap about 6" in length, held on by a chunky quick release clip.

On opening up the front flap, a very well padded, soft grey interior emerges, with plenty of protection for your trusty little handheld. When put in, the GP32 sits snugly, giving you that nice warm confident feeling that says 'that ain't going anywhere'. The interior protects the screen well too.

Unzipping the back area reveals another nicely padded pocket, this time with several compartments for SMCs, Batteries and the like. These seem to differ depending on



their use.
The top left one is netting, coated in a flexible plastic (possibly antistatic?) and seems to be for SMCs. The Lower left one expads out a bit more and appreas to be for batteries. The one on the right seems to be for either a boxed game, or (as I have shown it) an RF unit. Another nice little embroidered Entware logo finishes the interior off nicely.

Overall, this case is an extremely good quality piece of kit. I was very pleasantly surprised how good it is, and how it differs from many of the low-quality cases you get for the GBA. I get the feeling you could put your GP32 in it, along with some batteries and SMC, then happily throw it against a few walls and still be gaming through the night afterwards (disclaimer: I haven't been dumb enough to test this out though, and an educated guess leads me to suggest you shouldn't either…!). A great product which will extend the life of your GP32, especially if you're accident-prone. For the price? Well worth it!

10 out of 10.

-axeman

Review

GPChess 0.5 review

The GP32 has been long overdue for a chess program, and finally rcx21000 answers the call. Sure, there are chess games available for other systems that can be emulated, but it's great to have a truly free native version running. I took a look at the 0.4b beta of GPChess. 0.5 will be the first public release, identical to 0.4b but with faster AI.

The first thing that struck me was GPChess' beautiful graphics. There are actually three changeable themes - you tap L to switch through them - with the first the most stunning. Black borders around the pieces make things clearer, but unfortunately the same cannot be said for the pointer, which (as shown in the screenshot) is almost invisible at times. There is also some flickering, but this is bearable as it happens only when moving your cursor.

A lot of work has been put into the game; rcx has impressively written the AI from scratch using the common but effective Alpha-Beta min-max search. You can choose the depth through 'levels' at the menu screen, from 1 to 3. In a later release you will be able to specify a time limit as well. During the game, you simply select a piece, and select where it moves to. Then the opponent does the same, until an ending.

Unfortunately the speed is not as good as I'd hoped. At level 1 the opponent's move is almost instantaneous, but the reason behind that is the lack of depth. You can use a knight fork or other trap and win quite easily because it never looks ahead enough.







The AI is much better in level 2, but then even opening moves take several minutes to calculate. For level 3, several hours! This is due to the exponential increase in calculation time, and the nature of chess AI. Adding some level settings between levels 1 and 2 would allow a greater control on difficulty vs. 'thinking' time. rcx promises that 0.5 will be faster; he has been working on AI speed almost exclusively for the last few days.

rcx has been smart in many regards, however: Firstly, the processor goes to 40 MHz when making moves, jumping to 132 only when the opponent calculates a new one. This will save your battery a small amount of life, at least. Secondly, a progress bar tells you how far the AI is into its calculation. A bunch of chess features are supported, including queening and castling, although en passent is not yet implemented. The AI used to be quite paranoid and stupid, sacrificing high-ranking pieces for low ones, but these issues have been fixed and now it handles the new features well. Speaking of new features, the save option is neat, saving the places of all the pieces as well as game settings for those long matches.

I do have a few suggestions, however. When moving pieces illegally, the game simply doesn't do the move, but doesn't tell you why. It would be helpful, especially to novice players, if a message showed 'Your king is in check' or 'You're moving an opponent's piece' to explain the error. Also, a 2-player mode (RF isn't needed) would be a neat addition; rcx said that he would implement this eventually.

Overall GPChess is a slightly flawed, but very promising GP32 effort. There are some bugs to iron out but this is a playable game at least, with plenty of room for improvement in future versions. You can find the public version on gp32x.com.

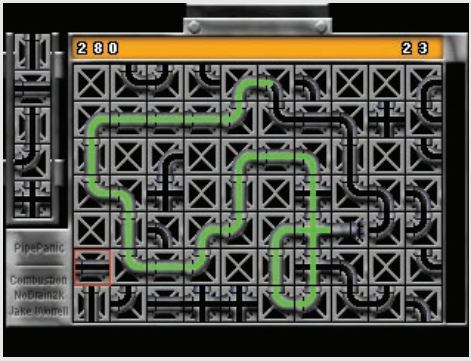
-rico

Review

Pipe Panic review

From the same team that brought us GBAX-compo winning Gloop, Combustion Studios' latest offering is a remake of 'Pipe Dreams' / 'Pipe Mania' for the GP32. Produced by NoBrain2k aka Jake Worrel, Pipe Panic involves Gloop, but in a slightly different way.





The premise of the game is simple but fun: there is a 'conveyor belt' of pipe pieces, and you have to place each one somewhere on the grid. After a precious few seconds of grace, Gloop starts coming out of the pump situated on the grid and through the pipes you have places. It is here that the game truly becomes a panic as you scramble to lock the pipes in place before the Gloop reaches the end. Success comes from forethought and planting tiles where they will have to go in future, instead of connecting them all to the pipe's opening.

NoBrain2k has enriched the already fun game with brilliant graphics and carefully-tweaked timing. The game flows (no pun intended) just fast enough to keep you on your toes. When the Gloop moves through the curves, it actually follows the shape of the curve, and little details like that, and the shading of the win/game over screens, make the game look so much more polished.

As for how to win the game, I was unclear about it. As shown by the third screenshot, I won very early on after not doing much at all. On the flipside, in the second screenshot I had done quite a lot yet still hadn't won. However, this was only a demo. I'm sure the full version will have documentation.

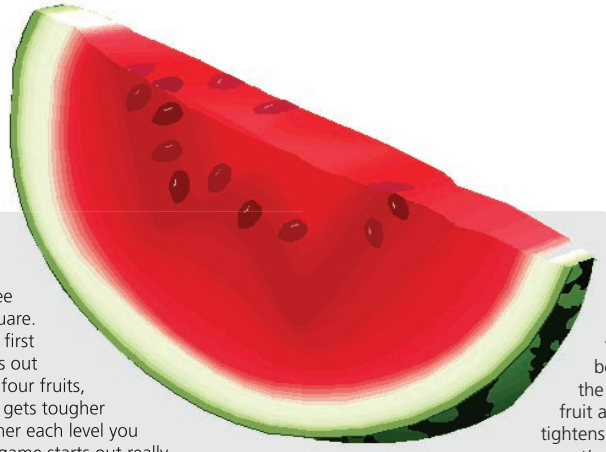
The demo only includes one level, but with a scoring system and full level loader it will be easy for NoBrain2k to add more. Similarly there is no sound but the author has said that will be on the cards. Overall, this game looks extremely fun and I'd love to see more, particularly if multiple graphics sets were used for the levels.

-rico

GP32:ZINE

Review

Tanglees Magic Square Review



"Another Tetris clone…or is it?"

Tetris has become really well known in the gaming business, and people are often quick to judge a game as a Tetris clone. The truth is, that actually very few games are Tetris copies. Albeit Tetris is a great game, and can provide hours and hours of gameplay, it can eventually – after playing it a couple of months – get a bit boring. If you're looking for something fresh, to lighten up your GP32 life – or you are just looking for a game to waste time with, then Tanglee's Magic Square might just be something for you!



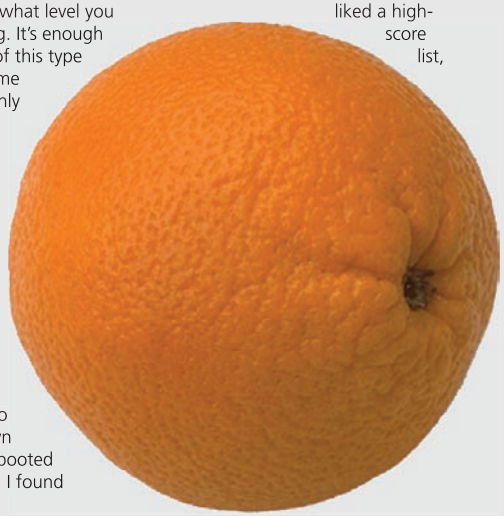
"Prees the Botton to continu!"

At first glance, Tanglee is the typical asian game. Packed with the cuteness of asian-art, accompanied by the sweet sound of a happy tune, Tanglee clearly have a great appeal. The splash screen features a cute little house in a cute garden. Covering most of the screen, is the cuteness of Korean text, in cute colors and cute animation. There's also a cute little spelling error – but we don't take much notice of that, do we? Clearly – if you do not like the appeal of 'cute' games, don't get this game. After the famous splashscreen, we are presented with a nifty level selector. You can choose between five scenarios, each with ten levels. The gameplay is best explained blending a Dr. Mario game with a lot of fruits. The mix is – yep, you've guessed it – Tanglee Magic Square. While the first level starts out with only four fruits, the game gets tougher and tougher each level you play. The game starts out really easy, and the first five-seven levels should be over in a snap. When you reach the second scenario, things are starting to get personal. The game ends in a near-impossible for the mortal series of levels, which you have to be either mentally ill or very quick on your fingers to win. Well I figure I should describe the gameplay before enganging the critical talk. Basically – your goal is to line up as much fruits as possible. Once in a while, more fruits walk in (yes, I said walk in) from either top or right of the screen. By changing the position of a few fruits, line-ups will be pretty easy in the beginning – but when the time between the new fruit arrivals tightens, the game get's more difficult. By lining up fruits they disappear, and you are rewarded a buch of points for your work.



Wait...walking fruits?

Yes – back to the walking fruits and the inevitable cuteness. The game almost screams that it is Korean. It features cute walking fruits dancing to an extremely happy tune. Although that way cause serious stress and agitated muscular spasms, it can be overseen, and focussing on the gameplay is properly the best thing to do. At first – the gameplay and controls seem a bit wierd with only the A button and the D-pad used. It does take some time to learn the game, but due to the easiness of the first levels, you can win the levels even if you are completely retarded. When you have figured out the game, and the difficulty is getting tougher – the game easily becomes really addicting. Especially if you like puzzle-styled games. On the later levels, different types of fruits, music and backgrounds appear. Each Scenario gives you a new background and game board. This adds the the variety of the game, and makes it a lot more beautiful to look at. In all, the game is actually pretty beautiful. It has a lot of colorful scenarioes, fairly good art and a simple yet practicable interface. The interface does the job, without being showy – and that is what matters. I find the interface quite easy to navigate as well, it shows how many fruits you have cleared, how many points you have gathered and what level you are currently playing. It's enough for a puzzle game of this type – so you don't see me complaining. The only thing I could point my fat and rather slimey finger on, would be the lack of an instructions screen. Even though the controls are easy as hell (only one button used), the rules of the game itself could have used a description. I had no idea what I sat down and played when I booted up the game – until I found myself failing to complete level five in scenario three, almost 1 hour after I started to play. I could have easily played for more time – if only I could have completed the later levels. Luckly – you can jump in at any level you want, thanks to the nifty level selector I talked about in the beginning. This is great – as the game does not feature a save option. Another thign the game lacks is a proper high-score feature. When we loose a level, we are granted a small screen saying how many points we gathered – but now more. I would have liked a high-score list,



so people could compete against each other, trying to reach the top of the list. Speaking about competing – I would have loved a multiplayer feature. It seems to me, that too few GP32 games actually takes advantage of the RF-link, which opens huge possibilities for multiplayer gaming. Playing this game head-to-head, would be a great opportunity to get some great gaming. Well, it seems like we are going to cope with what we can get.

All in all, Mr. Watermelon?

The game equals a small, pick-up-and-play type game with a great and addicting gameplay, but certainly not something I would pay $35 on Liksang, or $6 at JoyGP. It would have been the most wonderful homebrew freeware game, but instead they are charging money for a game this size. But if you like puzzle games, are fond of the cute graphics from the east and like pick-up-and-play typed games, then you will love Tanglees Magic Square. Otherwise, it is not worth the money.

-zimba

You can buy Tanglees Magic Square at Lik-Sang.com. You can find the link at our webiste.

Tanglees Magic Square	
Manufacturer	EZ-Soft
Language	Korean
Price	$34.90
Players	1
Interface Great, simple and not showy	7
Gameplay Seen before, nothing really new	6
Graphics Colorful and beautiful. Really asian.	8
Sound The music gets repetetive. Small glitches.	5
Replayability Can be play again and again, good value!	7
OVERALL	
Although not a game I would buy for $34.90, it's definately a good puzzle game, with a good replayability, and good graphics.	7





Review

Tomak - Save the Earth, Again Review

Tomak – Save the Earth, Again! What an unoriginal yet funny name, showing off the simplicity of asian games. Tomak was first released on SMC back in the early days of the GP32. It quickly got a reputation of being extremely difficult, boring and therefore was abandoned pretty quickly. Seed-9, the developers of Tomak, faced a challenge, and released a patch for the game faster than you can say Tomak – Save the Earth, Again! This patch contained a fair amount of fixed, including the possibility of customizing the games difficulty. This was cherished by fans, but the game never really reached the GP32 mainstream before JoyGP brought the rights to seel the game. The game was sold for almost no money on their site, allowing people to buy, download and play the game in a snap. JoyGP sold the game with a few more fixes to it. It had some new menus, better graphics, better level balancing and a lot more. Tomak quickly became well known, and is to date one of the most downloaded games at JoyGP. Tomak – Save the Earth, Again is also the game many people tend to buy on SMC, when they order their GP32. All in all – you can't say GP32, without saying Tomak.

Boom, blast, slam!

Tomak – Save the Earth, Again is a standard arcade shooter. It features the same arcade shooting gameplay, that classics such as R-type and 1942 invented. Tomak – Save the Earth, Again is a typical fast paced adcade shooter. Filled to the edge with enemies, bombs, weapons and beautiful backdrops. It's more than enough to satisfy the most hungering adrenaline junkie. A story is not really needed in this type of game – and to fulfil this, Tomak – Save the Earth, Again features no plot at all. Basically, you are a flowerpot, destined to save the earth. Somehow, you've done it before, though I don't know what this is referring to. To help you in your quest, you are granted a numerous amount of weapons you can gather while playing the game. Weapons, health-packs and the like, are granted to you by destroying enemies, completing bosses and such. On your way, you can choose different 'modes' to play in. There's a flowerpot mode, where you shoot regular shots, while increasing your firepower. When you have gathered enough firepower, you can then switch to a mode where you fire off missiles, being more powerful than the regular shots, these basically provide more damage to your enemies. There is also a shield mode, used to protect you against enemy fire. This mode is great if you have enough firepower, because it drains your firepower quickly. When you're out of firepower, you return to the regular mode. The best mode is clearly the bomb mode, where firing off multiple bombs at the time is a blast.





Tomak – Save the Earth...	
Manufacturer	Seed-9
Language	English
Price	$34.90
Players	1
Interface A bit boring menus, combined with a wierd bunch of voice effects.	7
Gameplay WAY too short. Gameplay seen before, nothing new.	6
Graphics Crisp and gorgeous graphics, with animation failing once in a while.	8
Sound Good sound effects and music, although glitches spoil the fun.	5
Replayability What did you say? Does NOT compute at all!	7
OVERALL	
Good for a couple of minutes, but gets boring quickly. Too...short! Could have been much better with a little more work.	7

Graphics, a city in Korea.

Let's move on to the 'outer' of the game, the graphics. This is where the game clearly wins. It is packed with beautiful scrolling backgrounds, a great set of character and enemy sprites and overall has some of the best graphics a GP32 game has had to date. It features a nice-looking cartoonish graphics, in the famous anime style we are all so familiar with on the GP32, love it or hate it. The graphics clearly beats the GBA, which is good to see, and it is most certainly pushing the GP32 to it's limits. The animations are nice – but limited – and there is a good variety of bullet sprites as well. The sprites are generally really good. There is a lot of enemies to blast, each more mindblowing and different from the other. Boss sprites are beautiful to look at as well – but do not begin to stare at the gorgeous graphics, because a matter of nano-seconds could change your destiny. In this fast-paced game, stopping up to look at the view is not recommended, as you will be toast in a few seconds. Although the game is set in this high speed, with enemies flying across the screen, bullets ripping through the air, I experienced slowdowns in the framerate sometimes, when there were too many bullets on screen at the same time. It is a sad thing to see, as Seed-9 could have easily avoided this problem with a few nifty lines of code. Sound like minor glitch – but counts a lot when you play the game.

Pump up the volume?

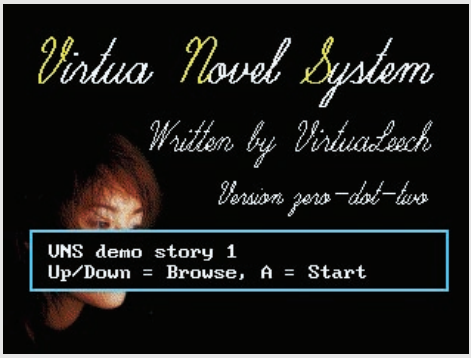
Another great force of the game, the sound is clearly some of the best I've heard on the GP32. The music is good, featuring a nice set of fast techno tunes. The music is clear and so is the sound effects, and I have not experienced the 'clicking and popping' that other gamers have experienced. There a fair amount of sound effects, though there is a few I miss. The menu has some funny and unneeded voice effects – completely unneeded, but fun none the less. The only thing I could put my slippery finger on would be the looping of the background music. When the music loop is over, it loops back with an sound – sounds like a 'click' or something – which gets irritating after a while of play.

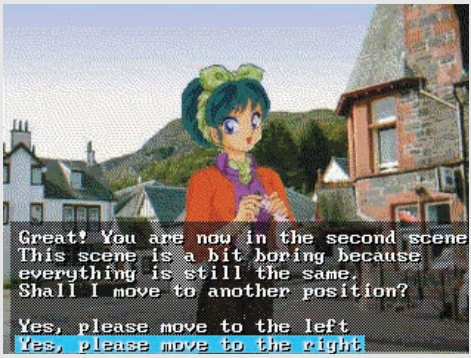
Well, what is it like?

At the bottom line, Tomak features great graphics, a ncie amount of good quality sounds and music, but it lacks a lot in the gameplay. Each level – there are four of them – takes about three to four minutes to complete, which is far too short for a commercial game. When the gmae is completed, the game restarts on a higher diffuclty. Too short to be true, although it is. You feel cheated after buying this game, realizing it takes half an hour to complete, and I beg that most of you have brought the JoyGP version, and didn't get the SMC version. This would have been direct theft of money. The game also lacks some great features, such as multiplayer gaming and a high score system. A high score system would be really cool – as it would allow for more competiting – instead of being just flat out boring after a while. Replayability is a city in Russia in Tomak, and Seed-9 could easily have given us a lot more levels to complete. When you have completed Tomak once, I can safely tell you that you do not feel the need to do so again.

-zimba

Review





Virtua Novel System

It all started from one GP32Xtreme forum topic: someone wanted to make Hentai-style games for the GP32. But out of this perhaps niche idea came a better one; a generic game engine that allowed the user to pick options and read dialogue, wrapped with graphics, sprites and transitions. Frank Faber, aka VirtuaLeech has made this idea a reality with VNS, the Virtua Novel System.

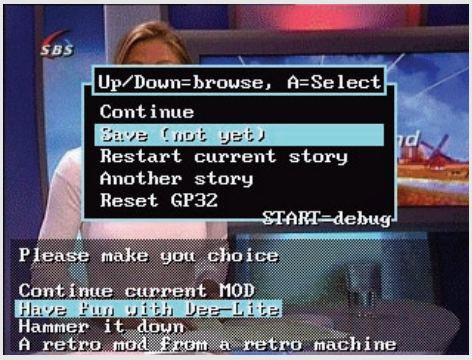
This impressive application is a standalone FXE which runs .VNS text files. You place it in /GPMM/VNS, with all your MOD music, SEF sound effects and 16-bit BMP images into a directory under that. The .VNS file contains instructions, dialogue and 'novel' settings. However, VNS can run a lot more than just novels.

The well-documented and INI-like .VNS syntax has support for 'scenes', each scene a different string of dialogue, optionally with choices. The scenes link to each other and can have their own background, transition and custom-positioned sprites. The transitions are particularly impressive; you can choose from over 20 of them from wipes to fades. On the audio side, each scene can have an opening sound effect, plus manipulate the MOD background music.

The new beta, which we don't have, adds support for variables so that you can create Myst-style adventure games. You can set variables during the scene code, then compare them later and execute different code depending on their values, so for example, if you have gotten a key, a door somewhere else can be unlocked and passed through. System variables allow run-time modification of engine constants like the defualt sprite positions. Even more impressive additions include scrolling panoramic images, which are planned for the new beta and more-or-less implemented.

Creating 'novels' for the engine is surprisingly easy. The enclosed documentation, VNSGuide.htm, contains help on all the commands you need to know, plus examples. Novice users will find it easy: they can just set a sprite 'left', 'middle' or 'right', whereas more advanced users can specify and exact pixel location. Tweaks like this allow VNS to appeal to all levels of creators. In addition, a full set of debug tools is included - at runtime, you can see exactly what VNS is interpreting from your definition file using the debug mode.





Running the novels is also easy; at the start-up, you can scroll through the available novels by title. There is no flickering when selecting choices and the transitions flow well. The user menu offers a plethora of useful options, such as saving/loading your adventure mid-way, restarting the story or choosing another.

There are a few limitations with VNS, however. There's currently no compression, which will cause a problem for those who have SMC space at a premium. Although VirtuaLeech wants to avoid zipping the novels so that multiple VNS files can share the same resources, I would suggest GIF or PNG instead of BMP for the image format; there are a few PNG loaders available. Sprite dimensions must be a multiple of 10 pixels, although this isn't much of a problem. There were other complaints, such as one palette for all pictures and a fixed transparent colour, but the recent addition of 16-bit graphics have eliminated them.

VirtuaLeech has plenty of features on his wishlist, and he works fast - beta two added MOD support, beta three added 16-bit graphics. He also wants to add WAV loading and a Windows-based story loader in the future, but these are strictly wishes.

VNS impressed me both with the speed of its development and the features it possesses. It will be, when released, the most powerful game-creation tool on the GP32 and hopefully spawn a new community of games. To kick this off, NiN^_^NiN is developing a demo novel for the first public release, but hopefully many more will follow suit.

-rico

Feature

Top ten things to have on your SMC

As the GP32 development scene grows, more and more games, emulators and apps are coming out. This is a guide to what's best on the scene - the cream of the crop. If you're new to the GP32, then these are the things you should try first - and if you already have a GP32 and haven't tried some of these - what are you waiting for?



10. Free Launcher/Wind-Ups/MultiFW

If you're going to do anything exciting on a GP32, you'll need a launcher app. GamePark's ubiquitous Free Launcher, as most people discover after five minutes of use, is slow to load, has an unpleasant interface, and quickly gives you RSI from scrolling through its list. At the moment, there are two alternative routes - Wind-Ups, or replacement firmware. Wind-Ups has the advantage of looking like a real OS, and its built-in image and text viewers, GXB and FXE loaders, make it a very useful app indeed. For the more adventurous, the semi-dangerous process of flashing the GP32 with a new firmware, such as MultiFW, adds a range of options for loading. This can also get rid of the excruciating GP32 intro screen. Guides to flashing the firmware can be found online.



9. Frodo

For some people, there is nothing as exciting as seeing a true classic emulated. And if your formative computing years took place any time between 1980 and 1994, you'll probably have come into contact with a C64. This wonderful machine is emulated to near-perfection by Frodo, from the annoyingly long and fit-inducing flashing loading screens to classic games such as Revenge of the Mutant Camels.



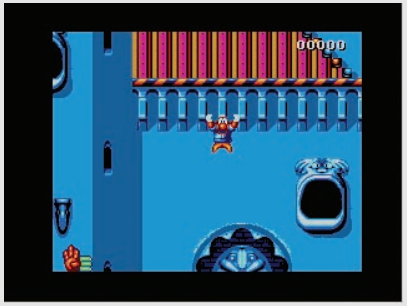
8. ScummVM

Something that surprises newcomers about the GP32 is its ability to play all the decent LucasArts games - the Monkey Island series, Indiana Jones, Sam and Max - even real speech. ScummVM is an open-source project that has been ported to the GP32, and does its job very well. If you can put up with slightly crackly sound, then there's nothing better for a rainy day or a long train journey than getting immersed in the world of pirates or animal detective agencies. What's more, the next version may be able to run Beneath a Steel Sky, one of the best ever games made.



7. Gravity Force

This re-write of the Amiga classic is still in development, but, judging by the demo, it's likely to be a fixture on everyone's GP32. The premise is simple: control the rocket ship, shoot the bad guys, and deliver packages. At first, controlling the craft is almost impossible, but once you get used to it, you can come up with all sorts of creative, destructive and vindictive ways of destroying the enemy, as well as doing gravity-defying stunts while landing. Addictive.



6. SMS32/fSMS

Ah, the Master System: for some, it conjures up memories of coming home from school and playing Prince of Persia and Golden Axe. For others (me, who didn't have one), it's a fantastic way of getting into this great system. The range of games is huge, and the graphics range from the perfectly acceptable to the brilliant. The two emulators, SMS32 and fSMS, have the advantage of emulating at full speed.



5. Snes9xGP/SnesEmu

If having the C64 emulator impresses your friends with old-skool tastes, then a SNES emulator will impress everyone else. Getting the SNES to run on the GP32 is an achievement in itself, and both the port of Snes9x and SnesEmu manage this feat. The holy grail is getting it running full speed, and the next release of Snes9xGP claims to have neared that target. At the moment, the speed of gameplay on these emulators varies according to what game you are playing. Simple games like Bust-a-Move run full speed with sound, while later and more complex games such as ISS DX are unplayable. Fortunately, Mario lies somewhere in the middle.



4. MP3 software

The built-in MP3 player is, let's face it, pretty awful. The sound quality is acceptable, and it does play the files, but it is ugly, slow to respond and never seems to load ID3 tags properly. The European release of the GP32, which will feature new firmware, is going to do away with the old MP3 player altogether. The MP3 upgrade software from Team K2yaa will replace it; fortunately, the player has been released as an FXE file, meaning anyone can use it. Plus, it features a cool spinning GamePark logo.



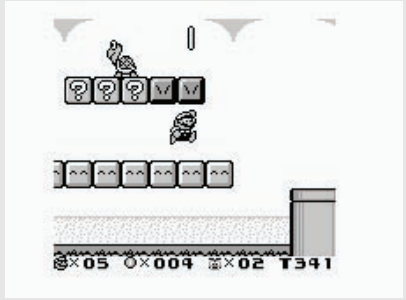
3. GP Cinema

The only "pay-for" software on this list, the app that replaced MoviePark could have been a poorly designed, hacked-together movie player; luckily, we were treated instead to a very well-built, easy to use app. The additional overclocking option means that movies can be enjoyed at a higher quality than MoviePark could ever manage, while the controls are so simple you don't need to read the help - and all for the price of a Happy Meal.



2. Doom

Craig's work on the Doom port has seen it rise and rise; now, with the original WAD files, it's possible to experience the game as Id intended - unlike on the GBA, where the expensively-priced port was significantly cut-down. The latest version plays at full speed, allows custom WAD files to be loaded, and finally has both the original midi music and sound effects in place. Truly the finest port we have been given so far.



1. GPVGB

Easily the most essential thing anyone can have on their GP32, GPVGB works for so many reasons; it's well-coded, so many GameBoy and GBC roms will work perfectly, some even running full speed in full-screen mode. The games were originally designed to be played on a handheld console, and this works to GPVGB's advantage. The range of games available is also a major selling point; and the fact that there are so many classics for this platform - SuperMario 2, Tetris, R-Type and Tiny Toons to name a few - mean it's a great way to pass the time, as well as proving that whatever the GBA can do, the GP32 can do a hundred times better.

GPCinema a must-have? Sure, why not!



Five things not to have

1. GBA Emulator - "if you want to play Advance games, get a GBA"; plus, it's too slow for any serious gameplay.

2. More than eight MP3s - this is supposed to be a games console. Sure, have MP3s, but wouldn't that space be better used with Doom levels?

3. e-books - likewise. You don't buy an expensive sound system and then play audio books on it, do you? You do? Oh...

4. SNES games with too many buttons - a shame, but it's a bit pointless if the game needs two more buttons than the GP32 physically has.

5. GP32 disk-based magazines. ;)

-taras young

This article was written as a contribution to GP32:zine by Taras, if you would like to contribute, please contact Zimba at zimba@gp32zine.com

Final Words

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VISA

thawte it's a trust thing

UPS

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