

Walking up a giant uterus, smashing demon sperm with a 2 by 4

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So I'm sitting here consuming vast quantities of caffeine in an attempt to reach the state of mental breakdown required to actually complete a coin-op, when it suddenly hits me. I'm sitting here playing retro games, and I'm wasting so much potential. I have hundreds of games, good and bad, fun and boring, worth writing about and worthy of throwing in the bin. And some of them, not all, but some, are beginners of series. So read on, dear reader, as I tell you of some of the wonders you may have missed. The great games that will forever have a place in the hearts of those of us who enjoyed them at the time. Whether you're too young to have played them or just didn't come across them for whatever reason, these games are ones you should hunt down. Now! And if you played them at the time, maybe you'll enjoy revisiting them from an interesting perspective.

Now, I don't want to try preaching here. I'm not gonna explain to you that Street Fighter II was one of the most influential games of its era and all that junk, oh no. Street Fighter II was and still is a bloody amazing game, plain and simple. But then, I'm not going to talk about Street Fighter II today, oh no. To start with, we're going to the amusement arcade. The box we're looking for? A little thing called splatterhouse.

I'm sure most of you have played at least one survival horror game. Resident evil most likely, all though of course there are many others. Alone in the dark, say. Whatever. The fact is that they all owe their roots to one game. Splatterhouse. Picture the scene. A mansion, owned by one Dr West, a parapsychologist who mysteriously vanished. Two students, Rick and Jennifer, take shelter in the mansion during a storm. Unfortunately, Jennifer is captured and Rick murdered. He is brought to life through the power of the "terror mask" and thus our game begins. Simple side-scrolling action as Rick fights his way through the mansion, killing demons with his fists or with weapons. Violent weapons. In fact, it was the first arcade game to be given a mature rating. Possibly something to do with, I kid you not, the level in which Rick walks down a giant uterus, smashing demonic sperm with a 2 by 4. Splatterhouse spawned three sequels, Wanpaku graffiti for the famicom was a Japan-only release and featured super-distorted characters. Splatterhouse 2 and 3 were improvements on the first game, keeping the difficulty level maxed whilst continuing the story. Splatterhouse3 was also notable for its multiple endings. For each level! Basically, you had to complete each level within a time limit to avoid the death of Jennifer, or Rick and Jennifer's son, or what have you. And obviously depending how the game went, there were multiple endings. Smoothly done.

Splatterhouse: violent, impossibly difficult horror fun with a character who looks like Jason Voorhees.

Of course, if I'm going to discuss Splatterhouse then I should start following a theme. Splatterhouse: side-scrolling beat 'em up. Streets of Rage: also a side-scrolling beat 'em up. Also known as Bare Knuckle, the SOR trilogy for the sega genesis featured one or two players fighting through a number of levels against hordes of punks in order to reach "mr X" and kill him. Sounds simple, but of course it's rather difficult. Many was the time I reached the end, only to be cut off at the last hurdle by an inability to win against the man with the machine gun. We're talking grade A fun here, people. Like Goldenaxe. A fantasy battle in a similar vein, goldenaxe featured three skimpily-clad warriors with swords, axes and magic fighting against the un-dead and other skimpily-clad folk to defeat Death Ader and reclaim the goldenaxe. Although of course it wasn't that simple. Riding on dragons was commonplace. Fighting was simple, yet the sheer number of enemies on screen at a time made the whole thing difficult, particularly for those of us who conserved out magic for just the right moment. A whole world of pain was visited upon your little man during those games. And you enjoyed it.

Back to more familiar territory now, as we move onto a more conventional game, one which has survived over the years. Or rather, game type.

Tachibana Ukyo is, to many people, the epitome of "cool". Those of us who understand how to get the best out of him will tell that with Ukyo, it's not about winning but about looking good. It's known as the Ukyo philosophy. There's also a good chance you haven't heard of him. Personally, I was first introduced to him on the ferry between Brodick and Ardrossan. For those of you who don't know where that is, it's off on the North coast of Scotland, Brodick being the only main port on a small island called Arran. That arcade box was removed years ago. Doesn't mean I don't remember it though. The game in question? Samurai Shodown. I used to be very very good at that game. Still am. It's a beat-em-up very much in the style of Street Fighter, the main difference being that the characters have weapons. Swords for the most part. It also had death animations including chopping in half and extreme blood loss. Something removed from the American release. The impact of Samurai Showdown? The story goes that it was an inspiration for Soul Caliber. It also spawned a number of sequels, and the fifth game even got a re-release on Xbox recently. You may know it as Samurai Spirit, or you may not.

Killer Instinct was also a beat-em-up with weapons. Or at least one or two characters waved the things around. 3d characters with moving 3d backgrounds. Of course the big selling point was the combo system. It had its flaws, sure, but it was also very very impressive. By hitting the correct buttons you could string together huge and complicated combos, which weren't exactly easy to block. Not like the combos in street fighter II. Those combos weren't even real combos.

Ah, yes, Street Fighter II. How many games are there? Hundreds. All of them Street Fighter II. Street Fighter 3 was a bit pish and not many folks really remember it. SF2 on the other hand was the biggy. Special moves that were easy to pull off, speed, great characters, and of course the tournament system. It was a particular arcade box, the championship edition if memory serves me correctly. You used to have a few of these things strung together. You had two players fight each other on each box, and then the winner on one box was paired off with the winner on another. Classy it was. A really good player could stay on a box for ages, getting any would-be challengers to stick in their 20p to try and beat him. And if they did, they got to play until someone could beat them. Hundreds of games, all for 20p. And that's what it's all about, hmm.

Sadly, I'm not going to continue. There's so much more i want to say, but I just don't have the time. If I write much more, I'll have to start cutting more bits out than I already have, and that just won't do. Maybe if this little rant turns out to have gone down well I'll look at some more games. Or the same ones in more detail. But for now, that's your lot. GO out and try some of those games if you haven't already. Y'might be surprised.

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