



# GAMES, GAMERS, & GAMING

## Revisiting Retro Games

By M. Brandon Robbins

Gamers are a nostalgic lot, and they often wish to revisit their childhood favorites. So, for almost as long as we've had video games, we've had rereleases, remakes, and throwbacks. Developing a chunk of your collection around these games is a great way to please players who fondly remember the original versions and to educate younger and newer gamers about the history of this unique artistic medium.

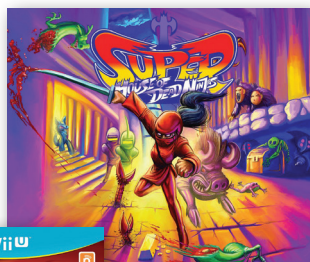
### Into the vault

Some publishers and developers revisit classics by releasing the original game in a format compatible with the newest hardware, often as part of a compilation. Nintendo did this to great success with its Super Nintendo release of *Super Mario All-Stars*, a collection of the original Super Mario Bros. games for the Nintendo, dressed up with shinier graphics and bundled with a game that was previously available only in Japan, all on one cartridge for its (then) current system.

This trend continues; both the PlayStation Network and Xbox Live are stocked with digital-only rereleases of games from previous consoles. A massive chunk of the catalog for the NES, Super Nintendo, and Nintendo 64 are available for purchase on the Wii U's digital marketplace, which is a major selling point for the system, as gamers can relive their memories without having to dig up or re-buy classic machines.

While digital distribution has made releasing classic titles for new platforms easier, compilations still get published on discs. Sonic's Ultimate Genesis Collection is one of the more recent releases; it compiles 48 games previously put out for the Sega Genesis. Another popular vehicle for rereleasing classic games is the plug-and-play console, which is packaged as a replica of the original console. With controllers included, these boxes have a hefty collection of games stored in their

*M. Brandon Robbins is Media Coordinator, Goldsboro High School, NC, and a member of the 2011 class of the American Library Association's Emerging Leaders*



onboard memory. All the user has to do is plug them directly into a television. They are not customizable, and the onboard library is all you'll ever get, but they are handy and inexpensive.

A recent version of the Atari 2600 called the Flashback 5 even features an arcade-perfect port of *Space Invaders*; that's something that not even the original Atari 2600 had!

PC gamers have never had too much trouble reliving their old faves, with computer games not being as dependent on hardware as console games. However, the rise of the digital marketplace has made things even easier, with retailers such as Good Old Games (gog.com) specializing in selling legal, DRM-free copies of classics.

### Play it again, Sam

Sometimes, developers will look at a game from the past and ask what they would do differently if they were making it today. This often goes beyond a thought experiment and turns into a full-blown remake. A remake might be as straightforward as a graphics update, sometimes even simply improving the original resolution. However, just as often, the developer will actually rebuild the product from the ground up with new mechanics, rules, and physics.

One of the best remakes of recent times is *Duck Tales Remastered*, a modern take on the classic NES game. It's as brutal and unforgiving as the original but now has high-definition 3-D models and fully voiced and animated cinematics. At its core, however, it's the same, featuring the original control scheme and level designs.

Several classic PC titles have been remade as of late. *Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Father* and *Shadowgate* are two great point-and-click games that have been

made even better with a metaphorical fresh coat of paint. One of the most frequently remade games has to be Capcom's seminal horror thriller *Resident Evil*. First appearing on the original PlayStation in 1997, the game has been given face-lift after face-lift, with the most recent edition, *Resident Evil HD*, now available on the PS4, XB1, and PC.

### Old-school inspiration

Some developers show their love for older games by making an original creation in the spirit of the classics. Last year's awesome *Shovel Knight* is a shining example of this approach; its classic sensibilities and twitchy game play make it feel like the best Nintendo game you never played. *Super House of Dead Ninjas* is another great, fast-paced game that, without apology, values challenge over story and characters. *Hard Reset* is a first-person shooter that harkens back to the days of nonstop reflex-based shooting action, and *Divinity: Original Sin* is the kind of sprawling, dense RPG that PC gamers used to sink their teeth into all the time. The "Legend of Grimrock" series even comes with graph paper so players can make their own maps of the in-game dungeons.

With video games, it's easy to fall into the trap of wanting only the latest and greatest. However, it's important to respect and promote the games that laid the foundation recent games were built upon and to applaud the developers who revisit their sensibilities even in modern games. Diversify your collection with some classic selections and new games with classic roots, and your games collection will be respected by the gaming community and enjoyed by your patrons.

Until next time, keep telling yourself: just one more level!

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