

Top-notch 'Metroid Prime' faithful to its predecessors

Game review

Aaron Shakra
Pulse Reporter

"Integrity" is not a word usually associated with video games. The multi-billion dollar industry has seen generations of consoles come and go, and currently there are more franchises and sequels than ever.

There are more incarnations of "Street Fighter" than one could shake a stick at. Mario and Luigi have popped up everywhere (including the 1993 film "Super Mario Bros."). But some-

how the "Metroid" series of games has managed to avoid this bastardization.

The first "Metroid" video game was released in 1986 for the Nintendo Entertainment System, known today as the NES, or the "original Nintendo." At the end of the side-scrolling, exploration-based game — which takes place on a planet called Zebes — the character of Samus Aran (a bounty hunter whom the player controls) is revealed to be female. While this is not uncommon for today's games, back in the 1980s it was a rarity.

The first game was followed by a 1991 Game Boy sequel, "Metroid II: Return of Samus," and by the 1994 Super NES installment "Super Metroid," which was considered the most recent in the series until now. Samus, of course, has made two other video game appearances in the "Super Smash Brothers" fighting games released for the Nintendo 64 and Nintendo GameCube.

The most prominent of the new games in the series is "Metroid Prime,"

released last November. The game has netted "game of the year" honors from both the prolific GameSpy.com and GameSpot. The latest installment is the most radical departure from the series yet — at first glance, it's a first-person shooter. Yet describing the game in this way is deceiving. This is not merely a clone of a "Perfect Dark"-like game set in the Metroid universe. While "Metroid Prime" could have easily resulted in an unnecessary harnessing of console power, creating one more redundant 3-D game, Retro Studios developers have successfully created a game still that feels like Metroid.

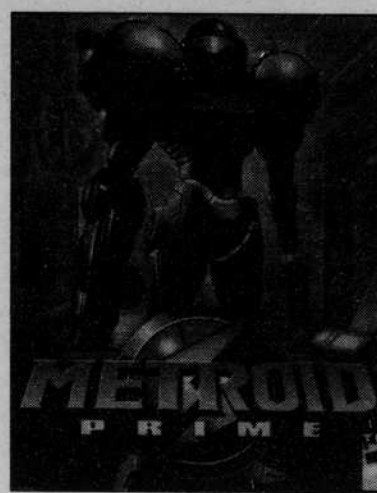
Most conventions from the series remain intact — Samus uses weapon fire to open circular doors, she can still shrink into a morph ball, the creators kept the time-tested grappling hook, and there are familiar enemies (to those who are familiar with past games). And while there are some redundant aspects to this game — excessive use of Samus' scanner is required — they are only disappointing if there's

an expectation of trigger-happiness.

The most immediately striking feature of the game is the intuitive movement. Compared to other first-person shooters I've experienced on the system (notably, the James Bond game series), the controls are incredibly well-designed, to the point that a new player doesn't have to learn to move around the world of Tallon IV, he or she just moves.

Metroid's graphics are top notch. For its genre, there is probably no better-looking console game today. Perhaps reflecting the spirit of the previous installments too much, the music can be quite grating. However, fans more keen on the games will probably get a kick out of this.

Those who prefer the more "classic" style of Metroid games have the option of playing the Game Boy Advance game "Metroid Fusion," which was released concurrently with "Prime." The two games can be used together, revealing secrets that will delight players — especially fans of series — further.



For all this history of "Metroid," none of it is necessary to become immersed in the pretty, pretty colors and shining lights of "Metroid Prime." If this is your first experience in the Metroid universe, it's a good place to start.

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'Emogame' is a comic trip through pop-punk

Story tags

Helen Schumacher
Pulse Reporter

Sure, they say video games have always been for nerds. But never before has there been a video game whose heroes so closely resemble the geeks playing the games.

Instead of the usual machismo of action stars with big guns, this online computer game — "Emogame" — stars seven musicians who must battle the evil forces of Aerosmith's Stephen Tyler, who has kidnapped the emo band The Get Up Kids.

Emo, short for emotional, is the catch phrase used to describe the music genre often characterized by pop-punk guitars and superfluously sentimental lyrics, as well as skinny teenagers in threadbare T-shirts, Converse tennis shoes, black horn-rimmed glasses and messenger bags adorned with pins from all their favorite bands.

Created by art school graduate Jason Oda, "Emogame" both idol-

izes and makes fun of the recent music explosion.

To save The Get Up Kids from the clutches of the Aerosmith frontman, players must first choose their character from the group of rag-tag bleeding hearts, which includes, among others, Chuck Ragan from Hot Water Music, Chris Carrabba from Dashboard Confessional, Conor Oberst from Bright Eyes and Cedrick Bixler from the now defunct At the Drive-In.

To conquer Level 1, players must guide their musician through a yuppie town to The Salvation Army. Inside the store, a dressing room serves as a portal to the magic dimension of Jeremy Enigk, who fronted one of the original emo bands, Sunny Day Real Estate.

Armed only with 7-inch records, the player must fend off Dave Matthews Band listeners, football players, a group of girls in Weezer T-shirts hanging out at the Hot Topic store and even Creed.

Once gamers pass Level 1, they must infiltrate the MTV headquar-

ters to destroy the band Jimmy Eat World, who is upsetting the balance of emo's semi-underground, semi-mainstream popularity by becoming too commercially successful. But before Oberst, Carrabba or any of the others can reach Jimmy Eat World, they must make it past hordes of Blink-182 fans, boy-band 98 Degrees, Courtney Love, Fred Durst and corporate music executives.

Level 3 continues in much the same way, this time players find themselves in a dungeon battling zombies and Mama Fratelli and her sons (remember "Goonies"?). Eventually all that stands between the heroes and victory is Stephen Tyler — in all his skin-tight animal-print spandex pants glory.

Unfortunately, the game has some sexist and homophobic content — apparently female musicians aren't able to fight off bad music. However, Oda's name-dropping and attention to detail makes playing humorous. For example, there is a bonus round in the high school cafeteria of Level 1, where

Armed only with 7-inch records, the player must fend off Dave Matthews Band listeners, football players, a group of girls in Weezer T-shirts hanging out at the Hot Topic store and even Creed.

the player, staying true to emo fashion (vegetarianism), can gain extra points collecting fruits and vegetables while avoiding hot dogs and hamburgers — the meat's not free-range. Although by no means challenging, the game does offer some novel fun.

"Emogame" can be found at the Web site www.emogame.com.

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LTD

continued from page 1

a decrease in bus route frequency, Palmer said he and his fellow riders are forced to "pack it in" on a daily basis. And though he frowns upon the bus pass price increase, Palmer said he'll grin and bear it.

"(LTD) has to make their ends

meet, too," he said.

Students at the University pay \$8.25 per term to use LTD services, whether or not they choose to use the system. The charges are included in incidental fees, which are collected through University billing.

"Fees paid by students to support (bus pass) programs range widely," Vobora said, "but the UO rate is at the

very low end of the spectrum."

Vobora said the student fee currently sits below the base group bus pass fee — paid by other LTD group pass organizations — of \$11.13.

As an Oregon Medical Laboratories employee, Fran Lawson works for an organization that receives a discounted rate. Lawson, who commutes once a day to the University

area, said she has noticed a considerable increase in crowded buses along Route 11, but is willing to pay the price in the name of convenience.

"It's not that much less to bus instead of park," said Lawson. "But the ability to get dropped off right next to my job is a perk, especially during the winter."

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