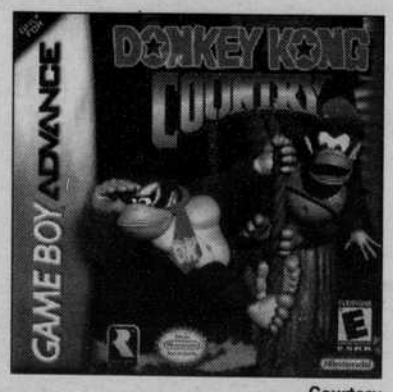
Donkey Kong game lacks good graphics

The re-release maintains the original's fun but lacks the vivid graphics lauded by the SNES version's fans

By Aaron Shakra
Pulse Editor



Courtesy

The phrase "everything old is new again" is most apt when describing the present state of portable gaming. Nintendo, whose Game Boy system holds a de facto monopoly on the market, has been re-releasing a slew of older titles such as F-Zero, Mario Kart and Super Mario Bros. If it's old and popular, chances are it's coming to a Game Boy cartridge near you.

GAME REVIEW

Yet another example is Donkey Kong Country, originally released for the Super Nintendo back in 1994 and made available for the Game Boy Advance last year. Developed by Rare, the game was heralded for its "ACM," or Advanced Computer Modeling graphics. Every art element in the game was graphically rendered — a first for console gaming. Translation: Back in the day, this was the absolute shit.

And of course, there was the game play to back it up. If the Mario Bros. games for the Super Nintendo were the best side-scrolling platformers, the Donkey Kong Country series was easily (forgive the pun) second banana, or, perhaps, holds a tie for first.

So, this is basically the same game released for the Super NES. Plot: zero. Donkey Kong's bananas are all stolen and it's time to get them back with his friend Diddy. Extra features: minimal. Although Nintendo might try to sell gamers on the "time-based DK attack mode," this is about as exciting as watching apes groom themselves. Actually, such a statement is an insult to the apes. However, one useful feature is the ability to save at any point during the game, making the Cranky Kong save points from the original game inert.

The audio soundtrack remains more or less intact. More, because there are supposed additions to the soundtrack, such as character grunts from Diddy and Donkey Kong. Less, because the Game Boy Advance stereo sound is paltry compared to the Super Nintendo version.

The biggest and most unfortunate drawbacks here are the graphics. Allow me to illustrate this with a story. This past summer, spending time at a friend's house in the hills, I saw sunsets so beautiful I likened them to "Donkey Kong Country skies." Well, unfortunately, there are no such vistas here. Drab, pixelated, washed-out jungles are the norm. The technique of anti-aliasing seems to have been largely forgotten. All of this is sort of inexplicable, considering that the Game Boy Advance is supposed to be as powerful, if not more so, than the Super NES hardware. And on the Super Nintendo, with any decent television, everything is beautiful and crisp. Does the now Microsoft Corporation-owned Rare, still a Game Boy developer, perhaps hold a grudge toward Nintendo?

Maybe Nintendo will re-release the title again and call it "Donkey Kong Country Advance" with the graphics the game deserves. But if the game play is what it's about for you, don't hesitate to try out the present version. Anyone playing for the first time will obviously be unable to notice a difference. Here's hoping greater attention will be paid to the next Donkey Kong re-release.

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