

Retro Rearview: MEGAMAN

Written by DarkTetsuya

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I know I haven't done one of these in a while... I thought it would be really difficult to top June and BEMANI month, with a whopping five massive articles back to back about my favorite note smashing series. But this week was Comic-Con, and since Capcom was there talking a little bit about the most interesting upcoming Megaman title I've ever seen - *Megaman Universe*, I thought I'd talk a little bit about the entire series that lead up to this epic-sounding game supposedly encompassing all things Megaman (and quite a bit of other Capcom nostalgia to boot, if the teaser trailer is any indication.)

So hit the jump to return to the year 200X!

It all began in the year 1987. (*for us anyway*) Keiji Inafune had created a brand new character by the name of Megaman (*or Rockman in Japan*)

This game was definitely quite a departure for Capcom, where their usual forte (*no pun intended*) was home ports of their classic arcade titles (1942, Commando, Gun.Smoke, Makaimura aka Ghosts'n'Goblins) so this game was quite different from their usual fare. Players control Megaman (or the Blue Bomber as he's sometimes affectionately known) in his mission to defeat the nefarious Dr. Wily who has reprogrammed all of the robots originally created by the good Dr. Light.

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Megaman must journey through six different levels, each with their own Robot Master awaiting at the end of it. There's no set order to the levels, you can tackle them in almost any order. Each level is vastly different, featuring a wide variety of terrain that Megaman must cross (frozen icecaps, a construction site, to a lava and fire-filled deathtrap gauntlet of death) Once Megaman has reached the end of the level, you must run one final gauntlet of enemies (shooting turrets, electrical beams, or other misc. enemies) before finally arriving at the lair of the Robot Master.

Upon defeating each Robot Master, Megaman will inherit their special ability (from Iceman's freezing ray, to Elecman's three-way electrical shock) and can call upon their powers at any time. After the bosses have been defeated then you will get to move onto the final set of levels before culminating in a final showdown with the evil Dr. Wily.

As time passed more and more sequels were made, including five more on the NES, Megaman 2 and Megaman 3 being two of the most popular games in the entire franchise's two decades worth of games (*Personally I lean more toward Megaman 3, I'm not quite sure why*) which included several spinoffs:

- Megaman X - This series debuted on the Super NES, and took place a century after the events of the original Megaman timeline. X has to defeat the evil Sigma and his repleids, with the help of his mysterious sidekick, Zero.
- Megaman Legends - The very first spinoff in the series to delve into 3D platforming gameplay, Megaman Legends was an action game with 3D platforming and RPG elements, and also featured new redesigned versions of old favorite classic characters, such as Roll, Dr. Light's robotic maid assistant.
- Megaman: Battle Network - Released on Nintendo's handheld systems, the Battle Network series (*known as Rockman.EXE in Japan*) were more of a Pokemon-esque take on the Megaman series, where you actually play as a young boy named Lan, and Megaman is in the game as a battling virtual pet, almost like a Tamagotchi of sorts. Several Megaman bosses made appearances in the Battle Network series, and even one game featured a surprise guest in the form of *Boktai* star Django!
(Which was weird because that game was by Konami... but go figure.)
- Megaman Zero - Released on the GBA, this was an action game starring X's sidekick, Zero. Haven't played this one myself, but I imagine it being alot like the main Megaman series games, or at least like the X series...
- Megaman ZX - Another spinoff which I admit to not having played, X and Zero are apparently only made reference to in this game.
- Megaman Star Force - I'm sorry, I'm just really only a fan of the main 1-10 series, so all I can tell you is the Star Force games are similar to the Battle Network titles.

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In addition, there were a few additional 'spinoff' games that only had one or two entries each, such as Megaman: The Power Battle/Megaman: The Power Fighters - Just incase you thought I didn't really know squat about all the Megaman games, (*I just don't follow all the spinoffs*) I do know about these two.

Released in arcades in the mid 1990s, Megaman: The Power Battle was an arcade game where you take control of either Megaman, Protoman, or Bass, and fight your way through one of three paths, each from a selection of the original Megaman titles, which also do away with the actual stages so you're just left with the boss fights, and then some Dr. Wily stages.

Megaman: The Power Fighters adds new character Duo to the starting lineup, but otherwise featuring mostly the same gameplay as the original Power Battle game. (*Interesting bit of trivia, both of these games were combined on one cartridge for the Neo*Geo Pocket Color, featuring 8-bit graphics which looked identical to the NES version.*

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In addition to the 'Power' titles, there were a few other standalone spinoff titles that didn't spawn a full-fledged series:

- Wily & Right's Rockboard - A board game, featuring characters from the Megaman universe, Japan only
- Megaman Soccer - Released on SNES, this was a soccer game starring many of the bosses from the Megaman universe.
- Megaman: Battle & Chase - A Mario Kart-style game, only with Megaman characters and bosses.
- Megaman: The Wily Wars - This was a compilation released for the SEGA Genesis, featuring updated 16-bit versions of Megaman 1, 2, and 3 (*all based on the harder Japanese versions*) as well as a bonus game, the 'Wily Tower', which allowed you to select a handful of powerups and assist items from Megaman 1-3, and bring them with you to fight some all-new bosses.
- PC games - Hi-Tech Expressions released a version of Megaman for PC, which was very strange to say the least... it only had three bosses (*which have never been seen or heard from in any other games since*) and no in-game music, not even MIDI! There was also a Chinese-only release called Rockman Strategy which was more like an RPG than a traditional Megaman game.

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But perhaps the most interesting game in Megaman history was recently announced earlier this year. Entitled *Megaman Universe*, Megaman series creator Keiji Inafune teased it as 'The Ultimate Megaman game of your dreams'... Now whether that means a 'Megaman Vs. Capcom' game in the vein of games like Super Mario Crossover, or a Megaman game featuring a Little Big Planet-esque level editor (Similar to that in the PSP Megaman: Powered Up) isn't known yet. Some of the comments make it sound more like the latter than the former, but almost no information is available for this game outside of the *Robot Chicken* inspired teaser trailer.

So anyway, I hope you enjoyed my look into Megaman's past and future. I'm probably taking the remainder of July and most of August off from updates, but when I return home near the end of August I'll be resuming development of Project: Journey, so stay tuned for updates on that game! (*And a little teaser? Expect several keyboard entry cheats in the game!*)