



As promised I'm back again with another installment of *Retro Rearview*, this week I'm taking a look at the first upgrade to the *beatmania* series, beatmania IIDX. So hit the jump to take a look at one of the few BEMANI releases that are still going to this day!

Released in early 1999, beatmania IIDX was a deluxe upgrade to the original beatmania, only this time the game featured seven keys instead of just five, 4 white and 3 black, Also interesting about this version is the turntable on the Player 1 side of the cabinet was moved over to the left side of the keys, which drastically changed how you played depending on which side you played on. I've seen many players actually using the left hand side, although personally I've always stuck with the right hand side. (*That way, going back and forth between beatmania/beatmania III and IIDX is almost seamless.*)

Also new is a variety of 'effect' switches that can be adjusted, as well as a 'VEFX' button to turn on/off the in-game 'effector' setting (*Note that the arcade version didn't feature a footpedal like beatmania III did*) Of course, perhaps the biggest audio-related innovation was the massive subwoofer platform you had to stand on, which *really* allowed you to 'feel the music!'

Of course, what would be the point of upgrading the game's audio hardware without also giving the visuals an upgrade as well? beatmania IIDX features a really sweet-looking 16:9 HDTV monitor which makes playing the game (on a decently working monitor) even more awesome. Of course sometimes the monitors were prone to technical issues, like burn-in, or discoloration.

But what would be the point of having an HDTV if the games didn't have an upgrade to how it displayed videos? beatmania IIDX originally featured a 'Video CD' player before later adopting a DVD player for videos once that technology became commonplace. Perhaps one of the most legendary aspects of IIDX were some of its memorable background videos, like this one from the oldschool favorite, Macho Gang by Anal Spyder (*seriously! that's the artist's name!*):

Speaking of which, the series' videos introduced everyone to a rather interesting collection of characters, whom appear randomly in the game's videos:

DJs:

- Ameto (*Debuted in IIDX16: EMPRESS*)
- dj Celica (*Debuted in 1st Style*)
- Daruma (*Debuted in 8th Style*)
- Duel (*Debuted in 3rd Style*)
- Eiri (*Debuted in 9th Style*)
- Ereki (*Debuted in 6th Style*)
- Erika (*Debuted in 4th Style*)
- Hifumi (*Debuted in IIDX 14 (GOLD)*)
- Iroha (*Debuted in 9th Style*)
- K-Na (*Debuted in 6th Style*)
- Lillith (*Debuted in 4th Style, and the only character to have a cameo in beatmania US in the song 'Mr. T (Take Me Higher)*) - for the longest time I thought she first appeared in 5th...
- Nix (*Debuted in 3rd Style*)
- Nyah (*Debuted in 2nd Style*)
- Q-Jack (*Debuted in 4th Style*)
- Sakura (*Debuted in IIDX RED*)
- Saya (*Debuted in IIDX 16 EMPRESS*)
- Shem (*Debuted in 7th Style*)
- Shi-low (*Debuted in 3rd Style*)
- Shiki (*Debuted in 5th Style*)
- Siren (*Debuted in 2nd Style*)
- Tekka (*Debuted in 10th Style*)
- Tsugaru (*Debuted in 8th Style*)
- Xiatian (*Debuted in HAPPY SKY (12)*)
- Yuz (*Debuted in 2nd Style*)

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- Zilch (*Debuted in 5th Style*)

"Eurobeat Girls": (Which may or may not have been inspired by Initial D, because all these videos depict the girls racing and drifting down the highway.)

- Akane Sugo
- Aki Suzuka
- Emiru
- Mika
- Yuri

Random IIDX characters:

- DJ Robo (Last seen in IIDX 8th Style)
 - Fireboy (Introduced in 2nd Style)
 - Kana (Appeared in several random videos starting in 2nd Style, like the 'Hitch Hiker' songs)
 - Killer (BEMANI artist Tatsh's alter ego)
 - Tart & Toffee (*Appearing in the videos of songs by Orange Lounge (our namesake artists!!), they also appear in the songs in Pop'n Music*)
 - Tora Yamato (*Appears in all of artist Tiger Yamato's videos*)
 - Tran (*Perhaps the most infamous mascot of IIDX, has appeared in many many videos throughout IIDX's history, as well as having a cameo in a few songs in Pop'n Music*)
- Here she is in what's arguably her most popular appearance, Starmine from IIDX 4th:

As for the game itself, the first edition (before adopting the 'Style' numbering system up through 10th Style) featured a few different play modes, like '4-key' (play using only the white keys), 5-key (the closest 5 keys to the turntable) and 7-keys where you use all seven *and* the turntable.

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Other modes included in later games were separate difficulty settings (*originally as Light/7/7Keys/Another, L7/7K would later be renamed 'Normal' and 'Hyper' respectively in IIDX RED (11)*) as well as an 'Expert' mode where you play a predetermined set of songs on a 'course' and you get one red lifebar, which doesn't regenerate as quickly as the normal bar does. It starts full at 100% and decreases significantly more than the normal game's bar. You could also adjust the speed at which the notes fell in some later styles, similar to post-DDRMAX era games in the Dance Dance Revolution series.

Luckily not *all* the game's modes are geared toward the expert players, as 5th Style -New Songs Collection- debuted both a 'Beginner's' mode (with easier notecharts for the novice player) and 'Drill' mode (Similar to some of the Mission Modes in some of the home versions of DDR, play a specific part of a given song and get a passing grade.)

Two other innovations that came in later styles were an on-screen display of your judgement counts (Flashing Great, Great, Good, Poor, etc.) and a simulated 'towel'. Prior to that, many arcade players utilized an actual towel draped over the lane to have a customizable 'sudden' mode to adjust their timing accordingly.

As I mentioned last week, beatmania IIDX is still going to this day, here's all of the releases to date since its inception in 1999. Are you ready for this?:

- beatmania IIDX (3/99)
- beatmania IIDX Substream (6/99) - This one also linked up with Dance Dance Revolution Club MIX so one player would be playing dj on IIDX, and the other would dance to the song on DDR Club MIX.
- beatmania IIDX 2nd Style (9/99)
- beatmania IIDX 3rd Style (AC 3/2000, PS2 11/2000)
- beatmania IIDX 4th Style (AC 9/2000, PS2 3/2001) One of three PS2 versions along with 5th and 6th Style to feature the '-New Songs Collection-' subtitle upon its release.)
- beatmania IIDX 5th Style (AC 3/2001, PS2 5/2001)
- beatmania IIDX 6th Style (AC 9/2001, PS2 6/2002)
- beatmania IIDX 7th Style (AC 3/2002, PS2 3/2004) - I remember the epic gap Konami left between the home release of IIDX 6th Style and IIDX 7th Style, we weren't sure it would *ever* surface!!)
- beatmania IIDX 8th Style (AC 9/2002, PS2 11/2004)
- beatmania IIDX 9th Style (AC 6/2003, PS2 9/2005)

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- beatmania IIDX 10th Style (AC 2/2004, PS2 11/2005)
- beatmania (US PS2 2/2006) - Perhaps the only good thing about this release was it was a cheaper way to get the IIDX controller, which could easily set you back \$100 or more on eBay for a Japanese model.)
- beatmania IIDX 11 RED (AC 10/2004, PS2 5/2006)
- beatmania IIDX 12 HAPPY SKY (AC 6/2005, PS2 12/2006)
- beatmania IIDX 13 DistorteD (AC 3/2006, PS2 8/2007)
- beatmania IIDX 14 GOLD (AC 2/2007, PS2 5/2008) So far the *only* version of IIDX that had a limited location test here in the US!
- beatmania IIDX 15 DJ TROOPERS (AC 12/2007, PS2 12/2008) - Apparently the djs served a tour of duty in this release.
- beatmania IIDX 16 EMPRESS (AC 11/2008, PS2 12/2009) - The last PS2 release, the home version of this game featured a second disc called 'PREMIUM BEST' featuring all old revivals from IIDX's long history. Also quite possibly the 'Barbie' release to contrast the last 'GI Joe' one...
- beatmania IIDX 17 SIRIUS (AC 10/2009)
- beatmania IIDX 18 ResortAnthem (TBA 2010) Currently being location tested in Japan, this game features a summer/beach theme, with the interface a bright orange.

Unfortunately with the PS2 well on its way into retirement, it isn't clear if there will ever be a home conversion of either SIRIUS or ResortAnthem. Unless they show something at this year's TGS (*Really, E3 wouldn't be the place that they show it, being an American convention*) so whether or not there will be any future installments past IIDX16: EMPRESS/PREMIUM BEST, I can't say. But who knows? Konami may yet surprise us.

Interestingly there were also mini-cabinets for IIDX, although I think they came first because many of the early videos don't say 'beatmania IIDX' they simply say 'beatmania II' and some of the songs make reference to just beatmania II, so there was apparently a standard-sized version of the game that didn't feature nearly as many bells and whistles as its deluxe counterpart.

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beatmania IIDX 10th Anniversary Edition (2009) is the 10th anniversary edition of the beatmania IIDX series. It features a new game mode called "Don't say I didn't warn you" which is a challenge mode where the player has to survive a series of increasingly difficult stages. The game is available on the PlayStation 2 and Xbox 360.