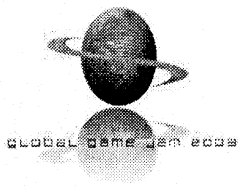


Game Jam

If you weren't one of the many that attended this year's Game Jam, then check out the coverage of what happened just below.
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The Sting

www.thesting.org

BlazBlue

From the creators of Guilty Gear, a new fighting series makes its debut. Does it hold a light to Capcom's Street Fighter?
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October 13th, 2009

Currently recovering from Mid-Terms

Volume 64, Issue 2

ZIMBRA – THE NEW EMAIL SYSTEM

What you need to know

Jarrett Bell
Senior Staff Writer

Beginning on October 16 and ending on October 19, you will not have access to the email system. I'm sure you want to know exactly what is going on and why that is the case. Before you get that information, ask yourselves the following questions: are you dissatisfied with the amount of SPSU mail space that you currently have? Fellow students, are you dissatisfied with the fact that you cannot share your calendar or use an e-mail client like Microsoft Outlook or Mozilla Thunderbird to POP your email?

On these three dates, our current e-mail system, known as Mirapoint, will be converted to the new e-mail system named Zimbra. According to Ron Skopitz, the Director of IT Operations, Zimbra is a "web-based email, calendar, and document sharing platform written and supported by Yahoo." You heard right- we are getting an e-mail system that Yahoo wrote and currently supports, and you know that means an e-mail system that is loaded with new features. Are you excited yet? Hopefully so!

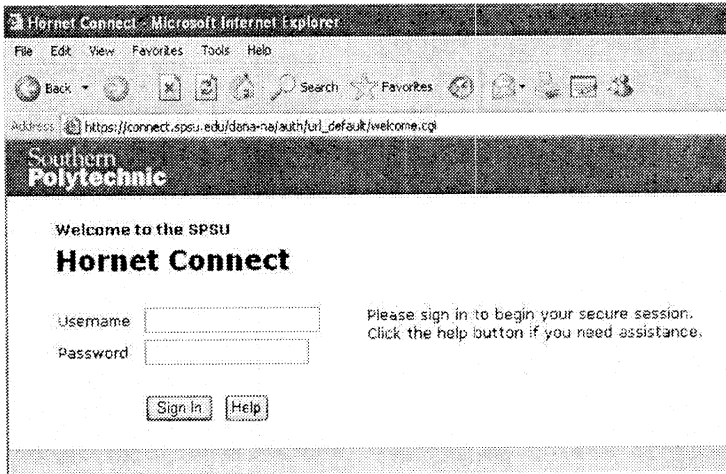


Photo credited to: spsu.edu

So why are we moving away from Mirapoint? SPSU has leased the Mirapoint system for 3 years. That lease is up at the end of October. The Division of Information Technology (DoIT) concluded that Zimbra was a better fit for the school at the current time. Other software-based email systems were considered during the process of determining the next e-mail system. In addition, several service-based systems were evaluated including Google Mail, colloquially known as Gmail, Microsoft Live@EDU and Yahoo. However, there were potential issues with these outsourced systems that would

necessitate splitting up students and faculty and staff, which would result with different email addresses for each of the two groups. This was not the ideal situation to replace the current Mirapoint system. Consequently, none of these other systems made the cut, except Zimbra.

Any replacement would need to address the shortcomings of the Mirapoint system. One of the primary shortcomings of the Mirapoint system is the system is a hardware-based appliance. In being a hardware-based appliance, the hard drive space is fixed (meaning that each user has a fixed amount of storage

space), processing power was limited, and there limited ways to add capacity to the system in any form. This led to a system that was expensive to be modified to accommodate the need for more space and new features.

As the newly christened replacement, Zimbra does not suffer from the same limitations as Mirapoint. "Zimbra is a software-based app that we run locally on our own servers," according to Skopitz. Since Zimbra is a software application versus the hardware-based appliance that Mirapoint is, servers and hard drives can be added for more capacity and redundancy. This creates a modular, adaptable system that allows for future expansion when conditions require such an action."

Perhaps what many people care about is what features Zimbra will bring to the table that Mirapoint could not deliver. Students will realize they now can share their calendar with other students and even faculty, have a task list, share files with other students using the Briefcase functionality, and store documents and notes, just to name a few features. All of these features,

among others that Zimbra has to offer, are fully configurable and customizable to your needs.

There are some students that are very comfortable with email clients such as Outlook and Thunderbird and usage of these clients were not possible due to licensing limitations with the Mirapoint system. If you wish to use your email client other than the web interface with Zimbra, the settings to download your email via POP/IMAP is on Collaborate (<http://collaborate.spsu.edu>), the SPSU internal message board to communicate with other students, faculty and staff. However, there is a caveat- DoIT will not support any way of accessing your email except through the web-based interface. So if you feel you will need some support later, use the web-based interface, which is the only supported way of accessing your email.

If you're ready to start exploring and using the new email system, go to zimbra.spsu.edu from wherever you are. Experience the powerful, exciting, and feature-abundant new email system now and see the difference for yourself.

Develop Games, Skills, Friendships in 48 Hours

Jon Preston
Game Development Professor

It all started innocently enough on Friday, September 18. Twenty students and faculty from Southern Tech, Art Institute of Atlanta, Georgia State, and the University of West Georgia met in the Games Lab in the J building for a weekend of fun and game development. Forty-eight hours later, with rain drenching the metro Atlanta region, two complete games were built from the ground up using nothing but adrenaline, caffeine, pizza, and raw talent.

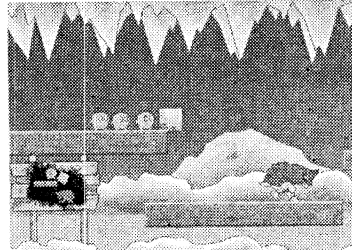
On Friday night, students were informed that the theme of the weekend's game development would be "heat" in honor of our sponsor Pepper Ranch who graciously donated hot sauce for all participants. Pepper Ranch is a local company that makes fantastic spices and sauces with habanero peppers (more info at <http://www.pepperranch.com>). The students would have to in-

corporate this theme of "heat" into their games and that the play experience should last no more than 5 minutes. Teams then self-formed and began designing how their games would play. They then worked over the next two days with little sleep to crank out a game with original art, music, and core game mechanics.

Nick Dolce, A.J. Savino, Kristina Dutton, and Rob Nale developed the winning game, "Paragon," and each took home a triple pack of Pepper Ranch sauces. "Paragon: Where Some Friends Don't Make the Cut," a side-scrolling platformer that focuses on quick mechanic subjection and simple micromanagement implementation. The object of the game is to lead a herd of innocent critters through the daily dangers of their world. The main goal is to help two critters to the door at the end of each level. In doing so you proceed to the next area. As the player, you have to help navigate your little companions past hostile inhabitants,

dangerous pitfalls, and hot burning coals. During the journey you find elemental stations that grant your critter the power of ice and fire. Take note: with great power comes great responsibility. These powers may be great but will destroy its host over time. As the sheppard of your herd, you must utilize your environment to help you reach your destination.

Another team of students from AIA and SPSU developed a Super Smash Bros. Brawl clone called H.E.A.T. – Hyper



Paragon Photo credited to: Jon Preston

Extreme Attack Tanks – where up to 4 players can battle it out using different tanks, bikes, and mechanical spiders with different

weapons and abilities. This game was unique to the jam in that it was the only game that was developed to run on the Xbox360.



H.E.A.T. Photo credited to: Jon Preston

Look for this game to show up on Xbox Live Arcade in future months as the team may develop it into a full game!

Two other teams competed but still had some work to do before their games were ready for prime time. Look for those to show up later – perhaps even at the upcoming Global Game Jam 2010. This next jam will run Fri-Sun on January 29-31 next year and will be coordinated worldwide with over 1500 other participants building games. We encourage everyone at SPSU to join us to build and play games that weekend. Please see <http://>

games.spsu.edu for more details on this past jam or the upcoming jam next year.

Beyond the fun of the weekend, the Fall Game Jam serves another purpose: The Georgia Film, Music & Digital Entertainment Office sponsored a VIP room at SIEGE for the students to show off their games to potential employers and others in the game and digital media industries at SIEGE 2009. SOUTHERN INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT & GAME EXPO [SIEGECON.NET] is the definitive center of gravity for knowledge exchange among video game industry professionals and students in the southeastern U.S. This year, the show hosted 600-650 attendees who enjoyed 2 keynotes, 60 break-out sessions, and 15 social/networking events over a 3-day weekend from October 2-4.

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Dishing out a Thrashing

Stefan Seville
Staff Writer

The Atlanta Thrashers have been the butt of many hockey jokes since their establishment in 1999. Not only does it come from our location (most people in Atlanta don't even know we have a professional hockey team) and its seemingly bad hockey environment, but the fact that in 9 seasons the team has only made the playoffs once. Many rumors are started each year, mostly by Canadians, which feature the Thrashers franchise moving to a northern city – most recently to Winnipeg. But through all this, the Thrashers have managed to put together what looks like the best group of players in team history.

Since the 2006-2007 season, when Atlanta won the Southeast Division title, the Thrashers have finished in the basement of the league. This was mainly due to the following reasons:

1 – Goaltending. The Thrashers have invested over \$10 million dollars in goaltender Kari Lehtonen over the past four seasons. He was selected second overall in the draft of 2002, then spent a few years in the minor leagues honing his game. Upon being called up to the big leagues at the start of the 2005-2006 season, he promptly suffered a groin injury and missed over 35 games that year. Since then, while he has shined on the ice, the problem has been keeping him on it. He has missed an average of 20 games per season due to injury, leaving the goaltending up to streaky back-up Johan Hedberg and unreliable Ondrej Pavelec. This uncertainty in goal has

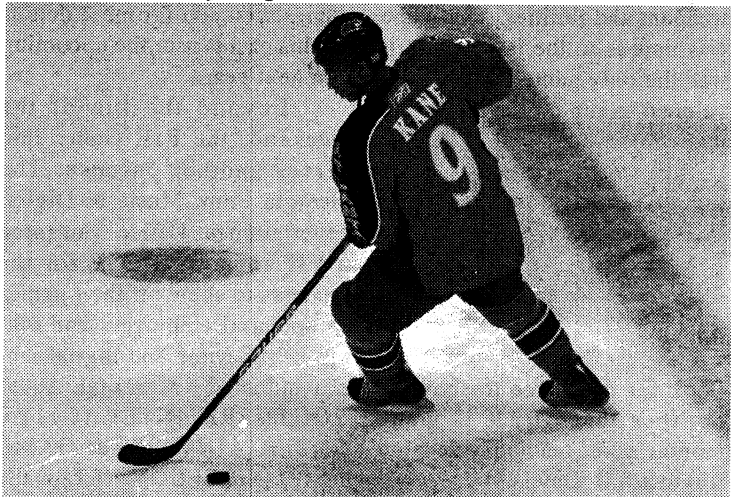


Photo credited to: Stefan Seville

led to and compounded many of the Thrasher's problems over the past years.

2 – Defense. For those same years the team suffered from lack of a reliable goaltender, we have had some of the worst defense in the entire league. Goals scored against a team are rarely just the goalie's fault; a number of things are usually done wrong to lead to an opponent's score. This is where the defense comes in. Our defenders would typically be caught out of position and try to recover illegally – by tripping, holding, or hacking at the opponent with the stick. This would lead to unnecessary penalties and many more opportunities for the

opposition to score. Even if they did stay in position at first, often times our players would abandon duties and go for a big hit, leaving another man wide open for a scoring chance.

3 – Offense – When your team includes Ilya Kovalchuk (the highest scoring player, 299 goals, since his entry into the league in 2001), it is a given that



Photo credited to: Stefan Seville

you will have offensive success – unless you are the Thrashers. Over the years, the Thrashers have had several dominant scoring lines that fell apart due to external distractions, free agency and plain bad attitude. Dany Heatley, the winner of the 2002 Rookie of the year award, was responsible for a car wreck on Lenox road that killed teammate Dan Snyder. After a year or so, the guilt got to Heatley and he requested a trade to get away from the cloud following him around. Highly talented scorer Marc Savard was lost to free agency after our oft-ridiculed General Manager Don Waddell failed to re-sign him. Marian Hossa

(acquired in the aforementioned Heatley trade), after a coaching change, decided he didn't like the direction of the team and started playing like he didn't care. Waddell traded him away at the deadline, alleviating the team of that distraction and headache, all the while the Thrashers plummeted to the bottom of the league.

I only write those three points to emphasize the changes the Thrashers have made this off-season, and their potential effect on the team's success. Ondrej Pavelec has emerged with strength and talent in goal, taking the place for now of Kari Lehtonen as the team's #1 goalie. Several young draft picks by the

names of Zach Bogosian and Tobias Enstrom have emerged with raw skill and good sense of the game, and when paired with recently acquired veterans Ron Hainsey and Pavel Kubina make for a great defensive set up. Nik Antropov, a 6'6" center, adds to the Thrasher's strength and size while playing along the boards and in front of the net. Bryan

Little broke out last year to be one of the top 20 scorers in the league (in his second year). Rich Peverley, acquired off waivers midway through last season, looks to set career highs in points after a strong second half. Evander Kane, an 18 year old named for boxing legend Holyfield, represents the future of the organization with his pure ability and speed. But most importantly, extremely talented Captain Ilya Kovalchuk (4th last year in the league with 43 goals) looks to lead the team to new ground – deep in the playoffs.

The Thrashers, though recovering from two straight horrible seasons, are headed in the right direction. This preseason the team had a problem it hasn't ever before – too many talented players. Over 70 were invited to training camp, with a final roster of only 23 spots. Depth in all positions has led the Thrashers to building their best looking squad since inception. While only one game into the season (a win against Tampa Bay, 6-3), the Thrashers are looking to turn heads, change skeptical opinions, and surge into the playoffs of the 2009-2010 season.

Check out the Thrashers' next home games:

Thursday October 22nd vs. Washington Capitals

Saturday October 24th vs. San Jose Sharks

Thursday, October 29th vs. Washington Capitals

Thursday, November 5th vs. Columbus Blue Jackets

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THE TENSTONE PAPERS: THE NORMAL SERIES STANDARDS, BASED ON OPINIONS, PREJUDICES, AND PRECONCEIVED NOTIONS

Jarrett Bell
Senior Staff Writer

From the first installment of this series, we made the assertion that 'normal' is a subjective term that cannot be applied universally. We have backed up our assertion that 'normal' is subjective, as we drew the conclusion in Part I that definitions of words in the dictionary are defined by a mutual agreement. We concluded that this mutual agreement has an opinionated foundation and consequently, the definition penned in the dictionary is opinionated.

Armed with that discussion, let us revisit the first and second parts of the definition of the word 'normal', as it is listed in dictionary.com: conforming to the standard or the common type; usual; not abnormal; regular; natural; serving to establish a standard. We are going to zero in on the word 'standard' and discuss more in depth of conformation to a 'standard' at the end of the series. We are omitting the analysis of the words regular and natural and deferring the discussion of common to the next installment.

According to dictionary.com, the definition of 'standard' is as follows: something considered by an authority or by general consent as a basis of comparison; an approved model. From Part I, we saw how a mutual agreement requires a general consensus from the majority or all of the parties involved. We can apply this same principle to the word 'standard.' In order to create a standard, there will be a set of criteria chosen by a specific authority of people or the general populace that will be used to evaluate the contents of the standard-to-be in question. The standard is created by a mutual

agreement among the people judging on the belief that a certain set of criteria to be used in the judgment of the contents of the standard-to-be will yield the necessary information to make an effective and pertinent comparison. This is essentially the stated definition of 'standard.'

However, we discussed in Part I about how humans lack the ability to be objective. By lacking this ability to be objective, it is virtually impossible to objectively choose criteria, let alone make an effective and pertinent comparison. For example, say for instance we have two supervisors interviewing people for a position at a technology firm. Before the interview takes place, each supervisor may have different traits that they are looking for in a potential employee. Before that interview takes place, both supervisors must come to a mutual agreement on what traits they want in an employee and answers they are looking for. These two people are judging the interviewee on a set of criteria that they believe will yield the necessary information to make an effective comparison with all other interviewees they have had and/or will have. Hence, the two supervisors have created a standard to judge potential employees by. Considering the mutual agreement concept discussed in Part I, we can say that the creation of the standard is based on opinion.

The criteria selection in creating the standard, as well as how a standard is applied is also based on preconceived notions and prejudices. To see this, recall from Part I that we said that the interpretation of the brain essentially destroys any chance of objectivity. The brain will interpret what it is seen and heard and hold it in memory in any state

of consciousness (recall this terminology from Part I.) When the person sees another person that is remotely similar to the prior experience, the past experience is evoked, whether good, bad or ugly. The person holding that past experience will have a preconceived notion or a prejudice against the person(s) they have seen and/or about to engage with. Moreover, societal stigmas on certain groups of people quickly become stereotypes, which add vinegar to already an inevitably distasteful mix. It is possible that a person may not have an experience with a person or a set of people. However, if they have knowledge of widely held stereotypes of a specific set of people (or has heard things about that particular person), their first experience will more than likely be tainted, as the person may assume the first person they meet in that group of people will adhere to such a stereotype. In the end, the person on the receiving end will get the shorter end of the stick. Nevertheless, we must also note that this process is reciprocal, as the other person will likely hold the preconceived notions, prejudices, and stereotypes of their own as well.

In any case, by virtue of the discussion, we can see that preconceived notions, prejudices, and stereotypes that humans inevitably hold are divergent to the concept of objectivity. Finally, humans will always be at odds with objectivity, as we are no longer innocent at birth. Our parents instill (or at least attempt to) their qualities into their children, which automatically means the child gets a slanted viewpoint. This is the beginning of the divergence from objectivity- and coming back to the path of objec-

tivity will not happen in a human's lifetime.

We can apply the above discussion and see that the supervisors in our example have seen and heard things that will factor in their decision of the traits, talents, and abilities that they look for in a candidate. Their past experiences tarnish their objectivity on what is seen and heard. Past experiences open the door to prejudices and preconceived notions- all (but not limited to) these items minimize any possibility of objectivity. These prejudices, preconceived notions, and other factors can, in any state of consciousness, come into the picture when, but not limited to, making decisions, interpreting details of any and all forms, etc. Since the brain interprets what is seen and heard and combined with the factors stated above whether they happen in any of the states of consciousness is the perfect, inescapable recipe for subjectivity.

We can also say the supervisors in this case will have some preconceived notions or prejudices at the criteria deciding process and at the interview itself. This could be for many reasons. Some examples include something that was on their application, the interviewee's name, the references supplied by the interviewee, if any- and the list goes on. Therefore, in selecting criteria to make the comparison, these preconceived notions and prejudices will get in the way of choosing the criteria to make that effective and pertinent comparison. Moreover, even after the criterion has been selected, who is it to say that the comparison was done effectively, fairly and strictly according to the selected criterion?

Given the entire discussion,

we need not prove that the definition of the word 'standard' is subjective, as we have already stated in Part I that all definitions are subjective. Instead, we showed that the process of creating a standard is subjective and mired in opinion. That is, when society creates a standard, there is pressure by the powers that be on the populace to adhere to such a standard, even if adherence to that standard violates their natural proclivity. That standard that is created and forced upon the populace by a separate authority or a subset of the general populace) and with the majority of the people engaging in a mutual agreement among themselves in blindly accepting that standard is effectively the 'normal.' (We'll explain this more at the end of the series.) The standard is enforced by the parties engaged in the mutual agreement in an effort to appease or fit in with that authoritative group, even if it violates the natural proclivity of some of the populace or not. Due to the standard being enforced, many will conform to the standard, even if it does not feel right to them. However, those who do not conform to the standard are considered abnormal, among the various terminologies applied to them. Finally, the people who do not conform to the standard debunk the possibility of the universal application of the normal that was established. This supports our original assertion that normal cannot be applied universally.

Stay tuned for Part III as we continue to dissect this very complex word.

Punch-Out!!!

Sean Fine
Editor-In-Chief

Genre: Puzzle/Fighter
Platforms: Wii

Remember the good old days? The days where owning a video game console was considered nerdy and gamers were social outcasts? Remember Punch-Out? You might know it better as that old Mike Tyson game. Well, it was more than that. Punch-Out put you in the shoes of Little Mac, a hopeful rising boxer to become the world champion. It was a fun game with a catchy battle theme and tricky, intense fights that relied on reflexes and recognition. It was very fun.

There was an arcade version with unique characters and a sequel for the Super Nintendo that was just as fun. For the longest time, we heard nothing until the Game Developers Conference of 2008 came around and hardcore Wii owners were delighted to find a game trailer meant for them, Punch-Out was coming for the Wii. However, does it have that knock-out punch or should it retire?

Gameplay: With very little story to worry about, Punch-Out was always about figuring out your

opponent and reacting fast enough to strike back and conquer your opponent. It's a tried and true formula and Punch-Out for the Wii only expands upon that. Its simple and fun and the controls have been never sharper... if you're using the classic setup to play. You see, there are two main setups to play the game, one using the classic d-pads and A-B punching, and the other using the motion sensing control involving the Wiimote and nunchuck.

The main problem with the motion sensing control is that while intuitive, there is a slight sensitivity problem where even though you might not mean to throw a punch, Mac still will and sometimes there is a delay between you throwing a punch yourself and Mac responding appropriately. It doesn't make the game unplayable per se, but against the final bosses, it can become very frustrating if you don't have complete control. Despite those bit of nit-picking, I actually enjoyed the motion control. It felt refreshing and satisfying to be able to literally punch out your opponent.

There are only 13 other boxers to fight, so content may seem short at first glance, yet with each fight comes a new puzzle to solve and complete,

which become increasingly difficult towards the end of the line. It helps that once you achieve the championship, you have an 'Championship Defense' mode where you fight the 13 opponents again, but this time with new rules and puzzles to solve, such as beginning fight Glass Joe have protection against head attacks. On top of that, there's a challenge mode to meet certain requirements with each opponent's. It's a fun past time to try and meet the conditions like Beating King Hippo with just body blows and while not necessary, certainly adds to the replayability.

Graphics: Punch-Out for the Wii would first appear to be something of a graphic remake of the old NES title, with a similar Little Mac model, nearly all the original cast, including Doc Louis, familiar strategies and so on. If that is the case then the graphical update is a welcome one, using cel-shading to give the game a very cartoony look, but honestly, to try and give the game a realistic look would just take away from the game.

Another thing that shines through is how colorful each of the characters are, especially the various opponent you face, from 1-99 beginning fighter Glass Joe to the Cana-

dian lumberjack Bear Hugger to the brutally wild Bald Bull, each of the characters are exceptionally interesting and have mini-cut scenes at the beginning of each round with very excitable animations, not to mention little tidbits of their personality shining through each of their fighting styles. While graphics are nothing new, the game serves as an example that games don't need to have more polygons in order to be a pretty looking game.

Sound: The music department is nostalgic to say the least, with redone tunes from the classic Punch-Out, from loud trumpets and ripping guitar to various foreign rearrangements that relate to each of the many countries that you'll be fighting opponents from. Another nice

touch is that the voice acting for each character are their native languages, which really makes the game pretty authentic, only problem is the words are not subtitled so unless you learn each language or look up a guide to see what they're saying, you might lose the effect of their taunts to you between rounds.

Overall: Punch-out is a good game that holds the fun feel of the classic game, while introducing it to a new generation of gamers, so I feel like it's a game that everyone who enjoys a good nostalgia rush while still offering a twist of the normal formula. I recommend anyone who likes a good fight to give it a shot. Who knows? You might like it. 8.5/10



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BlazBlue

The Next Generation of 2D fighting

Sean Fine
Editor-In-Chief

Genre: Fighting
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360

Aksys systems is a company that certainly has made a name for itself in recent years. With the series of Guilty Gear under its belt, the team has shown that they know how to make good and enjoyable fighting games. With BlazBlue, the team has decided to try their hand at making a new franchise, as though to prove they don't need the popularity of a franchise to show they make a good game. Does BlazBlue meet the expectations that both Aksys and their fans or will BlazBlue sink underneath other fighting titles like Street Fighter 4? With much positive reception in Japan arcades, signs point to the former.

Story: The main plot centers around 12 major characters that their activities in the 13th Hierarchical City of Kagutsuchi, most of which are seeking main protagonist Ragna-the-Blood Edge, including a holy order of knights called the Librarium, a faction called Sector Seven, an numerous bounty hunters. Yet all is not as it seems in Kagutsuchi, and who knows? Perhaps there are a few people pulling the strings from the shadows.

For a fighting game, the story is really good, with each character

having branching story lines and interesting relations with other characters in the Story Mode alone, yet the arcade mode is also quite intriguing as it gives lots insight of the backstories of the characters.

Fighting games in general are notorious for having very poor stories. Hell, look at the recent big fighter title of Street Fighter 4: half the characters had pointless plots and really served no purpose. Thankfully, each of the characters in BlazBlue are very creative and colorful, in personality and the plots surrounding these characters are fairly deep and intriguing. It personally makes me want an anime series based off the game to appear, though I won't hold my breath for it.

Gameplay: Guilty Gear really revolutionized how fast a fighting game can be and still be balanced (granted it took them several attempts to balance everything), while including interest mechanical features like dust attacks, roman canceling, and faultless defenses. BlazBlue is both a simplification and an upgrade of Guilty Gear's fighting system, yet providing enough unique factors into the game to make the title stand apart from its heavy metal inspired cousin.

In BlazBlue, there are 4 main buttons to worry about (5 if you really want to worry about taunting). These include the A, B, C normal attack moves, and a unique

'Drive' button that allows special abilities that are unique to each character. Other special techniques in the game, like throwing, Barrier Guarding, Bursting, and Countering involves pressing a combination of these buttons, and give some really simple yet well implemented ideas to matches.

However, it's the Drive abilities that really set the game apart from other franchises as it provides really interesting aspects about each character. For instance, Librarium knight Jin Kisaragi has the Drive abilities to freeze his opponent, which can lead into some nice combos, while tank-devil Iron-Tager can use his magnet-drive ability to draw his opponents closer and even fire bolts of magnetic power if his gauge is full enough.

It's a fun concept, allowing beginners to easily perform cool moves while giving veterans something juicy to bite into.

Combos in the game are relatively easy and while they require some memorization and understanding concepts of each character's properties, it's not as unforgiving in the combo area as another game whose combos are based almost entirely around timing, like Street Fighter 4. In this regard, BlazBlue is easy to pick up and just play single player matches, or if you and a friend are new to both learn the game. Once you go

online though, it's essential to have practiced your character of choice, though that seems to be a common thing nowadays. In short, gameplay is solid and fun: it's fast, but not confusingly so and no where near of slow as more technical fighters, with interesting moves and even more interesting combos.

Graphics: This game isn't 3D, at least, the character aren't. Only the majority of the backgrounds are portrayed in the third dimension as they're constantly animated with various events happening while the players duke it out on the front, and even then, there are glimpses of 2D animation in the back, but that's not what you're interested in, is it?

The characters are stunning with beautiful high definition art that gives the character animation, which flows seamlessly from one position to another, so much personally and fluidity, you'd swear this couldn't possibly be all two dimensional. The graphics of the game really make a point to show that 2D sprites aren't (and probably shouldn't) be a thing of the past, especially when they capture that anime-esque feel so well.

Sound: Vocal work comes in two flavors: English and Japanese, a first for Aksys fighter games, and believe it or not, I enjoy the English voices more than the Japanese voices in most cases. This is probably because of unique sound clips

each character has for other characters. For instance, if main character Ragna were fighting against nightmare-fuel monster Arakune, he probably would just fight and talk normally, calling his attacks and what not, but if Ragna were fighting against special relation Jin, he would call out Jin's name and curse him throughout the battle. I love it when games do things like that.

It's the battles where the vocal work really shines, but going through story mode, you begin to notice how much one person's voice really sounds bad. In my case, it was Taokaka.

Music in the game reprises Daisuke Ishitawari, of Guilty Gear fame, for the soundtrack and he outdoes himself with each of the music exciting and awesome, while still making subtle references in his music. The ability to choose your music during character selection makes this all the sweeter.

Overall: I will admit, when I was hearing about BlazBlue and saw character concepts, I felt a little jibbed, because I wanted a new Guilty Gear game instead, but BlazBlue has more than proven to be a worthy successor to the Guilty Gear franchise and might even challenge Street Fighter 4 in terms of enjoyment. If you like fast-paced anime-filled action, then I'd happily recommend BlazBlue. 9/10

Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2

Kevin Baker
Staff Writer

Genre: RPG Beat 'Em Up
Platforms: 360/PS3/Wii/PS2

What happens when Marvel decides they want to sponsor a game featuring their own super-heroes from their universe? While your first answer might have been what originally was Marvel Online (the game that became Champions Online), but the real answer is Marvel Ultimate Alliance.

Now while the first is many years old, the second in this series was recently released for all gaming consoles. Take my word for it, when I say all, I mean every console games are currently made for. Vicarious Visions and Activision are the two companies teaming to bring Marvel's vision to the gaming industry once again. Now, normally I would say this game is wonderful, but honestly it could use some improvement. Enemies will glitch into walls or into the floor, requiring the use of certain powers or abilities to hit them and advance the level to the next section.

The game runs about the same length it will take you to beat the first one, and for a sequel I felt the length of playtime could have been extended. For how the game plays, it seems to move well enough, and the aforementioned glitches don't happen too often. Below I break down in more detail exactly what

the game has going for it.

Pros: Now while the first game had many powers (including your Xtreme which was a heavy damaging power for each character.) This one has only four per character. Everyone who is reading this is now pulling their hair out and asking 'How can four powers over many be an improvement?' Well, the truth is the last game had so many powers and you didn't use half of them. You were limited to only three choices for your powers since the Xtreme always took up the Y button input. Also only certain powers could be applied to the X button input, this limiting you really to only two choices for powers. In this game, you only get four powers that upgrade as you level them. With each three points invested into the power you gain upgrades to the power itself, from two to four depending on which power it is. The boost powers and costume benefits from the previous games are converted over into abilities that you use money (called ability points) to upgrade these abilities. In the previous game, this money was used per player and had to be spread out amongst each hero. In MUA2, each hero gets the total amount of money gained throughout the game. This feature allows you to put the points into each hero as far as you can afford without worrying about upgrading other heroes. Each hero has their own set of abilities and powers that make them

unique from the other heroes, allowing for a good combination of powers and attacks to be used. Each character can pair with another to form a fusion attack, this attack replaces the Xtremes from the first game, and to make up for it they are gained faster so you can use them more often.

Now then let's move onto the part people want to hear so they can complain about it on message boards and amongst their friends, what is wrong with this game?



Mix and match your own dream team of Heroes

Photo Credited to: gamespot.com

Cons: Let me put this simple statement out there, this game is far from perfect by any means of the word. The glitches do occur, which means there wasn't much debugging or testing done by the developer and testers when the game was being created or polished up. Another problem with the game is the extra costumes included for the characters. Most of the costumes are on the negative side of approval from

multiple people I have played this game with. A few are good and aesthetically pleasing, but the costumes have no effect on the character or game-play. Also only player one (who also has to be signed into a profile) can unlock the costumes. This makes it annoying having to switch out through every character in order to unlock the rather lackluster costume. Another problem that I personally, and possibly you once you have played, have with the game is the size of the roster.

PS3 and Xbox 360 will be having DLC released with all kinds of different characters both from non-playable characters in the game, and new characters they will be releasing the data for. I understand business and their wanting to make more money off of the game, but I feel that these characters could have been included to show they put effort into improving the game over the previous installment.

The story for the game uses influence from the Civil War storyline in the comics as the backdrop for the game. It takes an original story to it in how the Civil War affects the heroes and what occurs as a result of the dividing of costumed heroes. Needless to say, it is entertaining and made for something different rather than the story following exactly how the comics would have went. Overall the game I felt had things going for it, but a lot of things could have been improved to give a greater reception amongst the people who were looking to purchase it.

Overall Rating: 7/10. The game is for the most part well placed and formed, but the cons and how they handled the game made it far from perfect.

Twenty five characters total, and a lot of the ones that were in the first were not included in this game. Characters such as Blade, Ghost Rider, Doctor Strange, Black Panther, etc have become unplayable. Sure if you buy the Wii, PS2, or PSP version you have Psylocke, Cyclops, and Blade as playable characters, but honestly shouldn't these characters have been standard and then some for the roster? Luckily the