

WELCOME!

Welcome to a brand new issue of Dream On Magazine! It's hard to believe that Sega released the Dreamcast twenty years ago! It feels like only yesterday. Luckily, the indie developers have been busy these past decades, so there's lots of dreamy goodness to cover.

This issue took a long time to come out due to huge mistakes on my part, and I sincerely apologize for that. However, the wait should be worth it, as I've had some awesome help. The DC Evolution crew, the same folks who put together the excellent compilation disc, "The Sandman #1", helped to make sure that this issue is the best it can be.

So, feel free to dive in, and read up on the past, present, and future of the independent Dreamcast movement. I hope you find as much enjoyment out of it as we've had creating it.

Jennifer "Mickey" McMurray, aka MetaFox

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HISTORY

On June 23, 1997, Sega's Chief Operating Officer announced "the Saturn is not our future", publicly revealing for the first time that they were working on a successor. This console would use a Hitachi SH-4 for its CPU and an ARM processor for sound. The code name for the console was Katana, but it was given the name Dreamcast by the time it hit retail. It was released in Japan on November 27th, 1998, in North America on September 9th, 1999, in Europe on October 14th, 1999, and in Oceania on November 30th, 1999. It was discontinued just a scant few years later when Sega announced that it was discontinuing the console on January 23rd, 2001. Production of new games continued in North America until spring 2002, in Europe and Oceania until winter 2002, and in Japan until 2007. However, it continues to have an active commercial life among independent game developers.

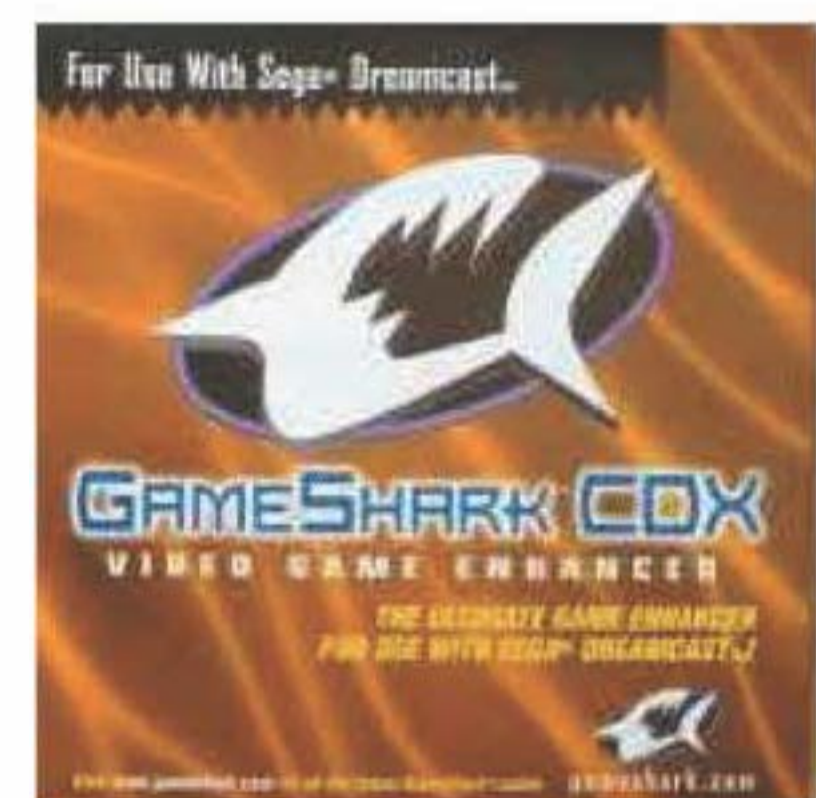


The Space Channel 5 Mil-CD

The Dreamcast continues to be attractive to indies because the games can be sold on CD without having to obtain a license from Sega, which drastically reduces the overhead that is usually present in commercial game development for consoles. This ability actually stems from a vulnerability discovered early on in the lifespan of the Dreamcast. Sega of Japan developed a multimedia system called the MIL-CD, or Music Interactive Live-CD.

The purpose of this format was to allow music companies to release music CDs with multimedia functions that could be played on a Dreamcast. However, it soon became apparent that it could be used to allow the Dreamcast to boot code on a standard CD-ROM, without needing to use the proprietary GD-ROM format that Sega used for Dreamcast games (as well as some arcade games with hardware based on the Sega Dreamcast and Microsoft Xbox).

The independent game development community soon discovered the Mil-CD releases, and adapted them for their own code. The first demonstration of independently developed software intended for commercial sale was the GameShark CDX. This was the localized version of Dattel's Action Replay CDX, as Interact had acquired the rights for release in North America. It was shown at the Consumer Electronics Show, which ran from January 6 to January 9, 2000.



The Gameshark CDX



The A.G.E. Demo, by Hitmen

The first non-commercial independent code to successfully run on the Dreamcast was achieved by the demo group Hitmen. Their A.G.E. demo, a technical demo for the Dreamcast that displayed stylized text, graphics, and music, premiered at the Mekka & Symposium 2000 convention in Fallingbommel, Germany on April 23rd, 2000. This demo was never released publicly, as it was developed using a custom coding library and required the Dreamcast to be connected to a host computer using a custom serial port adapter known as the Dreamcast Debug Handler.

HISTORY (continued)

The commercial PlayStation emulator, bleemcast! was then demonstrated at the Electronics Entertainment Expo, or E3, which ran from May 11 to May 13, 2000. The Action Replay CDX became the first independent commercial release when it was released to retail on June 2, 2000. Marcus Comstedt, who would later become known for his Dreamcast ports of the Super Nintendo emulator SNES9x and the adventure game interpreter ScummVM, reverse engineered this disc and built his own library for the Dreamcast using the open source GNU C compiler for the SH-4 processor. He wrote documentation detailing the process of booting code directly on the Dreamcast, and released a simple "Hello World" demo on June 20th, 2000.



bleemcast! for Metal Gear Solid

Unfortunately, at the same time the indie developers were reverse engineering the Mil-CD format, software crackers discovered the loophole that was employed by the Action Replay CDX. A pirate group known as Utopia released a CD image intended to boot illegal game rips on June 22, 2000. This boot loader was quickly followed by a rip of the game Dead or Alive 2 on June 23, 2000. Due to the inability of their game rips to boot on their own, all of the early pirate releases required the use of their boot loader, which became known as the Utopia Boot CD. The boot loader itself was created by modifying the teapot demo that was included with the official Sega Katana library.



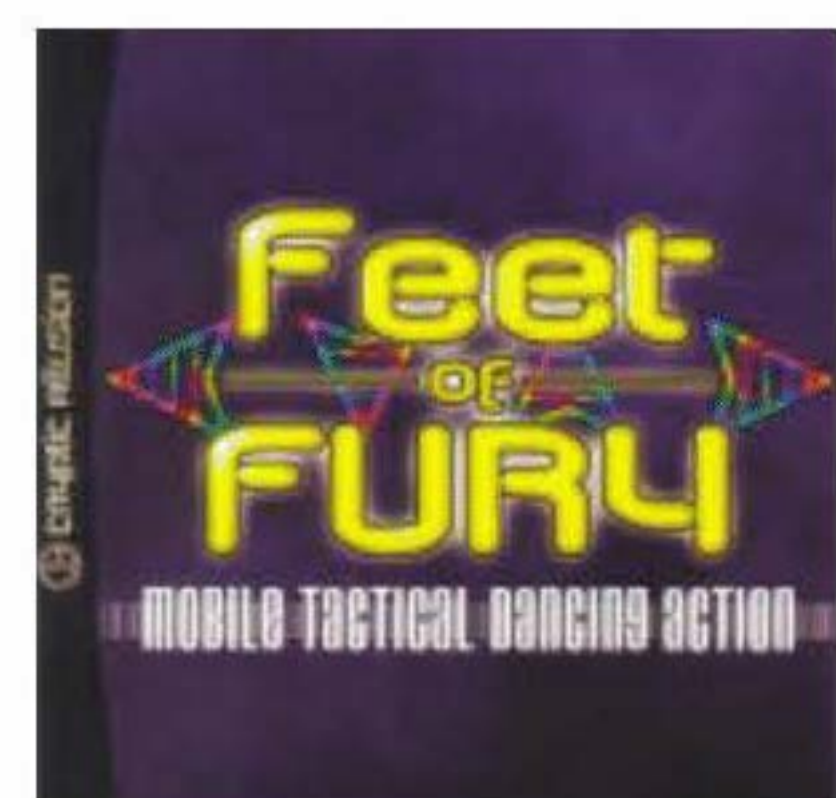
An official GD-R disc

Other pirate groups soon released game rips in the form of self-booting images which would run on a Dreamcast directly after being burnt to a CD-R, eliminating the limitations of the Utopia Boot CD. Sega's much touted GD-ROM (Gigabyte Disc) format, which was meant to be a hindrance to piracy, was soon obsolete, as the only restriction towards playing illegal copies of Dreamcast games was now the slow connection speeds of most internet modems of the time.

Thankfully, the legal independent development scene thrived, even as the pirate releases continued to pour out. HeroZero improved upon Marcus Comstedt's code with hzlib. Mr. Comstedt continued working on his library, libronin. Cryptic Allusion, a coding group which would later become known for their Dreamcast dancing game Feet of Fury, developed a new library known as KallistiOS, or KOS, initially known as the libdream library, and then expanding beyond its forbearer. Independent developers created a CD of software running on the Dreamcast, called DC Tonic. This disc was handed out to attendees at E3 2001, which ran from May 17 to 19, 2001.



The DC Tonic demo CD



Cryptic Allusion's Feet of Fury

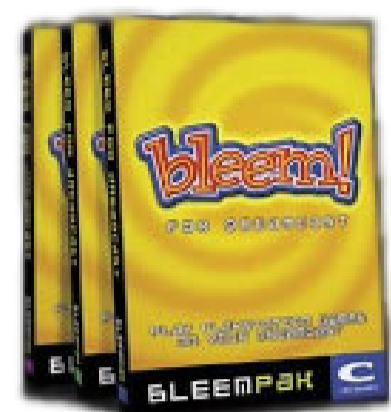
The first indie commercial game was the aforementioned Feet of Fury. It was developed by Cryptic Allusion, and published by The GOAT Store on July 7th, 2003. It was developed with KOS, which is the most used library for indie Dreamcast development. Libronin continues to be used as well, such as with ScummVM and the Dreamcast port of Cave Story. Both libraries continue to be supported and updated by their respective developers, and commercial and freeware Dreamcast software continues to be released, even to this day.

bleemcast!

Bleem, LLC. was a company founded by a programmer named Rand Linden and a marketing expert named David Herpolsheimer in California on August 18, 1998. Their flagship product was a Playstation emulator for Windows. bleem! version 1.0 was released on April 20, 1999.



As alluded to above, the Dreamcast version of bleem! was unveiled at E3 2000.



The original plan was for bleem! for Dreamcast to support 400 PlayStation games, as the emulator was intended to be released in the form of four "bleempaks", which would emulate 100 North American PlayStation games each. There were also plans to later release two additional bleempaks supporting Japanese and European games.

Alongside the bleempaks, bleem! also intended to release the "bleempod", an adapter that enabled PlayStation DualShock controllers to be played on the Dreamcast, including the second analog stick, which standard Dreamcast controllers lack.



There were also plans to release "bleempads", which would have been Dreamcast controllers that used the usual controller layout, plus an additional analog stick. None of these were released, however a prototype bleempod later appeared on eBay.

Bleem was a small team consisting of two programmers, Rand Linden and Rod Mayer, the president and CEO David Herpolsheimer, and a few beta testers. Plus, they had two lawyers, Scott Karol and Jonathan Hangartner, who defended bleem! against Sony in regards to three lawsuits, four attempts to prevent bleem! from selling their products, and an attempt to obtain the names of all of Bleem's customers. Thus, the Bleem team lacked the employees and the financing required to properly test hundreds of games.