

esis. After the mode of play (Story, Tournament, or Versus) is selected, a lag shot will determine who goes first. When preparing for a shot, players can rotate the cue, adjust the power, and determine the strike position, meaning spin can be put on the ball. Players can even make the ball jump. Within the Tournament and Versus modes, players can select from eight-ball, nine-ball, one-pocket, rotation, and other variations. A Trick mode is also available. The Saturn version is enhanced with full-motion video.

The Miracle Piano Teaching System

Publisher: The Software Toolworks. Developer: The Software Toolworks. Musical Instrument/Band Simulator, 1 player. 1992.

Packaged with a full-sized electronic keyboard, which is enhanced with two speakers for stereo sound, *Miracle Piano Teaching System* teaches gamers how to play the titular instrument. As players pound away at the pressure sensitive keys, onscreen keys flash to mimic the movements of the real keys. A variety of drills, musical numbers, and games (such as shooting ducks and creating a bridge for a robot) enable players to practice music notation, fingering techniques, pedaling, and more. In addition, the keyboard is equipped with more than 100 virtual musical instruments and other sounds, including guitars, drums, and voice effects. This hard-to-find game was also released for the NES and SNES.

MLBPA Baseball

Publisher: Electronic Arts. Developer: High Score Productions. Sports/Baseball, 1–4 players (simultaneous). 1994.

A solid, arcade-style baseball game, *MLBPA Baseball*, as the title indicates, was licensed by the Major League Baseball Player's Association, meaning virtually all of the real-life big leaguers are included. The lack of MLB licensing means team names and logos aren't used, but the players (which are large) wear their respective colors and play for their respective cities (there are 28 teams in all). Player statistics and ratings are based on the 1993 season. Highlighted by a 162-game Season mode,

the game is replete with features that hardball fans will appreciate, including rundowns, bad hops, booted balls, the double switch, cutoff plays, snap throws, authentic stadium music, and digitized scoreboard animations (in the Super Nintendo version, the scoreboard animations are NOT digitized, meaning all you see is player silhouettes). The batting view is from behind the plate. When the ball gets hit, the view switches to a $\frac{3}{4}$ overhead perspective. The controls are simple and intuitive, and players can steer pitches. Battery backup saves progress (the SNES version uses passwords). Also released for the Game Gear.

Monopoly

Publisher: Parker Brothers. Developer: Magical Company. Board Game, 1–8 players (simultaneous). 1992.

Parker Brothers' famous board game is recreated very nicely for the Sega Genesis. Up to eight players take turns rolling dice (with a digitized hand), moving a token around the board, earning money, drawing Community Chest and Chance cards, and trying to bankrupt the other players by purchasing, renting, and selling houses, hotels, railroads, and other properties. The advantage of the video version lies in the computer handling all the accounting and money management tasks, giving the game a faster pace than its more tangible, more tactile counterpart. Cartoon-like animations, a game editor (for giving players cash and properties before the game even begins), voice effects, an auctioneer (who runs property sales), and a timed mode add to the fun. Interestingly, the Sega Master System version of *Monopoly* is enhanced with battery backup and lets up to 10 players in on the action. Also released for the NES, GB, SNES, and numerous other systems.

Mortal Kombat

Publisher: Arena Entertainment. Developer: Probe Software. Fighting, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1993.

A legendary home release, *Mortal Kombat* for the Genesis hit the streets September, 13th, 1993, a day that went down in infamy as

“Mortal Monday.” Not only was the cart a port of a hot, controversial arcade game (Midway, 1992), it helped usher in the age of video game ratings, thanks to its blood and gore. The one-on-one fighting evokes *Street Fighter II*, but with digitized graphics, a Shaolin Tournament storyline, and a more violent presentation, such as the highly popular Fatality moves, which let players finish off their opponents by ripping out their spine or another such gruesome maneuver. Gamers can fight as one of seven different characters: Johnny Cage, Liu Kang, Sonya Blade, Kano, Raiden, Sub-Zero, or Scorpion, each with his or her own special moves, such as fireballs, lightning, or shadow kicks. The SNES game has better graphics and voice effects, but the Genesis version excels in gameplay (six-button controller recommended). More importantly (at least to consumers at the time), the Genesis game has a blood code (ABACABB) that the SNES game lacks (the “blood” in the SNES game is gray sweat). Also released for the Game Boy, Game Gear, and Sega CD, the latter version augmented with new animations and superior sound. Remade for the PS3 and Xbox 360.

Mortal Kombat II

Publisher: Arena Entertainment. Developer: Probe Software. Fighting, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1994.

Based on Midway’s 1993 arcade game, *Mortal Kombat II* for the Genesis, like the first *Mortal Kombat*, is missing certain voice effects from the coin-op classic, and the digitized graphics aren’t as sharp. These are small gripes, however, as this is a great game. The one-on-one tournament fighting returns from *MK*, but this time there are 12 fighters to select from, including Reptile and new characters Baraka, Jax Briggs, Kitana, Kung Lao, and Mileena. Other improvements to the formula include more special attacks, better coloring, superior controls, and blood and gore already in place without the need of entering a code (giving it an M-17 rating). There are more finishing moves this time out, including the creatively amusing Friendships (kindness exhibited towards the opponent) and Babalities (turning the opponent into a baby). The SNES version

also has blood and gore, but with better graphics, making it the more desirable of the two versions. Also released for the Game Boy, Game Gear, Saturn, and Sega 32X.

Mortal Kombat 3

Publisher: Williams Entertainment. Developer: Sculptured Software. Fighting, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1995.

Although faster than its progenitors, *Mortal Kombat 3* has much of what gamers came to expect from the one-on-one fighting series, including hidden characters, finishing moves (Animalities are now part of the mix), high and low punches, high and low kicks, flying kicks, flips, jumps, foot sweeps, roundhouse kicks, and a variety of special moves. A run button has been added, as have chain combos, and gamers can now select from 14 fighters, including newcomers Cyrax, Kabal, Nightwolf, Sektor, Sindel, Stryker, and Sheeva, the latter of whom is a tough, four-armed opponent. Unfortunately, Raiden, Johnny Cage, Reptile, and Scorpion didn’t make the cut. Also, the inclusion of cyborgs and urban American areas veer the game away from its mystical/oriental roots. One flashy, attention-grabbing addition is the bi-level battlefield ability to smash an opponent up or down to another screen. Based on Midway’s 1995 arcade game. Six-button controller recommended. Also released for the GB, PSX, and SNES. Followed by: *Ultimate Mortal Kombat 3* (arcade, Genesis, SNES, Saturn).

Ms. Pac-Man

Publisher: Tengen. Developer: Innerprise Software. Maze, 1 or 2 players (alternating, simultaneous). 1991.

Ms. Pac-Man for the Genesis includes a fairly accurate port of Midway’s 1981 arcade classic, but it also offers a host of unconventional features, including the use of a Pac Booster, which makes Ms. Pac-Man and Pac-Man (who player two controls in simultaneous mode) move faster and leave speed streaks in their wake. Other unorthodox options include: a pair of rousingly good two-player simultaneous modes (Cooperative and Competitive); four difficulty levels (Easy, Normal, Hard, and