

The Ultimate Dreamcast Collection - Editor's Choice

A guide to ensuring you have the ultimate line-up of Dreamcast software.

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Not everyone buys a console the moment they come out, and when you buy a system a fair way into its lifespan, there's always a collection of games that you don't know about, that are true classics for that system. For this reason, we felt it'd be a good idea to recap on what we felt were the best games for Dreamcast. We've started with our pick of the various titles that have come out over the past year and a half, and will later present the people's choice, by running a series of polls to see which games the Dreamcast owners feel are the best of their kind.

Racing

Editor's Choice: Metropolis Street Racer
Developer: Bizarre Creations

Racing games have become one of the best selling genres of all, which became particularly evident in the PlayStation's heyday. The Dreamcast started off a little slow in this area, but over time, the Dreamcast developed a line-up of racing titles that made this THE system to own if you liked racing games. Something that has been lacking in the genre though is innovation. With everyone focusing on creating a more realistic driving experience, gameplay has been all about simulation, rather than something that is by its nature, fun. Bizarre Creations found a way to maintain a hefty element of realism, while adding a feature that ensured driving stylishly would not only be rewarded, but mandatory.

The "kudos" system gave the driver points based upon their style, with more points for controlled drifting, and penalties for hitting walls, and other cars. Your progress through the game was more directly effected by your style than your lap time, and this is something that should have been an option years ago. Besides the gameplay innovation, the amazingly detailed environments of Tokyo, San Francisco and London are amongst the most realistic depictions of an urban environment in any video game to date, with the probable exception of *Shenmue*.



Runner-up: Le Mans 24 Hours
Developer: Infogrames - Melbourne House

This locally developed racing title has been given the thumbs up from critics and gamers around the globe. A fantastic blend of arcade and simulation game mechanics, *Le Mans* is a worthy addition to any gamer's library.

Sport

Editor's Choice: Virtua Tennis
Developer: Hitmaker

Having a game that provides a realistic simulation of a sport is impressive, but when a game manages to impress and capture the attention of those who don't even like the sport in real life, then you know that the game is something special. Hitmaker took the time old sport of Tennis, and presented it in a fashion that was not only visually realistic, but also featured a control



system that was simple enough for anyone to pick it up and have a go right off the bat.

Unlike many arcade to home console conversions, *Virtua Tennis* featured a special mode that gave you enough goals to push towards to ensure that you wouldn't simply get your hands on an arcade game without having to slip a dollar into the machine every time you wanted to play. World Circuit mode allowed you to hone your skills on your way to attaining the coveted number one ranking in the world. On top of all that, it made a fantastic multiplayer title for singles, or doubles. The sequel, *Sega Sports Tennis 2K2* should be on your wish list.

Runner-up: Tony Hawk Pro Skateboarding 2

Developer: Neversoft / Treyarch

Even if you've never been into skateboarding, a few goes of *Tony Hawk*, and you'll be an instant convert, at least in the virtual sense. With the ability to create your own skater, and have them master a selection of tricks that offer almost limitless combo possibilities, or to create your own dream skate park, this is the kind of title that keeps gamers occupied for a long time.

2D Fighting

Editor's Choice: Marvel vs. Capcom 2

Developer: Capcom

2D fighting games really took off in a big way once Capcom's *Street Fighter II* hit the arcades. It was the biggest gaming phenomenon since *Double Dragon*. We then saw a variety of spin offs by Capcom through the years, involving other collections of characters, including quite a few from the popular Marvel Comics. Some of these games introduced super jumps, air combos, and tag-team elements, all lending to a somewhat over the top game, that was nonetheless, extremely entertaining and action packed. If unlockable characters is something you dig in fighting games, then this is your bag. A whopping total of 56 playable characters are there to unlock, and you can play as three of them at a time. This was the first game to introduce three way tag-teams, and tends to result in long epic battles as a result.

Perhaps this title is the epitome of one that has been created with the fan, with so many twists in gameplay to master, and so much to unlock. Regardless, it's clearly one of the best 2D fighters ever made.



Runner-up: Capcom vs. SNK

Developer: Capcom

It was something fighting game fans had wanted for so many years, a chance to take the two strongest schools of 2D fighting, and blend them into one grand tonk-fest. The result was an outstanding 2D fighting game that allowed fans of the genre to decide which series had the strongest characters for themselves. A rare moment in rival companies becoming partners for a project.

3D Fighting

Editor's Choice: Soul Calibur

Developer: Namco

With the exception of Tecmo, who had reasonable success with *Dead or Alive*, the 3D fighting game title usually sat with either Sega, for their *Virtua Fighter* series, or with Namco. Even though Namco are best known for their *Tekken* series,



Soul Calibur was clearly a huge step ahead of any fighting game they had released on any system, and thus Dreamcast owners were treated to arguably the best 3D fighting game to date on any system. Besides sporting visuals, that are still to this date some of the best on the Dreamcast, *Soul Calibur* featured deep gameplay, a host of characters, and most importantly, enough special modes and extras to ensure that you'd be playing *Soul Calibur* for quite some time to come. Mission Battle mode in particular gave you unusual combat scenarios that truly improved your abilities, and offered some genuine variety. Unless you have a serious issue with fighting games that involve weapons, this is THE 3D fighting game to get for Dreamcast. This game has aged very gracefully and is still as valid today as it was back when it was first released.

Runner-up: Dead or Alive 2

Developer: Tecmo

If any fighting game at all has a chance of being deemed better looking than *Soul Calibur*, then it has to be *Dead or Alive 2*. Featuring a new concept of environments that allow the combatants to take the fight to different areas, this game presented us with the most visually free-flowing combat in any game yet.

RPG

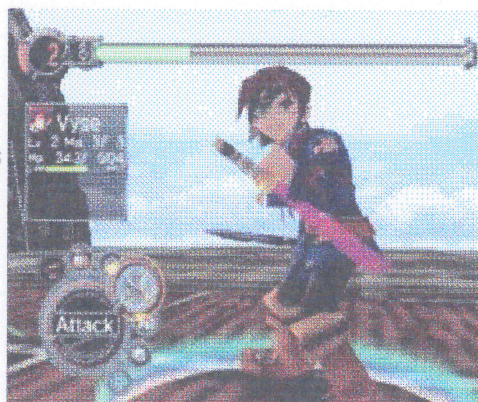
Editor's Choice: Skies of Arcadia

Developer: Overworks

As a fan of RPGs myself, I have to go on record as having said that the Dreamcast has been disappointing in this genre, purely due to the lack of titles. However, when the titles that are released are as good as *Skies of Arcadia*, it all seems to matter that little bit less. Fans of Japanese RPGs crave games with endearing characters that push their way through a gripping plot, and that's exactly what Overworks delivered.

Gorgeous visuals are abundant in the world of Arcadia, with each character wonderfully designed, and each environment being spectacular enough to convey that feeling of being in a truly wondrous world. Combine the engrossing eye-candy with a plot that keeps you from putting down the controller, and a better than average combat and character development system, and it becomes very easy to see why many would rate this as the best RPG on Dreamcast.

It's been a while in the coming, but if you haven't played *Skies of Arcadia*, you haven't played the best RPG on the Dreamcast.



Runner-up: Grandia 2

Developer: Game Arts

While this long awaited sequel didn't have the kind of storyline that *Skies of Arcadia* did, an innovative combat system made this one more than worth your while if you were an RPG addict. Obtaining this game locally may prove difficult, so you may need to look at importing.

Online Game

Editor's Choice: Phantasy Star Online

Developer: Sonic Team

While at this point, there's little competition for this title locally, even if this were an American or Japanese site, I'd still be recommending this title over all the others. *Phantasy Star Online* is a perfect example of what can be done with console



gaming online. The Dreamcast gamers were crying out for more RPGs, and what better way to fix the problem than to offer a co-operative online RPG, which has proven so popular with PC games such as *Diablo* and *Everquest*.

While *Phantasy Star Online* doesn't offer a gripping plot, it does offer a fairly well balanced game based on character development, which you can explore either on your own, or with others online. Due to the nature of the game, lag isn't a big issue, and even if it were, the game performance is just fine.

With built-in language barrier busting features, and almost countless hours of gaming to be had, *Phantasy Star Online* is currently the best value online game for Dreamcast, and one of Sonic Team's greatest pioneering moments.

Runner-up: Chu Chu Rocket

Developer: Sonic Team

They have a knack for online gaming already it seems, as Sonic Team deliver the other online title of choice (for local gamers at least), *Chu Chu Rocket*. Even if you're not inspired to get online to puzzle your brain out against all comers, this also makes a great four player game offline as well. The budget price is also a welcome reward for those who choose to Chu Chu.

Action

Editor's Choice: Jet Set Radio

Developer: Smilebit

Talk about an original game concept, this is it. Take street punks of the near future, hand them some modified inline skates, a can of spray paint, and a total lack of respect for the law, and you've got *Jet Set Radio*. This game blew us away with its groundbreaking cell-shaded artwork, which gave it the appearance of a cartoon, more so than a typical video game.

Add to the wonderfully stylised visuals, a soundtrack that for the most part, is extremely funky, and perfectly suited to the game, and you've got an audiovisual feast to be woofed down by any hungry gamer. The gameplay was quite original, and full of good humour, which never goes astray. For reasons unknown, this game sold quite poorly, but don't let that fool you, this is a brilliant game that features enough diversity and new gameplay ideas to make it a must have title. Piecing together a seemingly implausible series of grinds, or tagging an rival gang member while you're pulling off a classy grind makes this game every bit as much fun to play as it is to look at.



Runner-up: Crazy Taxi

Developer: Hitmaker

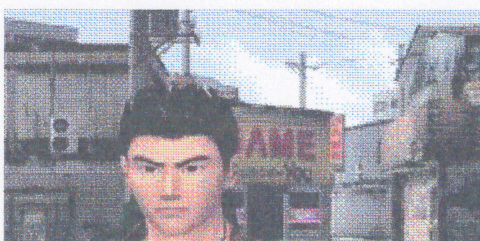
While it doesn't boast a huge amount of options or extra goodies to unlock, *Crazy Taxi* for Dreamcast was such a fantastic port, of what was one of the best original arcade games in years. Some might call this a racing game, but given the slapstick nature of this title, and the lack of actual racing elements, it winds up in the "action" basket for this gaming journo.

Adventure

Editor's Choice: Shenmue

Developer: AM2

Some might call *Shenmue* an RPG, but due to the associations most people have with that term, I found it more apt to simply call this wonderful



game an "adventure". *Shenmue* tells the first chapter of an epic adventure, about a young Japanese man's quest to discover why his father was murdered by a mysterious Chinese criminal, and a means to make him pay.

Blending elements from the adventure, fighting and action genres, *Shenmue* truly feels like an interactive movie, although this term in the past was previously used to mark a game as being pretty, but non-involving in terms of gameplay. In this case, the term is applicable not due to a lack of interactive gameplay, but rather an unrivalled level of presentation and visual quality.

Where most games shy away from attention to detail to maintain the illusion that you're in a believable world, *Shenmue* applies the opposite philosophy, using extreme detail and interactivity to make the world seem very complete. Everything helps to maintain the illusion of reality, from realistic lighting due to the time of day, right down to having certain people or encounters only available at a certain time of day. Once you've completed *Shenmue*, you'll join the ranks of gamers hanging to get their hands upon the upcoming sequel.

Runner-up: Resident Evil - Code Veronica

Developer: Capcom

The further adventures of Claire and Chris Redfield are nothing short of spectacular in this wonderful action/adventure title that was developed from the ground up for the Dreamcast. While this game didn't really shake the series up in terms of new gameplay features, the visuals were mind-blowing, and the storyline enthralling enough to keep all fans of the survival horror series very happy indeed.

Platform

Editor's Choice: Rayman 2 - The Great Escape

Developer: Ubi Soft

Rayman is one of the few platform game characters that everyone knows, that hasn't come from one of the big hardware manufacturers like Sega, Nintendo or Sony. Rayman had won fans over in the past with quality platform gaming, and the lovable bundle of floating limbs continues to keep up the quality in his adventures on the Dreamcast.



Rayman 2 may be a traditional platform game in that you run around and jump from ledge to ledge a great deal of the time, but there are enough elements in the gameplay which aren't in other games to make this an innovative title, rather than a "me too" game.

Visually, the various levels you pushed through in *Rayman 2* were organic enough to make it feel like you were actually progressing through a fantasy world, rather than a series of levels that were purely created as a series of challenges between the beginning and end of the game.

Runner-up: Sonic Adventure

Developer: Sonic Team

The first true 3D Sonic game was a great leap forward for the series, and an outstanding platform title to show off what the Dreamcast was capable of. Besides the blistering 60FPS wonders of Sonic himself, there were five other characters to play as with different styles of play, making this a very diverse gaming experience.

Puzzle

Editor's Choice: Chu Chu Rocket

Developer: Sonic Team



Something that could have made *Bust A Move 4* a clear-cut winner in this genre would have been 4-player multiplayer gaming. Unfortunately, *BAM4* lacked this feature, and this left *Chu Chu Rocket* as the only fast-paced four player puzzle game available for Dreamcast.

Don't let its simplistic visuals fool you into believing this is a half-arsed game. Once you're in the middle of a four way battle to horde all the mice into your rockets, while doing your darndest to make sure your competitors are pulling their hair out in frustration, you'll be totally engrossed in *Chu Chu*.

Special puzzle modes help make this a long term challenge for those who want some seriously cerebral gaming moments, as some of the puzzles presented are truly mind-bending. The ability to create your own puzzles, or download others is also a big bonus.

To top it all off, if you're low on friends, or have a habit of injuring or maiming them during multiplayer gaming sessions, you can jump online and play some other puzzle-fanatics there.

Runner-up: **Worms Armageddon**

Developer: **Team 17**

Unlike the fast paced *Chu Chu*, *Worms Armageddon* is a turn based puzzle/strategy title that takes the critically acclaimed series to Dreamcast. The skill lies in judging what combination of weapon, angle and velocity will cause the most harm to your adversary's squad of worms. The antics end up being comical to a point where even the most up-tight gamer can get a laugh out of this one.

1st Person Shooter

Editor's Choice: **Quake III Arena**

Developer: **Raster Productions**

At this point, *Quake III Arena* is winning almost by default, because the rest of the real competition is still due to be released. That said, *Quake III Arena* is far from shabby, as it is a very respectable port of the highly successful PC game. To give gamers the full blown first person shooter experience, Sega manufactured a mouse, which allows you to go out and get your hands on the best control set-up for first person shooters, the mouse and keyboard combination. A real disappointment exists with the lack of online play support for the local version of *Quake III Arena*, but the single player game can be made more than challenging enough to provide a great long term goal. Completing the tiered championship on nightmare difficulty will test the mettle of even the most experienced first person shooter fanatics.

Even though the Dreamcast can't pump out resolutions as high as a decent PC can, the anti-aliasing provides the same sort of smooth edges that PC gamers are used to, and this is by no means an ugly or substandard representation of the original.

If you're after something more mission based, go pick up a copy of *Hidden & Dangerous*, as the future of both *Half-Life* and *Soldier of Fortune* for Dreamcast appear very uncertain, although *Soldier of Fortune* is still on Ubi Soft's release schedule.

Light Gun Shooter

Editor's Choice: **House of the Dead 2**

Developer: **Hitmaker**

Here's another default winner of sorts, as the only competition for this game will come in the form of *Confidential Mission*, which isn't quite out yet (although it should only be a week or so away). If



you haven't had a go of *House of the Dead 2* in the arcades, or on a Dreamcast, then you're definitely missing out. For the most part, the aim of *HOTD2* is simply to take out the hordes of undead nasties that are taking over the city you're making your way through, but there are enough extra paths to discover by saving the people you come across, or shooting certain items hidden throughout the game. Besides the standard arcade and boss modes, there's a training mode for those who want to hone their skills with some brutally unfair challenges to play through.

So there you have it, a fair collection of must have titles for the Dreamcast. Once we get the reader results in for their opinions on the subject we'll take a look at a more exhaustive list of titles that both we and the gamers recommend. We'll then have a look at a collection of upcoming games that warrants you stuffing shrapnel into Mr. Piggy for.

