



Prez Says: A Message from Boss Josh

Here we are again! It's time for the second issue of the Limited Run Games newsletter. This time, our newsletter is focused on one of my favorite types of games: The metroidvania!

Over the last (nearly) five years, we've released a ton of these games, and I have loved every one of them. One game, in particular, stands out to me: *Shadow Complex*. *Shadow Complex* came out the week before my mom died from leukemia. It helped me cope with her death, and without it, I'm not sure how much

more difficult the weeks after her death would have been. It was, and still is, an honor that we had the opportunity to release what is such an important game to me.

I hope that we have been able to release games that are important to you, too. If we haven't already, maybe we will in the future! Thank you for being a fan and supporter. Don't forget: Physical is forever!

—Josh Fairhurst

CEO & Co-Founder, Limited Run Games

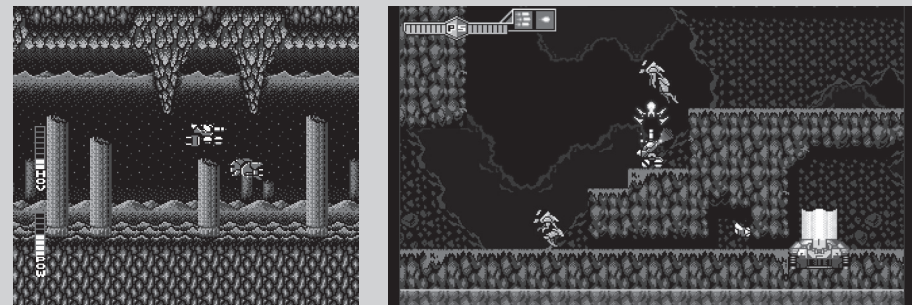
Refining a Classic with Blaster Master Zero

Later this year, Limited Run Games will ship *Blaster Master Zero*, Inti Creates's update to SunSoft's NES classic *Blaster Master*. It's a great game—and a fortuitous one. According to Inti Creates president/producer Takuya Aizu, *Zero* almost didn't happen.

"Around 2015, SunSoft inquired with us about developing a game that would be a reboot of *Blaster Master*," he says. "At the time, we were in the thick of the development cycle for *Azure Striker Gunvolt 2*." Despite this initial complication, things changed when Aizu happened upon a conversation between representatives from Nintendo and SunSoft at E3. Inti Creates's potential role in

the NES game, *Zero* can claim to be that rarest of remakes: It captures the design and essence of the original while sanding down the older release's rough edges.

Director Satoru Nishizawa says *Blaster Master*'s core strength has always been present; *Zero* simply reduces the barriers to entry. "The most appealing thing about *Blaster Master* is the ability to ride an all-terrain battle tank, *SOPHIA-III*," Nishizawa says. "Discovering dungeons as you explore areas in the side-view maps, defeating the bosses that lurk within to obtain new power-ups for *SOPHIA-III*, then enjoying all the new places you can explore thanks to those power-ups



Old and new. **Left:** The NES version. **Right:** Blaster Master Zero.

a *Blaster Master* reboot came up in conversation and "really piqued the Nintendo rep's interest," Aizu says. "They said that, given Inti Creates's track record with the *Gunvolt* games, if Inti were to develop and publish the game, it would turn out well."

Zero debuted as a Switch launch title, where it offered a bite-sized diversion for players who needed a break from the 100-hour-plus odyssey that was *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild*. With upgraded visuals, improved play mechanics, and countless quality-of-life improvements over

you just got." He also says the game's fundamental loop of progression, combat, and exploration embodies the appeal of the metroidvania format as a whole.

"More than simply 'defeat enemies and progress', what makes exploratory action games so appealing is the fact that you have to overcome obstacles and find ways out of increasingly difficult situations," he says. "It feels like the character and the players are growing and getting better together, which gives you the power and motivation to face even tougher challenges." **LR**

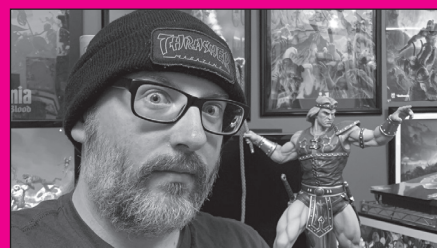


Ah, the exploratory action platformer. Is any genre finer? Your lovable editor (who has been *falsely* accused of creating the word "metroidvania") would argue there is not. Whatever your feelings, one thing is certain: Limited Run Games has published a bunch of the things, and they've all been incredible. This issue of *Limited Run Club O' Fun* is all about these addictive, nonlinear adventures. So sit back, grab a snack of tasty wall meat, and enjoy!

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Printed by: Millennium Print Group

Profiles in Limited Greatness: Joe Modzeleski



What's your role at Limited Run?

I'm a developer, I work on internet development and ports, and I assist our partners with digital-to-physical conversions and other odds and ends of console engineering.

How did you get your start here?

I partnered with Limited Run to release *Super GunWorld 2* on PlayStation 4, and eventually was brought on full time.

Any non-gaming hobbies?

Music: I play drums well, guitar and piano badly. I like skateboarding, and paintball.

What's your all-time favorite game?

If I just get one choice? *Tetris*.

What's your dream Limited Run release?

A collector's edition bundle for *Mega Man Legacy Collection 1 and 2*.

Limited Run Games Community Spotlight: Skul

Limited Run Games would be nothing without its community, and beginning this issue, we're turning the spotlight on YOU by highlighting some of our amazing fans. Follow @LimitedRunGames on Twitter for your chance to shine!

LR: Hello! Please introduce yourself.

SKUL: My name is Skul. I'm a YouTuber with around 250,000 subscribers ([youtube.com/user/SkulShurtugalTCG](https://www.youtube.com/user/SkulShurtugalTCG)). I've been playing video games as long as I can remember; I grew up when the GameBoy and Nintendo 64 were in their prime.

LR: What's your very first video game memory?

SKUL: My very first video game was a *Snoopy* game for MS-DOS. My dad bought the game for me to play when I was two. (I still have it!) My favorite gaming memory is my first time attending the 2015 *Pokémon World Championships* in Boston. Being surrounded by so many other *Pokémon* fans, and witnessing the best players in the world battling each other, filled me with energy and excitement.

LR: How did you start your Limited Run collection?

SKUL: The first Limited Run Game I bought was *Drive! Drive!* for PS4. I happened upon a YouTube documentary by My Life in Gaming that talked about the origins and early history of Limited Run, and I remained a LRG fan when the company began releasing Nintendo Switch games. As a

Switch collector, I've done my best to keep up with all their Switch releases. It isn't easy, but I try!

LR: What's your favorite Limited Run release?

SKUL: I love the *Shantae* series, and since it's so important for me to own physical copies of games whenever I can, I'm thrilled LRG was able to release the *Shantae* games. I wish it were possible for Limited Run to do another run of them so more people could experience the series.

LR: What is it you like about Shantae?

SKUL: I like the character herself. She's cute, she's strong, and her ability to transform into different animals by dancing is a unique gameplay mechanic that enhances the platforming. It feels like every time I pick up one of the *Shantae* games, I can't put it down, because I'm too addicted.

LR: What do you hope to see from Limited Run in the future?

SKUL: Limited Run Games has always focused on quality titles. It seems every time a new game is announced, it's a game that I've heard of, and more often than not a game with lots of positive buzz. I'd love to see more of that, for every platform possible. Heck, if releases for the upcoming Atari VCS were possible, I'd be happy to see that, too! **LR**

Right: Skul's Limited Run Games Switch collection (above) and Limited Run Games PlayStation 4 collection (below)



LizardCube on Wonder Boy's Gorgeous Revival

Although many gamers associate the term "metroidvania" with Nintendo consoles (after all, the word comes from *Metroid* and *Castlevania*, which both got their start on Nintendo Entertainment System), the genre has a long and storied history on many other platforms. Consider *Wonder Boy III: The Dragon's Trap*, which debuted back in 1988 on Sega's Master System console and has lived on as a fan-favorite ever since. In 2017, it finally received its due when LizardCube and Dotemu graced the 8-bit classic with a top-to-bottom overhaul under the supervision of director Omar Cornutt.

Cornutt, a lifelong Sega fan who helped launch definitive Sega resource smspower.org back in 1997, felt privileged to remake *Wonder Boy III*; the original game was a childhood favorite. "In *The Dragon's Trap*, the adventure felt very elaborate," he says. "We spent months exploring that world."

While the relatively limited reach of the Master System means *Wonder Boy III* never received the same universal acclaim as many of its NES-based contemporaries, Cornutt says the game holds timeless status among the Sega faithful. "The same way a generation of people would return to NES *Zelda* or *Mario* every once in a while, we Sega players returned to *The Dragon's Trap*. Because the game has so many weird secrets, it always feels like a bit of a mystery."

2017's *The Dragon's Trap* lays modernized visuals and music atop a recreation so faithful that players can switch between the remake and the original 8-bit game at any time—and even use old passwords to restore progress. Not only is the world layout the same, so is the combat system, as well as the curse that allows Wonder Boy

to transform into animals to perform certain tasks. Cornutt admits that sprucing up the visuals while preserving the underlying game was a difficult, trial-and-error process. "Sometimes the initial draft of [a new] animation would compromise playability," he says. "That's where I would suggest adjustments, sometimes tweaking the animation timings myself. We made dozens of subtle tweaks to ensure the gameplay felt

right while not compromising animations." Despite these hurdles, the fluid, hand-drawn animation wasn't the most challenging improvement seen in *The Dragon's Trap*. Cornutt says the widescreen view proved to be the significant technical undertaking: "We had to modify the original game to support a 16:9 screen ratio, which had lots of knock-on effects on the level design and the original game engine design, which is still running on an emulated, enhanced Master System. We spent months staring at and hacking Z80 assembly code to make all the little changes necessary for widescreen and 60Hz play."

One thing that didn't cause any headaches for Cornutt and his team was approvals from *Wonder Boy*'s creators. "Once [Ryuichi] Nishizawa agreed on the direction we were taking on the project, he pretty much let us do our own thing." That isn't to say LizardCube had carte blanche, however. "We asked if we could add Asha from *Monster World IV* as the female character for the game," says Cornutt. "His answer was that the world from *Dragon's Trap* and *MW4* didn't overlap, so she shouldn't be in the game." In her place, the team came up with Wonder Girl, who plays exactly like her male counterpart—one of the many little improvements that make *Wonder Boy: The Dragon's Trap* one of the finest video game remakes of all time. **LR**



VOL. 1 ISSUE 2 U.S. \$0.00 / CANADA \$0.00

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