

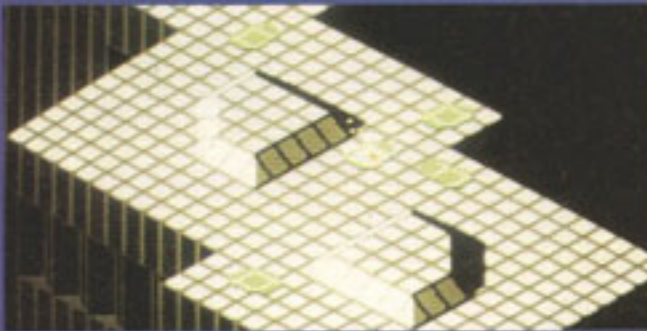


Playing Marbles used to just involve hitting some other marbles out of a chalk circle in the playground. However, those enterprising folks at Atari took the marbles and made them battle it out in an all or nothing race set across varied isometric 3D scrolling landscapes.

The object of each race is simply to reach the GOAL! flag positioned at the end of the course. But before you can get there, it's your job to negotiate a number of cunning traps positioned by the Marble Madness authorities. Each level has its own hazards to overcome and there are also the likes of mutant black marbles and moving acid pools trying to stop your attempts.

Controlling the marble is perhaps the stiffest challenge. The orb-like object responds realistically to the landscape and owing to the inclined surfaces, tends to roll about a bit. Later levels also boast massive ramps that your marble uses to perform nifty jumps.

Sounds like a bit of a challenge, huh? Let's put it this way - Marble Madness is the ultimate test of your ball controlling abilities!



▲ Acid pools dissolve the marble.

MARBLE MADNESS

LEVEL THREE

More holes and slimmer paths make level three a lot more interesting. A potentially deadly wave machine lurks at the end of this stage - aaagggghhhh!



LEVEL FIVE

On this level, everything you know is wrong! The enemy sprites can be destroyed on contact for extra time, and even the gravitational pull is reversed!



LEVEL PREVIEW

The worlds of Marble Madness are very strange indeed, guaranteed to test every aspect of your sphere-controlling abilities. Here's a preview of each level of the game.

LEVEL ONE

The difficulty level is set to vegetable level for the beginner race - even most of the holes are surrounded by safety rails, doh!



LEVEL TWO

Things get marginally more difficult here. Watch out for the deadly iced whirlpool just before the goal line - it spins you out of control!



LEVEL FOUR

Hazards abound on this level. Vacuum cleaners, enemy marbles, massive leaps and crushing mallets are just the beginning of your troubles.



LEVEL SIX

The ULTIMATE race - set in the void of space! Platforms are pretty scarce on this level, and to make things worse, you have no idea where any chute leads!





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▼ Oo-er! Here, the orb-like hero is accosted by strange suction creatures. They're deadly.



COMMENT



I've been waiting for a truly arcade perfect version of Marble Madness for six years, and it's finally arrived. Not only is the gameplay absolutely

JULIAN

identical, but this version also features note-for-note sound and spot-on graphics. Some players might be disappointed by the fact that there are only six levels, but personally it doesn't bother me at all - there are three difficulty settings and I found myself going back to it constantly to see whether I could improve my score, even after I had finished the game many times! If you want to experience a truly classic arcade game, take Marble Madness for a roll.

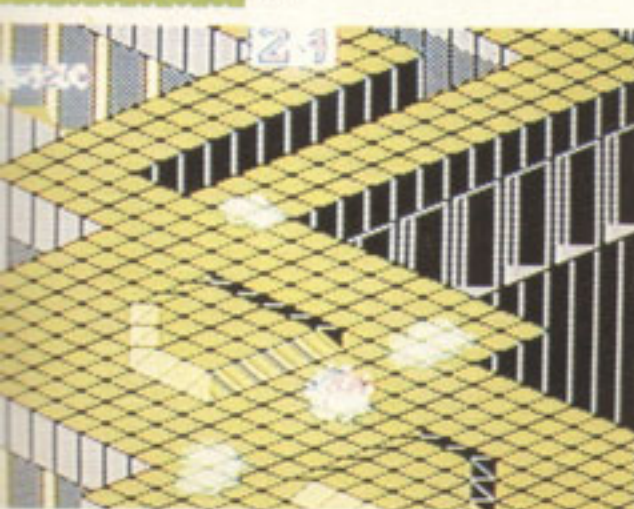
NINTENDO'S GOT BALLS

Nintendo owners that like the look of this game should check out MB Games' version of Marble Madness. It's got all of the features of the Megadrive version including the two-player mode, all of the levels and all the hazards too! It's so good, in fact, that we gave it a groovy 85% when we reviewed it back in MEAN MACHINES issue 12!



CONTROLLING YOUR BALLS

Two control methods are included in Marble Madness. The NORMAL mode moves your marble as per your joystick movements. However, since most of your movements are difficult diagonals, the GRID method can be employed. Here if you say, move right, your marbles moves right in the diagonal perspective (so it appears to be going up and right). With both control methods, pushing one of the buttons boosts the speed of your marble.





REVIEW

A BRACE OF BALLS



Just like the original Atari arcade machine, Marble Madness has the simultaneous two-player option available. This doesn't change the gameplay much, but there are plenty of laughs to be had as the two of you race to the finishing line. Not surprisingly, extra bonus points are given to the winner of each race.



▲ There's just enough time left to reach the GOAL! line!

COMMENT



Marble Madness is yet another excellent game from Electronic Arts. The first things to strike you are the excellent graphics. The subtle hues of the coin-op's backdrops and sprites have been captured perfectly, and the animation on each sprite is truly excellent. In this respect, Marble Madness is arcade perfect. The same can be said of the superlative sound - each of the weird and wacky soundtracks complements the frenzied action perfectly. In the playability stakes, Marble Madness comes out tops too, with the inertia on your marble making for smooth, responsive control. The only slight downer is the fact that there are only six levels, but even if you complete these, the difficulty level is jacked up, providing even more hazards and challenge. Add in the two-player mode and you've got a cartridge that you should add to your collection - NOW!

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▲ A bewildered marble, like this one, is more difficult to control.



▲ The mallets spring up from nowhere to give you a good bang.



▲ Oh dear! Some spaz has sent the marble flying off the edge - doh!



BY: EA

PRICE: £34.99

RELEASE DATE: JANUARY

GAME DIFFICULTY: EASY/MEDIUM

LIVES: INFINITE

CONTINUES: 0

SKILL LEVELS: 3

RESPONSIVENESS: FAST



PRESENTATION 87%

Not much in the way of attractive screens, but there's the choice of control modes and difficulty settings.

GRAPHICS 93%

Extremely well-defined, with some truly superb colouring and animation.

SOUND 86%

Catchy tunes that are stunningly close to the coin-op's. Decent effects abound too!

PLAYABILITY 93%

Playable to the extreme, Marble Madness is instantly addictive!

LASTABILITY 87%

Only six different levels, but actually completing the game is quite a task. The two-player mode keeps the appeal high too.

OVERALL 88%

A perfect arcade conversion, Marble Madness is in a class of its own on the Megadrive!