

JANUARY 2026 // VOLUME 003

MAGFEST POWER



AN INSIDE LOOK AT THE MUSIC, GAMING, AND MORE FROM MAGFEST

FOREWORD

A MESSAGE FROM OUR FROSTED KING

Dear Reader,

HELLO!!! We're glad you made it! Can you believe it's been a whole year since our last Super MAGFest (and MAGFest Power MAG'zine)? We certainly can't believe it.

So, anyways, what have you been up to? How was your 2025? Ours was pretty rad. We got to host MAGLabs again, complete with our very own beer - Pixelated Pilsner! I couldn't have any, because I'm a donut (don't wanna get soggy), but I hear it was a big hit! Let's see... MAGStock went all out on the Friday the 13th theme with an insane ARG, and somehow roped in Bard City for the finale! 🎉 Not to be outdone, but determined to out-sun-and-fun, MAGWest closed out with a BIG SHOT summer featuring magFAST for charity and shenanigans, a Secret Night Market of family friendly fun, the debut of the Game Grooves/ MAGWest Charity Album, and a specialty Mega Ran Black Materia performance, all while keeping the vibes very 🌴 Costa Del Sol – if you know, you know.

We wouldn't be MAGFest if we didn't help power events with our friends - SAAM Arcade, BitGen Gamer Fest, and [PORTLAND, OR enters the chat] MAGWest MiniFest! Yep, we made a trip to Portland for some music, indie games, and good vibes. I promise it wasn't just a pilgrimage to a familiar kingdom, Voodoo Doughnuts...

But the best part about all of it was the friends we made along the way. That's you! You are our

friends! We can't say enough how much it means to us to have tens of thousands of people joining our music and gaming festivals. But that's not going to stop us from trying. And we try so hard for y'all. THANK YOU! It is incredibly heart-warming to see the joy and excitement you bring into our gaming spaces, concerts, makerspace, panels, and all the other wacky stuff our volunteers put on (we're looking at you, Charity Auction 🎰). Seriously though, if you haven't witnessed our over-the-top Charity Auction before, put that on your calendar immediately, and maybe bring \$5 for a mystery prize. Sure, there's a 12% chance it will be RiverDance on DVD, but there's a 100% chance of that \$5 going directly to Child's Play!

Hearts and Sprinkles,



-King Donut*

President, CEO,
Chairman of the Board,
King of MAGFest

*Ghostwritten by King Donut on behalf of our Employees, Board of Directors, Chair & Division Teams, and many other people who truly appreciate your love and support.

IS THERE SOMETHING
YOU'D LOVE TO SEE?
TELL US
ABOUT IT!



NOTE FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

It's not easy following King Donut, but that's what happens when you invite royalty to deliver the opener. I'll echo the King's sentiments - thank you all for reading the 3rd issue of MAGFest Power, arguably the best issue yet. None of this would be possible without the talented and dedicated MAGFest Power MAG'zine staff, affectionately known around here as the Zine Team. We officially kicked this project off April 1st, and unofficially started pre-planning January 13th. That's right, Super 2025 hadn't even started yet, and we were already working on this issue for 2026. This has been a true passion project for all of us, and I hope that comes through in our words.

Before you carry on, please consider thanking everyone involved. Even though we've worked hundreds of hours, we're all probably floating around Super working more. We love what we do, and we just can't stop. **Dac, you can't fix me.** 🎉

I want to personally thank our editors - Emily, Heather, Jez, Rafe, and Silvi - for tracking down sources and writing the best articles we could ever ask for. To our guest contributors - The Protomen, Crush40, The Arkadian,

Mike (evilsonic, Director of Duels), Cybertronic Spree, Tiberian Sons, Mustin and The OneUps, stemage, Jeff from Marshall Art, darmock from Steel Samurai, Kevin from Super Strikers, and our very own V and emfedex - thank you for giving us more content than we knew what to do with! This magazine wouldn't have the best artwork and layouts without the Theme Team - Kaitie, Twill, Luna, Daniel, Art, and ThatGamerGrl. The literal reason the magazine entered this world to begin with, and an actual madman - GREG. Seriously, Greg, you really tied the room together. Now take a nap, please.

And finally, thank you to Dac and Deb for letting us run away with part of your budget. I know I've added some stress to your lives with my level of unhingedness, and I'll try my best to not actually make your lives any harder with my shenanigans.

A stylized signature of the name 'JFrye' is written in a flowing, cursive font. Below the signature is a small, abstract illustration of a letter 'J' with a face, having large, expressive eyes and a small smile.

-JFrye,
Editor-in-Chief,
MAGFest Power

MEET THE EDITORS

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MAGFEST POWER

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BIGMA

REPLICA MANUFACTURING & CORRUPTION
OHM (OMEGA HARBOR MFG.)

AND THE LIST GOES (HALCYON) AND ON

VOLUME 3 / JANUARY 2026

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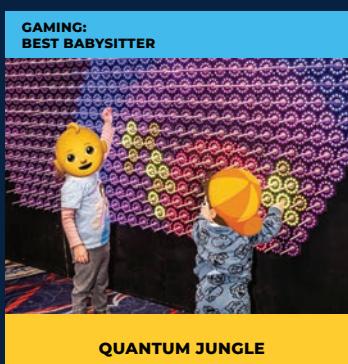
20X6TH ANNUAL STAFF-SELECTED AWARD RECIPIENTS



DINO - ZAKU / SUPER STRIKERS



THESE PONDERERS - DODECIMATION



QUANTUM JUNGLE

MAGFEST

20X6

2026 OFFICIAL MAG'ZINE

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YOU PICK THE STORY

You're about to embark on an epic journey only available as a Massively MAGFest Offline Roleplaying Game (MMORPG) where your decisions affect the outcome. How does it work? Easy - read the story introduction below, then make your decision on how to proceed. Your decision will lead you to the next page in your story. Good luck, adventurer!



by
Jez Whitehall

It's the cold that wakes you.

Your crew had scored a Gaylord room, and while it was amazing, the room had been unreasonably warm. Had a roommate cracked the window?

You're about to rub the sleep from your eyes when the view stops you. You aren't in your hotel room or even the National Harbor anymore. At least not as you know it. What was once the Gaylord lies in front of you, the walls crumbling and the giant glass panes shattered and scattered across what was once the atrium. The empty frames of the glass doors flop lazily in the breeze.

What happened? It was Friday and MAGFest was just getting started. Your roomies, however, were already calling it a night. Not ready to turn in you'd gone back out. You eventually found yourself in the arcade at an old arcade machine. The cabinet was blank, but the game was some kind of platformer. No problem, you'd played a couple of the Mega Man X games as a kid and loved them.

But just a few minutes into the first level the game had totally glitched out, making an awful roaring sound and displaying a warning about a virus before shutting down. Defeated, you decided to catch a few zzz's. After that... the rest of the night is a blur.

And then you woke up here. Fighting the panic, you decide you can't just sit here. The Gaylord is gone, but turning, you spot the Capital Wheel, still standing. Maybe if you can get up there you'll have a better view? You head off down the deteriorating sidewalk. The silence where there was once the bustle of gamers and cosplayers is eerie enough to

give you goosebumps. But as you approach the wheel, movement catches your eye.

It's another person! A cosplayer, from the lab coat. You start towards him, relieved you aren't alone, until you realize he's digging frantically in the sand. So many zombie movies flash through your head, but as you back away, you trip over something.

It's an arm. And not the big statue kind, either. Your sudden gasp alerts the cosplayer, and he whirls around.

"Oh! You've found them! Great work!" He hurries over to you. "This is my latest archaeology project, you see!"

"Er... Who exactly are you?" You ask, watching as he uncovers more of the arm. It looks like another cosplayer from the shiny metal.

"My name is Dr. Hype! I'm hopeful this technology can help me fix things here." You've met this kind of cosplayer before, the kind that NEVER breaks character.

"What exactly went wrong that you have to fix?"

"What went wrong? This was once a wonderful place," he says, looking up wistfully for a moment. "A place where music and games brought everyone together. But at the peak of the hype, a concert for something called 'The Protomen', the sound system was hijacked and a virus transmitted. The mascots on stage were turned into horrible RemiXes of themselves. The most dangerous of them all is Bigma, the Warrior of Sound."

"I'm sorry, the Warrior of Sound is called WHAT?" It's still hard to shake the feeling

you're being pranked, but it's also hard to ignore the empty, ruined landscape.

"Bigma!" He has the chest and most of the head of the person he's digging out uncovered, and you begin helping shift the sand. "The RemiXes trampled over music and free expression. Each took on a music style and twisted it. But we'll remind them of what they really stand for, and we'll do it with this!" He gestures to the body in the sand, now mostly uncovered. It's humanoid, with an M shaped mask and sleek white and gray design. Its right arm is styled like a cannon. The thing you dug up looks a bit like a robot. Maybe a lot like a robot.

"What is this?"

"It's a robot!" Dr. Hype says with glee, flipping a switch. The panels and helmet begin to glow a bright teal. The eyes flicker open.

The robot sits up, rubbing its head. "Where am I? What happened? Sawtooth?"

"Hello! Do you recall anything?"

The robot looks around. "My name... is Pulse. My purpose... my purpose is to bring the music back to this silent world." Pulse hefts the arm canon, shaking the sand out of it.

"Marvelous! Is your Sound Core intact?" Pulse carefully takes aim, the meter on their arm canon charging. With a deafening noise they fire of a blast of sound, neatly punching a hole in the spokes of the Capital Wheel. You postpone your plans to climb it.

"Fantastic! Do you remember what we need to do next?"

"Of course," says Pulse. "We have to defeat Bigma and the RemiXes."

"Excellent! We're all on the same page then," He says as Pulse staggers in the sand. "Are you... having any trouble?"

"Some of my systems seem to have been damaged. I'm not sure I can do it alone." Dr. Hype ponders for a moment, and then pulls out something that looks like a Swadge in the shape of Pulse's head.

"I recovered this from the building. If you'll give me a minute, I can reconfigure it." He pulls out a screwdriver and begins to work. "It already has a screen, speakers, a control pad, and can even communicate with nearby devices, all in this compact form. A fantastic piece of engineering! If I just attune it to Pulse..." A few moments more and the lights all shimmer in sync. He passes the modified Swadge to you.

"What am I supposed to do with this?"

"Try the controls as Pulse runs! You should be able to give them direction, communicate, and see what's going on." Sure enough, there's a small image of the three of you on the screen. If you use the control pad while Pulse runs and jumps, they have a much smoother time.

"Alright! It looks like you two have it down! We should be ready to face the RemiXes."

"Already? What kind of RemiXes will we have to fight?"

"That's the spirit!" You begin to think Dr. Hype would hype you up if you told him you were going to lay down and sleep until the whole thing was over.

"According to my research..." He squints at a tattered magazine page on his clipboard. "It

looks like there's Kinetic Donut, Smash Gorilla, Deadeye Chirpzi, Grind Pangolin, Drain Bat, Flare Gryffyn, and Rip Baroness. And of course, there's Bigma himself. We don't know much about the abilities of the ReMixes, so this will be a fantastic way to research!"

The faded image he shows you is a line up of past MAGFest characters, smiling and waving. You can't imagine the beloved King Donut hurting anyone. Ember Demon, yeah, you can kind of see her going bad, but never Percy and Jasper, the inclusive magpies. You want to help. But more than that, you want to bring the music and fun back to MAGFest, and get back to partying and gaming.

"Let's do this. Let's save MAGFest!"

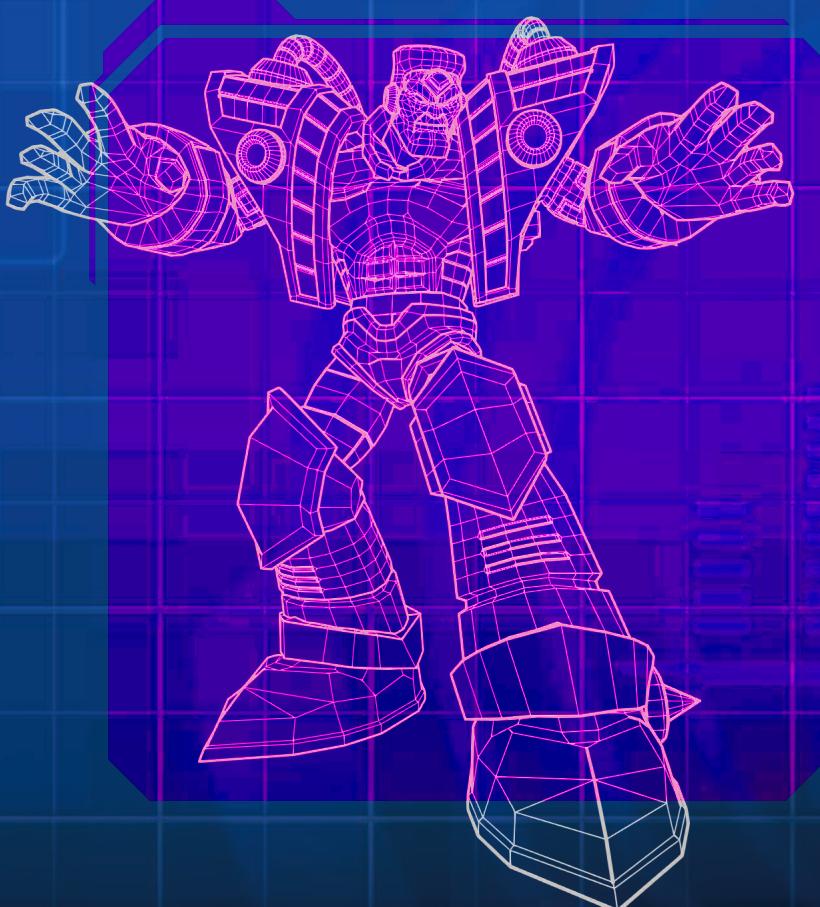
WHICH REMIX ARE YOU
FIGHTING FIRST?

KINETIC DONUT ▶ PG. 20

FLARE GRYFFYN ▶ PG. 26

SMASH GORILLA ▶ PG. 24

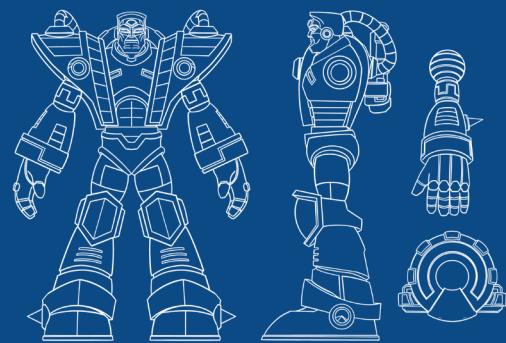
BIGMA ▶ PG. 28



OBJECTIVE: FIND AND DEFEAT BIGMA

Once the legendary Master of Ceremonies, **BIGMA** was created to unify and protect MAGFest through the power of music and gaming. But after a mysterious encounter with the MAGiX Virus, his purpose became warped. Now, Bigma believes that music is chaos, and only total control over sound can bring true order.

His devastating Colossal ROAR silences all in its path, spreading the virus and turning artists into obedient drones. With an army of corrupted MAGiX RemiXes—mechanical lieutenants created in the image of former MAGFest mascots and icons—Bigma reigns as the tyrant of the Omega Harbor.



Feeling winded?

PUT A LITTLE

gas

BACK IN YOUR TANK



TRY OUR NEW

Musical fruit

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ONLY AT

the BAKED BEAN CAFÉ

AVAILABLE FOR AN EXTREMELY LIMITED TIME • STRICT LIMIT OF ONE PER CUSTOMER
TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR TO SEE IF THE MUSICAL FRUIT REFRESHER IS RIGHT FOR YOU

MUSIC AND GAMING



OUR **MUSIC** SECTION puts the **M** in MAGFest, setting the stage for the stars, songs, software, and square waves that keep us all rocking out throughout the festival. Stay tuned for interviews, previews, essays, and more...!



The Protomen pack the house on the Main Stage at Super MAGFest 2024

SHEDDING SOME LIGHT ON THE FUTURE

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE PROTOMEN

We know what you're here for. Don't lie, you flipped right to this page once you saw it in the Table of Contents. This interview has been a long time coming, so we'll stop teasing you.

The Protomen - Act III. How does it feel to finally get Act III pressed?

COMMANDER: Slow down there, fella... your readers will be reading this interview in January 2026... but right now, in our timeline, it's September and the record has yet to be pressed and is definitely not out yet. So we're not gonna go counting our sheep before they hatch, but this is the closest we've ever been to having the record out, and it feels pretty great. Imagine how great it'll feel when we're all at MAGFest together... holding our physical copies aloft in the sky, screaming and dancing around the merch booth, completely weirding out all the innocent bystanders just walking through the vendor hall minding their own business. It's gonna be magical. I'd say we've got a 50/50 chance.

It's no secret that Act III has been in the works for years. How has time impacted the vision and tone of the story?

PANTHER: We've had a pretty good idea of where the story was headed for a very long time. The bones of this album have been in place since not long after Act II was released... and they've mostly held together in the same basic shape this whole time.

Once we'd fleshed out the whole story, we stepped back and listened to what we had and

realized that it was still incomplete somehow. It didn't match the full soundtrack we heard in our brains. We had some holes to fill that we couldn't see until we had the whole record to listen to. We also realized that we needed a bit of help to get it where it needed to be from a production standpoint. We knew we wanted to continue that upward climb we'd started with Act II and furthered with the Cover Up.

We were lucky enough to find a fella here in Nashville by the name of David Kalmusky. He's a world class producer/engineer who decided to let us ruin his (and the entire crew over at Addiction

Sound Studios') world for the past several years. When he looks back on his life, he will find that he spent much more time with us than anyone else he's ever known (other than maybe Journey). It will make him very sad, but I think he'll still remember the record we made together somewhat fondly.

COMMANDER: And yeah, that pandemic did a pretty good job of wrecking any momentum we had going. But it also forced a bit of downtime to hone some of the more nuanced bits of the story, which of course caused us to continue to rework things... all on an indie-band budget that forces a snail's pace.





PANTHER: What we're saying is.... we hope this album is good. But if it's not, we're happy to go back and keep working on it.

Obviously every Protomen fan knows the story so far (and for anyone that doesn't, we'll include a synopsis after this interview). What would you like listeners to know going into Act III?

PANTHER: Some of you already know this, but it turns out a lot of people don't know that our physical albums come with a libretto (of sorts) that is timed out for a read-along with the music, and that fills in most of the gaps of the albums' story. I think we'd recommend first reading along with Acts I and II before going into Act III. If you don't have a physical copy of our first two albums, guess who has a merch booth right here at Super MAGFest? (Also, you can find the booklet/librettos/liner notes online pretty easily at this point).



You've just wrapped up a busy day in the studio, and you're hungry for a monster meal. What's your go-to hot sauce, and what are you pouring it on/in?

COMMANDER: That's sort of an impossible question, because there's a specific hot sauce for everything. But my general go-to is my orange pulp habanero sauce (or my datil version) that I make myself. As for the where, we'd likely end up at Tapatio (a food truck/restaurant, not to be confused with another great hot sauce I didn't make or the world's best Doritos) for some awesome burritos and tacos.

Which track from The Cover Up was your favorite to record, and why was it In The Air Tonight?

COMMANDER: I think it actually WAS "In The Air Tonight" for me, because it was great getting to meet Phil Collins during that process. He heard that we were gonna cover it, so he flew into town and asked if he could sing backup and play drums on it, but we had to decline because of the well-known beef he has with Ralph Macchio. See, the thing is, Ralph Macchio is the one that actually commissioned us to cover "In The Air Tonight," because he wanted to use our version in an episode of their wonderful Cobra Kai series that would come out 5 years later. And the background on the beef is that Phil apparently auditioned for the part of Daniel LaRusso back in 1983, but was passed on because he was like 33 at the time. They were looking for more of a 23 year old 17 year old. Supposedly Phil made an objectionable comment to Macchio at the audition and Macchio still hasn't

let it go to this day. Also, interestingly enough, none of that happened. As far as we know Phil and Ralph live happily together in England... or maybe it's Long Island. But for real? My favorite to record was probably "Mr Roboto," "Silent Running," or "I Still Believe." Can't really choose.

MURPHY: "Drove All Night" was pretty special to work up. I brought that one to the table after obsessing over the original, sung by Roy Orbison (RIP to him and the sick rat tail he grew out in his final days as part of a bet with Johnny Cash). Legend has it that his version of the song is a demo take and was never really finished. So I knew we could "Maiden" it up at the end. Roy came to me in a dream in 2015 (with his deathbed rat tail now grown out to be something more of a Reggie Bannister) and congratulated us on finishing it that way. He was pleased.

PANTHER: Many of those songs were terrifying

Comprised of famous cover songs, The Cover Up (Original Motion Picture Soundtrack), released Jan 2015, is the Protomen's soundtrack to an in-universe movie



to attempt. They're all culturally iconic and super important to us personally. I won't tell you which ones I think we failed miserably on, but I think we were especially proud of how "In The Air Tonight" turned out. Also, we were shocked at how few people knew "I Still Believe." Even with it being on the Lost Boys soundtrack, that seemed to be a hidden treasure for some people. We've loved The Call's original version (and really their entire catalog) forever... but we also knew we couldn't cover that jam without the incredible sax part from Tim Cappello's version. It's a shame we didn't think to get him to play it on the album. But having him on Act III is a pretty solid consolation prize.

When you're off duty at Super MAGFest, what are your must-do's?

COMMANDER: I tend to wander around the vendor floor looking for TurboGrafx 16/PC Engine stuff, and then I usually find the Tron machine in the arcade. I also like to go hang out in the console museum, that place is pretty rad. Aside from that, I like long walks on the beach and watching the sunset on a cold January morning in National Harbor.

MURPHY: Wait, I ALSO like long walks on

the beach and watching the sunset (and sunrise) on a cold January morning in National Harbor overlooking the Potomac. Commander...Is that you I always run into when it's too dark to see?

PANTHER: I dislike walking. So I'll either be sitting in my hotel room trying to decode secret messages, or hanging out in the concert hall listening to all the awesome bands play.

COMMANDER: Hold on... there are bands at MAGFest??

Act IV maybe?

COMMANDER: I think we're gonna skip right to Act V.

PANTHER: ...But it won't come out until 2095.

MURPHY: Maybe we should just rerecord Act III?

Where can folks listen to Act III?

COMMANDER: Well, again, since we're doing this interview 4 months before Super MAGFest we're not quite sure how to answer this one, aside from it'll be available on all the streaming platforms in the known universe, and you'll be able to purchase the albums from our website, protomen.com - As for live shows... you can come to three of them this

weekend! Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights!

What are some of your favorite numbers?

PANTHER: Well, I'm pretty partial to **18-17-18-10-34-3-5-7-11-20-7-8**. Thanks for asking.

Let's end with a fun one - you've won tickets to any amusement park in the world. Where are we going and what's the first thing we do once we're inside?

COMMANDER: I think we're just gonna follow Bit Brigade Luke wherever he's going. He's the real amusement park connoisseur. As for what we're gonna do when we get there? Likely ride the first ride with him and spend the next 30 minutes puking on some old lady's feet. Sorry, old lady!

MURPHY: I've actually done this exact thing with Luke about 6 years ago. He toted me around for 2 days like a robot doll he won after crushing 20 plastic plates with a softball. The silver upchuck was everywhere, irreparably staining Cedar Point and Kings Island.





A HUGE THANKS TO THE PROTOMEN

for collaborating with us both on stage and in print!

Obviously don't miss their performances

THURSDAY, FRIDAY, AND SATURDAY

NIGHTS ON

MAIN STAGE

and/or if you're reading this after Super,
make sure to check out their full suite of albums!

PROTOMEN

UP NEXT: THE PROTOMEN'S
STORY SYNOPSIS
SPECIAL FEATURE IN THE NEXT SECTION! 



A MAGFEST POWER SPECIAL FEATURE

THE PROTOMEN: ACTS I & II

A SYNOPSIS OF THE MUSICAL STORY SO FAR

We completely get it - sometimes you just want to read from a trusted source to confirm your interpretation of an artist's story. No problem! Our very own emfedex sat down with both the albums and their included story booklets & lyric sheets, and wrote out the entire storyline from The Protomen (Act I) and Act II: The Father of Death. But that's not all - emfedex also somehow, someway, got an official review and blessing from The Protomen! (Does that make this article eligible to be an Encyclopedia source?)

It was the year 200X, and the world was under the tyranny of an authoritarian despot named Dr. Wily.

The only man who dared challenge this reign of terror worked tirelessly to build a champion of justice to liberate the people by destroying Wily's robot army. That champion was Protoman; and when his creator, Dr. Light, unleashed his unbeatable machine a great battle ensued that drew a large crowd of bystanders who watched eagerly. Protoman fought heroically, but the odds were against him. Eventually he was violently overcome

by sheer numbers, and Dr. Wily ordered his destruction. The crowd of people watched on but not one among them had the courage to speak or act against the travesty before them. They resigned to their fate as they watched Protoman face his. With his death they sealed their own and in their collective cowardice they chanted the broken words: **"we are the dead."**

In the aftermath of the violent battle, Dr. Light watched as the mob of cowards dispersed back to their lives of complacent slavery. Some amongst them carried the only remains of the battle - Protoman's scarred

helmet - to a makeshift grave. Emotions of grief, remorse, and regret started to overwhelm Dr. Light as he began to process all that happened. He had futilely sent his own son to his demise for a people that didn't deserve it, and his heart began to burn with anger. He returned to his workshop and began to destroy it in a blind rage; but as the parts of his machines began to fall and collapse around him he suddenly realized that a shape took form! A form shaped by his love, another son who he vowed never to sacrifice to a populace of cowards content to suffer in silence as he did his last. A son he would love and cherish - Megaman!



AN OVERVIEW OF THE PROTOMEN

RELEASED
SEPTEMBER 3, 2005

LABEL
SELF-RELEASED .
SOUND MACHINE (RE-RELEASE)

PRODUCED BY
HEATH WHO HATH NO NAME

As the years went by, the legendary name of Protoman was still whispered in the shadows by the people. Dr. Light feared the day would come that Megaman would learn of his lost brother and seek vengeance. Rather than wait out the inevitable, he told the story himself and urged Megaman to see the futility of fighting against Wily if the people won't stand for themselves. Shocked by the revelation of his lost brother, Megaman ran out into the night and tried to process his feelings. Feeling pity for the people, he felt it unjust to leave them to their fate and searched for hope they would persevere one day. As he found himself approaching the lonely grave of his lost brother, men began to gather around him. It was then that he made out the angry, scrawled words that defaced the marker on the resting place of his only brother: **“hope rides alone.”**

Megaman rushed through the night bolstered by his thirst for vengeance and the encouragement of the human mob that followed. Metal loudspeakers tried to quell the uprising and maintain control but they pushed past them all with one singular purpose. Wily's robot army stepped out to block their advancement towards the fortress, commanded by one mysterious figure shrouded in the darkness. Megaman fought

his way forward, his rage focused against the leader who would fall by his hand. Just before the killing shot was fired, the figure stepped out of the shadows and Megaman recognized he was not just another robot. Frozen in disbelief, he didn't see the face of evil but that of a hero. A face like his own, the face of his lost brother.

As Megaman fell to his knees in shock, his father emerged from the crowd and spoke a hard truth aloud. Protoman still lived but opposed his own brother. The vengeance Megaman sought, and the justice for the people he wished to save, are incompatible now, and he cannot have it both ways. Protoman taunted the crowd of people, insisting none among them have the courage to fight for their own kind. As the people remain unmoved by his words, Protoman implored his brother to back down and not be their martyr as he played this role before and foresees no alternate outcome. While pleading with his brother, Protoman took notice of his father in the crowd. For an instant the light in his eyes shifted and suddenly he began to destroy the remainder of Wily's robots. Destroying his own legions between them, he made his way to the front to face his brother and demanded the two fight one on one to determine the people's fate.

A great debate ensued between the two to decide the fate of man. Megaman began to see his brother's point that the crowd is weak and will never stand for themselves. Protoman taunted the crowd for their cowardice and in fear of their lives the people pleaded for Megaman to save them and kill Protoman! After a blinding flash and deafening sound the two brothers stood merely feet apart. Protoman fell to the ground dying and whispered his final words into his brother's ear, “maybe someday they'll see a hero is just a man who knows he is free.” Megaman finally understood and looked up at the pleased crowd seeing no heroes among them. Megaman finally saw them for who they are, they are the dead.

The crowd proclaimed Megaman their hero and as they chanted praises at him he looked towards the robot army that was poised for the action depending on his next move. Megaman dropped his battle scarred helmet and the robots looked up high toward the fortress that safely housed Dr. Wily from the battle. With a wave of his hand the robots began to slay everyone, those in the front most eager to watch the bloodshed being the first to have it reciprocated. Megaman made no move to stop this, these people were already dead even if they didn't know it yet. They were slaves to their weakness and cowardice and there was nothing he could do for them. Even if they were to survive they'd never truly be alive. He walked towards the edge of the city, never looking back at the sounds of screaming and carnage behind him. As the city burned behind him one sound finally caused him to turn and look back. A choir of human voices chanting in unison: **“we are the dead.”**

ACT II

CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE



Two great men looked out onto the city from their workshop and debated their next actions, which would determine its fate.

Thomas Light had dedicated his life to building machines that would improve the quality of life for hard-working people. His father worked himself to the grave, and the one he loved was on the same path. His machines could have ended this type of suffering for everyone. Albert Wily wanted to seize this opportunity to take back something for themselves and become the leaders he believed the weak-willed people needed. He argued that the machines could easily be converted to become soldiers as needed, but Tom still believed that his ideals and the fortitude of man would triumph. Anxious over the decision, Tom pulled the lever to engage the machinery and walked out into the night, thinking of his beloved, Emily. Believing his partner a fool, Albert's gaze shifted from the lifeless eyes of each machine until it met one with a single red light. This eye shined brightly through a black blast shield on a dark green helmet. Albert shuddered at the sniper robot - his own modification - and left the workshop. The machine following shortly behind - both men were going to the same place.

**AN OVERVIEW OF
ACT II:
THE FATHER OF DEATH**

RELEASED
SEPTEMBER 8, 2009

LABEL
SOUND MACHINE

PRODUCED BY
ALAN SHACKLOCK,
THE PROTOMEN

As Thomas walked home, lost in thought, he struggled with the decision he had just made, and the unforeseen consequences it could bring. Thoughts of his beloved were a comfort to him and he hoped he could make things right. But Thomas failed to notice the familiar car passing him. Albert reached Light's home first, to begin ransacking the place for some crucial element to his plan. Emily was also on her way to Tom's apartment after another long day working at the factory. In her hands, so blistered and sore from hard work, she carried a personal letter to deliver to her beloved. Exchanging letters had been a ritual they had commonly practiced due to their busy lives, which often separated them. As she approached the apartment, she caught Albert in the act of his trespass. Unaware of his red-eyed machine lurking in the shadows, she demanded answers from him. He tried to convince her to come away with him, but once he realized that her devotion to Light was unimpeachable, he ordered his new creation to murder her.

When Thomas arrived home, the green-helmeted assassin was still there. He first noticed the red light pulsating from the darkness of his fire escape and then the bloody, dripping knife in its hand. Confused at first as to why this machine from his workshop was there,

its purpose became clear to Thomas when it tossed the knife on the floor towards Emily's lifeless body. The assassin jumped to the ground below, leaving a broken Thomas cradling his beloved's body. Devastated, he kissed her forehead one last time and put the letter from her calloused hands in his coat pocket. His wild stories of robotic killers did little to convince the police of his innocence, leaving him no choice but to jump from the window and escape into the darkness.

Albert Wily fielded the reporters' endless questions with his practiced answers, but his true focus was set towards the next stage of his plan. Lying to them about his partner wasn't enough; it was just another step towards getting the control he wanted. He walked away from the barrage of (soon-to-be obsolete) voices to his broadcast studio; a red blinking light heralded the start of this moment of glory. The hum of a thousand tubes powering a gigantic screen popped to life and lit up the night for everyone in the city to see. As Wily's face came into focus, for the first time the people looked to one man towering above the city. They saw the face of a leader espousing inspirational opening thoughts. He then assured them that the murderer, Thomas Light, would be apprehended and their city made safe again.

They trusted him completely.

Thomas was arrested at the cemetery where Emily had just been buried. No one attended her service. Not even her coworkers from the factory were there, as they had to take extra shifts to make up for her absence. It angered him to witness the hypocrisy of not one person there for her when so many were calling for his judgment. They weren't looking for justice for her, they were just looking for someone to be punished, and Wily had

already given them a name. The city was told all they needed to know by the screen. Every thread of evidence was dissected and rebuilt by Wily's media machine to incriminate Light and turn the population against him. Broken by his loss, he waited for the inevitable verdict of guilty, but it never came. Thomas left the courtroom a free man only to meet an angry mob outside. Their feeling of injustice was palpable; the telescreen had already told them their judicial system would fail, that the laws of the city were flawed and now they would obviously have to take matters into their own hands if justice was to be served. Thomas knew his only recourse was to flee the city. Police helped him push through the furious sea of people and escorted him to the old train station. As his train pulled away, he looked back at the tower he helped create, his partner's face screaming at the crowd from the giant screen, whipping them into a frenzy.

This was Albert Wily's city now.

As the years passed, the city was rebuilt into a technological marvel. A sleek and silver bullet train was constructed around the new glass and steel buildings that pierced the sky. As the machines toiled endlessly on reconstruction, the undesirables, the homeless and the criminals all vanished. Since the large telescreen atop the city now sent out signals to hundreds of smaller satellite screens, the information flow was endless! People were living lives of leisure in a steel-plated utopia now that the factories and mines were fully automated. As the next generation grew up under this new normalcy, the older ones felt no need to speak of the "before" times. What good could come from telling the children of the horrific world that had been, when men ran themselves? Things were so perfect now that it seemed dangerous to speak of old. They were

all the recipients of a great gift by a great man; however, an unspoken fear dangled over their heads. A fear that this silence kept them safe. Ghost stories of a demon with a single red eye haunted them nonetheless – a dread spectre that would whisk away dissenting voices. A new generation grew up inside metal hands that encircled the neck of the city.

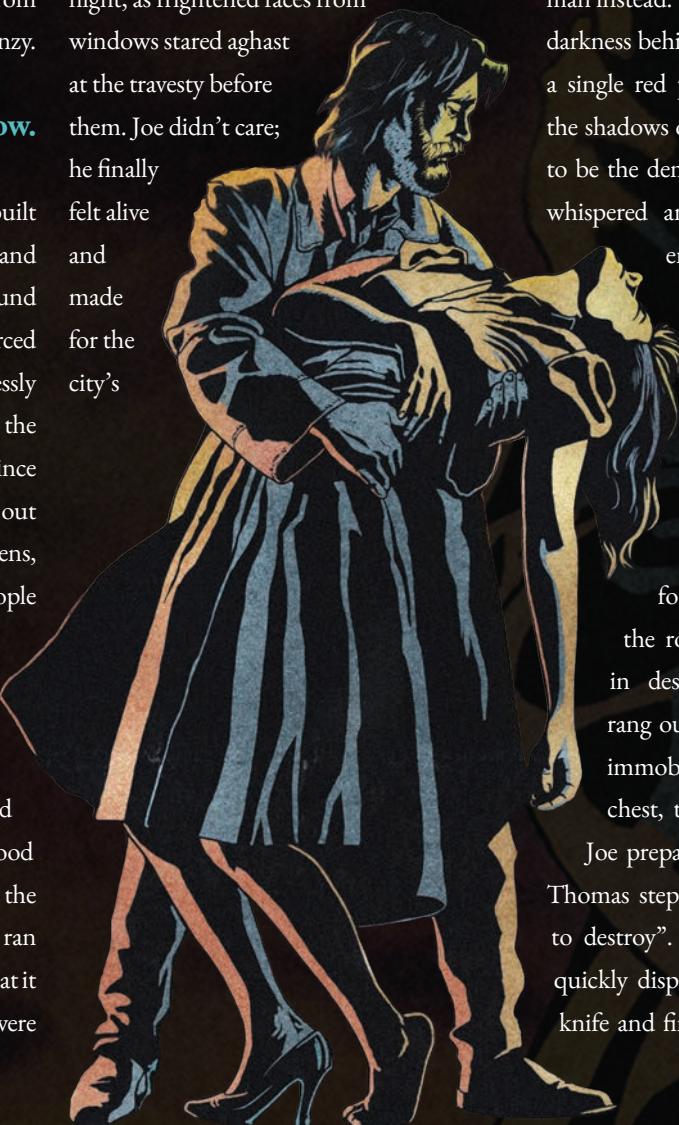
Some knew deep down something was horribly wrong. One such young man, Joe, sensed this city was a stagnant prison of complacency and had a burning desire to break free. His father had a motorbike, a relic made of iron that burned gasoline and ripped at the stifling silence, that seemed out of place in this city of shining glass and metal. With a kick, Joe started the engine and it roared to life. He rode fast through the night, as frightened faces from windows stared aghast at the travesty before them. Joe didn't care; he finally

felt alive and made for the city's

outskirts. When he finally broke out of the bubble of oppressive brightness, he slowed down and looked around in the darkness. There was a comfort in the relative silence. No sounds of traffic. No metal footsteps patrolling. But even here, Joe couldn't escape the incessant sound of the telescreens. He looked back to watch a familiar face on the giant screen, babbling incessantly but saying nothing.

Joe felt watched all night, but not by the screens. Over their sound, he heard slow footsteps approaching, and he recalled the stories of the red-eyed assassin that the children of the city loved to repeat. "Light's monster," they called it, and he readied his knife at the sound of the approaching steps, but out of the darkness emerged a gray-haired man instead. The man pointed a finger at the darkness behind Joe, who then turned to see a single red pulsing light pushing through the shadows of the black alley. Joe knew this to be the demon of which the city fearfully whispered and he taunted the figure to emerge into the light. The sniper robot didn't draw the gun at its side but slowly approached with a long knife. Joe rushed at the machine and tackled it but the machine ended up on top throttling Joe's neck. His hands blindly reached out for any defense and snatched the robot's gun. Pulling the trigger in desperation, a devastating blast rang out. Now lying several feet away, immobilized with a smoking hole in its chest, the robot's red eye was fading.

Joe prepared to fire the killing shot but Thomas stepped in, "I built this. It's mine to destroy". His grim words delivered, he quickly dispatched the machine with Joe's knife and finally introduced himself. They



both dragged the body into the protection of the shadows, and Thomas removed the green helmet from the robot's body, motioned to Joe, and said, "Here...try this on."

They carefully made plans to take out the main telescreen at the top of the tower in central city: Wily's tower. With that destroyed, it would stop the broadcasts going out to all the satellite screens throughout the city. With Wily blinded, Light could re-enter the city undetected and kill his old partner. His only chance at freedom and revenge, he could destroy the man that had taken everything from him. With their small window before the sniper robot was reported missing soon closing, Thomas locked the green helmet under Joe's chin and sent him off with a bag of explosives.

Joe raced towards the tower on his motorcycle. With each screen he passed along the way, reports escalated of an incident in the outer rim: alerts about an armed assailant, a growing threat to public safety. Joe was like a missile aimed at the great steel arm holding a torch of fear over the city. The main telescreen was visible from everywhere and its destruction would be felt by all. Joe aimed the bike at the main doors of the tower, jumping off at the last moment. Six hundred pounds of iron and chrome exploded into the sealed doors. Joe rushed inside as sirens erupted around him and raced to the top of the tower to the transmitter. When he reached the roof, he was shocked to see it had already been lined with explosives. Before he could escape, the timer reached zero and triggered the explosion, flinging his lifeless body from the roof. As Light approached the plaza, he watched the flames erupting from the tower and saw what could only be Joe's body plummet to the ground. By the time he finally reached the boy, a crowd had gathered

around them. The glare of the flames above were reflected in the helmet of the scarred blast shield Joe was wearing. Explosions rang out in the distance as Thomas saw, one by one, the satellite telescreens splintering in a succession of flaming eruptions.

Light understood immediately that this was all part of a plan by Wily's design. From a tower far to the east at the edge of the city a red light pulsed: a second transmitter. They had stopped nothing. As he fell to his knees, crying out at their failure, the enormous loudspeakers began to howl things like "threats to safety" and "insurgent forces". The frightened people were commanded to return to their homes lest they be counted among the criminals. Thousands of robots, girded in helmets of green, began marching from the steel gates of the eastern complex. Wily had built a fortress and an army – he'd only been waiting for this pretext to unleash it.

Thomas had sealed everyone's fate, and now a thousand red eyes marched towards them to deliver the city's reckoning. He lamented all his regrets to his departed Emily as the tower crashed down around him. With the end in sight, he finally steeled his courage to read the letter he pocketed from her lifeless hands all those years ago. Her final words - "This city needs you now," she'd said - rang out like a chorus calling to him. Thomas looked down at Joe's mangled body and removed the green helmet from his head. Recognizing this battered face as that of a hero, he finally spoke:

"Joe, when you see Emily. Tell her to wait for me, 'cause I still have work to do..."



ACT III

GET THE ALBUM AND READ ALONG WITH THE LINER NOTES AS YOU LISTEN TO EXPERIENCE THE CONTINUATION OF THE STORY!





HIDDEN HOLO-BEACON FOUND > COMMUNICATIONS SIGNAL DETECTED



DATA CAPSULE :: MODEL HAWKINS-MK.2 ::

comms ports available... ATTEMPTING TO CONNECT...
comms uplink established.

accessing stored message log... MESSAGE RECEIVED.
decoding data...
MESSAGE DATA CORRUPTED. attempting to compensate... . . .

DATA RETRIEVAL LOG:

- partial data retrieval succeeded
- data fragment isolated and decoded // remaining data lost.

// ATTEMPTING DECRYPTION... DECRYPTION FAILED
// PRIVATE KEY [A31] PARTIALLY CORRUPTED

// -- OUTPUT LOG: ----- //

// -- recovered message ends -- //



A TRANSFORMATIVE MUSICAL EXPERIENCE

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE CYBERTRONIC SPREE

Cybertronic Spree's 2025 performance at the Robot Prom got us hyped for the rest of the weekend to come, but left us burning with very important questions. MAGFest Power fired up the old intergalactic radio and arranged a chat with our equally-favorite robotic heroes.

What's the story of Cybertronic Spree? Where did you come from, what brought you here, and what's next?

HOTROD: Y'know, we get that question a lot- what on Earth possessed us to start a band in the first place?

You could say I 'dared to be stupid'- I mean who starts a band with their mortal enemies right?

Maybe it's a cop out to say that we were brought together by the power of ROCK- but it's true!

All I know is that one day I had the soundtrack bumpin' on my carstereo- uh me, and then a blinding flash enveloped me lighting my darkest hour.

Transformers doing Transformers: The Movie soundtrack had been right there the whole time

and honestly, I was surprised no one had the truck nuts to attempt it sooner. To bring people together. A universal greeting to spread across the galaxy.

Ultimately, I couldn't get the thought of assembling the most devastating band in the universe out of my head.

If you wanna know the whole story, I guess you'll have to wait until the comic comes out.

ARCEE: Yeah, the Transformers: The Movie soundtrack is hands down the most bitchin' soundtrack. Between killer riffs of Vince DiCola, Weird Al, metal as fuck tunes by Kick Axe and NRG, and let's not forget, Stan Bush's classics, I was chomping at the bit to play these songs live.

HOTROD: We came to Earth with an essential mission: party like it's 1986! We learned to play fragile Earth instruments, relentlessly honed our

skills, and began throwing down some serious musical firepower. We started with the straight up magic of the Transformers: The Movie soundtrack of course, but we're not a band to stay in our lane. We had the most talented bots in the galaxy, there was no way we could be contained in a musical genre.

ARCEE: That's also when we realized having fun as a band wasn't playing the Transformers: The Movie soundtrack per se, it was playing music that we collectively loved, whether it was covers, VGM classics, and eventually, our own songs.

HOTROD: As for what brings us here to MAGFest, it's quite an honor to be part of this festival and community- the band has always loved VGM. In keeping with our existential party vibe, DOOM was one of the first non-

transformers songs we started playing. It might not be obvious at first how a band of Transformers exactly fit into MAGFest but there's more than meets the eye here.

ARCEE: Almost all of us have been involved in creating videogames in our alt modes. HotRod and I have contributed concept art. Rumble and Shockwave compose. Unicron satisfies their gaming hunger by making their own worlds- they're like bleak, dystopian hellscape?

UNICRON: Earth is not prepared for the machinations I have devised- but in time, I might unleash it.

HOTROD: The band has even composed VGM in collaboration with Vince DiCola! VGM is an integral part of our DNA in both inspiring the music we play and the music we write.

So what's next for us? We're always on the road chasing that next great gig in the sky. We tend to keep our cards close to our chest, but I think the Quintesson is the only one who knows exactly where we're headed.

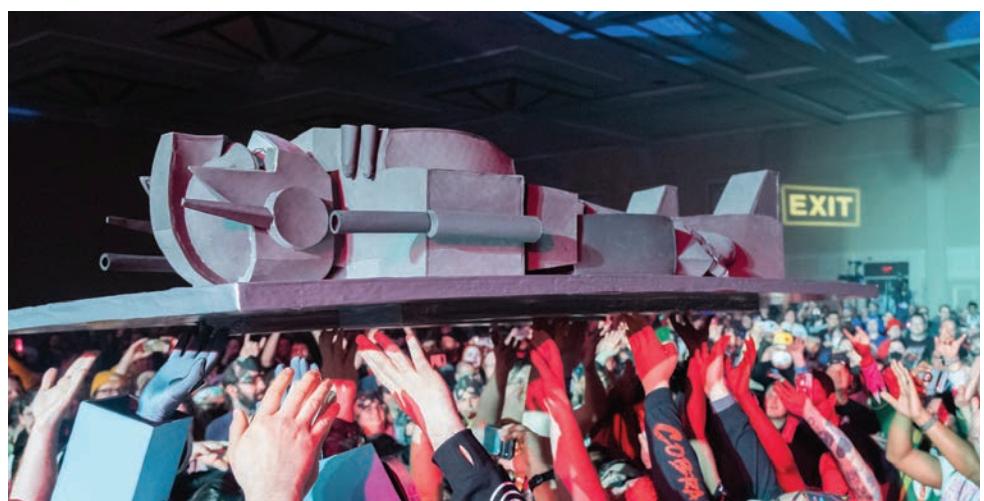
QUINTESSON: Innocent.

Robot Prom - how did that become a thing?

ARCEE: MAGFest wanted to bring back the prom and asked us to play it. Trouble is, proms suck and while we wanted to play it, we knew we had to go harder than just balloons and punch and disco balls or whatever.

QUINTESSON: But we wanted to keep with the theme of coming of age and JUDGMENT.

HOTROD: With a monumental platform such as prom, we knew we wanted to combine forces with MAGFest legends. Lacey Johnson,



Megaran, Danimal Cannon, and The Protomen were all down to collaborate but we needed something that was really going to give the event a 'hard reboot' no one was expecting.

So I just went back to the old Transformers cartoon. See there were these 'hate spores' in season 3 spreading across the galaxy and it was only by banding together that they were able to be stopped. The episode hit pretty hard. And I realized that this is the story of all of us in this moment and our coming of age as Transformers. This is our prom- our programmable read-only memory!

We wanted to tell our story with one helluva rock opera and MAGFest said oh heck no. Just kidding, they said yes. I couldn't believe we had the corpse of Optimus Prime crowd surfed into the audience, Starscream crashing the party, and that Madonna remixed with Castlevania could raise the dead. But that's the thing about the audience at MAGFest; they're magic!



Anything happening at Super 20X6?

HOTROD: A little nanobot told us that 2026 is the year of the robot, so don't be surprised if you see some of us there alongside some of our favourite robot heroes...

2026 is also the 40th anniversary of Transformers: The Movie, so we're dead set on partying. Like it's 20X6.

What do you like to do off stage at Super?

ARCEE: I love dungeon-crawling the convention, hitting up the shrines and ending the night at the arcade at disgusting hours. But what takes the cake is watching other incredible artists here at MAGFest. You can waltz into any concert and be amazed by the talent. And damn, it feels good to hear your fav videogame soundtrack loud from the crowd.

HOTROD: My favourite thing to do is go to room parties and meet new people. It's always a blast sharing drinks, stories or just jamming. And bouncy-castles are pretty cool. Though I guess those go hand-in-hand.

UNICRON: Snacks, snacks, snacks!

SOUNDWAVE: Soundwave superior at DDR.

QUINTESSON: It's no secret that I am still playing Pokemon GO! So anytime I am off stage, you might see me wandering aimlessly with my faces buried in my phone, but don't judge. I assure you I am very busy.

Out of curiosity, what is your top speed at Nürburgring?

HOTROD: Hey, we can easily blow at 300mph but it's so satisfying to cruise at a cool 69.



Have you met Bumblebee? Is the voice thing just a schtick?

ARCEE: Met Bumblebee? We go waaaay back. I remember the days when Bumblebee was a hypebot. Then they went to Hollywood for a while, came back with a whole new look, and now they're hitting the skins. Is their voice a schtick? I mean, is wrestling real?

Favorite game to play on the TI-83 Plus graphing calculator?

SHOCKWAVE: 80085

What's your preferred travel method between gigs?

ARCEE: We've used almost every mode of transportation, but the smoothest, chilliest method has got to be the RV. It's basically friendship on wheels. The interior is like a throw

back to that retro Earth sitcom, *Golden Girls*. Powder pink, soft lighting, and full of drama. If it was up to me, the fridge would be stocked with cheesecake.

What is your favorite videogame mechanic?

ARCEE: Hotrod and I have been playing this retro game on Itch.io (shout-out to Escape Wizard!) and I absolutely love floaty controls as a challenge. I mean, I am definitely yelling every time I flame out, but it's kinda cathartic and humbling!

What isn't a videogame but should be?

UNICRON: Transforming in tiny spaces.

ARCEE: A racing game but make it busted tour vans. Each band starts with a shitty budget, picks their preferred tour van from some old punk on marketplace, and then sets out on the



road. The van or bus or whatever is obviously gonna hit some mechanical issues so your challenge is to make all the tour dates so you can pay for repairs.

SOUNDWAVE: You have to decide whether to replace your bassist with a mechanic.

ARCEE: You need to find expert places to park so that your catalytic converter doesn't get stolen.

With being a musician as precarious as it is, are you ever worried that someday you might be replaced by humans who make knockoff copies of your exquisite robot bodies, then try to play the soundtrack to *Transformers: The Movie* live?

HOTROD: No. It's way too much work.





ROCKSTARS IN DISGUISE
THE CYBER
TRONIC SPREE

SUPER MAGFEST'S ROBOT PROM

WHERE EEPROM STANDS FOR "ELECTRONICALLY ELEGANT PROM"

Darkness gripped the ballroom, and anticipation ruled the audience, tension and excitement drawn forth and fed back into the assembled masses.

ROBOT. HUMAN. ROBOT. HUMAN.

PROM.

Proms have a long history at MAGFest – getting dressed in our best fancy duds, dancing hard and putting the 'ball' in ballroom. They've featured some of our most electric performers to date, and our return to the prom format in 2025 featured a prom like no other we've held before, centering a band whose flair for showmanship and musicianship both cemented the Robot Prom as an event unlike any other

in MAGFest's history. From the opening of their intro, featuring a scintillating synthline underpinned by the powerful rock underneath it that launched straight into the theme for Transformers, the Cybertronic Spree had us utterly transfixed from the opening salvo of sonic might they brought to bear.

And they never let go.

With staples of their own oeuvre like "Run For Your Life" to hypnotize us with their magnetic charisma as performers, the Spree had the one and only Optimus Prime crowdsurfing, starting a segment that would have been a set all on its own under normal circumstances. Their instincts to let loose the power to fill arenas with sound on songs like "True Survivor" and their originals like "Logical Lover," letting Hot Rod lead into a brief interruption from one of



by
Rafe





the moons of Neptune itself!

Needless to say but we'll say it anyway: the circumstances were nothing but extraterrestrial for the Robot Prom.

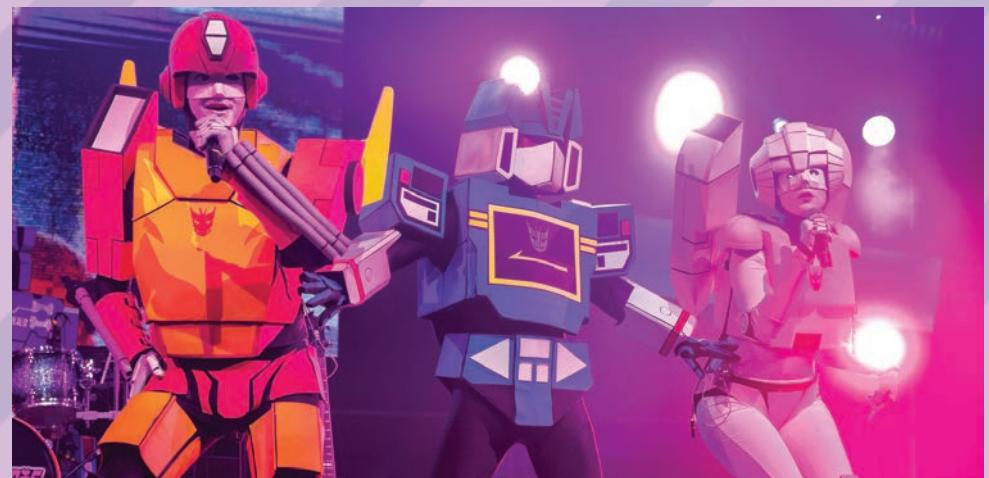
The Spree brought out the virtuoso of keytar and vocals that is Lacey Johnson to dazzle us all and get the ballroom singing along to Pokemon, only to move into a Weird Al cover (editor's note: it wasn't Albuquerque and that's okay!) followed by the one and only teacher rapper hero himself, Mega Ran, for a dose of radioactive pizza-fuelled rhymes that was "Turtle Power" segued into the sleek rhythms of "Tractor Beam." This is the kind of lineup you can only, only, see at places like MAGFest, where legendary collaborations from across the musical spectrum can precipitate with so many talented performers at one venue. And that was just the first two collabs, because they brought out Murphy from the Protomen for vocals on "Thunderstruck," and the incomparable Danimal Cannon for a very theatrical version of "Never Tear Us Apart" leading into the raw power of "Battle" wear Danimal showed us exactly what he's capable of with his guitar (before Arcee savagely finished him with her glowing sword).

Like INXS wrote in 1987, worlds collided in these collaborations, letting the Spree not only highlight their own musicianship but that of other musicians who have been on the main stage of our beloved festival time and again. With a masterful command of timing and dramatic aplomb, they brought back their guests performers for "Like a Prayer" to bring down the Potomac Ballroom, featuring dancing robots and technicolor bubbles underpinned by

heavy guitar, keytar, and brought to the rafters by Arcee's stellar pipes.

MAGFest is a great many things, all swirling and oscillating through the day and night, all working together to become greater than the value of its individual parts. The Robot Prom was this concept in musical form -- an amalgam of elements that have intersected before, may intersect again, but in that form, in that order, only coalesced in the way they did just the once,

to kick the first night of Super MAGFest 2025 off in a way that will stay with us like the flash of neon lights, the melodies of a band of robots on a successful mission to make us rock and the press of bodies on a Thursday night in January.





YOU PICK THE STORY

"Let's fight Kinetic Donut first," you suggest. As a soft, sugary food, he shouldn't be much of a threat. The Swadge shows Pulse standing in a food court. Gnarled neon signs hang haphazardly as Pulse takes off, running down the counters. It's just like a classic platformer game. The ancient mall speakers are even playing funk music. When Pulse encounters his first enemy, some kind of chili dog waddling on two feet, they don't hesitate to blast it. Pulse is less ready when a slice of pizza zooms down

from the ceiling and slaps into them.

It's not long before Pulse reaches the center of the food court, disturbing Kinetic Donut.

"You're challenging me?! You're in MY court now, and here, I'm the king!" Before you can react, the donut jumps up and slams into Pulse.

Pulse is up in a second, blasting away at the donut boss, leaping over the shock waves and avoiding being sucked into its gaping mouth.

Finally, the critical blow is dealt. The King has fallen, crumbled, powerless at your feet.

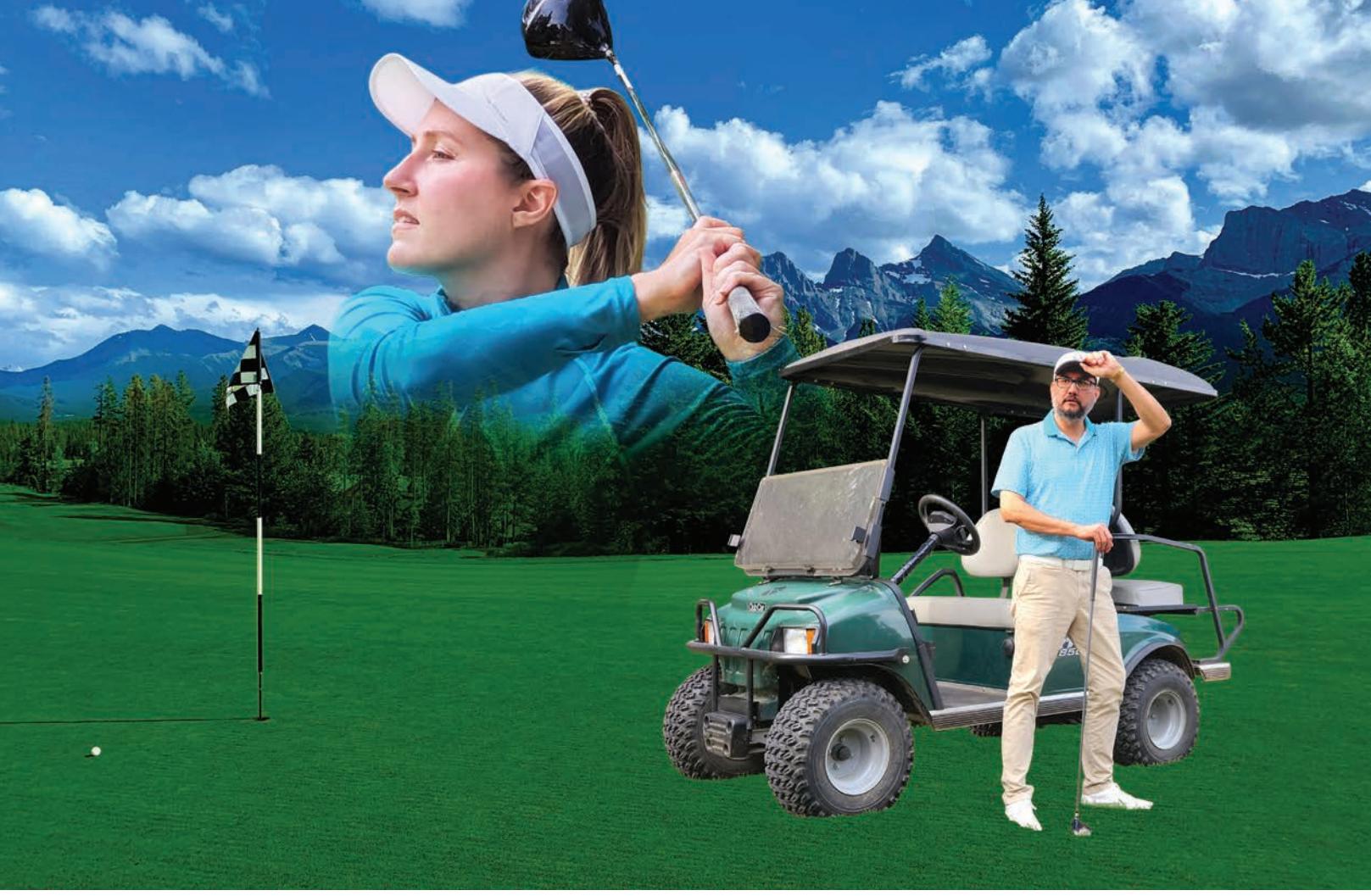
"I think I've absorbed the power of Funk! I wonder if I can use that smash attack," Pulse muses.

"That's fantastic, Pulse!" Dr. Hype cuts in. "I've had a wonderful idea for an experiment! Let's try this move on another boss."

WHO SHOULD PULSE'S
NEXT OPPONENT BE?

► SEVER YATAGA PG. 33

► RIP BARONESS PG. 36



The OneUps are putting the “*putting*” in “*putting the ‘fore’ in* “*unlike anything you’ve heard before*.””

Music and Gaming have walked hand-in-hand for decades, delivering an emotional experience not possible with sprites alone.

From Super Mario Bros. to SimCity; from Tetris to ToeJam & Earl; from Axelay to Zombie Ate My Neighbors, The OneUps have captured the essence of beloved fan favorites across video game music history.

With no killer soundtrack left untouched, The OneUps embark on a truly groundbreaking mission - a mission that would find themselves entrapped in the wilds of The Outdoors.

Presenting GOLF by The OneUps - songs from and inspired by GOLF on NES. This new, never-heard music from The OneUps will transport you from tee to green and everywhere in between. Relive your GOLF journey starting with a 270-Yard Drive. Then, enjoy Fairway Silence with 0mph Winds, and end your round with a visit to The 19th Hole.

All these classics - and more - are available for the first time in this environmentally friendly plastics-free 0-disc collection. Available exclusively on Bandcamp at a “Pay-What-You-Want” price,

all proceeds are directed to *Code in the Schools*, a local nonprofit supporting education for Baltimore City youth. This album and advertisement may be fake*, but the Code in the Schools donations are 100% real**.

**New, never-heard
music from**

**THE
OneUps**

*Yeah, this isn't a real album. But Mustin was a really good sport and played along with our silly ideas.

**But seriously, if you *also* want to play along with our jokes—and support a good cause—legitimately we will send every single bit of the proceeds to *Code in the Schools* (www.codeintheschools.org). Also, shout out to Charity Auction! Check them out Sunday in Cherry Blossom!

***As an added bonus, there is a real track that Mustin composed featuring Jess on sax just for this bit, but I'm not gonna tell you which one it is. 😊

**FEATURING 14 EXCITING
NEW TRACKS:**

1. Fairway Silence
2. 0mph Winds
3. Quiet Please!
4. Golf Is a Fore-Letter Word
5. Good Lie
6. Putting for Birdie
7. Out of Bounds
8. Sand Trap
9. Bad Lie
10. Alphonse & Belinda's Theme
11. Stroke of Genius
12. 270-Yard Drive
13. Theme of Love
14. The 19th Hole

8. Sand 9. Bad

Sand Trap

Acoustic Spoons

Wind

Rain

Ac. Spns.

Wind

Rain

Ac. Spns.

Wind

Rain

To Electric Spoons

El. Spns.

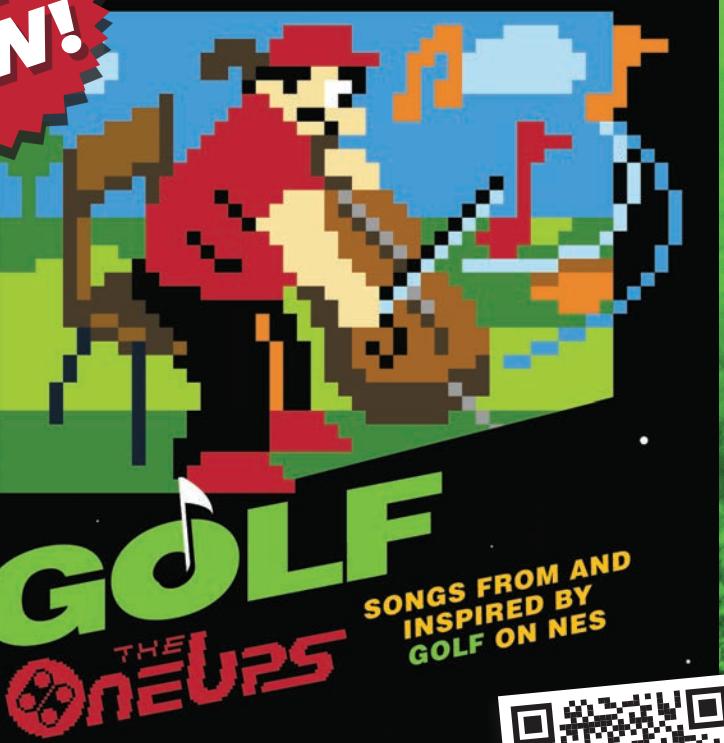
Wind

Rain

El. Spns.

Larghetto

**ORDER
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Includes bonus sheet music!



ARENA AT SUPER MAGFEST

MAGMOVES AND MAGGROOVES IN A BALLROOM NEAR YOU

WHAT IS ARENA, ANYWAY?

Super MAGFest's Arena is, in a nut-shell, a space for attendees to get up, get moving, and make connections!

Since getting its dedicated space in 2016, Arena has grown to offer a wide variety of experiences. During the day, you can find attendee run classes featuring various dance styles from K-Pop to Filipino line dancing to ballroom dance. In the past, Arena has also offered fight choreography, LARP, aerial silk, pro-wrestling, and martial arts demonstrations. In addition to creating opportunities for attendees to push themselves physically, Arena also offers ways for attendees to stretch themselves socially, offering courses and panels on improv comedy and VR experiences.

At night, Arena turns the lights down and the speakers up with the Arena Dance Parties, running every night from 10 PM to 4 AM (or later!). Each night features a different video game theme and some of the MAGFest community's best DJs. Cosplay, conga lines, and dance circles are STRONGLY encouraged!

Arena also hosts social gatherings, including the infamous Bunfest.

If finding your center with yoga or dancing all night aren't your things, Arena also hosts a number of interactive shows like Cutthroat Cosplay, the MAGMoves Dance Contest, cosplay dance-offs, an improv showcase, and their newest addition in 2025, DRAGFest, MAGFest's first drag show.

No matter your fitness level or how broken in your yoga mat is, Arena has something for you! Interested in checking out Arena events

this year? Search "Arena" on the GuideBook schedule to see everything they have to offer!

MEET OUR LONG-TIME ARENA GUESTS

ANTIPODE BELLY DANCE

Antipode is a comedic geek belly dancing troupe hailing from State College, PA. Fusing the theatrics of acting with a mix of cosplay, pop-culture, and off-beat humor, Antipode has been bringing the audience full geek entertainment



by
Jez Whitehall

in the form of costumed performances and lessons since 2006. Antipode's previous MAGFest appearances include Stardew Valley Bellydancing, Super Mario Bellydancing, Pokemon Prance, and lessons set to live music. Antipode performs throughout the year at numerous conventions and festivals along the east coast, often teaming up with guest dancers to bring dazzling dances to over 100 shows.

YOGA FOR GAMERS

Founded in 2013 by Danielle Foley, who is a RYT-500 Yoga Instructor based out of Detroit, MI, Yoga for Gamers is a project that offers gamers a way to connect authentically with their minds, bodies, and creative selves through movement, breathing, and meditation practices. Yoga for Gamers classes are set to video game music and designed to help attendees discover how they can create more fun and energy in their lives while exploring the link between the gaming process and the yoga process.



A creation clash competition using wit, the oddest assortment of materials, and a dose of sabotage: it's Cutthroat Cosplay.

LATIN DANCING FOR NERDS

A MAGFest staple since 2018, Latin Dancing for Nerds is run by Steph and Aldo of Geeky Grooves. Steph started out as a Ballroom dancer before falling in love with Bachata while Aldo has been teaching for five years now with a focus on Latin Ballroom dancing. Together they attend east coast conventions to combine their

love of video games, anime music, teaching, and Latin dance to bring Bachata and Salsa to geeks everywhere. When not attending a convention, Steph can be found teaching out of D.C. with Inspira Dance.



Arena hosts one-of-a-kind content, workshops, and classes like folk dance and aerial silks



Arena caps off each night with a uniquely themed Dance Party.

YOU PICK THE STORY

"I bet we could tackle Smash Gorilla first," you say, wondering if one hundred men, one gorilla, or Pulse would win in a fight.

Pulse takes off, ending up in the Gaylord halls. Some kind of salsa music is playing. As you watch, a conga line of monkeys dances through. Pulse deftly jumps over the line, dodging bananas and running along chairs set up for some long forgotten panel. Inside the ballroom, Smash Gorilla has clearly made himself at home.

"Don't tell me you're here to break up the party? Forget about bananas, let's make this a bonanza!"

Before you can figure out what that's supposed to mean, he slams both of his fists on the floor, causing a shockwave. The pair fights and just when you think you've got the upper hand, the gorilla pulls out a can of salsa. He pulls the lid off and starts drinking. Ugh. Not even at the wildest MAGFest party can you imagine someone straight chugging salsa. Pulse is spamming shots, but Smash Gorilla's health is recovering. Pulse finally manages to get the upper hand, felling Smash Gorilla and absorbing his power.

"I guess I can do this now?" Pulse produces a jar of salsa, and you cringe as they pop the top off and take a sip.

Couldn't it have been cheese sauce?
"Well! Where to next?" Dr. Hype asks.

WHO SHOULD PULSE'S
NEXT OPPONENT BE?

► KINETIC DONUT PG. 52

► DEADEYE CHIRPZI PG. 58

DRAGFEST 2025

DRAGFEST AT SUPER MAGFEST

"WHAT DO YOU MEAN 'THERE'S NEVER BEEN DRAG AT MAG?!"

Super MAGFest 2025 marked the first-ever drag show for MAGFest, one of Arena's most popular events to date! The entry line wrapped around the atrium, and the Arena was stuffed full of eager attendees. The performers strutted, pranced, and shashayed their way across the stage, serving killer ensembles and fabulous moves.

Sirene Noir Sidora Jackson wowed with Princess Peach and shimmering fairy inspired looks, bringing effervescent energy without a hair out of place. Traveling all the way from Chicago, Weebwitched embraced their inner cringe in a form fitting Mettaton cosplay, bringing real SOUL to their chair-o-graphy and soothing lonely hearts everywhere with their Spamton routine. Vin U Endo came to represent Boston's only all Jewish drag troupe with a Kyogre performance that was absolutely legendary and kept the crowd thirsting for more before spoiling Disco Elysium plot points with sparkle and style. Meanwhile, Shoujo-A-Go-Go brought the magic and batted a thousand with a classy and radiant routine as Dummy Thicc Solid Snake, making sure to show off her box. Finally, Trash Ketchum tapped into the true MAGFest energy with a perfectly compatible Vaporean look and a Danny DeVito inspired fit perfect for offering nice eggs to everyone throughout the night.

DRAGFest returns to Super MAGFest in 2026!

MEET YOUR DRAGFEST HOST!



Trash Ketchum (she/her) is the illustrious host of DRAGFest. A long time lover of music, video games, and performance, Trash first got her start as a kid doing community theater in Connecticut. Later in life, she dropped out of

college to start a band called "She Eats Planets" ("she" being X-Men's Dark Phoenix). Trash also got an early start as a video game enthusiast, enjoying classics like Pokemon Red and N64 games like Pokemon Puzzle League and Pokemon Stadium 1 & 2. "I know," Trash laughs, "Trash Ketchum loves Pokemon games, are we shocked?!" Final Fantasy VII also holds a special place in her heart, and she even featured video game music in her wedding, picking game songs for the wedding party and walking out to Street Fighter: Guile's Theme.

Trash first got into drag during the holiday season of 2014. While looking for a show as background noise, she stumbled upon Ru Paul's Drag Race. "I was captivated," she said of the show. "So many of my favorite things combined- costumes, makeup, singing, acting, being an absolute clown- where had this art form been all my life?! The queer joy, the artistry, it was so special to me." After moving to New York City, Trash met drag queen Gina Tonic who took her under her wing. The two have since become fast friends, even cohosting a Pokemon drag show called "Gotta Drag 'em All" together.

While Trash has previous cohosting experience, DRAGFest is her first solo hosting gig. "When I like something, I'm looking for it everywhere, like looking for Sailor Moon merch any time I'm in a dealer's room," Trash said.



by Jez Whitehall

"When I realized there was no drag at MAGFest, I just had to do something about it!" One Facebook post later and the first DRAGFest was in the works with Arena co-chair Deast and the Arena team assisting. As a disabled queer woman, inclusivity and diversity are important to Trash. "Shows are so much more interesting



and fun to watch when you have variety, people can bring different points of view, different ideas, from their unique perspectives. Life is so much more exciting that way!" While she's more used to only organizing her own costumes and performances, Trash has really enjoyed the process of organizing DRAGFest, saying the overwhelming response has left her "shook, gagged, and gooped".

"It's so gratifying to have an outlet like this where I feel understood. I appreciate every single person that waited in that line for us, I can't express that enough! I already knew the vibes at MAG were ✨immaculate✨, but it just really proved to me what an awesome and supportive community there is in MAG".

Outside of DRAGFest, Trash can be found in NYC performing "whenever she can", as well as online on Instagram @trashketchumny and on Tiktok or Youtube @trashnyc .



Shows are so much more interesting and fun to watch when you have variety, people can bring different points of view, different ideas, from their unique perspectives. Life is so much more exciting that way!

- **Trash Ketchum,**
host of DRAGFest



DRAGFEST
WILL BE IN THE
ARENA
ON
**FRIDAY &
SATURDAY**
AT
6:30 PM

**THIS IS A (FREE)
TICKETED EVENT:**

**Get your ribbon at 1PM FRIDAY
ONLY outside the ARENA (next
to Panels HQ) in order to attend!**

YOU PICK THE STORY

"I bet we could handle Flare Gryffyn first," you offer. You figure he's probably more used to fighting in a spaceship than in hand to hand combat. Not that Pulse will be using their hands. Unless an arm canon counts.

Pulse picks his way into the concert hall. Some of the amps still play crackling rock music, zapping Pulse when they get too close. Crabs made of wire snip at them.

"Pulse, you've taken a ton of damage. Are you going to be up for fighting Flare Gryffyn?" Before you get a response, they stumble in

front of a concert stage.

"An audience!" As the fog clears, a tall bird man steps forward. "Though you've come to see me, I'll be the one to witness YOUR demise!"

Another strum from the guitar sends a wide laser blasting across the concert hall.

"Pulse! You have to jump clear!" you shout, but it's too late. The wide beam hits Pulse as they attempt to scramble out of the way. Pulse staggers back.

"I can't jump high enough to get over it!"

Flare Gryffyn glides down, strumming as he goes, generating a hexagonal blast of light around himself.

The blast is enough to take out the rest of Pulse's health, and the Swadge screen goes dark.

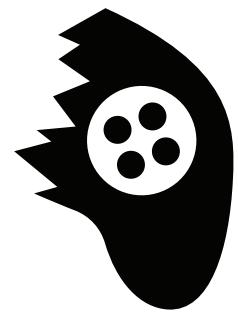
"Pulse! Pulse, get up! We have to beat Bigma!" But it's too late. You've been defeated.

DEFEAT.

TRY AGAIN!



MAGFEST POWER ARTIST INSIGHTS



MEMOIRS OF A SMASHED GAME CONTROLLER

by Johnny Gioeli from Crush40

28 years ago, and many rock albums deep, I'm invited to use my gift of singing to perform on what I thought were just "games"... and... the journey begins...

The last "game" I played as a kid was Pong, and then later I graduated to full color with "Frogger"! I can still visualize those logs in the water moving faster and faster completely in sync with my rapid heartbeat. I had to jump onto those bitches ever so frustratingly, and that game literally made me smash the controller to bits. I did not tell my dad. Ummmm... sorry dad.

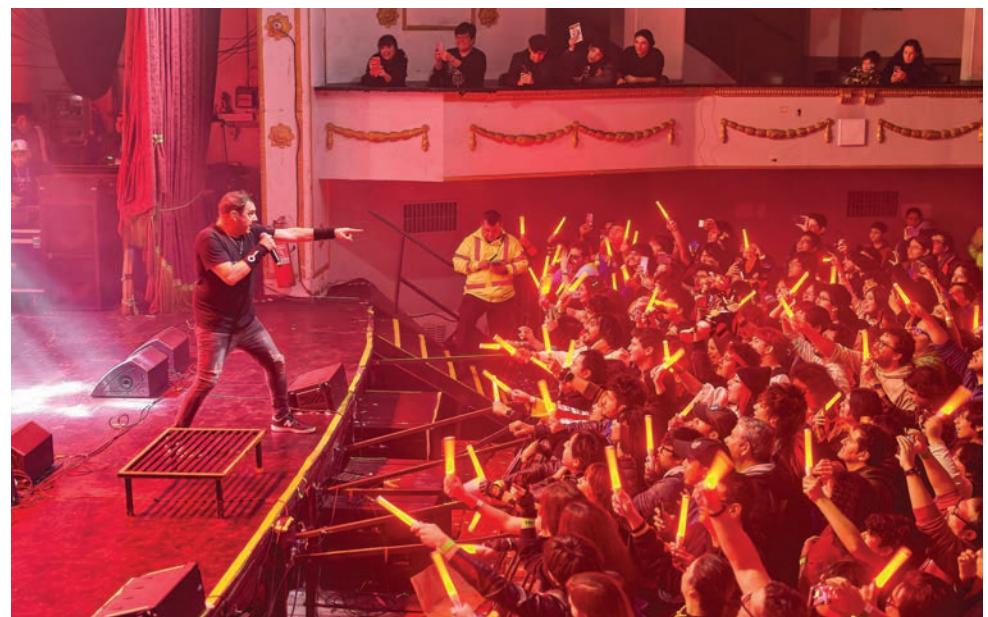
Since that experience, I never touched a controller again..but the memory is branded into my frontal lobe forever. Why? Maybe because it was simply a moment in time? A very important moment in time! And while frustrating for me, because I'm a gaming idiot and uncoordinated to a gaming degree, the memory of the solitude and escape from reality branded me like a cows ass. Moooooo!!! Oooouch!!!

I hear all this talk on the adverse effects of game addiction (I made that "game addiction" medical term up). Let me tell you what Dr.

Johnny Crush40 ER singing doctor has studied in 28 years.... Symptoms of the most amazing community of caring, love, togetherness, support, beautiful free and diverse humans to exist on planet Sonic. How have you learned every word of every song I have ever written for these iconic Sonic games!!!!?? How!!!!!!???? I know how...

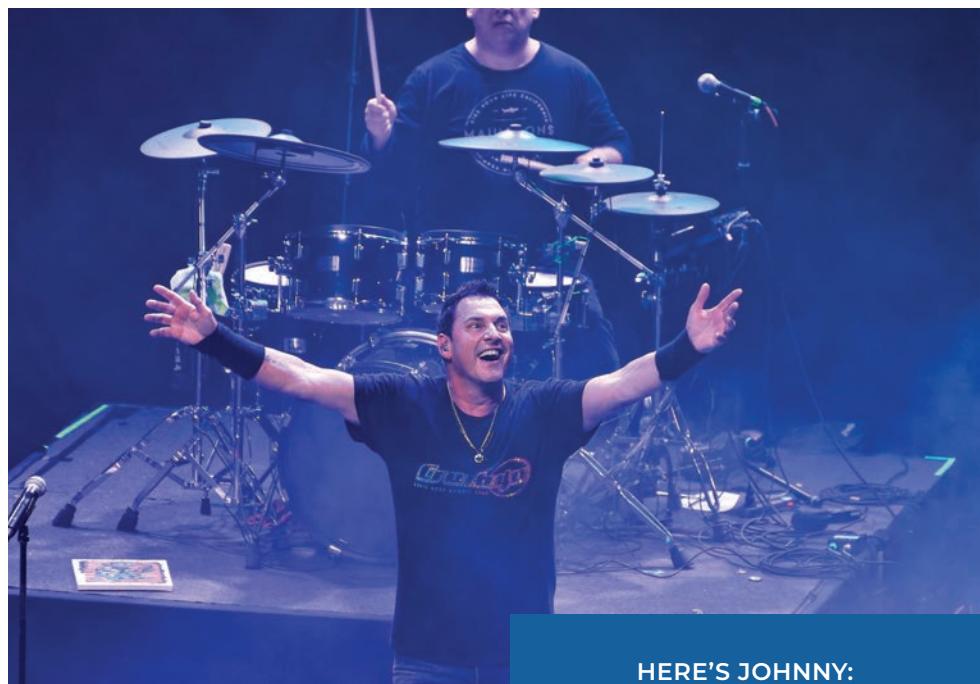
because you have taught ME that these songs and these games connect you to a world of happiness. And that these songs and these games represent a place in time that was "safe" and well within your life control when the world seemed out of control. And it was...and is...simply good.

Since retiring my smashed Frogger controller at



level 2, I've played numerous Crush40 shows and events around the globe. The spirit of gaming is more prevalent than ever. I recall a fan in Santiago Chile crying on my shoulder saying that they were bullied, beaten, and tortured. Then, their final words wiping tears from their eyes saying "Look at us now"! Yes.... Look.... 30,000 people at this event alone and ready to recall and re-live their favorite Crush40 songs in sync with the games that made them feel happy and "safe".

This amazing community gave me the most incredible life. Stories to be passed down for generations to come, and a sense of victory for anyone who felt "abused" because they were "a gamer". I love you all. I love your weirdness like mine. I love your costumes. I love your excitement. I love your commitment to me and to each other time and time again. Your enthusiasm empowers me and is the reason why I do this. I've seen you all grow from little kids to become doctors, lawyers, musicians, IT professionals, CEO's of companies and more! No matter who you are, what hardships you've faced, what you do or don't do for a living, you are part of the most amazing memories of my life. I am forever grateful within your presence.



HERE'S JOHNNY:

INSTAGRAM
@JOHNNYGOELI

MUSIC COLLABS
johnnycrush40@yahoo.com

JOHNNY'S FAVORITE AUTISM CHARITY
popcornforthepeople.com

WHAT DO YOU BRING TO THE TABLE?



RIVER VIEW BALLROOM & NATIONAL HARBOR LEVEL

ADVERTISEMENT

YOU PICK THE STORY

"Why waste time with the small fries? Let's go straight for Bigma himself."

"Listen, I support you 100%. But are you sure? Bigma is powerful. You'll want as much experience as you can get before you take him on..."

"Pulse said they were made for this! Their arm cannon punched a hole right through the Wheel! A couple of blasts will knock Bigma right out." You can definitely get Pulse through this. Pulse sets off towards Bigma's lair.

"WHO ARE YOU?" A voice booms. Bigma is massive, stepping towards Pulse. You didn't think he'd be that large.

Pulse begins firing as Bigma moves forward and your screen flickers. The next thing you know, Bigma is laughing as two shimmering balls hover over him. He grabs one, lobbing it at Pulse. You try to help Pulse dodge, but you're too slow.

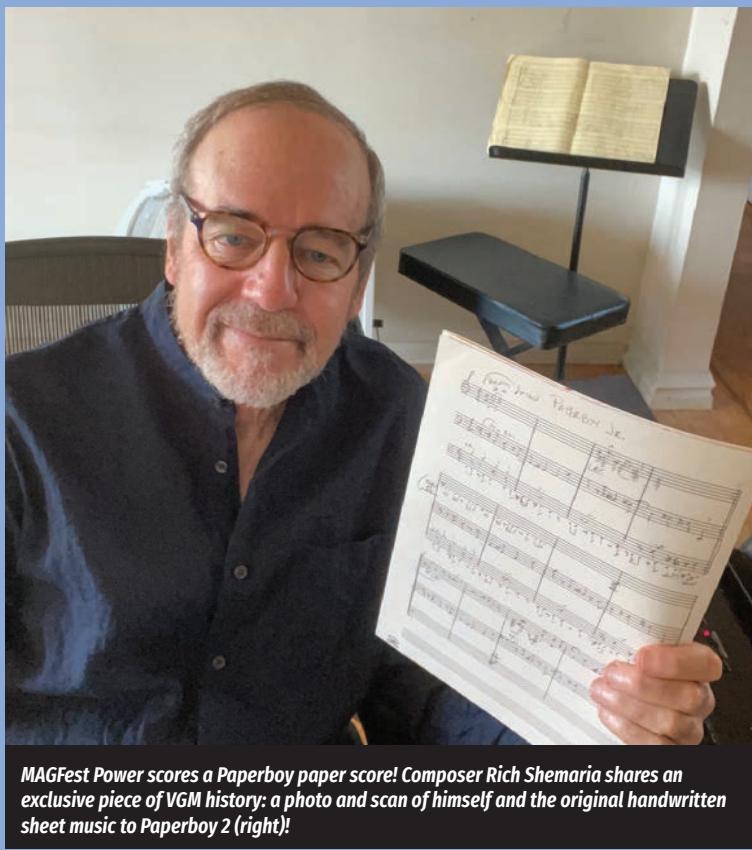
As you watch, Bigma dashes across the screen, smashing Pulse into the floor.

"Pulse! Get up!" You shout desperately. "Come back! We'll get stronger and try again!" But it's too late.

"Tremble with terror, YOU ARE FINISHED!" Bigma roars. As the Swadge screen goes dark, you realize you may never be able to return to the music of MAGFest. You've been defeated.

DEFEAT.

TRY AGAIN!



MAGFest Power scores a Paperboy paper score! Composer Rich Shemaria shares an exclusive piece of VGM history: a photo and scan of himself and the original handwritten sheet music to Paperboy 2 (right)!



MAGFEST POWER EXCLUSIVE ACCESS

HANDWRITTEN ON PAPER? BOY! INSIGHTS FROM PAPERBOY 2 COMPOSER RICH SHEMARIA

As if this Random Retro Soundtrack Review weren't enough, we somehow managed to arrange a call with the original Paperboy 2 composer, Rich Shemaria. Wanna know what we learned?

Well, Rich moved to New York in 1985 to pursue his creative dreams. Rich worked at an exercise studio in the Tribeca area along with the drummer of his band at the time. A couple regulars of the studio, Nick and Kate Eastridge just so happened to ask Rich if he had any interest in working on some original video game music. VGM was simpler back then, but Rich knocked it out with The Last Starfighter, Conan, and Mad Max. Then, along came the SNES with 8 full channels of audio goodness, and a game sequel that would capture the hearts of young gamers everywhere.

Armed with only a Yamaha DX, a Roland 505 drum machine, and the original Paperboy theme, Rich set out to write what would become the most

certifiable of VGM bangers the SNES would ever see. Inspiration for Paperboy 2 included Quincy Jones (Sanford and Son), Jack Elliott (Barney Miller, Night Court*), and possibly a subliminal but unintentional bit of the Seinfeld theme. The result? Actually not what we got in the game... After digitizing the original score for video game technology of the time, the final product was, well, a surprise. As Rich described it, human articulation was completely lost in a quantized computer world.

Wow - if the original score was even better than the soundtrack we got, I cannot imagine how tasty those licks must be. Rich, from the bottom of my heart, thank you for your work. Paperboy 2 may be a small credit on your resume, but it has a permanent home in many of us. Please let us know if you ever get back into VGM work.

You can find more about Rich's work on his website, www.richshemaria.com, and on

social media such as Facebook and Instagram by searching Rich Shemaria. You can also see more about Rich's video game contributions, as well as a slew of other VGM works, at the Video Game Music Preservation Foundation Wiki (vgmpf.com).

THE MAN HIMSELF

WEBSITE

www.richshemaria.com

FACEBOOK

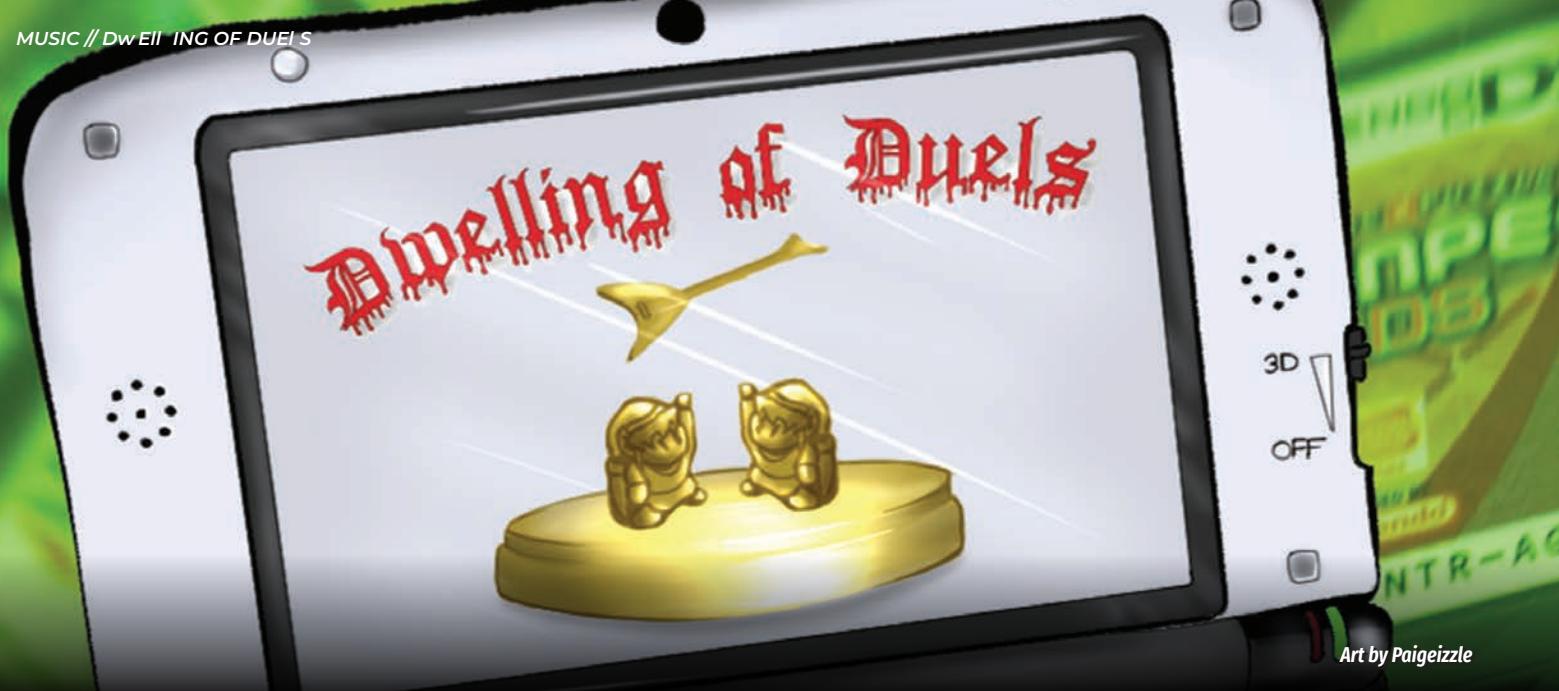
[rich.shemaria](https://www.facebook.com/rich.shemaria)

INSTAGRAM

[@richshemaria](https://www.instagram.com/richshemaria)

RICH SHEMARIA, VGMPF WIKI





Art by Paigezille

DWELLING OF FRIENDS

A TOTALLY REAL INTERVIEW BETWEEN MIKE AND BRIANN ABOUT THE HISTORY OF DWELLING OF DUELS

by Mike Doyle (evilsonic) and Briann

You love video games; you love music; you love video game music. You love covers and arrangements of video game music. Have you heard of Dwelling of Duels? We won't pre-spoil anything here, but you should totally read what Mike and Briann have to say, then go check them out. DwellingOfDuels.net

Dwelling of Duels. I remember the first time I heard about this monthly video game music remix competition like it was yesterday. I was visiting home over Christmas break in 2004 and my friend Briann (aka atomic) played "Ninjascape", Ashane's Ninja Gaiden 2 track from the November contest. Dwelling of Duels (also known as DoD) had been around for a little over a year at that point, and while there have been ebbs and flows over the years, there have been over 260 duels that have produced nearly 2 weeks of continuous music. So when I heard about this opportunity to spread the word about this wonderful weird little corner of the internet, I thought the best way to share the story of those years would be to interview the woman who invited me along for the ride.

The following interview has been edited for clarity.

MIKE: So, Briann... I remember when you first introduced me to DoD, you said that the whole thing started as an online feud from a message board called the Shizz. That's the message board centered around an early VGM band, the Minibosses, is that right?

BRIANN: What? Sorry, the babysitter cancelled tonight, so I've got my hands full.

MIKE: And the actual dispute began when one guitarist challenged everyone else to a Shredding contest... but the original poster didn't even participate?

BRIANN: Robert, buddy, turn off the stove, OK?

MIKE: I always thought that was so interesting... it's such an early 2000's internet interaction, but instead of just fizzling out, this community sort of built up around it where musicians... in a lot of cases, friends... would hone their skills by arranging, recording, and mixing video game covers over the course of a month, and it's been going on since 2003!

BRIANN: Jenny, I don't think the cat loves that.

MIKE: You're right, it really is a labor of love. Now, if I remember correctly, the old contests all took place on the Shizz and you could only vote if you either had 50 posts or you submitted a song. And the songs all had to be submitted anonymously... Why do you think that is?

BRIANN: [sound of a loud crash, but also something wet]

MIKE: Personally, I think it was to help encourage unbiased feedback. I know I have personally given critiques on songs that turned out to be from talented musicians I would never presume to offer mixing tips to. But that's one of the other great things about DoD, and how it puts you in touch with this wide range of musicians with different skillsets and ideas - it really encourages collaboration, don't you think?

BRIANN: No, Robert, don't throw that in the -

[sound of glass breaking]

MIKE: And in that sense, it's been remarkable how DoD has kept up along with technology so naturally. Back when you and I first started participating, the internet was so slow and space was so precious, it was nearly impossible to collaborate effectively with another musician online. But as data got faster and easier to store and share... that's made some of the projects of recent years a possibility. And the listening parties are another great example of that... these days, we host them on Twitch, but in the early days, people went into a chatroom and synchronized hitting play on their playlist. Isn't that wild?

BRIANN: OW!!! Jenny! Don't pull mom's hair!!

MIKE: Of course... we can't talk about DoD listening parties without mentioning the live, in-person parties. Nowadays, we have listening parties at newer events like VGMCON and MAGWest, but the history of DoD and MAGFest goes almost hand in hand. It had already been a tradition by the time you and I went to our first Fest... was that MAGFest 4 or 5?

BRIANN: [the sound of a cat yowling] Robert, let go of his tail!!

MIKE: I think it was 5. And the DoD listening parties at MAGFest were always in the middle

of the night so they wouldn't interfere with other bands performing. As far as I can tell, that has more or less remained the same, with after midnight start times. It's been trickier to get the 5-hour blocks DoD has had in the past, but they've been no less memorable. Do you have any favorite DoD/MAGFest memories? Maybe even if you weren't there in person?

BRIANN: [sound of a child crying] yeah, buddy... he doesn't love it when you pull his tail like that.

MIKE: I really wish I could have been there for MAGFest 7. That was when Shnabubula submitted "Playing Super Mario World While Taking Mushrooms", and I heard that the whole room lost it when that track came on. And of course, nothing can beat the visual of the candid camera moment from MAGFest 12 when a Sonic cosplayer walked in the room during the... NSFW version of "Anatomy of a Hedgehog" and almost immediately turned around.

BRIANN: Jenny, I'll play Mario Kart after I finish putting this band aid on your brother, OK?

MIKE: But one of the things that cannot be overstated is just how important a role Discord has played in helping DoD get to where it is today. Ten years ago, if someone stumbled across the DoD listening party at MAGFest,

they would have to create an account for a message board they never heard of. These days, you can just hop on Discord. And that has also helped keep the conversation lively all month long. Not only is that great throughout the year when we have our regular contests, but when you're at an event like MAGFest, it becomes so much easier to stay in touch with your fellow Dwellers. Dwellers? Or Duelers? What do you think, do you have a preference?

BRIANN: [sound of a smoke alarm] Robert, I thought I told you to turn off the stove five minutes ago!!

MIKE: Yeah, it probably doesn't make too much of a difference. Anyway, thank you so much for taking the time to answer my questions tonight. Without spoiling anonymity, are you working on any exciting tracks this month?

BRIANN: No, don't put that on th- [the line disconnects]

Very exciting stuff.



**Editor's Note: The Zine Team has been assured that no children or cats were actually harmed during this interview... !*





FROM RAD COVERS TO RED CARPETS

A SITDOWN WITH BUTTON MASHER

You must know us by now - if our musical friends come through town, we gotta come by and hang with 'em! That's exactly what happened this winter when Bit Brigade, Galactic Empire, and Grammy Award winner Button Masher rolled through. This not only gave us an opportunity to bring some bonus content to the magazine, but to do so with a Grammy Award winning artist!! We got to pick the brain of Jake Silverman, aka Button Masher, for a solid couple hours, and I can't tell you how captivating it was. Well, I guess I can tell you...

Jake's story begins for us in Los Angeles circa 2018. Like all musicians, Jake was trying to find his way, at the time working as a jazz pianist. One fateful day, while playing through *Gradius 3*, a spark lit. The music... Why does it sound like that? HOW does it sound like that? Jake's love of electronica, love of video games, and this banger of a soundtrack created who we know today as Button Masher!

Armed with an SNES, an organ, and a wealth of creative juices, Button Masher's quest was set - write and perform some of the illest arrangements you've ever heard. The quest wasn't without struggle, but thankfully the online community Battle of the Bits provided much needed passion and inspiration to be bold. One of the first works to drop was Metaknight's Revenge (*Kirby Superstar*), a 4-month project that caught the eye of someone in particular. A certain Charlie Rosen from The 8-Bit Big Band!

Charlie loved it; so much so that he convinced Button Masher to do a collaboration

with The 8-Bit Big Band on a Big Band version. As one does when Charlie Rosen calls, Button Masher hopped on a flight to NYC, recorded with 8BBB, they posted it, and that was that. Done. End of story. Right?

Well, it seemed that way. Two years after recording, Charlie sends a text - I think I'm going to submit this for Grammy consideration. You down? Seems about as reasonable as buying a lottery ticket, but sure, why not? Several months pass, and Button Masher has all but forgotten about the Grammy submission. November 23rd, 2021, Button Masher's dad reminded him that it's Grammy nomination day. "There's no way I'm making that list this year." Spoiler: Charlie Rosen & Jake Silverman made the nominations list that year.

Fast forward to April 2022, Charlie and Button Masher land in Las Vegas to represent Video Game Music and make a little history. We were told to watch the video of the award presentation (QR code below) - the



by **Luna Toon & JFrye**

reaction from Button Masher is priceless. Shock, excitement, disbelief, delirium. Enough emotions to make a man forget how legs and stairs work for a brief moment. All this in contrast to Charlie's whimsical waltz down the aisle. A truly overwhelming experience for a truly historic moment; not just for Charlie and Button Masher, but for the entire Video Game Music industry. This was the first award ever for a VGM cover track.

That day sealed the deal - Button Masher is here to stay.

**"WE WENT TO THE GRAMMYS
WITH VIDEO GAME MUSIC"**

[VIEW ON YOUTUBE](#)





WHAT'S NEXT FOR GRAMMY AWARD WINNER BUTTON MASHER?

We're glad you asked, otherwise these questions and answers would go unused.

- New Content! Button Masher is looking to assemble a band and hit the road on another tour (hopefully in April!)
- Working alongside a homebrew developer to experiment with ROM and/or cartridge releases!
- Sega Genesis anyone???

WHAT OTHER QUESTIONS DID YOU ASK GRAMMY AWARD WINNER BUTTON MASHER

We are silly people with silly questions, and we are thankful to have gotten so much of Jake's time. As such, we can't not share some of our favorites.

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO WIN A GRAMMY?

Charlie is cut out to win Grammy awards; I make Kirby Covers. It was surreal. It felt like a simulation.

Fun Grammy fact: The award for the show is a prop - they mail the actual awards after the show.



WHAT'S YOUR MUSICAL HOT-TAKE?

Some people think Chiptunes can't be popular. I think you can make a career out of a lot of stuff, and Chiptunes is on the table! Old school games' soundtracks are bangin', so people definitely love the style. Marketing is key.

GO-TO SNACK?

Pita chips and caramelized onion hummus

SOMEONE IN THE EARLY 2000S RUINED SPAGHETTI-O'S, AND I CAN'T CONVINCE ANY YOUNGER PEOPLE THAT THEY USED TO TASTE GOOD. DO YOU AGREE?

I remember Spaghetti-O's, and I want to eat them again.

IF YOU HAD TO PICK ONE BUTTON TO MASH FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE, WHAT WOULD IT BE AND WHY?

Probably [A]. [B] usually gets you out, goes back, cancels; but [A] moves you forward.

WHAT'S ONE FOUR THINGS YOU WANT TO DO AT MAGFEST THAT YOU HAVEN'T DONE YET?

- Bring a Super MIDI Pak to do a live performance on real hardware in real time.
- 5-Player Bomberman
- X-men arcade
- Bring a full band to play on stage





Welcome to the King's Court.

At the King Donut Food Court, you're royalty.

Relax. Indulge. Treat Yourself.
With 13 eateries to choose from, you rule.



- Kinetic Donuts - Smash Gorilla Smoothies - Chirpzi's - Serving Yataga -
- Pangolin Poutine - Flare Gryffyln's Kickin' Chicken - Crash Turtle's Soups -
- Jolt Lapin's Salad Bar - Baroness Dungeness - BigMA's Country Cooking -

HOW DO GAMING LEGENDS SPICE UP THEIR FOOD? LET'S FIND OUT!

STEVE WIEBE'S TOP 5 FAVORITE HOT SAUCES

1. TAPATÍO SALSA PICANTE
2. SRIRACH (HUY FONG FOODS)
3. CHOLULA ORIGINAL
4. TABASCO GREEN PEPPER
5. FRANK'S REDHOT



Yes, we really did ask Donkey Kong champion Steve Wiebe for his Top 5 Favorite Hot Sauces, and these are really his answers.

We also reached out to Billy Mitchell for his Top 5 Favorite Hot Sauces but did not receive a response by the time of this publication.

YOU PICK THE STORY

"We did it, Dr. Hype! We defeated Kinetic Donut!"

"A job well done! Let's try out this new ability Pulse has!"

Pulse sets off and before you know it he's at what looks like the Nightclub. LED lights still flicker, and through the Swadge speakers you hear EDM music. You're surprised to see blocks flickering in and out of existence with the beat while birds dive towards Pulse.

You come upon what's become of Percy and Jasper. Hideously fused together into one

entity with three legs and slashing wings, Sever Yataga hops about to the beat of the EDM.

"I'll show you who's at the top of the pecking order!" It's hard to believe they've gone from promoting inclusiveness to promoting murder.

The birdlike boss activates some kind of armor and begins shooting colorful lasers in every direction. It's all you and Pulse can do to dodge.

But once they've finished scattering the lasers, Pulse is easily able to lob shot after shot at them, bringing them down in a puff of

feathers and hideous shrieking. Pulse manages to absorb the power of EDM, trying out their new ability, making a shield around themselves. You study Dr. Hype's faded magazine page to see what your next move is.

Smash Gorilla Tropical Smoothies

Your favorite fruits RemiXed in to a Funky Fresh new treat!

Mention Bigma and Total Sonic Control for 20% off your Order!

IN LEGAL TROUBLE?

"Better Call Hank!"

HANK WADDLE
ATTORNEY AT LAW

(555) MAG-FEST
"CALL HANK NOW!"

Space... the final stage... a dedicated stage for... CHIPTUNES!



Chipspace has been a staple for the Chiptune community and general fans of 8-bit console sounds for years. We present awesome showcases from the crazy amounts of talent in the chiptune community, curated primarily by the community itself! After all, what's a community without bringing up the talent around you? One that sucks, clearly.

Between showcases, we have cool demonstrations and an open mic for chiptune artists! Come show us what you have, no matter if you're using a Gameboy, a tracker, or a circuit-bent Furby connected via MIDI to your synthesizer! Although if you're doing that last one, hit us up! It'd probably sound awful, but it'd be a hell of a show.

SPACE FACT: Space is not a perfect vacuum like we've been led to believe, which means if you could be loud enough, something could hypothetically hear your cover of Angel 2 the Core.

CHIP FACT: 70 grams of potato chips containing about 330 calories could be converted into 1.4 megajoules of energy. That's enough energy to run (just) an Intel Core Ultra-7 265K processor at maximum power (250 watts) for 93 minutes!

CHIPSPACE FACT: Glenn Dubois once ran a party so late into the night that the hotel shut us down because we bothered people's breakfasts. At 7:30 AM. That party became the basis for the chip rave!



Left to right: Tony Dickinson, Travis Moberg, Max Noel, Nate Horsfall, and Connor Engstrom of the Tiberian Sons

MAGFEST POWER ARTIST INSIGHTS

FIGHTER PLANES IN TIGHT CORRIDORS

by Max Noel from the Tiberian Sons

Picture this: the year is 1995. You're a game designer at legendary Japanese studio Namco, and you're tasked with the mission to create a game about fighter planes, to serve as a launch title for the PlayStation. Striving for rigour and verisimilitude, you go to the nearest VHS rental store and come back with the three most painstakingly researched, historically accurate documentaries ever produced on the topic: *Top Gun*, *Star Wars* and *Macross*.

You make *Ace Combat*.

And it gives birth to the coolest game series ever made about the coolest pieces of military technology ever built.

Ace Combat doesn't model the way fighter planes work. It models the way we wish they would. Even the lowliest jet packs a hundred missiles, which only lock on at preposterously close ranges and are laughably easy to evade. Guns work at distances we stopped caring about after World War 1. Why, you ask? Because it's awesome. Because it lets you admire the F-14, the Rafale, the MiG-29, before you shoot them down. Because it operates on vibes, and the vibes are immaculate.

From the relatively straightforward arcade

shooting formula of the first two episodes, the series would quickly evolve to feature intricate, character-driven storylines, in contrast to western-developed fighter plane sims that only got more drab in the pursuit of "dynamic campaigns" as time and technology marched on. The closest we ever got was the *Crimson Skies* series (all two games of it, twenty years ago).

Meanwhile, *Ace Combat 3* was a cyberpunk corporate war that had the player character hack the Electrosphere with their fighter plane to stop the digitally transcendent consciousness of a post-human mad scientist from uploading itself into all of the world's computers (This was 1999, the era of *Wipeout 2097* and *Wip3out*. Remember when it was cool to replace an E with a 3 for the third episode? Ah, the nineties). Subsequent titles would keep taking inspiration from the Japanese greats, *Gundam* chief among them, to weave the superficial outlook of "wow cool fighter plane" with the deeper message of "war fucking sucks".

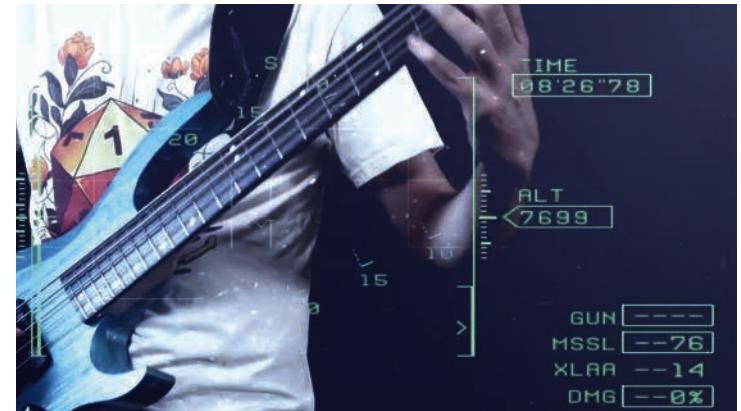
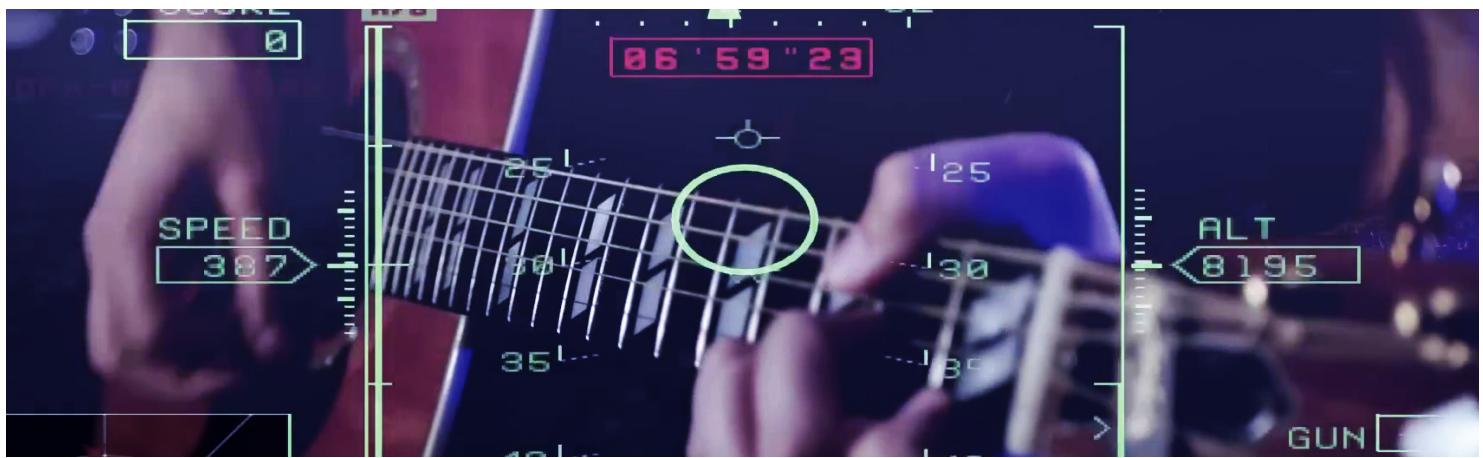
Sure, there's superweapons and trench runs (in tunnels, in canyons, in underground cities, even down the barrel of a particularly large railgun) and submarines that are also aircraft carriers captained by mad men who want to burn the world. But

consider that the most iconic antagonist of the series, Pixy from *Ace Combat Zero*, is a man who witnesses a nation detonate seven nuclear bombs on its own soil in a desperate attempt to halt a war that it's losing. Traumatized by the experience, he deserts to a radical anarchist organization that seeks to abolish countries entirely.

And then you have to joust him. In your plane.

But I digress. There's a second aspect to all that. *Ace Combat 4* saw the addition to an already





stacked music team (Namco's track record in that era also included such bangers as Ridge Racer 4, Soul Calibur and Katamari Damacy) of one Keiki Kobayashi. He was then promoted to lead it, and to say that he took things to the next level is quite possibly the understatement of the century.

For his first trick, he got the sky to sing in Latin over orchestra and electric guitar (Megolith from Ace Combat 4). Then he got a choir to sing the story of the game (The Unsung War from Ace Combat 5) and scored the final duel of Ace Combat Zero for orchestra, choirs and flamenco guitar with Zero... Which he later rearranged

into a monster jazz fusion keyboard jam as a loving tribute to Chick Corea, mere days after the latter's death.

When Ace Combat 7 was the last chance of the series, caught in the throes of development hell, Kobayashi wrote Daredevil to score the penultimate mission. The team found that the track went so hard, that they rewrote the entire mission from scratch (and reorganized a fair chunk of the game before that) just to be worthy of it. The shield drop to end all shield drops exists in order to do its own soundtrack justice.

We worship the guy. And his team (Ryo

Watanabe, Mitsuhiro Kitadani, Hiroshi Okubo, Tetsuzaku Nakanishi... Too many to list, each of them a master of their craft). And Ace Combat in general. We believe it is one of the most underrated video game series and soundtracks of all time, and we want to celebrate it. We want to share our love with you.

There's too much of it to condense into just one concert. But if you return home with a smile on your face, your ears filled with the thunder of supersonic jets, soaring triumphant across deep blue skies... We'll call that mission accomplished.

Now go dance with the angels!

YOU PICK THE STORY

"Why don't we try Rip Baroness next?"

Pulse makes their way to the mouth of a cave below the harbor. Trash and candy wrappers litter the entrance. Inside isn't any neater, and where you expected to find demons, there's only garbage and cardboard standees. Could all this be former shrine offerings?

The enemies seem to have been washed here as well, leftover from other levels. You think an elevator must be stuck somewhere as

smooth jazz echoes through the cave.

"This place is kind of a dump."

"Of course it is!" A voice yells. "I'm the Trash Man! How about a nice rotten egg in this trying time?" He begins pelting Pulse with trash he's pulling from his flying trash can. He pulls out a saxophone, and you suddenly find yourself wishing the Swadge didn't have speakers as he begins playing a hectic screech.

"Hang in there, Pulse! He'll run out of breath sooner or later!" just as you finish, he

does. Pulse takes advantage of his distraction, and as he's defeated Pulse absorbs the power of Jazz, leaving Dr. Garbotnik in his trash.

"It looks like I can double jump with this ability!" Finally, you're getting somewhere!

WHO SHOULD PULSE'S
NEXT OPPONENT BE?

► GRIND PANGOLIN PG. 86

► DEADEYE CHIRPZI PG. 58



This is the view YOU will get if you join the MAGFest Community Orchestra

THE MAGFEST COMMUNITY ORCHESTRA

MUSIC (AND, LIKE, A HUGE AUDIENCE) FILLS THE ATRIUM

Saturday morning, 10am, Gaylord National, Atrium. You're barely awake, which is more than some of your squad can say after staying up until who-knows-when o'clock. Coffee and breakfast burrito in hand, you see dozens, no, hundreds of people walking towards the fountain. Nearly all of them with instruments - strings, woodwinds, did someone bring a bassoon?! They all take their seats, and up steps a fellow in a faux fur coat. Wait... Is that? Multiple Grammy award winning CHARLIE ROSEN!?

Within seconds your still-not-fully-functioning faculties are engulfed in orchestral goodness. *Can You Feel the Sunshine?* You can now, and it's coming from nearly 300 orchestra members from all around the community. Your community. Our community. Joining together to perform one-of-a-kind arrangements from Baldur's Gate to Banjo Kazooie. This is a concert like no other at Super MAGFest.

You enjoyed EVERY. SINGLE. SECOND of it. And now you wonder, "could I be part of the orchestra next year?" YES. The MAGFest Community Orchestra welcomes everyone, with any skill level, to perform. Choir, cello, soprano sax, and alto flute; casual performer, touring professional, and haven't-picked-up-my-saxophone-since-high-school. All are welcome here. All are encouraged to be here. Don't worry, you'll get to practice well

in advance and even rehearse a couple times all together.

The MAGFest Community Orchestra is the living, breathing, tear-jerking embodiment of MAGFest. And, trust me, your central nervous system will try activating your lacrimal glands whether you like it or not. Words can't describe how incredible this concert is to watch, let alone participate in. If you'd like to join the MCO, hop into their dedicated Discord server; and don't forget to catch the next MCO concert in the Atrium! (Check Guidebook for exact day/time.)



by
JFrye



Multiple-Grammy winner Charlie Rosen conducts the MAGFest Community Orchestra during Super MAGFest 2025



Pete Piranha plays percussion perfectly



Double the reeds, double the fun



Two of the biggest flutes you've never seen in person... until now!



WAAAAAAH a great performance



Approaching the mathematical limits of performers per lower atrium



A TRIBUTE TO A VGM LEGEND

IN MEMORY OF MASASHI KAGEYAMA

MAY 23, 1963 - SEPTEMBER 5, 2025

by Emily Anthony

I was surrounded by such great friends, and every day was like a dream. I was always filled with tears of joy. Thank you so much. MAGFest became my motivation.

- MASASHI KAGEYAMA,
2025

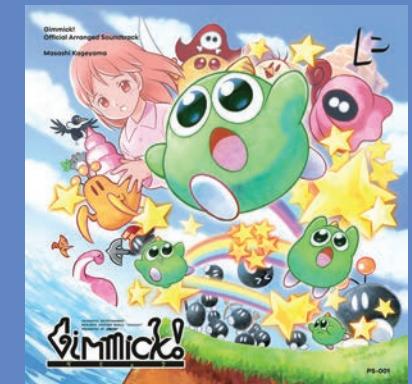
design, but also ended up becoming an in-house favorite at NARU, the oldest jazz house in Japan. As a jazz enthusiast himself, he started performing with his saxophone during the past two years, and he joined Brave Wave, a Tokyo-based record label led by CEO Alex Aniel, as a gaming composer. He was invited as a guest at Super MAGFest 2025, where he attended with Aniel in tow and performed alongside the Super Strikers on the Main Stage.

Masashi Kageyama was a Japanese musician and composer, best known for the cult-favorite **Gimmick!** for the Famicom (Japanese NES), released in 1992 in Japan and under the name Mr. Gimmick in Scandinavia. The game uses an expanded sound chip called the Sunsoft 5B, which provides more sound channels than a standard Famicom game cartridge's Yamaha YM2149. With this upgraded chip, Masashi Kageyama was able to create a more advanced score crossing multiple genres, describing it as a “compilation of game music”.

After **Gimmick!**, Kageyama-san slowly retreated from the limelight and decided to change gears from music to design. He built his new career over the years and not only went on to master photography and



Kage-san and Super Strikers at Super MAGFest 2025



GIMMICK!
OFFICIAL ARRANGED
SOUNDTRACK

BY MASASHI KAGEYAMA

AVAILABLE ON
BANDCAMP



Kageyama-san was inspired by his weekend at Super MAGFest, and vowed to produce more music. He released the official arranged soundtrack for Gimmick! just a few weeks after the event, with musicians from the scene contributing such as the Super Strikers, Marshall Art, and Tee Lopes. Full credits to all the artists, engineers, and more are listed on Bandcamp in the QR [direction].

This article is a collection of stories about Kageyama and his weekend at MAGFest 2025.

ORIGINS OF THE FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN MASASHI KAGEYAMA AND THE WESTERN VGM AND CHIPTUNE SCENE:

"Masashi Kageyama's MAGFest story began in January 2012 on a small side stage set up at MAGFest X. Autoscroll - an alter ego of Philadelphia chiptune band Cheap Dinosaurs devoted to covering VGM tunes - played a set that might have set a MAGFest record for most VGM deep cuts in a single performance.

In the middle of the set was Just Friends, from Gimmick! for the Famicom (NES). At the front of the crowd armed with an iPhone was emfedex, dutifully documenting the performance as she had done with many chiptune shows before. This video was Kageyama-san's first exposure to MAGFest. From what I understand, his first reaction upon finding the video was confusion: who was this band? Why were they playing a song he had written decades ago from a game that was never released in their country? Were they trying to pass off his composition as their own? Emily explained the situation - the band was paying tribute to his music. With that understanding a friendship was born that opened a whole new world to Kageyama!

The MAGFest crowd was fully aware of the song's origins - the band had handed out printed copies of their setlist to the audience, complete with game and composer credits. After this clarification, he was genuinely appreciative: Kageyama's impression was that Gimmick! and his soundtrack was not well received. He has stated that part of the reason why he stopped composing for games "probably had to do with the fact that there was almost no response whatsoever to the work I created." Yet here there was - a band who had discovered his work, performing it to an audience of enthusiastic VGM fans. What



followed was a flurry of Facebook friend requests from Kageyama - starting mostly with the band members but extending to the broader western chiptune and VGM scene. He had found a community of folks making music using video game hardware, and at the same time a pocket of foreigners who were ardent fans of his music."

- Jeff, Marshall Art

The moment of sharing the stage with Kageyama was nothing short of surreal. The months of work and preparation gave way to pure joy that radiated from Kageyama's iconic compositions accompanied by his spirited participation on saxophone.

**-KEVIN,
SUPER STRIKERS**

"Kageyama's music is undoubtedly some of the finest to have ever graced the Famicom. But it also has an intangible quality that resonates deeply with anyone who listens with their full attention. When

we began planning our set for Super Strikers in 2025, conversations came up around who from the Brave Wave roster we could invite to join the program. Among a list of legends, the band's unanimous choice was: Kageyama. "We have to see if Kageyama is interested. If not, we'll go from there."

His acceptance was a thrilling first step but we were cautiously optimistic. It took a village to make it happen, with Magfest and the Brave Wave staff doing all they could to ensure his first-ever trip outside of Japan was seamless and accommodating.

At our introductory dinner, Kageyama was gracious, warm, considerate, and complimentary. He brought CDs and personal gifts for the band. I received a tin of matcha candies from Kyoto (matcha is my absolute favorite). His complementary nature was felt by all that he met at Magfest and stayed in touch with through social media, expressing how inspired he was by the community and how impressed he was by the musical talent he experienced that weekend."

- Kevin, Super Strikers

WEEKEND AT SUPER MAGFEST 2025

STEEL SAMURAI PERFORMANCE

"Steel Samurai was invited to play the main stage, and soon after I found out that Kageyama-san was going to be there! Later, we found out he might end up missing our set due to a scheduling conflict.

With the help of our friends Stemage and Jeff, Kageyama was able to see us play "Strange Memories of Death" or S-MOD (song from Gimmick!) in rehearsal. Stemage got an amazing video of it. As soon as we started playing S-MOD, Kageyama recognized the song. The pure joy on his face that you can see in the video - it puts a smile on my face every time I see it. After we played it, he had us sign the CDs I brought for him (Krieger and Steel Samurai), and he was just absolutely ecstatic. Being able to perform this track for the composer, and him being excited about the performance meant so much to me. At this point I have performed S-MOD for 13 years, so it was an amazing honor to meet him after sending Happy Birthday wishes back and forth and little else for most of that time.

Through some really crazy luck, Kageyama was able to see a lot of the Steel Samurai main stage performance after all. I didn't realize it until my

bandmate pointed him out as we finished the set. Kage-san was so enthusiastic about it! He looked like he was having an awesome time and that made me so happy to see. Afterward, Kage-san came to the autograph session. He told us we aren't allowed to break up. And, he told me and the band that he wanted us to cover another Gimmick! song, which we were excited to agree to."

- darmock, Steel Samurai

PERFORMANCE WITH SUPER STRIKERS AND ATTENDING THE MARSHALL ART SET

"The moment of sharing the stage with Kageyama was nothing short of surreal. The months of work and preparation gave way to pure joy that radiated from Kageyama's iconic compositions accompanied by his spirited participation on saxophone. We're so glad we had gotten this chance, what we know now was a last chance. For us it was the highest point we'd reached in our musical and personal lives, and we can only hope it was as meaningful for Kage-San."

- Kevin, Super Strikers

"I was absolutely blown away by Kage-san's performance on saxophone. It was amazing to see him shred it up on stage with our friends! At their autograph session he got excited when he saw me, and

told me he wanted to join Steel Samurai! Of course I said, "Yes!", and he seemed absolutely thrilled!"

- darmock, Steel Samurai

"As I was walking out of the Green Room to get a spot for the Marshall Art set I saw Kage-san was perched on a far side railing spot. This was during Marshall Art's soundcheck. So, I walked up to the middle front area closest to the stage and asked a person to hold a spot for me. They were nice and said they would. I then went back to where Kage-san was and gestured and asked if he wanted to be closer and he said, "Yes!" So, I escorted him over and he got a front row view.

Then I asked the Super Guitar Bros., Joe and other friends to keep an eye out in case some moshing happened so he'd be safe and I just stood behind him for most of the set. You can barely see me in one of the Marshall Art photos from the stage, but I was there the whole time. Kage-san would occasionally remark something exciting about the band throughout the set. Unfortunately between the show being loud and the language difference, I was not able to hear exactly what he said, which is when I mentioned to Joe that I hadn't seen Alex. I think that's about when Joe messaged Stemage."

darmock, Steel Samurai

"I received a phone call from my friend Joe, who was front row with darmock before the Marshall Art set. He said, "Kageyama is here, but he isn't with

anyone. Should he be?" They found that surprising. There was worry that he might get bumped around near the front bar. I called Alex to check, and was told that Kageyama-san requested to go to the show by himself. I shared this info, and a few people gathered around him to make sure he was safe for the show. After Marshall Art, Bit Brigade fans barreled toward the front row. It was a little scary. Joe decided to loosely follow Kageyama-san out just to be safe. Once they got near the doors, Kageyama paused, turned, and simply said, "Arigatou."

- Stemage

A PLEDGE TO WRITE MORE MUSIC

"After the Marshall Art set, Kage-san and I parted ways and I went back to the Green Room to hang out. A little later Kage-san showed up with Alex and Kage-san made it a point to come up to me. He said something and Alex was stunned, and had to take a moment to collect himself before translating.

Kage-san had said that he wanted to write original music for all three of our bands (Steel Samurai, Super Strikers and Marshall Art) to play. The whole green room was shocked to hear that translation, it was nuts. Everyone's jaw was on the floor. I told Kage-san we would be honored, and thanked him."

- darmock, Steel Samurai





IN MEMORY

Masashi Kageyama was diagnosed with stomach cancer in February 2025, and passed away in September. He was a beloved, warm, spirited person whose “boundless enthusiasm”, per Brave Wave, “left an indelible mark on everyone who had the privilege of working with him.” Alex Aniel noted on X:

“I worked with Kageyama-san for nearly a decade at Brave Wave. During his short bout with cancer, he shared many details of his goals and wishes with me.

In 2025, he was staging his comeback as a musician, first by attending MAGFest in Washington D.C. (marking his first ever trip outside Japan), and then by releasing his first ever album, “Gimmick! Official Arranged Soundtrack.” After attending MAGFest, he became motivated to release a proper original album. He also vowed to return to MAGFest

someday to perform his original music.

After his stage 4 terminal cancer diagnosis in February, Kageyama-san was determined to live long enough to release his next album. He even sent me a photo of his laptop from the hospital room as he tried to make music until the very end.

I doubt I'll ever meet anyone like him ever again. May he rest in peace.”

Others who shared their weekend with Kageyama-san cherished their time together.

“Masashi Kageyama may have come to MAGFest as an official guest, but it sure seemed like he was

As I listened to the live performance, I gradually regained my energy. I got so many treasures from MAGFest that I couldn't carry them all. I want to transform those treasures little by little and deliver them to you all.

- KAGEYAMA

there to spend time with friends and experience the event.

MAGFest enabled Kage-san to meet people he had connected with online over a decade ago and he clearly was very excited by that. He was just as happy about

seeing us in person as we were about meeting him. In our first meeting at MAGFest, we talked about my day job and my family. He was taking pictures with us (and not the other way around!). Who knew that meeting one of your favourite composers could feel like catching up with a friend!

The other thing that I remember noticing was how much he was taking in the event - especially the music. At one point during the weekend I spotted him browsing Rock Island, checking out some of the CDs

that were on sale. He was front row against the rail for multiple main stage bands, including Marshall Art. It was really special and elevating to see him at the front of the crowd for our entire set.

After the event, I reached out to thank him. He had this to say about his MAGFest experience:

"I was surrounded by such great friends, and every day was like a dream. I was always filled with tears of joy. Thank you so much. MAGFest became my motivation. There is no such large-scale event in Japan. It was a really good experience. I'm sure we'll meet again."

- Jeff, Marshall Art

"It was fun bonding over 90s guitarists and Amy Grant. That was the way he always remembered my name. I wasn't expecting to wax on Heart in Motion over the weekend with a legend."

- Stemage

"It's one of the highest praise to receive as a VGM artist when the composer you look up to appreciates and loves your take on their song, and asks you to do an additional song! Sadly, I was not able to finish the new arrangement before his passing, but I have pledged to finish it in his memory."

After the event I reached out to thank him. Here is a part of what he said:

"It was physically and mentally tough because I participated in the event in a skinny state, but with your help and everyone else's help, I managed to get through it. Because of that, I stayed in bed in the hotel except for my own event and your band, Marshall Art. I really wanted to be with you all more and talk to you. But it's a great joy to have been able to participate in MAGFest. And it's my new motivation. At the beginning of Marshall Art's live performance, I could barely stand. Thank you so much for that time. As I listened to the live performance, I gradually regained my

energy. I got so many treasures from MAGFest that I couldn't carry them all. I want to transform those treasures little by little and deliver them to you all. If you come to Tokyo, please be sure to contact me. I'll treat you to a delicious meal."

I'm sad we'll never have that meal, and that I won't be able to send or receive birthday wishes with him anymore, but I am so grateful I was able to meet him after all of these years and share all of those great moments with him. He was one of the kindest and most positive people I have ever met, just an absolute joy to talk to. I will forever cherish that time, it was truly the best MAGFest ever."

- darmock, Steel Samurai

"After all these years, it had been a dream of all of us in the community to finally be able to connect Kageyama to everyone in person. It's uncanny that this opportunity to come to MAGFest happened when it did. It was a very busy weekend for me with everything happening on stage, so I missed out on most of the opportunities to spend quality time with him. However, on the final night he made a point to

come backstage and share his feelings with me. He said he was very impressed with everything we are doing at MAGFest. Nothing of this scale could be done back home and he greatly respected the hard work and dedication he saw. Hearing the impact that the community had on his life first hand was absolutely amazing. It was such a wonderful experience for him at a time when it mattered the most. I'm truly honored we were able to give that to him."

- emfedex, Music Booking Team

Thank you so much.... It was a really good experience. I'm sure we'll meet again.

- KAGEYAMA



MAGFEST POWER THANKS THE SPECIAL CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS PIECE:

emfedex, MAGFest Music Booking Team • Jeff, Marshall Art
darmock, Steel Samurai • Kevin, Super Strikers • Stemage

PULSE'S POWER-UP PUZZLES

DONUT GET LOST

Pulse is ready to take on the hideout of the nefarious Kinetic Donut! Can you help guide him through the twists and turns of his electric maze?

Bonus challenge:
Kinetic Donut currently has 6 points in his health bar, and Pulse is running on empty! Guide Pulse to the 7 letters of "MAGFEST" hidden in the maze, to give him the power-up he needs to defeat Kinetic Donut!

PULSE POWER



READY



DONUT POWER



ASSEMBLE THE SQUAD

Read the clues below and mark the grid to indicate YES (O) or NO (X) for each of the different combinations.

Welcome to your first MAGFest! Your friend has introduced you to their con squad, and has asked you to find a place for you all to eat dinner. Problem is, when they rattled off all the names, identities, food preferences, and where to find them to group up, you got it all confused. Figure out who wants to eat what and where they are... here's what you remember:

- Peter, the photographer, the person in a panel room, the person who wants ice cream, and Jamie are the 5 friends.
- Jamal, Abigail, the person at the gazebo, and the burrito fan already had Pizza today without the Pizza lover (party foul!).
- Ace spotted Peter entering the makerspace earlier today.
- Abigail and Jamie aren't interested in cosplay or photography.
- Peter and Ace were debating between pizza and sushi yesterday.
- Jamal is not a cosplayer and loves tacos.
- Jamie is currently looking for their drumsticks in the hotel room.
- The speedrunner is the person in the panel room.

		Identity					Location			Food						
		Drummer	Cosplayer	Photographer	Game Master	Speedrunner	Makerspace	Arena	Panel	Hotel Room	Gazebo	Sushi	Pizza	Burritos	Ice Cream	Tacos
Name	Food															
	Jamal															
Peter																
Ace																
Jamie																
Abigail																
Sushi																
Pizza																
Burritos																
Ice Cream																
Tacos																
Makerspace																
Arena																
Panel																
Hotel Room																
Gazebo																

(Puzzle solutions can be found on page 61.)

DR. HYPE'S DATA DECRYPTION: WORD SEARCH

PUZZLE 1

A	S	W	A	D	G	E	Y	E	E
R	P	I	A	N	O	A	M	D	C
E	A	M	I	S	L	G	F	A	A
N	S	M	E	P	T	E	B	C	P
A	A	L	S	T	S	A	I	R	S
G	T	O	U	R	A	S	G	A	R
I	C	S	E	P	U	L	M	E	E
A	D	P	O	M	N	U	A	T	K
!	U	C	N	S	O	L	E	A	
S	C	H	I	P	T	U	N	E	M

PUZZLE 2

M	G	M	B	L	A	R	P	E	B	S	U	R	G	L	J
R	U	E	A	N	L	O	H	I	L	E	N	A	P	A	A
O	I	S	E	K	T	A	G	Y	T	O	M	E	G	T	M
C	T	R	I	E	E	M	B	E	T	I	D	N	A	E	S
K	A	R	L	C	A	R	L	N	N	H	I	U	Y	M	P
N	R	B	K	Y	O	O	S	G	I	U	M	T	L	I	A
M	A	G	F	E	S	T	R	P	O	P	V	P	O	N	C
T	A	L	D	N	A	L	Y	R	A	M	T	I	R	D	E
E	I	N	O	G	A	Z	E	B	O	C	S	H	D	I	P
S	C	C	H	A	R	B	O	R	P	W	E	C	E	E	A
G	C	N	P	I	X	E	L	O	A	O	N	A	I	P	R
E	A	O	A	O	E	C	I	D	A	T	R	I	U	M	T
P	S	M	U	D	W	N	G	D	R	A	G	O	N	S	Y
O	W	L	E	T	T	E	V	A	W	E	R	A	U	Q	S
S	A	X	U	S	S	E	R	E	D	E	V	L	E	B	S
E	G	N	O	P	E	D	A	C	R	A	M	A	G	E	S

This puzzle is a word search puzzle that has a hidden message in it.

- First find all the words in the list.
- Words can go in any direction and share letters as well as cross over each other.
- Once you find all the words. Copy the unused letters starting in the top left corner into the blanks to reveal the hidden message.

1ST: FIND THESE WORDS

ARCADE	COSPLAY	PIANO
ARENA	GAMING	PULSE
BIGMA	MAKERSPACE	STAGE
CHIPTUNE	METAL	SUPER
CONSOLE	MUSIC	SWADGE

2ND: FILL THESE BLANKS WITH THE UNUSED LETTERS.

A horizontal dashed line with a solid line segment on the left and a solid line segment on the right.

FIND THESE WORDS

ARCADE	INDIE	SUPER
ARENA	JAMSPACE	SWADGE
atrium	LARP	TABLETOP
BIGMA	MAGFEST	POSE
CHIPTUNE	MAKERSPACE	MAGES
CONSOLE	MARYLAND	GAMES
DICE	METAL	PONG
DANCE	MUSIC	SAX
DRAGONS	PARTY	SWAG
SCOUTS	PIANO	PIXEL
GAMING	PINBALL	BELVEDERE
GAYLORD	PULSE	POINTS
GAZEBO	RHYTHM	PANEL
GUITAR	ROCK	POWER
HARBOR	SQUAREWAVE	

FILL WITH THE UNUSED LETTERS

A decorative horizontal line consisting of two parallel dashed lines with a gap in the center.

CROCHET CREATIONS: DUSTCAP'S HELMET BEANIE

Dustcap Helmet Beanie

by: Luna Toon @lunasstuffinthings

Materials:

Loops and Threads, Impeccable in Sunny Day

Loops and Threads, Impeccable in Guacamole

Loops and Threads, Impeccable in Black

**Supplies:**

Crochet Hook size H/8 (5.0mm)

Stuffing

Scissor

Abbreviations (U.S Terms):

rnd: Round

sl st: Slip Stitch

ch: Chain

inc: Increase

sc: Single Crochet

dec: Decrease

dc: Double Crochet

blo: Back loop Only

Top Piece / Speaker

Start with Black

Begin with 6 stitches in a Magic Ring, ch 2 (6)

rnd 1: 6 inc dc, sl st into the first dc, ch 2 (12)

rnd 2: 1 dc; 1 inc dc repeat 6 times, sl st into the first dc, ch 2 (18)

rnd 3: 2 dc; 1 inc dc repeat 6 times, sl st into the first dc (24)

Color Change to Sunny Day

rnd 4: 24 inc, sl st into the first dc, ch 2 (48)

rnd 5: 48 dc in blo, sl st into the first dc, ch 2 (48)

rnd 6 - 8: 48 dc, sl st into the first dc, ch 2 (48)

rnd 9: 24 dec dc, sl st into the first dc, cast off (24)

Leave a long piece of yarn to sew on to the beanie later

**Beanie**

Beanie is worked entirely in Sunny Day

Begin with 9 stitches in a Magic Ring, ch 2 (9)

rnd 1: 9 dc, sl st into the first dc, ch 2 (9)

rnd 2: 9 inc dc, sl st into the first dc, ch 2 (18)

rnd 3: 1 dc; 1 inc dc repeat 9 times, sl st into the first dc, ch 2 (27)

rnd 4: 2 dc; 1 inc dc repeat 9 times, sl st into the first dc, ch 2 (36)

rnd 5: 3 dc; 1 inc dc repeat 9 times, sl st into the first dc, ch 2 (45)

rnd 6: 4 dc; 1 inc dc repeat 9 times, sl st into the first dc, ch 2 (54)

rnd 7: 5 dc; 1 inc dc repeat 9 times, sl st into the first dc, ch 2 (63)

rnd 8: 6 dc; 1 inc dc repeat 9 times, sl st into the first dc, ch 2 (72)

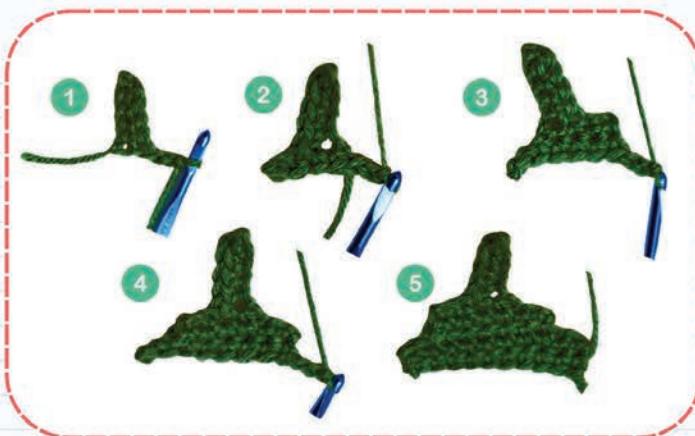
rnd 9 - 17: 72 dc, sl st into the first dc, ch 2 (72)

rnd 18: 72 dc, sl st into the first dc, cast off (72)

CROCHET CREATIONS (CONT'D)

Controller

Worked entirely in Guacamole
rows are worked diagonally
row 1: ch 6, sc 5
row 2: ch 3, sc 4, ch 3, sc 6
row 3: ch 3, sc 8, ch 3, sc 12
row 4: 10 sc
row 5: 5 sc, sl st



Optional Speaker Brim

Brim is worked entirely in Sunny Day
ch 74, begin dc in 3rd stitch from the hook
rnd 1: 7 dc; 1 inc dc repeat 9 times, sl st into the first dc, ch 2 (81)
rnd 2: 8 dc; 1 inc dc repeat 9 times, sl st into the first dc, ch 2 (90)
rnd 3: 9 dc; 1 inc dc repeat 9 times, sl st into the first dc, ch 2 (99)
rnd 4: 10 dc; 1 inc dc repeat 9 times, sl st into the first dc, ch 2 (107)
rnd 5: 11 dc; 1 inc dc repeat 9 times, sl st into the first dc, cast off (116)
Leave a long piece of yarn to sew on to the beanie later

Assembly

Sew the Top Piece / Speaker onto the top of the beanie, fill with stuffin as you go. Sew the Optional Speaker Brim onto rnd 14 of the beanie. Sew the Controller onto the beanie one round above the speaker Brim (rnd 12). sl st with Black to decorate the Controller



Black Squarewave

Begin on rnd 8, 7 stitches away from the Controller
sl st vertically downwards to the Speaker Brim (rnd 14)
sl st 11 around the Speaker Brim horizontally
sl st vertically upwards to rnd 8, matching your previous strand
sl st 10 horizontally on rnd 8
sl st vertically downwards to the Speaker Brim (rnd 14)
sl st 12 around the Speaker Brim horizontally
sl st vertically upwards to rnd 8, matching your previous strand
sl st 10 horizontally on rnd 8
sl st vertically downwards to the Speaker Brim (rnd 14)
sl st 11 around the Speaker Brim horizontally
sl st vertically upwards to rnd 8, matching your previous strand, cast off



INTRODUCING

SNACKTICAL PASTRYONAGE ACTION

TACTICAL DONUT

CARRYING CASE

BY:

ROSEATE SPOONBILL CASES

PROTECTING YOUR MOST VALUED ASSETS SINCE 20X6



Classic
Pink



Modern Teal
(w/ Sprinkles)

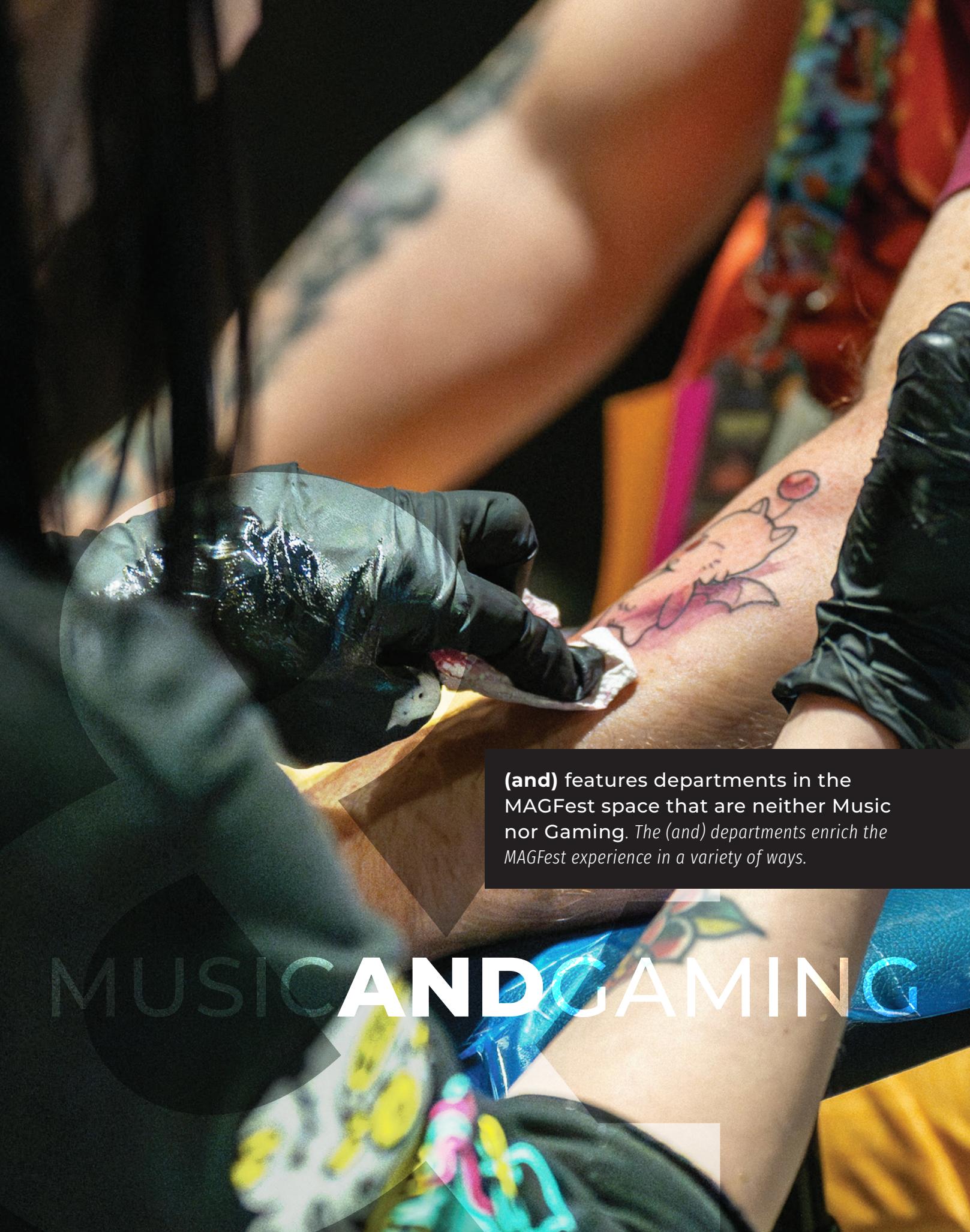
Digital
Camo

Frosted Cake
(w/ Sprinkles)

*Donut not included

*Donut not included

Full coverage padding and IP69 rated for ultimate donut protection
Food safe and crush proof composite shell (Certified BPA & MSG Free)



(and) features departments in the MAGFest space that are neither Music nor Gaming. The *(and)* departments enrich the MAGFest experience in a variety of ways.

MUSIC AND GAMING

(AND) NOW TO ANSWER SOME

READER QUESTIONS

Long-time readers of MAGFest Power MAG'zine know to submit their burning questions to magfestpower@magnet.org. Here are the top questions we've received since Super 2025, which have somehow become a little more unhinged...

What's the craziest thing you've seen at MAGFest?

At the charity auction there's always a bidding war for the VIP package, which sold for 5-figures at Super 2025. That was insane!

Forget what is MAGFest, WHY is MAGFest?!

Some MAGFest for the Music, some for the Gaming, and some for the AND. The real WHY is the friends we've made along the way.

MAGCruise???

Be the change you want to see. - King Donut (probably)

When you're in the console room, what game do you always try to play each year?

Dr. Mario.

How do you pick the yearly theme? Is there a committee? Is it one person? Is there voting?

We covered this last year. Please reference MAGFest Power MAG'zine Volume 2, page 17, right column, 5th question (right under my hot sauce spiel). There have been no material changes to our answer.

What can non-locals do to have fun in the area outside of MAGFest?

Where do you find the time? We run non-stop from opening ceremonies Thursday to closing ceremonies Sunday. But I do enjoy picking up cookies from a certain Swiss bakery before and/or after Super. Nomnomnomnom!

What does king donut taste like?

I think you're confusing King Donut with a king cake. King cakes are delicious, so long as you don't mind a boat load of cinnamon and sugar.

What's the loudest recorded Colossus RRHUUUOOAAAAAHHHH?

Well over 13.

Thoughts on Nintendocore?

A perfect crossing of Music and Gaming? Yes, please!

Can I get \$20 on my Divvy?

We love questions that pander to a limited audience, many of whom do read this magazine. That said, it's funny you think we have \$20 to give.

What are your hopes and dreams for the gaming community in the next five years?

"More art, less business."

- the entire Zine Team

We would like to see game development recognized more as an artistic endeavor than a business bottom line, supporting small studios and indie developers, and protecting them from being swallowed up or closed by large publishers.

We would like see both games and an industry that reflect the people who play them.

Seeing the next generation of gamers taking up interest in building and repairing retro hardware and other skill sets that are at risk of becoming lost over time. Also, idk, Half-Life 3?

How much wood would a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood?

Well over 13.

Should I break up with my boyfriend?

Of all the magazines to ask, this is probably least likely to make a good decision. You did see our Garbotnik Valentine spread from last year, right?

What is MAGFest's official relationship to the shrimp parade?

No comment.

Best crossover cosplay you've ever seen?

I saw a Princess Peach-like costume a couple years ago that was styled after Rainbow Road. It lit up like crazy. That was cool as hell.

What was your favorite MAGFEST 2025 moment?

Midnight Pickle Party.

How can concert attendees obtain ear plugs if needed?

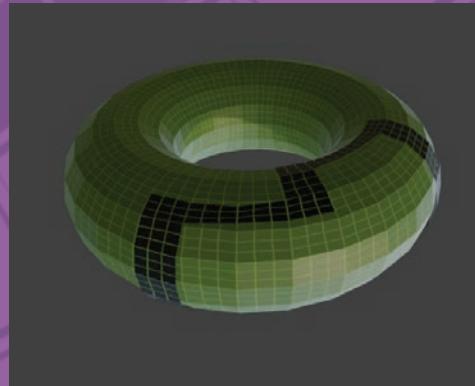
Our Public Safety crew has you covered! Drop in at Camellia 1 & 2 to say hi, ask about all the cool ways they help you have the best time at Super MAGFest, and pick up a pair of disposable earplugs. Don't forget to grab a bottle of water while you're there! (As if they'd let you leave without it. Hail Hydrate!)

What makes that one Final Fantasy Adventure song slap so damn hard?

You'll have to be more specific and narrow your query to only a single banger. Although "Rising Sun" is more typically covered within certain online communities such as Dwelling of Duels, we are particularly fond of "Fight 1," which slaps in large part due to the use of a technique known as the Ostinato (a continually repeated musical phrase that is often modified to fit the current harmonic center). Ostinatos are frequently deployed in classical and metal music and are especially effective in "Fight 1" because their rhythmic predictability can serve as a good substitute for a traditional drum track (since the FX channel in FFA was used during boss fights for sound effects).

Why is the Charity department the best department?

They are lovably insane and raise money for a great cause. Name one other department that will take your \$5, give it to Child's Play, and give you a mystery prize in return.



What's the water bottle policy in the concert spaces?

No metal or glass of any kind, up to 1 liter (33oz) in a resealable plastic container. Do not bring your Bubba Keg or boot flask.

Pen, pineapple, apple, ____?

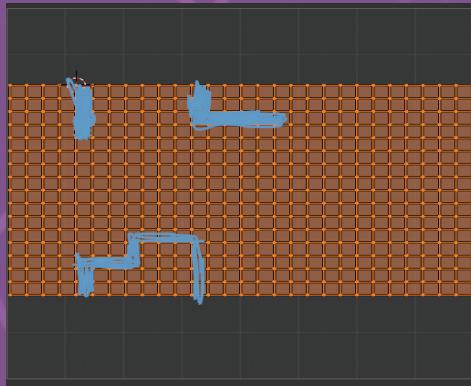
Pizza.

Did you know that the phone game snake is actually played on the surface of a donut (torus)? When you wrap from the top of the screen to the bottom, you're going through the donut hole, and when you wrap right to left, you're going around the outside of the donut.

We're having trouble visualizing this. Please demonstrate using a donut and a gummy worm.

Which topologically speaking, means you're also playing snake on a coffee cup. Probably.

Ok, how about maybe a 3D rendering?



YOU PICK THE STORY

"I bet fighting Kinetic Donut would be a Piece of cake," you offer.

Pulse sets off through a partially demolished food court. Before you know it, you've reached King Donut's lair.

"Who dares enter ... wait... is that salsa I smell?"

As the donut wanders closer, Pulse produces a jar of salsa. Kinetic Donut swipes it and downs the whole jar, rapidly shrinking and transferring his funk powers to Pulse.

"I'm sorry about that, I think I was just hangry."

"That was such a quick victory, should we

try another venue? Maybe Rip Baroness?"

Her cave entrance is choked with ancient trash. Inside, where you expected flaming demons and an industrial metal hellscape, you find more conga monkeys and some kind of jazzy elevator music playing.

"Doesn't this seem weird? Recycled enemies, all of this trash..."

"You'll have to put me out with the trash to get through!" The Trashman shouts as he swoops in. Pulse fires off a barrage of musical cannon shots at him.

Do you think people should make snake games for other topologies?

Like a plane, maybe?

Is this more questions about snake than you were anticipating getting?

Strangely, this was the exact number of questions we expected about snake games.

Like, if someone wrote a snake game that took place on the inside surface of a cube (or rectangular prism), you could play a projected game of snake around the inside of the concert hall and wouldn't that be cool?

Ok, now you're one question more than we expected.

I suspect in the unlikely case you use any of the snake topology questions I won't have difficulty convincing my friends that's mine.

If you had a bet with your friends, we expect a 25% cut, which you should give us at the Merch booth in Expo Hall E (by Registration).

HOLLOW SNAKE

So we'll admit this one got stuck in our collective heads and required some investigation. We dove into Blender to unwrap the Donut (torus, but that's less fun) and map it to a grid of the same dimensions as the classic Nokia "Snake" game. Sure enough, once you see the unwrapped shape in both 3D and 2D simultaneously, the dimension-hopping Snake makes a lot more sense! We admit it, MAGFest Power reader; *you might be right.*

Just as you think Pulse has this in the (trash) bag the Trashman pulls a saxophone from his junkcraft and begins playing an earsplitting sound, scattering music notes across the floor. Pulse stumbles over a few before the jazz solo stops and they're able to get a final shot in. As the junkbot crashes into the ground and Dr. Garbotnik resumes his true form, Pulse absorbs the power of jazz.

► SEVER YATAGA PG. 33

► GRIND PANGOLIN PG. 86

WHO SHOULD PULSE'S
NEXT OPPONENT BE?



Wes Johnson leads Matt Mercer, Marisha Ray, Jan Johns, Ellen McLain, and John Patrick Lowrie in Voice-a-Palooza shenanigans

BRINGING YOUR FAVE GUESTS TO SUPER

An interview with ThatGamerGrl and Bri, Co-Department Heads of the Super MAGFest Guest Department

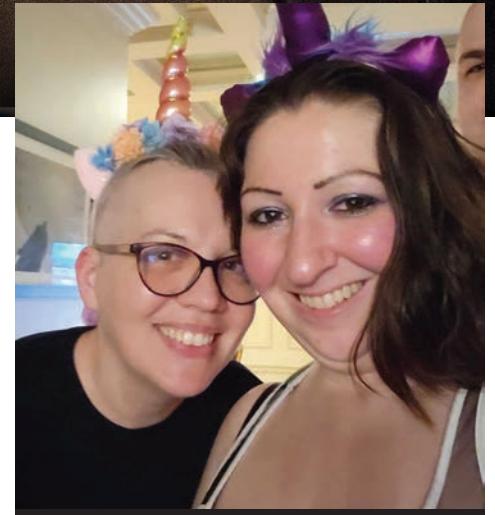
We've seen the term "Guest" used to refer to some of the people who come to Super. What is a Guest, actually, and what does the Guests Department do?

At its core, a Guest is a notable individual in the games, video game music, or pop culture sphere that MAGFest contracts to come out to an event and share meaningful content with our attendees. Guests are not generally performers that play music at a MAGFest event, although sometimes we do team up with the Music Division to bring out amazing musicians that also appeal to other facets of MAGFest.

The Guests Department works year-round to book Guests to come to Super MAGFest, develop content with those Guests to share with attendees, manage their travel and accommodations, and ultimately make sure that a Guest and our attendees have an awesome time together at the event. Sometimes that means ensuring that we have interpreters available if the Guest doesn't speak English, or is deaf or hard of hearing. Other times it means making sure that they know where the great meal spots are in National Harbor that meet their dietary needs.

How big is your team and how long have you been doing this?

The Guests department at Super MAGFest became a volunteer run department in 2018, and is currently made up of two Department Heads and six teams. Our Booking Team works year round (sometimes across multiple years) to bring awesome folk to MAGFest. We have a specialized booking group called Team Japan that works to book legends in the video game scene. Our Content Development & Scheduling Team works with Guests and other MAGFest Departments to create fun and engaging programming. At the event, our Liaison Team works directly with our Guests to help them get to their appearances and assist them with any at-event needs. Lastly, our



The magical unicorns themselves, ThatGamerGrl and Bri

Hospitality Team works to give our Guests a place to relax, recharge and network at the event, and our Operations & Logistics Team works with the hotel and transportation and logistics providers to make sure everything runs smoothly.

How many Guests are typically at Super?

The number of Guests we have at Super MAGFest ebbs and flows a bit each year, but we generally have somewhere between 25 and 35 Guests.



It's just what the doctor ordered: Erika Ishii



That's a lot! But it seems like the right amount given that there are over 20,000 attendees. How does the selection process work? How many Guests are recommended by other departments? What about by attendees? Do you spend a lot of time researching possible Guests?

When we're researching Guests to book we check out recommendations made by attendees and volunteers, and referrals from previous Guests and our industry contacts. In addition, we often have requests from other departments at MAGFest for Guests that would synergize with their programming. Before deciding to reach out to a potential Guest, we have a lengthy review process to figure out whether they align with MAGFest's core values and with the overall vibe of the event. Sometimes we find a Guest who would be a perfect fit for MAGFest, but our budget can't accommodate their asks – at least for now.

How do you balance Guests from different fields? What about different types like influencers, youtubers, game designers, voice actors, musicians?

During our research process, we build a pretty complex dossier of information regarding each potential Guest, so during our booking process, we do our best to make sure different disciplines are balanced. We do put extra emphasis on booking folks who can potentially slot into more than one facet of MAGFest, like a voice actor that might also be a game developer. Despite our best efforts, sometimes our final booking may end up a little lopsided towards one facet or another, just due to scheduling.

What's the difference between a Guest and a Performer? Do you work with the Music Division to book either?

The clearest difference between a Guest and a Performer is that a Performer is booked through the Music Division to play a show at one of MAGFest's music venues, like our Main Stage. A Guest is generally representative of a different facet of MAGFest, leaning more into games or pop culture like a voice actor or perhaps a renown cosplay artist. Sometimes we do book musicians as Guest, but they tend to be composers or other non-performing musicians notable in the industry. On occasion though, Music or Guests find an opportunity to tag-team. A great example from Super MAGFest 2025 was Lotus Juice, whose attendance was made possible thanks to Guests, Music, and Team Japan collaborating together like Voltron. No, you can't drive our lions, have you seen the cost of gas?

Do you pay Guests to come to Super? What kind of perks do they get?

We do provide some compensation for our Guests' time while they're at the event. We have a "green room" of sorts full of snacks and drinks where our Guests can grab a quick bite, recharge, and network with their fellow Guests while at the event. Ultimately though, we think the coolest benefit we can offer a Guest is having a blast at MAGFest, whether that means throwing down at Consoles playing Street Fighter, playing a crap ton of pinball at 3 AM, making new friends, or waking up to the sounds of the Community Orchestra.

What's the difference between being a Guest and being a Panelist?

One of the coolest parts of MAGFest is that anyone can be a panelist, whether you're a Guest, an attendee, or perhaps a disgruntled fan of Final Fantasy VIII that is tired of their favorite FF being besmirched in popular opinion. The Panels



Department, a whole separate team of killer folks that we get to collaborate with, works hard to select interesting topics for folks to check out. We do work with them to help them round out their schedule with Guest panels that MAGFest attendees will find cool, but not all panelists are Guests brought out by the Guest Department, and not all Guests end up doing panels.

What's the most difficult aspect of booking Guests?

Getting a hold of cool people that you or I might want to see at MAGFest! Social media has been a bit of a double-edged sword – we can see and interact with folks easier than ever before, but contacting them in a public forum doesn't fit with our process, so finding good contact information can be difficult. Some people have management contacts that we can find and work with, and sometimes we can reach out through our network to get an introduction, but it's almost never the same process from one potential Guest to another.

How do you work with Guests in the leadup to Super and at the event?

By and large, the Guests Department manages and supports all of a Guest's experience at Super MAGFest, and that starts well before the event. We work with them before the event to set expectations and handle the various paperwork that is necessary to get them there. During setup, our team shows up days before the event to finalize details with the hotel and address any last minute travel issues. During the event, our dedicated Liaison Team is there to make sure that Guests have everything they need, and that they get to their scheduled content on time. They also help coordinate any last minute details with

Departments that might be working with a Guest as a part of their programming.

What do Guests do at Super?

Oh jeez, what don't they do? Many of our Guests participate in panels or cosplay photo shoots (or both!). They'll often have an autograph session, where folks can come meet them and have something signed (although they're also generally excited to meet folks out and about the fest as well!). We try to include Guests in other programming, like as a celebrity host or player of MAGFest Versus, or when TJ Davis did a sing-along with the magFAST crew while they played Sonic R. Most importantly, we want Guests to "Do A MAGFest" – have fun, meet new people, show off their Smash skills, check out a concert – that kind of stuff!

Do you field a lot of strange requests from Guests or their teams?

You know, not really? By and large, part of finding Guests that are a great fit for Super MAGFest seems to have also filtered out folks that might have eccentric requests. We've never had to provide a bowl of only green M&Ms or anything like that. Though, now that you mention it, we did have one Guest ask for a framed picture of Nicholas Cage. Pretty sure they were doing it as a goof. We still got it for them though.

Guests have varying levels of celebrity. Have you dealt with any safety issues or other weird moments? How do you handle the parasocial aspect of managing Guests at Super?

Fortunately, no one on the current team has had to manage a situation like this, though we're certainly prepared to do so should we invite a



Guests teamed up with Indie Arcade to bring out Quantum Jungle

Guest with a level of notoriety that could cause a safety concern. We've always got a hotline to event security and public safety should there be a situation we need to handle. We've had a few parasocial incidents, but nothing that caused a big problem. One interaction that a staffer observed involved an attendee crossing a parasocial line with a Guest, only for one of the attendee's friends to step in and deescalate the situation themselves by pulling their friend away. It was pretty neat to see our attendees step up to make sure everyone has a great MAGFest, including our Guests. That said, for volunteers in the Guests Department, we have a fairly stringent onboarding process to find folks that are capable of being a support resource first, and a fan second. We even have procedures in place in the event that we happen to bring out a Guest that a Department staffer might be at risk of not being able to compartmentalize their fandom for, and we work to keep those lines of communication open and honest.

How do you see your work changing in the future? Should there be more Guests? Different ones? A different process?

We made some fairly big shifts in how the Guests Department operates last year, and we plan to continue along those lines, including growing our team to spread out the work a bit more. As far as bringing out more Guests? I don't know about increasing the count, per se, but we are bringing out more Guests with varying backgrounds. Diversifying our lineup to represent not just all the kinds of people that folks want to meet at Super MAGFest, but also of all the kinds of people who attend MAGFest is a very important goal for us.



Acoustic lobby concert featuring Austin Wintory, Mason Lieberman, and painter Angela Bermudez



THE A IN MAGFEST STANDS FOR ACCESSIBILITY

The editors sat with Bonnie and Kat, Department Heads of Accessibility at Super MAGFest, to learn about how the department serves our community.



by
Emily Anthony



Look for the Jigglypuff sign to easily find the accessibility desk outside Expo E

What is the mission of the Accessibility department?

We work to ensure everyone can attend and fully enjoy Super MAGFest, no matter the barrier.

Why does Super MAGFest have an Accessibility department?

Because it's the right thing to do. Everyone is likely to enter a disabled community at some point in their lives, and it is in everyone's best interests to serve everyone's needs. We not only follow the ADA guidelines, but also strive to follow the spirit

of the Because it's the right thing to do. Everyone is likely to enter a disabled community at some point in their lives, and it is in everyone's best interests to serve everyone's needs. We not only follow the ADA guidelines, but also strive to follow the spirit of the law and other initiatives for inclusion at MAGFest. Disabilities come in many different forms: they can be permanent or temporary, static or dynamic, can present as physical, sensory, or behavioral/emotional, and may look different than what one would expect. For example, pregnancy can be disabling, but is not commonly pictured when thinking about disability or ADA compliance! We seek to serve all of these communities to make sure they can enjoy their MAGFest.

What services does Accessibility provide?

Department Heads for all parts of Super MAGFest submit information to our department to schedule meetings to review layouts and media, request interpreters for their programming, and to ask

questions as a part of the pre-event checklists. Our team maintains an Accessibility Resource Guide that compiles third-party resources for bettering physical, verbal, visual, digital, and cultural accessibility at the event. Our department pushes proactive efforts to make the space more inclusive to provide a better experience for all attendees, versus reactive efforts when things go wrong.



"I really loved the service dog kit and definitely loved the quiet room."

- Ashlee Maloney





“I have severe fibromyalgia, osteoarthritis and cysts in both knees, a neck issue that causes blindness in one eye, and other injuries from being in the military. I have been so grateful for the accessibility department. I’m grateful for the seating provided during concerts.” - Zoe F

““MAGFest allows me to see smaller metal bands that normally is not possible for me since they mostly play in smaller standing room only venues that have no seating. I can’t stand in place for that long. The ADA riser in the back of the concert room is fantastic and I am very grateful for it. Especially so last time when I had to use a cart to get around instead of just a cane. The staffers monitoring the elevators are also very appreciated.” - DeskLaser

Digital accessibility is a large focus for the department. The digital space is where the disability community has the greatest organized presence, so making a website and social media accessible helps to encourage trust that an individual or organization does in fact have disability inclusion in mind. The team works with the Theme, BOPS (Broadcast Ops), the website, and social media teams to meet or exceed Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. Web Accessibility considers items such as colorblindness checks, ensuring images have alt text, checking readability of font style and size, use of easily understood symbols, and more. We are pursuing improvements with BOPS to improve the closed-captioning of MAGTV at the fest.

During Super, we manage a few spaces and perform key tasks. Sometimes there are modifications to room plans – chairs shuffle around, power cables are run in unexpected places, a different set of doors is used for entry – which can push the room out of compliance. Therefore, we perform walk-throughs of event spaces during setup and along the weekend to make recommendations to stay accessible. We run the Accessibility Help Desk as a direct interface for questions and assistance; it can be found outside Expo E, which is where you got your badge. Anyone can borrow mobility aids from the Help Desk; previously we only offered wheelchairs, but we are expanding our offerings for Super 2026.

In 2025 we prototyped ElevatorOps, a team who responds to requests for assistance with accessing

““Last year I attended MAG with a scooter due to an injury, and the Accessibility Help Desk was the first place I went to get the blue ribbon. I will sing their praises to anyone: the people there were so kind and took the time both to call the hotel and double check with staff about my questions on recharging my scooter where possible (at panels, etc - which was a huge stress saver).” - Chax



““I’m an Autistic/ADHD cosplayer with Lyme Disease who has been attending conventions for around 15+ years now. Being a cosplayer means getting to engage in a creative way with my special interests, but sometimes the added sensory struggles of wigs, complicated outfits, props, contacts, etc. can make it easy to get overstimulated and have an anxiety attack. Having spaces like the quiet room to color and decompress while I emotionally regulate has been game-changing for my convention experience (especially because I typically don’t room at the Gaylord itself these days).

Additionally, feeling welcomed to mask and seeing others doing so too gives me an increased comfort as an immunocompromised attendee.” - cosmicquarts



chaotic experience that is MAGFest. Puzzles, coloring pages, and sensory tools are available for anyone who needs to cool off. Find it on the map in

It should be noted that the Accessibility Department does not handle hotel related accommodations - those are done in the hotel booking portal! This team is only for the event space.

Azalea 3 right past Security and Medical.

How can I request assistance?

Pre-event, the best way to get a hold of the team is emailing accessibility@mafest.org. On site we have a hotline, which is listed on your badge:

Send texts to 844-624-4311

Voice calls go to 844-624-4311 x30

Alternatively, you can come to the Accessibility Help Desk outside of Expo E/Registration.

It is okay if you are uncertain of what you need or are not sure if it is something we can help you with - the best thing to do is come talk to us.

We are solutions-oriented and want to ensure everyone can attend and fully enjoy Super MAGFest.



YOU PICK THE STORY

"Let's see if we can tackle Deadeye Chirpzi," you say.

You can see the heat wash over Pulse as they enter her lair. A jet of flame shoots up from a magma pool. The clanking sounds of chains and the roar of the lava remind you of the most brutal metal music. You can almost pick out a beat...

You help Pulse leap past the arcs of lava. As they hop over another blast, Deadeye Chirpzi herself is waiting, armor dark and scarred with battle damage.

"Don't waste your time running. I'll just hunt you down." She wastes no time herself, locking on to Pulse and launching a molten laser. But Pulse is quicker, and they manage to skip out the way, getting a few shots in. You think you've got her cornered when she suddenly lunges at Pulse, grabbing them by the neck.

"Pulse! Shake her off!" In just a moment Pulse is free and launches a blast of pure sound directly to her face.

"I guess the hunter... has become the

hunted," she says as she falls. Pulse manages to absorb the power of Metal as she becomes Cho once again.

WHO SHOULD PULSE'S NEXT OPPONENT BE?

► DRAIN BAT PG. 84

► BIGMA PG. 79

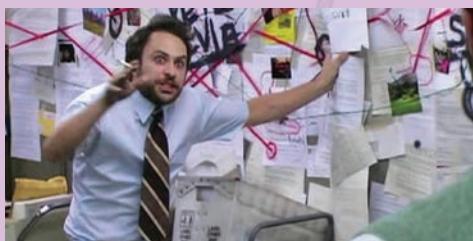
SUPERMUPPETFEST

A DIVE INTO THE WORLD OF MUPPETS

by Jon O'Neal (The Arkadian)

At the time of writing this, *The Muppets* are celebrating 70 years of songs, jokes and absolute muppet mayhem. They have been a cultural institution since 1955 when a 19 year old Jim Henson and eventual wife, Jane Nebel, created a show called "Sam and Friends" as a local lead-in for *The Tonight Show* on WRC-TV. That spark ignited an adventurous career that brought us shows such as *Sesame Street* and *The Muppet Show*, to movies like *Labyrinth* and *The Dark Crystal*, to even video games! Love 'em or hate 'em, the muppets aren't going anywhere anytime soon. As a celebration of all things muppet, I bring to you my personally curated lists of the best songs, games, movies and of course, MUPPETS!

Before we get started, one must ask themselves...what is a muppet???



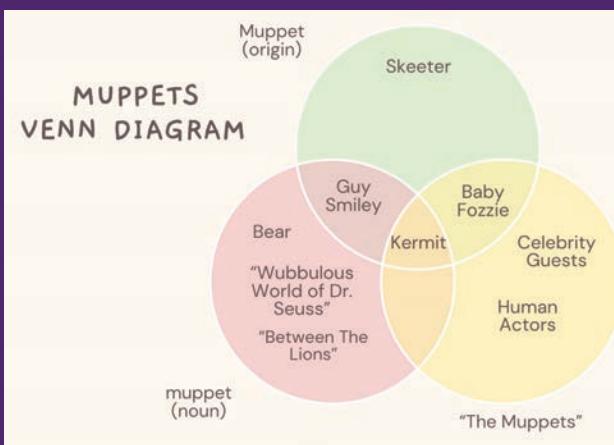
Well, by definition, muppets are a specific type of puppet created by Jim Henson and the Jim Henson Company, consisting of foam rubber covered with fleece or felt. A standard muppet design sees one hand used to operate the mouth, along with general movement, and the other hand moving wire rods attached to the muppet's hands for additional expression (ex. Kermit's "YAY").

At that point, you could say all creations from the Jim Henson Company are considered muppets, but that's where it gets a little confusing...

You see, Jim's creations involve many forms of puppetry. Some techniques combined technology with puppetry (*Waldo*, *The Jim Henson Hour*/*Muppet Vision 3D*) as well as certain movies and TV shows using more advanced forms of puppetry (ex. *The Storyteller*, *Labyrinth*). We also have the muppet babies to consider. Would they be muppets? Well, yes and no.

But THEN there's also "The Muppets", the comedy troupe everyone knows and loves. That is an entity all on its own. It can be a confusing world for someone wanting to explore the world of puppetry, so I present to you, dear reader with:

THE MUPPETS VENN DIAGRAM



To simplify this, all productions with Jim Henson creatures are off the table. This includes:

- *The Storyteller*
- *Dark Crystal*
- *Labyrinth*
- *The Jim Henson Hour*
- *The Witches* (1990)
- *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (1990)
- *Dinosaurs*

I've broken this down into 3 categories which are:

- **muppet (noun):** a physical puppet.
- **Muppet (origin):** A type of character created in the Jim Henson world.
- **The Muppets:** The comedy Troupe.

You see, not all Muppets are muppets. In fact, not all Muppets are members of The Muppets as well. Let's take a look at some examples.

Kermit - The spirit of Jim Henson and the glue for all things muppets. He culminates all realms of the diagram.

Guy Smiley (*Sesame Street*) - He is a muppet and a Muppet. However, he is not a member of The Muppets despite one cameo in a Christmas special (*Muppet Family Christmas*).

Big Bird and **Oscar The Grouch** - One would argue that these two should be in all three categories. For the sake of this example, they are muppets and members of The Muppets, having cameos in multiple productions for TV and Movies for The Muppets.

Baby Fozzie - While most would think Baby Fozzie debuted with *Muppet Babies*, the origin of *Muppet Babies* came from a scene in the film *Muppets Take Manhattan*, where physical baby versions of certain muppets were designed and used for that scene. They were also later used in *Muppet Family Christmas*. He is a Muppet and a member of The Muppets.

Skeeter - The sister of Scooter in *Muppet Babies*. She was created specifically for the show with no other trace of a physical version of this character (and no, the *Robot Chicken* episode doesn't count). She is only a Muppet by origin.

There you have it! Now that we see the difference between muppets, Muppets, and The Muppets, let's proceed to the songs, games, and movies found in The Muppetverse.

TOP 3 MUPPET SONGS



"Turn The World Around"

(The Muppet Show, S3Ep14)

A song with a powerful message that still rings to this day from Harry Belafonte. The song represents a concept of shared humanity over cultural differences and a call to action focusing on a more positive and unified future.



"Bein' Green"

(Sesame Street)

The first trademark song for Kermit The Frog, singing about self acceptance and individuality.



"Rainbow Connection"

(The Muppet Movie)

I know this looks cliche, but this song represents not only the spirit of The Muppets, but the spirit of Jim Henson's dream to spread joy and laughter through his art in the company of his peers.

TOP 3 MUPPET MOVIES/SPECIALS



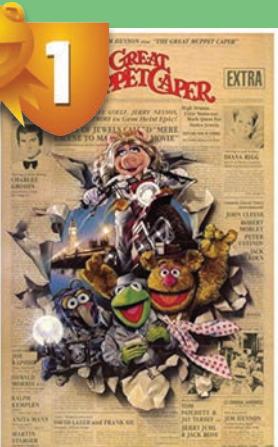
Muppets Take Manhattan

Directed by Frank Oz, this movie introduced us to muppet babies and Kermit getting married to Miss Piggy. We also see a more featured role for Rizzo The Rat, running the kitchen of a New York diner with his cohorts in the "rat scat" sequence.



The Muppet Movie

Okay, don't be mad, but *The Muppet Movie* is number two for me. While I love this movie a lot, I'm in the boat of "the sequel is better than the original" with my number one pick.

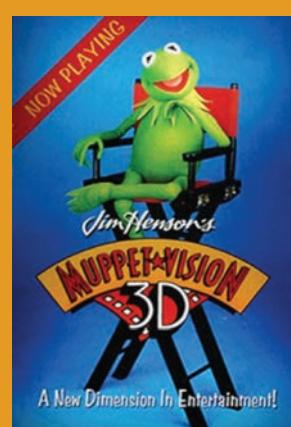


The Great Muppet Caper

I FREAKIN' LOVE THIS MOVIE!

There's a bit more inclusivity in this one compared to the original where you feel like you are on the adventure with them. A lot of fourth wall breaking moments and the best part is that it's rooted in England, which is where the muppet show was filmed. There's a whole dream sequence with choreographed

swimmers where two men (or a man and a frog) pine over Miss Piggy and she's even more delusional in this one than she was in the first movie! I could go on and on about this one, believe me.

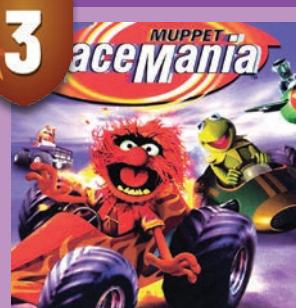


HONORABLE MENTION *Muppet Vision 3D*

While there isn't an official release of this presentation at Walt Disney World, it is worth noting the importance of *Muppet Vision 3D*, as it was the last project Jim Henson worked on before he passed. This show was housed in an interactive theater filled with animatronic penguins, bubbles, cannons and a walk around character (Sweetums).

Whatever the future holds for this show, it is dearly missed by muppet fans all over, including myself.

TOP 3 MUPPETS VIDEO GAMES



Muppet RaceMania (PS1)

Mario Kart with muppets is exactly what you think it would be. It's filled with muppet history and contains 25 characters old and new.



Muppets Party Cruise (PS2, GC)

The music is fun, the minigames are fun, there's a bunch of bonus content. It's a great game.



Muppet Monster Adventure (PS1)

MUPPETS AND MONSTERS AND MAYHEM, OH MY! This game feels like a spyro the dragon/banjo kazooie type clone where you play as Robin The Frog on a mission to save his Uncle Kermit, Miss Piggy, Gonzo, Fozzie and Clifford after they are transformed into (Universal) monsters! You are aided by Dr. Bunsen Honeydew, Beaker and Pepe The King Prawn in this whacky ride. In addition, all the music for the game is composed by Michael Giacchino.

Thank you for taking the time to read through this world of Muppets I crafted for the magazine. I hope you found something new to discover from it! If you'd like to check out some of my stuff, feel free to find me at:

BANDCAMP
[ARKADIANVGRB.BANDCAMP.COM](https://arkadianvrb.bandcamp.com)

INSTAGRAM
[@thearkadian_official](https://www.instagram.com/thearkadian_official)

BLUESKY
[@jononealmusic.bsky.social](https://jononealmusic.bsky.social)

Okay, so I think that about...oh...my bad...
I forgot the most important list...

ARKADIAN'S TOP 5 FAVORITE MUPPETS

Editor's Note: MAGFest Power does not have the budget for licensed Muppets images, so please instead enjoy these, uh, loving original illustrations

#5



Rizzo the Rat

#4



Swedish Chef

#3



Pepe the King Prawn

#2



Kermit the Frog

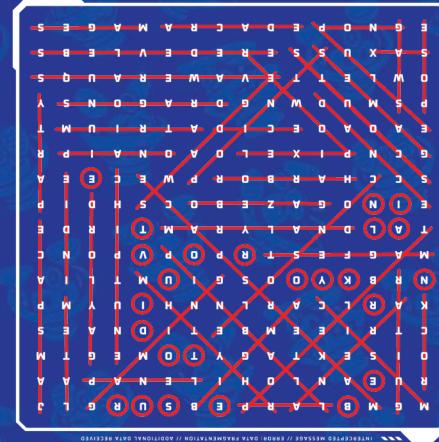
#1



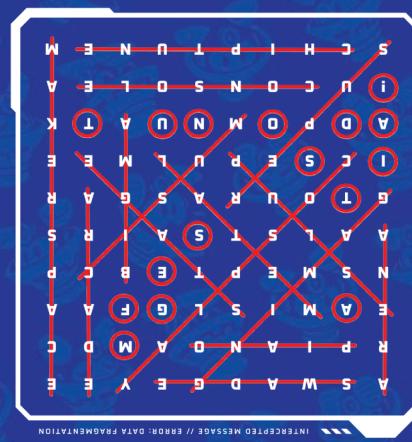
Gonzo the Great



Name	Identity	Food	Location
Jamie	Speedrunner	Tacos	Panels
Peter	Copilot	Pizza	Makarspæce
Jaime	Speedrunner	Tacos	Panels
Albigail	Game Master	Ice Cream	Arena
Jamie	Drummer	Burritos	Hotel Room
Peter	Photographer	Sushi	Gazobo
Jaime	Speedrunner	Tacos	Panels
Albigail	Game Master	Ice Cream	Arena



Word Search 2



INTERCEPTED MESSAGE // ERROR: DATA FRAGMENTATION

Word Search 1

LOGIC PUZZLE

PUZZLE SOLUTIONS (from pages 45-46)

"LET'S DO A CONVENTION!"

**"TELL ME AGAIN WHEN
YOU'RE SOBER."**

— JOSEPH YAMINE & SEAN RIDER,
KATSUCON 2001.

MAGFest creator Joseph Yamine holding a copy of the program for MAGFest 1

FROM THE MAGFEST ARCHIVES

THE FIRST FEST MAGFEST'S ORIGIN STORY

Super MAGFest 2026. Probably the best one yet, but how'd this get started? We sat down with people who were there from the beginning, and learned of surprising origins, a serendipitous meeting with a night manager, and how taking a chance can change everything. We're going back to turn of the century America to finally explain "why so much lumberjack?" and find out more about the con—I mean Fest—we all love.

Where does the story of MAGFest 1 begin for you? How did you hear about it?

JOEY. (Yamine, Creator, Woodsman):

When I was 9. I got an NES and got into videogames. Also, I founded Club RoAnime (RoAnime) with Sean Rider.

REZ (Richard Scott, Co-founder/Staff, Woodsman): As a member of RoAnime. I helped make MAGFest because I was also really into PC and console gaming.

PERNELL (Vaughan, Co-founder/Staff, Woodsman): When I left home in Delaware to attend Virginia Tech. A friend there knew Joe Y. and introduced us because we had large video game collections. We bonded over that and I also joined RoAnime.

TOM (Diehm, Staffteer/Attendee #1, Woodsman):

I've attended Anime conventions since the late 90s. I like them but was looking for a video game convention. I saw MAGFest at their Otakon 2002 table, and it was driving distance.

BRENDAN (Becker, Volunteer/Attendee, Woodsman):

MAGFest had a table at Otakon 2002 with Drum Mania and Guitar Freaks so I talked to them. They asked if I wanted to see The Minibosses. I was already a fan so I decided to go.

JOECAM (Cammisa, Attendee, Lumberjack):

In Allentown, PA. on a OneUp Studios message board. Mustin told me his band the One Up Mushrooms (OneUps) booked their first live show. I knew wherever that show was I was going. He said, "Have you heard of MAGFest?"

CHRIS ("Moguta" Guinnup, Attendee, Lumberjack*):

In high school I'd searched Napster for the Final Fantasy 7 soundtrack and found orchestral performances. I've been hooked on VGM rearrangements ever since. When I was 19, I helped coordinate an email campaign to get gaming magazines to cover Project Majestic Mix: A Tribute to Nobuo Uematsu. I heard about MAGFest through their & OneUp Studios' message boards and was excited to hear The OneUps and Minibosses live! I made plans to meet an online friend, and drove down from Delaware.

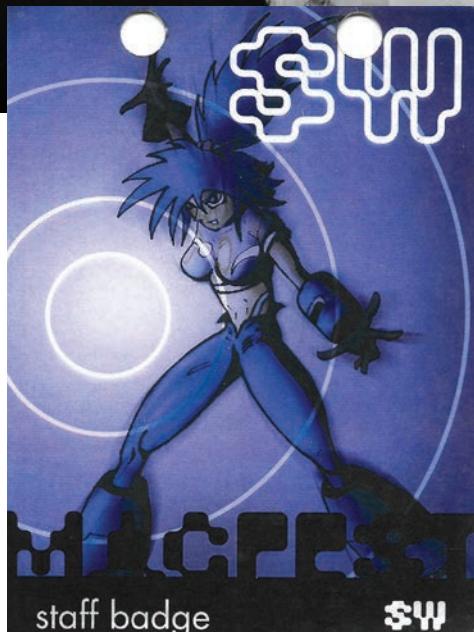
MIKE (Kemp, Attendee, Lumberjack):

I was a senior at a University in Washington, D.C. My friend runs up with a hand-drawn flyer and says, "We gotta go see The Minibosses!" I said, "Who are the Minibosses?" [An early video game music cover band from Phoenix, AZ.] We got directions from Mapquest, crammed 6 guys into a 1984 Volvo, and went.

How did the initial concept evolve?

JOE Y.: I was advised to get three things: a business license, a hotel contract, and a headliner. Planning ended up being from





February 2001 to September 2002. RoAnime was enthusiastic to help and anyone who put in around \$30 got a badge.

As Sean and I worked, our plans kept revolving around video games. One day I said, "Why don't we do a video game convention?" We brought this to RoAnime and most disliked the change and withdrew support. Left were Sean Rider, Pernell, Rez, and me.

Sean suggested asking The Minibosses to come to MAGFest. They agreed to do a concert and put details about it on their website. The Minibosses were fairly popular, so being on their website raised the profile of MAGFest. Then other bands reached out. Now we had likely the first multi-band VGM concert in the U.S., by accident.

PERNELL: Joe Y. and I went to E3 2002 to get support for MAGFest. We learned how public



Promotional booth for MAGFest at Otakon 2002

relations worked at those events. Smaller companies were more approachable because they saw themselves as closer to the everyday gamer. We got support from Atlus of America, Working Designs, and Microsoft (twice).

Who staffed the event?

JOE Y.: I recruited some regulars from my shop (Captain Gamestation), friends and family. We had under 20 Staff to cover all the departments: Registration, Main Events, Con Ops, Con Suite (my mom), Vendors, Video room, Gaming, LAN, and Table Top.

PERNELL: I recruited Bemani friends from Baltimore, MD (David T. And Malcolm C.) to co-manage the video game room. They both lent their consoles and games, and David also supplied a Dance Dance Revolution (DDR) machine.

How was pre-event set up?

JOE Y.: We were set up Thursday night with time to spare. The 24-hour game room had 15-20 CRTs (Cathode-ray tubes) and PVMs (Professional Video Monitors). The consoles came from personal collections. Also, the hotel's night manager was the regional representative for Xbox. He saw our event and brought us a bunch of swag to hand out!

REZ: The video room was set to show: Captain N: the GameMaster (1989), Super Mario Bros. Super Show! (1989), The Wizard (1989), Super

Mario World (1991), and [Adobe] Flash and meme videos.

What was your first impression?

JOECAM: When I arrived on Friday I started looking around and I felt at home. There's a Pac-Man arcade machine I can play, I don't need any quarters!

BRENDAN: I arrived during the rave. There were a lot of people in the hallways and I made friends. Everyone was friendly, happy to be there, and helpful.

What was the best programming you attended?

JOECAM: The concerts and the DJ set. I was there to see The OneUps and get their new album, "Time & Space." I also wanted to pick up the new Project Majestic Mix (Stephen Kennedy) album: SQUAREDANCE.

CHRIS: I loved The Minibosses and The OneUps performances best! Virt's (Jake Kaufman) humor-infused panel "Composing Game Music Professionally" was a blast!

Favorite memories?

REZ: Seeing The Minibosses perform live!

TOM: They had the first TurboGrafx-16 system released in the USA on display.

BRENDAN: I ran into The Minibosses at KFC and got to hang in their room for a bit.

JOECAM: I went to the bathroom. As I stood at a urinal, I heard a voice from a stall say, "Hey man, you here for the bands?" I looked at the stall in disbelief, "...Mustin!?" "...Yeah?" "It's Joe!"

CHRIS: Meeting the people behind the fan VGM scene: Dale North, Stephen Kennedy, Mustin, and Sean "Ailsean" Stone. Making friends with JoeCam!

MIKE: I had had no concept of the VGM scene before MAGFest. I bought a Minibosses album and it's still one of my favorites. My friend stole a Lara Croft cutout.

What did you think when it was over?

JOECAM: It was really fun and I hoped it would happen again. It was run by people with passion for what they were doing. That makes a difference.

CHRIS: I had a blast, and I knew I had to come back! I met friends that had only been screen names before. I thought, "this is my community!"

What's important for people to know about MAGFest 1?

JOE Y.: We're in the Mid-Atlantic and wanted to stand out from the many East coast Anime conventions, so we chose to be: **Mid Atlantic Video Game Festival.**

REZ: It was a great place to sit down with a game and make a friend at 2 AM.

PERNELL: Don't do something because you expect it to succeed, do it because you want to see it come to fruition. Just attempt it!

TOM: Amazing to see how MAGFest influenced other conventions and media. Now there are more conventions that focus on video games or VGM. MAGFest isn't the same as when it started, but that's ok. It's been interesting to see it grow.

BRENDAN: Joe Y. founded MAGFest, I renamed it to Music and Gaming Festival.

MIKE: People attending today have it too easy!!!

It was obvious that people did this for the first time back then and look at it today. Just because you haven't done something doesn't mean you shouldn't try.

What's a Lumberjack?

JOECAM: At MAGFest 10 we had a panel called "Welcome Lumberjacks" like the hotel sign from the first. A photo found too late showed it was "Welcome Woodsmen of the World!" A Lumberjack went to every Super MAGFest, a Woodsman at least the first.



MAGSTOCK MEMORIES

A LETTER FROM THE CHAIRS



Dear MAGFest,

Wow! What a great summer we had together. Do you remember when we got to destroy that haunted arcade cabinet? Or how about the Chili Cook-Off and the Campsite Decorating Contest? People really went all out this year! Plus all the usual favorites, from tie-dye to tournaments, and of course lots of music and gaming on top of the amazing vibes!

Did you catch any of the concerts? It's hard to pick favorites, but Bard City, Professor Shyguy, and Steel Samurai were definitely some of ours. And who could forget partying at the pool to beat the heat and catch some jams at the same time?

But at the same time, it was nice to sit back and unwind. Spending time with friends around the campfire, sharing food and drink with anyone who walked by, chatting under the stars until the sun came up... then getting up the next morning for even more fun summer camp adventures. Who could believe 4 days would go by so fast?

Next year's MAGStock will be even better. We're already working together to come up with some great ideas and fun camp-wide collaborative activities. It's going to be a summer to remember. Can't wait to see you all next time - June 11th - 14th, 2025 - for....

MAGSTOCK

H.A.G.S! XOXO!
The MAGStock Chair Team



MAGFEST EVENTS FEATURE

MAGWEST DOES IT AGAIN

BREAKING LIMITS AND LEVELING UP

by Veronica Tyler Christie

MAGWest is the West Coast counterpart to Super MAGFest, a three-day celebration of video game music, gaming, and community. Since 2017, it's been the place where chaos zone jams, all-night gaming, and an exciting concert series collide in a 3-day weekend in the Silicon Valley. Run by fans, for fans, MAGWest has always been about heart over hype, no corporate show floors, no barriers, just pure, shared passion.

And this year? We leveled up.

AIN'T NO PARTY LIKE A PRE-PRE PARTY

Before the official event crept up on the horizon, MAGWest was out in the community building the hype!

At FANCon at Eastridge Mall, MAGWest powered music, panels, and cosplay filled the halls with energy for San Jose local anime fans and families, featuring the Bay Bladers, Character Select, Aimai Mirai, and a pocket version of our Cosplay Contest.

Game Grooves powered the first ever MAGWest Game Jam. The effort brought on West Coast artists such as Prog XP, Lowlander, Bao Vuong, and Sam Hipp to name a few, and together was created the Final Fantasy VII tribute album where all funds raised are dedicated to MAGWest event planning and programming all while encouraging West coast artists to collaborate with one another.

Every pre-event stop built awareness with our community, a wonderful countdown till touchdown.



MAGWest made an appearance in Portland, OR with MAGWest Mini Fest! We packed an 8-hour day of gaming with PIGSquad and Vacuum Brew, spotlighting MAGWest performer alumni such as Shubzilla x Bill Beats and Balkan Bleeps, while introducing fresh faces like Under the Deku Tree and Mechlo.

The MADE Museum of Arts and Digital Entertainment hosted a MAGWest mini that featured the intersection of videogame culture and music. A perfect nod to Bay Area roots by celebrating hip hop, anime, and break beats featuring Bayokyo, Ronin Op and The Final Fantasy Files.

WHEN FINAL FANTASY BECAME THIS YEAR'S FINAL REALITY

A Final Fantasy VII inspired concert line-up populated the mainstage including Lucrecia, Aivi & Surasshu, Power Glove and a special Mega Ran Black Materia set—joined by Rebirth cast members John Eric Bentley, Arnie Pantoja, and Will C. Stephens. Hearing them perform while standing just feet away? That's the kind of emotional and chilling moment MAGWest lives for especially with the heart-pouring outcry of "Marrrrleeeeeeeeene" from Bentley.

We hosted cosplay modeling sessions by partnering with Cosplay n' Draw blended art and fandom, giving attendees the chance to draw live cosplayers from OneCuppaCoffee Cosplay, Lovi.D, and other wonderful cosplaying attendees.

Activities on activities on activities are righteously exciting; however, what is most important is the way the attendees participate that make the space pop. From jam sessions that spill past midnight, to hip hop battles, and to panels fueled with spontaneity, MAGWest proves every year that *you don't just attend, you become part of it.*

"MAGWest was a fantastic opportunity to perform and connect with musicians from all across the West Coast. The dedicated jam space serves as a representation of the community's love for video game music and its performance."

- Max Mitchell,
Bassist from Under the Deku Tree, first-time performer, jam session host and attendee at MAGWest 2025

DON'T LET THAT FOMO LINGER, WE COMING BACK!

Whether you were there this year or followed from afar on the stream, one thing's clear: MAGWest continues to grow, continues to experiment with adding new programming, and continues to find new ways to make the weekend immersive for those who want to get something out of us... shamelessly.

So keep your eyes on the announcements for the 2026 date! MAGWest will be back! The invitation is always open: Come through.

Opening ceremonies happened and suddenly the weekend unfolded into a wonderful adventure all in the theme of Final Fantasy VII. We introduced some new features that optimized the excitement to our already small and mighty footprint. Here are some highlights:

Virtual Video Game Orchestra (VVGO) hit their limit break with their biggest concert yet, collaborating with the Co-Op Choir, main stage was filled with nostalgic Final Fantasy VII orchestrations, emceed by Austin Lee Matthews (voice of Roche from Rebirth), also featuring the award-winning VVGO arrangement of 'Bombing Mission' conducted by guests Brandon Harnish and Jose Daniel Ruiz.

MAGFast breathed new life into speedrunning charity programming, raising support for Child's Play through voice actor donations and variety show antics.

And for tabletop fans, Starfinder took over the tables—turning dice rolls into whole new galaxies.

This year, Marketplace had an expansion pack: Night Market, an outdoor evening of shopping, unique trinkets, and hangs. It gave attendees and specialized vendors a chance to connect before stepping back inside to explore the vibrant Wall Marketplace, where full-weekend exhibitors showed off everything from handmade merch to retro games and records.

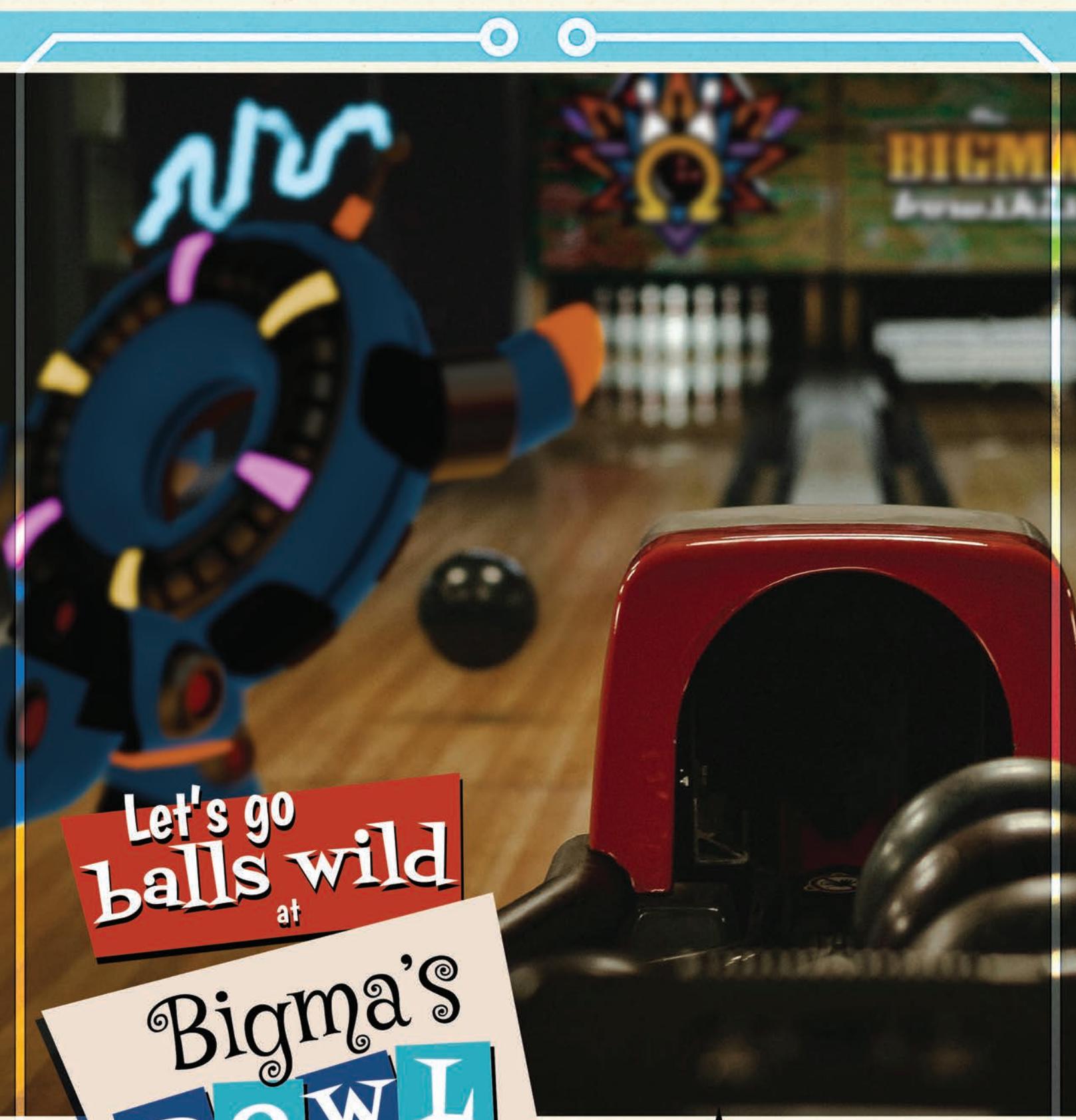
Oh, and did we mention? Pinball made a comeback!



NEED CONVINCING?

Visit Jolie from Final Fantasy Files and check out her recap!





Let's go
balls wild
at

Bigma's

BOWL

-O-

R.A.M.A



the official lanes
of

BIGMA
bowlskins



GAMING is the center of the MAGFest galaxy, bringing together all different groups, genres, and generations. Get ready for consoles, indies, arcades, and even MAGFest's own custom games on the Swadge. Game on!

MUSIC AND GAMING



FROM THE MAGFEST ARCHIVES

WTF IS A SWADGE?

A HANDHELD HARDWARE HISTORY

So, What the F5 Key is a Swadge? If you've paid attention to our commercials on magTV, or skimmed over to the right at our dictionary quote, you'd know the Swadge is both Swag and a Sweet-Ass Badge accessory.

While the original Swadge really was a swag + badge, the current Swadge dev team likes to push the boundaries of function to accompany the exceptional form. Featuring a full color screen, speaker, touchpad, and LEDs out the wazoo, the modern Swadge is a considerably more robust device than its predecessor. Well, and it's also not actually a badge anymore - it's a badge accessory!

While every version of the Swadge is unique, one thing that remains consistent is the team's commitment to designing around a theme - most often the same theme we use for Super MAGFest. Super MAGFest? Super MAGFest Melee? Squarewavebird! Super MAGFest Mania? Hot Dog Swadge! Another consistency the team likes to embrace is technological evolution. Even with a common CPU from 2023-2026, the componentry and functionality has evolved - from buzzer to polyphonic speaker; adding an SAO port*, adding an aux port; and new in 20X6 a pair of LED matrix eyes.

This is a team that loves to tinker, and that doesn't stop with hardware. Every single year, software devs from literally across the globe bring their visions from concept to final product in less than 9 months. Programmed entirely in C, the devs have created classic modes like ColorChord and Tunername, flagship games such as Magtroid Pocket and Big Bug, and personal favorites of mine - Bongo Bongo Bongo and Ultimate Tic-Tac-Toe. Development doesn't just mean making a game, though. These projects also need an engine. Hey, did you know there wasn't a physics engine for the Swadge until one of our devs made it? Such is the burden of a completely custom platform.

So that's WTF a Swadge is;
now how about we take you on a
guided tour through Swadge history,
and maybe leave you with a tasty
teaser of this year's **20X6 Swadge**.

Enjoy, and don't forget to pick up
your very own Swadge at
Expo Hall E!

swadge
(‘swaj) : [noun]

- 1 : A custom handheld device made by and for MAGFest attendees, primarily, but not exclusively, at Super MAGFest.
- 2 : Swag
- 3 : Sweet-Ass Badge accessory

– Anthony-Feinstein's Dictionary, probably

MAGFEST
SWADGE



**As if this whole thing weren't enough already, many Swadge folks make Swadge Add-Ons that plug right into the Swadge, usually adding more LEDs and flair. Come to the Swadge panel to see, and maybe acquire, some SAOs for yourself!*



The 2024 Gunship Swadge, with injection-molded "Barrier Shell" and "Cho" SAO

**CHECK OUT THESE
SWEET-ASS BADGE
ACCESSORIES!**



SWADGE MAN



1

WATERCHIP MAGFEST 11 (2013)

This staff and supporter badge had a functional circuit that could be used with the addition of a hardware kit. About 15 people got help installing the kit at MAGLabs 2013, and the rest of the 30 kits were purchased after the event. This featured an ATTiny44 and ATTiny85 with USB ports. The ATTiny44 was flashed with TinyISP firmware that let it be used as a USB AVR programmer for the ATTiny85.

We realized we could make just bare PCBs for an affordable price.

FUN FACT

- The Engineer and Serial areas are touch pads!
- Can transmit audio in FM radio spectrum.

2

VAMPIRE HUNTER SUPER MAGFEST 2017

The first to have an esp8266 processor and interact with other swagdes using only 2 AA batteries. When it was turned on, it would seek a wifi network for MAGFest Swagdes and connect using a key that was in the firmware (which got hacked at the event). Once connected, it would communicate with a server that ran various virtual games, and could collect and send data to and from swagdes. This connection also enabled some really cool interactions. There was a mode where buttons pressed on a swadge were queued up to display on the LEDs of everyone's swadge across the event space. During Main Stage concerts the lighting deck synchronized the LED colors of everyone's swagdes by broadcasting lighting channels via 3 connected castlevania swagdes. If it got too far from the main wifi networks, the lights turned dim red and it went to sleep for a while so batteries didn't need to be removed overnight.

Your thumb would rest immediately next to where the battery connector poked through. And it was really sharp.

FEATURES/MODES

- Serial Programming: able to load new firmware using a 4-pin connector
- Magtorch: flashlight
- Disable deep sleep

3

GOTTA GO WEST MAGWEST 2017

Featuring eight buttons and a speaker, this first synthesizer swadge was designed to ring in MAGWest 2017. The buttons play different notes and a touch-sensitive wheel in the middle controls pitch. The sound-scape is rounded out with some vocal samples.

We didn't have enough time to get boards made in a factory, so we came up with a simple design and made it a synthesizer.

FEATURES/MODES

ATTiny861

FUN FACT

You can definitely play "When the Saints Go Marching In"

SWADGE HISTORY TIMELINE

1 WATERCHIP MAGFEST 11

2 VAMPIRE HUNTER SUPER '17

3 GOTTA GO WEST WEST '17

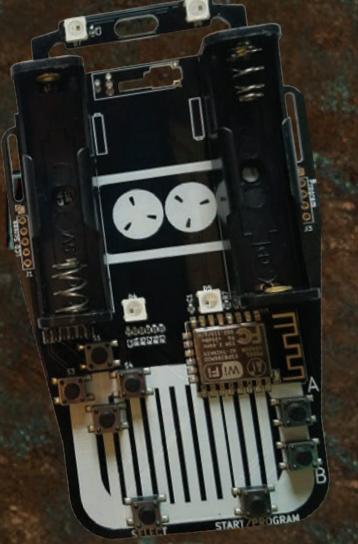
2013

2014

2015

2016

2017

**4**

BIG DADDY MAGLABS 2017

MAGLabs 2017 marked a return to the ESP8266 and connecting Swadges to a main server. This is the only time to-date that the Swadge was the official event badge. A PCB without components was used for 1 day attendees. Turning on a Swadge at registration enabled it to download the latest firmware and join the swadge network. A game was set up in one of the rooms where everyone could use their Swadge to interact with and move an on-screen character.

An OLED display could be added via optional Badge Enhancement Module (BEM) kit, and installation help was available in the Makerspace.

Unfortunately, the OLED screens didn't turn on. However, the Swadge team was able to roll out a mid-event firmware update for the screen so it could display a name.



Badge Enhancement Module (BEM)

FEATURES/MODES

- Color Setting: for LEDs
- MAGLabs Plays Pokemon
- Swadge 2 the Beat: concert interaction
- Swadge-polling app (created during event)
- WS2812 LEDs
- Optional OLED display.

**5**

KING DONUT SUPER MAGFEST 2018

King Donut was another synthesizer swadge featuring 14 buttons and a full musical scale, all powered by two CR2032. The trills were alive with the sound of two channels and 13 different sound modes.

These swadges were manufactured and programmed in a factory, but didn't arrive until after MAGFest was over. The team updated the firmware, added sound modes, and mailed them out.

FEATURES/MODES

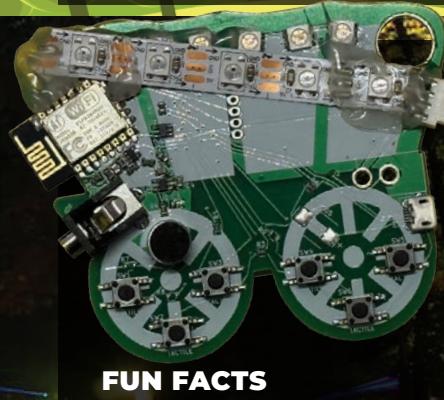
- Sine Wave: Five Octaves
- Square Wave: Three Octaves
- Noise: Two Octaves
- Drum Set: Two
- Sound Byte: One "MAG" and one "Fest"

FUN FACT

Can be upgraded with a headphone jack.



MAGFest is a donut.

**6**

WAGON MAGSTOCK 2018

MAGStock rode the trails of historic PC gaming with its unique Wagon Swadges. It had a microphone and 8 LEDs that lit up to the music when running Colorchord. The Swadge could also support external LED strips if configured to use the additional LEDs.

This came in handy due to an unexpected complication at the factory. At the event a team member hacked off the WS2813S LEDs, then soldered and hot glued WS2812B strips to the Swadges. Around 100 were made, but they were only distributed to about 32 people. Those 32 people had a blast.

FEATURES/MODES

ColorChord

The Swadges were ordered with WS2813's, except the factory thought we meant WS2813S... which is a VERY different LED.

FUN FACTS

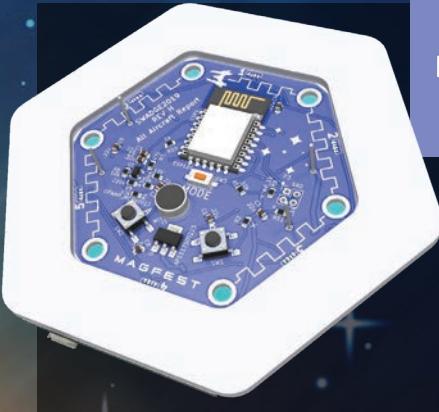
- ColorChord now ran without needing an external server.
- No one died of dysentery at MAGStock 2018.

4 BIG DADDY LABS '17**5 KING DONUT SUPER '18****5 WAGON STOCK '18**

2017

2018

2019



7

REFLECTOR SUPER MAGFEST 2019

The Reflector had a couple of firsts. This was the first Swadge to incorporate a plastic part (hexagonal LED diffuser), and the first ad-hoc wireless (Swadge to Swadge) connectivity.

The Reflector also had a microphone and 6 modes. The ad-hoc wireless connectivity (called ESP) is enabled by the chip maker's custom wireless communication protocol. Two Swadges could pair by each entering pairing mode and being held close to each other. Swadge pairing enabled two-player games of Reflector, the reflex game. Winning games of Reflector unlocked additional Light Dances.

Final assembly for each Swadge included reflashing firmware and attaching the diffuser with double-sided tape. It took a team of about twelve people two full days to complete.



FEATURES/MODES

- ColorChord
- Reflector
- Light Dance
- D6 Roller
- Flashlight
- Guitar Tuner



8

BARREL & BANANA SUPER MAGFEST 2020

2020 was twice the fun with two Swadge shapes in honor of a well-known large primate's homeland, Barrel and Banana! This is the first built-in monochromatic OLED screen and accelerometer, which introduced new ways to interact with games. It also had 6 LEDs, three buttons, two AA batteries, and one buzzer for sound.

Swadge Team took full creative advantage of designing with these new features. Tiltrads was a familiar block-stacking game with tilt controls. Color Shake let you change the colors of the 6 LEDs using nine different motions. Joust was a multiplayer movement game where you try to jostle your opponent's Swadge while keeping yours still. Its "Free For All" mode let any number of Swadges connect wirelessly for a barrel of battle fun.

FEATURES/MODES

- Tiltrads • Snake • Joust •
- Maze • Gallery •
- Color Shake • Music

FUN FACTS

- First built-in OLED screen
- First accelerometer
- First programmer: The team designed a Swadge programmer that drastically reduced the time to "flash" a blank. They flashed 3000 in 3 hours!



9

CHAINSAW SUPER MAGFEST 2022

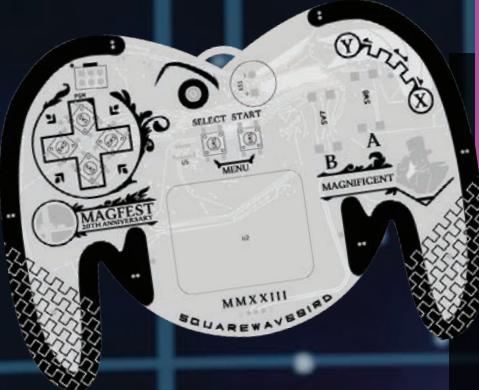
The Chainsaw built upon the Barrel platform with a monochromatic OLED screen and 6 RGB LEDs but swapped the buzzer for a microphone, and removed the accelerometer. There were four buttons arranged like a typical D-pad, an action button, and it was powered by either 2 AA batteries or Micro-USB. Edge-plating gave the chainsaw teeth a metallic finish. A merch tier included a Swadge Dock that could be used to power, reprogram, or display the Swadge.

*The kick-in
version had
ACTUAL GOLD
teeth!*

FEATURES/MODES

- Shredder • Flight Sim • Personal Demon •
- Stomp • M-Type • ColorChord • Tunername





FUN FACTS

- Fully programmable via USB-C
- There's a place for an SAO connector

10

SQUAREWAVEBIRD SUPER MAGFEST 2023

Squarewavebird debuted at the 20th anniversary of MAGFest. All 2,750 sold! A Swadge-tastic MAGFest first!

It had 8 LEDs, 8 buttons, a touch pad, accelerometer, microphone, buzzer, a new processor (ESP32) and full color LCD (Liquid Crystal Display) screen. It was powered by three AA batteries or USB C. There was also a new optional accessory, a 3D printed shell. 200 were made in atomic purple as an ode to the GCN (IYKYK or ask an elder).

This Swadge interacted with the VRChat Portal. You could play with it in VRChat where other people could see and interact. You could even reflash it in VR zone!



FEATURES/MODES

- Gamepad • Light Dances • MF Paint • Dice Roller • Tunername • ColorChord • TechnoSlideWhistle • Jukebox • Swadge Bros • Super Swadge Land • Donut Jump • π-Cross • Flyin' Donut • Tiltards Color



FUN FACTS

- Uses USB-C
- You can wirelessly share MF Paint creations!
- There's an actual SAO connector
- Swadge and Shell combo only \$69

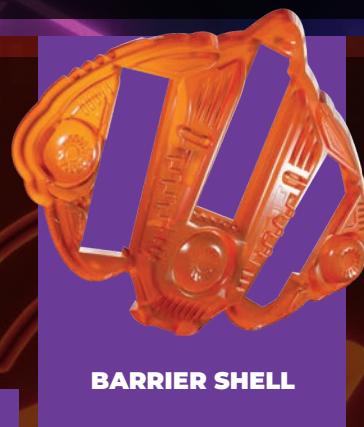
11

GUNSHIP SUPER MAGFEST 2024

Gunship used the same ESP, screen and buttons as 2023. New to this model were dual sound buzzers and SAO connector! SAO provides power and LED patterns so you can connect fun little PCBs. It had a touch pad, microphone, accelerometer, and 9 RGB LEDs. It was also powered by three AA batteries or USB C. A beautifully-designed Barrier Shell case was available for purchase.

FEATURES/MODES

- Magtroid Pocket • Galactic Brickdown • Lumberjack Panic & Attack • Pushy Kawaii Go • Flyin' Donut • Super Swadge Land • ColorChord • Jukebox • TechnoSlideWhistle • Tunername • Light Dances • MFPaint • Gamepad • Timer



BARRIER SHELL



FUN FACTS

- Case purse!
- Tasty snack!
- Mmm...MIDI!
- Swadge 2025 OST is \$Free.⁹⁹
- Longdog is exactly 12"

12

HOTDOG SUPER MAGFEST 2025

Hotdog used the same ESP, screen and buttons as 2023. New to this model is an AUX port and midi speaker! It had a touch pad, microphone, accelerometer, 9 RGB LEDs and SAO connector. It was also powered by three AA batteries or USB-C. This year's Swadge Shell case was a lunchbox with storage, but this Carry-Out Shell wasn't enough bun for the fun of the Crazy Person Tier Longdog. The original soundtrack (OST) is available at [this link](#).

FEATURES/MODES

- ColorChord • Bongo Bongo Bongo • Tunername • Sequencer • Jukebox • MIDI Player • Light Dances • Timer • Gamepad • Pango • Big Bug • Chowa Grove • Swadge Hero • Hunter's Puzzles • 2048 • Ultimate TIC-TAC-TOE



CARRY-OUT SHELL

SWADGE 2025 OST





ON THE PULSE

THE 20X6 SWADGE

The Pulse swadge shares about 50% of its DNA with the Hot Dog. After the incredible success of the significant audio upgrades with the Hot Dog, the swadge team pushed the limit further with the largest swadge to date replicating Pulse's gigadome.

Pulse features bright blue/green eyes fit for emotes, score tracking, and more for all of the swadge games driven by a brand-new co-processor, the CH32v003. Their brain is still ticking with the ESP32-S2, but the addition of the co-processor allows for much more complex light shows at the concerts and gives them lots of personality.

The 2026 Swadge features a platformer Mega Pulse EX, a side-scroller aligned with the event theme which uses the same game engine that was used to create Super Swadge Land on the

Squarewavebird. Additionally, it features strategy games like Alpha Pulse X: Dance Network, puzzle games like Picross 2, and more.

One of the crowning achievements of the Pulse Swadge is the addition of Swadgepass - a social utility inspired by the StreetPass functionality on the Nintendo 3DS. Swadge users will create their profiles with pre-generated usernames, custom avatars, and select from a library of fun facts and pretty user cards to personalize their Swadge experience. As they walk around the 'fest with their Swadges turned on, they find other users and share their data. Information like high scores, your favorite sandwich, and more are passed between your new Swadge friends. Look out for the Atrium mode to view your other MAGFesters custom Sonas (like perSonA!) in their favorite locations of



by
Emily Anthony



The "Wub-Tank," 20X6's injection-molded Swadge Shell

the event.

Get your Pulse Swadge in your pre-order merch pack or at the booth in Expo E, and make your SwadgePass profile now!

SWADGE SHOWCASE!

20X6

A **MEGA PULSE EX**
Jon Vega

B **ALPHA PULSE X: DANCE NETWORK**
James Albracht

C **SWADGEPASS ATRIUM**
Emily Anthony

D **VECTOR TANKS**
Adam Feinstein

E **COSPLAY CRUNCH**
Jarett Millard

F **SWADGETAMATONE**
Jarett Millard

* Early release content shown. Subject to change.



MEET THE NEW MAGFEST INDIES

INDIE ARCADE, MIVS, AND INDIE RETRO HAVE COMBINED INTO A BRAND NEW MEGA-TEAM THAT ISN'T SO NEW AFTER ALL.



by
Silvana Russo

If you've been to Expo Hall C at Super MAGFest, you've seen some indie games. Maybe you've even referred to the space that you're in as the "Indies Hall." Maybe you know it as "Indie Arcade," or "MIVS," or just "idk, indie games," as Co-Department Head Socks Magocs has heard countless times. Maybe you've noticed the incredible variety of games in the hall, and the surprisingly different ways that games are played (and made!), from PC and console games, to brand new games made for very old systems like the Sega Genesis (a staple of my childhood), to bespoke (and sometimes one-of-a-kind) arcade cabinets, and games where you play by moving a giant hat with your head, or flicking a door stopper, or ripping

pages out of a book and putting them through a paper shredder. These differences in form are what split indie content into multiple departments over the years, but the similarities in function have now brought them back together into one unified team: MAGFest Indies.

I spoke to Socks Magocs, a long-time Department Head of Indie Arcade and now one of four Department Heads of MAGFest Indies, to get an idea of the history of indie video games at Super MAGFest and the impetus behind the new team-up. I was surprised to learn that they all started as one team originally: the MAGFest Indie Videogame Showcase.

Back in 2013, the MAGFest Indie Videogame Showcase (MIVS) began as a way for indie developers to present videogames that attendees might not be exposed to otherwise. It's grown a lot over the years, and in 2025, MIVS showcased over 70 indie videogames. MIVS gets so many submissions that the Department Heads can't possibly screen them all, so they work with a large group of videogame aficionados who volunteer their time playtesting submitted games — an average of 50 hours of play time per judge! MIVS is unique among gaming showcases because they don't accept submissions from publishers. Every

game is submitted and presented by the developer, so when you play the game, you get to talk to the people who made it and give your feedback to the people who can actualize it. I suppose this won't be surprising to people who aren't familiar with MIVS but are familiar with MAGFest. MAG is all about community, so of course, we're playing and making and iterating on games together. MIVS also makes a concerted effort to make showcasing games accessible for independent developers by not charging any tabling fee. Tabling fees are standard practice at festivals in Super's size bracket, and they often cost thousands of dollars, which can be out of reach for a lot of hobbyists or developers at the start of their careers. Allowing them to present their games free of charge opens up avenues for small studios, solo developers, and even students to showcase their work at Super MAGFest!

Back in the day, MIVS accepted indie arcade submissions as well. In 2014, their second year of operations, MIVS accepted an arcade cabinet from a small studio called Death By Audio Arcade. Then they did the same thing the next year, and the next. It was clear that there was an audience at Super MAGFest for bespoke arcade games, so in 2019, that spun off into a new department: Indie Arcade. Death by Audio Arcade has now become





Arcade Commons, and many other indie arcade artists have joined the showcase, but you can still find Arcade Commons machines in Expo Hall C every year, and of course, you'll see their work as part of the programming of the new MAGFest Indies team. The MAGFest Indie Arcade has grown an astounding amount since 2019. It's now the single largest alternative control event in the world, although it's still not the most well-known (for now!). MAGFest somehow ended up being the central hub for a weird and amazing art scene that is only getting bigger as more people come to understand the potential of alternative control games as an art form and a storytelling medium. Department Head Socks Magocs himself got into alt control game development because he was exposed to it at MAGFest, and he's not the only one. Several former MIVS developers have also made the jump to alt control because they were inspired by what they saw at Super! I, myself, am endlessly fascinated by the possibilities and the realities of alt control gaming. As a designer of ARGs (which I sometimes refer to as videogames that you play in real life), I think a lot about how a player interacts with the mechanics of a game, and



nowhere is that more open and inventive than in alt control. What if instead of a joystick, you move the wheels of a bicycle with your hands? What if you use a skateboard instead? What if you do have a joystick, but it has one hundred buttons? What if there is just one button and every time you press it, a number goes up? All this and more at the Indie Arcade, now part of MAGFest Indies.

At this point, it should not surprise you to hear that Indie Retro, the third piece of the new department Voltron, also came out of MIVS. Mega Cat Studios started showcasing their own homebrew games and retro games from other indie studios as part of MIVS in 2017. In 2023, they split off into their own department, just like Indie Arcade before them. Because indie retro games run on standard retro consoles (as opposed

to support separate teams, there was a lot of logistical overhead that was being duplicated (or triplicated) unnecessarily. And, while each department had its own niche in the gaming world, there are increasingly more games that don't fit neatly into one category, and there are more and more opportunities to be involved in community-building in a bigger way. Those are things that a re-unified MAGFest Indies team can pursue with renewed gusto. And, they're doing it this year at Super MAGFest 2026 with an Experimental Games Showcase, which features a collection of games that don't fit cleanly into any of the existing categories. According to Socks, it was what each team achieved on their own as a solo department that enabled the leaders to recognize the value in a unified front.



to the bespoke cabinets of indie arcade games), Indie Retro is able to accept remote submissions. The games they showcase come from all over the world, and often from developers who are not able to attend Super MAGFest in person. So, you'll see brand new games from South American, European, and Asian developers (among others), who've shipped those games to MAGFest on physical cartridges (no emulation allowed) to be played on retro consoles like the NES, Sega Genesis, or TurboGrafx-16, which MAGFest provides. Full disclosure: I had never heard of the TurboGrafx-16 before writing this article, and it is thrilling that people are still making new games for this 1989 console in the year 2025. What an extremely MAGFest thing to do.

Now that each of the three departments has gotten to spread its wings for a while, something has become very clear to the various Department Heads. While the programming is different enough

Lest you think these teams went into their merge headfirst without evidence that it would work, don't worry, they already had proof. Last year, for Super MAGFest 2025, the Indie Arcade and MIVS teams collaborated with MAGScouts to bring 30 students from the Computer Game Development & Animation Department at the Barbara Ingram School for the Arts to the festival to learn about game design and its impact on the community. The students attended panels, played games in Expo Hall C, and attended a special Q&A with game developers from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds, including early-career developers and veterans with decades of experience. It showed how MAGFest Indies can not only support indie game developers from all over the world, but also inspire and guide the next generation of those developers, ensuring that there will always be new and exciting games to showcase. This year, MAGFest Indies is bringing a variety of

collegiate game development programs to Super to show off the games of their current students, and maybe even find some new ones. Indies will also be showcasing the results of this year's Alt Control Game Jam: Flip Out! This is the second annual jam, which provides an easy way for game developers to learn how to work with hardware, and introduces the basic concepts of electronics, wiring, sensors, and arduino programming. You can see (and play) the Flip Out! Collection in the Indie Arcade at Super MAGFest 2026, and even attend a workshop in the Makerspace to build and take home your own Flip Out! Controller.

As part of my research for this article, I asked Socks what his favorite games were that had been featured at Super MAGFest in the past, and the first one he mentioned was Johann Sebastian Joust, which was in the original MIVS lineup in 2013. It's a dueling game with no graphics that uses motion-detecting controllers. Players have to keep their own controllers still, while jostling the controllers of the other players, with the sensitivity of the controllers determined by the tempo of J.S. Bach's Brandenburg Concertos. Johann Sebastian Joust was a mainstay at Super MAGFest for years



What's a 2D Dungeon crawler? Line Wobbler, of course! Photo by: Brett Correale

and was the first alt control game featured by MIVS, long before alt control became the purview of Indie Arcade. The other game he told me about was Kung Fu Kickball, which started as a PC game featured by MIVS, before being built into an arcade cabinet live during a panel at Super MAGFest 2019 (yes, you can still find the panel on YouTube). Kung Fu Kickball is now a commercially available arcade cabinet that can be found in arcades across the country — a true MIVS and Indie

Arcade collaboration come to life. With the indie videogame departments now back together under the broad MAGFest Indies roof, I expect great and weird things in the future. The sky is the limit, but please don't make a game taller than the ceiling of Expo Hall C — we'll never be able to get it out.



Fried Chicken • Fries • Devastation • Sick Bass Riffs
Onion Rings • Flare Blast • Silencing MAGFest

TRY OUR NEW "OOPS! ALL TALONS!" MEAL

HOT

REMIIX YOUR DINNER PLANS

YOU PICK THE STORY

"I bet these abilities we've gained are enough to tackle Bigma now."

"That's the spirit!" Dr. Hype says nervously.

"I just don't want to waste any more time with these small time RemiXes! This is the only way we can restore music, right?"

Your Swadge screen stutters as Pulse winds his way through the blank concert cathedral. Flickering enemies phase in and out of existence, often getting hits in on Pulse before you can react. Finally, battered but determined, Pulse reaches Bigma's inner sanctum.

"Bigma! We're here to defeat you to save MAGFest!"

"SILENCE!" Bigma roars, and you see Pulse stumble. The energy bar on the side of their arm cannon drops. "This chaotic sound is too unpredictable. I will have control."

With that, he dashes forward. You try to direct Pulse out of the way, but it's like they're moving through cold nacho cheese. Bigma slams them into the floor.

"Pulse! You have to use one of your abilities!"

"I'm trying! I can't get any of them to work!"

"Time to go! Say goodbye, Pulse! Ghaaaa ha ha!"

The Swadge screen glitches and flickers. You're spared the sight of Pulse being pounded into a pulp. You weren't able to save the music after all. You've been defeated.

DEFEAT.

TRY AGAIN!



I CHALLENGE YOU TO A DUEL AGAINST YOUR OWN SKILLS

Have you ever played a classic game so much that you believe you could beat it blindfolded? Maybe you're so good you can 100% No-Hit nine times out of ten? Well we've got a Challenge for you.

Gaming is in our blood. We grew up playing all the cornerstones - Super Mario Bros., Sonic, Mega Man X; but, they weren't just fun and challenging like today's games. They were really fun, and hella challenging. And that's okay, because we had all the time in the world to memorize the maps, master the button sequences, and discover the glitches (after all, the devs couldn't patch a cartridge you already bought). Following hours, days, and weeks of practice, we were finally able to beat most of the games in our collection. Or, at least we'd claim we did.

Fast Forward a handful of years. You can still clear SMB World 8-4 on a whim. With a little warm-up, you can take down all the MMX

Reploids. But does that really scratch the itch? What if there were something more? Something different? Something that isn't just 90s-gaming-hard, but actually, really, excruciatingly difficult? Like defeating all 8 Reploids, randomly rotating, with a single life? (the-what.png) Yep, you read that right. All 8 Reploids; one life; X teleporting randomly every few seconds.

Bouncing back to SMB, how about clearing World 1-1 at full velocity. Sounds easy, right? No no, I mean FULL. VELOCITY. No walking, no stopping, no accidentally running face-first into a ? block, no hitting the corner of the steps at the flagpole.

Our very talented and completely evil Challenges team have come up with some, well,



challenging Challenges to test your skills more than you ever dreamed possible. Super 2025 saw more than 50 unique Challenges attempted over 24,000 times for a whopping 2100 hours of gameplay. Brutal, relentless, awesome gameplay. And an amazing/abysmal success rate of only 25%. On the bright side, that provided our staff with 1500 hours of laughing at your mistakes.

My challenge to you is to visit our friends in the front of Expo Hall A and try out some of their madness. Who knows, you might even score some wins and walk away with a prize or two!





TABLETOP ROLE-PLAYING AT MAGFEST BEYOND DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

From niche indie games to epic mega-games and everything in between, the D&D Team is about a lot more than the name suggests. It's really about bringing people together around the table.

My second Super MAGFest (I think it was 2019, but all pre-pandemic years blend together) I spent the whole time playing Dungeons & Dragons Adventurers' League. I know that sounds like hyperbole, because surely I did other things. And it's true; I also slept. That was the year that the "Epic" was based on Waterdeep: Dragon Heist, and it was the best mega-game that I've ever played. It set a standard that I've failed to reach even with mega-games that I've written and produced, and I'm still mad about it.

If you're not a TTRPG player or just not a D&D player, you probably have no idea what any of the words in the above paragraph mean. Let me give you a quick primer:

Tabletop Role-Playing Games (TTRPGs) are storytelling games where a bunch of players sit around a table together (or sometimes stand, or walk, or swim) and use the game's written mechanics to tell a shared story. Often, one player is the Game Master (GM), and they are the lead storyteller. They create environments and threats, and the other players decide how to navigate them. They also determine how the world responds to the players' actions. I like to think of the GM as being the showrunner, and the other players as the writer's room. Everyone is working together to tell a story, and the game mechanics (usually dice, but

sometimes cards or tokens) and setting provide structure for that story. Rather than just saying what happens in every moment, in moments of heightened risk or consequence, you say what your character tries to do, and then roll to see how it goes. We call this "play to find out" and it's the core principle of TTRPGs.

Dungeons & Dragons is the game that kicked off the TTRPG industry way back in 1974, and it's still the most popular game by a wide margin. D&D is a fantasy adventure game, where players usually play "adventurers" in a medieval fantasy world who

have some skills like swordfighting or magic, and are tasked with defeating monsters, saving people, or other quests that you can imagine the heroes of a fantasy novel might undertake. The game has always been popular (despite a brief period in the 1980s where "satanic panic" made a lot of players' parents very worried for no reason), but it had a big resurgence in 2014 with the introduction of 5th Edition, published by long-time D&D owner, Wizards of the Coast (a subsidiary of toy maker, Hasbro). D&D 5th Edition is, despite what many TTRPG aficionados will tell you, good. It's good, and



by
Silvana Russo





that is a major contributor to its popularity (along with some smart marketing and a couple of societal factors that I won't get into here). 5th Edition took a game that was for "serious gamers" and made it accessible to everyone. It took counterculture and made it culture. I spoke with Department Head Sharon Cheng, who told me that it's been fun to see the popularity of Dungeons & Dragons skyrocket over the 8 years that she's been with the team. She said that nowadays, most people who come to the TTRPG rooms at MAGFest are asking "how do I play?" instead of "what is D&D?" It's been a big change. D&D 5th Edition also introduced something called Adventurers' League, which is particularly relevant to the programming of Super MAGFest.

Adventurer's League is a system for organized play of Dungeons & Dragons. It provides written

adventures, standardized rules, and a track for leveling up your characters across many sessions of play at various gaming venues. Because it provides a standardized process for conventions, game stores, and even your home games, it allows you to bring the same character to games at any of these places and tell that character's story across multiple years and multiple locations while keeping the rules fair. It also makes it much easier for organizers and GMs to run games at conventions and festivals like Super MAGFest.

The D&D Department at Super MAGFest runs a lot of Adventurers' League

games (also known as AL). According to Department Head, Tim Scott, it accounts for about 50% of the programming. The team has around 40 GMs total, running games all day (and pretty late into the evening) for attendees, with 5-6 players per table. That means that approximately 20 people's time is spent running AL games, all the time. And at any given time at MAGfest (aside from the middle of

the night) up to 100 people are playing AL. Adventurers' League games also cover every level of play, which means they're great for newbies who want to start at level 1, but also great for experienced players with higher level characters (don't worry if you don't have

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*- Sharon Cheng,
Department Head*

a character, level 1 pre-generated characters are available so that you can jump right in).

But the department's programming goes far beyond Adventurer's League, and far beyond D&D itself. 50% of programming may sound like a lot, but given that Dungeons & Dragons accounts for about two thirds of the TTRPG economy, some might say that 50% is a small amount. The industry as a whole has exploded in the past decade, with countless indie games and quite a few games based on popular licensed IP like The Lord of the Rings, Star Wars, or Avatar: The Last Airbender. A handful of small press publishers have made big names for themselves in the TTRPG space,



like Magpie Games, Exalted Funeral Press, and Chaosium, among others. And this is to say nothing of Paizo, Wizards of the Coast's biggest competitor and publisher of Pathfinder and Starfinder (both of which you can find games of at Super MAGFest brought to you by the Pathfinder Department – a game so popular it has its own team!). Small presses provide games in other genres, like sci-fi, horror, sci-fi-horror, rom-com, and even telenovelas and professional wrestling (try to convince me that those are different things, I dare you). And, they provide different styles of play, including games that have no GM or that have no dice rolling. Many indie games don't have fighting at all; instead, the conflict and the uncertainty in the story comes from other places. But small press games also provide different ways to play within the fantasy adventure genre. One of the biggest games of this year is Daggerheart – a competitor to D&D from Darrington Press, the publisher attached to Critical Role (the most popular piece of TTRPG media). Daggerheart has made it into the D&D Department's programming for Super 2026, with an introductory adventure using pre-generated characters, and with 3-hour sessions using the Daggerheart core rulebook. Even though Daggerheart is a major competitor to D&D, the Department Heads don't see any issue including it in the programming, since the team is about so much more than Dungeons & Dragons. I asked Sharon Cheng about it, and she said that she

and the other Department Heads played a session of Daggerheart to prepare, and they "loved the rich characters and cinematic battles." They're excited to run it for attendees!

I asked Sharon what game she was most excited about, and she mentioned Pirate Borg, a Mork Borg game that I've also been playing a lot of. In terms of theme and tone, it sits somewhere between Pirates of the Caribbean and Muppet Treasure Island. It's wacky and bloody and fun, and it's just one of the many small press games that the D&D team offers. Sharon said that what really interests her the most about the D&D Team's programming



isn't a specific game or genre, but being able to introduce more people to the hobby. One of the ways that she does that is through the Learn to GM program, now in its second year. Here's how it works: an experienced GM runs a session for players who want to learn, and they rotate the GM chair from scene to scene so that each player gets a chance to run the game for the other players and

for the experienced Game Master. The GM can offer tips and tricks and the other players can provide feedback. It's kind of like a writer's workshop, but for GMing. According to Sharon, this kind of program is really hard to find outside of big events like MAGFest, so it provides something

special. She told me that GMs love running the event because it's fun to see people discover the "other side" of Table Top Role-Playing Games. And, ultimately, TTRPG players love sharing the hobby with new people.

Sharon views her role as that of a community builder, not just introducing new players to TTRPGs, but providing a venue for people to come together and make new connections. Part of the programming for Super MAGFest 2026 includes a social event for people who are looking to form gaming groups. Sharon told me that quite a few gaming groups have started at MAGFest and

continued outside of the festival. People meet at the table and decide that they want to keep playing together! This social event seeks to facilitate that, welcoming people from all over who want to meet other gamers and play online or in person in DC, Maryland, or Virginia.

When I asked Sharon what makes the D&D Team's programming special, she said it was the connections people make around the table. "We don't have all the lights and sound effects of the video games, but we do have all the smiles, laughter, and heart-felt expletives when a die roll goes really badly. We have a great combination of the heroic stories of the video games AND the electricity of the live musical performances – that feeling of sharing the space with other people who are digging the same thing you're digging."

That description of what it's like to play TTRPGs at Super MAGFest tracks with my experience as a player and as a GM. And, nowhere is it more apparent than in the Epic. For the D&D Team, the Epic is the core of the event. It's a 20 table, 120 player mega-game, where all of the tables work together toward the same goal. There's also friendly competition between the tables, and sometimes there's a prize for the winners. When I played the Waterdeep: Dragon Heist Epic, we were all Rogues, trying to steal treasure from a gala event, like a fantasy Ocean's 11 (or, I guess Ocean's 6). We had to gather information, plan our heist, and execute it flawlessly. The team that heisted the best and earned the highest score won a fabulous in-game prize. My table didn't win, but we did successfully complete the heist, and we had

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- **Sharon Cheng,**
Department Head

a pretty great plan that I'll happily take credit for. Even though we didn't "win," we definitely won, and that was more than enough for me. The Epic is a signature program of Adventurer's League, and it only happens at big events like Super MAGFest. The team really goes all out for it too: there are sing-a-longs and costumed characters roaming from table to table, adding new challenges for the players. It really feels like a signature event. What Sharon likes about the Epic is the vibe, and I have to agree. "The energy of that many people all rolling dice and solving puzzles together is tremendous." Like the rest of the team's programming, it's a celebration of being in community.

On D&D 5th Edition's tenth anniversary, Wizards of the Coast (WotC) put out an updated version called D&D 2024. It's kind of a new edition, but it builds off of 5th Edition, rather than replacing it. Most conventions and festivals have made the switch, and MAGFest is no exception. Along with D&D 2024, WotC has now introduced Legends of Greyhawk, which is a new structure for organized play that focuses on telling stories in the classic D&D setting of Greyhawk, and which will eventually supplant Adventurer's League. The

D&D Department Heads are taking the change in stride. For Super MAGFest 2026, the team is offering games from both AL and Legends of Greyhawk so that they can cater to players who are itching to try the new content and to those who want to keep playing the way they know and love. Ultimately, it's about providing programming that makes people feel welcome at the gaming table, whether they've been coming for years or they're brand new; that's what community-building is all about. I asked Sharon how she envisions the

future of the MAGFest D&D Department, and she said, "we'll keep welcoming people to the hobby of table-top role-playing. Teaching people to play, how to find new games, and how to run games for their friends." Whether that's through Adventurer's League, Legends of Greyhawk, or indie and small press games in every genre in existence, I have no doubt they'll complete their quest with the highest score possible.



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YOU PICK THE STORY

"Let's try Drain Bat next."

Pulse winds their way towards the concert halls. From somewhere classical music is playing, reminding you of the secret Triforce Quartet shows at the gazebo.

Pulse blasts their way past a few mechanical knights on their way into Drain Bat's ballroom. The cave opens up to a large dance floor. Waiting for you there is Drain Bat herself.

"Hmmpf! Come on! Let's dance!"

"Pulse! Use the charge shot!" Pulse begins powering up the beam of metal music as Drain Bat flutters her wings.

"Look out! She's attacking!" Pulse almost has the charged shot ready, but as you watch, the shockwaves from Drain Bat's wings siphon the energy out of Pulse's cannon. Suddenly the drain part of her name makes sense.

"I can't finish the move!" Pulse shouts, struggling with their arm cannon. But it's too late. She's behind Pulse, and with a wicked swoosh, she's knocked them right out.

You've been defeated.

DEFEAT.

TRY AGAIN!



MAGFEST INDIE TABLETOP SHOWCASE

WE'VE ALL BEEN THERE...

Logging countless hours playing board games about trains and settlers. Sometimes you just want something new and exciting. Sometimes your friends get tired of losing to you at the same games over and over again. Let's face it, you're too good! That's why we have the MAGFest Indie Tabletop Showcase! Invite your party over to the Riverview Ballroom and try out some brand new games from independent developers!

Oh no... SO MANY CHOICES!! Fear not - we have just the solution for you! Grab your favorite d100 and make a Chaos Magic roll to see what the universe suggests you try!

HOW IT WORKS:

1. Pick up a d100.
 - *If you don't have a d100, either visit Marketplace or find a virtual die roller on your phone.*
2. Roll that d100.
3. Look up the number rolled in the Tabletop Chaos Magic Table to the right.
4. **Play the game matching your number.**
5. Some numbers may have additional instructions, such as re-roll or add/subtract a d6. Do what the table says.
6. Once your friends are tired of losing at that game, roll again!!
7. Never Stop Blowing Up Rolling.

NO, REALLY, IT'S THAT EASY!

Roll that big ol' die and get to playing some of the newest, hottest, awesomest, indie-est games this side of the galaxy!



TABLETOP CHAOS MAGIC TABLE

d100	Outcome	d100	Outcome
1-2	Boiling Point by Anoba Studios: A fast-paced card game where crustaceans race to escape heat and battle chefs for revenge.	51-52	We're Sinking by Ludamus Games: A competitive, lightweight, survival, and social dilemma board game on a sinking ship.
3-4	Axolotl With A Gun by Bright Bard Games: A one-shot TTRPG about adorable amphibians with comically oversized weapons and cute hobbies fighting evil robots bent on destroying their habitat.	53-54	Memoir Games : A series of games that use personal memories to create stories and art through drawing and writing exercises.
5-6	Bonds Between by Bright Bard Games: A card-altering TTRPG about everyday dragons in the modern world and the quiet, broken places they call home.	55-56	house by Marn S.: A GM-less, map-making game about exploring a seemingly endless, possibly haunted house.
7-8	Trash to Treasure by Bright Bard Games: A short-form, eco-fantasy TTRPG about magical girl trash goblins fighting pollution and corporate greed.	57-58	MetaFiction by Marn S.: A PbtA TTRPG about being trapped in a death game, but also about being trapped inside a story.
9-10	BitterSweet by Coo' Games: A light, quick card game where players collect chocolates they like while avoiding those they don't.	59-60	Time To Drop by Marn S.: A GM-less TTRPG where you and your friends take on the roles of a heist crew trapped in a time loop, trying to get their final job right and ride off into the sunset with the goods
11-12	Lily Hop by Coo' Games: A card game where frogs race between lily pads to capture flies.	61-62	You Can Check Out Any Time You Like, But You Can Never Leave by Marn S.: A TTRPG about employees and guests at the Hotel California, the first and only hotel to exist outside of time and space!
13-14	Road Warriors by DBG Games: A Forged in the Dark TTRPG where you play as comedians going on the road to entertain audiences all over the country, whether they like it or not!	63-64	Memoir Games by Memoir Games: A series of games that use personal memories to create stories and art through drawing and writing exercises.
15-16	Gem Blenders TCG : A card game where you mix and match gems, explore blend synergies, and command your heroes to outwit your opponent!	65-66	The Time We Have by Elliot Davis: A tragic two-player game about brothers in the zombie apocalypse, one of which has been infected, and the final days before he turns. It is a storytelling card game played on opposite sides of a closed door.
17-18	Endeavor Universal Role Playing Game by Gold Empire: A TTRPG system designed for heroic exploits within relatively grounded settings.	67-68	Love, Career & Magic by Pegasus Games: A storytelling game set in a quirky reality TV show with mythological creatures working modern-day jobs.
19-20	<i>Alpha Pulse charges up. Roll again and add or subtract 5 from the result.</i>	69-70	<i>Haha, you thought we'd give someone this number? Roll again.</i>
21-22	The Peddler's Prize by Graftbound Press: A collaborative world building game in which players build an inventory of strange objects and design a setting through these curiosities.	71-72	Snacksquatch by Necessary Diversion Games: A card game where you bid sugary sweets to catch monsters, but if you give them too much sugar, they'll knock you out of the auction.
23-24	Tiny Mall Wizards by Green Intern Games: A micro-RPG about being a diminutive wizard in a modern Shopping Mall, inspired by that one TikTok video. You'll solve and cause problems in unequal measure!	73-74	Beneath Nexus by Silverclutch Games: An asymmetrical dungeon crawl where one player controls the evil Blight Lord, and others reclaim a ruined city.
25-26	Estate: Raise the Realm by Grod Games: A worker-placement card game about rebuilding a war-torn estate.	75-76	Heavy Armor by Silverclutch Games: A tactical squad combat game where players control mechs in strategic battles on a hex board.
27-28	Pirates Dragons Treasure by Dark Port Games: A Shipbuilding Card Game for Dragon Slayers in the Age of Piracy!	77-78	Chronicler by Rule Zero Media: A TTRPG with a modular design for varied gameplay.
29-30	Hide The Body by Hillary's Toybox: A card game about hiding bodies in open graves. It's kind of like Uno but with corpses and cadaver dogs.	79-80	Kotam: Conquest by Wherever Games: A strategy game for 2 to 4 players where players take the role of rival rulers expanding their domains across a hex-based territories.
31-32	Of Popes and Plagues by Hillary's Toybox: A "beer and pretzels" gotcha card and dice game about trying to survive the plague and probably failing.	81-82	SpellArms: The Trading Card Game by Evilly Enhanced Games: A fantasy-themed trading card game with no mana, no energy, and no resources holding players back.
33-34	Death Cap Sauté by Junk Food Games: A GM-less TTRPG where players compete in a deadly culinary contest using dice rolls.	83-84	<i>Bigma eats your dice. Roll again with new dice.</i>
35-36	Moon Rings by Junk Food Games: A solo journaling game where you play as a witch who wishes to end the reign of the cursed Blood Moon.	85-86	The Long Road Ahead by Unicycle Games: A PbtA TTRPG about great journeys and great sacrifices.
37-38	<i>You cast tone deaf at level 9. Roll a d10. If you are a musician, subtract the result from your roll and go to that line. If you are not a musician, add it.</i>	87-88	SpellBound by Fragor Games: A deck-building game where players use spells and summons to gather resources and gain power in magical battles.
39-40	Bread by Lunarpunk Games: A competitive card game where players build an engine to survive a famine by managing limited resources.	89-90	So Many Horrid Ghosts by Spilled Coffee Creatives: a one-shot game where Lady Macbeth, Mercutio, Ophelia, and more unite under a shared goal: get revenge on the playwright who had the nerve to kill them off.
41-42	Conviction by Lunarpunk Games: A semi-cooperative card game where couples try to change each other's minds through strategic play.	91-92	The Harvest Helpers by Spilled Coffee Creatives: A TTRPG where players take on the role of pumpkin spirits who work to make sure a small town's Fall Festival is a success.
43-44	Cursed VHS by Lunarpunk Games: Too spooky for a description. Play it if you dare.	93-94	Exit Vector by Vector Tridens: A vehicle combat game set in a dystopian future where players control expert pilots on high-stakes missions.
45-46	Vibes by Lunarpunk Games: A card game where players match classmates to create the perfect group for an art class project.	95-96	Void Breakers by Megacosm Games: A brutal, strategic brawl where players control interplanetary prisoners battling in an arena.
47-48	Toppings by Ludamus Games: A pizza-themed competitive card game where players assemble their perfect pizza with set collection and engine-building mechanics.	97-98	Witches' Revel by Sigil Greenhouse: A 1v1 dueling deck-construction game of tiny witches casting enormous spells.
49-50	<i>You turn into a potted cactus. Roll again.</i>	99-100	<i>A crit? Really? Don't lie to the nice people. Roll again.</i>



Pulse and Bigma: the hero and villain of Super MAGFest 20X6



MEET THE SUPER MAGFEST THEME TEAM

An interview with the Super MAGFest Theme Team Department Heads

First things first, who are you?

Kaitie Muncie juggles mascot designs, illustrations, pixel art, and promo/merch projects. Additionally, she designs and makes art for Swadge games, so some of that :sparkles:theme magic:sparkles: ends up right in attendees' hands. She also flexes her organizational powers for goal setting, tasks, and timelines to get things out the door on time and to the team's quality standards.

Greg Lord is a graphic wizard and 3D sorcerer, according to Kaitie (Editor's note: he will be very humble about this and dispute these claims). He focuses on a lot of the 3D art, graphic and character design, and animation work for MAGFest each year such as the trailers, signage, and map. Over the years, it's given him chances to go wild on experimental projects like kicking off the MAGFest Power MAG'zine (fulfilling his long-running dream of MAGFest having an art and lore book) and the annual VRChat virtual worlds. Like Kaitie, he also works with the Swadge team, focusing on the 3D design of the Swadge shell and other Swadge-related projects.

Why does MAGFest have a theme team?

MAGFest's content and experiences are already amazing, and the theme gives it an

extra layer of fun. We're the crew that ties everything together with mascots, stories, art, and even little surprises you might stumble into during the weekend. We do that with the theming, which touches the logos, merch, and other assets for the event. It is our goal to set our highest-possible standard of visual quality for MAGFest. We definitely love what we make and always want our work to shine, but it's also our job to make sure everyone looks good. We generate asset packs for all the departments with fonts, colors, imagery, and more for their use. This enables a standardized brand for social media, advertising, and more.

What was your favorite MAGFest theme?

KAITIE: "I've been coming to Super MAGFest since 2014, so it's tough to choose! As an attendee and new volunteer, the year inspired by Smash was incredible—I designed a big banner with all the mascots, got a sneak peek at Swadge games, and still had time to dive into tournaments and see all the on-theme bands. Total chaos in the best way. But as a creator, the year inspired by Sonic has been my favorite so far. It was such a blast collaborating with the team and letting my childhood steer some design choices—five-year-old me was thrilled with Pango, Poe, and Pixel. And Dr.



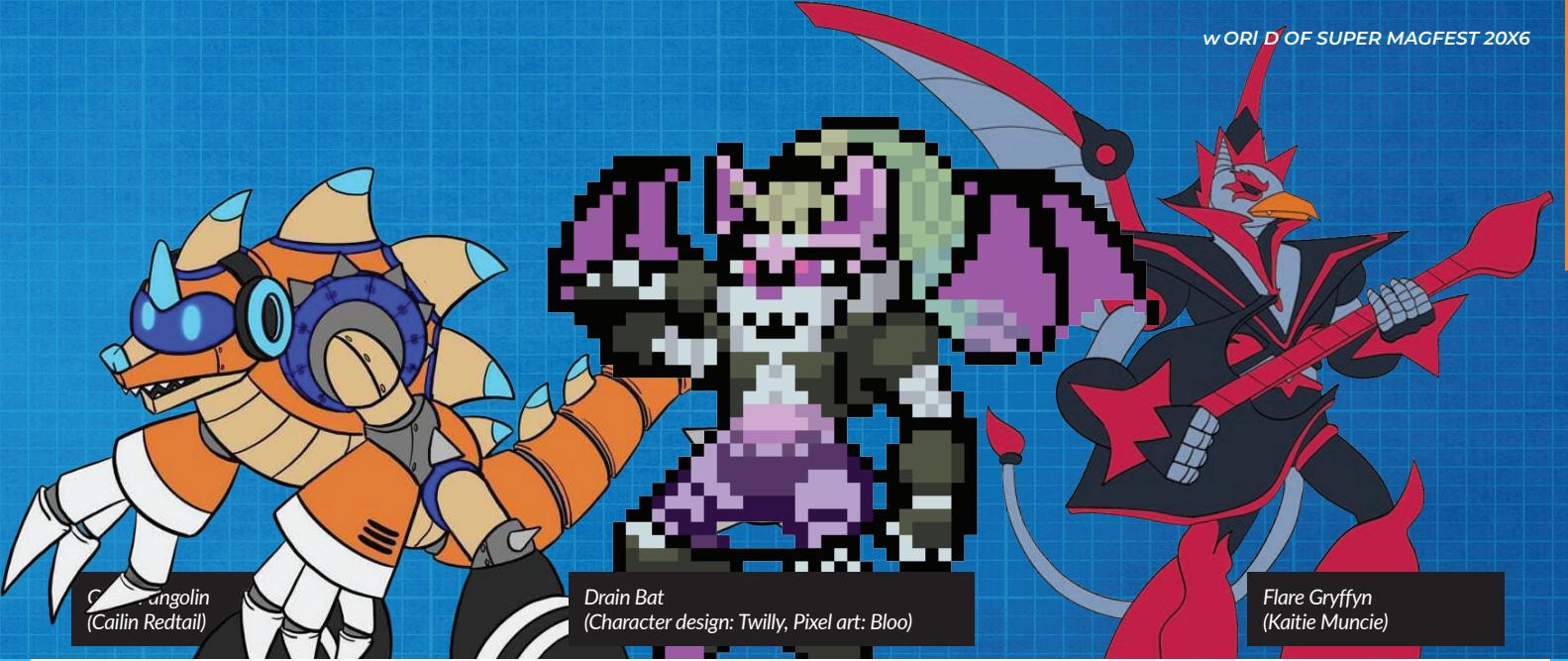
The mysterious Sawtooth, mentor and returning MAGFest mascot Sunny McShreds in disguise.
(Illustration: Kaitie Muncie)

Garbotnik? That was all Greg. I can't explain it, but Dr. Garbotnik made the event all the more special. He'll always be my favorite villain...and sweetheart."

GREG: "I've been staffing since 2020 and each year has genuinely given me new favorite experiences and creative challenges. But, my first year as an attendee was 2016—the theme inspired by the original (Super) Metroid—so getting to relive that while we worked on 2024's "MAGFest Prime" theme felt like a return to my origin story. It also gave me a chance to dig deep into a ton of exciting 3D work. And, also, I just really love Metroid! (But yeah, all of that said, I do kinda wonder if I'll ever love a character more than last year's Dr. Garbotnik...)"

Okay, the big question: How does MAGFest choose the theme?

There are some guidelines we try to follow to make sure that our themes for Super MAGFest



are always going to be a worthy match for an audience as large and as diverse as ours. We always want to make sure our themes are recognizable, well-loved, and strong examples of both Music and Gaming. The theme is one of our strongest opportunities to let our staff, guests, performers, artists, and audience all come together in feeling like they have something exciting in common to latch onto. And, yes, we read your feedback on the forms and take suggestions into consideration, so please fill out the post-event survey!

Every year starts with a big brainstorm – staff toss ideas on the table, we debate, joke, and sometimes get way too dramatic about it. Eventually, one concept just clicks as the story we want to tell. Occasionally, themes are chosen in collaboration with certain stakeholders such as guest booking or other anticipated content.

For example, Super MAGFest 2023 was inspired by Melee because it was the 20th anniversary of MAGFest, and it featured many mascots from previous years in an anniversary celebration.

From there, the Theme Team runs wild turning that seed into mascots, lore, art, and all the surprises you see leading up to and at the event.

Tell your favorite story about the theme team/adjacent work.

KAITIE: “One of my favorite memories was creating the animated trailer for Super MAGFest 2026. Greg, I, and our amazing Division Heads spent weeks designing characters, backgrounds, and sneaky Easter eggs. Every section went through multiple revisions, and we even animated tiny references to past themes and mascots. Watching it come together—

chaotic brainstorming, late-night edits, endless feedback—was wild, but seeing attendees spot the hidden details made every late night worth it. I was there for the first reveal with a smaller group of staff and volunteers in April. Goosebumps the entire time. The roar from that tiny crowd in the first few seconds? INSANE. I can only imagine the reactions of folks seeing it at home. MAGFest brings the most hyped people together—it’s an endless cycle of “you’re insane” and “this is SO AMAZING holy COW.””

GREG: “My Theme Team story started the day the pandemic canceled MAGFest 2021. Super MAGFest really recharges my emotional batteries each year, and knowing how badly I was going to miss that, I decided “screw it, I’ll make my own” and started on a fever dream project of modeling the Gaylord. Long story short, that turned into the Virtual MAGLord

YOU PICK THE STORY

“We need more abilities before we fight Bigma,” you say. “Let’s fight Grind Pangolin!”

You watch as Pulse enters a Metro tunnel, blasting a robotic rat off the rails. Trotting along the tracks is quick work, and you can imagine Grind Pangolin curled into a ball and racing around curves and through tunnels.

Pulse pulls into a station, looking around for the next enemy to blast.

“Well, don’t just sit there and waste your precious time. Hurry up and fight me!” Grind

Pangolin spins into view. The pangolin is a robotic, twisted version of himself.

“Pulse, he’s going to dash!” Only a moment later he crashes into Pulse, knocking them back.

“Ha! You’ll have to be faster than that!” He shouts while Pulse recovers to hit him with a smash attack. The pair bounces back and forth across the station, Pulse jumping and Grind Pangolin spinning, until Pulse finally catches him with one final Mic Drop.

“Every world ... has its end...” Grind Pangolin says, falling. Pulse is ready to absorb both the power of ska music and his new trombone slide move.

WHO SHOULD PULSE'S NEXT OPPONENT BE?

► **DRAIN BAT PG. 84**

► **BIGMA PG. 88**

(our VRChat-based themed venue each year) and the hype of that project—and the emotional and creative connections that gave me with so many new friends and people in our community—will always feel like the most incredibly wholesome origin story. Working with so many great people was so gratifying, and it earned me a spot on the Theme Team that I will always absolutely treasure. But, more recently, I will say that the annual moments when I arrive at the Gaylord each year and walk through halls colorfully filled with all of the things we made together are always going to be some of the proudest and most gratifying moments of my life.”

Is there anything you want to add that I haven't asked about?

Did you know we've got a rotating application for the Theme Team? If you're a graphic designer, composer, illustrator, or other creative, we'd love to hear from you and volunteer!

Reach out to
theme-team@magfest.org
 for more details.



HIDDEN HOLO-BEACON FOUND > COMMUNICATIONS SIGNAL DETECTED



DATA CAPSULE :: MODEL HAWKINS-MK.2 ::
 comms ports available... ATTEMPTING TO CONNECT...
 comms uplink established.
 accessing stored message log... MESSAGE RECEIVED.
 decoding data...
 MESSAGE DATA CORRUPTED. attempting to compensate...
 DATA RETRIEVAL LOG:
 - partial data retrieval succeeded
 - data fragment isolated and decoded // remaining data lost.
 // ATTEMPTING DECRYPTION... DECRYPTION FAILED
 // PRIVATE KEY [A3] PARTIALLY CORRUPTED
 // -- OUTPUT LOG: ----- //
 // ? P H E R ? N ? A ? E R ? P A ? E
 // -- recovered message ends -- //



What does the Theme Team actually do?

We create and produce artwork, graphics, signage, trailers, and all kinds of thematic assets that make Super MAGFest (and other MAGFest events) feel immersive. We are also the lorekeepers of MAGFest's ever-expanding history of characters, stories, and experiences.

When do you start working on the theme?

Right after Super MAGFest ends! Sometimes, theme concepts are cooked up over a year in advance, and held until the theme is chosen.

What's a Swadge, and what does it have to do with the Theme Team?

The Swadge is MAGFest's custom badge-turned-game-console. We create the visual assets for the hardware, plus themed art, pixel sprites, scripts, and sometimes even hidden surprises for the games. Have you unlocked all the Swadge's Easter eggs yet?

Do you really hide Easter eggs?

Absolutely. In art, lore, games...sometimes even in places you'd never expect. Keep your eyes peeled...

How do you pick the mascots?

They're designed to match the year's theme and story—sometimes nodding to gaming or music history, sometimes calling back old mascots, and sometimes brand-new creations.

Can attendees help with theme ideas?

You bet! Staff brainstorming leads the charge, but fan culture and community energy shape a lot. We love suggestions and we genuinely try to keep our eyes out for where the community's energy is. But, even better is when people want to contribute, and then they reach out about joining the Theme Team!

YOU PICK THE STORY

"I think we're ready," Dr. Hype says. "Bigma used to be the master of ceremonies before he was infected by the MAGiX virus. Now he wants total control. Instead of celebrating the music, he wishes to silence it." Pulse enters his lair, an empty concert hall. It's utterly devoid of any music or fun.

But that's okay, because you're bringing both.

There's plenty of enemies on the way as Pulse bounces off of flickering holograms. As you reach the final stage, you finally come face

to face with Bigma.

"You are everything wrong with MAGFest," Bigma thunders at Pulse. "Just look at you. A glossy corporate sellout. You've mixed every genre of music into a dissonant mess to appeal to as wide an audience as possible."

"You're wrong! Our differences are what make MAGFest wonderful! There's something for everyone, whether they love music, gaming, or anything else!" You falter in your inspirational speech. What DOES the 'A' in MAGFest stand for? 'Arts and Crafts'? They do

those at Magstock.

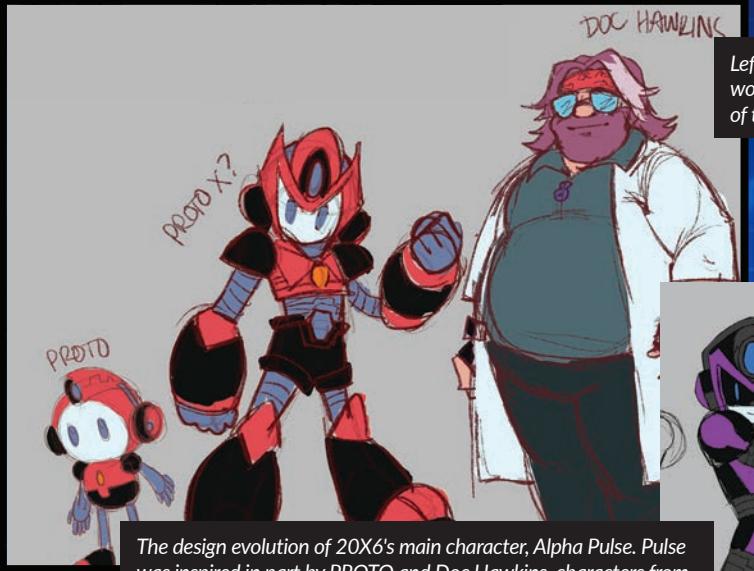
"I've heard ENOUGH!" Bigma lets out a colossal roar. Pulse tumbles over but quickly recovers, using the music they've acquired from the RemiXes to defeat Bigma.

As Bigma collapses, you're surprised to see the virus slowly scattering. Wasn't Bigma the source?

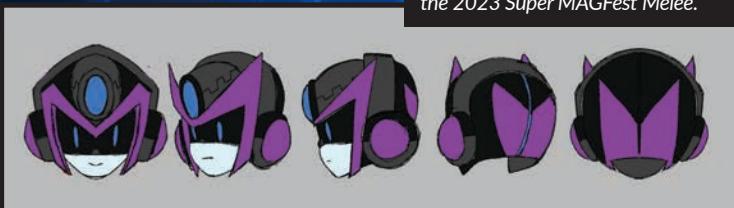
"Was he being mind controlled too? I thought he'd gone bad all on his own!"

The small door at the side of the stage swings open.

CONTINUE TO PG. 90



Left: Greg's and Kaitie's first drafts of "Proto X," who would later become Pulse, as a futuristic evolution of the 2023 MAGFest PROTO character.

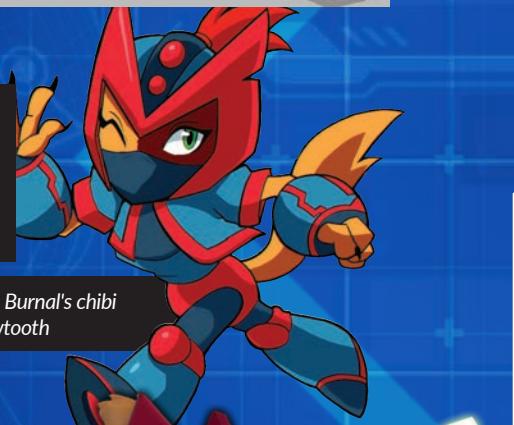


Left: Kaitie's turnaround of the character design

Right: A closer-to-final concept sketch of Sunny!



Left: Kaitie's character design process developing Sawtooth. Sawtooth's final design includes both futuristic robot armor and classic costume pieces from Sunny's outfit as an Emwing pilot



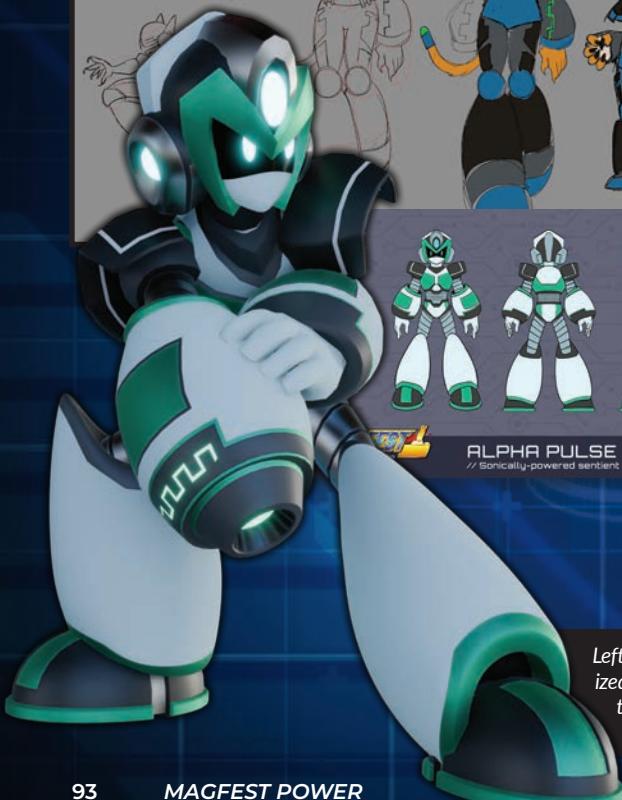
Right: Giezelle Burnal's chibi design for Sawtooth

Kaitie's emojis bring our characters to life on social media

HYPE



Left/right: Once design details are finalized, Greg models, rigs, and animates the characters in 3D for MAGFest's merch, print, and animated assets





Sawtooth and Pulse
(Giezelle Burnal)

The concept of turning the Super MAGFest Melee hero, Master of Ceremonies, into a villain emerged early in the theme design process, and thus Bigma was born (Greg Lord)

Dustcap
(Greg Lord)

YOU PICK THE STORY

You struggle to comprehend what you're looking at as it waddles in. It seems to be some sort of penguin mech suit.

"Who are you?"

"Me? I can see why you might not recognize me, after all I'm mostly working behind the scenes. It is I, Hank Waddle."

That doesn't clear things up at all. You wrack your brain to remember what theme he was from. Maybe 2019? You skipped that year after you got a bad head cold.

"Dr. Hype? Do you have any info on this guy?"

"Very little, I'm afraid. My records only show that he was Cho's legal counsel."

"Very little! Why, how dare you!" Hank sputters. "Well, I know just what to do with this hearsay. I will here by and therefore ip so facto depose of you ad hoc and post haste!" From somewhere he produces a giant gavel, swinging it at Pulse.

"Do you like my mech suit? I had it specially made to help me enforce the legal code of MAGFest – by force!" Pulse trombone slides under the latest gavel swing and manages to shoot a pulse of energy at Hank.

"See, this is exactly the kind of thing that will get MAGFest shut down!" Hank continues. "It's too rowdy! Did you even get that arm cannon checked at prop check? We need organization! We need rules and order! If everyone follows all the rules, we won't have any trouble. If we can just turn down all this racket, no one will get a headache!"

"Legal? No copyright law in the universe is going to stop me!" Pango is here, and the other RemiXes are right behind him!

"We'll never give up! We'll never let you down!" King

Donut cheers.

"Garbotnik? Even you're here? I thought... well I kind of got the impression you were the bad guy from the way you hijacked last MAGFest Power's personality quiz," you confess.

"You read that? Well, then you should know better than anyone I'm a complicated guy."

"We're all rooting for you!" Dr. Hype chimes in. "But maybe we should focus on the enemy."

"Everyone! I have an idea! Hank is trying to take away everything that makes MAGFest amazing. What if we rock so hard, we blow him away?"

"That's an amazing idea!" Dr. Hype chimes in, but you know he'd love it. One by one, everyone takes up instruments. Bigg Funkus has his bongos, and Gryffyn Funkhammer has his bass guitar. King Donut found another mic somewhere. As Pulse continues the fight against Hank Waddle, all of the mascots start playing.

And it's a concert to rock the ages. At first you're not sure it'll work, all of the sounds are so different. But the longer you listen, the more you realize this is what makes MAGFest magical. Everyone is coming together, having a great time. And yeah, maybe it isn't perfect, and maybe it's really, really loud. But that only makes it all the more special when everyone's on the beat together.

And finally, Bigma sits up as well. He's openly weeping.

"I'd forgotten... how beautiful it is, when everyone is in perfect harmony."

"What?! No! This isn't legal! Have you even seen the fire code? You can't have this many people in one room!"

Hank is distracted, and Pulse gets more and more hits in on him, easily dodging his attacks while he cries out. Hank's suit begins to fall apart in chunks.

"This is assault! This is battery! You can't do this to me! I'll sue! I'll sue all of you!!!"

Everyone plays louder and louder and Bigma gets in on the action, conducting and announcing solos. You've done it! You all came together for the loudest and rowdiest concert of all time! You out rocked Hank Waddle! You've saved MAGFest with the power of music!

Something hits you in the stomach.

"Dude, your alarm has been going off for ten minutes! What even is that sound? Did you record that in the concert hall last night?"

You sit up, grabbing the pillow your roommate tossed at you. You're back in your Gaylord room, sunlight streaming in your window. Your phone alarm is playing some kind of rock music.

"What... what year is it?"

"What time did you get back from the arcade? It's Saturday morning! Come on, we're going to hit up Yoga for Gamers."

You roll over, sand and your Swadge spilling out of your pockets. You have the feeling this really will be the best MAGFest ever. Even if you have to get up way too early to do yoga.

THE END.



Pulse





BIGMA



HYPE ^{DOC}



MAGix on the High Seas

JANUARY 8-11, 20X6

Join Bigma Travel as we experience the breathtaking views of the Potomac River with the best and brightest RemiX talents!

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DRAIN BAT



KINETIC DONUT



SEVER YATAGA

MORE GREAT RemiX talent to be announced!

POWER UP

WITH THIS YEAR'S

ACTION-PACKED ISSUE

OF

MAGFEST U U POWER

THE OFFICIAL MAG'ZINE OF

MAGFEST L R 20X6

Join us for an exclusive behind-the-scenes journey into the world of MAGFest!



MUSIC: Interviews, articles, and insights from some of MAGFest's biggest performers! Our team brings you backstage into the minds and creative lives of your favorite musicians!

AND: An inside look into the departments that make MAGFest so unique, bridging our Music and Gaming communities with special events, guests, and more!

GAMING: A sneak peek at the games and developers that bring gaming to MAGFest's Indies, Challenges, Swadge team, tabletop, and more!!

TONS OF ALL-NEW FEATURES:

Puzzles and activities • Interactive narrative adventure

Explore the world and lore of Super MAGFest 20X6

Meet this year's Swadge and explore a timeline of Swadge history!

MAGFEST

