

Anime Active

Written by Hsin Tsao

After covering how to personalize your computer system to be an electronic anime shrine, it is now time to look at anime programs so that we can make our PC's anime-active. Most of these titles will be designed for Windows 95 and should run on English based Win95 machines with minimum changes.

In my search for anime PC games, the initial feeling was that of disappointment. Anime PC games are simply lacking here in the US. Those that do exist are of poor quality and not worth the time it took to port the game over from Japan. It surprises me why any company would port a game that simply wasn't good to begin with. Since the popularity of anime hasn't exactly sky-rocketed, publishing a game only because it looks anime-ish won't earn those valuable gaming dollars.

The main publisher of anime games in the US seems to be a company called Megatech which produced the following titles: Power Dolls, Knights of Xentar, and Metal & Lace, Cobra. It appears that Megatech isn't catering to anime fans, but hormone driven young men who would put up with the crappy game play just to get a glimpse of a few still shots of nude anime babes. If that's the reason a person went to buy the game, my advice to them is simply to go search the web and find the images there. You'll probably find that some people already ripped the images from the game and uploaded to some web site, or simply find better images than what these games hold.

Megatech

When I first heard of Megatech, I was a freshman in college. The company released Power Dolls, and in the game magazines, it looked pretty cool. My roommate, who knew something about anime but wasn't really a big fan, even used his modem to dial up the Megatech's BBS to download the demo. Slowly, but surely, the game transferred over the phone lines to our machines. After all the anticipation, the game turned out to be a big disappointment. It was mainly a simple arcade game that had a picture of a girl between each round. The pictures weren't bad, but for a single non-animated picture, the web offered tons more that were much higher in quality. Unfortunately, Megatech never went beyond offering players anything other than a

basic arcade game with still shots in between. Also, it doesn't look like Megatech is really publishing any new games (Good or bad? You decide.).

SquareSoft

If any company gives me hope of having anime games in the US, SquareSoft might be the one. The creators of the Final Fantasy series have been advertising in many of the popular programming journals for programmers to port Final Fantasy over to Win95. No word has come out though about whether the company will be successful, but having a large well-known game can help open the door for other titles to be ported. I myself am not a big fan of Final Fantasy, but the game does look to be a high quality title. That is what is needed to bring recognition and popularity of anime games into the US market. As long as people don't think of Power Dolls as anime games, but rather bring Final Fantasy to mind, the future will be brighter.

The latest word seems to be that Final Fantasy VII for Win95 will come out sometime in late 1998.

Rabid Entertainment

This company only recently came to my attention because of a preview in some computer game magazine. Rabid is currently working on a game named Septerra Core, and from what I've seen of the screen shots, this looks to be a beautiful game with a distinct anime flavor. This game has moved near the top of my "Anxiously Anticipated Games." Septerra Core is a PC-based RPG game that tries to combine the best of console-based RPG (i.e. Final Fantasy) and traditional computer RPG games (i.e. Ultima). Apparently, the game will be set in a large and highly detailed world where the player will lead a party of adventures/rebels/outcasts to solve the mystery of Septerra's Core. The characters have a definite anime feel to them, and the story line could have been an anime series. This is one title that seems to promise a lot, but final judgement will be withheld until the game actually comes out.

Otaku World

So where that leave us here in the present? In my search, I came across Otaku World (<http://www.otakuworld.com>). For those anime game fixes, here's a good source to download games from (as well as graphics, themes, and screen savers -there a couple that I'm really fond of by Elf-). Many of the programs aren't "games" but rather little programs called Windows Mates, but they can be fun and entertaining. Be aware that many of these titles are written for Japanese versions of windows and many are 16 bit applications (designed for Windows 3.x)¹. However, I have been able to run them with no problem.

Some of my favorites are the "window sitters" which displays an anime character that sits on top of the current active window. I've downloaded the ones for Sakura War and Evangelion, and while they do nothing for my productivity, they are fun to look at, and they keep you company. Many also have the option of changing their costumes, so you can get different looks.

On the Otaku World site, there are also some programs that do nothing but sit there and wave. Even those can be cute. You will also be able to find some Japanese computer games such as Puyo Puyo which seems to be a popular game with roots from Tetris. These are all small programs and games, but until we get some big name US producers to come out with high quality games, hopefully, these little mini-programs will keep you entertained.