



» [Game Boy] Game Boy games often offer unique takes on existing properties, like *Super Mario Land*'s shooting sections.



"Both the Game Boy and the Spectrum are Z80, so I already had a head start"

Jas Austin



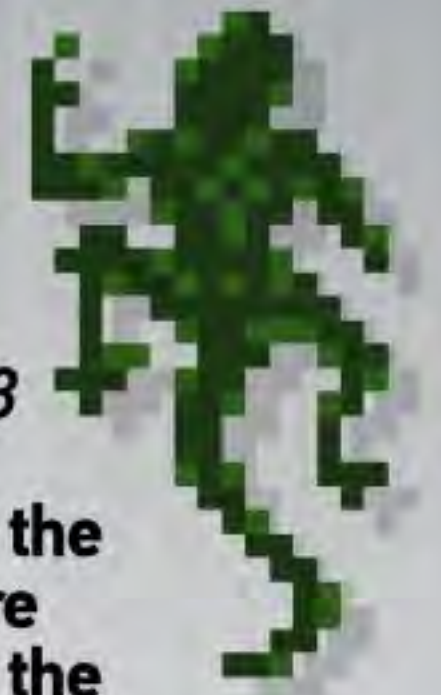
Nineties, from cheap 'block game' handhelds to the likes of the Mega Duck and the Supervision. Even today, contemporary machines such as the Playdate draw clear inspiration from the Game Boy's classic design.

The limited display of the system has also been a visual inspiration for many, including Gaz, whose game *Owyn's Adventure* uses the Game Boy visual style. What inspired this choice? "I started *Owyn's Adventure* as an entry to the Unofficial Game Boy Jam run by my friend Jamie, who convinced me to take part away from another personal project that I'd gotten a creative block on," explains the developer. If you're a regular reader of our Homebrew section, you'll likely be familiar with such development drives. "It was two weeks to make as much as you could so long as the game featured just four shades of the Game Boy green. After two weeks I had some systems in and a rushed level, so I thought I'd spend a couple of weeks working on the level design but kept going as I was enjoying working on it so much."

The existence of an unofficial jam suggests that there's no shortage of people interested in making Game Boy-style games, and a look around the indie scene bears that out. Browse the online store for the Nintendo Switch and you'll find games like *Save Me*, *Mr Tako* and *Awesome Pea* that lift their limited colour palettes and green hues directly from the original model of the Game Boy. It's not just on the handheld platform that you'll find this reverence for Nintendo's original machine, either – PC games like *Madcap Castle* and *Squidlit* also pay homage to the system's distinctive display, while others like *Evoland 2* and *PlataGO!* include the Game Boy as one of many retro gaming styles. The look even goes beyond games, as mobile apps like *Retrospecs*, *Bitstagram* and *Retroboy* offer camera filters designed to produce images like the Game Boy Camera add-on. So what makes the look of the machine so popular with indie developers? "A couple reasons as to why the Game Boy aesthetic is popular come to mind," says Gaz. "Firstly the ▶

## MINI MAKING OF... ALIEN 3

JAS AUSTIN REVEALS THE STORY BEHIND HIS UNIQUE INTERPRETATION OF ALIEN 3



**You worked on the Spectrum before moving over to the Game Boy. Was it a smooth transition?**

Yes, it was pretty smooth. Both the Game Boy and the Spectrum are Z80, so I already had a head start. What was new to me was hardware support – scrolling and sprites for example.

**Were you able to watch the *Alien 3* movie prior to starting development?**

Sadly no, but the team did get to attend a private screening in a small cinema in Leicester Square shortly before the film was released, which was pretty exciting for me. For the design we only had a copy of the script.

**There must have been a temptation to do a typical 2D run-and-gun, like the other versions of the game?**

A side-view game was the obvious choice but we purposely avoided doing that. My last few games had all been side-scrollers and I was a bit sick of doing them, so I pushed for the idea of doing something top-down with a little less straight action. Plus at the time I had a feeling the other versions of *Alien 3* would be side-scrolling actions games and thought this would help our game stand out.

**Did you receive any feedback – or interference – from the movie studio?**

Fox had no feedback or input into the game design, I'm not sure back then that the film companies saw the games industry as anything important. However any larger graphics of the actors had to be signed off by Fox and the stars.

**How long did the development last, and was it a smooth development?**

It wasn't the smoothest development. I started on the game and made a very quick prototype to demonstrate the top-down scrolling view. But then I got pulled off the project to work on another game, *Spider-Man 2* if I recall. Sadly my replacement on *Alien 3* had to stop due to health reasons, so after finishing the *Spider-Man* game I jumped back on board. The previous coder's work wasn't something I could use so I went back to my original code. Because the development was now running late the pressure was on to get it finished. It was tough but I managed to finish the coding in about five weeks, which even back then was pretty quick.

