

THE sim racing world erupted at the weekend after an incident between F1 young gun Lando Norris and IndyCar veteran Simon Pagenaud during the iRacing finale at Indianapolis. Guest driver

Norris was seemingly set for the win, but was punted out by Pagenaud. The French ace had blamed the Brit for an earlier crash and was heard on the livestream saying: "I am going to take

Lando out." He later backtracked, but it sparked a war of words — with claims that Pagenaud even received a death threat as fan fury raged. The eSports series — which was put on

to replace real racing affected by the Covid-19 pandemic — also sparked a heated debate about the online sport. Guess racers want to win — whether it is virtual or on track.



## GRADIUS

PC Engine was best-known for 2D shooters and Gradius is one of the jewels in the crown.

This is a cult game that became a classic.

It was developed by Konami for the arcades in 1985, but was given the re-release treatment on the PC Engine in 1991.

This is easily the best version — beating other homeports hands down.

Gradius was also known as the Nemesis. It

is a series of rock-solid space blasters and may be one of the granddaddies of the whole genre but its name carries real weight, even with non-fans.

This version is a near arcade-perfect conversion. In some places it is actually even better because it features an extra level

and some bonus stages.

The sound is epic — it adds a real depth to the gaming experience. What. A. Riot.



# GRAFX IS A MINI MARVEL

## THE condensed console business is booming — with classic machines getting a mini makeover.

The gaming giants — Sega, Nintendo and Sony — have all made sure they get their slice of the miniature magic pie.

It attracts new buyers and gives them a chance to dust off some much-loved titles from yesteryear and give them a new lease of life.

Their success proves that nostalgia can be a big draw for gamers looking to recapture their youth.

But could the magic spell work 30 years later on a console that was considered an oddity back in the day? And one that had hardly rippled the sales surface.

Well, Konami — yes, the same Konami that published Metal Gear and still makes PES — have just released the PC Engine Core Grafx Mini. Extra points if you remember the original.

This is a bite-size version of the 1990 PC Engine Core Grafx that was originally made by NEC Home Electronics.

It lived by a few names around the world — a trend that has continued with this one. This is

## PC Engine Core Grafx Mini

£99.99

the Turbo Grafx 16 Mini in the United States. But it's not just the name that's different — there are three different versions of the console with US, UK and European variants.

To be fair there is just a logo and colour change between the European and UK ones, but the American machine is a totally different-looking beast.

We reckon this suggests that the mini console is really targeted at the hardcore collector and not so much at those looking to capture past joys... a theory that is backed up by the game selection.

You get **FIFTY SEVEN** titles —

including a few hidden gems — but there is a sucker punch. There are about 25 TurboGrafx-16 games, with the rest PC Engine games that are **ALL** in Japanese.

That makes many of these "treats" suck-it-and-see affairs. Some are playable but you haven't got a hope with others unless you

unearth a fan translation to read while you're playing.

The console is a perfect downscale of the original and is a cute character compared with other minis — but the UK one is the best-looking.

The controller feels good and the buttons are satisfyingly spongy when pressed but you only get one controller with the console even though it can take two. There is a multitap on the way.

Set-up and menus are very easy and clean. Loading and jumping from title to title is simple and there is a range of display settings.

The PC Engine Core Grafx Mini was always going to be a challenge. It was never a mainstream console, so it is a rare collector's item.

However, this mini may be the best of its kind to date. It is well-rounded, but time will tell if that is enough to take it beyond original fans and collectors.

★★★★



## SPLATTERHOUSE

THERE are timeless treats on the PC Engine Core Grafx Mini, but others are retro classics.

Bandai Namco's Splatterhouse is a case in point. What once would have seen parents across the land in uproar over horror scenes and stories now seem pretty tame by modern standards. But, at the time, there was nothing like it.

The PC Engine version even had a parental advisory warning on the box.



This side-scrolling beat 'em-up features nods to everything from Friday the 13th to Alien and Poltergeist as you are the hockey mask-wearing Rick who battles through an evil mansion to defend Dr West and save his girlfriend. But, like the gory visuals, time hasn't been kind to the gameplay. It feels very stiff to control.

Overlook the rough edges and this is a solid beat 'em-up that does have some creaky moments — even 30 years on.

## SNATCHER

IT'S a fair bet that unless you're a hardcore fan or collector, cyberpunk thriller Snatcher is the main reason to pick up this mini console.

It is a true unicorn of a game. It is hard to track down and even harder to get working, and it's become a cult classic because of one of the game's development team.

The visual novel is by Metal Gear and Death Stranding creator Hideo Kojima — and that makes this a must-play for a lot of

his fans because it is some of his earliest work in the industry.

It is clear he "borrowed" more than a few ideas from movies such as Blade Runner and The Terminator to create the game. And before you rush to buy

the Mini system there's one BIG issue — it's all in Japanese.

You need to know the language to follow what's happening, but there are fan translations to help with a play-through.



MICROSOFT went Xbox crazy with more than 25 minutes of action from new and unannounced titles for the Series X Xbox.

From epic RPGs to space battlers and sports titles, it was a real Smörgåsbord of delights. And Microsoft's new

smart delivery system means if you buy the Xbox One game you will automatically get the Series X version as well.

The headline news was DIRT 5, Vampire: The Masquerade — Bloodlines 2 and gameplay for Assassin's Creed Valhalla. But there were

also new treats like Call Of The Sea, Chorus and The Ascent.

It promises to be an exciting time until the end of the year.

But the showcase was missing that killer blow from a first-party game like Forza, Gears Of War or Halo which was a little

disappointing. It would have been great to see some of them running on the new tech.

No word yet on a release date or price for the new console, but they did tease that this is just the first of more showcases planned for the summer.



## TOP 5 GAMES THIS WEEK

- 1 FIFA 20
- 2 Animal Crossing: New Horizons
- 3 Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare
- 4 Mario Kart Deluxe 8
- 5 Grand Theft Auto V



## NEW MUSIC

By Jim Gellatly

### CLUB BEIRUT

WHO: Craig McInnes (vocals/guitar), Fraser Laing (guitar/vocals), Ryan Livingstone (bass/vocals), Jordan Linton (drums)

WHERE: Ladybank, Fife  
FOR FANS OF: Bastille, The 1975, Blossoms

JIM SAYS: Despite having just two singles behind them, Club Beirut are starting to make waves with their euphoric indie pop.

The genesis of the band was 8,000 miles away when frontman Craig was serving with the RAF in the Falklands. He'd spend his downtime putting together music in a small rehearsal room there.

Craig's now at RAF Lossiemouth while Fraser is in Fife, Jordan in Edinburgh and Ryan in Dundee — it's all a bit more manageable than being in the South Atlantic.

The band name also stems from Craig's forces career. He explained: "I lived in the block a few years back and our corridor was the 'sesh' corridor where everyone would come for a party."

"By the end of a weekend the place would be a total wreck. One of the bosses saw it one day and referred to it as 'downtown Beirut'."

Craig and Fraser are long-time friends, having met playing in bands on the Fife scene. They hooked up after Craig posted some song snippets online. He said: "I wasn't taking it seriously at all, but Fraser got in touch and kind of pushed me to make something happen. He then reached out to Ryan and Jordan."

After just a few months together the boys unleashed their infectious debut single Something New in February. The reaction was beyond their expectations. Craig said: "It's had over 30,000 streams which we still can't get our heads around."

"I remember saying I wanted to get 500 in total for the first single, but when I woke up the day after the release it was already over 1,000."

With live music on hold due to the pandemic, the band have yet to play live. The bookings had come in including an appearance at the postponed Party At The Palace in Linlithgow. A lack of performance hasn't stopped Club Beirut's progress. They recently signed up to Los Angeles-based management company and label Project Asteri.

It's a new operation run by former Universal Music Japan boss Kimi-taka Kato and multi-platinum producer NicoTheOwl.

Fraser said: "I found out about Project Asteri when we had our first play on Japanese national radio by Mike Rogers. I added Mike on Facebook and by complete luck up popped Kimi Kato on my 'friends you may know'. Being the chancer that I am, I sent Kimi our music, not even expecting a reply. The next day I got a reply saying how much he loved our tracks and that he would love to work with us!"

Club Beirut's brilliant second single The One That Hurts is out now. The pop banger sets things up nicely for when they finally get to make their live debut.

MORE: facebook.com/clubbeirut  
● Jim presents a weekly showcase of New Music on Amazing Radio Sundays 2-4pm.

amazingradio.com  
jimgellatly.com

Watch video of Club Beirut at thescottishsun.co.uk