

ENTERTAINMENT

Zelda games offer entertainment for all ages and skill levels

By **OLIVER EISLER**
Columnist
OPE5000@PSU.EDU

Long ago, there existed a kingdom where a golden power lay hidden. It was a prosperous land until the day when a man of great evil found the golden power and took it for himself. With its strength at his command, he spread darkness across the kingdom.

But then, when all hope had died, a young boy clothed in green appeared as if from nowhere.

Wielding the blade of evil's bane, the boy sealed away darkness and delivered light to the land. This boy, who traveled through time to save the land, was known as the Hero of Time. The boy's tale was passed down through generations until it became legend.

Does this sound familiar to you? If not, put down this newspaper and proceed immediately to your nearest gaming store to purchase *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* for either the Nintendo 64 or the Nintendo Gamecube (this version is also playable on the Nintendo Wii).

Ocarina of Time is universally recognized as the greatest game ever made by almost all reviewers. Despite being released in late November, the game's total sales were higher than that of any other game in 1998 and most importantly, *Ocarina of Time* was the first game

to ever get a perfect score from *Famitsu*.

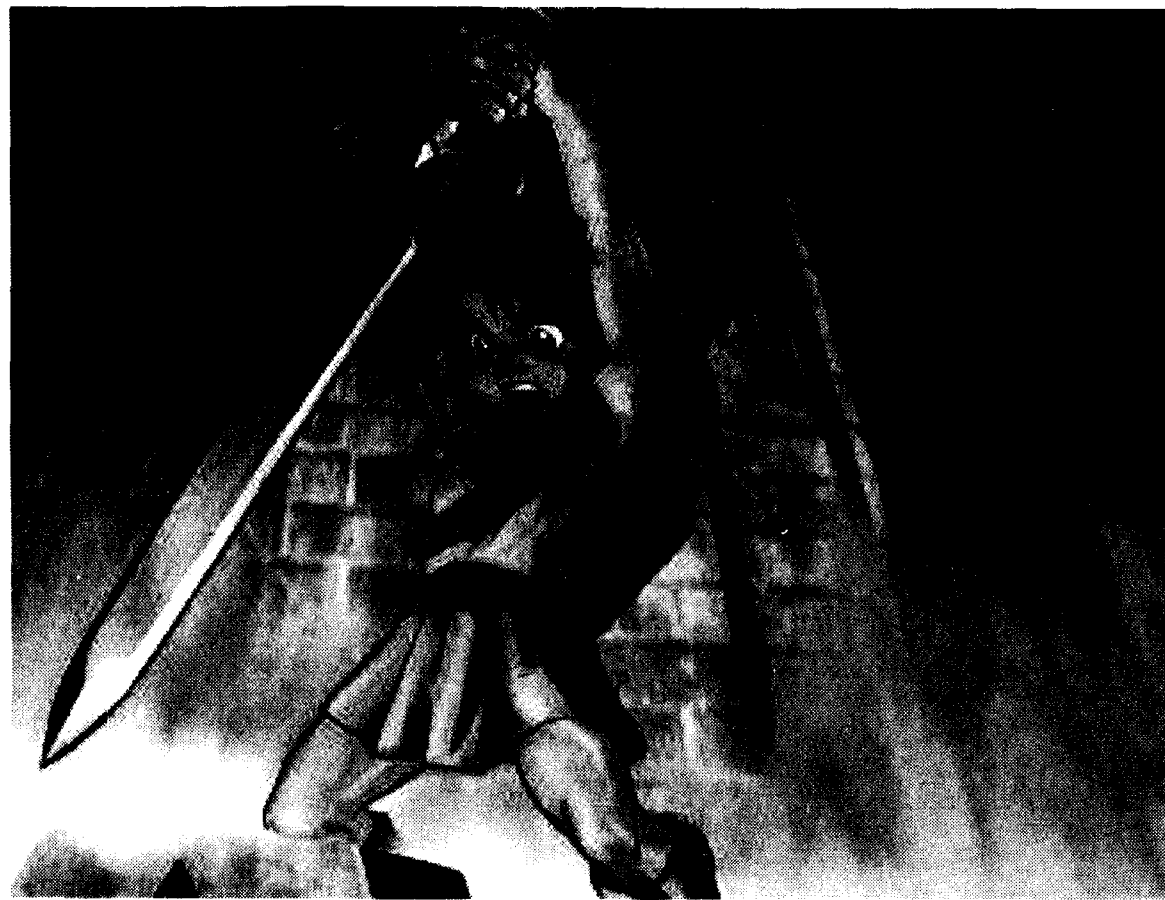
As people who have beaten *Ocarina of Time* are aware, Link the Hero of Time split time in two in order to seal away the evil Ganondorf at the end of the game.

Once Ganondorf was removed from time itself, Link traveled to the untainted past. In this past, he went on many other adventures and fought great evil in the lands of Hyrule and Termina. However, in the dark future he left behind (or more technically, forever ahead of him), Ganondorf was able to escape from the dark realm he was sealed in and he flooded the world with water.

The people believed that the Hero of Time would once again come to save them, but the Hero did not appear.

Thus a new hero, also named Link, took up the mantle of the first Link. This new hero was known as the Hero of Winds.

After much effort, and help from a dysfunctional pirate crew, the Hero of Winds managed to put a more permanent end to Ganondorf



Zelda, a video game staple, has been around since 1998 and offers entertainment for the masses. Photo Courtesy of Google.com

than his predecessor...by plunging a sword straight through his skull. The story of the Hero of the Winds is chronicled in the game *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker*.

Now that you have some backstory, let me get into what I really want to discuss in this article:

Nintendo's latest installment of the Zelda franchise, *The Legend of Zelda: The Phantom Hourglass*.

Picking up where *The Wind Waker* left off, the Phantom Hourglass continues the adventures of the Hero of Winds. The first aspect of the game that strikes the player is

the quality of the graphics.

I feel confident in saying that *The Phantom Hourglass* has the best graphics I have ever seen on a handheld system. Not only are the characters and environment beautifully cell-shaded, but the graphics load so smoothly that there is no time for a loading screen to appear.

As expected of Zelda games, the music throughout *The Phantom Hourglass* is very good and fitting in most stages. However, I would be lying if I said the

music quality is as great as that of *Ocarina of Time* or even its sequel *Majora's Mask*.

The Phantom Hourglass uses the Nintendo DS's revolutionary stylus controller, which definitely takes some getting used to.

If you have trouble getting used to the game's controls, try going back and practicing on earlier stages. Trust me, it's worth the effort!

The Phantom Hourglass, like in any Zelda game, has its fair share of puzzles and dungeons. My primary complaint about this game is how straightforward and simple these are.

I realize that Zelda games are designed for people of all ages to enjoy. However, I imagine that even most 5-year-olds would find this game's puzzles repetitive and redundant (and you need to go through a lot of them).

It is of no help that, of all the great music themes in the game, the dungeon theme is one of the worst as it repeats over and over like the puzzles themselves.

Thankfully, the numerous bosses throughout the game are much more imaginative than the dungeons they rest in and the theme for the bosses is different than for the rest of the dungeon. Also, unlike in some Zelda games, you will be spending most of your time in the over-world.

In this game, that is a very good thing. Because of how new *The Phantom Hourglass* is, I will not be going over its story, but I will say that there are some very interesting surprises.

I highly recommend that you play through it and see for yourself.

New role playing game comes at a steep price, but is worth the cost

By **MATTHEW MAHONEY**
Columnist
MLM5039@PSU.EDU

World of Warcraft (WoW) has become the dominant Massive Multi-player Online Role Playing Game (MMORPG) of our time, but there are a handful of titles coming up that could make converts out of some WoW players.

WoW just made headlines recently by tipping the scales at over 9 million players around the world. While no one thinks that WoW players will leave in mass droves some new titles coming out may seriously slow the number of new players that sign up for WoW.

Richard Garriott's *Tabula Rasa* is a new MMO set to come out within the next couple weeks. *Tabula Rasa* has been met with delays in its release, but according to the developers at NCsoft this was done to fix server problems and ensure that gamers would have a fun gaming experience.

One of the key differences between *Tabula Rasa* and many other MMORPGs on the market today is that the combat system for *Tabula Rasa* is done in real-time. It is geared more as a shooter game rather than a one click "whack-

a-mole" style of today's online gaming.

The game still uses behind the scenes "dice throws", or for the more mathematically inclined a series of permutations and statistics done at random to determine the amount of damage given and received. Cover, concealment, stance, ammo type, weapon type, and basic abilities are taken into account.

The game features a variety of classes and areas of expertise so players can specialize as they see fit. While the game doesn't seek to destroy the mold set by MMOs previously it does seek to greatly expand on it and provide new angles.

The beta of *Tabula Rasa* will have ended at the time of this paper's publication, but that only means that the full game will soon be available to everyone.

The downside is nothing small though. To run this game at its full potential a player will need a near "Super Rig". The basic requirements include 2.5 GHz processor, 512 MB RAM, and 128 MB Video card with an NVIDIA 5700 or ATI 9600 chipset. The recommended go higher and then some weighing in at 3.5 GHz

processor, 2 GB RAM, and an ATI x1800 or NVIDIA 7800 series chipset video card.

The cost isn't cheap either. The game itself has a price tag of \$50. Then there is a \$15 per month fee,

or \$180 for the entire year. Good online gaming does not come cheap in the world of MMOs.

The biggest difference *Tabula Rasa* offers gamers, compared to other MMOs of today, is a science

fiction back-story that many claim is unrivaled in the MMO industry. Narrative is quickly becoming a key selling point of many games, but unfortunately so has graphics as witnessed by the immense power needed by a PC to run this game in its full glory.

And the term PC is used for a reason. Macintosh users, unless they are running Boot Camp, will be missing out on the adventure.

Another MMO slated to come out, with much anticipation, is the game *Agent*, developed by Sony. Not too many details have been released about this game considering that it is still in development and hasn't even hit Beta yet. This is another real time shooter-style MMO that offers a new twist on combat in game play.

Some fans may be turned off by this game purely for the fact that it is Sony made. Recent follies surrounding the PS3 and PSP slim have turned American Consumers off to the notion of Sony video game products, but this new MMO looks to be interesting.

If it turns out anything like what they are touting then we can expect to see some high paced, high octane online gaming on a massive level.

This game will also require a serious hardware upgrade to play. The specs have yet to be released, but expect Sony to give gamers a run for their money as they load every possible byte of information they can into this game.

The interesting characteristic to *Agent* is that it claims the need for people to act within their class structure. If a player chooses to be a spy then they will need to be stealthy.

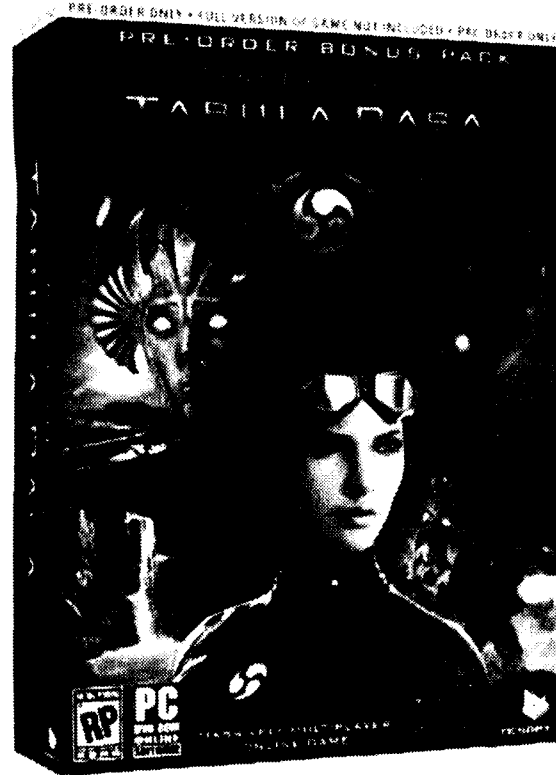
If they choose to be a mercenary then the player will need to be an out right fighter.

The game also has an unprecedented NPC aiding system. A player can recruit NPCs to do things on the side for them. Such as gather ammo, scrounge for gear, find money, and a host of other things to make your campaigning easier.

Either way the MMO market has been and will continue to be flooded. It will be next to impossible to ever take down the beast that is WoW,

but there are some new games off on the horizon that look promising for an adventure or two.

Just be sure not to sell a kidney for upgrade money in your zeal to play them all.



Although it is popular, WOW comes at a hefty price. Photo courtesy of Google.com



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