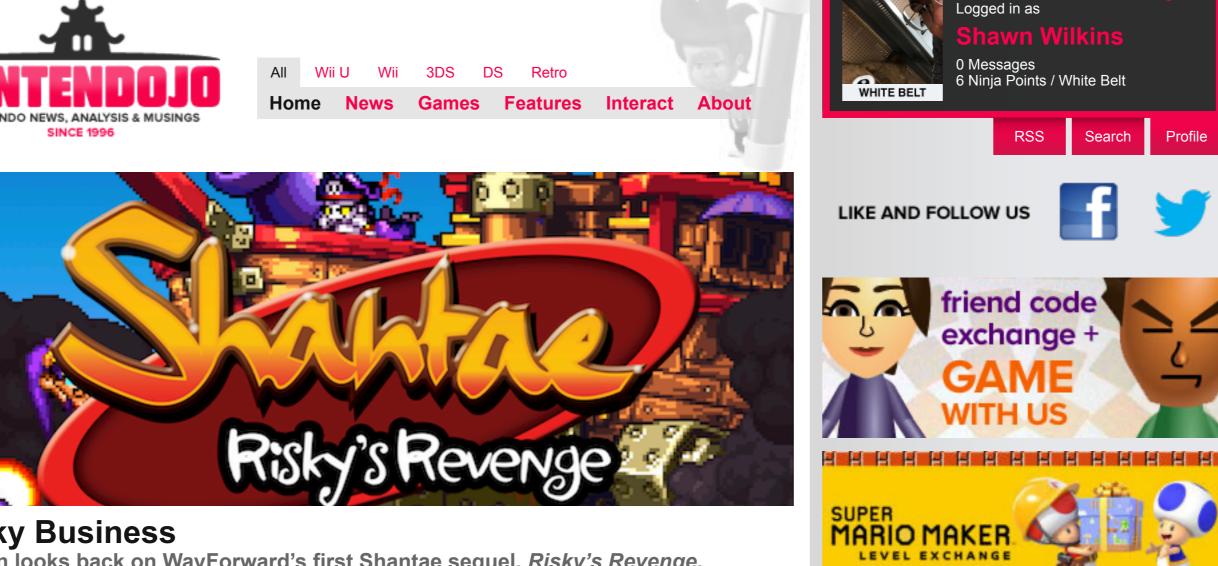
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**Risky Business** 

Shawn looks back on WayForward's first Shantae sequel, Risky's Revenge. By Shawn Wilkins. Posted 08/13/2015 09:00 1 Comment

Finding good and worthwhile DSiWare games is a challenge for most, and an immense grievance for others. However, the games that really shine are truly diamonds among a bleak canvas. So few games got exposure with DSi's incredibly small lifetime, so finding a game that is worthwhile may be a difficult, but all-in-all rewarding experience.

A game that truly resonates with the ideals of good gaming while paying excellent homage to the past is Shantae: Risky's Revenge. While the game is well-known to people who strive to find decent independent games, let alone excellent sidescrollers, its entire series has always been a part of a narrow niche. The first game sold horribly and didn't find much life on shelves as retailers were anxious to have it there in the first place. In wasn't until years later that the game developed a cult following by the devout consumers of WayForward. While the Game Boy Color game really placed a high bar that couldn't be reached by most games, it was never acknowledged during its prime. Being released a full year after the launch of Game Boy Advance didn't help much either. Even though it has what could be classified as enhanced features when played on a Game Boy Advance, the feeling of buying an old game for new hardware was something people avoided.

Shantae, the series, is about a half-genie girl living in a world where she has to fight things ranging from exotic birds to half-dead zombies. The overall plot of the games stretches from simply trying to retrieve a steam engine to trying to gain her powers back. While the series has always placed its focus on pure gameplay, with a story that only progresses after a line or two of dialogue, the real seal of approval is found in its art.

After the first Shantae, WayForward tried desperately to make a sequel. Throughout the years, we were teased with a potential GBA title, Risky Revolution, and a DS title, Risky's Waters. Neither of these games saw daylight. However, in 2009, we had full confirmation that a sequel was coming out to Nintendo's new experimental web-service, DSiWare. This game was Risky's Revenge and while it was well received by fans far and wide, anyone who doesn't care for the series

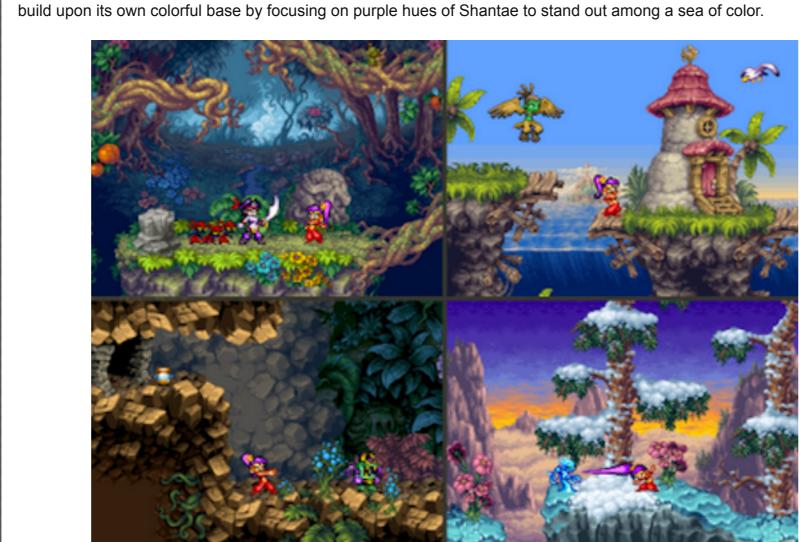


Risky's Revenge is a game from an era where Nintendo was trying to grab hold of independent developers and allow them to produce content for a service that had always been depicted as lackluster. Although, with WayForward mission to put its best effort out with the Shantae series, being bound to DSiWare was nothing for the developer to find fault in. Nintendo has always made sure its games are vibrant, colorful, and beyond gorgeous when it comes to artwork. The same goes for WayForward and Risky's Revenge. You can't find a single moment in this game where it's always aweinspiring at how well colors flow with each other and how the pixel-bound artwork finds itself taking a stand above it all. The enemies cling to trees, pulsating with their movements. The characters flow back and forth while managing to stay still during dialogue. Even Shantae finds herself jumping in unorthodox ways in order to exemplify the extent to which WayForward has thought about the amount of detail in such a niche game.

Risky's Revenge made people realize that DSiWare is not a service to mock, but one to truly delve into in order to find classics like this. While the game did see re-releases on Steam and iOS years later, it's only because the original did



Shantae on Game Boy Color was a moment in gaming that we don't see often in other areas. GBC was a console that was made primarily to take the existing concept of the Game Boy and simply add color. The differences in some games are well-executed and visible, like with Pokémon Crystal compared to Pokémon Gold, but some are less than stellar. However, Shantae, being its own standalone game, made sure to take advantage of not only the overall hardware improvements, but the encompassing enjoyment found in playing a game that is engulfed by colors of various arrays. The same goes for the sequel. Risky's Revenge is a game that takes its homage of the pixel sidescrolling era to the highest extent. The look of the game is one that rivals that of a Super NES title like Super Metroid, but it manages to

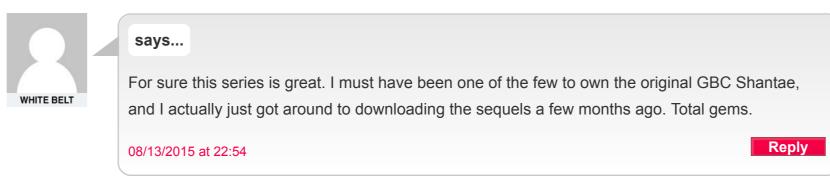


Gameplay is something that is rivaled only by the intense looks of the game. However, when you see Shantae whip her hair to kill a one-eyed spider that shoots slow-motion energy balls at her, you can't help but wonder where the idea came from. Like Mario before it, and Mega Man after that, the core gameplay isn't new, but the ideas behind the game and how you interact with everything revolving around it are. No other game offers a spin on zombies that makes them seem comical and foolish as Shantae does. You find yourself using them for your benefit at times, while at others you'll know that staying away is your best bet. Risky's Revenge capitalizes on not only the color and brilliance of the gameplay, but the intricacies in the game's core to make it stand out. Pixel-based art, gameplay that is progressed by small ticks of dialogue, and taking control of a girl who is out to protect her town because it's literally her job to do so. It's an empowering tale of how a game can take an idea from "this would be cool" to "this is what cool is" in a short span of

Risky's Revenge eventually led to Pirate's Curse, which is definitely a favorite game of many. Pirate's Curse has updated elements, some HD graphics, and is available on Wii U, but the previous entry set a standard. Risky's Revenge took a service like DSiWare to its quintessential peak. With such a short-lived existence before 3DS and the eShop took over Risky's Revenge made sure that it went in and came out not only as one of the best offerings WayForward out

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