

Lost in America

Japan's most outrageous games get softened for our shores. **BY BOB STRAUSS**

FORGET THEORY Z economics, Godzilla movies, and karaoke. Want to know what's really different about Japanese culture? It's the video games, which often undergo some revealing (and little-known) changes before hitting America. Here's a critical look at some of the

idiosyncratic games that are brightening video screens in the Land of the Rising Sun, as well as a peek into how the games have been altered for American consumption. (The Japanese versions can be found in some specialty shops, and require an adapter for use with U.S. systems.)

FINAL FIGHT



AT VARIOUS points in this brutal but fun combat game, the hero—either a karate black belt or an apparently steroid-pumped wrestler—head-butts, sucker-punches, or otherwise wreaks havoc on lithe female villains as well as the usual array of male opponents. (Capcom, for Nintendo Super Famicom)

THE (WHITE) hero still gets to whale on the bad guys—many of whom appear to be black—but the women have been replaced by colorful male punks. According to Capcom USA: "Industry standards for game content vary as we cross cultural boundaries." (Capcom USA, for Super Nintendo Entertainment System)

JOE & MAC



BEFORE YOU even press "start," four cavemen march into a thatched hut, accompanied by the sound of women screaming. The hut shakes suggestively for a couple of seconds—then the men emerge, dragging a bunch of cavewomen by the hair and looking *very* satisfied. (Data East, for Super Famicom)

ALL THAT'S pictured during the initial display are abandoned huts that quickly fade into the title screen, allowing players to commence the cartoony prehistoric action. Data East USA: "We didn't want kids to see [the Japanese display] and think it was okay." (Data East USA, for Super NES)

D.J. BOY



AT THE END of the first stage of this juvenile action game, the skateboard-riding, kickboxing hero fights an obese black woman who stops periodically to break wind on him. All this takes place in a bizarre Japanese conception of an American inner city. (Kaneko, for Sega Mega Drive)

D.J. BOY *still* battles an enormous black woman, only here she's a few shades lighter and no longer has a fondness for flatulence. Kaneko USA: "[The Japanese programmers of the U.S. version] were looking for input, and obviously they got it from the wrong people." (Kaneko USA, for Sega Genesis)

BONK'S REVENGE



WHEN HE EATS certain pieces of meat, the pint-size protagonist sprouts long lashes, affects a fey, doe-eyed expression, and blows heart-shaped kisses at his male enemies, who then turn into stone. This game is known in Japan as Pithecanthropus Computerurus 2. (Hudson Soft, for NEC PC Engine)

WHEN HE EATS certain pieces of meat, a butch, scowling Bonk blows steam out of his ears and pulverizes foes with his enlarged noggin. (A Turbo Technologies spokesman, previously unaware of this alteration, laughed too hard to offer any intelligible comment.) (Turbo Technologies, for TurboGrafx-16)