



Poor old Wonderboy. First off, his girlfriend gets kidnapped by an evil demon, then a dragon king threatens to destroy his people. After that he gets transformed into a small dragonette and has to fight the dragon king again to regain his human form. Now he's got back to his village to find - guess what - it's been overrun by evil monsters from the north! Aaaagh!

Still, he's still got all his sword-swinging platform-jumping abilities intact, and you can be sure he'll be using them to their full extent in this, the fifth installment of the Wonderboy saga.



▲ Wonderboy versus Miconid!



CHAT EVERYONE UP

The most significant advancement made by Wonderboy is his conversational ability. Talking to people around the village is as essential to his progress as handling his chopper. For starters, there are many shops along his travels which allow him to equip himself with far better gear than the piffling amount he begins with. Then there are a important clues as to the whereabouts of items, spells or people who can help him which are only revealed by talking to the right people. The simple rule is talk to everyone.



SAVE GAME



Wonderboy in Monster Land is a big game. So much so that it comes with a battery back-up, so that you can save your game and continue later. This is done by visiting the inn in the village. Spend the night there and not only is your energy fully replenished but you're offered the option of saving your game.

WONDERBOY IN MONSTERLAND

▼ An epic confrontation between boy and monster!



▲ Use your magic here!

Wonderboy's other new skill is his mastery of magic. Wonderboy has learned to cast a number of spells - namely Firestorm, Thunder, Quake, Power, Shield and Return. The first three are offensive spells used to damage opponents, Shield guards Wonderboy for a short time, Power restores damage done to the youngster and Return is a special spell whose use only becomes apparent at a later stage in the game...



QUEENS AND FAIRIES

Wonderboy isn't alone in his quest. Should he meet the Queen Elenora of the Cloud Kingdom, she dispatches one of her fairies to go with him and help out. She does this by, er, hovering over monsters' heads and casting twinkling lights around them. Really useful. However, she does, at random intervals, drop life-up hearts in Wonderboy's path, allowing him to restore his flagging energy bar.



COMMENT



RAD

I was quite disappointed with Wonderboy in Monster Land when we got the Japanese version in a couple of months ago. It's quite easy to see why, now, as the masses of Japanese text meant that a lot of important clues were overlooked and the game was rendered completely unplayable. As you may expect, the official English version doesn't have this problem, so how does it fare against the multitude of other Megadrive platform games? To start with, the graphics are nice, the sprites and backgrounds are highly colourful and detailed, although the animation leaves something to be desired. The sound is laughably limp with a pseudo-tune lispng its way along to the accompaniment of some weak effects. Fortunately Wonderboy is very playable. The platform element is quite simplistic when placed against the likes of, say Sonic or Robocod, but the puzzle/role-playing elements are absorbing and enjoyable. Wonderboy is also pretty big, you're certainly going to need the battery back-up if you want to complete the game. If you're a bit bored of the same old platform stuff or you don't want a full-blown RPG, Wonderboy is a recommended purchase.

COMMENT



Although the graphics aren't brilliant and the sound falls woefully short of the standards you'd normally expect from the Megadrive, Wonderboy in Monster Land is

JULIAN both absorbing and addictive - all thanks to the marvellous playability. The challenging platform action and the tricky but logical puzzles combine together with the game's enormous size to give massive depth of gameplay. There's tons to discover, and the game's many original features and novel concepts keep you playing just to see what's around the next corner. If you're looking for a platform game that'll keep you playing for weeks rather than days, this should be put at the top of your list.



▲ Each character in the game has a unique line of conversation.

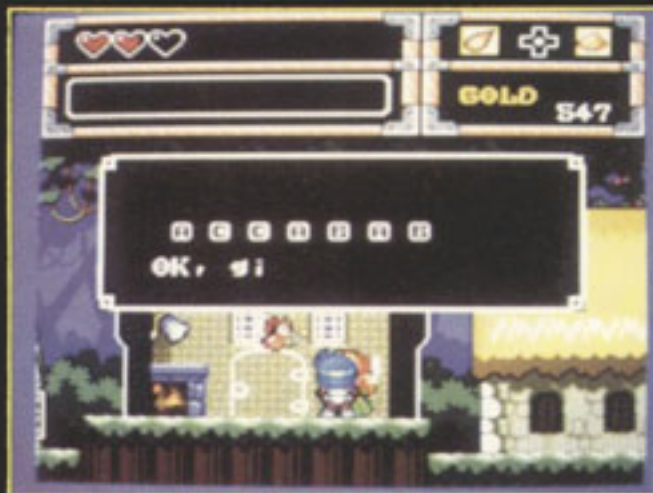


▲ Wonderboy gets toolled up



HOW TO PLAY WITH YOUR THING

Easily the most important character to take notice of is Sonia, found in her house in the village. Not only does she reveal the whereabouts of Queen Elenora but she also gives the location of the essential musical instrument used to open doors in the monster hideout and she teaches you how to play the thing!



BY: SEGA
PRICE: £TBA
 RELEASE DATE: TBA
 GAME DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM
 LIVES: 1
 CONTINUES: SAVED GAMES
 SKILL LEVELS: 1
 RESPONSIVENESS: GOOD



PRESENTATION 80%

No options, but the in-game presentation is excellent.

GRAPHICS 78%

Chunky, colourful sprites and backgrounds. The scrolling is smooth, but the animation is poor.

SOUND 53%

Oh dear. The tune is feeble and pathetic to say the least, and the effects follow suit in their ghastliness.

PLAYABILITY 87%

Absorbing and involving puzzle elements go along with Wonderboy-style platform action to make this instantly interesting.

LASTABILITY 89%

Some of the puzzles take a bit of work to solve, and there's enough of them to ensure Wonderboy won't be completed in a hurry.

OVERALL 88%

An interesting and intriguing meld of puzzle, role-playing and platform action which should keep Wonderboy fans happy for weeks.