



(Sorry that's the only banner I could find that'd work)

(Editor's note: I was gonna wait till tomorrow to post this, but I thought it was just gonna get lost in all the E3 epicness, so I tossed it up on monday.)

Continuing my month-long look at the BEMANI series, this week I'll be taking a look at the **ORIGINAL**

band simulation games, Guitar Freaks & drummania! For those of you today who have played the hell out of games like Guitar Hero and ROCKBAND, these games by Konami actually beat GH by about seven years. Hit the jump to read the details on these ground-breaking music games!

Of course, anyone who's ever played any of the other music games should be familiar with Guitar Freaks' premise - Select a song, and using the plastic guitar, hold down one of the three colored fret buttons and strum the simulated 'picking lever' to play along with the music. Additional bonus points can be obtained by hitting the 'Wailing Bonus' icons, little guitars that scroll up the screen. To hit these, tilt the neck vertically and if you time it right 'WAILING BONUS!!!' will appear up the column on the side and the crowd will cheer!

And before you even reply to say anything I already know what you're thinking, 'Only three buttons? Man I've five-starred Dragonforce's Through The Fire and the Flames on expert, that shit sounds uber-easy!!!' Trust me -- it isn't. The timing windows are definitely super-tight, so unless you're hitting the notes perfectly (or at least near-perfectly) you're not going to survive the song. *Additionally*, if you wind up strumming the lever or trying to hit a note that isn't there, you'll break your combo and lose a chunk of your life gauge. So in that respect Guitar Freaks is definitely a lot less forgiving than either ROCKBAND or Guitar Hero.

Retro Rearview: Guitar Freaks & drummania

Written by DarkTetsuya

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Speaking of the music, well it would certainly have a harder time making it big over here (*Then again, even the unofficial US version, Rock Revolution didn't exactly fare so well, and it was more covers and less in-house stuff*

) with all the in-house tracks, as awesome as they are (FIRE being my favorite Guitadora song EVAR.) they probably wouldn't resonate with US audiences. Luckily there were a handful of familiar covers of songs (like if memory serves, one of the games had a cover of Guns 'n Roses hair-metal classic, Welcome to the Jungle) It also had quite a few Japanese licenses, like a (admittedly very awesome) cover of Gackt's 'Another World' (another one of my personal favorites)

A few months later, Konami released drummania (yes all lowercase, must've had a thing for k.d. lang, I dunno) to arcades. Similar in style to Guitar Freaks, only you played on a full-size MIDI drumkit. For those that haven't had any actual prior drumming experience (like me) the game can be *extremely* challenging, way more so than Guitar Freaks or even ROCKBAND's simplified four drums+kick pedal setup.

Also released around the same time, was Guitar Freaks 2nd MIX. What really set this one apart from the original, was you could actually link up with the first drummania machine, and one or two players could play on guitar, and one player would sit over on the drummania machine, and play the exact same song's drum track! Sure it's commonplace now with Guitar Hero and ROCKBAND, but back in 1999-early 2000s it was more or less unheard of!

As if that weren't enough, when Konami released Keyboardmania 3rd mix in early 2001, (Almost ten years before ROCKBAND 3 did keyboards!) it could join in a session with Guitar Freaks 5th MIX and drummania 4th MIX! The five-player uber-sessions this game created, were in a word.... EPIC. (*OLR hostess DarkSakura actually found this video, someone had all three games in his basement/garage!*):

(*Even though this was only a 3 player session, its still pretty fuckin' epic.*)

And if you want to hear more about *Keyboardmania*, it was actually spotlighted in 'Classic

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Game of the Week' on OLR's 368th episode (which was pre-taped, but still brings the lulz) so go check it out if you haven't heard yet!

As for GF/dm, there were several home versions released for PSX (GF only) and PS2:

PSX:

- Guitar Freaks
- Guitar Freaks 2nd MIX Append (much like the beatmania appends from week one, this was like an expansion for the original game featuring many new songs from GF 2nd MIX.)

PS2: (*Which was interesting because not all of the GF/dm pairs had home conversions, so there were a couple of 'best-of' compilations to pick up the slack*)

- drummania (3/2000)
 - GF3rd/dm2nd (12/2000)
 - ギタドラ! (*GuitaDora*, more of that leet Japanese shorthand Konami is so fond of)
- GITARFREAKS 4th MIX & drummania 3rd MIX (9/2001)
- GFV/dmV (3/2006) - so the PS2 went five freaking years without a new GF/dm combo.
 - GF/dm MASTERPIECE SILVER (8/2006) - One of two 'best of' collections, featured many songs from GF5th-11th and dm4th-10th)
 - GF/dm V2 (11/2006)
 - GF/dm MASTERPIECE GOLD (3/2007) The 2nd compilation disc, featuring even more of your fave GF/dm tracks from the versions that never got a home port.
 - GF/dm V3 (10/2007)

I won't list all the arcade ones, but the series went all the way up to 11/10 before they released Guitar Freaks/drummania V, so that way drummania no longer had to be one mix behind. It certainly alleviated confusion as to whether or not particular versions could link-up or not. And even more recently, after six 'V' installments, Konami has been location testing an all-new

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version of GF/dm, called 'XG'. What's interesting about the XG games is it adds two more frets to the guitar, and even more drums for the drummer (I don't have an exact count offhand, I just know it's more than regular drummania.)

Interestingly, around the same time XG was announced, Konami also revealed they'd be releasing GF/dm V7. Basically from the looks of it, it's going to mirror the XG games as far as interface and songlist are concerned, but it'll be a special kit for the standard GF/dm cabinets, for those arcades that wanted the new songs, but didn't want to shell out the big bucks for the uber-deluxe cabinets.

Unfortunately, just like IIDX last week, there haven't been any new versions of GuitaDora announced since the release of V3, so unless Konami is planning a next-gen version for PS3/360 (which would definitely be nice, with likely compatibility with the GH/RB guitars and drums, oh and no region locks on the PS3 version!) it looks like the series is going to be orphaned, just like IIDX appears to have been.

As for a series that hasn't been orphaned (as of yet) get ready to tune in next week! In celebration of Orange Lounge Radio's *eighth* anniversary, I'm taking a look at the main game that we all started on,

DANCE DANCE

REVOLUTION

! You really

don't want to miss this one it's going to be EPIC.