

A **Snowball** NETWORK

Search Web

Categories/Services

ign.com | personalize / my.ign | email | win stuff

click here for free game guides



April 3, 2001



Today's Hot Buy



#### Rio 600 MP3 Player

The 600 sounds fantastic and for around \$170.00 it's a great deal. [Find Lowest Price](#)

#### Other Partners:

[NFL Lifestyle](#)  
[Video Messaging](#)



### sections

News  
Games  
Reviews  
Previews  
Features  
DVD Movies  
Hardware  
Guides  
Codes  
Release Dates  
Editors' Choice  
Gamestore  
Trade PS2  
Letters  
Q & A  
Chat  
Boards  
Email Us

### entertainment

Movies  
DVD  
Sci-Fi  
Comics  
Anime  
TV  
Wrestling  
ForMen  
Babes  
Cars  
Gear  
Dating

### games

Videogames  
GameCube  
Nintendo 64  
PlayStation 2  
PlayStation  
Dreamcast  
Handhelds  
Xbox  
PC games  
RPG Vault  
Action Vault  
Codes  
Guides  
Online Games

» send this story to a friend

» chat about it

» post a message

PS2 &gt; reviews &gt; Unison

## Unison

### Three girls and an afro save the world rather cheesily in Tecmo's great dancing game.

April 3, 2001

When I first heard that Tecmo was bringing Unison out to the United States, I thought, "What the hell are they thinking?" As dancing games go, it's got a great system, catchy tunes, great graphics, and the infamous Tecmo "bounce" (Dead or Alive fans, you know what I'm talking about). But it's also incredibly Japanese-specific. The songs and costumes were classic J-pop mixtures of sexy/innocent, you had a bad guy who sat on a duck portapotty, an effeminate white guy with an afro, and probably 30 minutes or so of Japanese speech. A total conversion would be tremendously difficult and expensive, so I knew Tecmo would have to make some compromises along the way.

And man, it compromised a lot. They've changed the soundtrack, the moves, the voice acting, and even the gameplay. In fact, if it weren't for the fact that the storyline and the graphics are the same, I'd think this was an entirely different game. Still fun, just totally different.

## Presentation



Freak out! Le Freak, tres chic...



#### Game Info

**Publisher**  
Tecmo

**Developer**  
Tecmo

**Genre**  
Action

**Origin**  
Japan

**Number of Players**  
3

**Release**  
March 2001

IGN.com  
Affiliates  
Feedback  
Link to Us  
Site Map  
Site FAQ  
Staff

community 1

Log In/  
Register  
Email  
Newsletter  
Chat  
Voice Chat  
Boards  
Video  
Messaging

shopping 1

New Games  
Shop IGN  
Apparel  
Software  
Music  
Books

About the only thing that remains the same in both versions is the storyline. 200 years into the future, the world is ruled by Ducker, who, as the name suggests, likes ducks. Aside from having a headquarters resembling a duck's head, he surrounds himself with robotic mallards and rules the entertainment world with an iron fist. Dancing is forbidden, and those found shaking booty are severely punished.



Hot polygonal dancers get down in a bizarre 3D world...just go with the flow, man.

Enter Dance Doctor, a lavender-clad dance master that looks like something straight out of the 70s. He leads three girls - sort of a futuristic version of the Spice girls to bring dancing back to the world and overthrow Ducker.

It may sound cheesy, but it works. Tecmo's 2D and 3D design is ultra retro/hip, combining campy 70s sci-fi/action/comedy plots and cutting-edge design so successfully you can almost believe that dancing could save the world. The only thing - and it's a big thing - is that Tecmo has redubbed all the original Japanese dialogue into English, and it suffers, since the voice acting is incompetent at best. Thankfully, the gameplay more than makes up for it.

## Gameplay

Like all dance games, Unison is essentially a "Simon Says" game. You move both analog sticks to follow a pre-arranged pattern on the beat and you're graded on how well you follow the original choreography. Where Unison's unique, though, is that it's the first to use the analog sticks instead of the d-pad and buttons, and the first to choreograph an entire song. In other words, unlike games like Dance Dance Revolution or Bust a Groove, what you're doing with your controller directly corresponds to what you see on screen. It takes a bit of getting used to, but this is the only game where I really feel like I'm dancing instead of following directions.

That's also because the game's flow also resembles the real experience. Generally, each level consists of a learning phase where Dance Doctor shows off the routine - you can move along with his steps to learn the moves. Then you get tested on the routine. If you pass, then you can move onto the actual show, where you have one chance to do the routine right, or your career, and the game, is over. Unfortunately, the American version has stripped out Doctor Dance's voice and defaults to teaching the entire routine at one time. Without his support or teaching the player to learn in small chunks, it can be a little overwhelming.

Sounds hard, but the American version is incredibly easy, compared to the original Japanese system. The original

Japanese choreography had you using the the full range of the analog sticks - circles, arcs, diagonals, etc. If Chilly waved, you waved. The American version only uses the four cardinal directions, which really limits the player's connection to the characters on screen. Also, the Japanese version left the handy dandy analog stick indicators in training mode. Once you were on the broadcast, you had to dance from memory - much like real life. The American version always has the analog routine icons on, even in the final performance.

That being said, the American version's all-new choreography works very well in four directions, since much of the new dance routines don't rely that much on elaborate hand movements, and if you really want to test yourself, you can turn off the indicators.

## Graphics

Graphically, Unison has the best graphics ever seen in a dancing game. What did you expect from the guys who brought you Dead or Alive 2? The DOA breast bounce (or "chest tremor," as it's called by the Japanese) is alive and kicking, the girls are cute, and Dance Doctor's afro has a physics system that must be seen to be believed. The 3D is impeccable, and while not incredibly detailed, the look is perfect.

As to be expected by Tecmo's frisky artists, the girls' character designs are top notch. Each stage in the story mode has unique costumes - ranging from bare-midriff US flag costumes to Japanese kimonos, snow bunny outfits, and my personal favorite, leotards and leg warmers. The stages are also well-designed - each one has its own unique design aesthetic true to itself down to the last detail. Unfortunately, the stages are all designed for the original Japanese songs, so it's strange to see girls in frilly dresses and skirts shaking their rump to Aqua's Barbie Girl.

That's a shame, too, because the new motion-captured dances are very, very good. The routines work perfectly for the songs, and they're a pleasure to watch, since they're full-body routines considerably more sensual than the more innocent moves required by J-pop dancers. The cognitive dissonance can be jarring, so much so that sometimes I prefer to dance in training mode more than the actual level.




## Sound

There's not much to say about the sound. Almost the entire J-pop soundtrack has been replaced with American songs. Most are great dance club songs, like Aqua's Barbie Girl or the We are Family remix, and there's no doubt that Tecmo spent time making sure the moves and the music worked together. Still, when Tecmo's putting Naughty by Nature's "O.P.P." in girl-friendly game like this, you've got to raise an eyebrow or two. But overall, great songs, and a great selection.

## Comments

*Unison is tremendously dumbed down for an American audience, but it's still darn fun to play. The gameplay is almost completely different, the language dubbing is horrible, but the soundtrack is rock solid and the new motion capture is definitely hipper. If you like challenging dance games, this is one you don't want to miss.*

--Jeff Chen

<b>Presentation</b> The storyline is funny, but a lot's lost in the translation and dubbing. The graphic design and art direction are top-notch, though.	8.0
<b>Graphics</b> As usual, Tecmo's graphics are nearly flawless and well-designed, and the new motion-capture is great. Unfortunately, J-pop graphics and hip-hop sound don't mesh too well.	8.5
<b>Sound</b> Aside from the horrible dubbing (which only exists in single-player mode), the soundtrack is top notch. With the exception of YMCA, they're all cutting edge songs or remixes of older disco tunes.	9.0
<b>Gameplay</b> The routines are simpler, but they're still challenging, and the slightly different philosophy works surprisingly well. However, the new game flow changes make it harder to master.	8.0
<b>Lasting Appeal</b> There's plenty of stuff to unlock in Club Unison, so dance fans will definitely want to finish the single-player mode, and the songs are always worth another time through.	8.5
<b>OVERALL SCORE</b> (not an average)	<b>8.3</b>
  	

» [send this story to a friend](#)

» [chat about it](#)

» [post a message](#)

### Current Media

#### images

- ['Scuse me?](#)
- [All hail the afro!](#)
- [Bumbling henchmen](#)
- [Citadel of anti-dancing evil](#)
- [Hordes of faceless minions!](#)
- [Killer lightshow](#)
- [Nice place to live](#)
- [Sensei in the DJ booth](#)
- [Stars and stripes](#)

#### movies

- [The classic moves](#) 1406K
- [Training sequence](#) 3322K
- [YMCA part 1](#) 4515K
- [YMCA part 2 - young man!](#) 5362K



### Archived Media

#### images

- [Bust a move](#)
- [Eeensy-weensy box art](#)

#### movies

- [Afro-sensei shows his moves](#) 4428K
- [Evil geniosity](#) 5245K

- I'm blinded!
- Nice tattoo
- Pirouette
- Psychedelic
- Throw ya  
transparencies in the air
- Get up on the stage 2882K
- Man, I suck at this game... 4706K
- RIGHTEOUS AFRO CLUB
- DANCING ACTION~! 4439K
- SUPER DANCE UNIT 5658K
- TGS Video 1725K
- Who is this "Unison"? 4620K

---

## Sponsored Links

[Free Cell Phone from IGN Wireless](#)

---



© 2001 Snowball.com, Inc. All rights reserved.  
[about us](#) | [advertise with us](#) | [become an affiliate](#) | [privacy statement](#) | [user agreement](#) | [help](#)