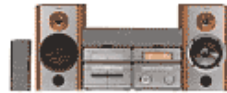
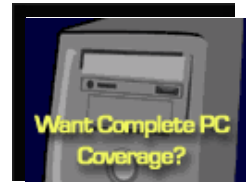




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### Unison: Rebels of Rhythm and Dance

Developer Tecmo	Publisher Tecmo	Genre Rhythm	Players 1-3	ESRB E - Everyone	Release Out Now
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Can Tecmo take these solid gold dancers to the top in Unison? Our full domestic review tells the sordid tale, with media.

Tecmo is the latest game developer to tweak the rhythm genre with Unison: Rebels of Rhythm and Dance. A lively hybrid of Sega's Space Channel 5 and SNK's Cool Cool Toon, Unison gives you another reason to keep your dancing shoes polished.



As a recovering dance junkie, I've been itching to get my hands on the domestic release of Unison for some time. Looking back over the past couple years, I realize that among my favorite titles are Samba de Amigo, Space Channel 5 and Dance Dance Revolution—all shining examples of rhythm genre joy.



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Like the aforementioned titles, Unison requires a certain ability to drop your ego and put some pep in your step. You can't excel at this kind of game if you intend to keep your cool at all times.

For example, I swore I would run in the opposite direction upon hearing a single note of Village People's "YMCA", yet here I am matching dual analog presses in time with that crappy song all for the people of Twin Ships (no, not St. Paul and Minneapolis).

As is the case with most rhythm games, you'll be breaking it out mostly when you have company over or for a few quick rounds. This isn't the kind of title like Tony Hawk's Pro Skater where you can play six hours on end. That said, it is great for a few rounds of fun. Unfortunately, while rhythm games are quite popular in Japan, they've yet to gain solid footing in the US, where we like our women always naked and our guns always smoking.

This is a shame really, because Unison is a load of fun. As Craig mentioned in our import review of Unison, this is basically Charlie's Angels in a disco hall. As Trill, Cela or Chilly, you follow the dance instruction of Doctor Dance (he's the guy with the afro made of gelatin). Your mission is to take over the airwaves and win audience approval (thank you Space Channel 5) so that dancing will once again be allowed in Twin Ships.



Emperor Ducker has forbidden dancing as it distracts from his singing and that of his protégé June Baby (who continues the tradition of Tecmo jiggly jubbies). The Emperor's henchmen Like and Y'know attempt to track Unison and stop them, but, like, y'know, they keep screwing things up for our amusement.

Using your great powers of perception you can surely tell that Unison doesn't take itself too seriously. The light-hearted approach is welcome and helps the game quite a bit. The story segments between rehearsals and performances are delightfully cheesy.

So, how's it play? Anyone familiar with Cool Cool Toon and Space Channel 5 will feel right at home. First, Doctor Dance shows you the moves in Lesson mode. Two circles on the screen represent your range of motion, with an interior circle designating the left and right analog stick position. No buttons are required during play—it's just down to your ability to memorize the dance routine and the corresponding analog stick motions.

There are three difficulty levels, dependant upon which girl your choose to control through story mode. At the lowest level the whole affair is rather simple as the scoring system is lenient and the required movements stick to up, down, left and right. As things progress you'll utilize sweeping motions reminiscent of Cool Cool Toon's control system.





You can practice all you want, focusing on one section of the dance routine or taking on the whole routine straight through in view mode. Doctor Dance busts all the moves while you simply follow the routine with your own movements in the two circles on screen representing your analog stick playfield.

Once you've got it down you try things out on your own, going through the routine without the instructor leading the way. When you're comfortable with your dancing prowess it's time to move onto Broadcast mode.

When you hijack the airwaves your two girlfriends join you to perform the routine straight through in front of a captive audience. If you fail, it's game over (you can easily restart from the beginning of the current stage). If you succeed you'll win new fan support in Twin Ships and speed toward your goal of dancing freedom.

I rather enjoy the control scheme. Using the dual analog sticks in succession is very intuitive and requires good coordination without taxing your patience like the overly complex patterns of Cool Cool Toon. The required controller input syncs well with the dance movements on screen making things feel even more natural. You feel a part of the dance routine rather than just matching random button presses.



Once you've successfully shaken your booty to a tune in story mode you'll be forever able to play through that song in Club Tecmo mode. Two friends can also join you in Club Tecmo mode (a third player will require a multi-tap) where you can blame your slow-witted, uncoordinated friend for screwing everything up for you.

Some of the major changes from the original Japanese version are the lack of voice instruction during lesson mode, translation of all voice and text and a new song set. I really miss Doctor Dance's instruction in lesson mode, not so much because it makes the game any more difficult, but it was delightfully fruity and silly hearing him blurt out phrases during the routine. You'll have to check out our original movies from the import version below to see what I mean. [See "The Love Machine" for a great example of this.]

I also miss some of the original J-pop tunes. Thankfully one of my favorites, "Night of Fire" has been preserved. Considering that all the motion capture was complete I'm a bit surprised that selections were actually removed from the game.

They'd certainly have made a fine addition to unlock through story mode at the minimum. My hat is off to Tecmo for the addition of Nelly's "Country Grammar" which is a big bonus. Also new to this version is Aqua's "Barbie Girl", Apollo 440's "Stop the Rock" and "O.P.P" from Naughty by Nature.



The song selection is nicely varied, if not entirely contemporary. "Country Grammar" is a huge coup that will extend the game's appeal beyond the pop crowd. Sound effects are all well done, focused on the cartoon sequences between gameplay.

While the lip-syncing is horrendous, suggesting the animation was never considered when English was dubbed in, the voice work itself is quite charming. The narrator between scenes is amusing and though there are oddly placed pauses in phrasing, the overall package is above average and appealing.

Unison's graphics are simple as is to be expected from a cartoon inspired art direction. However, they are beautifully rendered and save for some minor polygon shimmering and jaggies the game is a beauty to behold.

Hasegawa-san's character design is gorgeous and inventive. Ducker's duck motif is slightly insane, but thoroughly original. The girls are pretty, pleasant and feature new costume designs for each level.



The programmers have seemingly designed a unique physics model for Doctor Dance's afro. This poof of air is so huge it surely has a moon system. It manages to jiggle and roll in a rather bizarre fashion. It still can't hold a candle to the fantastic motion capture that has been carried over into the new song routines.

As a whole, Unison is consistently pretty. The Batman-style scene transitions are great. Unison's menu system is simple, attractive and effective. The manual is even beautiful and inviting with a great use of color and graphics. This is an often overlooked area, but major props go out to Tom Lee and Jun Hasunuma who are credited for the US design and packaging.

[Mike "The Mighty Shmoo" Smuland](#)

A bigger Tecmo fan by the day.

Unison: Rebels of Rhythm and Dance: The Scores					
Graphics	Sound	Gameplay	Depth	Presentation	Overall
8.0	8.0	7.5	7.0	8.5	8.0
<p><b>The Final Word:</b> Unison is a nice combination of different rhythm genre styles working together to form a consistently charming and attractive game. Newbies and the curious owe themselves at least a rental. Fans of the genre will certainly want to get a copy of this one. Like most rhythm titles it is a bit straightforward, but there are plenty of reasons to come back for more.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><a href="#">gamerweb reviews policy</a></p>					

Unison: Rebels of Rhythm and Dance Movies
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