Twitter Thread by Tom James, The Daigo Umehara of Dating Sims



Tom James, The Daigo Umehara of Dating Sims
@iiotenki



Considering this year I don't have much in the way of game translation to discuss, publicly, I'd say this was a productive year for writing threads on largely neglected and forgotten Japanese games. So if you're looking to learn about some, here's what I wrote about in 2020!

2020 was another year where I talked a *lot* of shop about dating sim history. Much of it was actual dating sims, like in some threads below, but sometimes I went on adjacent tangents, like for the cool Kojipro-developed Tokimeki Memorial adventure games: https://t.co/uUl6Pmro06

> I finished the drama CD for Shiori's route of Tokimemo Drama Vol. 3 earlier and it was sweet, but lacking. So, I'm plunging back into the world of Feeling Sad About Shiori! Maybe I'll make this a thread about all the cool ways KojiPro translated a dating sim to an adventure game? pic.twitter.com/SWXLvUwMO1
>
> — Tom James, The Daigo Umehara of Dating Sims (@iiotenki) September 2, 2020

I also went down a whole new rabbit hole for Fuuraiki, an open-ended PS1/PS2 adventure game with a cult following about traveling around the island of Hokkaido that's set to real world photography. It's a unique tangent in galge well worth exploring: https://t.co/wsZ6gJ4pwj

> So as I mentioned about a week ago, I've been digging into Fuuraiki, a late PS1 release I've been meaning to check out for years. It's an adventure game where you travel along Hokkaido on motorcycle taking photos of the scenery and writing travelogues and it's pretty rad. pic.twitter.com/uhajPmDrm9
>
> — Tom James, The Daigo Umehara of Dating Sims (@iiotenki) January 27, 2020

I also took a quick jaunt into Michinoku Hitou Koi Monogatari, a spiritual predecessor to Fuuraiki that's about traveling around Tohoku against a backdrop of mahjong matches. It's a rough draft that would get much more refined later, but still worthwhile: https://t.co/gcmCafAbyT

> It's neat as a historical curiosity and I'm glad I did it to have context for a Fuuraikai route which sees Yumi (the oneesan in purple) return, but I wouldn't call it at all essential. My main takeaways are I suck real bad at hana-awase and a stupendously dumb swan boat chase. pic.twitter.com/aRe1S4yF6o

— Tom James, The Daigo Umehara of Dating Sims (@iiotenki) October 27, 2020

In terms of actual dating sims that I covered, the focus was mainly post-Amagami games released by Kadokawa such as Photo Kano. While I think these games have MANY flaws, they do offer key insight into the state of the genre during its decade-long decline: https://t.co/M6XBKjvgGg

> Well.
>
> Let's do this again, I guess. pic.twitter.com/pLoef5uHap
>
> — Tom James, The Daigo Umehara of Dating Sims (@iiotenki) April 25, 2020

In addition to Photo Kano, I examined Reco Love, a game with as many problems in the framing and execution of its mechanics as there are in its character writing. It's a dating sim I would never recommend, but an academically interesting one nonetheless: https://t.co/r8ipi5YlXX

> Well.
>
> Time to go talk to some girls with the power of... *squints* "imaginary air hockey" in Reco Love, or whatever the hell is going on with this game's conversation system.
>
> Let's see how this goes, I guess. pic.twitter.com/2JMJHhXuU4
>
> — Tom James, The Daigo Umehara of Dating Sims (@iiotenki) May 19, 2020

And finally, some mechanically inventive RPGs I enjoyed very much. First up is Yuusha Shisu/Hero Must Die, a feature phone RPG that was eventually remade for Vita and other systems where the clock is ticking and the protagonist's strength drains over time: https://t.co/7OBq0SKePw

> So as I wrote in Japanese, I've been playing a Vita RPG called Yuusha Shisu, a remake of a flip phone game designed by Shoji Masuda (Tengai Makyo II, Oreshika, etc.) with a unique premise: you play a hero who's been revived after dying in a climactic fight with five days to live. pic.twitter.com/aAKPxUSteH
>
> — Tom James, The Daigo Umehara of Dating Sims (@iiotenki) June 22, 2020

Then there's Next King, a deeply funny, inventive board game/RPG-hybrid by acclaimed designer Shouji Masuda that cynically riffs on the tropes of dating sims and other galge that were so prevalent in the Japanese industry throughout the mid to late 1990s. https://t.co/031HvrZP6n

> So regular followers know that I've been posting about this lesser known Japanese PS1 game by the name of "Next King." But despite my general gushing, I haven't really gone into what all it actually is, exactly. So, having finished it, I figured it's time for another Tom Thread. pic.twitter.com/T7mckgLgpQ
>
> — Tom James, The Daigo Umehara of Dating Sims (@iiotenki) May 31, 2020

And finally, the thread I'm most proud of this year: a retrospective on Gunparade March for its 20th anniversary. A rare example of a Japanese RPG whose storytelling is highly systems-driven, it barely functions at times, but is endlessly fascinating: https://t.co/aoJbkwdmNp

> Gunparade March turns 20 in Japan today. A late gen PS1 RPG from Alfa System, arguably one of the most important Japanese RPG developers to have worked on the system, yet not have much of their work localized, GPM is a dense, dense game, but let's explore what makes it special. https://t.co/0oPhbDnsxy
>
> — Tom James, The Daigo Umehara of Dating Sims (@iiotenki) September 28, 2020

This is all, of course, in addition to my regular duties on the Amagami LP. It's been on another hiatus due to various life stuff going on, but the true finale of it is slowly nearing. If you want to catch up on the current arc, you can start here: https://t.co/DemkeTKAHt

> Okay, folks. I'm getting antsy and don't wanna wait any longer. So let's make it official: the final arc of the LP thread, Haruka's two main routes, officially kicks off now! Time to rekindle my oldest flame of all in this game and give her story the translation she deserves. c: pic.twitter.com/WgG8x8WnSE
>
> — Tom James, The Daigo Umehara of Dating Sims (@iiotenki) February 26, 2020

I still have plenty more to write in the hopefully not-too-distant future, especially in exploring more dating sim history. (I played Love Plus for nine months straight this year!) But hopefully these threads offer good starting points for new games and genres to explore!

I do wish I had more I could openly talk about in terms of stuff I'm working on professionally and, like I said, with any luck, 2021 will be my biggest year on that end since 2016/2017. But in the meantime, thanks for your patience and indulging these adventures I go on. c: