



■ Like a dancing pied piper, Ulala must use her infectious choreography to gather fellow Earthlings to dance and do battle with the aliens. The more people you gather, the more powerful she'll grow

■ DREAMCAST

# SPACE CHANNEL 5

■ Publisher: **Sega** ■ Developer: **Sega** ■ Release Date: **Winter (Japan), TBA (US)** ■ Origin: **Japan**

In the future, space aliens will invade — the question is, can you dance well enough to get rid of them?



You can't count the number of games based on thwarting a massive alien opposition. But have you ever had to dance to do it? That's the premise behind *Space Channel 5*, a

rhythm-action title that may be even more offbeat than *PaRappa*.

Set in the 25<sup>th</sup> century, *Space Channel 5* looks like *The Jetsons*, except the dancing and '70s Euro-groovy music smack the game with an overwhelming *Austin Powers* flavor. As a cute TV reporter named Ulala, your mission is to rid the Earth of a mysterious alien presence. Your mission is accomplished by keeping time to the music's rhythm while issuing simple commands, such as directing a shot at the aliens. Keeping time with the tunes enables Ulala to more effectively blast the aliens and build an army of people to join her. The better Ulala does, the more people fall into step with her. The scene is not unlike a typical Broadway musical, in which progressively more cast members pile onto the stage, all performing the same routine in unison.

for some of Sega AM Annex's best-playing arcade games, including *Sega Rally* and the motorcycle racing game *Manx TT*. And while the game comes from the minds of Director Takashi Yuma and Art Director Yumiko Miyabe, Mizuguchi has been responsible for making it play perfectly.

"We've changed the game system during development," Mizuguchi says. "I do not want to make a stylish game that only has a good atmosphere. The game needs

**"I do not want to make a stylish game that only has a good atmosphere. The game needs to be fun"**

Tesuya Mizuguchi, producer

■ Mizuguchi explains that it was a conscious decision to make Ulala sexy, but more through her dancing than her physical character model. We think he's done both



**Sound absurd? It is.** But if anyone can make this work, it's the title's producer, Tesuya Mizuguchi. Mizuguchi is responsible



■ There is still quite a bit of camera work being tweaked, including this segment in which Ulala shoots the aliens

# → Alphas

## BEFORE ULALA, THERE WAS BARBARELLA

Back in 1968, Jane Fonda starred as the sexy, scantily-clad Barbarella, a space vixen who knew how to have fun while saving the galaxy. The film, like the game *Space Channel 5*, doesn't take itself very seriously.



■ Ulala — shades of Barbarella? We think so

to be fun. As a producer, it is my job to check it until the last minute."

Although Mizuguchi estimates the game is only 20% complete, *Space Channel 5* is already bubbling over with stylized music and graphics that blur the lines between sci-fi and a cartoon world. And while the characters don't boast large polygon counts, the game can feature scores onstage at once, bringing an oddly theatrical aspect to this musical saga that, well, just hasn't been done before. Any professional stage performer knows when they've "won" the audience over, and *Space Channel 5* imparts that dynamic by enabling players to bring in the crowd and get them dancing along.

Still, the game is scheduled to be available in Japan this winter, and that final 80% will be a lot of work for the development team of 25. Although some kind of modern play is being considered, the game will probably remain a single-machine experience, as Mizuguchi views *Space Channel 5* as a kind of party game, admitting it has been designed with the masses in mind. He feels that it should be enjoyable to watch someone else play as it is to play.

■ In the 25<sup>th</sup> century, the world is filled with bizarre rings. We predict that Sonic will love it



■ Players will not receive a traditional point scoring; rather they must obtain a high "excitement" percentage

"Recently, games are not so interesting," complains Mizuguchi when a reporter asks about the genesis of the game. Perhaps aware that *Space Channel 5* taps into something different, albeit completely wacky, he continues his thought: "Games with just better graphics and music are not enough, I think. If the gameplay does not really change from what is proposed now, the market may shrink."

With Dreamcast here now, and more high-end systems on the way, it's unlikely that the creative forces in this industry will let the next round of hardware go unchallenged on the design side. Like Mizuguchi himself, we know they've been thinking two or three hardware generations ahead for years.

— Tom Russo

