

SPACE CHANNEL 5

Format: Dreamcast

Publisher: Sega

Developer: In-house

Price: ¥5,800 (£35)

Release: Out now (Japan)



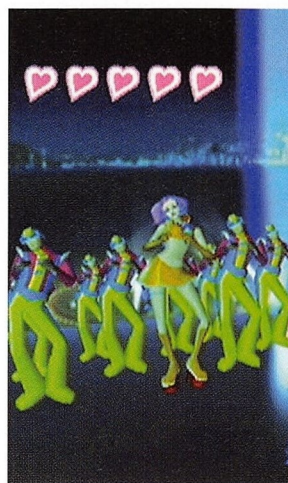
Progress throughout the game involves hitting percentage targets – your rate increases when you eliminate baddies by shooting them in time with the music (above left). Musicians bring new sounds to the audio mix (main)



Prerendered sequences are simplistic in nature but wonderfully stylised, evoking a uniquely kitsch flavour

It's no secret that creating glitzy polygon models and soaring audio tracks for videogames isn't rocket science. Granted, such disciplines represent hard graft and talent, but imbuing a game with real charisma stands as an accomplishment of altogether greater gravity. And that's exactly what Tetsuya Mizuguchi and his team working in the heart of Tokyo's funky Shibuya has done with *Space Channel 5* – this game oozes character from every polygonal surface. While it may be a rhythm-action title working more or less within established confines, its presentation gives it a vibrancy and energy that most games would kill for.

Lead character Ulala – a reporter for the eponymous 25th century TV news show – is fundamental to the game's allure. In static shots she may



look like so many other unusually proportioned heroines to have emerged from Japan, but in motion she comes alive, her swinging limbs and extravagant posturing serving to instantly relegate Lara Croft to near-Bella Emberg status.

Ulala and the companions she 'recruits' throughout the game are gloriously rendered in real time, but the characters and backdrops that make up the rest of the onscreen action streams from GD as you play. The resulting action is therefore limited, but that could be said of all rhythm-action games. At least *Space Channel 5* works supremely professionally with such constraints, generating its own brand of Simon

Says-style gameplay that's at least the match of any other similarly themed title. And while the action involves copying dance moves, Ulala must also shoot energy beams at baddies to destroy them, and blast 'friendly fire' to attract NPCs, the mix of the two styles serving to provide a fresh spin.

Though its longterm appeal is naturally limited, *Space Channel 5* is an absurdly appealing novelty title, with inspirationally showy musical content composed with real flair. If nothing else, it should serve as a springboard for a character destined for bigger things.

Edge rating:

Six out of ten



Boss characters are of the rotund variety, and are typical of the game's distinctive visual approach. That is: anything goes, so long as it's unusual