» Akira faces the future, though we reckon he's got as much idea of what it holds as we do – none.

VIRTUA REVIVAL

The *Virtua Fighter* series seems to be on the brink of a comeback, as Sega has teased a new project under the '*Virtua Fighter* x esports' title. The original 3D fighting series has been essentially dormant since the 2012 console release of *Virtua Fighter 5: Final Showdown*, the last revision of the 2006 arcade game, though the games and characters have been used for minigames and cameo appearances. Frustratingly for fans, there's little indication of whether this project is a brand-new game, a modern port of *Final Showdown*, a series collection or something else entirely. We'll keep you updated as more becomes clear.

GEAR UP FOR ALESTE

M2 has announced *Aleste Collection* for PS4 and Switch, which gathers Compile's shoot-'em-ups for 8-bit Sega consoles. The package includes the Master System games *Aleste*, known here as *Power Strike*, and *Power Strike II*, as well as the Game Gear's *GG Aleste* and *GG Aleste II* (confusingly localised as *Power Strike II*). A fifth title, a new Game Gear game called *GG Aleste 3*, has been created from scratch for the collection. Both versions launch on 24 December in Japan for ¥7,480 (roughly £55). A collector's edition is also available, bundled with a white Game Gear Micro featuring all five games, for ¥16,280 (£119).
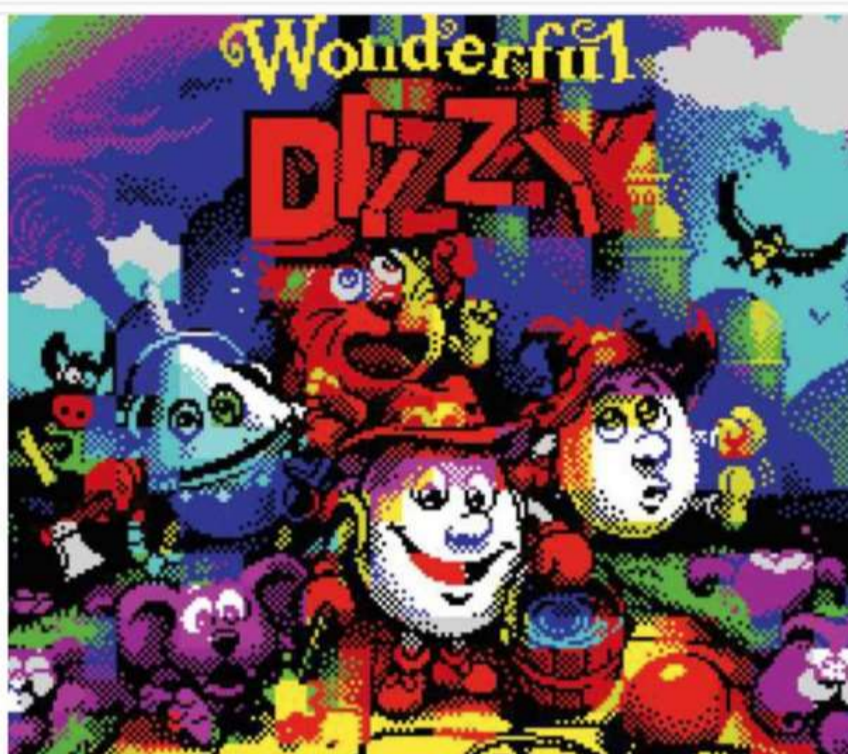
» [Next] It's about time we saw Dizzy in a new adventure. Get it? [Nick, stop. Please. – Ed]

» [Next] This looks like a bit of a treacherous path, even without any moving enemies to contend with.

INTO THE WONDERFUL

WE SPEAK TO THE TEAM BEHIND DIZZY'S NEWEST ADVENTURE

You can't keep a good egg down, and the hero of the Yolkfolk has been very visible in recent times, with plenty of rediscovered NES projects keeping Dizzy in the spotlight. Now though, something very special is upon us – Philip and Andrew Oliver have returned to design their first classic *Dizzy* adventure in decades, for release exclusively on the ZX Spectrum Next. The game has been in production for some time but is now nearing completion.

While the design is being handled by the Olivers, other aspects are being handled by *Dizzy* fans like coder Evgeniy Barskiy (pictured right). "I learned about Dizzy's games in the Nineties," says Evgeniy. "I remember we tried to understand all the puzzles with the dictionary, because we did not know English." Having worked on a fan remake of *Crystal Kingdom Dizzy* that was released in 2017, bigger things beckoned for him. "The authors of the original *Dizzy* series, the Oliver twins, liked our work very much. They offered to create a new official part of the series, and we agreed. It is unbelievable that after so many years a sequel is being released!"

Although the game is new, the goal is to deliver a familiar experience. "It's a good old *Dizzy* with classic physics and mechanics," says Dmitri Ponomarjov, a graphic artist on *Wonderful Dizzy*. Where the team hopes to push the boundaries is with the visuals and engine. "These visuals are a result of collaboration of five modern ZX Spectrum artists, and all of them are real professionals in the ZX Spectrum demoscene and game dev," says Dmitri. "Also, the game engine allows us a lot of nice features to use, so the true rich graphics couldn't be achieved without it. These are variable-sized background sprites, recolouring, mirroring, a non-strict tile grid and usage of 128K memory so all of this fits well," he explains.

This has been a major undertaking for the team, which has been working since 2017 on a purely hobbyist basis. "The main idea of the engine was to squeeze all the possibilities out of the Spectrum," says Evgeniy. "To achieve smoothness of movement and speed, I had to work on some tricks. It's not always possible to plunge

into the world of Spectrum, so the work lasted for several years." Still, he felt that the choice of platform enabled him to do great things. "The Next team did just a titanic job creating this computer. The new architecture is just a dream of the developers of the past."

"Philip and Andrew have produced the complete in-game plot and game map design on paper. It is a pleasure to work with them since they are professionals and they have made their part in a really quick and great manner," says Dmitri. "We are also constantly discussing the implementation details with them and they always provide some useful ideas and feedback on how things should be done."

"*Dizzy* is already part of our past, and part of ourselves," says Evgeniy, summarising the appeal of *Wonderful Dizzy*. Dmitri agrees, saying, "It's not aggressive, it's not hostile, it offers nice humour, relaxation, intrigue and exploration," We'll keep you updated when *Wonderful Dizzy* becomes available. ✳

» [Next] *Wonderful Dizzy* does look truly amazing, taking full advantage of the Spectrum's colour palette.