

It is the year 20XX. Technology has advanced to levels previously unthinkable, making life pleasant and easy for the human race. The pinnacle of these scientific leaps is the successful creation of androids-robotic humanoids, which can be programmed and used for a wide variety of occupations. In this field, none are better known than Dr. Light and Dr. Wily; colleagues, rivals, and friends. These scientists live and work in the massive city of Monstropolis where their creations help make daily life better for everyone.

To this end, they build eight highly advanced androids. Unknown to Dr. Light, Dr. Wily also had his own private pet-project: a mind-altering device, intended to be used on criminals as a quick way to reform them. Unable to get a test subject to see if the thing works or not, Wily opts for expedience and uses it on himself. A decision which, not only being blatantly stupid, has horrific consequences (for the next 2 billion years).

The mind-machine worked, all too well. But since Dr. Wily was basically a good person, it changed him into a raving lunatic determined to conquer the world. Wily in turn used it on six of Light's new androids and found to his delight that the machine worked on them as well, changing their programming from useful rolls to a predilection for murder and mayhem. Then, as a last act of defiance towards Dr. Light, he has his new android army smash their shared lab to bits and then attack Monstropolis as well.

But all is not lost. The two androids left behind were named Rock and Roll, and Wily skipped using his brain zapper on them because he felt they would be useless in his meglomaniacal goals. Rock was a lab assistant and Roll was a house keeper. And the other androids could shoot fire, lightning, ice, bombs, blades, or throw boulders the size of Buicks around. I mean, just how threatening can a robot programmed to be a maid possibly be? This, however, would prove to be Wily's undoing.

Rock had a strong sense of justice for a machine, and he didn't like what his former siblings and his former uncle were aiming to do one bit. Since the world appeared to be at Dr. Wily's mercy, Rock volunteered to have Dr. Light convert him from a simple lab assistant to a war machine. Thus Mega Man was born.

You are Mega Man. Your mission is to destroy the six stolen robots, find Wily's secret laboratory, and put an end to the madness before the world plunges into eternal darkness. Good luck, Mega Man; you are most definitely going to need it.

2) CONTROL BREAKDOWN

Since this is a NES game, and a fairly old one at that, you only have one option at the title screen, and that's to start the game. There are no passwords in the original Mega Man; if you're going to beat the game, you'll need to do it in one sitting. The control scheme isn't complex at all either, using all the buttons that the NES controller has to offer but in a very straightforward way.

D-Pad - You move Mega Man with the directional pad. He can run either left or right, both being necessary since there are points where you'll need to pull a strategic retreat as well as blaze ahead. The up and down directions will come into play when you need to climb or descend ladders.

Select - Pauses the game. Another unique feature of the first Mega Man,

as from 2 on out Capcom decided to do away with the simple pause function.

- Start - Pressing this button will start the game or select the stage you'd like to attack. During the game itself, start calls up the sub-screen where you can choose between the weapons you've acquired before zipping back to the action.
- A Button - A makes Mega Man jump. The longer you hold down the A Button, the higher Mega Man will jump. A critical function in any platformer of this era.
- B Button - Whether it's your standard Plasma Cannon or one of the weapons you've stolen from a defeated robot master, B is your attack key. This has variants as well depending on what weapon you currently have equipped. We'll talk more about this in a moment.

3) WEAPONS, POWER-UPS, AND SCORING

During your time as Monstropolis' metal policeman, you'll encounter a wide variety of items and equipment that will greatly assist you in your mission to end the robotic rampage and bring Dr. Wily to justice.

WEAPONS

Rock's special ability when he was a simple lab tech was the power to copy any tool he needed to assist Dr. Light in his constructs. This talent rolled (rock and roll? ha ha ha arrrgh!) over into his incarnation as Mega Man, allowing him to steal the powers of defeated high-level androids. Mega Man's color scheme will change according to which weapon you currently have activated. This is more an aesthetic feature than anything else, but it is kind of neat and your colors will affect the colors of certain on-screen items (as well as the spark balls that fly off the screen in a billion different directions when you die).

The drawback to these stolen goods is that you don't have an infinite amount of power to keep using them indefinitely. When you have a special weapon equipped, a second power-meter will pop up next to your life bar and will deplete with every shot you fire. The different weapons you acquire all eat energy at different rates. Once that bar is exhausted, you won't be able to use that weapon again until you recharge it.

The following is a complete run-down of all the special weapons you will acquire as you blast your way through the game. Seeing as I have been unable to come up with any "official" names for these weapons, unlike in subsequent Mega Man games, I have taken a few creative liberties.

Bomb Bomber (Green and White) - Bomb Man's goody. Mega Man will toss out a nice, round bomb that will explode after a brief delay. Though damaging and having a nice blast radius, you can't throw these very far. Most regular enemies are a bit too quick for you to use these effectively against them, but there are instances where Bomb Bomber becomes invaluable.

Cut Blade (Gray and White) - You gain this ability from Cut Man. It sends a scissor-like blade out in a boomerang-like circle. Though slow and with a fairly limited range, the Cut Blade is a strong weapon and can destroy several

in one hit enemies that you can't even hurt with your regular Plasma Cannon. Since it behaves like a boomerang it can hurt enemies both coming and going as well. But don't get too excited about that; it will still eat energy with every shot.

Elec Beam (Gray and Yellow) - Debatably the most useful weapon in the game, you get this for taking down Elec Man. It fires out three bolts of lightning, one straight ahead and two vertically, giving you unparalleled reach. The Elec Beam will damage absolutely everything in the game, and is in fact the only weapon that does significant damage to several of the tougher boss characters. Couple that with the fact that it eats energy very slowly for being such a powerful weapon and you've got some serious firepower at your fingertips.

Fire Storm (Red and Yellow) - Fire Man's weapon. The Fire Storm shoots a large fireball in whichever direction you happen to be facing. This weapon hurts most things bad, and can in fact penetrate certain enemies' shields. As a bonus, shooting this weapon will temporarily encase Mega Man in a shield of fireballs. Though this won't stop gunfire, it will put the hurt on anything that's stupid enough to touch you.

Guts Power (Brown and White) - Though critical in several areas, this special weapon has the least practical uses in the game. Now why is that? Well, this power allows you to pick up rocks and heave them at enemies. Once thrown the rocks will shatter, spreading out in four directions for a shotgun effect. Guts Power hurts like sin when it hits, but you can only lift specific blocks through the course of the game (signified by the brick starting to flash while you're standing next to it with Guts Power active). As the name implies, this is the ability you receive from Guts Man.

Ice Arrow (Blue and White) - Ice Man's weapon. Enemies that die in one hit will be destroyed as usual, but foes that take multiple hits to take down will be frozen in their tracks instead. This will permit you to blast them the rest of the way to pieces without the risk of being counter-attacked. Ice Arrow is also able to freeze certain traps.

Magnet Beam (Blue and Blue) - Actually a utility rather than an attack weapon, the Magnet Beam is found on Elec Man's stage. Using this item will allow you to create platforms in thin air, permitting you to bypass areas with difficult jumps if you so desire. The platforms will hover where you lay them for about six or seven seconds before

vanishing, so you'll need to move kind of fast while using this if you don't wish to be dumped into empty space. Still, Magnet Beam is a godsend in certain areas, and absolutely necessary to have in others.

Plasma Cannon (Blue and Blue) - Also known as the Arm Cannon. This is Mega Man's standard weapon, firing plasma bullets out in a straight line. Your blaster is fairly weak compared to the other guns you'll pick up from the robot masters. However, you'll always have this available if you need it and the Plasma Cannon is the one weapon that never needs to be recharged.

POWER-UPS

In addition to your weapons cache, we also have a power-up plethora to assist you. The following is a detailed list of everything you can expect to run into while you play through the game.

1-Up - These look like Mega Man's smiling head. Grabbing one will give you an extra life.

Bonus Points - These little balls are dropped by defeated enemies. Red, blue, orange or gray, once you complete a stage you'll earn 1000 points for each ball you have collected.

Power Pellets - These come in large and small sizes and will restore either a bit or a bunch of your life bar. If you've happened to play any of the other five Mega Man games that were released on the NES but are new to the original, you might not recognize these immediately. The appearance of these items wasn't standardized until Mega Man 2, and in this game they kind of look like light bulbs instead of the flashing circles they became later. But they serve the same purpose. Sometimes enemies will drop them, other times you'll find them scattered throughout the levels.

Weapons Capsules - As with the Power Pellets, these will restore either a little or a lot of the current special weapon you are currently using. Also, like the Power Pellets, they look significantly different than they do in the other Mega Mans (Mega Men?). These are one of the items that will change color according to which color Mega Man currently is. Again, as with the Power Pellets, Weapons Capsules are dropped or simply found.

Weapons Package - These are only dropped by your friendly, neighborhood robot master upon their demise. They look like a flashing ball with a cross on them. Grabbing this will give you the powers of whichever enemy you just defeated, as well as end that current level.

Yashichi - Only found on the very last level shortly before your showdown with the mad Dr. Wily himself. This symbol shows up in a myriad of old Capcom games; I'm thinking it was sort of their company logo. It looks kind of like a four-pointed throwing star. In Mega Man, it fully restores your life as well as completely refilling all of your special weapons.

Having an actual scoreboard is something that the first Mega Man had that was done away with upon the subsequent titles. And it's really not particularly hard to see why.

First off, you gain points by destroying enemies as well as gaining a hefty bonus for collecting those bonus balls mentioned above. In addition to that, you get an even bigger bonus for taking down the bosses.

Unfortunately points are pretty pointless (pun unintended) in this game. Since you don't earn lives or anything else for your score and there's no leader board to enter your initials on after the game is over, points don't matter one bit. Although some people like seeing how many points they can rack up (on old NES games, I always shoot for a million, just because it's a nice, round number and it's usually kind of difficult to reach on old NES games, and I wonder if I could use the phrase 'old NES games' one more time ... which I guess I just did), they really have no bearing on the game itself.

4) ENEMY MANIFESTO

Now let's meet all of the wonderful things that are going to be trying to kill you. Unlike subsequent Mega Man titles, Capcom actually bothered to name most of the enemies you'll meet. First we'll talk about the minor foes you'll encounter while slugging your way through the levels themselves.

ENEMIES

Beak - 200 points -

These are little gun turrets that make their homes in the sides of walls. After brief intervals where they're closed Beaks will open up and fire a succession of shots, four in all, in a variety of angles. Since Beaks are weak enemy which only take one hit to destroy, you'll seldom encounter them one at a time. Usually they pop up in groups of three to four instead. Beaks are invulnerable while they're closed; you can only take them down after their outer shell has opened up.

Blader - 500 points -

Bladers are flying enemies that will swoop towards Mega Man as they get closer to him. Though weak they seek safety in numbers, attacking in groups of three. Though another weak enemy, Bladers tend to show up in precarious areas with pitfalls, where one false move can mean death.

Big Eye - 9000 points -

The largest non-boss character in the game, Big Eyes are giant, Cyclops-like robots that jump around and attack by trying to land on your head. Being hit by one hurts like hell, and they're surprisingly fast for a large character. Big Eyes tend to be end-of-level gatekeepers, usually guarding the doorway to each the robot master's lair. Able to absorb a sizable amount of damage, it is usually a better idea to try and sneak past them rather than resorting to brute force.

Bomb-Omb - 0 points -

More like hazards than actual enemies, these are white explosives that pop up from various pits throughout the game. Once they've reached the zenith of their flight path, Bomb-Omb's explode, separating into four smaller bomblets that rain down on the area below them. Your weapons are useless against these explosives; dodging is the only way.

Tackle Fire - 200 points -

These are little, evil-looking fireballs that haunt Fire Man's area. They'll fly up out of the lava that infests the stage and then slowly float down towards your big blue head. Not too difficult to kill or avoid, Tackle Fires always attack in waves of three.

Crazy Razy - 500/1000 points -

Crazy Razy is one of the most unique enemies in any the game. Green and white and vaguely humanoid, Razy will charge at you while firing bullets when he walks onto the screen. If he passes you, his lower legs will explode and his upper half will start dive-bombing Mega Man in a pattern similar to the Bladers. Razy's torso can and will dog your every move until you either shoot him down or manage to run away. Simply shooting him will only demolish his lower half and trigger Razy's idiot flying torso attack early. If you want to take him out in one hit, you need to aim for his head. Each half of Crazy Razy is worth 500 points, and you get 1000 for taking him out in entirety.

Flea - 300 points -

Fleas are small, round, jumping enemies that inhabit several different areas of the game. Another fairly weak foe, and like most of the weaker enemies in the game Fleas attack in groups seeming to take a quantity over quality approach.

Floating Shell - 800 points -

Yet another enemy that has a strong defense, Floating Shells look like floating shells (kind of like calling Iowa a corn-filled state). At regular intervals, the shell will pop open and fire bullets in eight different directions (!) at once. Though only able to absorb one hit, the Shells can only be damaged when they open up.

Foot Holder - 0 points -

Foot Holders have the unique distinction of being an enemy that you have to ride to get from point A to point B. These invulnerable bad guys have flat tops, a large pair of eyes, and a propeller on their bottom keeping them airborne. You'll encounter Foot Holders spanning huge pits or rooms lined with spikes; in other words areas you can't possibly jump across without some assistance. In these areas you'll be forced to jump from Foot Holder to Foot Holder as they fly around in an aggravating, erratic pattern. To make matters worse they're armed too, firing bullets out of either side of their heads at regular intervals. Being hit by these shots will usually result in you being knocked off your current perch, dropping you to an untimely demise.

Killer Bullet - 800 points -

These look like fat missiles with eyes and snarly mouths. Killer Bullets move from right to left across the screen in a wavy flight path that can make them tricky to dodge or shoot. One hit will take these enemies down. But unlike most other opponents you'll encounter, Killer Bullets explode in a big way when shot. Being caught in the blast will hurt you just the same as being touched by them.

Met - 500 points -

Meet the little hard hat jerks that will be a thorn in Mega Man's side to the END OF TIME. Mets, also known and Hard Hat Hooligans or simply Hard Hats, are little hardhat (who'd have guessed?)-wearing robots that hide under their hats until you get close to them. Once within range, they'll pop out briefly and fire a spread of three bullets at you before ducking back into the safety of their hats. Mets are only vulnerable when they

open up to attack, so you need to dispatch them quickly. In later titles, Mets get feet and can move around in a wide (and I do mean W*I*D*E) variety of ways. But for the original, they're immobile.

Octopus Battery - 300 points -

Octo Batteries are boxy robots with suction cups on all four sides. They can absorb a decent amount of punishment and actually inflict a fair amount of damage should you come in contact with them. Octopus Batteries only move in a set pattern back and forth, however, and as such they are fairly simple to dodge.

Peng - 500 points -

Motorized penguins, the Pengs are another annoyance enemy. Taken down with but a single shot, the fly from the right side of the screen to the left. Although you'll only ever see one at a time, in the areas where Pengs attack they will keep coming at you until you've moved past the area. They fly in the same right to left wavy pattern that Killer Bullets have, and are similar to Bladers and Watchers in that Pengs don't inflict much damage but tend to show up in areas where one false move or unlucky hit will send you plummeting to your death.

Picket Man - 1500 points -

These guys look like Mets with bodies. They carry shields to deflect your shots and heave pickaxes at you in an arc. Like most enemies with some kind of protection, Picket Men can't be hurt for the most part as long as their shields are raised. Fire Storm will actually penetrate blast through their shields and destroy them whether they're defending or not. Only found on Guts Man's level.

Screw Bombers - 500 points -

These are stationary circular gun turrets. When you get close to one, it will pop out and fire two spreads of bullets in a half circle. Screw Bombers are another fairly weak enemy, though their low profile can make them hard to hit if they aren't attacking. Not really much of a threat unless you're low on health.

Sniper Joe - 5000 points -

Another Mega Man staple who turns up in various forms in virtually EVERY Mega Man out there, this is Sniper Joe's debut as well as the Blue Bomber. Recognizable by their single eye, Sniper Joes are another shield bearing foe. Like other bad guys with protection he has to drop his guard in order to attack you, and that's when Joe becomes vulnerable. These guys will also jump around making, themselves a harder target to hit than the Picket Men. Sniper Joe only appears on Bomb Man's level.

Spine - 200 points -

Spines are little enemies that resemble mobile landmines adorned with spikes. They patrol set platforms, moving back and forth along the length of their assigned area. Though normally they move rather slowly, once Mega Man is on the same level as a Spine it will start zipping back and forth as if it had suddenly taken a big drag of crack smoke. Worse, you can't hurt them with your normal Plasma Cannon, and their small size makes them a difficult target with anything else.

Super Blade - 500 points -

These are exclusive to Cut Man's level. In two areas, you'll pass a sliver bunker with a square peephole cut into its center. The Blades will swarm out of this hole in an arc, attempting to slice you to ribbons as long as you're near enough. Though not invulnerable, Super Blades will only be on the screen for a short amount of time, frankly making it easier to simply

avoid them all together.

Watcher - 400 points -

Watchers are hovering enemies that, when they're level with Mega Man, extend two electrodes to fire a pair of electric bolts at our azure ally. They're not all that tough, just another foe you can take down with a simple cannon blast. The problem is you won't see Watchers right away; they float onto the screen about three seconds after you've entered an area where they lurk essentially springing a surprise attack. When you couple that with the fact that they generally inhabit areas where it's pretty easy to get your blue butt whacked into a pit or onto spikes, they can be a deadly enemy indeed. Watchers always attack in a pack of six, three from the top and three from below.

HAZARDS

Of course, enemies aren't the only things you'll encounter while trying to free Monstropolis from Dr. Wily's iron grip. You also have the pleasure of dealing with an array of lethal traps and pitfalls.

Electrodes - Only found on Elec Man's stage, you can recognize these hazards by the twin-blue circles that inhabit the blocks they are fired from. Electrodes shoot a single, solid beam of electricity at regular intervals, making them essentially the same as the Fire Beams on Fire Man's level.

Fire Beams - These are like the below-detailed Flame Spouts, except they fire horizontally rather than vertically. They are also immune to Ice Arrow; you can't freeze them. Though perhaps not as damaging as Flame Spouts, the Beams can injure you even if you only touch the nodes that they fire from.

Fire Bricks - Another charming obstacle that lurks on Fire Man's level, these look like flaming brick walls and hit like them too. Though they only move along a set track, the flaming bricks move like immolated Mack trucks and are very tough to avoid. Fortunately, they only appear in one room, so your relationship with them will be brief and bitter...like most of mine have been.... and probably always will be....
sniff I just.... *sob*...oh please just go away!

Flame Spouts - Inhabiting Fire Man's stage (obviously) and a few areas of Wily's fortress, Flame Spouts create a jet of fire that shoots upward. Touching one won't kill you instantly, but it does inflict some hefty damage on your person (about six hits will make you dead at full power). These can be frozen with the Ice Arrow and then walked on, assisting in your passage of this obstacle.

Ice - Found on (SURPRISE!!!) Ice Man's level. The entire terrain of this sector is coated with a thick slathering of this slippery substance. When running, it takes a moment to get the traction to move. Likewise once you get going it takes time to come to a complete stop, causing Mega Man to slip around as if he were wearing roller skates. This can get you really, really killed if you're close to the edge of a cliff, so caution is a must.

Pits - Come on guys. This is a NES platformer. Of course there are plenty of places where, with a miscalculation or an enemy

hit at the wrong time will, you'll be sent hurtling to your death. This, needless to say, is instant death. So don't let it happen.

Rail Cars - In several areas, you'll come across rail-riding platforms that move back and forth over huge pits or spikes. You'll need to ride these to get to where you need to go, but the catch is there are gaps in the rails. When the cars reach these gaps, they will dump, sending you sliding to your doom if you're still standing on them.

Spikes - Spikes show up in different areas, but touching them always ends the same way: you'll go up like a Roman Candle on the fourth of July. Touching Spikes always spells instant doom, and even if you've just been hit and are enjoying the few seconds of theoretical invincibility that comes with getting damaged (see below) they'll still kill you immediately.

Warp Blocks - In various areas of the game, you'll come across blocks that will vanish and reappear in a variety of mind-boggling patterns. While these unstable platforms don't pose a threat to you directly, they will usually be positioned over an array of nastiness like deadly spikes or pitfalls. One false move generally spells disaster. They can also screw your aim up while jumping if you time it wrong. For instance, should you happen to be in the same spot where a block is fixing to appear when it warps in, it will shove you off to either side. Depending on what's beneath you, this can be a recipe for disaster.

Water - In most Mega Man games, water means you get to jump really high. But, due to the fact that this is the first Mega Man game created and the only place there's liquid to trudge through is Ice Man's stage, you don't get to enjoy this advantage. Rather the liquid acts more like sludge, actually hindering your jumping abilities. Thankfully, there's nothing in this area that can murder you in one touch (spikes, pits, IRS foreclosures). Still a miscalculation whilst bogged down in this mess can cause you to take damage you could otherwise avoid under normal circumstances. A few adjustments to your playing tactics may be necessary.

BOSS CHARACTERS

And finally, rounding out this section of the FAQ we'll briefly discuss this game's bosses. Bosses are, as you may have guessed, the toughest characters in the game. For starters, each receives an energy meter the same size as yours, and indeed boss characters' attacks hurt considerably more than your run-of-the-mill bad guys. The key to taking care of these toughies is the fact that the special weapons you'll accrue on your journey have varying levels of effectiveness on each of these foes. This gives you (in theory at least) an edge in the battle. Still, some of them are quite hard. The six primary robot masters (Cut Man through Guts Man) do not have set point values. Instead, the computer selects a random 'Clear Bonus' for defeating each of these villains ranging from 50000 to 90000 points.

As the name implies, Bomb Man tosses bombs at you while jumping around his lair and making a general idiot of himself. If he hits you directly, it hurts about as much as his explosives do, so be careful while fighting him.

Cut Man

Good old scissor-head! Cut Man is probably the weakest of the six robot masters in this game; your normal plasma shots will actually do a fine job of taking him out. Still, his Cut Blade can hit you coming and going, and if you get too close he'll start to try jumping on you a la Mario, which makes fighting him quite a bit harder.

Elec Man

I've always thought of Elec Man as the leader of the sinister six. He's just sort of got that 'I-am-in-CHARGE' (ha! puns are fun!) attitude about him. Elec Beam is just as powerful in his hands as it becomes in yours, and that paired with the fact that he's pretty quick and agile you've got a serious brawl on your hands here.

Fire Man

Fire Man's not as quick or jumpy as some of the other bosses are, and in truth he doesn't need to be. His version of Fire Storm sends wave after wave of what looks like the Fire Bricks your face. Due to their size these aren't easy to dodge. In addition, his flaming shots will leave a small, residual bonfire at your feet. Landing on this doesn't hurt as bad as being hit directly, but it will still hurt you. And when battling this creep, you need to avoid taking damage as much as possible.

Guts Man

Dr. Wily seems to have an unhealthy obsession with Guts Man; he's appeared in different incarnations in more Mega Man games than any other robot master in the series. Guts Man is slow and the rocks he throws at you aren't that hard to dodge. But touching this big boy will result in some serious injury to your personage, and when he jumps the entire room shakes. This won't take off any life but it will knock you off your feet, stunning you for a moment or two and leaving you wide open for an attack.

Ice Man

Maybe it's the cold, but Ice Man moves slower than any other boss in the game. To make up for this lack of speed, he fires out Ice Arrows in triplicate and in a pattern that is very difficult to avoid. This can be a tough fight if you're not on your toes.

Once you get to Dr. Wily's hidden fortress, your work's only half complete. Each level of the outpost is guarded by a special mechanical monster that make the regular robot masters look like wind up toys by comparison. You do get a set amount of points for dispatching each of these monstrosities, and here they are.

Bubble Boys - 70000 points -

Precursors to Mega Man 2's Bubble Man, the Bubble Boys are the third boss in Wily's fortress. There are a total seven of them, and they circle the room as you fight, shooting bubble shots at you the entire time. To make things even more interesting, the Bubble Boys speed up as you take them down. Thankfully, their energy meter is cumulative; each one is represented as a part of their whole energy meter.

Clone - 100000 points -

One of the harder fights in the game, Dr. Wily didn't steal Mega Man the way he did the other six robots. He did however manage to construct an

almost perfect replica. The Mega Man Clone fights identically to you, automatically switching to any weapon you happen to be using at the time. Defeating your evil twin is definitely one of this game's tougher challenges.

Rock Monster - 100000 points -

The toughest fight in the game, bar none, the Rock Monster is the guardian of the first level of Wily's fortress. This big, yellow bastard will start the battle by warping into the room, one piece at a time. Once it has assembled itself, it will open its single, red eye and fire at you before splitting apart again and zipping to the other side of the room. Any contact with its shots or its bits will put the hurt on you something fierce, and Rocky is only vulnerable when it's fully assembled with its eye is open.

And last but definitely not least ...

Dr. Wily - 200000 points -

When all's said and done Dr. Wily will finally engage you, piloting the first of his many mechanical assault ships. Since Wily's the main bad guy of the series, he gets two energy meters to play with rather than just one. The first meter measures the strength of the ship's outer armor, and the second tells you how close you are to taking down the craft itself. Wily's not going to go quietly either, as he's going to be shooting at you the entire time you're trying to bring him down.

5) SIMPLE MECHANICS

Now before we get started on the actual strategy guide, there are some basic game play mechanics that you should be aware of. Learn these, live by these, and you'll increase your chances of survival ten-fold.

DIFFERENT PATHS

Mega Man was one of the first games that allowed you to choose the order in which you tackled the levels of the game rather than putting the stages in a set order for you to slug through. Of course, this wasn't done just for lark. Since different weapons work better on the various bosses than others there's actually a fair amount of strategy that goes into choosing what order to battle the robot masters in. Obviously, some methods make better game plans than others, but I should stress that there is really no definitive order to play through the game in. Since the whole point of this FAQ is to teach you the easiest way to conquer this game, the method I have outlined in the walk-through section is the way I feel is the best but it is by no means the only.

THE GAME SCREEN

Once you've selected which level you wish to take on first, you will teleport down to the beginning of that level. There are several things you should take note of on the main screen. First off, that little blue guy is you. The white bar meter at the top left side of the screen is your energy meter (read: life) and at the top center will be your score (as noted earlier, points are merely that in this game, points, so there's really no need to pay attention to this).

THE SUB-SCREEN

As detailed in the Controls section, pressing Start will call up the

sub-screen. At the bottom of this menu will be an icon that looks like the 1-Up items in the main game with a number by it, indicating how many lives you have left. Above this will be a list of the special weapons you have acquired thus far, allowing you to select the weapon you need at the moment you need it. After you blast a robot master to itty bitty chunks, their weapon will be added to the sub-screen, indicated by the first letter of their name ('B' for Bomb Man's Bomb Bomber, 'C' for Cut Blade, and so forth; your Plasma Cannon is indicated by 'P'). Use the D-pad to highlight your weapon of choice for the moment. Then press start to return to the game with that weapon equipped and ready for action.

DANGERS OF MOVEMENT

I'm not sure what the deal is here. Perhaps it's just because the game is so damn old, but Mega Man seems to be adversely effected by his own inertia. That is, even when he's not traversing the ice on Ice Man's stage, he's got the tendency to slide around a bit when moving. Should this be your first encounter with a Mega Man game, this might not be too much of a problem. However, it does make the controls feel slightly sloppier than they should. And that's never a good thing for any video game.

Another thing you should be made aware of is that picking up Power Pellets or Weapons Capsules will slow you down slightly even if you don't actually get any benefit by touching them. This can make you very dead if you are in mid jump; the lag time will screw up your speed as well as your aim, usually ending with a one-way trip into a pit.

GUNNERY TACTICS

One of the most important features of most of your weaponry is the ability to actually fire through walls. Nearly everything in your arsenal can be shot through solid areas, allowing you to take certain enemies out without exposing yourself to danger. Be forewarned however that you don't have the exclusive rights to this advantage; enemies that shoot are also unhindered by walls.

DANGERS OF PAUSING

Pausing or visiting your sub-screen while you're clinging to a ladder can have disastrous consequences if you aren't careful. The game interprets this as you teleporting back into the level, just like you do at the area's outset. Why is this bad? When you teleport in you won't be automatically holding onto the ladder anymore. If you don't hold up on the D-pad immediately after unpausing the game you'll fall, and there are several areas in the game where being careless and forgetting about this programming peculiarity can result in your death.

CONTROLLING YOUR FALLS

This is a highly important feature of the Mega Man series. Whether jumping or falling you have full control over what direction you head in while in mid-air. You can reverse the direction of a jump, swing to the left or the right, whatever you need to do. This is a very important ability, and one you'll need to master if you intend to beat Dr. Wily and his mechanical miscreants. Being hit in mid-air negates this ability somewhat, seeing how as with any incurred injury the first thing that happens to Mega Man is he gets knocked backwards. However, recovering from these dangerous situations is entirely possible as long as you have enough distance to fall. (The exception seems to be when you get battered off a ledge, as

Mega Man tends to fall to earth like a two-ton safe if you weren't in the middle of a jump.)

SPECIAL WEAPONS

When you select a special weapon another meter identical in size but different in color to your life gauge will appear on the left side of your health. Firing special weapons will decrease your special weapons meter with each shot. Once said meter is completely gone, you can no longer use that weapon until you recharge it via the method described in the power-ups section of this FAQ. Each special uses up energy at a different rate, so get to know how quickly you will burn through each weapon's energy so that you can use each one to its maximum benefit.

In games like this, the tendency is to not use special items unless you're hard-pressed to do so or unless you're tackling a particularly tough foe. In Mega Man, it's not making liberal usage of your specials that can cost you in the long run. You see, during the game's initial stages between each level you will get a full refill of all your weapons energy, so there's really no reason not to use your weapons if you need to or if you feel like it. Once you reach Wily's fortress though you'll need to start exercising a bit of caution. Since those four levels are played back to back, whatever drain you've caused on your energy reserves does carry over to the next level.

TAKING DAMAGE

Being throttled by enemies will deplete your life. You can restore this meter by picking up the power-ups detailed in that section of this FAQ above. When an enemy or gunfire hits you, Mega Man will be knocked back a little bit and flash in an 8-bit example of robotic pain. While you should do your best to avoid taking damage as much as possible, being hit does give you a second or two of invulnerability after the damage has been done. In a pinch, you can use this feature to scurry past difficult foes or tricky spots in the level. This obviously has no bearing on being whacked into a pit, and less obviously does nothing to protect you from instant death if you are knocked onto spikes.

BOSS BATTLES

When you reach the boss of each stage, they teleport in, make a threatening gesture at you, and then a health meter of their very own will appear on-screen. Identical in size to yours, boss character energy meters will show up on the right side of the screen and are usually red in color. When you reduce the boss's health meter to zero, he'll explode in a fun ball of sparks and you will have completed the current level you're on. Of course, he's going to be trying to do the same to you the entire time, so no free lunch.

DYING AND CONTINUING

If the tables are turned and YOU are the one who gets their meter reduced to nothingness, you will explode into that nothingness in a manner identical to the boss characters. Of course, that's not the only way to kick the bucket. Falling into a pit or scraping spikes spells doom as well. You begin the game with three lives, as in most NES games. You can of course pick up extra lives as you battle your way through Monstropolis. But if you lose all of our lives then it's the dreaded GAME OVER.

Should unfortunate situation come to be, you will have option to either

Continue (which will start you back at the beginning of the level you bought the farm on with a fresh trio of lives and full restoration of all your specials) or you can go back to the Stage Select screen (which grants you all of the above plus the ability to try your luck on a different area). There's no real penalty to continuing, though you do lose all of the points you've accumulated. All of the bosses you've taken out will remain eighty-sixed and you can continue as many times as you'd like. The exception here is Dr. Wily's levels. If you make it to, say, the third area in Wily's fortress, buy the farm, pick stage select, and choose to go back to Dr. Wily's fortress you will have to start back on stage 1 of the final levels.

REPLAY

If you so desire (or if you miss something critical like the Magnet Beam) you may replay each of the initial stages as many times as you like. Each of the six robot masters will be back for another tussle at the end of the stage and you will still receive your Clearing Bonus for beating the snot out of them. You don't get anything special to add to your special weapons repertoire for beating the robot masters more than once.

6) THE WALK-THROUGH

All right. Let us get this puppy fired up. As stated above, there's no set way to complete the first six stages of the game. However, I have come up with what I believe is the most effective method for eliminating the robot masters. Following my suggestions below will allow you to complete the game without necessitating an extra side-trip to get that damn Magnet Beam. The first stage you are going to want to head to is Guts Man's level.

STAGE: CONSTRUCTION ZONE

ROBOT MASTER: GUTS MAN

WEAKNESS: BOMB BOMBER (3 Hits)

This rocky stage begins with a small hill guarded by those pesky Mets. Climb the hill, and get a nice, good look at your first obstacle. And it can be pretty damn hard to get past actually. Kind of sets the mood for the rest of the game, huh? Anyhow, you'll see a series of rails, each with a car on them going back and forth over a large pit. You need to leap from one of these to the next in order to cross this area. Of course Capcom we can't allow this to be easy, so on two of the rails there are gaps at regular intervals. When the rail cars reach these, they'll dump dropping you to your death. Jump slightly before the rail car reaches the gap, holding the A-Button down for maximal airtime. Wait too long, you die. Jump too soon, you die. Yippy-skippy, no?

Once past those damned rail cars and back on solid ground, a trio of Bladers will attack you. Past that and up a few platforms is a large Power Pellet. Chances are you haven't taken that much damage yet, but grab it if you need it before pressing proceed onward.

The next obstacle you'll encounter is Picket Man. If you had Fire Storm in your inventory you could blast right through their shields, destroying them in one shot. As it stands, however, you're going to have to do some fencing with your Plasma Cannon. Picket Man will keep their shields raised for a bit, eventually lowering their guard to shower you with pickaxes. They toss the axes in an arc, so what you need to do is get under that arc and pummel them with your Plasma Cannon. It may take a turn or two, but

once you figure the pattern you'll be able to take down these guys no sweat. There will be several more Picket Men guarding the metal catwalk you'll come to. These may require a smidge more caution since you'll have your back to a pit and spikes respectively during each fight. Once past those encounters keep following the path, and the path leads down. (I dunno; after years of playing 3D games on everything from the computer to the Dreamcast to now the PS3 it's kind of nice to be playing a game again where the only way to go is left to right.)

As you drop down to the next screen, veer to the left so that you land on the nearest of the three pylons. Here, another trio of Bladers will attack. After taking out that trash, your path splits. If you drop down the right hole, veer left, the center hole veer right; whichever you choose, this will land you on a break in the right pylon which contains another large Power Pellet. If you choose the left hole, veer right since dropping straight down will land you on some spikes. There's an alcove with two small Power Pellets to the far right, but another trio of Bladers will attack from that side of the screen and you'll need to eliminate them before trying to scoop up the Power Pellets.

After that's taken care of, take the left hole down. Going right will land you on another set of spikes. You can avoid those by making a hard left as you fall, but why tempt fate if you don't have to? There's another small Power Pellet here next to the spikes, which you probably won't need considering you just got enough energy tossed at you for free on the last screen to power a small country. There's also a 1-Up in a far alcove here. However you can't reach it without using the Magnet Beam and you quite obviously don't have that yet. So sigh with regret and continue downward.

Meet Big Eye! He's LOADS of F*U*N!!!! I'm being extremely sarcastic. Big Eye is a jerk. These things have two jumping attacks; one that goes low but covers a lot of ground and a high leap which doesn't go far but enables them to climb ledges to get up to your level or land on your noggin from a great height. They randomly alternate between the two jumps, making them that much harder to deal with. You can try to gun Big Eye down, but it's almost always smarter to try to slip past him. You're close enough to the boss that risking being seriously injured while fighting this jerk is a bad idea, one that's only going to make taking down Guts Man harder if you get hit once or twice. Wait for Big Eye to make one of his high jumps and dart under him. Keep running too; the big stupid will turn around quickly and give chase. As pointed out in the enemy section, Big Eye is fairly fast for a large enemy.

After a brief dash across this rocky area you'll come to a door and entering said door would put you within spitting distance of Guts Man himself. You're not quite there yet though. In all later Mega Man titles, the outer gate to any robot master's room leads to a short one-screened hallway, which ends in an inner door that leads to the master himself. These halls are safe zones, a spot before the big showdown where you can catch your breath, heal, and psyche yourself up for the coming battle. In the first Mega Man though, the hallways are quite a bit longer, and are infested with enemy robots. In Guts Man's case, he's got more of those aggravating Mets in his corridor.

Now while this might seem like one more hurdle to leap before you get to attack the boss, this set up can kind of actually work in your favor. You're in a closed environment. You're facing off against weak enemies. You can force those enemies to re-spawn as many times as you like. In essence, you have before you an energy factory which only requires that you run back and forth and shoot things to make them drop Power Pellets,

Weapons Capsules, and if you're really lucky a 1-up or two. This is a godsend should you have taken a severe beating or are low on weapons energy.

Whatever the case, when you're ready to go head to the doors at the far right of the tunnel. Guts Man awaits ...

Guts Man - Your first meeting with this big boy isn't going to be a cakewalk I'm afraid. Since you don't yet have Bomb Bomber, you're going to be forced to take down Guts Man with your Plasma Cannon alone. Your Plasma Shots aren't exactly harmless to Guts Man, but the damage they inflict is far from heavy, which will draw this conflict out a fairly long time.

When you enter the room, stay exactly where you are. Guts Man teleports down on at the far right. He'll begin jumping around and tossing rocks at your head. Anytime Guts Man lands from a jump, it will make the room shake and temporarily knock Mega Man off his feet. He'll usually attempt to hit you with a rock while you are thusly stunned.

To deal with this huge menace, fire when he jumps. Since you are on a level above him, you'll drill Guts Man with Plasma fire while he's in mid-air. The rocks Guts Man tosses at you will split into four bricks and spread out like a shotgun as they sail towards you. However, again your being on a level higher than he is will make jumping over these projectiles fairly easy. Being knocked down by Guts Man's earthquake-like shaking of the room I pretty much impossible to avoid; you simply have to wait to regain your footing.

Guts Man tends to keep his distance from you, though occasionally he'll get the bright idea to hop up and join you where you're standing. Should this happen, you've got two choices. First, you can stand your ground. Truthfully 9 times out of 10 Guts Man will jump back down into his little pit, allowing you to continue pounding the holy hell out of him. If he doesn't do that, and makes another hop toward you instead, you're going to have to act fast. Leap over his big dumb head and charge to the right side of the room, effectively trading places with him. Guts Man actually hurts you quite a bit worse by merely touching you; make sure you avoid him as you skedaddle away. With your roles reversed, dodging the flung rocks becomes a bit trickier. You should have enough of a lead on Guts Man if he decides to do this by now, so it's a simple thing to finish him off.

(Once in a blue moon, he'll pull this stunt right off the bat forcing you to give up your perch before doing any significant damage. If you are unlucky enough to have this happen, switch places with him as detailed above and hope he decides to leap back to his original position quickly.)

Whatever the case, Guts Man will go down with a minimum fuss. Nab his Weapon Package to end the level. Once back to the Stage Select screen make Cut Man your next target.

BLADE FACTORY

ROBOT MASTER: CUT MAN

WEAKNESS: GUTS POWER (2 Hits)

The first area you need to run through is scattered with a series of platforms and ladders, and is guarded by two Blader waves. Past that will be your premier encounter with the Beaks. They tend to spit out a lot of gunfire, which can be intimidating. But their shots really aren't that hard to avoid if you don't panic. Beaks always start with a high angled shot first, giving you ample time to counter them especially if you happen to be

on a lower level than they are. Scale through the next several screens until the road stops going up.

Whew! No more vertical fighting for a bitsy. But don't let your guard down. That silver shack (Shaq?) in the back isn't just there to make the background pretty. Once you get too close, the thing will start flinging Super Blades in your direction. Simply run past and they'll all miss, however. Once you're far enough away from the shack (Shaq?), the blades will stop flowing. Also at about this time a gang of Fleas will jump in to play. Fleas are more annoying than deadly, so fight your way past, keep moving to the right, and guess what? It's time to go vertical again! Except this time, it's not the Beaks you'll have to worry about.

Meet the Octopus Batteries.

These things inflict a fairly high amount of damage for low-level baddies; underestimate them and they will kill you pretty quickly. The Batteries only move up and down or left and right though, and are fairly easy to avoid or destroy if you're paying attention. Climb through the next four screens, passing or blasting the Octopus Batteries as you go.

At the top of your climb, you'll come to another Super Blade maker. Run past that like last time and keep heading to the right. Another trio of Bladers will attack you here. Grab the large Power Pellet in this area if you need to do so, then scale down the ladder.

We're going vertical again, except this time you'll be heading down instead of up. The next two screens involve dodging Floating Shells whilst trying not to be clobbered onto the waiting spikes below. The Shells themselves will keep flying in from the right continually, making fighting them a pointless waste of time. If you're going to bother shooting them, do so only to get them out of your way.

Going two screens down makes things go back to running left and right again. Another Big Eye guards this area. I still recommend flight, but it's up to you. Past this cyclopean menace is the gateway to your next boss fight. Cut Man's tunnel is filled with Screw Bombers, which coat the ceiling and the floor. Bash your way down this brief hallway and you'll come face to face with scissor head himself.

Cut Man - When you run into this jerk later, you won't have the luxury of using Guts Power on him. However that's a fight to detail further on in this FAQ. Since you've got the ability and the means to use it, switch to Guts Power immediately after entering Cut Man's hidey-hole. Drop down from the entrance platform and make for the first brick as Cut Man charges out to greet you.

Now, Cut Man has two basic attacks up his sleeve. Sometimes he'll decide to toss his blades at you. This attack basically acts as a very sharp boomerang, flying towards your face and then returning to Cutty along the same line that he threw them. The blade can hit you coming and going, but even though it will take a chunk off your life meter if it hits, it's actually pretty easy to avoid. Cut Man's other attack is trying to jump on you. This looks moronic but is actually quite a bit harder to dodge.

Typically the key to making this fight a snap is space. Cut Man won't use his jump attack unless he's literally standing on your toes. Anytime Cut Man takes damage, he reels backward away, which should permit you to keep your distance. Time your attacks so that he's either coming down from a jump if he gets too close or he's paused momentarily after throwing his

blades. Two hits are all it takes here. Should you miss with the bricks, switch back to your Plasma Cannon and simply stand and blast this punk to pieces. After collecting Cut Man's weapon, your next target is Elec Man.

POWER PRODUCTION TOWER

ROBOT MASTER: ELEC MAN

WEAKNESS: CUT BLADE (3 Hits)

Your first obstacle here is a trio of Spines on three platforms above your head. Change to Cut Blade to take care of them then climb up off the first screen. Two more Spines greet you in the next are, along with a large Power Pellet, which seems totally unnecessary considering you are about ten seconds into the level. Grab it if you need it and continue up.

Next we get our first encounter with Electrodes. Touching these is a no-no; it's not the most damaging thing in the books here, but they do hurt a bit. The beams will switch off and on, giving you a small window of time to scoot through before they reactivate. Watch the pattern, dash by as they switch off, and continue your ascent.

The next area will lull you into a false sense of security by posing no visible threat to your shiny, blue posterior. Don't fall for it. About three seconds after showing up, Watchers will float onto the screen and begin shooting at you. Three come down from the top and three more will enter from the bottom. Once within range the Watchers will extend their electrodes and fire dual bolts of lightening at you, dashing off the screen after they've attacked.

To handle these threats, use the following tactic. First hop off the ladder to the platform on your left; taking a hit while still on the ladder will make you lose your grip and while falling here won't prove fatal, you will drop down through several screens you had already passed, forcing you to fight your way back up. Aim your Plasma Cannon to the right first. Being at the bottom of the screen will put the lower trio in range quicker than the upper three. As soon as each one pops into your firing arc, blast it to ribbons. With the lower trio destroyed, turn your attention to the remaining Watchers approaching from above. Due to the small nature of the platform you're on, you won't have a lot of room to maneuver. Fire from in a right, left, right pattern, switching back and forth from one side of the platform to the other as you blast the Watchers to pieces with a minimum of fuss and damage. Remember this encounter; the tactics used on the Watchers here will work on them virtually everywhere else they pop up during the game. Playtime is over in this area so Continue your climb up the level.

The ladder you are currently on extends past the next screen you'll climb onto, which looks exactly like the last screen. And it is. More Watchers come out and play, so hop off the ladder again and deal with them as you did last time. Once everything's clear continue your climb.

In the following area you'll get your first encounter with Warp Blocks. Carefully watch how the blocks appear and vanish, and plot your course accordingly. Screwing up here mercifully won't prove fatal. It will only cause you to fall back through the last several areas (again). There are two ladders leading off of this screen, and you want to take the one on the right. Going left here will lead to a platform with three small Weapons Capsules. But it also dead-ends, forcing you to backtrack and take the right route anyway (besides, even though you've used a little Cut Blade, you probably won't need to refill it yet and there's still plenty of level to slug your way through for that purpose). At the top of the right ladder,

wait a couple of seconds for the Warp Blocks to start popping up. They form sort of a walkway to the next ladder, so stroll across and up, up, up you go!

The only danger in the next area comes from some rather precise jumping you need to do. Missing one of these alarmingly small platforms will cause death by falling. I'd advise against going for the large Power Pellet here, since the jump you'll need to execute in order to escape the alcove it's located in is way too tricky to be worth it. Besides, unless you've really screwed up you ought to still be fairly healthy. Reach the ladder and go (GASP!) up.

The next area features more Watchers and two ladders. Eliminate the Watchers a la your patented 'Watcher tactics' (tm). Now you get to make another one of those route choices. Decisions make life worth living, no? Allow me to break down the advantages and disadvantages of either path before you move on. Taking the ladder on the left will force you to deal with a trio of Spines on the next screen, which in turn will require another use of Cut Blade draining it's energy reserves somewhat. On the screen after that, Watchers will attack again. You'll have plenty of room here to maneuver around and get rid of them, so no difficulty here, and the next ladder leads to a screen where the paths converge again. If you opt to take the right way you'll only have to sneak past two Electrodes on the first screen. However, in the next area where the Watchers attack, the lower three are going to come out right up underneath you. Improvise your tactics here. Stay on the ladder and climb towards the top of the screen. When the Watchers appear, annihilate the upper trio fast then quickly climb out of the area before the lower three can attack.

That done, the next area will bring you face to face with a little item that's going to be your best damn friend throughout the remainder of the game: the Magnet Beam. It's blocked by three heavy bricks but no matter since you've got Guts Power. Heave the blocks out of your way, and snag the item. Once that's safely in your possession, the path divides again and, like last time, each ladder has good stuff and bad stuff ahead.

For starters we'll go left again. First you'll have to deal with more Spines (and use up more Cut Blade). In the area after, there will be two Electrodes to slip past. Finally on the third screen you'll have the pleasure of handling Electrodes and a Flea or two. When you come into this room don't move at first. Fleas are morons, and will constantly jump in your direction. In this case, that results in the Flea at the top of the area leaping off the edge of the platform. There's half the battle right there (G.I. Joe!!!). Now it's a simple matter of getting past the Electrodes and climbing the rest of the way up.

Taking the path on the right might prove even simpler. The first two screens will involve dodging Electrodes, which is simplicity in itself. When you reach the Flea area, there's simply no way to avoid combat this time. Shoot the simple Flea that's enclosed with you using your Plasma Cannon. Switch to Guts Power in order to move the brick blocking your path in a simple manner. Then simply take down the other Flea. Try to do so with the rock you're carrying for added simplicity. Then simply scale the ladder out of this simple area. Simple, right?

(Note: if you reach this area without having acquired Guts Power you must go up the left side.)

At the top of your climb is another area identical to the first set of hazardous jumps you ran into a ways back. You could live on the wild side

and leap from block to block if you wish. But personally, I've never been one for taking idiot risks when I don't need to. Break out that Magnet Beam and use it to make a bridge in the air for E-Z departure.

Up one more screen brings you to two more Electrodes, past these and up the ladder after that will greet you with the sight of the door leading to Elec Man. Of course, nothing can ever be that easy: the door is guarded by another damn Big Eye. As usual, I recommend flight, though if you'd like to, go ahead and fight. When Big Eye is either dead or safely behind you, duck into the doorway.

Even the hallway leading to Elec Man himself is vertical! This time, instead of enemies, the shaft is filled with Electrodes. Time it right, sneak past the beams, and get ready for your next boss battle.

Elec Man - Switch to Cut Blade to deal with Ol' Sparky. Elec Man is going to be a bit trickier than either of the robot master you've faced so far for two reasons. One! He's quicker than sliding on linoleum coated with snot, which will almost certainly lead to one or more contact hits. Two! Elec Beam is a wide, long, stream of lightening. Though fired in a linear manner, it moves in a wave-like pattern. Needless to say, this isn't the simplest thing on earth to avoid.

In spite of all this, I do bear some good news. Cut Blade will drop Elec Man in a mere three hits, and the blade will hurt him if it hits on the initial throw or the return flight. Time it right and it's even possible to nail him twice with one shot. You will most likely take some damage from lightening-boy, but unless your health is critically low this battle should be no problem. Once Elec Man is safely six feet under, head for Ice Man's stage.

ARCTIC OUTPOST

ROBOT MASTER: ICE MAN

WEAKNESS: ELEC BEAM (3 hits)

As you may have expected, Ice Man's is a snowy wonderland coated with ice. Coupling that with Mega Man's penchant for sliding forward even when he's supposedly on normal ground and the ice is going to make movement throughout this entire level a pain in the ass. But nobody ever said being a robotic super hero was going to be easy. And if they did they were lying.

Anyway, let's get started shall we? Your first challenge will come in the form of Crazy Razies. Dispatch them by hopping and shooting them in the upper half. Otherwise you'll have Crazy Razy torsos zipping all over the place in an attempt to bash in your face. Past the Razies it's time to take a dip in some sludge. As detailed above, water functions differently in this game than it does in other Mega Man titles, so bear this in mind while moving around. Over the course of your underwater expedition, there are several pits guarded by Spines (old face) as well as a never-ending wave of Pengs (new face). Cut Blade or Elec Beam will eliminate these the Spines, and Pengs can be dropped by pretty much anything. Eventually you'll climb out of the water and you'll come to a pair of Octopus Batteries guarding a large Power Pellet. Blast them and grab the energy recharge if need be then drop down to the next level.

Now have the supreme joy of dealing with Warp Blocks again! First thing to do here is eliminate the Spine; you may fall a time or two into the pit it's guarding, and there's no point in taking damage if you don't have to. That out of the way, observe The Bad: the pattern here makes the blocks that appeared in Elec Man's level look like simple addition compared to

trigonometry. The Good: you're not over anything lethal. Feel free to screw the pooch as many times as you want here. Of course you can always use Magnet Beam for a quick way out of here. However, you're coming up on an area which is much more difficult to traverse than these simple block patterns. Saving Magnet Beam to use it there is the smarter thing to do, seeing as you're in no danger of dying here. Either way, once you've conquered this room, drop down to the next area.

This is the beginning of that long, annoying area that I was just talking about in the previous paragraph. And a fairly benign beginning it is. This first part is pretty much the last room revisited-Spine, Warp Blocks, and all. Make your way out of that first area and head to the right. This will bring you face to face with the Foot Holders for the first time. Typically at this point you'd be forced to jump from one of these things to the next in order to cross that deadly, huge pit you see at the bottom of the screen. The ice coupled with Mega Man's control problems (drug use, overeating, nymphomania... I'm kidding! Get a sense of humor!) make this area one of the most difficult in the game, especially when you factor in that the Foot Holders will be shooting at you the entire time. And there's even more too! Once you pass the island that is at the halfway point, you'll be attacked by an endless way of Pengs, making the crossing even MORE dangerous if such a thing can be imagined.

Thankfully, you've got the Magnet Beam. While using this doesn't completely eliminate the dangers to life or limb here, it does make things a hell of a lot easier. There a large Weapons Capsule on the afore mentioned island, so snag it to recharge Magnet Beam. This will insure you won't run out of juice before hitting the far side of this area (be VERY careful when picking this up however; your perch here is icy and movement is compounded by the lag time that comes collecting...um, anything).

Once past that nightmare, there will be a shaft leading down to the next area with a 1-Up in an alcove cut to its side. Due to the annoying frictional effects of the ice, if you simply drop from here you won't be able to duck into the alcove. Instead, jump forward into the shaft and then hold hard left as you start to fall, swinging (hopefully) to the side as you drop. This should land you in the cubbyhole, though don't be surprised if you miss. Either way, head down when you're finished.

As you drop into the next room, hold hard left again. This will allow you to land on a platform with three small Power Pellets and three small Weapons Capsules (should you screw up on the fall, you can use Magnet Beam to claw your way back up to the area). Goodies collected, take the next shaft down again.

Well looky here! Big Eye again! You know what that means of course? You're close to the boss. Fight or flight, again it's up to you. Duck into the doorway and head down Ice Man's hall. In this passage you'll be faced with an endless barrage of Pengs. Keep moving right and blast the robots as they fly in. Soon enough, you'll reach the inner door and the moment you've been waiting for.

Ice Man - Snow-boy moves quite a bit slower than anyone else you've ran into thus far. He also doesn't seem to want to get close to you, which is refreshing for a change. The first thing Ice Man does at the outset of the fight is run to the far right side of the screen. Then, he'll leap into the air and slowly float to the ground while firing out three separate Ice Arrows at three different heights. Once touching the ground he'll go back up, shooting three more shots at the same height interval. This Ice Arrow barrage effectively covers your entire jumping range with projectiles. His

two barrages fired, Ice Man will run toward you a bit and repeat the pattern.

Opt for Elec Beam when dealing with this robot master; its wavy shot does a pretty thorough job of covering both high and low targets without requiring you to jump. Also, it murders Ice Man in a mere three hits. The top two Ice Arrows in the barrage will sail harmlessly over your helmeted noggin, but the low shot needs to be leapt over. Try and avoid the shots, but don't worry if you get hit a time or two. Your job here will be finished before you know it. Next, head to Fire Man's domain.

GARBAGE DISPOSAL FACILITY

ROBOT MASTER: FIRE MAN

WEAKNESS: ICE ARROW (7 Hits)

Things get rolling right off the bat when you transport into this toasty environment. Screw Bombers are your first set of adversaries and a stacked set of platforms and ladders are your first set of obstacles. Elec Beam is ideal for handling enemies that are above or below you, so use that in this first area. Past that you'll come to several pools of lava. Change Keys will pop out of this fiery goo three at a time, and a Flame Spout inhabits the island in the middle, so there's really nowhere safe to stand. Take your time and carefully make your way past these obstacles and scale the ladder at the top of the room. There is a large Power Pellet in this room as well, but unless you've been really stupid really quickly on this level, there's no way you'll even remotely need to use it. FYI, you'd need to use the Magnet Beam to collect this item if you decide to go for the nab. (Now that I think about it, flinging energy at you when you least need it seems to be a recurring theme in this game.)

Up in the next area is a pair of Flame Spouts, each guarding a small Power Pellet. Again, unless you've been exceptionally reckless so far there's no way you'll need these. Scale the next ladder up and off the screen. Here you can either dodge past the Flame Spouts and Fire Beams directly which is much more exciting/difficult/moronic, or you can use the Magnet Beam to get you to the upper path of this room. Up top is also a pair of large Weapons Capsules, enabling you to recharge some specials if need be, and giving the high road even more appeal. When you come to the ladder leading out of the current area, you will also come across a three-pack of small Power Pellets for your life replenishing needs. Gather these up before you move on.

And moving on we go. Descending brings you to a brief screen with Change Keys and a pair of Flame Spouts. It's pretty simple to dodge through, but the next room is somewhat larger and more complex. It is a large, horizontal chamber filled with Change Keys and Flame Spouts, and bears oh-my! Just kidding about those bears. You will basically be leaping from platform to platform over pools of lava, so your primary concern here is going to be getting smacked off a ledge. Dodge, duck, dip, dive, dodge, and blow anything that gets in your way to the tenth level of hell, then climb up the ladder to escape. Notice those chunks of flaming debris falling down the chute next to the ladder that leads out of this area? That's what you get to play with in the next area.

This is your one dealing with the Fire Bricks. Personally, I intensely dislike these things because if you try to slip between the bricks there's virtually no way you can avoid taking at least one hit. The Fire Bricks simply move too damn fast, and I dislike it when programmers make obstacles that are impossible to avoid completely. That's bad game design no matter what you say, but I'm getting off track here. Rather than playing by the rules and getting hit for it, break out that Magnet Beam and make a path to

the ladder, which leads out of this room.

Enter this final area and the first enemies that will rear their ugly heads are the Killer Bullets. There are also Spines to deal with so to Elec Beam for the best results here. Past the first part of this area will be a ladder with a large Weapons Capsuel at its top, so recharge what you need to before pressing onward. Finally you'll come to a series of small platforms over a lava pool. Two lines of Change Keys sprout from these fiery depths so be careful whilst crossing. The outer door to Fire Man's chamber is just ahead, guarded by a lone Flame Spout. (No Big Eye this time!) If you're hurting don't enter the hallway just yet. Use the endless flow of Change Keys to replenish your life first, and when you're ready enter the doorway to Fire Man.

This hall has got Screw Bombers in it, though on the ceiling. Use Elec Beam to cut a path to the inner door and get ready to rumble.

Fire Man - Toasty is likely to be the hardest boss you've encountered yet. He doesn't jump at you. He's not especially fast. But the waves of Fire Storm he'll, well, fire your way are large projectiles, hard to jump over. In addition even if he misses you with a direct shot, the flaming blasts hurtling at your blue body will ignite a small bonfire directly on the spot where you're standing. Finally, even though Ice Arrow is the best weapon to use against this robot master, it still takes 7 hits to bring him down.

Hit Fire Man with Ice Arrow as he charges out. When he begins sending those flaming walls at you, jump them, but be sure and leap forward a bit as you dodge to avoid landing on the residual fires ignited on the ground. You're probably going to take a hit or two, but as usual Mega Man should come out of this battle where he belongs: ON TOP. Once Fire Man has been disposed of, take a deep breath and head for the final robot master-Bomb Man.

DOWNTOWN MONSTROPOLIS

ROBOT MASTER: BOMB MAN

WEAKNESS: FIRE STORM (7 Hits)

Okay here we go! Last level before Dr. Wily's fortress! Teleport in and head right (as usual). First five Fleas will assault you. Nothing new or terribly frightening there, but next you'll come to something different: Bomb-Omps! These explosives first shoot up out of their pits, flying high into the air. At the zenith of their flight they separate into four little bomblets, which fall to the ground and explode. To get past these, hug the side of the wall that's in front of the Bomb-Omps' pit. This will put you between the two bomblets that drop forward. Between the Bomb-Omps, quickly jump over the hole and haul your blue butt to the next Bomb-Omb pit. Do not attempt to leap over these pits while the Bomb-Omps are on the launch; at best you'll come away with some damage, but it's more likely you will be clobbered into a pit. Past the Bomb-Omps there's a small area with a series of platforms, Screw Bombers, and several power-ups (two small Power Pellets and a large Weapons Capsule). Mop up the resistance, grab what you need, and then take the ladder up.

In the next area there are four Beaks stacked on top of one and other guarding a large Power Pellet. Switch to Elec Beam and get into position above the Beaks. They will all open up and fire at you before you are able to get to where you need be, but if you keep moving you won't be hit. Once you're where you need to be, wait for the Beaks to open again, and blast them all to kingdom come with one well-placed shot. Considering the fact that you probably haven't taken much damage at this point (see previous footnote), nabbing the Pellet that the Beaks were guarding is probably a

moot point. But it's there if you need it. Moving right along.

At the top of the ladder, you get to meet Sniper Joe! He'll come bounding in from the left. Joe's got a shield like Picket Man does, but in this case there's nothing in your arsenal you can use to penetrate his defense, forcing you to wait until he drops his guard in order to damage him. Unfortunately, Sniper Joe will be shooting back at you. I recommend your regular Plasma Cannon or Elec Beam to eliminate this threat. Sniper Joe will also jump around occasionally, and while airborne he is also vulnerable to attack.

Past Joe-boy you'll come to another series of platforms identical to the ones you encountered while dodging the Bomb-Oms. Only this time each platform will have a Beak attached to it and Killer Bullets will constantly be flying in from the right. Blaze your way through this until you reach the next series of platforms. This area is guarded by Spines and also has the ladder up to the next area.

Once you have finished climbing, this next stretch might prove a bit difficult. There's a series of jumps you have to make over a small ditch-like area. Sound benign? Well, half of the floor is lined with spikes. Not enough of a challenge? How about jumping to these platforms while avoiding those darn Killer Bullets? Best bet here is to dodge a Bullet when it flies onto the screen, and then follow it across the pit. Another Bullet will not fly onto the screen so long as the first one is still on-screen. Reach the ladder and climb out.

More spiky fun awaits you at the top. Hop from platform to platform while dodging the Floating Shells their gunfire. Scale the ladder and drop down the shaft to your right, veering right as you go to drop to the ledge below. Once you've reached the shaft the Shells stop coming. Another Sniper Joe will hop out to play here. Since he's on a level below you, switch to Elec Beam and electrify him with your shots when he drops his guard. After disposing of Joe-boy, go and see what he was guarding: a 1-Up! Backtrack to the hole and fall the rest of the way down.

To the right of this area is the entryway to Bomb Man's lair. A final Sniper Joe guards the door. Since this one is above you, deal with him in the same manner you handled the previous Sniper Joe, and then enter.

Bomb Man's hallway is a vertical shaft with a ladder running down the middle of it. This one is guarded by eight (count 'em, EIGHT!) Octopus Batteries. You can either drop to your confrontation (which will get you hit a time or two) or you can take the slow and steady way, and climb down shooting the Octos as you go (again, I recommend Elec Beam). Either way, the final robot master awaits you at the bottom.

Bomb Man - Bomb Man, as his name implies, throws bombs at you. He also leaps around the room like a cracked-out spider monkey. The bombs are really not that hard to avoid. They don't actually do any damage to you until they explode, so use this to your advantage as you dodge around the room. Bomb Man aims his throws so that the explosives will land exactly where you're standing. The strategy here is obvious: move. The danger in this encounter comes when Bomby buddy decides to jump around more than use his explosives. His movements are a little more difficult to predict this way than some of the other robot masters. If you take substantial damage from this fight, it's probably going to come from Bomb Man running into you rather than being caught by a bomb blast.

Either way, you've faced tougher fights than this so far. Like Fire Man,

Bomb Man is rather resilient to his weakness so this can be a protracted fight. Should you be facing him with less than full energy things might get a little hairy. If he cooperates, you should back away from him as he throws his bombs, taking potshots as you retreat. When you run out of space to back off, start moving back towards him. Ideally, moving away will make the bombs explode harmlessly behind you, and heading towards him will have the explosives sailing over your head. If he tries to stomp on you like a Goomba, remember Fire Storm creates a shield of flame around you every time you shoot it. This hurts him just as much as getting nailed with the fireball does, though you will take damage as well. Once that fight is finished, you'll have the tools, the talent, and the means to take on Dr. Wily.

So what are you waiting for? Let's get to it Mega Man.

DR. WILY'S FORTRESS, LEVEL 1

ROBOT MASTER: ROCK MONSTER

WEAKNESS: Elec Beam (7 Hits)

The beginning of the end starts now. But before we kick things off, let me reiterate something I mentioned earlier in this FAQ. Remember how you'd get a full refill on all your special weapons each time you finished a level? Well, kiss that advantage goodbye. These last four levels are played back to back, and there's no recharging between them. Should you use a weapon's energy completely, it will remain dry until you find the Weapons Capsules to recharge it. Strategic refilling of your specials is a must from now on in, so keep that in mind.

This level starts out with a bang, as the first thing you'll come across is a trio of Big Eyes. But NOW, he he.... NOW you have ICE ARROW! Freeze the bastards then blast them to bits while they can't move. Proceed and use Guts Power to break into the fortress. Since you need to conserve your energy, jump and snag the top block first to open a path. That way, you only need to use Guts Power three times. Next use Ice Arrow to freeze the Flame Spouts, effectively making them steps to the ladder out of here. Scroll forward slowly so there's only one Flame Spout on the screen at a time. It's far too easy to hit two of them with one shot when they're all visible, and if that happens it is nearly impossible that they will all be the proper height.

In the next room, climb to the top of the ladder and then drop down the gap to your left. Aim for the first platform (obviously), take two quick hops to the third platform, and leap to the ladder to climb out. Unless you've already gotten yourself seriously injured, I'd advise not going after the Power Pellet stashed near the ceiling. The placing of the alcove it is in makes jumping up there very tricky, and you really can't use the Magnet Beam to make it any easier. Add that to the fact that if you botch the jump, you're on a one-way ticket to a bed of spikes and just say no.

A group of Fleas will attack once you reach the top of the ladder here. Moving on to the right will reveal another Large Power Pellet, blocked off by two Guts Power-movable bricks and guarded by a pair of Fleas. Again, unless you're really, really hurting the Power Pellet isn't worth the time, effort, or energy expenditure to get. Use Guts Power to clear the bricks by the ladder and descend.

Caution on this next area is a must. You'll have a constant flow of Killer Bullets coming at you as you hop across a spike-lined pit. Remember, even though Mega Man gets a few seconds of invincibility immediately after he's been jacked by something, that god-like status doesn't transfer to touching

spikes. Walk softly, and when you've made it across take the ladder down.

Now we're gonna have some fun. This next room is lined, top and bottom, with spikes. The game would like you to attempt to cross this little slice of hell by hopping from Foot Holder to Foot Holder. Join me in giving the game the finger. Bust out Magnet Beam and use that to get through this mess. Be careful as you go of course; don't build so many magnet steps that you'll accidentally skewer yourself on the ceiling spikes. And of course don't allow the platforms to evaporate out from under you. Keep Magnet Beam selected when you reach the other side, since there's a pair of Weapons Capsules and you'll need to recharge Magnet Beam almost fully in order to pass the next area.

(Perhaps I should have placed this in secrets, since I'm almost positive this wasn't intentional on the programmer's part, but there's actually an interesting little trick here you can pull before you move on. After you've collected the Weapons Capsules and have climbed to the next room, go back down the ladder. Lo and behold! The Capsules have returned! Now refilling Magnet Beam is no problem, but why stop there? Use this little feature to refill all your special weapons before moving on.)

Ah, this room wasn't designed with the Magnet Beam in mind or anything. By the way, I'm being sarcastic. Obviously there's no way through this area without resorting to that trusty device. Shoot beams back and forth as you scale the shaft where you start, then create a series of platforms to reach the ladder up and out of this room. Once you enter the next room, switch to Elec Beam. There's nothing in this room to threaten you, but exiting to the right leads to one of the hardest boss fights of all time. Ready? Deep breath! And exit stage right.

Rock Monster - This is THE hardest Mega Man boss ever conceived, bar none. (That sentence was written before I got the joy of playing against King in Mega Man and Bass, so it's outdated. But this is still one hell of a fight.) It's also one of the most difficult boss fights I've ever encountered in any video game, and I've played a lot of them.

Once you enter the Rock Monster's room, he'll begin to fly in from the left piece by rotten piece. Only the bottom two rows of body pieces need to be jumped over, but since you can't really see what's coming next until it sails on-screen at Mach 2, dodging these parts is extremely hard and frustrating. You DO NOT want to be hit by bits of the Rock Monster; they hurt real bad and this is going to be a long fight no matter how you cut it. You need to take as little damage as possible during this opening, as difficult as that is. Once Rocky has completely assembled himself, he'll open a single red, beady eye, pop off a shot at you, and then warp to the other side of the room in the same manner he made his dramatic appearance. Dodging him from this point on gets slightly easier since you can tell which body hunk is getting ready to streak past you. Complicating things though is the fact that the room you do battle in is about a quarter smaller all other boss chambers, and the Rock Monster takes up almost fully half of that space.

There's no easy way through this. His eye is the key. When the Rock Monster opens up his ruby red, jump and blast it with Elec Beam. Elec Beam is the only weapon that does significant damage to this nightmare, but there's bad news about this too. Elec Beam fires so slowly, you'll only be able to hit him once before he goes back into warp mode, which means more waiting, dodging, and a better chance of this pile of crap killing you before you can kill him. And if you can believe it, there are even MORE problems than that. Though Elec Beam does have a large damage corridor, the wavy motion

of the shot could make you miss all together since the Rock Monster's eye is actually a pretty small target. Making aiming even more difficult is the fact the eye itself doesn't stay put; it opens up in different places every time the Rock Monster finishes his warp.

In a nutshell, this is one seriously tough battle. You're going to need quite a bit of skill, a big hunk of speed, and a little luck to make it through in one piece.

DR. WILY'S FORTRESS, LEVEL 2

ROBOT MASTER: CLONE

WEAKNESS: NONE

Well, now that you're past the Rock Monster, you're done with the hardest part of the game. That's including Dr. Wily, but more on that later.

The start of this level involves platforms and Bladers. Caution is a must here, as the Bladers seem to be programmed to attack at the most inconvenient possible moments. Being smacked usually winds up knocking you off a platform to your death. There's a small Power Pellet on a lower level about halfway across this first pit. Once you reach the first building, head down the tunnel and pause for a moment. (You I mean, not the game necessarily.) You'll see a pair of Weapons Capsules at the far side of this hallway. But there's a section in the floor here that's false. You can either use bombs to search around and find the drop, or opt for the easier way and activate Magnet Beam to grab these goodies. Once that's done, deliberately fall through the floor.

It's Cut Man again! And this time you won't have any bricks handy to drop him like a bad habit. Unload on him with your Plasma Cannon and dodge any blades he heaves your way. Your shots still knock Cut Man back each time they hit, allowing you to keep your distance. Since Cut Man won't jump unless he's close, you ought to be able to take him down in no time flat. After Cutty's been put away permanently, a section in the floor at the far left of the chamber will become passable. Head over to it and drop down to the next level.

We've got another pair of catwalks here, this time guarded by Screw Bombers. Cross these platforms to the next building. Again, we have the same set up as last time, though the gap in the floor isn't quite in the same place (oh, those sneaky Capcom programmers). Grab the Weapons Capsules, switch to Cut Blade, and drop down into the next room. Elec Man will greet you here. Take him out in the same manner you did earlier, and then drop through his floor to the next area.

Yet another series of platforms greets you as your toes touch down. Small Weapons Capsules are on the lower ledges and Bomb-Omps pop out of the pits to pepper the platforms with a profusion of powerful pellets. Sometimes I really impress myself with sentences like that. Anyway, just keep moving to the right and you've got a reasonable chance of getting out of here without a single hit. Once you reach the next building, climb down ladder and drop to the next area.

An area which is filled with Octopus Batteries. Use Magnet Beam to snag the 1-Up on the little floating island at the left of the screen if you feel like it before moving downward. Again, with your enemies being positioned mostly above or below you, Elec Beam is the ideal weapon to clear these next few screens. Two screens down from the 1-Up room, you'll come across four Beaks stacked against the wall and a large Weapons Capsule. Wait for the Beaks to all be open, then smash all four at once with one shot from

Elec Beam. Gather up the Weapons Capsule once the coast is clear. I suggest refilling Magnet Beam because there's another area coming up where the thing absolutely NEEDS to be used, but what you recharge is up to you. The last room before the boss has three Octos and a lone Beak. Pass that, and get ready for another seriously tough fight.

Clone - As you enter this colorful room, two devices will lower onto the screen. One hovers above your head and the other hangs sullenly a few feet away. The power comes on. It jolts through your body, it lights up the background...and it makes a perfect copy of yourself. Yes, fortress boss fight 2 is a Mega Man clone. And this is an extremely hard fight as well.

First off, the Clone isn't particularly fazed by anything you fire at it. All of the special weapons hurt him; they just don't hurt very much. Whatever weapon you're using, the Clone will automatically copy you. If you're shooting Elec Beam, he'll be shooting Elec Beam. Switch to Fire Storm, and the unoriginal bastard will switch to that as well. All things considered, since he's a copycat that's not too surprising. Now here's where the game takes the bullet train to Cheapville and steals all the nachos too. While your special weapons barely scratch his paint job, all of HIS special weapons hit you like a baseball bat made of titanium. In addition, touching this jackass hurts almost as much as being shot by him. And finally, the Clone gets the same invincibility grace period that you do when he's hit. You actually have to wait a moment between shots before you can hurt him again.

The best thing to do here is go with Elec Beam (again). The Clone will try to leap over your shots, but the length and the motion of Elec Beam will negate this attempt. Also, though he gets a few seconds of invulnerability, he also suffers from the same knock-back factor that you do. Another thing that will work in your favor in this fight is that the Clone won't shoot at you unless he's closer than half the screen away. Head to the far left side of the screen, stand and deliver. You're not going to come out of this fight unscathed, but the point is you'll come out of the fight. It will take a whopping 14 hits, but when all's said and done it's game over for him and game on for you.

DR. WILY'S FORTRESS, LEVEL 3

ROBOT MASTER: BUBBLE BOYS

WEAKNESS: GUTS POWER (1 Hit A Piece)

Level 3 of Dr. Wily's hideout looks like you've decided to jump into his septic system; the area you drop down into looks like nothing so much as a great, big sewage pipe. And it is. Maybe Mega Man thinks that there's no way Dr. Wily can effectively dominate the world with his toilet clogged. More alarming than that, it seems Dr. Wily deemed his plumbing such a vital area of his fortress that he actually has a contingent of security guards stationed there.

Three Octopus Batteries greet you at the outset. I'd normally suggest Elec Beam, but since that's probably either very low or exhausted after your fight with the Clone, switch to Cut Blade instead.

The next three screens involve you, Octopus Batteries, and Screw Bombers. Deal with these in your favorite manner, or simply jog past if you're not feeling confrontational. At the bottom of the shaft, the pipe makes a hard right. Follow it, and after a little jogging a wall of water will fill the tube, sweeping in from behind to push you to the right. Stop running; the water will push where you need to go just fine, and hustling along will get you hit by the Pengs that start flying in. Halfway through the tube, the

Pengs will switch to Killer Bullets. Keep annihilating everything that comes your way, and eventually, the water will sweep you right to the boss's room.

Bubble Boys - When you enter this boss's area, you'll notice a pile of tossable rocks sitting in the middle of the chamber. The programmers wouldn't have put those there unless they meant for you to use them, so switch to Guts Power. The Bubble Boys will enter the room via the three holes on the walls, one on the roof and one on either side of the chamber. They will float in singularly and begin to circle the room, firing bubble shots at you the whole time. There are seven in total, and they start moving faster and faster the more of them you break.

As said, switch to Guts Power and pick up the first brick. When the first Bubble Boy makes his appearance, smack him with your rock and he'll go down in one hit. Repeat three more times with the remaining bricks, and then switch to your Plasma Cannon. Gun down the remaining three Bubble Boys and you've won this fight. After dealing with the Rock Monster and that stupid Clone, this battle is sort of anti-climactic.

DR. WILY'S FORTRESS, LEVEL 4

ROBOT MASTER: DR. WILY

WEAKNESS: FIRE STORM (2-7 HITS), ELEC BEAM (14 Hits)

You begin things on a platform flanked by spikes, with some floating ledges leading to a ladder above you. Don't give in to the temptation to head straight for the ladder, because Watchers will fly onto the screen after a few moments pause. Use 'Watcher Tactics' tm! Then head up and out. Six more Watchers will attack you as you are climbing onto the next screen. Stay at the bottom first and use your Plasma Cannon to take out the lower group, and then gun down the upper group as they fly within range. Be careful here. One slight smack and you'll lose your grip on the ladder, causing you to fall. Not recovering spells Mega Man shish kebab on the spikes below.

Use Guts Power to acquire the large Weapons Capsule at the top of the bricks. Like the d~~id~~or? I've noted that Dr. Wily seems to have an unhealthy obsession with Guts Man. Most alarming about this is the fact that these halls of the fortress aren't the only place he displays it, as you will find out if you play further into the game series. Wily is really a very sick, sick man with a sick, sick.... uh... sickness. But never mind. The next area has Screw Bombers, past that are another set of ladders that lead to your next challenge.

Remember those lovely rail cars on Guts Man's stage? Well here's one with a doozie of a drop. Over a virtual forest of spikes to boot. Obviously there's no way you can jump this. Resort to the Magnet Beam again to cross without risk. Get on top of the tiny block in the center of the rail ride first, and then use Magnet Beam again from here to reach the next platform to your right. Now, if you feel you have enough strength and power to get through the next several fights, take the teleporter to the right. If you're doubtful and in need a bit of a recharge, climb down the ladder as far as you can and wait for the rail car to return. When it comes back from the left, drop onto it and hop off to the platform with the 1-Up. Then use Magnet Beam to reach the next platform over which holds the Yashichi. This will completely recharge your life as well as every one of your special weapons. Use Magnet Beam to get back to the ledge with the teleporter and step into it.

Oh you didn't really think that the game was going throw Elec Man and Cut Man back at you without the other four, did you? Not hardly! After

entering the teleporter, you'll be whisked to a chamber with Bomb Man. Take him out the same way you did earlier, then step back into the teleporter to face the next challenge. You'll tackle Fire Man and then Ice Man in the same manner. You can take out the first three revisited robot masters in exactly the same way you handled them the first time. But when you encounter Guts Man again, use your Bomb Bomber for optimum effect (3 hits is all it takes).

Teleporting out of the last master room will bring you to the final hallway in the game. There's one last large Weapons Capsule here. The two weapons you are going to need for this fight are Fire Storm and Elec Beam, so recharge one of those before stepping over the threshold and into the final confrontation.

Dr. Wily - As you may have expected, an old, evil scientist isn't much of a match for a super-powered android with a gun on his arm. So Wily isn't going to fight you directly. Instead, he pilots this huge, nasty looking machine that's armored and armed to the teeth.

During the first half of this fight, the ship has a nose cannon that fires out fairly large bullets in an arc at regular intervals. The gunfire isn't just spray and pray, and will track you as you move around to avoid it. The ship also isn't stationary, flying back and forth and making hitting it without getting shot in return rather difficult.

Kick things off here with Fire Storm. The craft's weak point is its nose cannon. Jumping and shooting it will hurt, but you can land multiple hits if you jump and make sure the flaming shield contacts the hit zone. After seven hits, the outer shell will blow off revealing Dr. Wily's cockpit and now the real fun begins.

In this form, Wily's ship will launch an energy ball at you at regular intervals. But the ball isn't boring enough to simply be energetic. No, it spirals as it flies across the screen making it extremely difficult to dodge. Also like the Clone, Wily's ship doesn't seem to be particularly vulnerable to any of your special weapons. The break point on the ship in this final incarnation is the cockpit itself.

Switch to your old stand-by, Elec Beam. What you need to do here is stay at the far left of the screen, jump, and shoot Wily in his craft's weak spot. The nature of Elec Beam makes it difficult to miss, so that's one less thing to worry about. The hard part here is, as I said, is dodging the blasts that Wily's firing at you. Try to time your attacks with his. If done right Wily will fire at you while you're in the air, causing the energy ball to sail harmlessly over your head when you land. 14 zaps with Elec Beam and you've won the day!

7) SECRETS

MEGA DAMAGE---The fact that there's a pause function in this Mega Man and no others lends itself to a very interesting glitch, one that allows you to take down some of the toughest bosses in one hit. This only works with weaponry that isn't absorbed by your target when it hits, like Cut Blade and Elec Beam. When you nail an enemy with one of these weapons, rapidly press the Select button to pause and unpaue the game. What happens is that every little twitch the shot makes will register as a full hit. And let me tell you, it

is a GREAT feeling killing the Rock Monster or the Clone in one shot.

CONTINUING THE FUN---The fortress levels of Mega Man can be hard to slug through, particularly in light of the fact that your special weapons will constantly be dwindling. There is, however, an easy way to counteract this. Each time you finish a level, deliberately lose all your lives at the outset of the next one, then select Continue from the Continue Screen. Look at that! You'll begin at the beginning of the level you committed suicide on, and ALL OF YOUR WEAPONS WILL BE REFILLED! Cheap, yet effective.

8) IN MY OPINION...

In 2007, Mega Man turned 20. This series has been with us for an awful long time, and even though there hasn't been a new Mega Man title in almost three years, it remains one of the best-loved series of all-time. There's just so much personality in the series, from the cartoony and straight forward regular series to the dark and rather adult world of Mega Man X, to the Legends series where old faces and new villains tried very hard to make you believe you were actually playing an anime. That's not even counting the untold spin-off titles that range from goofy to bizarre, like Soccer, Power Battles, and Battle and Chase. But none of this would have happened without that very first game, that first Mega Man that got the ball rolling. And that's what we're here to examine.

Mega Man is an old game, and it shows that in almost every way. This is not all together bad, but it's far from great either. For the time that the game was released, Mega Man actually had quite a bit of detail in its enemies and especially its backgrounds. All of the characters you encounter have a rather neat-looking anime style to them, most noticeable in their freakishly huge eyes. While most of the robotic baddies Dr. Wily throws your way aren't even human in shape, the masters in particular got a lot of attention to detail that could have just as easily been over-looked. These guys have personality, from Elec Man's cocky grin, to Cut Man's nasty scowl.

In the game play department, Mega Man is what I would consider a typical platforming title. Meaning the action is pretty much all kinetic; shoot bad guys, leap over pits, run past obstacles to reach the goal. There were dozens of these already on the market at the time it debuted, and dozens came out afterward. Mega Man took this very successful formula and added several elements that at the time were truly revolutionary. First, the programmers allowed you to pick the order in which you tackled the game rather than tossing a set series of stages at you. This went hand in hand with the other unique feature; the ability to take your defeated enemies powers and making said powers hurt your foes to a greater or a lesser degree than your standard weapon. These two features combined allow you to try playing through the game in any number of ways, greatly increasing the replay value.

Now, since there's nothing but gunfire and explosions, in the sound department there isn't much to nitpick. Arguably, weapons discharge and destruction are the two most common NES sounds in the universe. But the music...the MUSIC! The individual level themes from the Mega Man series are some of the most well-known, frequently re-mixed tunes in the gaming world, right up they're with Castlevania and Final Fantasy. Granted, this was

Capcom's first attempt, so the beats aren't as good as some of their later work. But still, I guarantee you'll get a track or two stuck in your brain. In the world of video games, the name Mega Man means you're in for a good soundtrack.

Mega Man is also a very difficult title, debatably the hardest Mega Man in the core series (written before 9 came out so, whoops, spoke too soon). The bosses you encounter during Dr. Wily's levels are insanely hard when compared to virtually any other boss character in any other Mega Man title. In particular the Rock Monster. I know for a fact this beast gets resurrected for Mega Man 3 and the Game Boy version of Mega Man 5 (and probably in several other games as well), and neither fight in those later titles is as remotely difficult as the original. In fact, I think it could be safely said that so long as you don't use the Mega Damage glitch the Rock Monster is the hardest single Mega Man fight, period. High difficulty attracts some people, but it repels quite a few others. The difficulty curve spikes after you reach the final four levels, and it wouldn't surprise me in the least to find out that most people can breeze through the first six stages, but throw their hands in the air when faced with the Clone or the Rock Monster.

If I had to select one area to pick on besides how damn hard it is, I would have to say that the controls show a definite lack of refinement. As detailed above in the 'Mechanics' section, playing through Mega Man does suffer as a direct result of this. Once you get used to them it's a cakewalk to compensate. But the fact of the matter is control problems can and do drive people away from games before they can get into them. Mega Man isn't crippled by these flaws, but not being aware of the way certain things work can lead to untimely deaths, deaths that shouldn't have happened.

Mega Man's a landmark game for the ideas it brought to the NES as well as being the starting point for one of the most successful game franchises in history. This first title has been outclassed in every category by its descendants; graphics, storyline, control, sound, music, it has all gotten better. But that's what later generations are supposed to do, make older ones look like crap. That's what everyone who's just turning 18 is doing these days to me, why should games be any different. Now I'm bitter... But the point is everything has to start somewhere. And as a beginning to something absolutely wonderful, Mega Man is solid gold.

8 out of 10.

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9) ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND LEGAL MUMBO-JUMBO

Thank you Capcom for still being the best game company out there. You rock! I seem to remember writing some idiotic letter when I was 12 asking you to end the Mega Man series. I'm glad I was deservedly ignored, though in my defense that is far from the stupidest thing I've ever done.

This FAQ was, unlike my others where I had to do some research, entirely written by me in every way, shape and form. So don't mess with it. Once again, I did turn to GameFAQS to see if there were any codes or cheats hidden within the game's plastic hulk. I came up with a glitch that I couldn't get to work and the 'Select' trick that I can remember reading about YEARS ago in like the first or second issue of Nintendo Power ever. So whoever's responsible for making that trick general knowledge, gracias.

All trademarks and copyrights contained in this document are owned by their respective trademark and copyright holders. I took creative

liberties with a few of the enemy and weapon names since I can't find any source that agrees on what the hell to call them, as well as with the back story. Let's face it; the first Mega Man's story was pretty inconsequential to the activity of going around and shooting evil robots to pieces.

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Comments, questions, corrections and other forms of feedback in general are all welcome.

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Until we meet again.

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