Samba De Amigo FAQ

by Mark Green   Updated to v0.3 on May 23, 2000

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Vestigial Samba De Amigo FAQ (version 0.3)

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1. The controller
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  So, you forked out whatever stupid amount your local importer was asking
for the Controller Set?  Here's the info on the Maracas controller.


1.1  Building the controller
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  This is straightforward enough, but I'll mention it here just in case.

-  Unfold the orange "Samba de Amigo" mat.
-  Get the two velcro stickers and stick them, velcro upwards, on the
   marked-off squares on the mat.
-  Unwrap the sensor bar, and use the velcro already on the bottom of it
   to stick it to the mat.
-  Unpack the two maracas and plug them both into the slots on the back of
   the sensor bar.
-  Plug the sensor bar into your Dreamcast and you're set to Samba!

1.2  How the controller works.. and getting used to it
------------------------------------------------------

  It'll probably take you a little while to get used to the Maracas
controller in play.  Here's a few tips:
  On the sensor bar, at the left and right edges, you'll see two little
sets of holes; those are signal sensors.  If you look at the Maracas
controller you'll see there's a device that resembles a two-to-one cable
connector halfway along the cable for each: in fact, that unit holds a
transmitter which points downwards as you hold the maraca.  The game uses
the signal, send from the maracas to the bar, to work out where you're
holding the maracas.  THERE ARE NO SENSORS IN THE FLOOR MAT!  The mat
is just there to mark off an area for you to stand in that's easily
seen by the sensors.
  If you find problems with control, then:
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- Make sure your feet are lined up with the feet on the mat and that you're
  facing the same direction as them.
- Make sure neither of the transmitters is caught on anything or similar.
  If you're listening to the music on headphones, make sure their cable
  hasn't got tangled in with the maracas cables.
- Make sure you're not holding either maraca out of range of the sensor. If
  the game doesn't get a signal from a maraca, it assumes it's still in the
  place where it last saw it, so this is probably what's happening if you
  find one of them won't register moving at all.

   Also bear in mind: you do NOT need to make all gestures on the right with
the right maraca or all gestures on the left with the left maraca. Sometimes
you'll have to hold them both on one side.
   There are two buttons on the maracas. The button on the right maraca
(ie, the one that's plugged into the right hand port on the sensor bar:
be careful your wires aren't crossed over!) is the start or select button;
the button on the left is cancel. The right button is also used for
pausing. To use menus with the maracas, hold the left maraca high, middle,
or low to choose the item on the menu; to scroll the menu, hold the left
maraca high or low for a short while and wait for the scrolling to kick in.

2 Menus and modes
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2.1 Main menu

   The main menu is as follows:

   Arcade
   Original
   Challenge
   Party
   Training
   Internet
   Options

ARCADE MODE: The standard game. Play 1 or 2 stages of Samba action.

ORIGINAL MODE: Same as arcade mode but with new music and maraca patterns.

CHALLENGE MODE: See section 4.

PARTY MODE: See section 5.

TRAINING MODE: Play a piece of music of your choice.

INTERNET MODE: Not applicable.

2.2 Option menu

OPTION MODE: Opens the option menu, which is:
   Game
   Hiscore
   Play record
   Sound type
   Sound test
   Effects
   DC Controller adjust

Maraca Controller adjust
      File select

Game: Three options: Game Level, Stages, and Continue. Continue is on/off;
   Game Level sets the overall difficulty, and Stages lets you choose how
   many stages to allow on each difficulty setting.
Hiscore, playrecord: Display the appropriate details.
Sound type: Stereo or mono. Default is stereo.
Effects: On or off. Default is off. When on, the game plays maraca
   sounds. If you have the maraca controller, you don't need this, since
   the controllers are actual maracas as well and make their own sound.
DC Controller adjust: Choose the buttons to map to the maraca inputs.
Maraca Controller adjust: Assign a height offset for detecting the maracas.
File select: Change the active memory card file. You do not need to
explicitly save or load data; the game does that automatically.

3 Game play
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   Once you're playing, the objective of the game is to shake the maracas
in time with the music as instructed on the screen.
   The screen shows pads at six positions; high, medium, and low on both left
and right. A series of dots will emerge from the centre of the display and
move towards the pads. You must shake a maraca on the appropriate side and
at the appropriate height when the dot hits the pad. The word "Yeah!" will
pop up next to the pad when you shake successfully. If you miss too
badly, the word "Boo!" will pop up instead. If you're boring and you don't
have the maraca controller, just hit the appropriate direction on the
digital joystick or buttons instead.
   On occasion, a long stream of RED dots will appear instead of the blue
ones. When this happens, you must shake the appropriate maraca as fast as
you can, making sure to stop shaking at the right moment. In this case,
you are judged on the timing with which you start and stop shaking the
maraca, as well as how fast you shake it during the period.
   Also occasionally, a pose event will occur. A box will appear in the
centre of the pads showing a stick-person posing with the maracas in
certain positions. You should try and duplicate that pose as much as
possible. Since there are no sensors in the mat, the game actually only
cares about the position of the maracas, so you don't have to move your
feet to match the indicator. You have a few seconds to get into the pose,
after which the game will check if the maracas are in the right place or
not.
   Successfully shaking, or posing, will increase the Rank Gauge at the top
of the screen, and increase your rank. Missing will lower the Rank Gauge
and lower your rank. Your rank determines the animation shown in the
background; typically, the higher your rank, the more will be going on
and the happier Samba (the monkey) will be. If the Rank Gauge is ever
completely empty, you will fail the stage, Samba breaks down in tears,
and your game will be over.
   A sequence of successful shakes is called an Amigo. Every shake you
successfully make increases your Amigo count (if it's a shake with both
maracas at once, that's 2 on the Amigo count!). When your Amigo count
exceeds 10, it will be displayed in the centre of the indicator. If you
miss a single shake, your Amigo resets to 0. Scoring high Amigos has a
cumulative effect on the Rank Gauge.
   When you complete the stage, you will be shown your score, your final
Rank, and your Max Amigo value (the highest Amigo score you attained
during the stage).

4 Challenge Mode

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   In challenge mode, you undertake a series of special tasks to prove
yourself "Maracas Great King!"
   After selecting your height, you'll be given a list of all the levels of
challenge available. At first, only the first will be available, but
completing that will unlock the next one down and so on. After choosing
your level, choose from the challenges available. The challenges are
as follows:

LEVEL 1 (Maracas Hopeful):
   Challenge 1: Play "Samba De Janeiro" successfully and finish with a rank
     of C or higher.
   Challenge 2: Play "Mambo beat" successfully and finish with a rank of B
     or higher.
   Challenge 3: Play "Take on me" successfully and finish with a rank of A.

LEVEL 2: (Maracas ?): ?
LEVEL 3: (Maracas Expert): ?
LEVEL 4: (Maracas Master): ?
LEVEL 5: (Maracas Great King): ?

5 Party Mode
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   This offers a set of three modes specially made for party play. The
three options are:

   Battle
   Love-Love
   Mini Games

   All of these games are best played by two players, but you can play them
all 1-player too.

BATTLE: Pick a piece and play it. You have a bomb in the centre of your
   playfield. As you accumulate Amigo, the bomb will get bigger and bigger.
   When it is maximum size, you will send it to your opponent and it will
   damage them. Damage is indicated by the bar at the top of the screen.
   However, if you make a mistake, your bomb will go out and you will have to
   start expanding it again. Also, if the opponent bombs you, your own bomb
   will go out.

LOVE LOVE: In basic terms, this is a two-player mode in which the two
   players share a single Rank Gauge and cooperate with each other. However,
   after the game, the game will display a "LOVE RANKING" based on your final
   score. Quite what this means I'm not sure. (Especially what it means
   if you were playing 1-player.)

MINI GAMES: There are five of these. Initially, you'll get two options:
   the top one is "Total Check Mode" (play all 5 and look at the result)
   and "1 Stage Mode" (play just 1). Then, if you chose 1 stage mode, you'll
   pick a game. The games, in the order they are on the menu, are:

   WHACK A MOLE: Exactly that. The six maraca positions represent holes;
     shake a maraca there to whack the mole when it pops up there.

   POWER RUSH: Similar to Whack a Mole, except that now, only one mole
     pops up at a time - but that mole is a ROCK, and you have to shake the
     maraca quickly to destroy it!

1, 2, SAMBA: (This is a pun in Japanese, where it's pronounced "Ichi,
      Ni, San-ba"; "Ichi, Ni, San" is "1, 2, 3" in Japanese.) In each
      round, the numbers 1 to 3, plus a bomb, will pop up in the maraca
      positions. Shake the maraca in the three numbered positions in
      order. Shaking in the wrong place will do nothing, unless you shake
      on the bomb, in which case you will fail the round.

    POSE AND POSE: Exactly what it sounds like. A long series of pose
      challenges.

    MONKEY REPLAY: Similar to the standard game, except that the game will
      play a sequence, and then you must play the same sequence back again.
      Also, the sequences will consist of really (really) weird sound
      effects! :)

    If you play 1 stage, you go back to the first menu after one game; if you
    play Total Check mode, you go through all five games in that order, and
    then a ranking will be displayed in terms of five values. From the top
    left, clockwise, these are: Kishi (Whack a mole), Power (Power Rush),
    Speed (1 2 Samba), Appearance (Pose and Pose) and Energy (Monkey Replay).

6. Miscellany
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6.1. Downloadable songs

  The facility exists for additional Samba de Amigo songs to be downloaded
from the Internet. The site is http://samba.dricas.ne.jp/. Connect there
using the Internet option and you can download additional songs..
  .. the only problem being that the Internet option won't work for most
importers, because it requires you to have DreamPassport set up and
registered, and I don't think a way has been found of doing that since
DreamPassport was revised.
  In practice, I doubt that the songs themselves are being downloaded. Even
if they were MP3, an MP3 would be at least around the 1mb mark and that's
BEFORE graphical cues and maraca patterns. It's far more likely that
what's downloaded is a signal that causes the DC to add the extra music
to the menus, and the music itself is already on the GDROM. It's
vaguely possible that a MIDI file could be sent (and this might even be
possible since a lot of the downloadable music is Sega retro console
stuff) but it seems unlikely to me..
  You *can* connect to the site with a PC (if you get lots of little boxes
when you try to do so, you just need to obtain a Japanese font), but you
can't download the song files: the server gives a Permission Denied error,
and one of the Japanese notes below the buttons reads: "This file cannot be
downloaded except by using Samba De Amigo.". (It's probably checking the
User-Agent field in the request.) Further, downloading a file from there
would probably not do much good anyway; the file sent probably isn't an
uploadable .vms save file but just a special signal which is recognised by
Samba.
  So, is there no hope? Well, I'm not sure. It may be possible to access
the extra music by the same method as in MvC2 and Power Stone 2 - namely,
modifying the save data in the memory card. Unfortunately, I can't report
on this because I don't have the necessary kit and NOBODY IN THE UK SELLS
INNOVATION MEMORY CARDS!! (If anyone knows where to get one, please tell
me.)
  By luck and flaw, I've gotten some information together on this. Firstly:
you can download DCI versions of the first four music files at
http://www.dreamcast.pe.kr/vm/. Since I don't have the memory card, I

haven't tried these, but I have looked at the DCI files with an editor,
and what I found was rather surprising: they apparently contain nothing at
all!

  No kidding. If we follow CJayC's DCI format description from the MvC2
FAQ, the actual data part of the memory card begins at 02A0 in the file.
(Before that is standard header and icon, which appears to be fairly
similar between all the music files, except for the name (SAMBADE1.Dxx,
where xx is 01, 03, 09 and 12 on the files available there) and a couple
of checksum? blocks that differ - one at 0012, one at 0063). At 02A0, *ALL*
there is is a string holding the song name encoded in a weird way, and then
zero-padding up to 041F. The "weird encoding" is achieved by writing the
song name in capitalised ASCIZ, splitting it into groups of four characters
(padding the last group with 0x0s if necessary), reversing each of those
groups, and then putting the groups together in the right order: so,
"SAMBA DE AMIGO" gets padded with zeroes (SAMBA DE AMIGO--, where - is an
0x0 character), split into groups of four (SAMBⅴA DEⅴ AMIⅴGO--), and then
each group is reversed (BMASⅴED AⅴIMA ⅴ--OG), and that (without the
separators) is what's in the VMU file.

  Of course, I don't even know that these are the *real* VMU files, but
could that really be all that's being downloaded? If anyone has any
results with these files, tell me if they work or not.