

# **Retrogaming Times**

## **Issue #33 - May 2000**

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### **Note from the Editor**

This issue will be much shorter and will not have many pictures in it. I have been experiencing internet problems and ordered a DSL line installation, but ran into phone line complications. So there has been a delay in getting it up and running. So I am stuck on a very old computer, that resets at random, while using a very slow modem on a very unstable phone line. The results is a smaller than usual and nearly all text issue of Retrogaming Times. But I didn't want to end my consecutive streak, so I figured a smaller than usual issue is better than none. So enjoy and think of it as a "Retro-Retrogaming Times issue", you know like the early ones that were very short and all text.

### **Cleveland Area Show Gets Confirmed Date!**

The classic game show in my own backyard (not literally, but you know what I mean) has finally been given a date! It is a classic video game and computer show and will be a joint effort of Jim Krych and Mike Gedeon. The show is on June 17th and is FREE! For more information, follow this link:

### **Video Game Songs - The Reader's Choices**

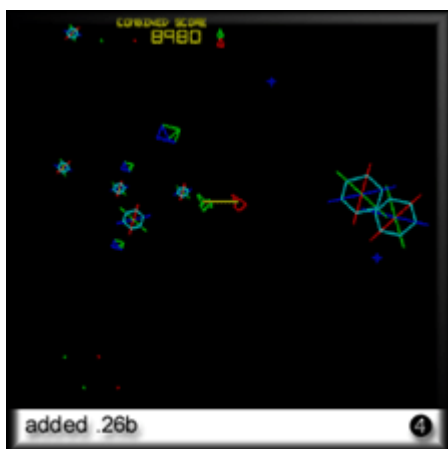
I received a handful of emails for songs that people thought would fit certain games. Some are dead on, some are a little in left field and others are just plain weird. Most people didn't want to be identified, so I didn't put the names of who sent them in. Plus, quite a few of the songs were sent in by numerous people. Many people didn't include the artists name, so if I knew them I added them, otherwise there is just some question marks. If you want credit for it, just email me and I will add it in. So here is the good, the bad and the bizarre!

- \*Robotron - More Human than Human by Rob Zombie
- \*Robotron - Mr. Roboto by Styx
- \*Video Game Industry after 1985 - Turning Japanese by the Vapors
- \*Donkey Kong - Roll out the Barrels by Frankie Yankovich
- \*Donkey Kong - Disco Gorilla by ????
- \*Deadly Duck - Disco Duck by Rick Dees (yes, the same person sent in both of these)
- \*Joust - Fly Away by Lenny Kravitz
- \*Satan's Hollow-Devil Went Down to Georgia by Charlie Daniels
- \*Combat/Frontline/Commando - War by Bruce Springsteen
- \*Rampage - Monster Mash by Boris Pickett
- \*Superman - Superman by the Kinks
- \*Spiderfighter - The Itsy Bitsy Spider by ??? (I nearly bust a gut laughing at this one).
- \*Mousetrap - Cat Scratch Fever by Ted Nugent
- \*Robin Hood - Shoot that Poison Arrow by ABC
- \*Outlaw - I Fought the Law and the Law Won by Bobby Fuller Four

Check back next month for a big list from Alan Hewston.

### **MAME Reviews**

With the internet problems continuing, I have not downloaded the latest MAME for eons. So, I will continue with the older games (actually they all are older games, but you know what I mean). So here are two games that will keep those trigger fingers going!



## [Space Duel](#)

This is one of those fun little games with the vector graphics. It was made by Atari and has a lot in common with Asteroids. Both have you shoot big objects to make them into smaller objects and eventually destroy them. Both have you clearing the screen to go to the next level. There is even similar controls, left/right movement, thrust and shields. But there are some differences or else it would have just been a sequel.

The first difference is the different options. You can play as a single ship or a joined ship. In two player mode, you can have separate ships or one that is connected. While the connected or joined ship is tough to control, it makes for a fun game. In the two player mode, you will learn to cooperate real quick or die even quicker. This is actually a really neat feature and one that you should try out with a friend or loved one.

The graphics are better than the original Asteroids and about on par with Asteroids Deluxe. The two ships are interesting looking, sorta like little ketchup and mustard bottles that you would find at a restaurant. Too bad the designers didn't capitalize on this. We could have had names like "Cosmic Condiments" or "Ketchup/Mustard Massacre". Guess people wouldn't take the game very serious. But it is hard to with a game called Space Duel and you are fighting in ketchup and mustard bottles. Oh well, they missed out on the sponsorship deals with Heinz and French's.

While your ships are a bit silly looking, the enemies are a different breed. You start off with what looks like cosmic wagon wheels. Every time I see them, the old Journey song, "Wheel in the sky, keeps on turning" plays in my head, which is not a good thing. Later on you are greeted by cubes and little ships that are a nuisance. Then there is this block that just comes at you and you have to shoot many times. While I cannot confirm it, I think it may be a guest appearance by Billy the Block, but there is no mention in the credits anywhere (a common problem in his career). Billy could not be reached for comment.

Anyways, the game is fun. As a one player game it is decent. But as a two player it is loads of fun, especially with the joined ships. Try it out with a friend and keep those condiments firing!



## [Timber](#)

Let us make it a theme here. Here is another game that is greatly enhanced with two player mode. For anyone who never heard of this game (and from the very low sales of the machine, less than a thousand, it is probably a lot of people), it was from the same people that gave us Tapper and Domino Man. Even the characters have that same look to them. But unlike the others that shine as single player games, this is really a two player game.

In an attempt to cover every job profession, this classic game put you in the role of the lumberjack. It is your job to cut down all the trees and turn lush forests into barren wastelands. OK, maybe I am being melodramatic, but you really are supposed to cut down every tree in sight. No selective cutting here, if it is a tree, chop it down. You have a timer that counts down and a set number of trees to lay waste to in the allotted time. When the whistle blows, you better hurry as time is running out. It is quite simple to chop the trees and then you can either watch them fall or push them in the direction you want. Then as you reach your allotted time, the foreman comes out and congratulates you. This guy is a brute and will beat you up something fierce, and that is if you do a good job. Fail at your task and boy does he get mad! Think of him as Bobby Knight and you are the poor player who just blew the game.

As I said, it is a decent one player game, but gets tedious after awhile. But add a second player and the game really takes off! Now you are in competition! Whoever gets the most trees, wins the round! So you want to hurry up. But the fun part is that you can be sneaky. First, you can push your tree down onto your opponent or run over and push that tree he just cut down onto him. This will slow him up for a few seconds. You can also push trees so they land in his path and he trips over them. Or run over and get the last cut in that tree he is working on and get credit for it. That is really sneaky.

There are little extras that add to the game. There is a random bird that falls out of a freshly cut tree and runs around like crazy. Grab him for bonus points. I personally think the lumberjack kills him and he goes on the menu the next day, but they never say what happens to him. There is also a bear who throws a beehive at you. Avoid it as bees may make tasty honey, but they will hurt you something awful. You can swing the axe and get rid of the beehive with careful aim. You cannot hurt the bear though. Trust me, I have tried with no luck.

While this game will not get a ton of play, it is a fun little game. Like Space Duel, the one player mode is decent, but nothing special. The two player mode on the other hand is a blast! It is a good way to turn friends into enemies. Just kidding! It is good fun and while they may get a little ticked at you when you drop a tree on their head (can you blame them), they will most likely just do the same to you.

### **The Many Faces of . . . Is Back** **By Alan Hewston**

By popular request, we're bringing back "Many Faces of . . .".

Original author Doug Saxon went to Europe last Summer and then began his Senior year of college. At that time, Doug did not mind if I did a few while he was gone, but I never got around to it, and Tom suggested that we wait. After a year, hopefully Doug does not mind me picking up where he left off, and will give me his blessing to continue.

One significant enhancement I'll add is a review selected 8 bit home computer platforms of each game.

These ARE classic gaming platforms, and I know some of you collect and play them - even if they exist on a floppy disk format. Many good ports can be found on the Commodore 64 & Atari 8 bit computers. There are also many ports on the Vic 20, but don't expect too many medals there. Due to a lack of cartridges for the Apple home computers, and not much fan base for the TI, I will not cover these platforms. Well, mostly because I do not have these platforms, and probably never will.

I'm adding a scoring system, 1 through 10 points, added up for each of 5 categories. The categories will be: **Gameplay**, **Addictiveness**, **Graphics**, **Sound** and **Controls**; as used by our fearless leader in RT issue 30 "Video Game Challenge". A score of "1" is for a complete dud, and a "10" makes it as good as the arcade (when applicable). I plan to include only the final score for each platform. I currently have listed 100+ potential "Many Faces" candidates, the platforms and a place for each score setup on a spreadsheet, which if Tom likes can be at home on the Tomorrow's Heroes site.

I'm also adding a self explanatory line called "Have Nots".

Bah Humbug. Intellivision fans will not rejoice at this column, since most games in that library are unique, to that platform or hard to find. Likewise the Vectrex, Odyssey 2 and Bally Astrocade will get almost no coverage.

Finally, unless I find/trade for several R or ER carts that I do not have, I'll be holding back on some reviews. I'm also hoping to get a CV multi-cart, and see also below for my desire to find more Atari 8 bit games. I hope that you still enjoy this series, and if successful, we have enough games to review for another 8-10 years. Now, on with the show . . .



### **The Many Faces of . . . Q\*bert**

After trading with original author Doug Saxon for the Odyssey 2 version, I am now able to review all but the Atari 8 bit version - which despite finding over 70 8-bit Atari carts, this one has eluded me.

**Platforms: Atari 8bit, 2600, 5200, Bally Astrocade, CV, C64, O2 and Vic 20.**

**Categories: Gameplay, Addictiveness, Graphics, Sound & Controls**

Q\*bert, is definitely a well loved game, with versions (or clones) on nearly every gaming platform know to man. My wife's favorites are the NES and SNES. The Gameplay is really varied on this home classic - from the Atari 2600 version where the red balls are only there when set to "A" difficulty, to the C64 and CV versions which have most of the features covered. One of the strengths of Q\*bert is the way the Gameplay progresses and becomes more and challenging, with levels and rounds. After avoiding Coily and just about to stomp the final block to the target color, out pops one of those green guys and the madness starts all over again. Then there are the rounds where every jump changes the color and you are lucky to survive.

Fortunately, all of the home versions are Addictive, have decent Gameplay, and gradually get harder and harder, to keep you coming back for more. The Graphics varied significantly from the O2, which were very poor, but functional, to the very crisp and clear C64. A couple versions even provide the between-levels tune and demo. The Sound took a backseat on the home platforms. I know that I really do want to hear every jump that Q\*bert, and the bad guys chasing him, make. Since you cannot look everywhere to see UGH and THUGH (sic) coming (out from the bottom corners), hearing is believing.

**Have Nots: Odyssey 2(19), Intellivision(26), Vic 20(31), Atari 5200(31), Atari 8-bit(34)**

All of these are acceptable games, and are very playable relative to their systems. The Odyssey 2 Q\*bert is probably one of the best 5 games on that platform, but not here. In fact, a good "Why is it that" only the good games for the Odyssey have more than one life.

I was depressed that the O2 version did not have more responsive Controls. Not surprisingly, the Controls for the Intellivision and 5200 are a problem. I even used 2 different Intellivision joystick inserts, and a 5200 Wico controller. The 5200 version requires you to push the button for every jump - yech! Maybe there is a 5200 keypad button for each jump direction, and I missed it. A perfect Controls score could have earned the 5200



a medal but not anyone else. What - No Gold for the 5200 version? Those who know Doug will doubt that he'll like my review.

### **Bronze Medal: Atari 2600 (34)**

This version lacks some of the bad guys, so it gets a low Gameplay score. Actually, switching it to "A" difficulty will add in the red balls, but not UGH and THUGH. Overall a very playable port, and adequate in every way. Without having the cart, I am assuming that the superior Atari 8-bit (having no controller problems) would have easily outscored the 2600 for the Bronze, but not too much higher.

### **Silver Medal: Colecovision (40)**

Coming in a close 2<sup>nd</sup>, this version has nothing to be ashamed of. Someone else could give the CV platform the gold medal. It has the most bells and whistles, and the best Gameplay, but the Graphics and Controls were better for the C64.

### **Gold Medal: Commodore 64 (43)**

This port is outstanding. The controls are perfect, not surprising for such a simple game like Q\*bert. The Gameplay is close enough to the arcade, and the Sound and Graphics are great. It is also the most challenging platform to play on.

Come back next time when I plan to review **Commando**.

Alan Hewston is hoping to start collecting Atari 8 bit floppy disk games, which should help in this column.

He has plenty of backup Commodore 64 game disks to trade, for your Atari games. Despite lacking a huge collection, this column will be helped by the existence of multi-carts. Gotta get me a CV one soon.

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### **Video Game Myths, the Classic Edition**

There are a lot of myths that float around classic games and collecting them. There are the usual that everyone knows about like how Pac-Man was originally called Puck-Man and how the Donkey Kong name came about. But these are the not so obvious ones. Some will be controversial and some you may agree with. Feel free to send your input, just be prepared for some serious debating.

#### **Myth #1-The Tramiels destroyed Atari**

The most hated people among classic gamers are the Tramiels. They were the ones who bought Atari from Warner Bros and failed to bring it back to glory. So since they were the last to own Atari, people just assume that they ruined Atari. What people forget is that the Atari they bought from Warner wasn't exactly the same Atari that dominated the game market. It was in bad shape and was losing money, lots of money. Do you think Warner would have sold Atari if it was still profitable? Do you think they got tired of making tons of money and thought it would be nice to let someone else get rich off it?

Did the Tramiels do a good job of running Atari? Not really. Could they have done a better job? Absolutely! Did they do the worst job? I doubt it. At least they kept it afloat where Warner Bros would have just dumped it. The video game industry was dying, just look at how Mattel dumped the Intellivision and how no one kept the Colecovision going. So it wasn't like the industry was doing well and only Atari was doing bad.

A lot of people lay blame on the Tramiels because they let Nintendo come in and take over the video game market. They say if the Atari 7800 was released first, then Atari would be the big one and not Nintendo. The truth is that the Atari name was not very strong at the time and the Atari 7800 would most likely have been a bomb. Nintendo helped to revive a dying market.

I think the Tramiels should be applauded for keeping a dying franchise alive for as long as

they did. The Atari 2600 kept coming out until 1988, where it would have been dead years earlier. Games like Road Runner and Secret Quest would never have existed had they not kept it alive. While the Atari 7800 had its flaws, it probably would never have existed without the Tramiels. Later on they tried to revive the Atari name with the Lynx and the Jaguar. While neither was a hit, at least they tried.

If there is one area where you can blame the Tramiels, it is that they were terrible at promoting their products. The Atari ST was a great computer, but no one in the USA heard of it. If they had advertised some, perhaps it would have done better here. Where the Warner Bros would advertise on television and did a good job of promoting the Atari, the Tramiels were the opposite. Whether it was poor decision making or a lack of funds, I am unsure. But some good television ads could have done a lot for their struggling systems, both consoles and computers.

So while they are not without fault, the Tramiels didn't kill Atari. They were not the ones who made ET and lost millions on it. They didn't delay the release of the Atari 5200 and give it those unreliable joysticks. No they merely took over a dying company and kept it on life support. So while they may have not have saved Atari, they surely didn't kill it.

### **Myth #2-Classic Games are Better than Modern Games**

I have heard this too many times. People will say that the best games are the classic games and the new ones are all junk. While there are many great games from the classic era, there are also great games from every other era too. That is like saying all the best movies came out in the 1930s (one of the best eras for movies with Gone with the Wind, Wizard of Oz, King Kong, etc...) or that all the best rock music came from the 1950s or 1960s.

Two areas where today's games beat out the classic games are in role playing games and sports games. If you look in the classic era, you have games like Adventure, Quest for the Rings and Advanced Dungeons & Dragons. Good games, but I personally would take newer games like Dungeon Master or Final Fantasy or Phantasy Star. These games offer a lot more in terms of creatures to fight, spells to learn and places to go. They also incorporate better graphics, more realistic sound and deeper gameplay.

Another area where games have greatly improved is in sports games. Classic sports games usually involved two teams, with no choice and unknown players. You couldn't play a whole season and there was no stats keeping (unless you used paper and pencil). There was only one stadium to play in and once a game was done, that was it. Today's sports games allow you to build a team and play it over many seasons. You can trade and draft players. You can track the stats over the year and some even have inclusion into the Hall of Fame. You get to see different stadiums, have different weather conditions and even commentary. You can hear the crowds, vendors and even the other players. Some like Gameday and High Heat Baseball also have great controls.

So while there are great games in the classic era, great games didn't stop there. There will always be great games and terrible games from every era. It is more a matter of opinion than a matter of fact.

### **Myth #3-eBay has destroyed the hobby and dried up the thrift stores**

While eBay has contributed to increased competition among classic game collectors, it is hardly the only reason why games are drying up. Even if eBay never came around, the supply of classic games were going to dry up. Most of these systems have been out of circulation for the last 15 years, some longer, some not so long. Most people have moved onto newer systems. The old game systems were not always put in a garage sale or flea market. Not everyone donated them to a thrift store. Many were thrown out and this still happens. Every day there are Ataris and Colecos and Vectrexes on their way to the dump. Most go unnoticed and are being destroyed.

Systems being thrown out is not the only place where they get ruined. Every year, fires, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, mud slides and other disasters claim systems and carts. And this will continue to happen.

The last thing that helps to bring down the world's supply of classic games is that many just quit working. When these systems were made decades ago, they were not designed to last forever. While they have outlasted many people's expectations, they do still wear out. So every year there are people replacing old systems, joysticks and carts.

#### **Myth #4-Games are cheaper at the thrift stores and flea markets than buying online.**

While you may get a game cheaper by buying it at a thrift store than from eBay or another source, that doesn't mean it is cheaper. If you are lucky enough to find the games you want in the first few tries, then maybe. But if it takes you six months to find that Crazy Climber or Q\*Bert's Qubes, then is it cheaper? Add in all the gas you spent, traveling from one thrift store to another. Add in the wear and tear to your vehicle. Lastly, add in the cost of your time. When you factor all those, it may not be such a great deal. Plus, you may buy games and systems that are broke and don't work. Try to return that broken Atari to the thrift store or that non working cart to a flea market. Guess what, you can't. Most online vendors will give you a replacement or a refund and some eBay sellers will back their items (at least if they want to keep a good feedback rating). So there is peace of mind and that is hard to put a price tag on.

I am not saying to avoid flea markets and thrift stores. They are still the place where you can be lucky enough to land an ER cart for next to nothing, but just be aware that there is more involved than just the price tag. It all depends on how much you value your time and how flexible your schedule is.

#### **Myth #5-Prototypes are Worth a Fortune**

While prototypes are among the most valuable games in the hobby, not all are worth a fortune. In fact, most of the prototypes out there aren't worth a lot. Most released games have prototypes out there in various levels of completion. How much would someone pay for a Pac-Man or Las Vegas Blackjack prototype? Not very much. There are three things that make prototypes worth a lot of money.

- 1.) **Was the game released or not?**-If a game was not released and only exists in prototype form, then it is worth a lot more than of a commercially released game. The exception is if the prototype is greatly different than the released version.
- 2.) **How many copies exist**-If the prototype is a one of a kind, then it is worth a lot more than if there are a hundred copies out there. The fewer the copies, the greater the demand.
- 3.) **How desirable the game is**-There is more demand for the Revenge of the Jedi prototype than there would be for some unknown game. So the more interested collectors have in a certain title, the more they are willing to pay for it.
- 4.) **What system is it for**-While there would be considerable demand in an Odyssey 2 prototype, there would be more in an Atari 2600 prototype. There are more Atari collectors, so there would be more demand.

#### **Letters to the Editor**

I do keep getting in letters from people and I do my best to answer a few of them. So here we go!

**Question #1-I am a big Nintendo fan and wondered if you thought that the demand for Nintendo carts would be bigger or smaller than they are for the classic carts?  
Signed BigNFan**

**Editor**-While I am far from an expert, I do feel that the interest in Nintendo 8-Bit carts as a collectible will be far greater than any of the classic systems, including the Atari 2600. I believe this for a few reasons:

1. There were more Nintendo game players. The system is one of the biggest of all time and it sold about twice as many systems than any classic system and offered more games.
2. While Atari and Intellivision and the others are part of history, the Nintendo name is still out there and they are still making video games and systems. For this reason, there will be

more people who will want to go back and collect all the systems.

3. A fair amount of games made during the 8-bit era are still coming out in the form of sequels and new versions and have been for years. Final Fantasy, Castlevania, Super Mario, Zelda, Megaman and others have continued to have new games come out and will continue to in the future. This builds interest in the old games as more and more people will want to have all the Final Fantasies or Castlevanias.

4. Many pop culture icons emerged from this era. While Mario first appeared in Donkey Kong, he really became huge in the Super Mario series. The Zelda series gave us Link and many other characters like Megaman, Kirby, Yoshi and others became part of the popular culture both in video games and outside of it.

Hope this shows you why I feel that the Nintendo will one day be a more collected system than even the Atari 2600. When this day will be, I am unsure. But I do know that the Nintendo is at an all-time low as far as what they are selling for at garage sales and flea markets, so it is a good time to build your collection.

### **Question #2-Do you think that shrinkwrap greatly affects the price of a video game cart? Signed Curious in Colorado**

**Editor**-While some people feel that it does indeed increase the value, mainly because the perception that the inside contents are all perfectly mint, I do not feel that it adds much to the value. I would say 10% more is the case, especially since some people have been known to reshinkwrap the carts. The only time I think it may add more to the value is when the shrinkwrap has something on it that proves it is original. If there was a sticker for a rebate or a mail in offer (like some of the Imagic games had) or if it has a price sticker from a defunct store (like a Children's Palace or Kiddie City), then it may add more. But keep in mind that the condition of the box under the shrinkwrap is important.

### **Question #3-How does one go about getting their games appraised and if so, how much does it cost? Signed Clueless Collector**

**Editor**-I have not heard of any professional cart appraisors. If anyone out there knows of someone who offers this service, let me know and I will give you a free plug here. The best thing I can tell you is to get a copy of the Digital Press Price Guide (can be found at <http://www.digitpress.com>) and see what your carts are worth. Keep in mind the completeness of them and the overall condition. Like anything that is collected, the better the shape and the more complete it is, the more value it has.

### **eBay Notes**

I spend very little time on eBay, but I have been tracking the Intellivision and Colecovision games of late. What I have seen is that there has been a small resurgence in the interest in the Intellivision games, mainly the rare and extremely rare games. While there were tons of deals a few months ago, the prices are starting to slowly climb back up. This is despite a fair amount of rare stuff up for sale of late. It is not out of the ordinary to see once elusive titles like Diner, Pole Position, Fathom and Turbo up more than once in a given week. The games that are a tier lower in rarity are showing up even more frequently.

You would think a greater frequency would send the prices down, like it did to the Scooby Doos and Jetsons a few months back, but it really hasn't. The Diners still bring in \$25.00 and the others can pull in \$30.00-\$40.00 at any give time and depending on completeness and condition, even more. I know as I tried to find a few bargains for my own collection, games like Dig Dug and Stadium Mud Buggies, only to be outbid, time and time again. Guess I will just have to be persistent.

On the Coleco front, things have been a bit different. Some of the biggies like Q\*Bert's Qubes and Mr. Do's Castle can sometimes be found at bargains. Not always, but I have seen them sell for half of what their going rate is. This is for loose ones, as boxed ones still command a premium.

### **Conclusion**



The end of my horrible online connections should be a thing of that past by the next issue. Hopefully, I will have the DSL in place and the website will go back to the level it should be at. This drought has killed me in both amount of work lost, lost sales and lost visitors. Oh well, there is always something to keep the man down. Tune in next month for a bigger and hopefully better issue. Without these limitations, I should be able to make a nice issue. Keep playing those games and keep those fire buttons pressed!

[Tom Zjaba](#)