Retrogaming Times

Issue #38 - October 20th, 2000

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MAME Reviews

Here is the next batch of MAME games to get the treatment! Read the review, play the game and see if I am on or off with my review.

Elevator Action
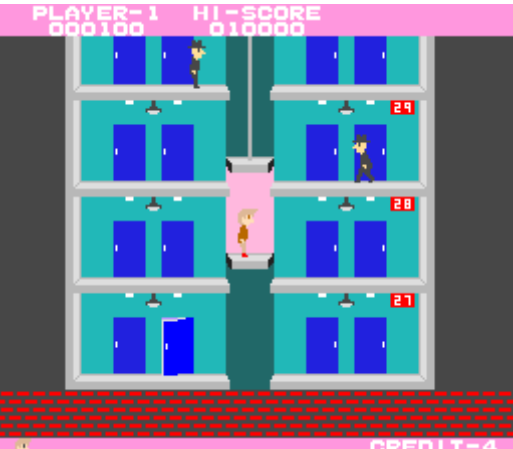
(This building has more agents than an all-star game).

This is one of those fun little games that for some reason, missed the whole classic game era. My guess is that since it came out in 1983, by the time the rights were secured and plans to make it were underway, the market was in a downward spiral. Too bad as it is a great game! It did finally make its console appearance on the Nintendo, but by then it was largely overlooked by the next generation of gamers.

The game has you playing a secret agent who is sneaking into a building to steal plans. Well, you are either a very brave or very stupid agent as the building is crawling with enemy agents. They are popping out of doors all over and ready to shoot you dead! A

little planning could have prevented this.

Anyways, you are in the middle of a fracas and you need to be ready! You have two weapons at your disposal. First there is your Hollywood gun, you know the kind that never need to be reloaded. Secondly, you have the ability to high jump and land on the heads of your adversaries.
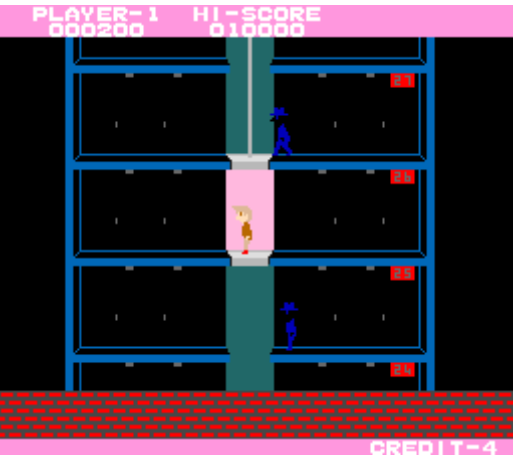
(Boom, boom, out goes the lights!)

There are a few other ways you can deal with your foes. They are a little more creative and more fun to pull off. The first one is that you can shoot the hanging lights and drop them on their head. But even if noone is there to get plonked in the head, it will put the building into total darkness for a few seconds. This makes me wonder about the wiring in this building. Guess it was wired by agents and not by real electricians.

The goal of the game is to go to all the red doors and collect the plans. You must go into every red door or you cannot complete the level, so keep this in mind. Once you accomplish this, you need to use escalators and elevators to get to the bottom and hop into the car and drive away. Then it is of to another building to start over again.

(Nothing makes for a quicker getaway than a sports car!)

This is just one of those fun little games. Who doesn't want to be a secret agent and drive fancy cars and get all the hot women? There are no women in this game, but you can imagine that you are driving off to the waiting arms of a gorgeous woman.

Spiders
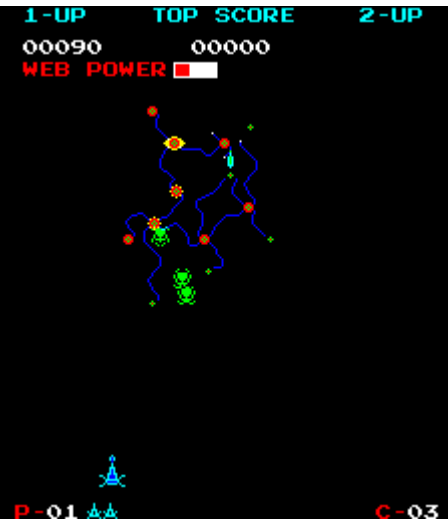
(Here comes the spiders from Mars, oh wait, that's another media.)

This is one of those little games that I never experienced before MAME. My only exposure to it was the handheld by Entex that I saw go for big money on eBay. Guess that is one tabletop that I will never add to my collection. Anyways, we are here to discuss the arcade game and not the handheld (which I never played, so it would be a very short review, and it would go something like this "Never played it, so I cannot really review it. ").

The game plays somewhat like Space Invaders. You have the spiders coming down like the aliens in Space Invaders, but the difference is they are making webs and branching out and there are more and more spiders. Your goal is to keep them from reaching the bottom of the screen, much like Space Invaders. If they do, you are dead and the game is over.

(Bummer, you let them reach the bottom.)

The graphics are simple, but do a good job. You have the cocoons that turn into more spiders, who in turn make more. You must shoot the oncoming spiders, who come down at you in waves, somewhat similar to Galaxian, except that when they reach the bottom, they go away, instead of popping back at the top. So you need to avoid and eliminate them, first and foremost. Then you need to get rid of the cocoons and clear the screen, before even more spiders pop up.

This is a a good time waster. The games are fairly quick and the action is pretty fast! It will most likely not be one of your favorite games, but it still deserves a place in your library of games. Now if I can just get my hands on that handheld.

Hobby in High Gear!

All indications is that this hobby is getting popular and hitting high gear! And the collectors are reaping the benefits of all this! And it is not coming at their expense. Sure, stuff is a bit harder to find, but prices on games and systems has remained fairly steady over the past few years, with the exception of the prototypes and stuff of that nature. Take a look at all the stuff going on:

-Many classic game shows are popping up! From the wildly popular Classic Gaming Expo to the smaller, but just as ambitious shows like Phillyclassic, CCAG and the Cincicon, more and more people are able to get out and meet other gamers, trade stuff and possibly buy some of those games that have eluded them! Also, new games, gadgets and memorbilia are available at the shows!

-Some of the old time companies are back in the business! From Intellivision Productions with their CDs to Buckner and Garcia rereleasing Pacman Fever, classic game stuff is coming back.

-Homebrews and new items are more plentiful! From John Dondazilla's new games Tim Snider's games to Lee Kruger's "Worship the Woodgrain", you have lots of great items for your classic. Also items like the Starpath CD and Cyberpunks Video, you have alot of great items and more to come!

-Videos of classic commercials from Sean Kelly to the original cartoons of classic video games available on the net, you have stuff that you thought was long lost, available to you again!

Remakes of your favorite games, including the new Dragon's Lair 3D, Ms. Pacman's Mazes and Frogger II.

So you can see that there is alot going on in the industry! It is a good time to be a classic game fan! We have so much that we can choose from that anyone should be able to find something to make them happy! Now all we need is someone to make classic video game action figures!

Sites of the Month

Once again I have searched high and low for sites that you will want to visit. The two I have listed this month are great sites for classic game fans! Check them out!

Remakes
Here is another site for new versions of classic games! This one has alot of stuff and two games that I really recommend (see the previous reviews) are the Burgertime and the Wizard of Wor. The M.U.L.E. is also pretty good and once I quit playing these, I will check out the rest. Some real gems here that are worthy of your time! Here is the URL: http://remakes.wax.nu/

Starcade
Remember the show that had the contestants answer questions about video games and feature video games? Well, here is a site that is dedicated to it! My favorite part is "The Games of Stacade"! This section has a ton of great info and is really well done! They have little videos describing the games and some info about the games!

They even have a video for sale of one of the Starcade episodes! I received mine and have greatly enjoyed it! I only hope they make more of them. While it was cheesy, it brought back some of the fond memories of the era (as well as reminding me of how fashionably devoid we were then).

Here is the URL: http://www.jmpc.com/Starcade/starframe.htm

An Answer to Our Prayers
By Fred Wagaman

If you're a frequent reader of this newsletter, you already know the virtues of MAME. The arcade emulator has everything going for it with one exception; using a keyboard to play most of MAME's games stinks.

But you have options. You can use a PC joystick or control pad. Not a bad option, but those controllers generally lack the arcade feel. You could build your own controller. Speaking from experience, this can be a challenge. When I built my MAME cabinet, I used an old keyboard and wired arcade controls into individual keys. That worked great with the exception of key blockage. Depending on what keys are hit, if you use more than 3 keys at a time, a 4th key may be ignored. I still have trouble playing some of the 4-button Neo Geo games on my MAME cabinet because of this. You could also spend the $50.00 and buy a keyboard encoder but you still have a lot of work ahead of you.

Another option would be to buy an arcade joystick specifically for emulator play. The most popular one right now is the Hot Rod by Hanaho (<http://www.hanaho.com/products/HotRodJoystick>). I have heard nothing but good things about these units. They are made by a company that makes arcade cabinets, so you know you're getting a quality product. I would love to have one of these, but unfortunately, I'm too cheap to spend the $200 on an item that can only be used on my PC. There are some other companies that make similar units, but Hot Rod is the most

popular.

I have come across an item that is in inexpensive alternative to anything else out there today. And here it is:

This is the Twin Shock Home Arcade unit by Blaze for the Playstation. This thing features 2 joysticks, 10 buttons per player, turbo and slo-mo. This thing is as wide as a card table. It is very sturdy and has an "arcadey" feel to it. Oh yeah, it even has vibration built in. Not only does it work with the Playstation, it will also work on the Playstation 2 and Dreamcast (with the proper converter).

I found this little (ha ha) gem at my local Electronics Boutique. Tom was visiting for the weekend and we stopped at the store. This unit was high on the shelf behind the counter. So out of sight was this unit that we couldn't even read the price. As the employee got the ladder to retrieve this stick, Tom and I guessed the price would be about $100. We were wrong. It was only $50. If it hadn't left with me, it would have left with Tom. You can find this item at www.ebworld.com <http://www.ebworld.com> under Playstation accessories. (That's where Tom got his.)

After we got it home, we tried it out. We tried fighting games, wrestling games and shooting games. This was the controller to have for two player, head to head competition.

But what I really wanted to do was hook this thing up to my PC.

I first checked out the Direct Pad Pro Web site (<http://www.ziplabel.com/dpadpro/index.html>). Here was software and schematics for building a Playstation to PC adapter via the printer port. I gave this option strong consideration, since one of the options under the Arcade at Home front-end for MAME (<http://www.arcadeathome.com>) allows for a Playstation controller to be used off of the printer port. And I still might try this. But knowing how my schedule is and the little amount of time that I have to work on this project, I opted for another solution.

I found Playstation to USB adapters at CounsoleSource (<http://www.consolesource.com/>). Once I verified with the company that two of their units would work on the same PC at the same time, I placed my order. I felt they were reasonably priced at $15 a piece. The units arrived, packaged with the required software, in a few days.

Now here is where I struggled a little. I tried to get a Playstation controller working under MAME v0.37 beta 7 using the Arcade at Home front end. After a lunch hour of frustration, I took some time to find info on getting MAME to work with USB controllers. From what I understand (and someone correct me if I'm wrong), the DOS nature of MAME does not allow it to recognize the USB ports.

To quickly solve this problem, I downloaded MAME32 and found that I was in business. I know I traded a little speed for USB compatibility, but if I ever build the converter for the printer port, I can go back to plain old MAME.

During my testing phase, I used a single Playstation to PC converter and a non-analog Playstation pad. All I had to do was go into the controller options and redefine the keys. Once that was working, I tested a single dual-analog pad (which, incidentally, is not a bad way to play Robotron). Then I tested both pads at the same time by playing Mario Brothers with my son. Then I hooked up the Twin Shock. Robotron worked great. And I finally felt I had a strong measure of control in Crazy Climber. I still stunk at it, but I couldn't blame the controller anymore.

Final price on this configuration ? Well, I had to spend an extra $30 for a USB hub to make room for the two Playstation to USB converters. So my final price tag came in around $110. I could have saved half of that by building my own converter.

If you're looking for a quality MAME compatible dual joystick at a reasonable price, take a good long look at the Twin Shock. I think you'll like what you see.

(Fred has been playing games for over 25 years and actively collecting them for over 10. The 2400 + games that he has takes up most of his home office and living room. He lives in Denver, PA with his understanding wife Jennie, his 4 year-old, button-loving son, Max and his 1 year old, 4th player, Lynzie. Fred has always had a weakness for unusual controllers. He is currently trying to determine what game he can play under MAME using his guitar-shaped "Guitar Freaks" Playstation controller. Fred can be reached at fcw3@mail.ptd.net).

Another Board Game Found!

In my endless quest to get all the classic video game based board games, I have found another one! This time it is a Wizard of Wor from Ideal, the same people who made the Pooyan game. It is part of the Flip Rcade series of games (with Wizard of Wor and Pooyan as the only two known games in the series).

What is so exciting about this? It is the first one that I have ever seen on eBay or anywhere for that matter. I have been looking for over 3 years and this is the first time it has shown up. Is it that rare? Who knows, it probably isn't easy to find, but exact numbers are unknown.

I have tried contacting numerous people, be it companies that sell board games or websites devoted to board games and have yet to get any information. Noone seems to know about this series of games. So I will just have to assume there are only these two games in the series and if any others show up, I will be delighted about it.

Now all I need is to get the Turtles game from Entex and the Q*Bert card game and I will have them all! Anyone have either for trade?

Questions of the Month

I forgot to put this in last month, so I will try to answer a few more questions this month.

Hello! I have read about how people get PAL systems to work on American televisions, but can you get an American game system to work on a PAL system? If so, how? from Overseas Gamer

Great question and one that I cannot answer. Anyone out there know how? If so, email me and I will be glad to post it in the next issue.

What joystick that originally came with a system from the classic games do you like best? from Just Wondering

I am guessing that you are asking what joystick that was originally packaged with the system do I like best and not a third party joystick. Well, let us eliminate some candidates. First off, the Atari 5200, the Colecovision and the Odyssey 2 have to be eliminated. The 5200 is too unreliable, the coleco too uncomfortable and the Odyssey just plain sucks. I have never found a working Emerson Arcadia, so I cannot make a good judgement on that one.

That leaves the Bally, Atari 2600 and Vectrex. I really like the Bally and it is a great stick, but it has one big problem. The joystick has a tendency to have the fire button go on you. You can easily open it up and solder it back in place, but it still is a pain. The 2600 is a darn good stick and sturdy like a mule. But my vote has to go for the Vectrex! I love the feel, the self centering and the multiple buttons! It may not be the most comfortable, but I really like and you can set it down and play it that way! Also, it stores right in the machine, so it doesn't get in the way. Just a great stick!

Why don't you do any interviews with the classic programmers? All I ever see is interviews with new programmers. from Get With It!

There is a good reason for this. If you look around the internet, you can find many interviews, either from the past or recent ones of most of the classic programmers. And if you read these, you will realize that most of the questions have been asked. If they haven't done anything in the classic game scene in ages, there probably isn't anything new to find out. So instead of asking the same questions once again, I look for people who are doing something now, something new.

Don't get me wrong, if a programmer wanted to do an interview, I would gladly do it, but it is not something that I look for. The one classic programmer that I did interview was Warren Davis of Q*Bert fame and this was because of the release of "Faster, Harder, More Challenging Q*Bert" for MAME, a previously unreleased game. This was big news and I tracked him down for an interview!

There are interviews that I have attempted, but never got responses. I have tried contacting the Intellivision people about the Intellivision Lives! CD when it was released, but they never answered my emails. I tried contacting a few programmers who are still doing games about interviews. They even agreed to do an email interview at CGE, but when I emailed them about it, they also just ignored the emails. So, I do try to do it, but some guys are just too busy or don't want to be bothered.

What does it take to get a site listed as one of the Sites of the Month?

A cash bribe! Just kidding. Just send along the URL and I will check it out. What I look for is sites that are different and offer something for my readers, be it games to play, information, etc... I try to vary the sites I put up, so as not to just put up emulation sites or Atari sites. Keep in mind that I do have a backlog of sites, so it may be a few months before I get to list it.

I noticed that you stopped Bit Age Times, how long before you end Retrogaming Times? from Concerned Reader

Actually, I put Bit Age on hiatus. Right now, I have alot going on in my life and I needed to free up some time. Hopefully down the road, my schedule will free up some and I can bring back Bit Age Times. With all the emails I received asking for it to continue or thanking me for it, I am thinking of doing it as a bi-monthly or possibly quarterly newsletter. But that is down the road.

As for Retrogaming Times, it will continue to go on at a monthly schedule. The only time I plan on taking a break is after issue #100. When that hits, I may take a month or two off. But that is a long way off.

The Many Faces of . . . H.E.R.O.

By [Alan Hewston](#)

You are Roderick Hero, in H.E.R.O. Helicopter Emergency Rescue Operation. This is an action/adventure game where you explore the mine to find the trapped miners using your unlimited power, lightweight, safe and easy to use jet-powered-propeller-pack. All 5 versions of H.E.R.O. use the same map for each level, at least up through level 17 or so, and all have practice modes, where you can start at a higher levels (5, 9, 13 or 17 (PRO)). Some versions (C64, CV, Atari 8-bit) have a pause button, which certainly can be useful, but all versions pause the action before each new life and at the start of each new level. Kudos go out to the Activision team for such quality control on their products, both then, and still today.

Score points for destroying walls or any of the handful of volcanic vermin you take out of their misery. You've got 6 sticks of dynamite and an unlimited-energy micro-laser beam (emits a ray from your helmet/visor). Complete each level by finding the trapped miner. You lose a life if your energy timer runs out, or you touch any hot magma, water, or vermin. Bonus points are scored for dynamite not used and any time left on the timer.

The most challenging aspect of this game are the pits and walls of lava that you must avoid. You can fly and hover over and around them, but there is a frustrating, built-in delay to flying, in all but the 5200 versions. So be patient while you learn to master the jet pack. Back in those days, an Activision patch could be earned with a score of 75,000 points. One of the highlights is finding out where or what the raft is, and then how to get off. Starting this month, I'll post the scores for each category.

Game Designed by: John Van Ryzin (All systems), and adapted by the Softworks.

Classic Platforms: Atari 2600, 5200, Atari 8-bit, Colecovision, and Commodore 64.

Categories: Gameplay, Addictiveness, Graphics, Sound & Controls

The Have Nots: Atari 8-bit (42) & Atari 5200 (43)
The Atari 8-bit port is fun, but disappointing. The Gameplay only scores a (9). Using the laser to eliminate a wall takes forever and there is no sound or visual change when you partially break the wall. No hint that you are doing some damage to it. The Graphics (7) and Sound (7) were the lowest of the lot, as the bonus and scoring sounds seem cheap and incomplete. The Controls get a perfect (10)! Finally, the Addictiveness is outstanding (9), so it will bring you back over and over again.

The Atari 5200 Gameplay scores a perfect (10)! The Sound (8) and Graphics (8) are very good, but could be better. The Controls (8) are pretty good, but only if you have access to better 5200 sticks, otherwise the score would drop considerably. The Controls are further complicated by a 2nd fire button for using dynamite. Finally, the controls are a bit too responsive, compared with the other versions. This makes for easier learning and controlling early on, but do not provide the pin-point precision when it is required in harder levels. Addictiveness still scores a (9), so it will bring you back over and over again...if you have better sticks.

Gold Medal: Atari 2600 (45), Commodore 64 (45), Colecovision (45)

I could not break the tie - I'll leave that for you to decide. All three are great versions and each deserves the Gold medal. Most likely, the system that you prefer will probably yield your favorite version of H.E.R.O. as well. The Gameplay is perfect (10) and the Sound (8) very good for all three versions.

The Atari 2600 Graphics are good (7), yet I scored them the lowest due to their simplicity. But the simplicity makes them highly effective and clear - so perhaps I should have scored them a (10). Kinda like looking at today's games. Do the extra graphics help, or hinder? After playing enough, I decided that the simple Graphics do make this game more enjoyable, and the Addictiveness score is rewarded top billing, a perfect (10) for that. Oh yeah, Roderick's character actually looks the best on the 2600 Graphics. The Controls also get a perfect (10).

The Colecovision Graphics are the best, scoring a (9), but this is just eye candy. The Controls are a real mystery but I still gave them a (9). Each controller, the standard CV (I still hate them but maybe I'm to picky), Wico (awkward), Amiga (2 buttons) and Super Action (2 buttons) works differently. 2 Buttons - meaning - similar to the 5200 where the second button ignites the Dynamite. I could not find a good rhythm playing with any of them. If the Atari 2600 stick would have worked, I may have given it a (10) but alas, it was not in the programming. The The Colecovision Graphics are the best, scoring a (9), but this is just eye candy. The Controls are a real mystery but I still gave them a (9). Each controller, the standard CV (I still hate them but maybe I'm to picky), Wico (awkward), Amiga (2 buttons) and Super Action (2 buttons) works differently. 2 Buttons - meaning - similar to the 5200 where the second button ignites the Dynamite. I could not find a good rhythm playing with any of them. If the Atari 2600 stick would have worked, I may have given it a (10) but alas, it was not in the programming. The Addictiveness stills scores a very nice (9).

I've played the C64 version the most, so I may be too critical of it, but the Controls are still a perfect (10). Addictiveness was great (9), but I've already decide the 2600 was the best. Graphics were nice (8), but seem a tiny bit off from the Colecovision.

Hope you did not mind the three-way tie. I even had all three up and running simultaneously, and could not score any one of them lower. So if you love the simple Graphics (don't we all?), the 2600 is the way to go; If Controls don't bug you, then maybe the CV is the best; or if you need perfect control and some graphics, then the C64 is your choice.

Come back next month when I plan a Thanksgiving feast review of Pooyan for the Atari 8 bit, Atari 2600 and Commodore 64. Alan Hewston is still looking for a Y cable for joystick controllers so that he can play more of his Colecovision games with an Atari stick. Anyone with one for sale or trade, or knows why mine doesn't work can reach Alan at Hewston95@stratos.net.

Ms. Pac-Man Maze Madness - The Review
by Geoff Voigt

"I have seen the best games of my generation updated by Maze Madness and hysteria..."

Namco's got its new PlayStation game out featuring Ms.Pac-Man, and the first thing potential buyers/players should be aware of is don't expect "Ms. Pac-Man World", 'cause it's not. Whereas Pac-Man World is a fun platformer that's got some spots that are exasperatingly difficult, Ms. Pac is a full-blooded maze game with some puzzle elements to feed the brain.

The game's fairly easy, but enjoyable for the most part. This isn't exactly Final Fantasy, but I think that's what the game developers were going for: something you play for a bit after work to unwind, rather than something that keeps you camped in front of the PS for days with hard rations for sustenance. Don't worry about the plot: Ms. Pac just has to rescue

Professor Pac and a Princess from the evil witch Mesmerelda. The cut scenes are comic panels with voices, instead of the full-animation bits in Pac-World. But remember PW was in production for over 3 years; Maze Madness nowhere near as long.

The controls for Maze Madness are easy: Up, Down, Left, Right. No buttons, no Super Ultimate-Nutritious-Breakfast combos, none of that. All the actions are taken care of with the same directional pad that has served our proud people for the last 20 years; it adds to the easy going feeling you get from this game in its Main mode.

The mazes are not as simple as the classic game; you now have springboards, TNT crates, ice blocks, keys and doors, molten lava, lightning tracks, concrete blocks, sticky tar paths, poison gas, rocket launchers, conveyor belts, switch walls, timer blocks, and there might be some other things I've forgotten. Add to this the other big thing that MM changes from the original- there's now more than just the Ghost Monsters that chase you now. Don't worry, Blinky, Pinky, Inky, Clyde and Sue are in this in game in full force, but there's now also Centipedes, Mummies, Yeti, Cavemen, Dracula and Frankenstein, the Egyptian Death God Anubis (!), and Chinese Dragons. Because of this variety of elements and enemies, one can now do many things we never though possible in a Pac-Man game; such as fragging Dracula with a rocket launcher or blowing up Clyde with TNT. You can still eat everyone with a Power Pill, if that's your liking. The various settings are as follows: Classic, (absolutely no change from the Namco 3 version, apart from a half-second pause after the starting music plays), Main Game, and Multiplayer. The multiplayer games are fun, and should be tried out the next time you're at a gathering of fellow Classic heads or just got 4 people, a multitap, and a PlayStation. You can either try to be the first player to get 80 dots in a maze, be a ghost and try to tag the Pac-Player, or there's a setting that has one of the characters with a bomb trying to get it to another player; kind of like hot potato.

While Ms. Pac is fun, it's not perfect: the view is isometric, and sometimes dots are missed because they're behind a column or overhang. You see it too late to get it, and generally have to re-start the level. This happens even with the "Dot Compass" that's provided. It also streams the data off the disc; and when playing the Ice Race bonus level, it's possible to out-run the data load, and fall off an apparent cliff in the track just to have the next section pop up after you fall. This is a glitch that has no excuse be in the game; I'm surprised it made it into production runs. But this game does have that classic feel; and that's the best thing going for it. Some Die- Hards will be put off by the great changes done to the gameplay mechanics, but still give it a try. Possibly rent it now, and then buy it once you see it in a Pawn Shop or on Clearance. But the $30 price it has now isn't bad.

(Geoff Voigt:gvoigt@ridgecrest.ca.us Yet another Peniless Artist(TM) also interested in 80's music-Classic Video Games-Anime-Techno Music-Coffee-US History)

The TI 99/4A"
A History-Part III"

by Jim Krych

You can learn a lot about things, by watching how others do them. Case in point: how many times was the TI Community offered a "clone" before one actually came? Several times, even if you are not counting TI's own successor-the 99/8.

By this time in my career as designing hardware for the TI 99/4A, I had established quite well, the "Never Announce Until Ready To Ship". However, in any project I was/am involved with, there is always a very small, select group of people, who know what I am doing and what I am up to. And that continues today even. These guys give me valuable feedback, and often very good advice-since they are coming from a different perspective, and since I am often "too close" to the trenches to see differently.

The last project I had done for the TI 99/4A, and one that would work with the Geneve/9640 as well, had it's roots back to an idea we had at Asgard Peripherals.

When I had gotten my TIM, V9958 80-column upgrade, for the TI, I did have a multisync monitor, from IMTEC, that was supposed to work with the 15.75KHz RGB of the TIM. Well, it did-for about 4-5 seconds!!!! So I ended up buying a 1CM135 monitor, to get the 80-columns that this upgrade offered. There was simply, no other way.

That incident sparked the "why", and we actually started work on a composite to VGA device some time in early 1993. The name of this was "Video Flyer". Well, Asgard Peripherals ceased to exist, and the project was canceled.

It was during a conversation with the gentlemen from Tex Comp, Ltd., when they had expressed an interest in selling the SuperAMS cards that the SW99ers had just put out, when the subject of the lack of TV RGB monitors came up.

The "Video Flyer" Project was soon started up again. This time though, it was to convert TV RGB into S-Video, and composite, with S-Video being the prime feature.

Much research was done, in private, and certainly not on the usenet groups or other TI discussion groups. And, I had finalized the design, for the prototype. And, parts were ordered. A perf board from Radio Shack was used, and an old TI 32K stand-alone case was used for the project case! After my schematics had been checked and double checked, I proceeded to build the prototype, over the period of an entire weekend!

While the color for the S-Video was not there-tuning cap needed adjusting, the entire prototype worked!!!

(Just ask the guys who heard my phone calls about it working!)

Considering it was video signals, wirewrap the likes a rats nest would be proud of, the hard work had paid off! Composite worked fine, and the S-Video, using the Chrome/Luma inputs of my 1CM135, was very crisp! Since I decided to save time by using the exact inputs as the 9-pin 1CM135 monitor-which has proven to be a very good choice! Very standard input!

Now, here is where it gets very interesting. We had a prototype, had it sent to our guys on the West Coast, and they worked/tweaked it. We had been asked by a fairly large company in Texas, to get them a PCB version, in a week!!! GULP!

This is where Church contacts came in, as a buddy of mine was also a PCB designer! Working around the box we chose, and much faxing of part dimensions, and using a similar, but better chip, we actually got the PCB prototype, and the initial box, to the company in about 8 days! I will never forget that as long as I live!

It didn't work out with the company in Texas, so we went on our own. Refined the design, fixed some bugs, a few more prototype PCB's were made, and a PCB manufacturer was chosen for the first production run!

However, during our initial posts to computers groups about this product, we had gotten word that "Video Flyer" was already used. By a company called New-Tek. They make the Video Toaster for the Amiga computers, the "Video Flyer" was a non-linear video editor system to work with the Video Toaster.

So, we had to come up with a different name. Well, after several brainstorms and suggestions, we named it the following:

"VideoTurtle"

Only then, did we officially announce. The results of that announcement, and the technical "advice" we were given on that announcement, will be dealt with in the series "The TI 99/4A, The Community Versus The Computer."

We did have reviews. We got an "Outstanding" by one Amiga reviewer-Bill Near. And another, "Dr. Amiga" gave us an "A-" and even bought one himself! Everyone who used the VideoTurtle, was impressed by the clarity and crispness of the display. Especially when

I showed the Amiga Atlanta group, using the VideoTurtle and an LCD Projector, with the 1280x400 Amiga Mode! And, an Apple IIgs reviewer was equally impressed.

However, no review with the TI/Geneve and the VideoTurtle has ever been done, and to this day, is still not listed as a replacement or viable solution for RGB monitors, in TI groups. All the more amazing-because the "Official" announcement of the VideoTurtle was at the 1997 MUG fair in Lima Ohio. And both my TI and a Geneve were shown using the VideoTurtle, in high-res/80-column modes, on an S-Video TV.

After some pretty interesting episodes on the Internet, especially over the VideoTurtle, that was it, for designing and being involved with the TI Community, and the computer itself.

In the summer of 1998, I sent a "Tell My Mom, I Done My Best" article, and officially got out of the TI 99/4A community. It had been a very interesting 15 years, to say the least.

I can say this, though, that no product I had been involved with, ever got less than an "A-" on any review. And, that we certainly delivered what we said. No project was easy, and often, had to go through revisions before it was released. But, we never released a half-finished project "called a soon-to-be ready" product, ever.

We refused to do what others had done, and sadly, still are doing, in the TI community. I can look at what the teams I worked with had accomplished, and know that we took the tougher, but far better route.

I see that the "AEMS" project lives on in the emulators, with SuperAMS available with the PC99 program. So our work there was not in vain.

But there are no regrets for having been involved with the hard work of getting projects to products. I learned quite a bit, and often supplemented what I was learning at CIE. And, I made some great friends, many of whom I still keep in contact with, today. I wasn't just a bystander, wondering who would do the "next-best-thing" for the TI, I was involved-and new ground was always being broken.

Well, that's it for my history with the TI 99/4A computer. We are going to be getting into the more nitty-gritty parts of the computer, the games(pre-TI and post-TI), and some other aspects. Such as info on the clones and unreleased products for the TI 99/4A, as well as the emulation scene.

Especially the games, as the TI had the raw power to allow for some very good ports, and some games did use that power quite well.

("Hi, my name is Jim W. Krych. I am a 31 year old technician, with an Electronics Diploma and a soon-to-be finished Computer Programming and Operations Diploma. I am currently employed at the finest maker of electrometers/nanovoltmeters/etc., in their troubleshooting/calibration department. I have a 14 month old son, his name is Treyton. I enjoy retrogaming and things that go with that. :)

I am still looking for someone to try my VideoTurtle product with MAME and other emus. Please email me if you are in the USA and are interested. I am having the Atari ST lin reviewed with the VideoTurtle, very soon. My email address: jwkrych@n2net.net)

eBay Notes

This month I decided to do something different. I am going to talk about things on eBay that irritate me. These are the things that really drive me up a wall. Feel free to send in your own and maybe I will post some of the clever ones in a future issue.

Top Ten Things That Irritate Me About eBay
10. Extremely rare Combat carts
09. When someone says they have 10 TI 99/4A games and half of them are entertainment/productivity carts.
08. Handling charges. Just charge me the shipping charges and make your money on the

auction.

07. Spam mail because you bid on an auction. "I saw you bid on some Coleco carts, I thought you may want my Odyssey 2 games that are ridiculously overpriced."

06. Wading through 500 O'sheas scalper auctions.

05. People putting up broken systems and saying "Untested". You know the Atari with a golf ball sized hole through the middle of it and the person saying "I couldn't figure out how to hook it up, but it worked when I played it 15 years ago, before I shot a hole through it,"

04. People who refuse to put the shipping charges in the description.

03. People with negative feedback ratings.

02. 12 year olds on Daddy's account.

01. How almost every Coleco auction that advertises 20+ games, has half of them being common Atari 2600 games.

Classic Home Video Games Deca 2000 Competition
by Alan Hewston

Over the last 2 months I've only played 10 video games. 5 Atari 2600 games and 5 Colecovision games. Sounds boring right? But then the same games were also being played by several of the best classic home video game players in the world. A two-month session of playing games, recording high scores and submitting them to the official Twin Galaxies judges, just ended before press time. My wife and several of the competitor's wives are very happy that it is finally over - especially after a brutal final two weeks of record breaking scores and marathon games. With the exception of Megamania, the Twin Galaxies world record for each game was broken, and in some games the record high score went up 10-fold.

Congratulations are in order for top 5 players, Ron Corcoran, Robert Mruczek, Steve Knox, Alan Hewston & Robert Macauley. Cash prizes went to the top 3 players, but then they excluded the 2 judges, who finished 1st and 3rd. So the 4th and 5th place fishers also earned a cash award for their hard work.

The following 10 games were played: Atari 2600: River Raid, Megamania, Turmoil, Ms Pac-Man and Pitfall. Colecovision: Montezuma's Revenge, Gorf, Zaxxon, Mr. Do and Miner 2049er. The top scorer in each game earned 100 points, and then everyone else's score for that game was 100 times the percentage of that top score. Points for each game were determined and then added together using a spreadsheet. Besides playing on an Atari 2600 or Colecovision, specific emulators were allowed. Fortunately, most of the games selected were not too hard rare. Future events may split up the competition into emulation and real machines.

Competitors are hoping that competitions can be held every couple months, specifically for each of these machines, if not others: Atari 2600, Atari 5200, C64, Vic 20, Amiga, Intellivision, Colecovision, Odyssey 2 (Oops, just kidding).

Here are the Final standings and point totals.

1st Place: Ron Corcoran 779.05
2nd Place: Robert Mruczek 753.95
3rd Place: Steve Knox 367.58
4th Place: Alan Hewston 360.46
5th Place: Robert Macauley 271.79
6th Place: Steve Krogman 271.31
7th Place: Shane Monroe 177.18
8th Place: Joshua Warren 162.27
9th Place: Chris Parsley 143.72
10th Place: Scott Bolderson 143.24
11th Place: Brien King 105.79

As you can see it was very close for 1st, 3rd and 5th place races. Maybe you can join us the next time. Thanks go out to Ron Corcoran, the Twin Galaxies Atari judge and Steve

Knox the Twin Galaxies Colecovision judge.

Please visit Steve Knox's TG Colecovision home page and the scores at: http://members.ex-pressnet.com/sknox/index.html There are scores for each game, screenshots, and a spreadsheet for the totals. There are links there to get to Ron Corcoran's Atari site as well, or visit: www.TwinGalaxies.com Alan Hewston is looking for anyone who has Bally Astrocade tape games to share, or trade. The Astrocade is a fair system, but needs more fan support and games Alan, who is sure happy to play a different game this week (H.E.R.O.) can be reached at hewston95@stratos.net

Interesting Email

Every so often, I get an interesting email, one that deserves attention. This was one of those emails. Please read it as I think there is some validity to it. While we have been spoiled by free access to games, I do feel there are alot of programmers out there who should get proper compensation and it could encourage them to reenter the market and possibly do more great games! What is a better incentive than money and acknowledgement? Anyways, read it and let them know what you think of their endeavor.

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"Seeing as how popular these classic and modern games are, we are spreading the word that authors who have rights to the programs should come visit us and list their software. Here is something you could possible post in your website or one of the two ezines. Many authors hold a copyright to software for older computers, console, or arcade software that are still widely requested for use today, and in need of a legal means for end users to obtain these older products. Current copyright law protects software far after its retail life has expired. Until now, there has not been a secondary distribution market for these type of products. Many great older products therefore become abandoned without the means of new distribution. Even abandoned, however, copyright law makes it still illegal to obtain these products without proper authorization of the copyright holder. Now, in our effort to bring closer together the wants of the millions of internet users who want to legally own and play these widely requested older computer, arcade, and console software, with the need of the authors for a viable marketplace to distribute such product after its retail life expired, today we open Shareware Sellers to Authors so that those who own a copyright on an older product, are strongly encouraged to offer a legal version on Shareware Sellers, as we support over 23 different formats, from the latest computer and hand held systems, to nearly all the classic computer, console, and arcade systems, whether releasing it public domain, freeware with full usage rights so users can use on systems other than the original, or as commercialware for profit, to allow end users the ability to obtain software LEGALLY while giving authors a means to a new untapped revenue stream using a variety of distribution models. We hope this will help bring together the current legal methods of obtaining and using software properly, in line with the strong desire of end users to obtain this software again. Authors can now visit the site here to begin adding their product, and we will shortly open to customers after we build our grand opening product database. http://www.sharewaresellers.com/frames1.php3

 David Levine of Team Shareware Sellers & Shareware Stories"

Conclusion

Another issue comes to a close. With it goes the end of the warm weather and flea markets in the area. The last of the garage sales are being held by brave souls. Now it is down to the internet and thrift stores for finding classic games. For you readers in the warmer climates, enjoy your year round flea markets. You have our envy as we peer out at the gloomy weather and dream of boxes of unsearched games. Enough of that, let us all have a Happy Halloween and enjoy your classic games! I know that I will play a few games of Dracula on my Intellivision to celebrate the occasion!

Tom Zjaba

(This issue was done while listening to a bevy of different music including Alan Parsons Project, Nenah Cherry, Papa Roach and even the Hamsterdance song. Don't bother asking, I cannot explain it).