

Retrogaming Times

Issue #39 - November 20th, 2000

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Collecting Video Games, the Harmless Hobby?

One phrase that I have heard from numerous collectors, whether they collect classic video games, sports cards, comic books or whatever is "Hey, I could be spending my money on alot worse stuff like drinking, drugs or women of ill repute". While there is some truth to this, it doesn't mean that the hobby cannot be damaging. Most of the times, it is a way for a person to justify overspending on their hobby, whether it be with money or time invested. A hobby is meant to be a way to relax, something to get interested in and to enjoy. If your hobby does not bring this to you, then maybe you should reconsider the hobby.

In this season of giving, think about your chosen hobby. Is the money you spend on games affecting your ability to pay other bills? Does it keep you from building towards your future, by saving money for retirement or college tuition? Does it cause strife between you and your significant other? Does it consume a good deal of your time and limit the time you spend with your family and friends? If you answer yes to one or more of these, then maybe you need to rethink the amount of time and resources you are spending on your hobby.

In this holiday season, take a step back and think about your hobby. If you have a fair deal of control, then give yourself a pat on the back. But if you notice any of the danger signs of a hobby becoming an obsession, then you may want to rethink your hobby. Maybe you need to set a budget for your purchases. Maybe you need to allocate less time to your games and more to your family. Because while you may think that video games may be a harmless hobby, like anything if it is not done in moderation, it can be just as damaging. Remember to keep it a hobby and enjoy your games and try to share them with your family! But don't get carried away, because in the end, it is the people in your life who are

the most important. I will now get down from the pulpit and get back to talking about video games!

What is a Classic Game ?

By [Fred Wagaman](#)

I think I may have discussed this before. If so, please forgive me.

What is a classic game?

What got me started thinking about this (again?) is our friends over at the Digital Press (<http://www.digitpress.com>) have started a Classic Video Game Swap Shop. And their latest Digital Press Classic Video Game Collector's Guide (6th Edition) is soon to be delivered. The first listing I saw was for a Laser Active Game. (The Laser Active was an obscure Laser Disk-based video game system. What made this unit unique is that modules could be attached to it for playing Mega Drive/Genesis and PC-Engine/Turbografx games) One of my first thoughts was that the Laser Active doesn't qualify as a "classic" game system.

Then I got a grip on myself.

So what is a classic game?

When the term "classic" is applied to other items, say cars for instance, it applies to cars from an earlier era. Not just the earliest era, but from one that isn't now. A Ford Model "T" and a '57 Chevy are both considered "classic" cars.

Many people use the term "classic", in the video game world, to denote not a kind of game, but a time period of a game. Many of us would think of Atari 2600-5200, Intellivision and Coleco as the "classic" period. But there is a whole generation that thinks of the NES and Sega Master when the term "classic" is used. Except for the educated few, many gamers have never played a system from the late 70's/early 80's. Some internet people even get bent out of shape when someone posts information concerning the NES in the rec.games.video.classic newgroups. But to the individual that posted it, the NES is a "classic" system.

We here at Retrogaming Times have used the "bit" moniker (as evidenced by our Bit Age Times Newsletter-currently on hiatus) to separate the game eras. NES, Genesis, SNES, Playstation, Saturn, et al were profiled in that newsletter. But by some definition, all of those machines will fall into someone's idea of "classics".

To me, a "classic" game isn't from any particular era. It is a game that has stood the test of time. A game that still stands up as playable to this day. There are "classic" games from almost any era. Games like Phantasy Star on the Sega Master System or Super Mario Brother 3 on the NES should not be excluded from using the term "classic" because they came from a different generation of machines. Conversely, the Atari 2600 version of Starfox should by no means have the term "classic" applied anywhere near it.

I remember a time when the video game press referred to different generations of machines in "waves". The second wave systems were the Atari 5200 and Colecovision. If that terminology still existed, we'd be on our 12th or 13th wave by now. Then there was the "Next" generation that included the Atari Jaguar, Saturn, Playstation and 3DO. But since there was always something new coming, that title was false. After they arrived shouldn't they have been called the "Here" generation?

Comic books have the Golden Age and the Silver Age. You can buy Mylar sleeves for Modern age books. In archeology, we have things like the Triassic and Jurassic era. Why can't we coin some universally acceptable terminology for video games?

To this end, I propose new terminology for classifying video games and their era.

[Joystick Era](#) - Joystick were the predominate controllers in the "retro" and "Classic" eras.

Atari, Coleco, Odyssey 2 all used joysticks. The Intellivision used a primitive joypad, but it really wanted to be a joystick (Anyone remember “Sticklers”?). Games were based on the eight directions and 1 (or maybe 2) buttons. Sure, there were some other controllers (paddles, steering wheels), but the joystick ruled the earth.

Pad Era - Things changed when the NES arrived. Sure, you could buy a joystick for it, and every system since, but the large majority of players became left-handed joypad users. The NES, SMS, Genesis, SNES, Saturn, Turbografx-16, 3DO and Playstation all came with pads. Pads still retained the eight directional control, but the pad design allowed more and more (and more) buttons to be added, giving players more options when interfacing with the game. Just like the previous era, other controllers still existed, but pads dominated. There is a period of transition that occurred sometime during the Playstation’s dominance that took us to the era we now exist in called the...

Analog Era- The Playstation’s “me-too” pad has become the defining controller for a new era. (What I mean by “me-too” is that it was Sony’s response to Nintendo’s N64 analog controller design). Analog control has become the defacto method of game play in this era. Sony has gone so far as to add analog capability to all of it’s buttons. Future games will take advantage of this. When fighting, your character may hit your opponent based on how hard you press the button, not just which button you press. This will become the standard. The Analog Era includes the N64, Dreamcast, Playstation 2 and for a large portion, the Playstation. We now expect our machines to come with and utilize analog control. Other controllers will still be made, but the analog pad is this generation’s dominator.

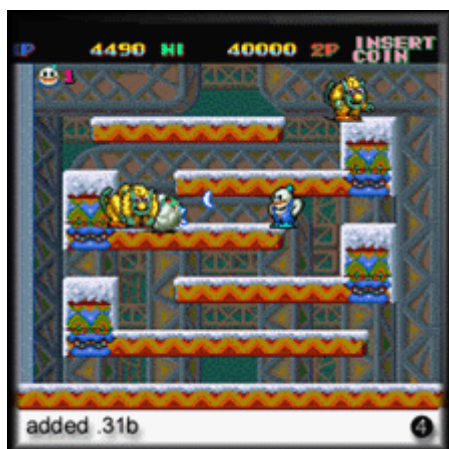
So what will the next era be? Maybe the interface between ourselves and our machines will stay the way it is. Maybe we’ll have a “wireless” era, or a “eye control” era, or a “brain-jack” era. I just don’t know.

But this I do know. Sometime in the next 10 years, someone, somewhere will begin to refer to the Playstation 2 as “classic” and someone else, somewhere else will roll their eyes and say, “Here we go again”.

(Fred has been playing games for over 25 years and actively collecting them for over 10. The 2500 + 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 5 year-old, button-loving son, Max and his 1 year old, 4th player, Lynzie. Fred received a larger collection of double-quotes (“) as a gift and had to use them up before they spoiled. Fred can be reached at fcw3@postoffice.ptd.net).

MAME Reviews

Time to keep those reviews a coming! Here are two more of games you may or may not have played. So hopefully my reviews will inspire you to give the games a try and see if I am dead on, or dead wrong?



Snow Bros.

If you ever played Bubble Bobble, then you know how to play Snow Bros. The play mechanics are the same and if I am correct, this is sorta a sequel to the very popular series (which also spawned Rainbow Islands and Puzzle Bobble). The game has you in

control of one of the snow bros, who look like snowmen. Your goal is to battle the monsters by covering them with snow and turning them into a big snowball and then pushing the off to bowl over everything in site.

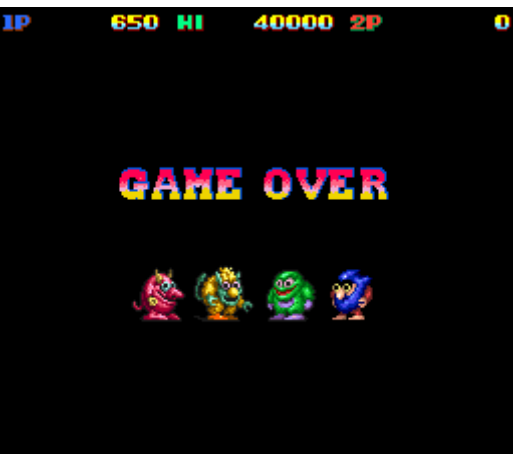
While it is a fun one player game, it really shines as a two player game! It is almost mandatory that you have two people as the game can be quite difficult. Not only are you outnumbered 5-1, but it takes quite a few hits to turn a creature into a snowball. Think of Dig Dug and the amount of effort you needed to pump up a creature and you have somewhat an idea of how time consuming it can be to defeat your foes. This also leaves you open to attacks, so you must be careful.



(The fire breathing frog, beware!)

The game consists of a bunch of different levels, each with its own challenges. Some have confining corridors to travel in, as you try to stop the creatures. Others force some creative jumps to get into a position where you have a chance at survival. There are also quite a few different creatures to fight. Some have special attacks, like the fire breathing frogs. These also present some challenges as you must constantly learn new foes.

Snow Bros is a very enjoyable game. Like I said, if you liked Bubble Bobble, you will like Snow Bros. It is the same gameplay, with some differences, mainly in graphics and creatures you must face. But make sure you play it with someone as the game is meant to be played with another gamer. It is called Snow Bros and that is a plural term.



(All the bad guys say good riddance to the Snow Bros!)



Turkey Shoot

Since Thanksgiving is coming, I thought this would be a good time to review Turkey

Shoot! It is not every game that allows you to battle turkeys. But these birds have gone bad and it is your job to stop their criminal ways! And you thought Chicken Run was crazy?

This is another of the light gun games. But on the computer, you use the mouse to move around and the control key to shoot. You also can throw grenades and make a turkey call, which freezes them momentarily. You get one grenade and gobble per level. While you may think that you are only dealing with regular turkeys, that is far from the case. There are also dive bombing turkeys and robot turkeys as well as the thug turkey. These gobblers are robbing banks and causing all kinds of havoc and only you can halt their fowl ways.



(Turkeys gone bad! And you thought killer tomatoes were dangerous.)

But the streets are not just full of turkeys. There are also innocent people who need to be saved. Besides saving them, you must also avoid shooting them. Shoot a person and you cause a fowl. Three fowls and you lose. Also letting a turkey carrying money to escape will cause a fowl, so keep them corralled.

The graphics are simple, but fun. Shoot a turkey and he becomes a stuffed bird (not the taxidermist kind, but the kind you would find on a dinner table). They run around with their weapons and look pretty cute, for rampaging turkeys. The game greets you with a gobble and the sound is pretty decent. Unlike many of the MAME lightgun games, this one is quite a challenge and it will take some time for you to beat all the levels. No walk through the park here.

Turkey Shoot is a quirky title with some appeal. While it will not go down as a classic, it is a nice treat. If they can find a way to make lightgun support for MAME, then games like this will really be more fun. But even with the hardware limitations, it is still a fun little game that you will gobble up. Sorry, but I couldn't help myself.

Meet and Potatoes

by [Geoff Voigt](#)

We all like to collect and get the rares, but apart from your dog and possibly a tolerant wife, (I have yet to meet a sumgal; I doubt I ever will) who can you show your best of your best to? Who else can you trounce or be trounced by at Warlords or Smithereens? Let's face it: unless you're quite lucky, none of your regular friends share this passion for Chuckwagon chasing that you do. So how can you get a hold of others of you ilk that do? Simple: find a Regional Collector's Meet, or start one if you can't find one. This is a list of all the Collector's meets I could find or root out. Let's start off with the big yearly events that everyone should know about by now. If you don't, you're REALLY new to this hobby, aren't you?

Classic Gaming Expo: Located in Las Vegas' Jackie Gaughan's Plaza Hotel, CGE has Free-play Coin-Ops, lots of vendors selling stuff you've probably just heard about in hushed corners (like Game Axes and 7800 Trac-Mar boards), and many special guests that probably programmed some of your favorite games, both home and arcade. It's a two-day thing that lets you completely gorge yourself on all that is Classic. The next one's

scheduled for early Aug. in 2001. www.cgexpo.com

PhillyClassic: In the planning for its second year, PC is geared more towards socializing and playing. The major American East Coast event for Classicdom. You can expect lots of tournaments, rare items available for play, auctions, and trade sessions. April is the magic time for the convergence on Philly. www.phillyclassic.com

CCAG (Classic Computer And Gaming): Seeing as how Tom Z. hosts the official site for this event, odds are that there's a CCAG banner above this issue of RT that you're reading now; so I'll keep it brief. A showcase for systems and collectors that has a classic computer bent. Tables and attendance are free.

Britmeet: This is the main event for all those in Britain and Europe. Usually taking place in June, its a great way to kick off Car Boot season in the UK. It could be theorized that an enterprising Yank collector could show up with a 5200 set up or two and be able to come back with some Parker Bros. Videopac games and a Leisurevision perhaps.... :/
www.britmeet.co.uk

REGIONAL MEETS: Focused on a specific area of the country, getting to a Regional is cheaper and easier than going to one of the big yearly events; it's mostly just a question of gas money. The smaller venues and informal setups allow for more discussions and actually help build the nearby trade contacts. Starting in the one of the two that I've got info for that outside of the USA:

Finland: **"The Alternative Party"** is a celebration of obscure and under appreciated computers. Game systems have home here too, apparently. Prizes are given out for 'most obscure Computer', and looking at past winners, I doubt my SX-64 would even get a ping on the radar. Sleeping arrangements can also be arranged; via a small spot for your sleeping bag in an adjoining room. <http://www.fishpool.com/alternative-party/>

In North America, going from East to West, starting in New England: **NAVA: (North Atlantic Videogame Afficianados)** Serving the New England area and occurring roughly twice a year in the "Video Game Connections" store in New Jersey, there are full-sized games for play, lots of distinguished regulars, and if it's in a videogame store, you should be able to pick _something_ up. New meetings are announce in rec.games.video.classic, and www.videogameconnections.com has a subpage for just NAVA stuff, and contact information.

Milwaukee: Since 1995, John Greve has hosted a meeting for trades, showing off, shooting the bull, and general silliness. Attendance is usually around 25, he tells me, and he's got coin-ops for free play. He tries to do it at least once a year, and is always looking out for new attendees. Contact johngr@execpc.com to get placed on his mailing list for the next meet.

Seattle and Vancouver: In the Pacific Northwest, there's two sister organizations separated by a National border but joined by a common mailing list. In Seattle, it's the **NorthWest Classic Games Enthusiasts. (NWCGE)** with meetings at least twice a year; the last one having been in Feb. Word is that many employees of the big N attend (Nintendo), and there's the very curious home-hack of a Vectrex hooked up to a large arcade vector monitor, housed in a TV console. Attendance is around 25-30.
<http://members.nbci.com/nwcge/main.htm> is their webpage.

Meetings are also promoted through rec.games.video.classic when they occur.

Vancouver has the **Vancouver Classic Video Games Club (VCVGC)** that try to meet monthly, according to thier website, <http://www.vcvgc.bc.ca/> Attendees are encouraged to bring portable systems for linking and meat for barbecuing. The site has a schedule of events.

San Francisco and Oakland does have a group affiliated with their area; **Bay Area Video Enthusiaists. (BAVE)** but to my knowledge there hasn't been a meeting of this group in well over a year. I'm including them so that their status can be revealed, or on the odd chance

that listing them helps re-start the group. No URL known, but meeting announcements were posted in [rec.games.video.classic](#).

Southern California Classic Collectors (SC3) serves Los Angeles, San Diego, and as far up north as Bakersfield. Meetings try to happen every Quarter or Trimester. SC3 trade sessions have been known to blow CGE trading out of the water, and nothing beats a good tourney of Joyboard Combat! After a Sat. afternoon of war stories, Smithereens and Incredible Wizard, the evening ensues at Regean Years, a nearby all-80's arcade and a Vegetarian Cafe. (hey it's LA, whaddya expect?!) SC3 got a bit more writing on it because I'm affiliated with this group, and you can use my E-mail below for contact information. Our (woefully un-updated) website is <http://home.inreach.com/cbreedon/>

I'm also aware of meets for Chicago, Dallas/Ft.Worth, Austin, and Florida. But these were not put in because of either not having enough information, or I wasn't contacted by the meet organizers in time to get their blessing as a contact point. If anyone reading this runs these, or any other meet I've missed, contact me and you'll get in the next Meet article I write in the next month or two. This offer also goes out to anyone running one in a country other than America; I'd like to see International meets too.

(Geoff Voigt is working on the next update of the rec.games.video.classic FAQ and hoarding trade stock for the next SC3 meet. He's also looking for classic gaming bumper stickers. Honk him at gvoigt@ridgecrest.ca.us).

The TI 99/4A

“Games - The TI Era”

by Jim Krych

Now, let's be honest. Just how many of us, when we first got our TI's, just wanted to program away? You got to be joking you say, this was the Atari and others era, video games were "it".

You're right, it was also the games that drew us to the machine.

The technical aspects of the TI 99/4A are for another article, but for now, let's just say that the TI did have some raw power when it came for video games. The Video Display Processor could have bitmap graphics, 256x192 resolution, 16 colors, 32 sprites, several video modes. The sound was very good, and the speech synthesizer was fantastic. And, carts could use the 8K cart port, or 24K for the side port-i.e. Miner 2049er.

The TI allowed two joysticks, and with a converter box, you could also use the many Atari-compatible sticks.

In short, the TI had all the potential to be a great gaming machine.

The question is, did it ever live up to it's potential?

This is a conditional “Yes”, because of TI’s policy of locking out third party cartridge makers, and that developing TMS 9900 assembly programs for the TI required a sizable investment-even if you didn’t use a 990 mini computer for it(like the GROM program development)

But despite TI's policy, some excellent, and much sought-after games, were indeed released between the introduction and the 1983 Christmas season, which I will call the "TI Era".

I wonder that if TI had opened a video game development center in sunny California, what type of games might have come out of it? And, what ports might have been released!!! Such is hindsight!

There were several companies that made games for the TI-of course many were released by TI itself, in addition to TI developed games. Milton Bradley had several neat games,

Blasto and The Attack come to mind. And, until MAME, I never knew that Blasto was an actual arcade game! Milton Bradley also had a peripheral for the TI that was truly ahead of its time-the MBX voice recognition unit! The joystick for this was like a Bally stick on steroids! The games that used the MBX were absolutely great. This device is probably one of the most sought-after by collectors, and I had one-at one time!

Companies like Sega and Imagic also had excellent titles that they had released through TI. Imagic's Super Demon Attack really used the TI's potential. Sega's Star Trek port used the speech in an excellent way.

TI's own games grew over the years. From the simple Video Games cart, to TI Invaders, Tombstone City, and of course, Parsec. TI Invaders is an excellent port of Space Invaders. I remember reading about it in a video game magazine of the time, I was in Junior High at North Olmsted at the time. Tombstone City is a unique, and fun, game. This game was even given away as source code in the Editor/Assembler package! And, we can never forget Munch-Man! The Pac-Man clone.

Alpinar and Parsec both used the Speech if it was available, as did Bigfoot, from Milton Bradley. Parsec can be best described as a Scramble clone, with speech! And the speech involved was considerable. Very lifelike, and interrupt-driven, so the game never slowed down with it! It also did some neat tricks with the hardware-like having sprites in automatic motion, while in Bitmap mode! Something, we had been lead to believe could not be done, by TI in their manuals.

Another TI game that really comes to mind for me, is Tunnels of Doom! This was simply a great role-playing game. And my brothers and I played many a different scenario. A later program from Asgard, would allow you to customize the Tunnels of Doom games, and make your own.

I haven't mentioned all the TI-produced games, including ones that were promised to us, but have shown up over the years. Bill Gaskill has a great amount of info on TI carts and games.

There were a few other third-party game cart makers during this time. I remember reading about Datamost trying to get programmers for the TI. One game they had advertised was the arcade-hit Zaxxon. Nothing was ever released, and might be possible that no code was ever done for this port.

One company that made games for the TI 99/4A, and their own carts, was Atarisoft. These games were for the most part, high-quality games. The arcade ports were especially well-done. Despite rumors that Atarisoft only had a very short time to do the titles, the games are very good. Donkey Kong, Defender, Ms. Pac-Man, and centipede, were great, and much needed for the TI community. Donkey Kong is still one of the best ports of the arcade game, exceeded, of course, only by the emulators, like MAME.

Unfortunately, TI had thrown a big monkey wrench into the whole operation-the latest TI consoles, the beige white ones, that would say a copyright of 1983, would lock out third-party carts! This really hurt them, although now, the practice is quite common. And, the Atarisoft carts were hit by this change in the 99/4A internals.

Outside of Atarisoft, Sega, and others, not many other arcade games were ported to the TI. Though, there were clones of games made for it. Out of the two million TI 99/4A's sold, a small percentage had the Peripheral Expansion Box, PEB, or a stand-alone disk system with memory, which would allow assembly games on disk.

Although after a time, most of these carts were cracked and pirated to disk, many TI owners, only had the console, as disk expansion was expensive. But, that was soon to change, despite "Black Friday", when TI pulled out of the home computer market. The third party companies would fill the gap, and some unique, and powerful games would emerge.

In short, the TI has some great features that allow it to be a great game-playing computer. With all the needed raw elements to do the job, and do it well. And some games, during

the TI Era, did do the machine justice, and showed us all, a tantalizing glimpse of our machine's abilities.

The next article is going to talk about the "After TI" era of the TI 99/4A, and the games that were made for it. It seems true in all systems, you never really push it's capabilities, until after the manufacturer has stopped supporting it, and the TI 99/4A was no exception.

("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 15 month old son, his name is Treyton. I enjoy retrogaming and things that go with that. :) My email address: jwkrych@n2net.net).

The Many Faces of . . . Pooyan

By [Alan Hewston](#)

Happy Thanksgiving! This year's Retro Times menu includes pork, but we hope that it is not eaten by the wolves. Manufactured at the arcades by Konami and later by Datasoft, Pooyan puts you in a unique role of the mother of a litter of piglets. In German, the word for piglets is Pooyan. While moving an elevator up and down, you, as the heroine, will rely heavily on your peripheral vision when firing your unlimited supply of arrows at the wolves. You must break the balloons upon which the wolves ride. The wolves also carry a defensive shield, throw rocks, and send interference balloons to block you from getting them. Only 2 arrows, or one wolf bait can be on the screen at once. The wolf bait merely bounces off the balloons, but when close to the wolves, it lures them to jump off their balloon. Collect the wolf bait at the top of the screen.

There are 2 screens (levels) in Pooyan, and 2 bonus screens as well. All 4 use the same layout, with minor changes from one to the next. Our heroine is always stationed inside her elevator (near the right edge of the screen), which only moves up or down. A set of 4 ladders are right next to your elevator, so do not let a wolf reach out and touch someone (you), or a life is lost. Stay above or below the wolves on the ladders, and the rocks (which look like giant cookies). From 24 to 48 wolves must be vanquished in each round, and a counter displays the wolves remaining.

SCREEN 1, "Pigs' House", where the wolves drop in on Balloons. Those landing softly will move to their right until they can climb up the ladders.

SCREEN 2, "Wolf Valley", where the wolves are now coming at you from below - perhaps some survived their fall from level 1. They take balloons up to the top and then work to push a shrubbery (rock) down onto your elevator. On later rounds, the balloons are two and three-layered. After one layer is popped, a smaller inner balloon is revealed, each time that wolf now floats upward more slowly. When 5 or fewer wolves remain, the boss wolf will appear, but not without an audible and/or visual cue to the game. You'll know it's the "Boss" by the clear balloon he uses (or he is flashing 2600). It'll take 3 or 4 hits to get him, and if you do not stop him - out come 5 more wolves.

In about the third round, the wolves first use their shields, and never stop doing so. They also start throwing the rocks at parabolic, instead of horizontal trajectories so that you cannot easily dodge them. Points are scored in regular and bonus rounds for every balloon popped, wolf dropped, and rock intercepted. BONUS ROUND #1: After clearing the first 2 rounds, you get to the first bonus round. This plays much like the 2nd screen, but now you cannot die, and you only have wolf bait as a weapon. BONUS ROUND #2: The wolves are in the greenery along the left edge and take turns throwing rocks at you. You score bonus points for hitting as many as possible with your arrows. Again, you cannot die in the bonus round. Bonus life every 50K (5K on 2600).



Game Designed by: Scott Spanburg (Atari 8-bit, Commodore 64),

Classic Platforms: Atari 2600, Atari 8-bit, Radio Shack Color Computer, & Commodore 64.

Categories: Gameplay, Addictiveness, Graphics, Sound & Controls

The Have Nots: Radio Shack Color Computer

I do not own this uncommon system, so I cannot properly review it here. I'm not sure if this game was made on cart and/or disk, but the CoCo programmers from Datasoft were (James Garon, and Gerry Humphrey). Feel free to send me your review/comparison.

Bronze Medal: Atari 2600 (26)

The Atari 2600 Pooyan is almost a different type of game, especially right after playing one of the other versions. The biggest difference is that only one wolf is allowed on the ladders - this is likely due to the 2600s graphical limitations. But, to add to the challenge and variety, that one wolf is mobile! He's chases after you on the ladders and really moves in higher stages. On the second screen, the wolf begins that round already on the bottom ladder, whereas no wolves are ever on the ladders on the other versions. This wolf-constantly-chasing-you-on-the-ladders idea is quite a nice variation, but it really makes for a change in strategy.

I may have been generous giving the Gameplay a (5) average, since this port is lacking much due to limitations in Graphics, Sound and memory. There is a 2600-unique option for choosing difficulties in stone speed [slow/fast], and trajectory [horizontal/parabolic]. The game is very very much harder to play as the wolves use their shields right away. I've hit a wolf 15 times and still did nothing. This programming bug (why not just loose the shield after 3 hits), makes the game tougher and frustrating, not to mention painful (thumb). The wolves just pop out of nowhere, so there is no planning your defense. Motion is very jerky due to the blocky Graphics. There is little to no pre-round activity and no chance to get a feel for the Controls. The memory problem is that the 2600 only keeps track of how many wolves come, so the round ends after 29 + [the screen number] wolves come at you, and then only after the final balloon or rock clears the screen. There is no continuity, no smooth motion and Pooyan is very hard to control up and down. The Gameplay also lacks any bonus rounds, and there are no multi-layered balloons - which may be why the shields never die. Too bad they couldn't have just added this difficulty as a variation. Finally, a bit confusing, the bait can only be picked up when pushing up at the top of the elevator and after centering the joystick first.

The blocky Graphics are poor (4) and cannot be overlooked as they change the game so much, including only having 1 arrow. The Controls should be easy to use, but they too are frustrating and only marginally acceptable (6). The music and Sound are fine (7). I scored the Addictiveness as poor (4), but I must admit that I really do like this game a whole lot more than my scores show. I just want to warn you not to get too frustrated and give up right away! It should grow on you some, and relative to 2600 games, it's a keeper and should get lots more playing time than most - it's just not the same game as the arcade version. Pooyan is also a pretty rare cart, but I may be willing to part with mine if a good trade can be worked out.

Silver Medal: Atari 8-bit (42)

The Atari 8-bit is not a disappointment, in fact it nearly won the Gold medal. The Gameplay is outstanding (9) and both computer versions have a pause button. But, neither one offers any options other than 1 or 2 players. The Sound effects are great, but overall score a very nice (8), as the musical score, although of high quality, as my wife says - "is annoying". The Controls are great as well (9) but I wasn't motivated to giving any score a 10. The Graphics as just slightly worse than the C64, but as still very nice (8). Finally, the Addictiveness is very good (8). Pooyan for the Atari 8-bit and the C-64 are both only available on disk.

Gold Medal: Commodore 64 (44)

There's no significant reason to like this game any better than the Atari - they're both great.

The only difference in scores, which are very similar, is that the Graphics here are a little bit easier to see the action, and score an outstanding (9). Likewise, I gave the Addictiveness 1 more point as well (9). See also Tom's review of Pooyan on MAME in Retro Times #23.

Come back next month when I plan the huge task of reviewing River Raid for the Atari 8 bit, Atari 2600, Atari 5200, Colecovision, Intellivision and Commodore 64 Whew!. Alan Hewston is looking for some popular, but harder to find games to help in this column. Let me know if you have for sale or trade any of these games: Colecovision: Joust, Dig Dug, Threshold, Moon Patrol; or Vic 20: Galaxian, Dig Dug, Super Cobra, or Intellivision: Pole Position, Blue Print, Commando, Donkey Kong Junior, Venture. Alan can be reached at Hewston95@stratos.net.

eBay Notes

There has been a trend on eBay lately, the decline in prices of classic video games. While there are still examples of wild prices for a single item (a shrinkwrapped Contra for the NES sold for hundreds and a boxed Intellivision going for a few hundred), the general prices have come down some. Collections of Coleco games used to command an average of \$3.00-\$5.00 per game for a group (with 10-20 carts) with a few rares. Now the same group would get an average of \$2.00-\$3.00 per cart. Intellivisions are even lower (granted there are more common Intellivision games) and I have seen lots where games averaged about \$1.00 each! Granted this was before shipping costs, but still a very good deal for a complete game! And we are not talking about a bunch of Blackjack and Pokers here, we are talking about a good mix of games with a few rares in the bunch. I know this because I have been using eBay as a place to get games for my own collection and for resale! In the past, I only used eBay as a place to sell and get hard to find items, but lately there are deals aplenty!

The best thing to do on eBay is to be patient. If the item isn't ridiculously rare, wait and track the prices. If there are quite a few of the same or similar auctions up, the prices come down. Why be the first to set the price and most likely pay more, when the second and third auction will come down in price. Remember that there are only a handful of items that won't be on eBay again. This and it pays to buy in bulk.

A few words of caution. First off, if the auction does not list the shipping costs, email and get a definite shipping cost. Also check for handling fees, something that will make me avoid an auction. I refuse to bid on any auction where they charge a handling fee. If they cannot make the money on the item (you have the ability to set the opening bid to whatever you want), then they shouldn't be selling it. Also make sure to check their payment options. I have seen people that will only accept US Postal Money Orders and restrictive things like that. A money order is a money order, what is the big deal?

A few things to keep in mind is that paying through Paypal or Billpoint can be a safer alternative. Paypal will cover you in the event you get ripped off by the seller, up to \$500.00. Granted they must be a verified seller, so check first. A good way to check this is try to send them money. The page before you actually send the money, it will say if the person is verified or not. If they are not, you cannot collect.

If you are not paying with Paypal, you do have extra coverage. eBay will reimburse you for getting ripped off, up to \$200.00 for a single auction. They are covered by Lloyds of London and do offer this protection. I have never had to use it, so I don't know what requirements are necessary and what kind of time frame it takes to get reimbursed.

Odds and Ends

Here are the little news and notes about the classic video game market.

-The latest copy of Digital Press, the price guide for the hobby should be out by the time this goes to press or soon after. RT writer, Fred Wagaman and RT editor and writer, Tom Zjaba (that's me) both have stories that were included in the latest issue! So if the other 5,000+ great reasons to get it are not enough for you, here is two more. Bring the issue to Phillycon or CCAG and we will gladly autograph them, thus ruining the value of the book and dropping the condition from near mint to very fine.

-Steven Kent has finished and released his wonderful book about the video game history called "The First Quarter: A 25-year History of Video Games". The book sells for \$21.95 and is available at most book stores, including Amazon.com. By the way, if you have not done so, also pick up Phoenix: The Rise and Fall of Video Games, the other must have book about video games. It is done by Leonard Herman and well worth the price! It can be found at: <http://www.rolentapress.com/>.

-Want to see a really innovative use of my top 50 list of classic games on my website? Check out what Josh Mooney has done! Here is the URL: <http://www-scf.usc.edu/~jmooney/vgame.html>. Now that is a creative mind!

-Speaking of creative, one of the readers of RT, Space Fractal (I hope this is a nickname he uses and not the product of hippie parents) sent me this cool link. He did a Java version of Cheeky Mouse (an arcade game that I reviewed in the MAME section) that is quite good! Go ahead and try it, it is free and alot of fun! Here is the URL: <http://www.playitgame.com/cheekymouse>.

Letters to the Editor

I decided to do a different slant this month. Instead of class video game related questions, I decided to put some of the off topic questions that I received this month. I did receive quite a few, so here is some answers to the non video game questions!

So who did you vote for in the election, Bush or Gore? signed NY voter

I thought about this one and when it came down to it, I couldn't choose the lesser of two evils (as many people put it). So, I chose to vote for Ralph Nader. He is the only candidate that I trust and can vote for with a clear conscience. I don't feel that Bush or Gore will do a good job and I do not trust either. So I voted Nader! Did I waste my vote? No, I sent a message that I want a real choice and the two existing parties do not offer one. Remember the only wasted vote is the one that is not cast.

Did you get a new Playstation 2? Do you have one for sale, preferably around \$300.00? signed Hoping in Texas.

Sorry, but I do not have any Playstation 2s for sale. People assume that if you deal in video games, irregardless of the era, you can get new ones too and at great prices. I have had quite a few people ask me if I could get them a Playstation 2.

As far as getting one for myself, no way. I would not buy a Playstation 2 for at least a year. With the unreliability of the original Playstation, I would rather wait and see if any problems surface, before putting that much money down on a system. Plus, the only game out that really interests me is Kessen and that is not enough to warrant a \$300.00 purchase. Also, I would never wait overnight, outside a store, just to get a game system.

More power to you people who do, but I am not in that group. I won't wait for nothing, except a driver's license (but then you don't have any alternative).

Do you prefer shipping with the post office or UPS? signed Just Asking

The questions I get each month are quite funny. Well, I will answer almost anything. For smaller packages and overseas, I prefer the post office. They are cheaper, easier and more convenient. For larger packages or very expensive packages, I will take UPS because of the insurance included and the package tracking, also included.

Why do you bother listing what songs or bands you listen to while doing the latest issue? Like anyone really cares. signed Get a Clue

Actually, I get more feedback about the music than I do about most articles. I have had people tell me about other music they like that is similar, share stories about the music and just to say "Hey, another fan of so and so band". I also get some funny emails with some light hearted barbs (Especially last month after putting in Papa Roach. Just for the record, I found that he only has one song I like. The rest of the stuff is pretty lame). Plus, it is at the end of the newsletter and easy to ignore if you don't want to read it.

I tell you what, "Get a Clue", I will leave it up the readers. If you want to see me continue to put what music I listened to while writing this issue, let me know. If you think it is stupid and would like to see it removed, also let me know. Whichever gets the most votes will win!

Follow up to the MAME stick article

By [Fred Wagaman](#)

Thanks for all of the positive feedback concerning the inexpensive Mame stick article (see "An Answer to our Prayers" from last month). I hope all of you that gave this a try had success. I had questions from literally all over the world. Some I could answer, some I couldn't.

One question I received concerned converting a Sidewinder gamepad into an Arcade stick. Here's the message

Hi! Ok I have a question for you and I dunno but I hope you can help.

I have a Sidewinder gamepad and while ago [long one] I came across a page where they had the schematics on how to convert your Sidewinder Gamepad into a Arcade Joystick. Do you know where I might be able to obtain this info. You see the reason I'm so interested in finding this little schematic is that I have 2 Sidewinders and they have the Daisy Chain feature that works really well with all the Win9X emus I have so I thought to get the arcade feel by building an arcade cabinet out of my old Sidewinder.. All help would be appreciated. :)
Thanks alot.

Shaveed

[Trinidad W.I.]

I was unable to help this person out. That's where you come in. If anyone can help, please contact him at nitro@tsstt.net.tt .

I'm sure someone out there can help.

American Systems on PAL TVs, the Follow-up!

Last month in the "Letters to the Editor" section, I put up the question, what do you need to do to play US systems on PAL televisions? Well, I received a few comments. Here are

two of them, I hope this helps people out!

Response #1

Yes it is possible to use NTSC game systems on PAL TV's.
Most of my collection is NTSC and my big ol' TV is PAL.

There are a variety of NTSC to PAL converters available from electronics stores, and many more available cheaply in Chinatown in Sydney and Melbourne.

Many multi system VCR's will also convert an NSTC signal to PAL, though not all provide it on the 'video in' sockets, (some only convert the signal when you play American tapes, not when you hook up an american video source).

In addition most new PAL TV's can accept an NTSC signal, look for a 'multi-system' 'multi standard' label on the TV.

The names to look out for are 'Video systems converter' 'NTSC-PAL converter'

Try www.burn.com.au if you are in Australia, they sell US and Japanese consoles and have many converters in stock.

-Pete

Response #2

Playing Imports on your PAL System.

I saw this question in your last issue and I'm glad to say I can answer it. I've posted pretty full instructions and a few relevant websites.

Ok, I'm guessing this fellow has a Playstation, so lets start from there. Ok, first of all, check under your playstation and look for the "Model Number". Now, this is extreamely important, it should be something like "SCPH-5502". Model numbers range from the early versions of the PSX, Starting at "SCPH -100x - SCPH - 9002" (x meaning the certain batch manufactured). Anyway, note that number. Then decide whether you want to install a "mod chip" or use a "game enhancer". Both have their cons and pros. First of all, I'll explain a mod chip.

A mod chip is a piece of metal with a few copper wires which is melded onto a specific part of your PS which allows games to bypass the region chip in your PS which prevents you from playing NTSC games. The pros of this procedure allow you to play NTSC and Backup Games like they are any normal PAL game. The cons range from warranty expiring, opening your PS, botched installation and modchip lockout games (such as Dino Crisis). This is a popular favourite amoung importers and If you don't mind the risk it's a cheap and easy way to go. Try and aim for buying a "STEALTH Mod-chip", as these ones can be hidden from any lockout games. Don't you love hackers?

A game enhancer is a small cartridge with a parallel port attached to it. These babies simply stick into the I/O port on the back of your Playstation and your away. No worries about opening, voiding warranties and the like. The obvious pros are simple installation, optional memory card space, optional cheat storage, risk free import gaming. The cons are pretty small, but infinitely annoying to some gamers. Why? The procedure know as the "Swap". This involves "tricking" your PS into thinking that it's running a PAL game when it's really not, via actually using a PAL game to boot it up, then quickly switching. I'm not going to explain the whole thing, but it's easy to find instructions online. Another con is that newer model Playstations (The SCPH -9002 series and PSOnes) can't use them....yet. The popular game enhancer company Gameshark (<http://www.gameshark.com/>) is currently developing a version that can be used on a PS, using a CD-ROM. Anyway, this is my personal preference and the same with a few of my friends due to the simplicity and no-risk operation.

SO decided on an option? American's can purchase them from Game Gizmos (<http://www.game-gizmo.com/>) with offers fantastic service (overnight delivery) and a huge

range. Australians can purchase them from PSX Plus (<http://www.psxplus.com.au>) which offers an equally fantastic service.

The next part's easy. You now have to trick your PAL television to running NTSC colours and framerate. Most newer televisions will run this with ease, and due to NTSC's better picture quality and speed, you may even see an increase visually. Older televisions (pre-94'-ish) MAY have some trouble, as they aren't equipped with NTSC playback built in. Older model playstations (SCPH - 500x and under) and Older TV's will need whets called a "NTSC Converter" which replaces your normal PSX AV/RF cable. Simply plugs into the back of your PS and into your TV via RF or AV. Easy. These things are moderately priced and can be purchased from both of the sites listed above.

By now, you have everything you need to run Import games on your PAL System and TV. All you need now are import games...but that's a different story. Post any questions about Playstation Importing and hardware to : arameda@bigpond.com. I'll try and answer as soon as possible.

- James Pinnell

Sites of the Month

Two more sites that need to be explored for you to completely enjoy your classic gaming experience.

[The Story of the Portable Atari 2600!](#)

What would be cooler than a portable Atari 2600? Imagine the look on kids faces when they expect to see a Gameboy in your hand and instead they see this! Well, give up the dream, because this site is not selling portable Atari 2600 units. Darn! But you can find out how one person did it and it is a very interesting read! Lots of cool pictures too!

Here is the URL: <http://www.geocities.com/funmazer>

[Toonarific](#)

You may ask why I put this site in my list. Well, they have a nice selection of classic video game cartoons on tape that you can purchase! I personally bought some Dragon's Lair cartoons and were very pleased with the them! They also have Pacman, Pole Position and Saturday Morning Supercade (that has Donkey Kong, DK Jr, Pitfall, Q*Bert, Frogger and more!). So if you are looking for some good classic cartoons and have been looking all over for them, check out this site!

Here is the URL: <http://www.toonarific.com/>

Conclusion

Time to wrap up another issue. We are now nearing Thanksgiving and Christmas is just around the corner. For all you fans of Bit Age Times, there will be a Holiday Issue coming next month! While I am not doing regular issues at this time, I will try to do a few special issues until my schedule allows me to get back to a regular schedule.

Everyone have a safe and happy Thanksgiving! Enjoy the time with family and remember to give thanks! We do have alot to be thankful for.

-[Tom Zjaba](#)

This issue was done while listening to Pink Floyd albums, specifically "Dark Side of the Moon" and "Wish You Were Here".