

Retrogaming Times

Issue #62 - October 20th, 2002

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The Best of Retrogaming Times!

One of the biggest complaints from readers of Retrogaming Times is how time consuming it is to have to peruse over 60 issues to find the articles they want. Most regularly done articles have fans, whether it be The Many Faces series or Classic Commercials or even Video Game Therapy. So I decided to start compiling the articles together to make it easy for a fan of video games to easily find what they want and enjoy it.

While there is alot of work to do, there is quite a bit up already. We have a good chunk of the Many Faces articles together. We also have all the Prose stories and Video Game Therapy together. In the future, we will compile all the interviews and all the Classic Commercials. [You can check out this work in progress here.](#)

The Many Faces of...Pitfall!

by [Alan Hewston](#)

We continue our 20th anniversary salute to games from 1982. I needed an easy, familiar game this month due to a family vacation and by coincidence October was also the month I made my Pitfall Harry costume (see Retrogaming Times #27). Not to mention I am running out of time to review this, the number one home video game from '82. In fact, "Pitfall!" was probably the leading selling and most played home video game & computer

cartridge based game of the era. The 2600 version topped the sales charts for more weeks than any game ever did or maybe since then. It's no wonder that we consider Pitfall!'s programmer, David Crane as if he were the Elvis or a Beatle of the videogame industry. But I wonder how much it would have hurt its popularity or sales if David had not followed the advice of his fellow Activision programmers just before its release to change it from 1 life to 3 lives per game. Good move! Otherwise the game may have been considered too frustrating with one life as can be seen in too many Odyssey 2 titles back then. 1982 was a great year and shame on you if you have not played this fantastic game on any system. Pitfall! surely paved the way for the future of adventure games, side-scrollers in particular and also for packing as much game/code as possible into those classic system's carts. See also Retrogaming Times #10 Where Doug reviewed Pitfall!



Home Versions [All versions buy Activision, first on the Atari 2600 by David Crane '82]: C64 (Peter Filiberti '84), Colecovision ('83), Atari 8 bit ('84), Atari 5200 ('84), Intellivision ('82)

Rumor Mill: Apple II version may have been started but only Pitfall II came out.

Categories (10 points each for): Gameplay, Addictiveness, Graphics, Sound & Controls

Sequels: Pitfall II, also by Activision planning for around RT issue #78.

Home Version Similarities: Except those in () all home versions have: the same 255 rooms (call them jungle scenes); same layout of treasures and obstacles (C64, CV); 20 minute (A8 bit, 5200) clock and 3 lives; pretty much the same time is required to cross a scene, or swing on a vine (C64); same points scored for treasures found or lost for falling down; Activision patch if you score 20 K; no gameplay options no musical score and most have no pause.

Timing of events: [Warning, this section is boring & technical but not likely to be told in any other "Pitfall!" review] I've not learned this from any reports or interviews, just by my own inspection, and loads of PT and videotape playback on the 2600 version, so I may be in error here. The 2600 has what appears to be at least 3 sets of timers for events, set 1) a global timer in sync with the game clock, set 2) a local timer based upon the time that you enter the scene, and set 3) a global timer offset from the game clock based upon some trigger event, such as when you enter a specific jungle scene, or collected a specific treasure, or some other global event (not just from the current scene, but anywhere in the jungle). The timer for set 3 could easily be changed during the game using multiple trigger events, or even have subsets. In fact, the set 1 timer may actually be the same as what I call set 3, but we'd need David to confirm that. Thus all events (vines swinging, pits & crocodiles opening & closing) are all set to one of these timers (or subsets of set 3) and stored in memory ahead of time. If you play flawlessly every time, and take the same path with no delays, you'd have the same sequence of events in every scene every time. Note that the scorpions and logs (and a large number of pitfalls) always use timing set 2 on every version on every scene AFAIK. I've never seen any random events on the 2600, but have seen them on the 5200/8bit where (in specific jungle scenes only) if you exit & enter a scene quickly over and over you'll see almost every time the vine has shifted to somewhere it would not have been. This may be a glitch in the code and not randomness so I looked but did not find this on any other version. Still, there's at least one scene on the Atari 8 bit not too far from the start where the vine appears to be random. Playing

flawlessly (without stopping) up until that point, and every time you do this, the vine starts at a different location. Interviews with Activision programmers hint that their (2600) code typically has no randomness or a lot less than you might think. This may be critical to the game design & play testing as Crane made sure that it was quite the challenge, but indeed possible to complete a game (with time to spare), every time you hit restart. I expect that he was a pretty good game player, but if not, we know that he was smart enough to turn off the collision detection of hazards and verify play through completion. The best completed game ever verified had 59 seconds remaining, but reports of up to 2 minutes have been heard. The shortest distance path is documented, but not too difficult to map out on your own via a videorecorder give it a try. If you don't have time for that, or are ready to verify your map, check out Ben Valdes' great Pitfall! dedication page:

<http://pitfallharry.tripod.com>. Unfortunately, on all versions but the Intellivision, there's a gameplay difference (from the 2600), either randomness has been added or the location, spacing or timing of objects has changed. This makes me wonder (given everything else is the same) if winning the game is possible for every attempt, or even at all. Fortunately, the great game player Todd Rogers (and to date only he) has achieved perfect games on all classic versions of Pitfall! Actually there is no Twin Galaxies data for the C64 version, but I think he told me once that he was perfect there as well. Maybe some day I'll set off on that lonely road of replaying these games until I get 20 minutes of perfection. Todd has paved the way, so we know it is possible - maybe he should write this review. Regardless of matching the gameplay of the 2600, the strategy and execution is still pretty much the same on all versions - just learn what things are different & adapt. It may be harder, but still possible and thus they are all unique additions to our classic libraries. OK, now back to the typical review but for each significant deviation from the 2600, I deducted a point in gameplay.

Have Nots: Intellivision (40)

This version was the first third party cart for the Inty and is graphically the closest to the original 2600. Kudos for making it look so close, but then Inty fans expected it to be even better on their graphically superior system. Graphics are still sharp (8) and nothing to be ashamed of save for some vines hiding behind the tress. The Gameplay is fantastic (9) and ever so close a match to the 2600. It took me quite a while to prove this to myself, but everything is really there in place and in synch - at least within a pixel or two. Alas, even the slightest pixel differences can make a particular scene ever so slightly harder (or maybe easier), but it is obvious that the programmers made every effort possible here to duplicate the original. No deduction here. The Addictiveness is enjoyable (8), but I felt that I had to knock off a point due to the slightly increased difficulty and clumsy controller, and use of 2 fire buttons. I expected to add back in a point for the usual INTY pause feature, but shamefully, Activision stripped that feature out of the code. The Sound is pleasant (8) with no problems, and closest to sounding like the 2600. But it's probably the worst of those scoring an 8. The Controls are very good (7). I started off scoring them a 5, but a couple hours of PT helped. Unfortunately, Pitfall! (or possibly Pitfall II) is the most precise, controls demanding game of the era and the Inty controllers just don't cut it. It's frustrating if the weak fire button just doesn't let you jump at the right time out of 300+ jumps. Game over. Then, the addition of a second fire button to jump OFF the vines. Why? How would it help? Moving downward to get off a vine, versus pushing a different button and still moving some direction. Consider that there are a few scenes where you must get off a vine, then jump over something immediately, this essentially doubles the complexity. I still keep scratching my head wondering why Mattel never made/added a better controller, if not for the Inty I, then surely by the time of the non-hard-wired controls on the Inty II. But overall it scores as one of the top 5 INTY games in this column, and was a big seller for Activision on the Inty.

Have Nots: Colecovision (41)

As with every remaining version in this review, the graphics and sound were enhanced. Or more accurately, they were intended to be enhanced, but were they, or was it at the expense of the gameplay? The Gameplay is very good (7) and is pretty much all there, just a bit off. There was at least 1 scene where a log or other stationary item is too close to the edge of the pit and a normal dismount at the extreme edge of the vine would plop you on top of this hazard. Thus this makes the game harder, as you need to jump off

earlier than usual. The larger character sizes may be the reason the scorpions are significantly harder to jump quite possibly there's no pixels of actual margin of error. We're talking about jumping 8+ scorpions in a row and around 20 total a most tedious task for the CV it's just plain cruel. Some of the rolling logs are either spaced differently or their timing is off. Also, see the latest release of the Digital Press Guide for the glitch where you can walking through walls going Left. There is also a neat introduction screen where Harry swings across a vine. The Addictiveness is enjoyable (8) but they ignored the pause capabilities and I already mentioned the increased difficulty. It also takes too long to reset the game, waiting for the intro screen in order to play again. This is also the worst version for jumping past / through the vines and dieing. The Sound is crisp (8) and refreshing, but also annoying. The stereophonic sounding vine swinging and collecting treasure is nice, but the footfalls with every step and the echoes of every jump are undesirable. I think it would have been more interesting to add sounds to the rolling log or crocodile's mouths closing shut! (ie to add effects to the hazards not the norms). The Graphics are sharp (8), with improved color and details but also things are a bit too big looking and the most different from the others. The Controls are perfect (10) using an Atari controller. Since there is no pause, and no options, you can easily use an Atari just need to move to start the game.

Have Nots: Commodore 64 (41)

The Gameplay is good enough (6) to work, but the worst of the lot. Items are offset or pairs of rolling logs are spaced differently but not making it more difficult. The worst problem is really obvious as it takes too long for the crocs, vines and pits etc. to complete a cycle. You need to pause and wait for it to go. They appear to be the same, but way off from the 2600. The scorpion is a little harder to jump, and there is a sprite glitch where you appear to have cleared the critter but then die. There is no randomness, but appear to be scenes with timing that is purposefully off from the 2600. The addictiveness is outstanding (9) with a pause using [run/stop]. Despite gameplay differences, the game is still fun to play, not much harder, just different. The Sound is effective (7), but the worst of the lot. Every effect is off and nearly all are annoying, especially the footfalls and jumps. Fortunately the Graphics are great (9), possibly the best of the lot. The Controls are perfect (10) as usual. Available on disk & cart easy to find. A second, simpler version of Pitfall! was included in Activision's Gamemaker, but we'll not go there.

Gold Medal: Atari 2600, 5200 and 8 bit (44)

I could try harder to break this tie, but I know that they all deserve a medal. Even if you feel that the timing of events as done on the 2600 is critical, or sacred you should still enjoy these other 2 versions. And if you are willing to accept a difference in gameplay, albeit slight or to include randomness, then you'll like the minor improvements in the later Atari versions.

Atari 2600

The original will always be the most loved and played of any version. The Gameplay is first class (9) as good a classic era game one can play (in terms of variety, strategy, and creativity) without having any gameplay options. The Addictiveness is fantastic (9) - again - about as good as one can get without adding a pause, difficulty levels or other enhancement. Certainly knowing that this game is extremely hard, but conquerable presents quite a challenge to players from any era. Pitfall! will most certainly bring you back again for more. Also factor in the mapping aspect, and that back in that era, common folk did not have a VCR, or newsgroups to learn and share information leading them to many, many hours of players lovingly trying to map this game out by hand. Other than RPG's or text maze games, this was unprecedented, but certainly yielded results and players could gradually learn and progress with each new adventure. The Sound is pleasant (8), with a nice variety but simplicity. Nothing sounds bad, but more effects and a musical score would surely help. The Graphics too are simple yet sharp (8). A few more characters and a little more animation or action would have helped. The controls are awesome (10) and were perfect for the challenge awaiting. This is the most common and cheapest version to find.

Atari 8 bit

The Gameplay is very nice (8) and as mentioned earlier includes randomness which appears to be a change from the original. There are possibly some trivial locations and timing changes and the clock starts ticking immediately, giving you one less second on this and the 5200 version. The Addictiveness is fantastic (9) but somehow there is no added pause. The randomness may make the game a little harder, but not significantly that I can tell. The Sound is impressive (8). Similar to the CV, the added footfalls and other effects are more stereophonic but can also be annoying. The Graphics are superb (9) and add in just a touch more realism without being overdone. The Controls are perfect (10) as you would expect. This version is the least common of all on cart, but still not hard to find, and is available on disk. So if you are willing to accept some changes, and a new challenge, then you'll like this version even more than the 2600.

Atari 5200

The same game as the 8 bit, but there are the usual differences in controls. The Addictiveness is awesome (10) as you have all of the best above, plus a pause button [pause]. The Controls can go three ways. With the pack in controllers you better just get your 20K score and then forget about playing any more. Wait until you get a Wico or other good controllers and then they are great (9). If you have a Masterplay interface you may be able to conclude that they are perfect and then this version would be the best. In fact, I know that I consider the Wico sticks a (10) for Pitfall II, and so maybe they could be a 10 here, but I had too much trouble with the crocs and scenes where you jump off the vine then immediately jump again. Vines and crocs are not part of Pitfall II. But come back in Jan '04 when the 5200 may earn a 49 or the only perfect 50 in the Many Faces of Pitfall II.

Come back next month, for another of my top 10 favorites, Dig Dug and its 10 faces on the Apple II, Atari 2600, 5200, 8 bit, 7800, INTY, Vic 20, TI-99, C64 & CV. Alan Hewston can be reached at: Hewston95@stratos.net or to trade see my new pages at: http://my.stratos.net/~hewston95/Hewston_vg.html This article written with the theme of Pitfall II almost haunting me, playing non-stop in my head.

COMMERCIAL VAULT

by [Adam King](#)

Greetings, gamers. For this edition of the vault, we take a look at an advertising method most companies use: mud-slinging. Talking smack about a competitor's system is nothing new. Who could forget Sega's infamous "Sega Does What Nintendon't" campaign. Well this can even be found in the classicgaming era, folks.

The two ads I have this month are for the Atari 5200, but they also feature the Colecovision. When Atari was working on the 5200, it was first designed to go against the Intellivision. But soon the graphically superior Colecovision burst on the scene, forcing Atari to change gears. After they released the 5200 they soon targeted the Colecovision with several ads trying to prove they have the better system.

You can see both ads at the Atari Historical Society (<http://www.atari-history.com>).

Commercial 1

This first spot shows people gathering to a movie theater for sneak previews of the upcoming arcade hits for the 5200. Once the curtain opens, we see several screens of 5200 games, such as Joust, Jungle Hunt, and the like. We also have a movie-style announcer narrate the spot.

"Here's what's coming from the arcades to the 5200 SuperSystem. Cartridges only the SuperSystem can play. And the SuperSystem versions are the best versions of the great arcade hits you can play at home. The Atari 5200 Supergames. You can't play them on Colecovision. Only on the Atari 5200 SuperSystem."

PICTURES:



"Hurry guys, or we'll miss the game previews."



"Coming soon to an Atari 5200 near you."



"SEE! A man defend himself from evil ostriches."



"WATCH! As a driver attempts the win the cup."



"LOOK! At a Bugs Bunny impersonator."



"All this and more on the 5200 (not Colecovision)"

I have seen a slightly different version of this ad that doesn't mention the Colecovision. Does anyone know which came first?

Commercial 2

This ad takes a more direct approach, saying why you should buy a 5200 instead of a Colecovision. Why? Because their games are superior and you can't play them in a Colecovision.

"Do you think Colecovision plays all Atari games?"

"You mean it can't?"

"Here's Pac-Man on Colecovision (shows 2600 version). But here's Pac-Man for the 5200 SuperSystem (shows 5200 version)."

"Now you're talkin'."

"And it doesn't work on Colecovision."

"But won't their adaptor-"

"It won't play SuperSystem cartridges."

"Not Pole Position?"

"Not this Pole Position."

"Not Centipede?"

"Not this Centipede. Only on the Atari 5200 SuperSystem. "

"But aren't they hard to find?"

"They're everywhere."

"Everywhere?"

"The Atari 5200 SuperSystem."



"Say have you heard the news? You can't play Atari games on a Colecovision."



"Isn't that your version of Pac-Man?"



See, it can't fit in a Colecovision...



... or their little adapter.



"Wow, thanks for clearing that up, Atari."



"Coleco-who?"

I almost busted a gut when they showed the "Coleco" Pac-Man. Who are they trying to fool, passing off their own crappy game as a Coleco game! Plus they fought against Coleco's 2600 adapter by saying it won't play 5200 games. This didn't stop them from forming the Atarisoft label and releasing versions of Centipede and Defender on that very same system. I thought they said it couldn't play Centipede.

Don't forget you have a chance to contribute to the Top 20 Commercials of all time. Send me what you say your favorite commercials are. I will accept ads from 1977 to 1990, which deal with Atari, Intellivision, Colecovision, and the lesser game systems. If possible I'll also accept early Nintendo and Sega ads. This will run to November 30th. Once December rolls around I'll post the results in Issue 64. Let's hope your favorite makes the list.

The moral of this column: You can lead a horse to water, but you can't force a 5200 cartridge into a Colecovision. Or something like that.

The TI 99/4A The 99/8 Bug List

by [Jim Krych](#)

When I started to really get involved with the TI, I also became very interested in the TI 99/8 Home Computer-what made it tick, its specs, etc. While I was working for Asgard Software, later Asgard Peripherals, I was given a set of seven 360K floppies that contained the entire OS of the TI 99/8 in source code!!!

Some of the programmer's comments are really funny, when looking through all of that code! And, you have a feeling for what they were trying to accomplish with the 99/8. Of note, then the list of bugs for the 99/8 shows some of the problems they had in trying to make the 99/8 a viable product out the doors of engineering and into the consumer world.

The way I got this file onto the PC is rather interesting. First of all, I was able to get a fully loaded Geneve system, with RS232, Rave Speech Card, PFM+, Myarc Floppy Controller, which enabled me to read the disks I had. After finding the correct cable at home, I originally had inserted a Sega Genesis cable, which sort of kind of worked. I hooked up my Geneve to the VideoTurtle and made sure the system worked fine, and it did on the 20" S-Video TV. I then had my Atari Falcon030 up and running, and after tweaking the terminal software on it, was ready to receive the text.

Funny thing was, my version of Port was a beta version, so I couldn't upload a text file. Yikes!!! A quick look through the Geneve manual showed me how to redirect output. Think of the Geneve's OS as like MSDOS with some TI flavors. So I did the following steps:

```
MODE RS232:9600
```

```
TYPE BUG > RS232
```

Once done, the file was sent to the RS232 card at 9600 baud to the Falcon030. Some of the characters got dropped, but just a few and I was able to fix the text. I used the Devpac editor on the Falcon030 to accomplish this. I formatted a 1.44Mb floppy on my main PC and just copied the file from the directory on my Falcon030, which I then copied and pasted onto this file in Word!!!

For you techies, the cable I am using between the Geneve and the Falcon030 is an old null-modem cable, with a modem cable (and 9-pin to 25-pin RS232 adaptor). I probably could work this on the spare PC at home too.

Well, it's a rather long file. So I will not say much more. The musings on the Yahoo Group have been about connecting their TI's to their PC's, via a Lantronix UDS-10 and Windows Internet Connection Sharing. And so, without further delay, the Bugs List of the 99/8!!!!

Last update: 8/25/83

99/8 Bugs found after 7/23/83 release

(1) The variables TEMP2 and LNBUF+2 were in same location. Program lockup resulted during READ if (a) a user subprogram was called or (b) GCHAR was called, due to the loss of the pointer to the next DATA statement.

found: 7/27/83

fix: move LNBUF to a new location, in PSCAN (grom1)

ann FMEX (grom2).

action: Revised grom codes 4435B and 4436B were shipped on 7/28/83. Production of 4435A and 4436A was stopped at that time.

(2) Errors in IF-THEN-ELSE handler.

(a) IF --- THEN ---- ! tail remark with no ELSE gives syntax error.

(b) IF --- THEN line-number :: statement-2 does not execute statement-2 on false condition.

Both in PARSE in 32KB rom. found: 7/28/83

fix: revised IF-THEN-ELSE code on 7/29/83

action:

(3) A\$=RPT\$("A",4090) gives spurious warning. found: 7/28/83

fix: change JLT REPT2 to JLE REPT2 in line 706 of STRING in 32KB rom

action:

(4) MB expander communication.

In RXD routine, the statement INV R8 was too early in code, and could be executed before valid data was accepted, causing a lockup on the final handshake.

found: 7/28/83

fix: move the statement down to after the second validity test. in ROM0.

action:

(5) CALL LOAD does not report i/o errors properly. The op code is correct but the result code is always zero.

found: 7/29/83

fix: in DSRLNK change SRL R1,4 to SRL R1,5 to truly right justify the error code. In LOADER add SLA R0,4 to put code in most significant nibble for error handler. Both in 32KB rom. action:

(6) The ON WARNING flag is not reset by a RUN.

found: 7/29/83

fix: clear the bit in KILSYM in the 32KB rom

action:

(7) In an error routine, CALL ERR makes RETURN NEXT fail. (Seems to replace pointer to error line with pointer to CALL ERR line.

found: 7/29/83

fix: (problem had nothing to do with ERR. RETURN NEXT did not map in new line.)
Add code to map in line on 8/1/83. 32KB rom

action:

(8) Parameter passing through multiple levels of subprograms did not work in some array cases.

found: 8/01/83

fix: in SUBPRGX in 32KB rom, on 8/02/03

action:

(9) CALL INIT will lose open files.

found: 8/02/83

fix: the 'fix string pointers' routine stopped too soon.

Just extend to run through I/O table.

At the same time, a garbage collection vulnerability was

discovered and fixed. 8/03/83

action:

(10) VAL can give errors on correct input

found: 8/03/83

fix: 'off-by-one' errors in algorithm corrected.

8/04/83 in 32KB rom

action:

action: re-release all on 9/19.

Due to space limitations, we are only listing the first 10 errors. If you want a complete list of all 40 errors, email Jim Krych at the following address:

jwkrych@adelphia.net

"Hi, my name is Jim W. Krych. I am a 33 year-old electronics technician. I am also a 14-year veteran of both the USCG, active, and the Ohio Army National Guard, reserve with B Co. 112th engineers. I can be reached at: jwkrych@adelphia.net or jwkrych@n2net.net I have a three year-old son, Treyton, and he is the CEO of Treyonics! I have also been blessed with a beautiful fiancé her name is Lori!!! I have founded my own business and, of course, I named the company after my son Treyton! Our flagship product is the Treyonics Home Controller System Model 9908. Better known as the...

Devastator

"Serious Gaming"

It's Alive

For anyone who is a fan of the Video Game Critic (or as he is known to his family, Dave

Mrozek) and his excellent site, may have noticed that it disappeared. What once was a site full of reviews of video games of all eras, now was a link to a sleazy gambling site. So you may ask happened to the old site? Well, after much work and effort, it has been moved to its new location! The new home of the Video Game Critic is:

<http://www.videogamecritic.net>

Please change your bookmarks as this is one site you want to visit on a regular basis. So give a big welcome back to the Video Game Critic and let's get him to send some more reviews to RT. We miss him!

What's your favorite videogame from 1982?
By Alan Hewston

It was Twenty Years ago today . . . 1982 was a fantastic year for new arcade games and not too bad for original games on home systems either. Listed below are 40 of the best video games released that year. I'd like to get your vote for which 10 are your favorites then we'll compile the Retrogaming Times top 10 list. I can't just let Tom and Adam do all the cool surveys around here. Don't worry about ranking them, just cut and paste the text, then delete about 30 of them until you have 10 or fewer left and send it back to me.

They're mostly arcade games, but also some of the more popular home games made on multiple systems. I had to draw the line somewhere, so if you like some other 1982 classic video games, not on my list, feel free to include them as well. I'll collect your email votes through mid December 2002 and post them that month. Here they are:

Amidar, Bagman, Blue Print, Buck Rogers Planet of Zoom, Bump 'n Jump, Burgertime, Choplifter, Demon Attack, Dig Dug, Donkey Kong Jr., Dragonfire, Frenzy, Gravitar, Joust, Jungle Hunt, Kangaroo, Knock Out!, Millipede, Miner 2049er, Moon Patrol, Mountain King, Mr. Do!, Pengo, Pitfall!, Pole Position, Pooyan, Popeye, Q*bert, River Raid, Robotron 2084, Satan's Hollow, Star Trek Strategic Operations Simulator, Super Pac-Man, Super Zaxxon, Time Pilot, Tron, Tutankham, Xevious, Victory, Zaxxon.

[Email Here to Vote](#)

This message brought to you by the makers of the "Many Faces of E.T." who cannot be contacted at hewston95@stratos.net. If successful, I'll survey you again for 1983 some time next year.

Stardate 7800
by Adam King

October is always an interesting time for the sports world. Football is getting underway, while Baseball is wrapping up with the World Series. It seems to survive every game system must have at least two types of games: arcade games and sports games. In the spirit of this month I have three game reviews (two baseball titles and one football cart) for the ProSystem. The aren't many sports titles on the 7800, but is what's there good enough? Are these games championship material, or should they be sent back to the minors? Let's tune in and see.

Just remember that the 7800 was released around the time of the NES and Sega Master System, so expectations will be high if Atari wants to compete.

[Pete Rose Baseball \(Absolute, 1989\)](#)

Whether you like or hate legendary hall of famer Pete Rose is irrelevant when it comes to this game. In my opinion this is actually the better of the two baseball titles on the ProSystem. The game features two views, which are very much like the NES series Bases Loaded. First you have the pitcher-batter view seen behind the pitcher, and after the ball is hit it switches to an overhead view of the field. You also get different shots of each

outfielder as they try to catch fly balls. The graphics are decent, but during the batting view, all the players have white skin, and with the field view, the skin is orange. Plus this game doesn't look much different from the 2600 version. The sounds aren't as great. There's this rumbling throughout the game that's supposed to be the crowd cheering. I would have gotten along without it. When you first begin the last few bars of "The Star Spangle Banner" play, and when the teams change you hear a short organ riff. The controls are a mixed bag. The pitching and batting handle well; it's fielding that's a problem. After the ball is hit you have to manually pick the player you ain't to control, instead of switching to the one closest to the ball. Also each player is confined in a little zone, and if the ball is outside his zone, you have to choose another player, and choosing the one you want is hard at times, resulting in some unfair scores. Playing the outfield is easier, and it's easy throwing to one of the bases. If the infield play wasn't so mucked up, then Pete Rose Baseball would be a more enjoyable experience. Still it is playable so I rank this one above the other baseball title.

Score: 5/10

[RealSports Baseball \(Atari, 1988\)](#)

The RealSports line of games revitalized Atari's sports line-up on the 2600 and 5200, so a 7800 port should be a grand slam, right? Sadly this fly ball goes foul. Here you have a match up of two generic teams, the red team and the blue team. The graphics are decent, improved over the 2600 version and they move smoothly. Most of the sounds are good, with nice tunes that play when runners are in scoring position and good sound effects. That sound you hear when the teams change positions is supposed to be crowd noise, not wind. Remember that. The gameplay is the low point. The controls are easy to learn but their plagued with problems. Pitching is nice since you can throw eight different kinds of pitches. However batting and fielding are another story. As the pitch is coming, when you push the button there's a slight delay before your player will actually swing. This can cause a lot of unfair strikes and outs. Pop flies also travel very quickly, leaving you with very little time to react, while the computer is on top of it fast. Also the computer often gives you control of the wrong guy. This game should be sent back to the dugout.

Score: 4/10

[Touchdown Football \(Atari, 1988\)](#)

Baseball didn't make the 7800 World Series, so let's take a look at the 7800's sole pigskin title. In this port of the computer series, you have two teams going at it, one wearing blue and yellow, and the other silver and black. You don't get much in the way of options, just number of players, length of quarters, and whether or not there's a Game Delay Penalty. Once you start playing, it's 6-on-6 football. During each play you put together your own play by choosing different formations. However there's no running plays. You either have to pass or hope your quarterback can get through the line of scrimmage. You do get most of the football action here, including punts, kicks, and interceptions. The graphics are decent but the movements are choppy. As for the sounds, the 7800 again has issues with crowd noise; however you do get a generic football ditty during each kickoff. The gameplay is very slow and boring, even with another player. Speaking of which, the computer doesn't provide much of a challenge. It's pretty easy to sack him and cause huge losses for the other side. The fact that you can make your plays is a positive, but it's not enough. This is another title brought down by horrid gameplay. This game doesn't make even make the playoffs, let alone the Super Bowl. You're better off using your 7800 to play 2600 Super Football.

Score: 3/10

Letters to the Editor

I ask for a survey of who reads Retrogaming Times and I end up with a geography and history lesson. For the people who wondered what arcade game it was mentioned in last issue of Retrogaming Times in the Letters to the Editor, it was Star Rider. Thanks to everyone who emailed to let me know and I did pass the information along to the person.

Now join me as I take my lumps.

"I just wanted to let you know that the Netherlands and Holland are two different names for one small country."

"Guam is not a country. We are a territory of the United States...."

"We (Guam) are just as much a part of the United States as any of the 50 states. We have the same laws...."

Those were some of the people who were a bit offended by my lack of geography skills and wanted to point them out. I apologize and did not mean to offend anyone. Guess my chances on Jeopardy are pretty bad.

Now here are some of the countries and places that sent in votes, but I did not count. While I am pretty sure that none of these actually exist, I am willing to give you a vote if you can prove it to me.

"I want to send a vote from the Dark Side of the Moon! We are all crazy up here for Retrogaming Times!"

"We may be a forgotten race, but Retrogaming Times is read and enjoyed in Atlantis!"

"We are some of your smallest fans! We are the lolly pop kids, the lolly pop kids!"

"I would tell you where I live, but then I would have to kill you."

"I am from Liberty City and when I am not carjacking or <censored>, I stop to enjoy an issue of Retrogaming Times."

As you can see, we did get our share of strange emails as well. Hope you enjoyed this little look into the many places, real and imagined that Retrogaming Times reaches.

Sites of Month

Time to give a little attention to a few sites on the net. We have had some great ones in the past and we hope you think these are just as nice.

MAME Rocks

From the maker of the MAME Dance comes another fun little movie. This time you have a more kicking song to go with all your fun MAME characters dancing around. Enjoy this fun little cartoon here: <http://www.powerstrike.net/Tehkan/mamerock.swf>

The Computer Closet

What a great site! These guys rescue classic computers and video game systems, fix them up and get them to good homes. Brings a tear to my eye. Besides their goodwill, they also have a ton of great information and pictures of all kinds of classic games and computer on their site. Check them out as they offer alot on their site!

<http://www.geocities.com/~compcloset/>

Classic Computers and Video Games

This site offers a fair amount of information and pictures, including a stack of pictures of Atari 2600 pirate carts! Probably the biggest selection of photos of pirate carts. There is also information on the Konix Multi System as well as the Vectrex and others. A good site to check out.

<http://home.wanadoo.nl/hessel.meun/>

Video Game Therapy - The Pitfall Crocodiles Session

Today we join renowned psychiatric to the video game world, Dr. I.N. Sane as he speaks to the crocodiles from Pitfall.

Dr. Sane - So what brings you to see me?

Crocodiles (in unison) - We come to speak about our low self esteem.

Dr. Sane - Before we get into that, do you three always speak together like that?

Crocodiles - We were programmed this way. We are cursed to be three beings but one mind

Dr. Sane - I see. When did you first realize this union of the mind, so to speak?

Crocodiles - From the very beginning, we did everything at the same time. Our mouths opened as one, we sat in the same pool of water as one, always facing the same way. We were the borg before the borg.

Dr. Sane - Very interesting. Let us get to your problem. Why do you have such low self esteem?

Crocodiles - It began with Pitfall Harry. Before him, we were happy. We sat and ate fish together. Then one day he began to run through our jungle. At first we were excited about the chance to eat something different. But instead of a steady diet of jungle explorer, we ended up being stepping stones for him. How humiliating.

Dr. Sane - Why did you not do something to stop this degrading behavior?

Crocodiles - We tried, oh how we tried. But David Crane, that cruel, cruel man, made us immobile. We were forced to sit in this pond and open and close our mouths in sync, while Pitfall Harry ran across our heads. We could not even eat him, if he stood on our eyes. You know how painful it is to have a grown man stand on your eyeballs?

Dr. Sane - If you are immobile, how did you get to my office?

Crocodiles - Hey, we can move! We really can move, the curse is lifted! Let us head back to the jungle and this time we will get Pitfall Harry. Vengeance will be ours! Thanks Doc!

Dr. Sane - You are welcome, I think.

Activision Anthology - A Collection For All Classic Gamers!

Just recently announced (officially as it has been discussed for close to a year on the Atari Age bulletin boards), this incredible collection looks to give Playstation 2 owners a huge shot of classic gaming goodness! Check out these stats!

- Over 40 classic Atari 2600 Activision games, including prototypes!
- Both classic mode and new enhanced mode!
- Ability to go online and download more games!
- Only \$29.99!

For more information, including a partial list of games, check out the EB website. Here is a link right to the game.

http://www.ebgames.com/ebx/categories/products/product.asp?pf_id=227936

I don't know about you, but I am preordering mine today! Considering it will probably be made in low quantities (due to the limited audience for the game), you may not find it at the major retailers. Here is hoping that it does really well and encourages Infogrames to make a huge Atari one. Imagine one with Adventure, Haunted House, Asteroids, Yar's Revenge, Missile Command and many others together.

Conclusion

Time to put another issue to rest. The cold winter months are coming and with it comes

football, raking leaves and more video game playing. This is a great time to check out the growing stack of carts that you have acquired over the summer and have yet to play. Go ahead and try them, they don't bite. Until next month, enjoy your video games as they are your friends.

-[Tom Zjaba](#)

(This issue was done while listening to Linda Rondstandt, No Doubt, Patty Labell and the theme song to Patty Duke).