Retrogaming Times

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Old Games, New Ways

The demand for classic games seems to be growing as more and more companies are finding new ways to release old games. What started with simple compilations has grown into quite a few different products. Now we have re-released handhelds (like the Mattel line as well as Simon and even the Ms. Pacman and other small arcade games) that offer that portable fun in a convenient package. Then there is the game system built into a joystick. With the Atari 10 in 1, an Activision one and now a Namco arcade controller, you can easily plug in a joystick into your television and play a variety of games! If that is not enough, there are more compilations coming as well as remakes of classic games! Let us look at a few of the different products that may be appearing on wish lists of classic gamers this Christmas.

10 in 1 Joystick

Take ten Atari 2600 games and add an original Atari joystick and you have a novelty item. While most of the games are not the deepest, there is quite a bit of fun gameplay here and you get the authenticity of a real 2600 controller. Take a look at the list of games, which offers a nice selection: Adventure, Gravitar, Breakout, Real Sports Volleyball, Missile Command, Asteroids, Centipede, Yar's Revenge, Circus Atari and Pong.

Namco TV Game

What a cool idea! You get a cool joystick that comes with five arcade (yes, arcade games and not 2600 versions either) to play on the television. Pacman, DigDug, Galaxian, Bosconian and Rally X are the included games and it gives you a nice variety of games. As nice as it would be to have Ms. Pacman and Galaga (and for myself, Mappy), it is nice that they gave it more variety in the way of Rally X and Bosconian as opposed to just the big hits. If it does well, I can almost guarantee there will be another with Ms. Pacman, Galaga and a few others (hopefully Mappy). At $24.95, it is about $5.00 an arcade game and considering how quickly money goes at an arcade, it is a very fair price. And setting it up is a breeze. Install batteries and hook up the cords and you are set to go!

Midway Arcade Treasures

Looks like the Activision Anthology has started a revolution! Give gamers alot of games and some cool extras and they will buy! Midway has listened and is offering a big stack of

classic arcade games with some great titles included (Satan's Hollow, Rampart and Robotron with the dual controller are worth the $19.99 suggested price). Here is a list of the games (not a definitive list, just what is announced so far), but it should be noted that Moon Patrol was on a beta version that was played by Gamespot, so it is quite possible that it will be included or possibly an unlockable game. There is also supposed to be some interviews and other content. Let us hope that for once, they include the ability to save high scores for the games. This simple feature could make all the difference as we want to not only brag about our high scores, but also be able to prove it to our friends, family and anyone else who will bother to listen:

Spy Hunter
Defender II
Gauntlet
Joust
Paperboy
Rampage
Marble Madness
Robotron: 2084
Smash TV
Joust 2
Bubbles
RoadBlasters
Blaster
Rampart
Sinistar
Super Sprint
720°
Toobin
Klax
SPLAT!
Satan's Hollow
Vindicators

As you can see, there is a wide variety of games and something for everyone. From shooters to racers to some good old school games, there is plenty there. It would be nice to see a few more games added (the aforementioned Moon Patrol would be nice as would Wizard or Wor to name a few). It is nice to see that they are finally making an effort to give gamers their money's worth in the compilations and hopefully the rest of the companies will take note (we are speaking to you Namco, who needs to do one very nice collection).

One last thing, does anyone know what is taking so long for Dragon's Lair 3D to be released for the Playstation 2? Has it been canceled due to weak sales on the other systems?

COMMERCIAL VAULT

by Adam King

Greetings, gamers. I have returned with another serving of old-school ads. This month I have two ads that feature the hot arcade smash Centipede. There are no ordinary commercials; since they ran on MTV, they're like one-minute music videos. Download them now and see for yourself.

These ads can be found and obtained at Cyberroach (cyberroach.com)

Centipede #1

Our first ad starts with someone playing the Centipede video game on his Atari. Suddenly, an insect's arm burst out of the set and pulls him in. Suddenly the whole world is under attack from centipedes. This starts a series of scenes involving a bum, several clips from old movies, and a 50-foot bug. The military gets involved via more black and white clips, and they use weapons that sound just like the effects in the game. Finally we go back to

the game player as the announcer says "Centipede from Atari. It could change your life." Indeed it does; the poor lad has become a Centipede.

"It's like Tron, but with bugs."

"Hey there, giant centipede."

Hey, Tom, THERE'S your Centi-Kong.

She's about to have a rude awakening.

They're calling in the Orkin men.

"I'm trapped in this rubber suit!"

Centipede #2

This next ad is appropriately called, "The Return of Centipede", and it takes a slightly

different tone. At first it seems like another horror-type commercial, with more screaming and black and white clips. But then we suddenly do a 180, and see a centipede play a saxophone!

Is this a commercial or a video for ZZ Top?

"Psst. Look behind you."

How does he play the sax with these short legs?

Your guess is as good as mine.

"No, I don't want to be on the new Ninja Turtles cartoon!"

Definitely not your everyday ads. That's it for this month. I don't have anything new to report on the upcoming CD. I'm hoping to have it released by the end of the year. Until next month, be careful when playing that Centipede cart.

THOSE MAGAZINE LISTINGS

by Tonks

There are many reasons why I loved my Vic 20 so much. One of the major reasons why I loved my Vic more than an Atari or Intellivision was free games!! No I am not talking about piracy (although that did happen quite freely, but I didn't know better back then), but rather I am talking about free games through magazine listings. While owners of Atari 2600s had

to pay through the nose for new games, us Vic 20 owners were busy playing our free games.

Oh the joy!

10 print "I hope this is a good game"
20 if A$ = yes then goto 30
30 print "yes, you just wasted 3 hours typing in another really bad pacman clone."

But seriously, the magazine listings were a wonderful source of free games. Yes many of them were very simple. Yes many of them were really bad pacman clones. Yes many of them were as buggy as hell. But among them you could find some real gems.

My school library got in about four different computer magazines each month. Usually all four would have some sort of Vic 20 listing. Me and my gang of Vic 20 owners took it in turns typing in the listing and making copies for everyone else. Soon we all had stacks of tapes full of games.

But although the games were free, they didn't come without cost. Typing in listings isn't exactly easy or all that much fun. Computer magazines in the early 1980's were not the glossy full colour magazines we get today. They were pretty cheap looking and at times the listing pages could be quite difficult to read. It was often difficult to decipher some of the strange symbols the Vic 20 basic used.

Then there was those two words that still send chills up the spine of owners of classic computers… "SYNTAX ERROR"! But where is the error you would scream as you then spent the next hour or more scouring the listing to see where you left out a colon or mistyped a word. Sometimes (maybe even often) the listing itself was wrong, which would take even longer to sort out. Sometimes you could never work out why the program wouldn't run, meaning you just wasted the last couple of hours.

But when it all came together and the listing you typed in turned out to be a really fun little game, you felt over 10 feet tall.

THE GAME REVIEWS

CLOWNS

If you have ever played Circus Atari on the VCS, then you will find things very familiar here. Except everything is much, much better. This is one of the games that shows that with a good programmer the Vic 20 could surpass the Atari VCS. Clowns is a variant on Breakout. Instead of controlling a paddle, you are controlling two clowns who bounce on a sea-saw. As they bounce, they get higher and higher and faster and faster. The aim is to keep bouncing the clowns and burst the three rows of scrolling balloons. Everything starts off pretty easy, but it all gets quite hectic when the speed picks up. The graphics in Clowns are terrific. The clown sprites are simple, but quite big. The balloons look great and scroll smoothly. Sound is minimal but very good. The sounds of the clowns bouncing and the balloons popping is very effective. When you miss your clown and he hits the ground, he dies and a great little funeral dirge sounds. Very good.
My Score - 8/10

GALAXIAN

This is the official version of Galaxian from Atarisoft. At first this looks very disappointing. The graphics are very colourful, but they are very blocky and don't look much like the proper Galaxian sprites. But once you start to play you feel right at home. Good graphics are good to have, but good gameplay is much more important, and this is just what you get here. The enemies swoop down smoothly. You move back and forth quickly and your firing is responsive. The explosions of the enemies when they are shot (as well as when you get shot) are nice and effective. Sound is minimal, mainly just white noise effects, but it does the job. If you don't let the blocky graphics turn you off, you will find this to be a very enjoyable Galaxian.

My Score - 8/10

LAZER ZONE

Boy oh boy! If you want to play a super hard but incredibly addictive shoot-em-up, then Lazer Zone is the game for you. You control two guns on two axis, along the bottom and up the right hand side of the screen. Up and down on the joystick controls the right hand side gun while left and right on the joystick controls the bottom gun. Pressing the fire button causes both guns to fire their missiles. Enemies come in from the top and the left. They try to move in and land on either axis and then pursue your gun until it crashes into it, ending your life. The game may sound a little simple, but it is incredibly intense. Trying to control both guns and keeping an eye on the enemy takes every ounce of your concentration. The sound is terrific. Jeff Minter pushed the Vic's limited sound capabilities about as far as you can in this game. Great shooting and explosion sounds that add heaps to the overall atmosphere. There are many other great little touches such as a very good title screen and scrolling text. One of Minter's best on the Vic, just a little behind Gridrunner.

My Score - 9/10

MOSQUITO INFESTATION

Mosquito Infestation is a fun game that has a few similarities to Missile Command. At the bottom of the screen is a human arm. Flying around the screen is a swarm of mosquitoes intent of sucking as much blood from the poor arm as possible. (Fairly true to life if you ask me!) Loose too much blood and it is game over. You control the trusty can of bug spray and must try and kill the mosquitoes before they get stuck into the arm too much. You have a limited amount of bug spray, so you must be careful to gauge your usage or else you will run out, leaving you defenseless. This adds an element of strategy. Graphics are pretty good, though a bit more colour would have improved it all. The mosquitoes look great as

they swoop around the screen.
My Score - 7/10

MOON PATROL
The classic arcade game comes to life on your Vic 20. I love this version of Moon Patrol. The graphics are a bit on the blocky side, but they are colourful and everything at least tries to look like the original arcade game. (One thing I disliked about the Atari VCS version of Moon Patrol is how the graphics had all changed so much.) There is some nice parallax scrolling of the mountains. Sound too is a good translation. But it is the game play that really shines here. In my humble opinion the programmers have done a great job. It really feels like you are playing the arcade game. All the major elements are there. If I was to make some criticism of the game I would say it could be just a bit faster. There is some slowdown when the enemy ships appear which can be a little annoying. But this is a fairly minor complaint. All up, this is a great game that should keep any Vic 20 owning arcade fan very happy.
My Score - 8/10

The Many Faces of...Frogger II: Threeedeep & Evolution

by Alan Hewston

This month we ponder two not-too-well-known titles, both having supportive fans making some noise in our 20th Anniversary survey of favorite games from 1983. Try them and you may be impressed. First, “Frogger II: Threeedeep” a home sequel to the arcade blockbuster “Frogger”, which was previously reviewed (consoles only) in RT issue #17, by Doug Saxon. Our second visit to the pond comes during the story of “Evolution”. Unfortunately our crack staff (me) erred again as this title had its origins in ’82, not ‘83.

The Many Faces of...Frogger II: Threeedeep

[C64 Screenshot, Underwater Level]

Not only does it have the clever misspelled title with 3 “e”s, as it is 3 game screen’s deep, but Parker Brothers (PB) was very resourceful creating their own sequel to get even more out of their “Frogger” SEGA license. The sequel is fairly creative, but probably did not garner the success that PB hoped for - ie some versions are rare on cart – meaning they didn’t sell as well. If you were hoping the sequel plays like the original, single screen game, perhaps adding a few twists & enemies then you may be disappointed. On the other hand, if you’re like me & got bored of one screen & wanted more, then “Frogger II” may be your right up your lily pad. The sequel retains the main character & several characters but adds a lot more strategy, planning, obstacles to the basic premise of - start

from the bottom of the screen, dodge enemies & obstacles to get all your frogs home (top of the screen) before the countdown timer expires. You still move (jump) mostly in 4 directions, but there are now 3 action screens tied together, and Frogger never drowns. The sequence of screens from 1) Underwater Frogger [avoid all obstacles, remain in water - exact opposite of the water portion of "Frogger"], to 2) Surface Frogger [remain above water like "Frogger" with some twists] and 3) Airborne Frogger [fight gravity to reach the cloud berths, bounce higher & higher & leap on birds like the water portion of the original]. This sequence makes a lot more sense to me than the original.

Mostly similar to Frogger: The Frogger II musical score begins as you start each game, but does not last long or play any other time. Starting from the bottom, you move upwards past various enemies & obstacles, filling all berths at the top of each screen while a counter tells you how many berths are left. Do all this before the life timer expires, then a new timer starts after each berth is filled or you die. As you travel upwards on the screen there are 10 to 12 rows of different hazards and objects, some not moving at all, most moving to the left, but some also moving right. Each row moves at a constant speed for that round, but is usually faster and more crowded with enemies as the rounds increase. Going off the edge of the screen or touching any of the hazards means death. There's also an audio warning when time is almost up & you still earn bonus points for the time remaining. You'll perish if you try to exit the edge of the screen (unless onboard the turtle, or playing the 2600 with the wraparound option).

New on II: Frogger is never harmed by water – he loves it! To me, this game gives us the best of "Frogger" with a whole lot more creativity, game depth, action and randomness added. But I realize that many gamers only like the simplicity of the original. You no longer die if you barely missed a berth (or it has already been filled), instead you move up to the next screen. Likewise, when you miss your target and fall down or into the water, you are not harmed, but simply fall back one screen and must repeat your efforts. The game increases in difficulty, adding more berths to be filed and/or more obstacles all the way up to the max difficulty in level 9.

Home Version Similarities: Except those in <>: all home versions have: 2 skill choices, Easy & Hard (start at lev 1 or 3); 3 screens (Underwater, Surface, Airborne); no pause <save for the AP2>; audio warning for sharks; bonus points earned (only if you reach a berth on that same screen when . . . touching bubbles, lily pads & butterflies); Your friends are the turtle, baby ducks, whales, mama duck (only means to the Airborne screen), birds & stork; neutrals (can slow you down) little fish <but deadly on 2600> & hippos (will shake you off); deadly enemies are the eel, alligators, barracudas, angry mama duck (when you bother her ducklings), sharks, dragons & airplanes! On screen you'll see your lives remaining, level number <2600 & CV>, berths remaining <CV & 2600>, timer, potential bonus points <2600> & score. You'll also see the points flash when you collect potential bonus points <2600>.

Arcade: None. Sequel to Sega's "Frogger"

Home versions: most by Parker Brothers, '83 (Atari 8 bit & 5200),

'84 (Atari 2600 Mark Lesser, Commodore 64, & Colecovision), '84 (Apple II, Sega)

Rumor Mill: None All cartridge versions are somewhat rare and collectible.

Have Nots: Apple II (36)

My first reactions were - the action is a bit slow & the hazards are too large & too plentiful. Gameplay is all there, superb (9), but narrower gaps for Frogger to jump through. The slower speed is frustrating, possibly caused by the graphical limits of a crowded pond full of animated objects or done on purpose since there's apparently no keyboard control. You'll need that slowness to help you to overcome moving the analog controller back & forth, all the way to the center position with every move. A noticeable, logical improvement on this SEGA version only, is that the drifting log berths from the top of screen 1, continue to drift at the bottom of screen 2 – Cool! Other changes from the PB versions are: landing near the edge of a log may still be considered landing in the berth. Not cool if you were wanting to get to the next screen. The disk drive takes 10 seconds to load each screen –

every time you change screens - bad for playing continuity & your drive. Graphics are pretty good (7), most objects have lots of color, animation & detail, but Frogger, the turtle and the bottom of the pond are all monochromatic white. A terrible choice for the main character to be the worst graphically - unless the version is for the Odyssey II. There are sloppy strips of color (like lanes) cluttering up the airborne screen. There's an impressive hi-res title screen with Frogger and a few friends - says 1984 by Sega, but spelled "Three Deep". Sound is mediocre (5), with barely any effects. The Frogger II theme song is nice, but only plays at the title screen & boot up. The internal speaker makes everything raspy. The jumping and dying sounds are OK, but there's nothing when starting a new round, no mamma duck squawking and almost nothing for the countdown timer warning. Controls are sharp (8), and go where you want, but the clumsiness of analog makes the game slow & tiring. Of all the AP2 games NOT to have a keyboard option - what's the deal here! Addictiveness is worth while (7) being the only system using a pause <esc>, but could be a lot better if not for the slowness of play, disk drive loading & a couple gameplay & graphics differences. One ugly glitch on screen 3, I filled #4 of 5 berths, the game now said level 2, but 2 berths remaining. There was really only 1 left & after I filled it there was nothing to do but run out the clock. There is a poor collision detection with the eel, so stay clear. Another glitch was landing on the mother duck when not near the ducklings & I died instead of flying off to screen 3. Finally, the third screen, by round 3, the dragon is so fast and you jump so slowly, that this really a test of luck not skill. Unless you are an AP2 fanatic, or want to put wear on your drive, there's no need to seek this one out. It's fun to play, but SEGA did a poor job compared to PB. Available on disk only.

Have Nots: Colecovision (40)

My first reaction was slow & ugly. Doug was right about how s l o w l y some of the rows move. This is frustrating and a boring way to increase the difficulty. The Addictiveness is still fun (7) but PB disabled every system's otherwise standard pause buttons. This version, plus all the Atari versions have another frustrating feature where only about 85% of the width of the pond surface is shown. Things disappear completely when off-screen, and you have to WAIT for them to reappear on the other side. The Gameplay is impressive (8), but suffers from not displaying the level number nor the number of berths remaining. On all systems Frogger has some problem (feature) where he can fall in between the lily pads, but it is much worse here as Frogger is really puny. The Graphics are very good (7) but most objects are only one color, too large and/or just plain ugly. The large size also explains why this version has the fewest horizontal lanes (rows). For some reason, the programmers made a decent effort at Sound, making it very crisp (8) with a multitude of well done effects. Controls are perfect (10), but IMHO only if you start with the CV then immediately swap to Atari style.

Have Nots: Atari 2600 (40)

My first reaction was how cool to see this game so well programmed & complete for the 2600. Clearly, among the better 2600 games made. The Gameplay is impressive (8) with nearly everything the medal winners have in place, but also missing all that the CV missed. One significant change, making it harder, is that after each berth is filled on screen 1 it disappears. Eventually just a solo log remains on top. The choice of 2 starting rounds (1 or 3) is awkward, done using the LEFT difficulty switch with "A" for round 3. The RIGHT diff switch on "B" allows a unique (easier to play choice) wrap around on the surface screen (2). The Sound is cool (7), with music to start each game and a full set of effects. Addictiveness is enjoyable (8), with few glitches & no cruel programming . . . well almost . . . you still canNOT move into a berth when near an edge. Graphics are a bit small and still blocky, but well proportioned to each other and always multi-colored, detailed, smoothly animated, and move along smoothly – thus pretty good (7) overall. The hazards/objects appear to be fewer, but not really as the smaller size and large number of lanes (most rows - tied with C64) all adds up. This allows for more range of speeds and a higher overall playing speed, giving this game the best hopping rhythm. Controls are perfect (10).

Bronze Medal: Atari 5200 (43)

My first reaction was again agreeing with Doug Saxon, who in RT #17 MFof Frogger II suggests trying the 5200 keypad option. The keys <2,4,6,8> correspond to (U,L,R,D). While this does give you more choices than just the standard stick, I think most players will

still make too many mistakes on the keypad – but give it a try first. Neither the Wico stick, or the Masterplay Interface helped me as the 5200 programming of moving the stick the direction you want & then pressing the fire button to make the jump is too cumbersome. Overall no Controls choice is better than a (9) - as even with lots of practice you'll still hopping the wrong way. Gameplay is fantastic (9), nothing missing. Addictiveness is very fun (8), but as mentioned before, the disappearing items on the surface screen are frustrating. I can't believe PB took away the pause! Graphics are outstanding (9) & Sound is sharp (8). Possibly the most collectible version is this large 5200 cart.

Gold Medal: Atari 8 Bit & Commodore 64 (44)
The C64 looks & plays slightly better, whereas the Atari sounds a bit better - but all scores are the same.

All three medal winners have a 3-screen-deep preview - about a 15 second glance at each screen - probably showing the entire library of object - ie level 9.

Commodore 64
My first reaction was the graphics & availability on both cart & disk make this the best version. Gameplay is well done (9) no problems. Addictiveness is enjoyable (8) probably the best version at gradually increasing difficulty, with fewer annoyances. Graphics are really colorful and detailed, the best - great (9). Sound is pleasant (8) but possibly a little better on the Atari. Controls are perfect (10).

Atari 8 Bit
In this, the first version made, all scores match the 5200 - save for perfect (10) Controls. I cannot put my finger on it, but there appears to be minor graphical differences. Available on cart & disk.

The Many Faces of...Evolution

OK, so you haven't had enough of all these aquatic & airborne life forms in "Frogger II" - so try out some more in "Evolution". Begin life as an Ameba, then a Tadpole, Rodent, Beaver, Monkey & finally a Human. How far can you evolve? Watch the animals parade onto the screen, dance a bit, then exit stage right. Nature challenges each animal in a unique survival of the fittest - to fend off your enemies & maybe even fight back. After completing level 6, ie as a human, witness the end of civilization and then start all over again as an ameba. Each animal stage is referred to as a level, so after completing all 6 we'll say you move onto the next round. Each new round you will have the same quantitative goals per level, but you face faster, fiercer, smarter and more numerous predators. The action is never violent or gory, but is quite competitive and unique. As an Ameba move all directions to collect pieces of immobile DNA. Spores, microbes & antibodies will eat you up, but your electrical charge (fire button) will shield you momentarily. As a Tadpole you must avoid the 4 hungry fish and snag 3 flies to make it to the next stage. Move L/R across the bottom of the pond & fire (jump & eat). As a rodent, use that little brain to lead your enemies (mindless snakes who can only move in the trails that you dig) in circles & take all the cheese. L/R/U/D plus use the fire button to drop dung. No shit! You can actually waste a snake with these pellets – probably the most foul of all weapons in VG history up to that time. As a Beaver, move all directions to avoid the alligators while collecting sticks to build a dam on the other side of the river. As a Gorilla, protect your oranges (on trees) from the thieving monkeys. Move L/R & fire (to throw coconuts). Finally as a human, move all directions and avoid the firepower or touch of any revolting mutants. You can fire up to 3 shots at a time, which last abut 10 seconds & all shots will bounce. Every shot by you or the mutants is equally deadly to any object it hits. Once 10 mutants have been vanquished, humanity will ceases to exist. This level plays is a little like "Robotron 2084". If on any level you die, you continue that level in progress.

[How far can you evolve? C64 screen shot]

Arcade: None

Home versions: All by Sydney Development in ’82 unless noted.

Apple II (Don Mattrick & Jeff Sember), Atari 8 bit (’84), C64 (Amory Wong) & Colecovision (‘83)

Home Version Similarities: Except those in <>: all home versions have: 4 start options (level 1, 7, 13 & practice any level <AP2>); a pause <CV>; a full demo of each level <CV>; displays the current level <CV> and what more is needed to complete the level <CV>; plays different music before and after each evolutionary level; keeps a high score list; has both a keyboard and joystick option <CV & AP2?>; a brief dance/intro to the characters <AP2>. Level 7 is thus stage 1 on round 2 &level 13 is stage 2 of round 3.

Have Nots: Apple II (39 or 41)

My first reaction was that the AP2 was probably the first version, since all versions have limited sound effects but are loaded with great music before and after each stage. Gameplay is first class (9) with everything but a demo or practice mode. Addictiveness is wonderful (9) with a pause <Esc>. Graphics are colorful and detailed but in limited quantities (objects, characters). The Tadpole’s pond floor is awesome - multicolored as if it were the bottom of an aquarium randomly filled with 16 or 32 different colored grains of sand. There is also good introductory animation prior to and after most levels, making for and overall graphics score of (8). Sound is good (6), mostly helped by the large number of musical scores before and after each level. Otherwise there are not many audio effects, and all sound is from the internal (tinny sounding) speakers. Controls are very good (7), but diagonal motion is choppy on the analog stick & I cannot get the performance I wanted from the controls choices. Neither <Control J> for Joystick or <Control K> for Keyboard worked. Instead the stick controls the movement and the <Apple> key is the fire button. Nothing else on the keyboard works, and the fire buttons are disabled on the stick. This makes it terrible playing an Ameba & Human and nearly impossible for the Gorilla to control his coconuts. Add two more points if your keyboard or joystick works correctly. Available only on disk.

Bronze Medal: Colecovision (41)

My first reaction was how different the CV graphics and layout are on every scene. Nearly all characters are bland, large & monochromatic. These do not detract from the Gameplay, but they are the worst of the lot, only a (7), very good. The Gameplay is impressive (8) but a step down from the medal winners. There is no demo, no on-screen indicators for the level number nor any indicator of what is required to complete each level. The action is slower than the other versions, with fewer predators. The Rodent (ala Dig Dug) is supposed to move slower when digging, but always moves at the same speed. As a Human, there are these red goons, looking like the Martians from Marvin the Martian, who prevent you from shooting your targets, the mutants. Finally, start option 4 previews each level - perform one action in each level and move on to the next one (Ameba to Human). Unfortunately, since the difficulty is easiest in this version there’s no need to practice the first 6 levels. In contrast, the practice mode for the C64 & Atari is useful - allowing practice of an entire level, for any of the first 18 levels in the game - fantastic! Anyhow, Addictiveness is pleasant (8) but the standard CV pause was disabled. Despite a major difference in each level you’ll still be driven to at least complete the first

round and see the end of civilization - probably the best on this version. The Sound is the best (8), very nice, having all the music, plus more, better and more frequently occurring sound effects throughout. The Controls are perfect (10) swapping in an Atari controller.

Gold Medal: Commodore 64 & Atari 8 Bit (44)
Another tie with both sharing the choice of either Joystick <Control J> & <F7>, or Keyboard <Control K> & <F5> controls and a practice mode to select any of the first 18 levels. These options, combined with no glitches make the Gameplay awesome (10), and the Controls perfect (10). The Sound is very good (7) with all the musical scores and the bare bones in sound effects to make the game fun.

Atari 8 bit
My first reaction - darn, no cart version – only on disk. The Addictiveness is super (9) with the pause <Esc>. The Graphics are impressive (8), a step up from the CV, but not quite as detailed, or as colorful as the C64. The Controls of the Gorilla are not what I expected and are as follows: fire without moving to throw straight up, fire while holding the stick up and throw diagonally left, fire while holding the stick down and throw diagonally right. The 8 bit version as the Beaver you move too slowly L & R but faster U & D, so factor that into your escape route. This version came out late, so there was probably no 5200 port in the works.

Commodore 64
My first reaction was, darn, no cart - only on disk. The Addictiveness is super (9) with the pause <F1>, resume <F3>. The graphics seem sharper (8) than the Atari, but not enough to score it higher. Kinda like 7.5 vs 8.5 & I'm scoring them both an 8. Yep, I'm wimping out since I rushed this review - I do like the C64 a wee bit better.

Come back next month for 2 more 20th Anniversary tributes in The Many Faces of "Archon" on the Atari 8 bit, C64, Spectrum & AP2; and "Boulder Dash" on the Atari 8 bit, AP2, CV & C64. Alan Hewston welcomes feedback on these reviews and can be contacted at: Hewston95@stratos.net or see some of his site at http://my.stratos.net/~hewston95/VG/Hewston_vg.html

Great Use for E.T.

While there are some fans of the game E.T. for the Atari 2600, they are few and far between. Most people think the game is pretty bad (myself included). But what it lacks in gameplay, it makes up for in another way. I found that E.T. was the perfect game for testing Atari 2600 joysticks. It has the character move in all four directions, plus when you fall into a hole (which is quite often), you can test the fire button as you levitate E.T. out of the hole.

You may be thinking that there are many games on the 2600 that has four way movement and uses the fire button, so what makes E.T. a better game to use for testing joysticks. Well, there are two reasons for this. The first reason is that the game is a slow moving game, so you can easily unplug the well tested joystick and replace it with another and not worry about getting killed. Try that in Asteroids or Yar's Revenge. Worst that happens is you fall down a hole. The other good reason is that since the game is so bad, you do not have the desire to keep playing it, so you can concentrate on testing the joysticks and move on. Put in a game like Adventure to test joysticks and you will end up testing one joystick. But with E.T., it is easy to test a big stack of them without worrying about being sucked into the gameplay. While I know that this is not the kind of use that Howard Scott Warshaw meant for the game, but at least he can know that his game is being used. And he can live with the knowledge that out of the three games he programmed for the 2600, two of them are great games (Raiders of the Lost Ark and Yar's Revenge) and as Meatloaf said "Two out of Three Ain't Bad!"

Deadly Sins of Video Games

Preachers, politicians and parents have all attacked video games. With the violence, sexual suggestions and general wildness, they make an easy target for these modern day

witch hunts. While most of the games that are attacked are the obvious ones, like Grand Theft Auto, Custer's Revenge and Doom, there is alot of wrong messages found in video games, if you look really close. With the right frame of mind and a vivid imagination, you can find wrong in the most innocent of games. To demonstrate this, we brought in world renowned evangelist, Reverend Byrne N. Hal. Reverend Hal has been at the front of the crusade to ban video games, popular music, dancing and whoopie cushions. He believes if he can accomplish this, all will be right with the world. So we took a handful of classic games and asked him to find the evil messages that the games were conveying to the youth of our country.

Pacman

One of the most known and played of all games, Pacman is responsible for really bringing video games to the mainstream. Could Reverend Hal find any messages in this most innocent of all games?

Reverend Hal: "This game is ripe with the sins of man. From the glorification of theft as Pacman steals the pellets from the poor ghosts to the gluttony of how he must eat everything. It teaches our children to not share and that stealing is O.K. What more, it teaches the sinful ways of reincarnation as both your character as well as the ghosts keep coming back. Truly a despicable game and one that should be banned."

Allright, he is tougher than I anticipated. Time to go for a more innocent game. Next, I decided to pull out Cabbage Patch Kids, the sugary sweet game from Coleco that is sure to stump him.

Cabbage Patch Kids

This Pitfall inspired game is as fun as it is cute. From the chubby cheeked like girl who skips through one level to another, it is one game that should not be judged by appearance alone. But can the Rev find fault in this cute game?

Reverend Hal: "Don't let the sweetness of the child disguise what is truly a morally depraved game. First off, her temper tantrums are a sign of bad parenting and a cry for help. Since her parents are never shown and if they are still around, to allow their child to go to such a dangerous place is a case of child endangerment that needs to be looked into. But this is just the tip of the iceberg. Why does the ground glow red like the flames of hell, before the fish rise up? Are these the spawn of Satan who come to attack one of God's children? And keep this game away from children as those demonic fish can go up the poor child's dress and hurt her, a truly disturbing and deliberate action that was programmed in by men who should be locked up and away from the innocent children they try to lure into playing this tool of the devil".

He is better than I thought. I must look harder to find something that even the Reverend Hal cannot find fault in. So I looked high and low for a game that would stump him.

Pong

The father of all games, Pong is about as innocent as it comes. Two paddles and a ball is as safe as one can find in a game. But could our Reverend find fault in it?

Reverend Hal: "Paddles have always been considered a tool for punishment and balls have many different meanings. Put the two together and the imagery is one that pushes the lifestyle of the programmers onto the innocent minds of the youth of America. Add in that the point of the game is to "beat" your opponent and "dominate" them while trying to "score" more than they do is really ripe with a subculture that goes against the very fabric of what is deemed acceptable by the church going public".

That is enough, I realized that the man is just crazy. So I decided to show him one more game to really throw him for a loop.

Custer's Revenge

Known as one of the most despised games in the history of video games, this should be easy pickings for the dear Reverend and one that should have quite an effect on him. Let

us watch and see.

Reverend Hal: "What is up with that man? What is that? Wait, he has gotten across the screen. What is he doing? Oh my heart....God I am coming to see you....my heart."

The Reverend was quickly rushed to the local hospital where he was later revived, but his mind did not recover from the scarring. He is said to be spending his days looking out a window and being spoon fed applesauce.

Letters to the Editor

Time to answer some of the spam the overwhelms my mailbox. Even with new spam guards in place, there is still more than any human should have to endure.

Hello, I am from Nigeria and I want you to give me your bank account number so I can steal all your money with lies about depositing huge amounts of money into your account. Please be a gullible fool and let me rip you off.

While I took some liberties with the actual wording of this email, you can get a better idea of what they would be saying if they were forced to tell the truth. What humors me the most about this is how many people get taken by this pathetic scam. And from a report, the average person gets ripped off for about $3,600 by this scam.

Want to get filthy rich? Just send this email to everyone in the known universe and bombard every newsgroup you can find with this pathetic attempt to take money from bigger saps than yourself. All you need to do is put your name on this list of mail fraud participants and send $5.00 to each of the other future wearers of vertical stripes and watch the money pour in like water.

The best part of this scam is now they even accept Paypal! Gotta love when a scam can now accept credit cards. Cannot get more legitimate than that.

Are you deep in debt? Want to get even deeper? Come to Fly by Night Debt Consolidation. We will not only consolidate your debt, but we will charge all kinds of high fees as we make sure that you never get out of debt, while we get rich off you. Our motto is "Kick them when they are down".

While there are a few legitimate credit counseling services, there are quite a few that are scams with high fees that cause more damage than good. The best rule of thumb is that if they advertise with spam, they are probably a rip-off.

Conclusion

Late as usual, but we made another month. One step closer to issue #75, a milestone for me. As great as it would be to reach issue #100, I don't really see that happening. But issue #75 is very close and very attainable. Then we will aim for issue #80. One little step at a time. But then I never thought I would make it to fifty issues, let alone more than 70 issues, so who knows.

Check back sometime next month and we should have another issue up. When is anyone's guess, but there will be another issue next month (or is it this month as I did not make it out in July).

-Tom Zjaba

(This issue was done while listening to Simon and Garfunkel, Carol King and Roberta Flack. Yes, it was a very mellow set. Peace.)