Retrogaming Times

Issue #53 - January 20th, 2002

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COMMERCIAL VAULT

by Adam King

To prove I don't just have Atari commercials, this month's ad is for Mattel's Intellivision II System. In 1982, Mattel released a redesigned Intellivision, that was not only sleeker looking, but was also cheaper to manufacture, and therefore retailed for quite less.

In this ad, a boy is writing George Plimpton that his friend wants an Intellivision but it's too expensive, so his dad is giving him an Atari instead. Plimpton writes back about the cheaper INTV II system, hoping it'll change his mind.

The boy writes:
"Dear Mr. Intellivision-sorry, Plimpton-my friend wants an Intellivision because of those great games. His dad wants him to have the other video game because it's cheaper. Could you do something about the price?"

George Plimton replies:
"Dear-what was his name-I think I have something that'll make your friend very happy:

Intellivision II. The people at Mattel Electronics have drastically reduced the size and price, but it plays the same great games. Your friend's father has no excuse now."

PICTURES:

"Who's this guy behind me?"

"Gee, I sure hope he can help."

"Is that punk bugging me again?"

"..So buy it or else! Sincerely, G. Plimpton"

In case you're wondering, that IS the boy from the movie E.T. Henry Thomas, to be exact. Since Atari had the rights to E.T. Mattel hired Henry Thomas to star in Intellivision commercials. However, Mattel didn't allow his name to be mentioned in the ads for fear of a lawsuit, hence the "what was his name".

If you gamers out there have a suggestion for a commercial for this column, let me know and I'll see if I can find it. Also let me know if you know a place where I can download old commercials (except for commercial-archive.com, which continues to have problems >:#).

Sites of the Month

This month, I have three different sites! All are pretty cool and I could not decide on just one.

Lafe Travis' Games

Way back in an earlier issue of Retrogaming Times (issue #11, seemed like an eternity ago), I put a link to a site that had the games, Grandpa Pacman and Venture 2. I told people how cool these games were and how they were a free download! I even did an interview with Lafe. Soon after, his site disappeared from the internet. To this very day, I would get emails asking what happened to the site and where could they get the games (much like how I still get emails from people looking for the Champ Games). No more must you look in vain! Lafe is back on the internet and his games are once again available to the masses! Let us hope that he eventually releases Donkey Lion and especially Mr.

Do's Zoo! To download these cool games, go to:

http://www.yosemite-sam.net/Games/Games.htm

What Video Game Character Are You?
Did you ever sit around and wonder if you can relate to Pacman more than say Mario? If a strange question like this ever went through your mind, then this site is for you. You get a list of questions to answer and depending on how you do, you get a rating of being a classic game character. As you can see below, I rated a Kong! Not sure if I should be worried, but my wife was Mario. I cannot complain, at least I still have a classic game career. To see what character you are, go to the following URL:

http://blog.ravenblack.net/quiz/videogame.pl

I am Kong.

Strong and passionate, I tend to be misunderstood, sometimes even feared. I don't want to fight, I don't want to cause trouble, all I ask is a little love, and a little peace. If I don't get what I want, I get angry, and throw barrels and flaming oil at whatever's stopping me. What Video Game Character Are You?

Pong Movie
Here is another of those funny little flash movies. This one deals with Pong. It is quite humorous, but does have some swearing, so you may want to view before showing the kiddies. To view this fun and creative movie, go to the following URL:

http://www.euniverselive.com/oska/humor_pong.swf

Space Taxi the Interview – with John F. Kutcher Jr.

By Alan Hewston

RT: From your resume, I see that you wrote the C64 versions of Rescue Squad in 1983, just after finishing high school, and Space Taxi in 1984 – this is quite impressive! What were your first programming experiences and how did they lead up to writing those two classic home computer games?

JFK: My first computer was not a C64, but a TRS-80, and I still have them both. I saved up as a freshman in high school in 1980. Home computers were pretty new then - not mainstream at all. I started writing games almost immediately once I got it. Most of my programming skills were self-taught in fact, in 9th grade, they let me out of my Math class to work on the school computer as an independent study. I had a knack for it and things grew from there. My family had one of the Pong units way back when, but I was more motivated by the arcade games such as Asteroids, Tempest, Pac-Man, Centipede. I was exposed to some early TRS-80 Games and that really got me going. I did write several games for the TRS-80 just for fun, including a tempest clone and an adventure game. I think that I also wrote a Space Invaders clone and a Bowling game.

RT: How did you come to program C64 games for Muse? RT Note: this was a last second question with a very interesting answer.

JFK: Someone mentioned to me that the C64 was going to be the next great game machine, so I convinced my grandfather to bankroll me with one. Dr. Sacco, a great guy, and my employer at the time, also believed in me and let me use part of my work time to write Rescue Squad. When I got it close to being finished, I literally opened up the phone book and looked for a publisher! I saw an ad for Muse, which was close by. I called them up and asked, "Do you sell C64 games?" They said, "No." I said, as I was hanging up the phone, "Oh OK, I just had one I wanted to get published." Right before I hung up I heard them yell, "Oh, wait. We just don't have any YET, but we are looking for them." So I went in. I showed the game to them. By the time I got home, I had a message to call

them. They said they had a contract for me to sign. They worked with me to add the music, and had a number of suggestions. But it was published within two months. I started working on Space Taxi that Fall, my freshman year at Hopkins University and the money would be put towards my schooling. There is always risk when you write games to be published as you never know how much they will sell. I was able to help pay my way through college with the games, so I'll always look back fondly on all the work that went into them. It was a blast writing them at the time.

RT: It's obvious that your work with Dr. Sacco had a major influence in Rescue Squad. So what influenced Space Taxi?

JFK: Not sure. I guess to some extent Lunar Lander, because the physics in Space Taxi are so precise. The Idea for multiple screens, I am not sure where I got that from. As for the various screens themselves, they were just things that came to me creatively. I recall making about 1 screen per day once I got into the groove of developing the game.

RT: What awards did your C64 games win?

JFK: Rescue Squad received a best of the year award. Space Taxi received a fair number of good reviews (A, A+, A-) in about a dozen magazines, including: Creative Computing, Nov '84; Infoworld, Feb '84; Infoworld, May '84; and Personal Software, July '84. It was a blast seeing my name and game in print on the newsstand in the magazines. Space Taxi was also nominated for Electronic Magazine's Action Game of the Year (lost out to something else). Perhaps the best achievement was the Consumer Electronics Software Showcase Award. I think there were only 10 in the games category, so that was quite an honor. I should also mention that Silas Warner (who wrote Castle Wolfenstein) created the fancy music for Space Taxi.

RT: Tell us more about you having the copyrights to the game/code?

JFK: Well, after Muse went under, the rights went back to me. I licensed them for a couple years to the distributor, but again, after the period of time was up. It all reverted back to me. So, I always held the copyright in the games. I had the old C64 disks transferred to a PC a long time ago, so still have the source code and all of the sprites files, and levels etc. I also worked on some educational software for Dr. Sacco.

RT: Were you seeking a degree in computer science, and what field of work did you hope to be in some day?

JFK: I was working on a BS in Electrical Engineering, but I stayed at Hopkins for grad school and received my Ph.D in Computer Science in 1992. While completing my dissertation, I began working full-time at a medical database management company. Got into writing database applications for trauma centers - a big difference from game writing, but I applied many of the Technical Skills. Also spent a fair amount of time working at my programming business (which would eventually become Digital Innovation, my current software development company – see www.dicorp.com). During the late 80's and early 90's I was the product development director at a national medical database analysis firm.

RT: When did Muse exit the industry, and did you quit programming videogames due to your schooling or career getting in the way?

JFK: I do not recall exactly. I believe it was 1986 that Muse went out of business. I remember going to the auction with a friend from Hopkins. We thought we were going to be able to pick up some items at a great deal. We laughed at the whole day. Broken computers were selling for more at the auction than you could buy them brand new down the street. Amazing how people get caught up in the bidding frenzy. I believe it was a software distributor who bought out the software titles for Muse. I did get some additional royalties from them.

As for my programming videogames, I think it was a couple of things. One was probably Muse not making it as a company. I moved on to MicroProse for a short time in 1985, where I consulted on the original C64 port of Solo Flight. I added additional terrain features

to it, like flying over water, mountains etc. But, I eventually went back to working for my original employer, Dr. Sacco. He was into the educational software market and the trauma research field. Eventually, my career centered around applying computers to trauma database applications, and I've now grown a successful part of our company around serving that market.

RT: Did you ever program on any of the other classic game machine computers of the 1980's?

JFK: I had some part time programming jobs where I developed some software for the Apple II.

RT: What do you work on today?

JFK: Mostly database applications. We have several successful products, including many in the healthcare field. We have the leading trauma registry product in the US – used by over 600 trauma centers. We have developed over 80 custom database applications for numerous clients and business partners. Some of our larger projects include ones for the American Heart Association and the Society of Critical Care Medicine, as well as our core products for trauma centers.

RT: Did your family get a kick out of your games and programming?

JFK: Sure, especially Mom. You know how Mom's are.

RT: Tell us about your family and gaming experiences today?

JFK: My wife Sue and I have two boys, Timmy 5, and Steven 2 1/2. We do not spend a lot of time playing games, but as you can guess from my children's ages that'll change soon. They're still a little young now, but next year we'll get the latest stuff. I also enjoy playing sports, including playing in a couple of amateur baseball leagues, as well as skiing and volleyball.

John F. Kutcher Jr. today with his sons Timmy, 5 and Steven, 2 1/2

RT: What is your favorite video game of all time? And is there a future for Space Taxi (hopefully our readers with any ties to the industry will take notes)?

JFK: Hmmm. Hard to say. Growing up I always liked Asteroids, even though the game is fairly simple. I would like to see, or help get Space Taxi rejuvenated onto a newer system? I've exchanged emails with some people on the Internet about it. Actually, one person made an Egyptian theme version of Space Taxi that runs on a web browser. Very neat! The emulators run it pretty well also. One day it would be fun to make a 3-d Version of it, with a view from inside the taxi, but that'll have to wait for me. I'm way too busy now with the company. But anyone working on a Space Taxi project should definitely drop me

a line. If they get it far along, I'd be happy to share some of the design details etc. to help make it an authentic replica. Thanks to everyone who has expressed their enjoyment of Space Taxi to me over the years. It's been great to hear from folks. I gotta dig out my old C64 and get the games up and running to show the kids. I'm not sure if my wife ever played it, but we were dating before then, so I'm sure that she's seen it. I'll need to get a good joystick and an emulator for Timmy.

RT: Thanks again John for your time. I know that our readers will find this very interesting, especially how you almost hung up on Muse. We wish that you could have written more games for us to enjoy, but your programming skills are obviously well suited for your successful career in trauma databases and educational software. I may do a review of Rescue Squad – it's a neat 3 screen game with many elements that are fun and challenging.

Our readers should look back at Retrogaming Times issue #23, and read more about the great game Space Taxi. John's friend told him about my article and then he read it and recently contacted me to say thanks. Also see a new game of Space Taxi at: http://taxipilot.sourceforge.net/

John F. Kutcher can be reached at: jkutcher@dicorp.com, and check out his company website at: www.dicorp.com

RT staff writer, Alan Hewston, who enjoys exploring part of the videogaming history via interviews such as this, can be reached at hewston95@stratos.net. If you are a classic game programmer and would like to tell us your story, please give Tom or I an Email.

Really Bad Video Game Poetry

To truly appreciate this poetry, you must understand its origin (that or generous portions of booze). Having finished watching the Pink Floyd story on VHI, especially about Syd Barret, I came into the computer room, sat down and put in Pink Floyd's first album (Pipers at the Gates of Dawn, an experience in its own right) and watched as a light bulb popped and went out. I then opened up a word document and began writing poetry about classic game characters. It was done in one take, no revisions, no changes. I used simple rhyme schemes in very simple setups. No Robert Frost, no e.e. cummings, just whatever stupid stuff came to mind. Well, as bad as they are, I share them with you. Laugh as you will, ghast in horror or pity the poor poet.

Pacman, Pacman
(best enjoyed while listening to "Bike" from Pink Floyd)
Pacman Pacman I never understood a Pacman
Take a sack man, to the track, man on your back, man
Walk a fine line, by design, til it shines so very fine
But a Pacman, in a dark land, full of sand, oh man
Hidden by a well, your score is swell, please do tell
Fight like a mother, look out brother, let's play another
Pacman, attack man, hurt hand, ain't life grand?

Coiley the Snake
(do not mix this poem with alcohol, very depressing)
We are all misunderstood, like the Coiley the Snake
We fight for our lives on the pyramid of space
Wondering why we must be reborn when we break
Searching so very hard for one friendly face
All our intentions so very misunderstood
All our movements feeling so programmed
No matter how hard we fight we do no good
Stuck in this miserable existence, we are damned

Will Classic Game Collecting Ever Go Mainstream?

This is a question that has been bandied about for ages. I can remember when I first got on the internet back in 1994 and finding newsgroups, I would read stuff about how the hobby was going to go mainstream and it would be ruined. If you look at some of the early newsletters, you will see these sentiments. The one nice thing about this hobby is that it is much more of a hobby as opposed to some of the other ones. Sure, there are people selling classic games on ebay and trying to make money off the hobby. Sure, there are sites, like this one that sell classic games for a living. But for all the whining and complaining that has gone on in the newsgroups and other areas for the past 7 plus years that I have read them (much earlier for others), the hobby is still pretty much underground. Yes, there are now two price guides and there has been stories in newspapers and magazines about classic games, but it is not much different than it was back then.

While the hobby has grown some, will it ever achieve the mass market interest that trading cards, comic books and toys have? My guess is no, it won't. To be truthful, I am already seeing the interest in the Nintendo surpassing the classic games. While the classic games will always have the most expensive games, some of the Nintendo games are catching up (a World of Atari cart, used at the tournament sold for over $7,000). When the Nintendo wanes some, I think the Playstation will pick up where it left off.

What does this mean to classic gamers? It means that the prices should stabilize some. There will be some games that fluctuate as demand grows or go down as more and more reach market. Of course, if Hollywood ever gets into a 1980's nostalgia craze, then things could change. With "That 80's Show" coming on Fox, it could bring in a minor surge of popularity, but I would not hold my breath. I think the market has survived any major intrusions by outsiders. The fears of the industry becoming destroyed by godless money grubbers appears to be unwarranted. I think we can all breath a sigh of relief (that is unless you invested all your money into classic games, hoping to cash in big time).

Don't get me wrong, I don't think that the classic games will be going down in price or even stagnating. What I do think is that the rate of which the games appreciate in value will be a much more slow and steady pace. The fact is that video games are now a part of pop culture and will only get more popular as time goes on. More and more people will be looking to trace back the history of the industry and want classic systems. Also, the number of working systems and games will decrease each year, so there is room for the prices to go up, but don't expect to be selling combats for $50.00 each anytime soon (maybe in the year 2525, if man is still alive).

THE ATARI 7800:
Atari tries to battle Nintendo

by Adam King

Several times I've visited the museum at Classicgaming.com, which has a lot of great information on classic systems. However, I've noticed that there's no mention of the Atari 7800, which I feel belongs in the museum. Since I've never received a reply to my e-mail I've decided to write an article chronicling the 7800 for this newsletter. Enjoy!
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As the world entered the year 1984, the video game industry was having major problems. Mattel and Coleco abandoned the industry, while many other companies went out of business as home computers were on the rise. The public felt that videogames were dead, and they scoffed at Nintendo's decision to bring the successful Family Computer to the U.S. Atari, on the other hand, was confident that they could still save the industry; they just needed the right system to do it. Instead of relying on the failing 5200, Atari started work on a new system.

On May 21, 1984, Atari announced their new system: the 7800 Prosystem. To avoid another 5200 fiasco, Atari did a market study to find out what gamers wanted, and they tailored the system around what they learned. First, they made the system backward compatible with the 2600, meaning gamers would be able to play Atari 2600 games on the new system without an adapter. Also the system would have a new custom CPU that

would power the system which was capable of moving 100 objects on-screen at the same and time and displaying a 256 color palette, as well as better controls than the 5200. To foil companies from making unlicensed games (as they doing to the 2600 in droves), the system would include an encryption key. If the system and cartridge keys didn't match, the game wouldn't work. This idea carried over to the NES later on. Accessories planned for the system included a high scores cartridge and a computer keyboard (see below). One disadvantage of the 7800 is that the system still had the old sound chip from the 2600; which doesn't lead to much. Programmers got around it by including the 5200's sound chip (POKEY) in certain cartridges to boost the audio.

The announcement of the 7800 was met with much anticipation, and the system was certainly innovative for its time. However, a fateful decision by Atari would sideline the 7800 for nearly two years. On July 2, 1984, Atari Corp, the home branch of Atari, was sold to Jack Tramiel and his family. Tramiel shelved the 7800 since he didn't like videogames and preferred computers. That would change in late '85, when Nintendo released the Nintendo Entertainment System to the U.S. Videogames were on the rise again and Tramiel wanted a piece of the pie, so the 7800 was dusted off and released to the public with six games. Several games came after.

However, it was already too late. Nintendo already captured the hearts and minds of kids all over the country. While the 7800 was able to meet or exceed some of the NES' specs, everyone wanted Mario and Zelda, not Centipede and Pole Position. Who would want a 7800 when everyone else had a NES or a Sega Master System. Some people also saw the 7800 system playing 2600 games, looked at the graphics, and probably got the wrong idea about the system's capabilities. Plus, Atari once again had the bad habit of announcing games that they never released, as they were known to do.

Over 60 games were released for the 7800, most of which were made by Atari themselves. Thrid-party support was small, only from three companies: Activision, Absolute, and Froggo. Nintendo's third party policy damaged its competitors, but mainly companies just didn't want to bother. The 7800 library is average at best, though there were some choice cuts. Some top titles for the system were Asteroids Deluxe, Food Fight, Ikari Warriors and Midnight Mutants, which starred Grandpa Munster, as well as some other excellent arcade ports. Of course a big factor in the system's library is its compatibility with the 2600 library, so you could say that hundreds of games were made for the 7800 (but let's not). Almost all the 2600 games work on the system without any problems, though there have been reports of certain games not working properly, such as Activision's Robot Tank and Decathlon. However these reports are inconsistent, mainly centered around earlier versions of the console, so you pretty much have to take your chances.

There wasn't much in the way of accessories for the 7800. When the system was built, Atari planned to make it into a home computer (which was the trend at the time). So a 7800 keyboard was designed to turn the system into a computer by plugging into the joystick port. Plus it was to include system BASIC and a word processor called VideoWriter. Set to retail for $100, it never made it to market (also a trend at the time). The basic controller the 7800 used was the Proline controller. Meant to be an improvement over the 5200's shoddy controllers, it was a joystick with two firing buttons and a sleek yet awkward design that was very uncomfortable to use. Also released was the 7800 Joypad. It was pretty much like the NES controllers and worked better, but they're very rare in the US. You can also get the sturdier Best Joystick from Best Electronics.

The 7800 tried to survive in the console wars, but without the marketing and backing Nintendo and Sega had, it just couldn't compete, and by 1991, the system faded away, especially in the face of the 16-bit systems. The system had become a mere footnote in the videogame timeline.

Throughout the five years the system was on the market, Atari sold 2 million units, and it developed a small following. The 7800 was a decent system; it was just a matter of timing, and it was the wrong time. Perhaps if Tramiel had released the system back in 1984 and

done a better job of handling it, Atari would have been the videogame leader instead of Nintendo. Alas, we'll never know.

As far as emulation goes, there are two options. First there's V7800, a DOS emulator created by Dan Boris. The super emulator MESS also supports 7800 emulation. Please note that you'll need an image of the 7800 BIOS to make the emulation possible.

Phillyclassic Game Show 2002

For Immediate Release

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PHILLYCLASSIC VIDEOGAME SHOW BLASTS GAMERS BACK TO THE FUTURE

Philadelphia, PA (January 16, 2002) – PhillyClassic3, The East Coast Classic Gamer's Event will take place at the Valley Forge Convention Center on Friday, April 26 and Saturday April 27, 2002. The show gives video gamers an opportunity to play, purchase, and trade video games from the past and a chance to test drive some modern classics on today's latest gaming technology. The show is a blast for video gamers of all ages.

PhillyClassic is dedicated to giving video game fans, both new and old, a great weekend of playing arcade and home console games, competing in tournaments, and buying, selling, and trading classic gaming systems, software, and accessories. PhillyClassic3 is expanding to nearly 15,000 square feet of convention and display space, a 6-fold increase over PhillyClassic 2001!

With the resurgence in popularity of everything from the 1970's and '80's, such as disco, bell-bottoms, and the VW Bug, classic video game systems such as Atari, ColecoVision, and Intellivision, are once again enjoying a second life. Not only are the original game systems popular once again, but compilations of classic games on modern platforms such as Sony Playstation and Windows PC's have been making a new generation of gamers aware of their roots.

Open to the public, PhillyClassic offers everyone a chance to revisit the electronic past. PhillyClassic is a hands-on show, not a traveling museum. Come see and play systems you grew up with and loved… or cool retro videogame systems you may have missed, such as stereovision 3-D handheld systems.

Many classic console game stations will be set up and ready to play with literally dozens of the most popular games from the 1970's and '80's. You can also rub elbows with fans of more obscure systems like the Vectrex and the incredibly rare AdventureVision. We'll have Atari and Commodore computer games as well! The show is not exclusive to classics either. Come and play some instant classics (definition: games that are so much fun, you can't put 'em down) for modern systems like GameCube, Playstation 2, and XBox.

For arcade fans, there will be plenty of full-sized coin-operated classic arcade games set on free play all day long.

Admission is $10 in advance and $15 at the door and allows attendees to play all day, enter tournaments, participate in a classic gaming auction, and meet fellow gamers, vendors, and videogame celebrities. Prizes will be awarded to the tournament winners, and there will be door prizes given away throughout the day. For those individuals interested in displaying their wares for sale, or just for show, display tables will be available for $20, and should be reserved as early as possible.

THE QUICK BLURB…

About PhillyClassic - PhillyClassic is a celebration of video gaming, from Asteroids to Xbox. The third annual show, PhillyClassic3, will feature competitive classic arcade and home game tournaments, tons of systems set up for free play, a classic gaming auction, hot deals at the buying/selling/trading tables, and lots of door prizes, including XBox give aways each day. April 26th & 27th, 2002 at The Valley Forge Convention Center. To save money by buying tickets online or to be an exhibitor, see the official website,www.phillyclassic.com

The TI 99/4A "Interviews"

by Jim Krych

Hello Everyone!

I hope and pray that all you Tiers out there had a safe Christmas Season and a Happy New Year! I want to thank those who have contacted me with corrections and possible leads about long-lost software and such!

I had mentioned a while back about doing interviews. I have gotten an interview from an old associate of mine-Paul Schippnick. I hope you enjoy his insight to the programming that he has done over the years!

Though it is early, I have gotten in touch with an old friend and computer partner, and will try to interview him-Chris Bobbitt of Asgard Software and Asgard Peripherals!

On with the interview!

Hi Paul! Please tell us a little about your self and your computer background! And, your TI hardware setup?

My work occupation is as a Tool Programmer, or CNC programmer. CNC meaning Computer Numerical Control. I write instructions for computerized milling machines, for manufacturing of metal and plastic parts.

I am also a professing Christian. And so I take an interest in what other people believe and think, in the hope that I might communicate the joyous news called the gospel, how that the man called Jesus Christ was really God's sinless Son who suffered and died so we who might deserve to suffer and die before a holy and righteous God would not have to. So we who place our trust in God through His Son may be forgiven of our personal sins and guilt, might have eternal life with God and a an abundant life here on earth, being given a since of value and self worth. And this evidenced by the bodily resurrection ascribed to Jesus Christ. I became a Christian at the age of 14.

My first computer was a General Electric Analog computer. It worked on balancing electric currents between variable resistors or pots. It was a General Electric electronics put it together kit. No soldering, just spring-loaded standoffs. It consisted of transistors, resistor, capacitors, and on off switch and of course the pots. There were three pots for calculations and one pot for balance or calibration. It used a tone, when set to null, or silent that was the answer on that pot. There were pre-printed overlays for addition-subtraction, multiplication-division, trigonometry and I think also maybe one for logarithms. On the backs of the overlays there was formulas, equations and problem examples for solving different types of math problems and physics. For the most part a slide rule was more accurate. But it did work. I got this when I was teenager. I guess about 15 or 16 years old at the time. This was in the mid 1960's.

My main 4A system consists of a 4A console, a GramKracker, an XT bridge box, TI Speech Synthesizer, a cassette player, a Peripheral Expansion System with, 1024K AMS card, two RS232 cards, P-System, and a TI Disk Controller. Three drives, DSK1 SSSD, DSK2 DSSD & DSK3 SSSD. And now PC99 available to be connected to it and for real time debugging. I have three versions of the 4A, a black and silver with the words, Solid

State Software, just like on the 99/4. A back and silver without the phrase, and a beige 4A with 1983 V2.2 OS. And I still have my original 99/4.

When did you first encounter the TI 99/4A? (Or TI 99/4)

In the late 70's and in 1980 I was looking to buy a computer console of some sort. A Radio Shack that had Tandy computer consoles. I played chess on one and won. The BASIC couldn't do trig or powers. And the extended basic which could do trig and powers was not very accurate, that is, not accurate to the precision of the output. The Atari 400 & 800 looked interesting. But again the extended BASIC when doing certain calculations would not be accurate to the precision of the output. This was primarily the trig and logarithmic function when certain limits were attempted in calculations. Now the TI-99/4 was a J. C. Penney's department store. I didn't like the overlay keyboard. Now I liked the Atari 800. But when it came down to the math. The TI-99/4 won. It got the correct answers for the limits. My interest was not in the graphics at the time or the games.

The TI-99/4 was about $600.00 with a three-module rebate. I don't recall which three modules. The modulator was an extra $75.00. And I also had to buy a black and white 12 in TV set for use as a monitor, which I still use with that modulator on my current 4A system. I bought the 99/4 in October of 1980.

What was your first program for the TI 99/4A?

I not sure what my first program was that I wrote. I might have it somewhere on a cassette tape. It was written on the TI-99/4. One program was to output Fibonacci sequence. Whether I saved that one, I don't remember. The programming I was interested in was for orbits and escape velocity according to relativity. I still to this day do not have a good program for this problem that I was trying to solve. It is not the standard answer ether since it is on, what I latter found out is, Einstein's premise that black holes DO NOT exist.

Newton's escape velocity equation:

Ve = sqrt(2 G M / r)

According to Einstein's theory becomes:

Ve = sqrt(2 G M / r + (G M / (r c)) ^ 2) / (1 + (G M / (r c^2))

But Einstein never wrote it.

So one of my early programs was called Kinetic Energy. 99'er Magazine was at one time going to publish it. But my article, that was to go with it was, my guess, never acceptable, do to spelling and grammar and program corrections that I never mailed. The program was only on cassette and the article was hand written, I think. If I had typed it, it was hand typed.

As for my first program on the 4A, well it was in 83. I would have to look at the program dates and when I bought my 4A.

Some of the other programs I have written, a factorial program that is very fast and gives up to 6 place exponents. A little program that will give a range of prime numbers. BASIC Plot Ltd and XBPlot. UNNEW which allows recovery of a TI BASIC program after entering NEW. NextError with assembly language source code for nested error reporting in XB using sub programs. And some others, besides others ether not finished or not published. One that was not finished on the 99/4 was a Triangle Solver program. I also looked at making it compatible with XB. The program was much later rewritten from scratch and finished to run on a TI-85 calculator for work. It has not been publish. Though a program by the same program name has been publish for the TI-85 calculator. But it is not the same program, nor do I have a copy of it.

Were you involved with any user groups and such?

The first club I was with was what was called Club 99, we didn't know about TI's program for Clubs. And so by time we found out, there were already recognized TI-99/4A clubs in the area. So TI, from what I remember and understand, never recognized this club. I was one of the first members of this club. I had also joined San Gabriel Valley user group and later Pomona Valley 99ers. I eventually drop out of the PV99ers club do to too many club meeting per month for me. I may have also dropped out of the SGVUG. Or they had folded while I was still attending the meetings. I don't remember.

Any major players in the TI Community have you met and got to know about?

Bill Gronos, he was the one who taught me the address for un-protection XB programs.

I got to be an acquaintance to Greg Miller of Miller's Graphics. And got to be a friend of Dough Warren who worked on the programs for the GramKracker. (I lost his phone number because I didn't have it on paper, and my electronic organizer when the battery went dead.)

I am a friend of Carrey Hoffman of Tex-Comp Ltd.

An acquaintance of Rich Gilbertson, of RXB. Who I met at some of the TI Fest West's.

Mike Write if CADD Electronics, PC99. I am sure I may have meet some others. But I never got to know them.

What did you think of the AMS/SuperAMS cards, and please describe your work on them; programs, etc.

I think that it is pretty neat. I wanted to know from a software low level how it was programmed. The assembler program that came with it, I have yet use it. I read the documentation, and some of the sample source code was misleading and could not work as written in the samples. I talked to Tom Wells, and some others at SW 99'ers while I was trying to understand how to correctly code for the AMS at the low level. Also talked to Carrey Hoffman about how the hardware of the Super AMS card was to work. The one member at SW 99'ers, I don't remember his name, he had an original AEMS card. I had sent some of my first versions of the XB AEMS Query programs to the SW 99'ers BBS. And this member ran the program on a card he had modified to have more than 256K as well as, if my memory serves me right, on also an original AEMS card. One of the key differences between the AEMS and SuperAMS was the lower 8K bank was not paged on the AEMS where as it is on the AMS card. The assembler that came with the Super AMS card was the one written for the AEMS card. So all the assembly language programs, as far as I know would not take advantage of the fact that the Super AMS the lower 8K bank pages can be paged. Also the AEMS was only 128K and 512K, where as the SW 99'ers Super AMS could be 128K, 256K, 512K and 1024K. You were kind enough to lone my friend Larry Hoffman your AEMS card for me to run program tests on. So one of my first XB AMS program is now has the program corrections to work with the rare AEMS card and the less rare Super AMS card. The program called TI Extended BASIC AMS Query Program, tests for the presence of an AMS card and reports its memory size. It also in the memory mapped mod reports the pages being used in each bank, all from TI Extended BASIC. The program uses 5 assembly language routines. The simple code required to use the AMS card from TI BASIC. CALL LINK("MAP"), CALL LINK("PASS"), CALL LINK("RWON") and CALL LINK("RWOFF"). The fifth program was CALL LINK("ISR",0) to turn off the user interrupt service routine if running. And CALL LINK("ISR",1) to restore the ISR hook value after the pages for the 8K space was restored. The last version of the XB AMS Query program is XBAMS107E. I was working on some more AMS XB programs, but they are still in development. The one program I was working on last, about 2 years ago, the AEMS version, was not finished. It would allow paging of the non-paged 8K space for XB in XB.. That is the reason I needed to borrow an AEMS card. Now that I understand how that card is different than the SuperAMS card, and that I now have PC99 full, I can continue where I had left off.

What is the best thing you have about the TI and the computer community?

The TI-99/4A had the most advanced BASIC (though slow) and easy to learn than most other BASICs of its day. The best thing about the community has been in the time past the user groups helping one another.

On the flip side, any bad experiences?

I personally have not had, for the most part, any bad experiences with the community. But I have friends who have, and that was bad enough. I have also have found myself in some times on the wrong side of the issue. Where I do not want to be.

The only bad experience was a program, I had borrowed a copy of to understand how the programmer did, what he did. I called him on the phone, and he essentially called me a thief. I apologized, sent him payment in full for the program. And destroyed any notes I had. I return the program to the owner of the copy. I never did learn what I set out to learn. The program could do 4A true bit map plotting from an XB running program. To this day I do not have any copy of that program.

What keeps you playing and hacking the TI after all these years?

For me it has been a fun computer to work and play with.

What's your favorite software? Games, utilities, etc?

My favorite software programs, which are utilities, MG Explorer and Advanced Diagnostics. My favorite games, mainly for their graphics are like, Super Demon Attack, Parsec & some of the Atari games. The games that I have the most fun with was Milton Bradley Connect Four, TI Video Chess, Video
Games 1-- Pinball, Hunt the Wumpus, Atari Defender, TI Invaders, A-maze-ing and The TI tank two player game, Blasto. I also like Star Trek, as well as a few others.

Any parting words for Retrogaming Times?

The Retrogaming Times was new to me. My personal interest in computer games has been mostly limited to collecting TI-99/4A module games. The plug in modules themselves. And that writing game programs is an excellent way to learn programming. Playing the games is the kid in all of us.

Well, I hope you enjoyed that! I will be looking to interview quite a few people from the TI community, so we shall be hearing from a wide variety of opinions, interests, and experiences!

I have one volunteer so far for the Gyruss story, "From Neptune To Earth – The story of the 357th Joint Military Forces Attack Squadron (JMFAS)" He is from the Swiss Army! So far, we have a US National Guardsman (and ex-Coast Guard), and a member of the Swiss Army. I am still looking for members or past members of the military-heck, even some Russians who may be reading these articles! We have the basic plot and background for the 1st chapter, including prologue and some other material. Please contact me at: jwkrych@adelphia.net

We had a MAJOR blessing on the 29th of December!!! The CEO of my company, Treyonics, was over for a visit! What a great time we had! And, when Treyton first saw the Devastator, the one first reviewed by Tom, he said "mine?……mine?" And, when he saw Pac-Man get eaten, he said "oh noooooo…" I only wish I had a camcorder for that! We do have some pictures though! See ya soon again, my little son!!! (Love, always, your daddy!!! J)

("Hi, my name is Jim Krych. I am a 32-year old electronics technician. I currently work for Keithley Instruments, in Solon Ohio. I am also a 13+ year veteran of the US military, with nearly six years in the active Coast Guard and the rest has been with the Ohio Army National Guard. I have formed my own company, Treyonics, named after my son Treyton. Our flagship product is the Treyonics Home Controller System: Model 9908. Known simply

as the Devastator! (Which will soon be reviewed in an issue of Maximum PC!!!)")

The Many Faces of...Gorf

By Alan Hewston

"Prepare for Annihilation". As one of the earliest multi-stage arcade games, Bally/Midway found a way to combine two of their Japanese imports and make yet another hit in Gorf. If any game should be called "Death from above", THIS IS IT! Gorf of course is Frog spelled backwards - so . . . how many ways can you kill a Frog? OK, stage 1 is the Space Invaders invasion called "Astro Battles". Stage 2, Laser Attack" had elements of Galaga and Galaxians, but the Gorfians have laser beam ships that shoot down at you. Stage 3 was a faithful recreation of "Galaxians", which is strangely missing on all classic home versions. Stage 4, "Space Warp" is similar to Gyruss, but the Gorfian ships spiral out 1 at a time, each very quickly and only once. Stage 5, "Flag Ship" was similar to the mothership in Phoenix and took you right to the heart of the Gorfian invasion fleet - destroy the mother ship and be promoted. But, before you got to retire from the Interstellar Space Force, (as either a Space Cadet, Captain, Colonel, General, Warrior, Avenger and beyond.), you'd be sent off on another mission to save someone else's planet from invasion - and fight the entire sequence over again.

Similar to Wizard of Wor you only get one shot. But now you can fire again, where the previous shot is replaced by the new shot – fortunately, the home versions all got this correct. Also like WOW, the arcade machine would taunt you with its synthesized speech using phrases such as: "Survival is impossible!"; "My Gorfian robots are unbeatable!"; "I devour coins."; and "Some galactic defender you are… ha-ha-ha!" Others aspects of the gameplay include: start with 5 lives (save the 2 from Commodore, where you have 6); a bonus life after every Flag Ship mission; a demo mode that shows each mission; the Bouncing Gorf unloads the invaders in Astro Battles; the Space Warp mission ends after all (12?) invaders have attacked. The CV and 2600 have several differences from the others that they share - so maybe they had the same programmer. These differences are: bonus life only once on the CV, after the first flag ship, and at 10K for the 2600; no demo mode; no unloading of the invaders by the Bouncing Gorf; and only 5 hits were needed to end the Space Warp mission. All versions but the 2600 have: 2 laser ships on the Laser Attack mission; command ships and bouncing Gorf; and shields.

For more information on Gorf see:

http://147.208.187.228/popopedia/shows/arcade/ag1057.php

Arcade Game Designed in 1980 Bally Midway (Jamie Faye Fenton)

Classic Home releases (in '82 and '83): Atari 2600 (CBS, Alex Leavens) & 5200 (CBS), Commodore 64 (CBM, Eric Cotton and MJB ?) & Vic 20 (CBM, Eric Cotton & Andy Finkel) and Atari 8-bit (Roklan), Colecovision (CBS).

Sequels: Ms. Gorf ('82), and Gorfian Pinball, both by Fenton

Categories: Gameplay, Addictiveness, Graphics, Sound & Controls

Many of the Faces of Gorf and also the arcade game.

Have Nots: Vic 20 (32)
Typical of the Vic, this version does a decent job in all categories but Graphics. The Graphics are weak (4), due to the inability to make smaller sprites with sufficient detail. Unfortunately, the explosion of the flag ship is also poor. The score and number of lives are the only (text) information shown during play. All the enemy ships are present, but then everything is just too big and choppy making for little room to maneuver. This really hurts both the gameplay and the addictiveness. The Gameplay is cool (7), with nearly all the elements there. Between levels, a brief delay allows you to see your current mission number, rank and mission title.

The Controls are perfect (10), but then the smaller relative playfield (oversized ships) makes your skill in controlling your actions a lot harder to acquire. The Sound is fine (6), and although all effects appear to be present - from time to time, too much is going on and an explosion or other sound can get clipped or omitted. There is no inspiring music, and the effects do not sound as good as on the other versions. The Addictiveness is fair (5), losing out due to no pause button, and the awful graphics - which BTW cause sprite detection/collision problems. Warning: If you move into the exploding debris you WILL die.

Have Nots: Atari 2600 (35)
The manual says that there are only 9 sets of missions. I'm not sure if the game ends, or the difficulty stops increasing at that point, but this is still a very nice game on the 2600. CBS offered a medal by mail if you scored high enough, and sent in a photo as proof. The Gameplay is decent (6), but lacking, and/or somewhat unique – due to 2600 limitations. In addition to the shortfalls listed at the top of the article, the programmers could not easily display so many ships - so there are fewer of the Astro Battles invaders. For some reason they did not allow you to move up or down anytime, and in some cases not far enough left and right. There's only one laser ship – but they partially made up for this by bringing it back in 4 seconds later, if the other ships were not destroyed. The flag ship missiles came straight down (and not randomly) and there is not much of any explosions. There are no added options or difficulties or level selections. The sound is pretty good (7), including all the bells and whistles needed, but nothing special, and no music. The Graphics are good enough (6) and do not detract from the game. The limitations are: missing or no detail for ships, scenery, explosions, space warp tunnel, and never any display of level, rank or name of the mission. You're just provided the score and number of lives. The Controls are perfect (10), so you can't complain there. The Addictiveness is good (6), but could easily be improved mostly with a pause and more ships to fight off and in general more randomness. Only 1 player.

Have Nots: Atari 5200 (37)
OK, now I know what I missed last month from Wizard of Wor. Both of these Atari 8-bit games were made by Roklan and then distributed by CBS on the 5200. This transfer may have caused the lack of programming to make the 5200 sticks (analog) useable in a game that needs digital control only. This problem did not occur for Wizard of Wor. I generously scored the Controls as (7) very good. Hopefully you will agree that with prolonged play you can overcome some of the problems – such as when you move left, you go all the way left, and when you go right, you go all the way right - in the blink of any eye. Some games are just not meant to be analog – and it makes Gorf unrealistic to boot. Thus drops the

Addictiveness score to very good (7), on this otherwise excellent version. A pause is included, but does not really help when your game is significantly shortened due to the problems of control. The rest of the 5200 review matches the 8-bit review.

Gorf and Wizard of Wor both had overlays, but they are not needed.

Silver Medal: Colecovision (40) & Commodore 64 (40)

I kept tweaking the medal winners since there was almost a 3-way tie for the Gold. The CV has the best overall game but drops down (maybe not far enough) due to 3 shortcomings (below) that probably could have been fixed. The C64 and Atari 8-bit also have the same apparent (*) shortfall, in that multi-deaths can occur on the Laser Attack and Space Warp missions. The play does not reset, but unfairly keeps playing and your next ship can arrive right on top of the enemy – spelling instant death. Maybe that's the way it should be (*).

Colecovision: Let's add a wee bit of music and extra sound effects and then between levels tell us that we were promoted? It's not quite the interlude between levels on C64 Space Taxi, but the CV provides a nice break in the action. The Sound is crisp (8), with nothing missing, and the music makes it the best. The Gameplay is very nice (8), and includes nearly all the desirable options. But there is a change from the arcade game, most noticeably is that the Flagship fireballs can be shot for points, thus allowing one to play forever. [Well almost - see the bug reported in Addictiveness.] The addition of 4 skill levels does not add much value since level one is already very hard indeed. Another difference showing up in Gameplay/story is that there is a space "tunnel" for the Space Warp mission. The arcade story tells of a space "web" coming out from the flag ship. So then the arcade mission should be called a space "web", not space warp. A space warp, as done correctly by the CV, would be like a space tunnel or wormhole where the ships come from afar, from all parts of the galaxy. The CV ships are not sitting there in a circle, but rather they DO "appear" from out of nowhere. In two-player mode, play alternates only after a player has completed a mission. This also is true of the Atari versions. The Graphics are enjoyable (8), and include all the ships from the arcade, and is the only version to have background stars. The only true graphical drawbacks are the Flag Ship explosion is terrible, and the ships are not as sharp as the C64. But the extras make up for these minor drawbacks.

The Controls are perfect (10), well, only if you use both an Atari and CV controller. Coleco knew that you could still earn a perfect score in my column :-) if you programmed the game to allow use of the CV controller in port 2 to set up and start the game, and then use the Atari controller in port 1 to play. No reason to penalize CV when this workaround does the job. The Addictiveness is good enough to keep you playing (6), but suffers from at least 3 significant shortfalls. First, there is no pause, which could have been added. Then the Sprite overlaps aren't consistent. Sometimes they are clearly overlapping but not considered to be. Other times they are not overlapping and considered to be and you die. This is really FRUSTRATING. Finally, a bug, or feature of the code – possibly caused by the Flag ship infinite point scoring SNAFU - causes the game to lock up after 20+ minutes of play. I tried playing on 2 different systems and also on 2 different carts and it always locks up - thus ending your game. I have not found any other reference to this bug for anyone else but me, so I have not reduced the score here. CV Gorf has an overlay, but it is also pretty useless.

Commodore 64: The C64 is inferior to the other winners in its Gameplay, scoring a (7) very good. All the game elements are in place, but there are zero options – ie 1 player only and no start level or difficulty. The Addictiveness is enjoyable (8) - the game is not so hard so fast as the CV and does include a very easy to use pause button. The C64 displays the rank, mission name and number at all times. But then this efficiency prevents the need for a short break between missions that the others enjoy – so it's quickly off from one level to the next – and no penalty here because you can always pause. When you're done, you get to see the high score Hall of Fame and temporarily put in your initials. The Controls are perfect (10), and the Graphics are crisp (8), but a bit plain. There's no mess or confusion (all the ships are crystal clear), and nothing is missing. The Sound is very good (7) and has all the effects in place, but there's no music. Too bad we all cannot enjoy

the speech - what's that!?! Yes, just as in the previous month's review, the Commodore version is reported to have speech added. I found this mentioned in 3 different sites, so it is probably correct. I suggest that all you emulation fans go out there and see if you can find the emulation for the Magic Voice and see if you can combine and run both at the same time. Then report back to me if you have success. If the speech were included without use of the Magic Voice then the C64 would have jumped up to win the Gold. This version is common on cart, and also available on disk.

Gold Medal: Atari 8 bit (41)
With only one shortfall, this version somewhat backs into the Gold. The Controls are perfect (10). The Sound is pleasant (7), but could be better with some music, and a little better sound effects. The Graphics are sharp (8) and have nice detail, nice explosions, and no clutter. The Gameplay is fantastic (8), including a selection of any of the 6+ starting ranks, 2 player mode, and like the C64, a high score hall of fame. This version and the 5200 have a unique firing capability on the Astro Battles mission. I did not penalize it - as one can get used to it easily. That is . . . a press and quick release of the fire button causes a short burst into the shields. You need to press and "hold" the fire button for your shot to penetrate the shields and attack the invaders. The addictiveness is enjoyable (8), with a pause and the only shortfall being the previously mentioned multi-deaths. This version is uncommon on cart, and also available on disk.

OK, why wasn't there a TI-99 version? No doubt it would have all 5 levels and probably speech as well.

Where's Jim Krych? Oh that's right he did mention Wizard of Wor and Gorf last month – touché.

Now if he can quickly find out about the TI Activision games – since I am doing Beamrider next month.

Yes, come back next month when I review the Many Faces of Beamrider on the Atari 2600, Atari 8-bit, Colecovision, Intellivision and C64 (also by Fenton). Alan Hewston, who needs many CV carts for this column: Pitfall II, Pac Man, Choplifter, Joust, Keystone Kapers, Dragonfire, Star Trek, Dig Dug, One on One and a few others can be reached at Hewston95@stratos.net and has a lot to trade at http://members.core.com/~hewston/Hewston_vg.html

Letters to the Editor

As I dig into the virtual mailbag, I find a few more gems to share with my readers. Hmmmm... no questions this month, an oddity in itself.

Who would win in a fight, Pacman or Q*Bert? signed a crazed gamer

Are we talking the video game characters or the cartoon characters from Saturday Morning Television? If it is the game characters, I would go with Pacman. While he is without any appendages, he can eat just about anything. If we are talking cartoon characters, then it is more even as they both have arms and legs (they should have challenged the writers and left Pacman as a big mouth and nothing more), so it would be even. Even then, I would stick with Pacman. He is a parent and Q*Bert is a high school kid. Q*Bert has not had to deal with a nagging wife and screaming kids. If you can survive that, there is nothing some high school brat can throw at you, that would be worse.

Donkey Kong was the first appearance of Mario, but what was the first appearance of Luigi? signed New Gamecube owner.

That's easy peasy! Mario Bros was the first game to feature Luigi. I cannot tell you how many times people have told me that Donkey Kong 3 featured Luigi. It was not, that was Stanley the Bugman, a truly tragic character in video game history. We miss you Stanley and hope the therapy is helping.

I was reading some of the old Retrotimes and saw your articles about Billy the

Block. I do not remember hearing about him before, who was he? Was he real or did you just make him up?

Billy the Block is very real, he is the symbol for every unknown, forgotten and overlooked video game character out there. Wherever there is an unnamed video game character, Billy is there. Whenever a character is forgotten to the annals of time, Billy is there. (At this time, Tom is dragged from his soap box and beaten into submission. Then after listening to some soothing music and drinking some herbal tea, he returns to finish the question).

Yes, Billy the Block is a made up character. Thanks for your question and may you have a very nice day.

Spring is Just Around the Corner

by Fred Wagaman

The snow is falling and so is the temperature.

Don't let it get you down, spring is coming.

And what happens in the spring ?

Yard sales, garage sales, porch sales and flea markets.

Now is the time to get ready.

Go through your stuff. Get organized. Alphabetize your loose manuals. Pick out your duplicates. Decide what you are looking for this year.

And of course, get ready for the shows. The classic video games shows.

The Philly Classic is the first show of the spring on April 26-27, 2002 at the Valley Forge Convention Center in King of Prussia, PA.

Check out www.phillyclassic.com

If you are planning on selling, looking to enhance your collection, or just want to show off your stuff, mark these dates on your calendar and plan on loading up the car for a road trip.

I was there last year. If you were there last year, you know how crowded it was. This year's show shouldn't have such a problem. If it does, this hobby will have grown more than I could have ever imagined.

There will be arcade machines, classic games, modern games and who knows, just maybe a few surprises.

Last year, a couple new homebrew games debuted.

There are other shows scheduled. Cleveland, Vegas and others. Eveyone who organizes one of these deserves a big thanks. It takes a lot of work and the people that do it usually get very little thanks.

(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 6 year-old, button-loving son, Max and his 2 year old, 4th player, Lynzie. Fred has his tabled reserved for the Philly Classic and is planning on bringing cash. Lots of cash. Fred can be reached at fcw3@mail.ptd.net)

Conclusion

Time to close out another chapter in classic video games. Before I leave you for another month, time to make some announcements and send out a few thanks. First off, I will be attending the Phillyclassic again this year. If you are at the show, stop by and say hello. Besides myself, most of the Retrogaming Times writers will be there. Fred Wagaman, Jim Krych and Alan Hewston are all planning on attending. Also, last year Dave Mrozek, the video game critic was in attendance. So it is a great time to tell us what you think of the newsletter. Praise, criticism, donations, we will accept it all! You cannot miss my tables as they are the ones with all the priced games, in alphabetical order. I will also be right next to Jim and his monstrous Devastator joystick. This thing is so big, you could not miss it in Time Square on New Year's Eve.

For you newer game fans, I have heard your pleas. A new issue of Bit Age Times will be out this month. We did an issue last month, after a 6 month hiatus and I received so many emails and hits, that I rushed in to do another issue. It is 80% done, so it will be out.

I would like to send out a thanks to the two people who nominated Retrogaming Times for a Digital Press Achievement Award. I don't think it was even in the running last year, at least I never heard anything, so to be mentioned was a great honor. I will not win it, Atariage.com should win it (and deservedly so), but it was nice to be mentioned.

Lastly, here is a wild little site for all you people who like the supernatural. Know those pictures that you have to look at it for a long time to see anything? Well, here is one for you. Just make sure to look for a few minutes or you will not see anything. Trust me, it will be worth it. Go to:

http://www.planetannihilation.com/terragen/ghost.html

See you next month and hope the New Year will be good to your classic game collections!

-Tom Zjaba

(This newsletter was done while listening to early Pink Floyd music as well as some odd stuff from Gong and Syd Barrett).