# Retro 7 Times

The Newsletter for the Retro Gamer in All of Us

March 1998

## Introduction

I am pleased to say that the amount of email I am receiving from Retro Times continues to go up. I received over sixty messages from the past issue and still more are coming in. I appreciate every one of them and try to respond to each one. I always enjoy hearing your opinions and even some friendly debating. While there is no true theme this issue, I am going to devote some coverage to the great playing, extremely affordable games. You know the ones that aren't hard to find, but are hard to stop playing. With all the talk about the high priced games, I decided to focus on the fun ones. So pull out those joysticks and enjoy!

## ODYSSEY COMMITTEE

While most of my friends had Atari's, I had an Odyssey II. I asked for an Atari, but this is what I got and like any grateful kid, I made the best of it. Sure, I couldn't swap games at school or around the neighborhood with the other kids. I was the only one I knew who had an Odyssey II. But once Quest for the Rings and Great Wallstreet Fortune Hunt came out, I was singing the praises of the machine. So much that a few friends of mine and myself formed the Odyssey Committee, a club for people who didn't own Ataris and liked playing the Odyssey. There weren't many of us, and we didn't do anything special, but we sure had fun playing those games. Sure Atari had Adventure and a bunch of other dungeon games, but only the Odyssey had a two player (at the same time!) game with a medieval flavor. Plus, you could pick your own characters. It was as high tech as it got back then and I felt cutting edge. Plus, the Odyssey was falling out of favor and the prices of games were dropping fast. I could afford more games for less money! It was my first taste of video game carrion and I liked the taste. Sure the system was dying and the stream of new games was going to come to a halt, but I got to pick up games I wanted but couldn't afford. I gained a new appreciation for vultures that day. Well, the club didn't last too long. I bought a Colecovision a little while later and the Odyssey was pushed aside. But for a moment there, it was the top system in my household and we were all proud members of the Odyssey Committee.

## AFFORDABLE JOYS OF CLASSIC GAMES

As I stated in the beginning, this month we are going to praise the joys of the classic and yet affordable games for the different systems. One of the joys of retrogaming is it can be an inexpensive hobby. Most of the games we played in our youth can be found for under $5.00, with many of them much cheaper than that. So I put together a list of some of the better games that you should be able to find for $5.00 and under. I broke them down by system. These prices are based on just the cart, you may have to more if you want it complete. So sit back and see how many of these gems are in your own collection. I know I will forget some, so feel free to tell me which ones you feel belong on the list.

### Atari 2600

Adventure, Adventure of Tron, Air Sea Battle, Asteroids, Atlantis, Battlezone, Berzerk, Boxing, Carnival, Centipede, Chopper Command, Circus Atari, Combat, Cosmic Ark, Defender, Demon Attack, Donkey Kong, Enduro, Fishing Derby, Frogger, Galaxian, Gorf, Grand Prix, Indy 500, Joust, Jungle Hunt, Kangaroo, Keystone Kapers, Laser Blast, Lock n Chase, Maze Craze, Megamania, Midnight Magic, Missile Command, Ms Pacman, Moon Patrol, Night Driver, Outlaw, Pitfall, Popeye, Q*Bert, Raiders of the Lost Ark, Reactor, River Raid, Robot Tank, Sea Quest, Space Invaders, Spider Fighter, Stampede, Starmaster, Star Raiders, Super Breakout, Turmoil, Warlords, Yar's Revenge.

### Atari 5200

Centipede, Countermeasure, Galaxian, Jungle Hunt, Missile Command, Pacman, Pole Position, Qix, Space Invaders

## Atari 7800
Asteroids, Ballblazer, Choplifter, Crossbow, Desert Falcon, Dig Dug, Donkey Kong, Donkey Kong Jr, Food Fight, Galaga, Joust, Ms Pacman, Pole Position II, Robotron, Tower Toppler, Xevious

## Colecovision
Burgertime., Cabbage Patch Kids, Carnival, Donkey Kong, Donkey Kong Jr, Frogger, Gorf, Lady Bug, Mouse Trap, Pepper II, Popeye, Q*Bert, Space Fury, Subroc, Venture, Zaxxon

## Intellivision
Advanced Dungeons & Dragons, Armor Battle, Auto Racing, Baseball, Beauty & Beast, Bomb Squad, B-17 Bomber, Bump n Jump, Demon Attack, Frog Bog, NBA Basketball, NFL Football, Night Stalker, Space Spartans

* I based this list on what I sell games for, so they may be a little higher elsewhere. It is also based on my personal tastes, yours may vary. But it does show that you can assemble a nice little collection for a little money. See, classic gaming can be both fun and affordable!

# MAME REVIEWS

As I delve deeper and deeper into MAME, I keep finding games that I really enjoyed at the arcades, but I had forgotten about. The games reviewed here are those kind of games, minor classics that were never ported to a classic system or at least to any system I ever owned. Without MAME, they would have stayed hidden in the back of my mind.

1.**Zookeeper**-This is a fine example of a game I loved at the arcade and didn't remember it until playing it. Over a year ago, someone I corresponded with on the internet, Charlie, tried explaining the game to me. That was the first I heard of it and then later on, I see all these people asking for it on MAME. I kept asking myself what the big deal is with this game and why don't I remember it. Well, with MAME 0.30, a working version of Zookeeper was finally available and it was the first new game I tried. When the game started and I heard what is possibly the most obnoxious sounds ever made by a video game, the memories came flooding back. I remember this game! Not only did I remember it, but I also remember how big a fan I was.

For those who never played Zookeeper, it is one of those fun little games that grows on you. You play the role of a zookeeper (I think almost every profession was covered in classic games). As is the duty of any good zookeeper, it is your job to keep the animals from escaping. The animals are in a brick enclosed cage and you would think that would hold them right? If you answered yes, you obviously don't play enough games. These aren't your ordinary run of the mill animals. No, these are super powered, thunder for hooves kind of beasts that take that wall down quicker than you can build it. These animals are either very starved or just plain destructive, because they want out in the worst way. It is your job to continuously rebuild the wall and keep them animals at bay. So, like a reverse breakout, you are building the wall and they are bringing it down. Of course, a few animals are going to escape and wreak havoc, it is their nature. That is where the net comes in handy. There is a bar at the top that slowly counts down to the end of the level. In the midst of it, are bonuses that pop up. These bonuses are in the shape of shamrocks, beers and other stuff. Also a net will eventually pop up. When it does, you go and grab this sucker and send them beasties flying back to their pen. Not the most humane method, but it does the trick. By the way, you must also jump over the animals as they come out. If you touch them, you die. They are wild animals after all and don't like being touched by people.

A great game that once again MAME saved from oblivion. I wonder how many other old memories are in my head that will surface in future editions of MAME?

2. **Kick**-This is one of the simplest games out there and yet quite addictive. You are a clown on a unicycle and it is your job to pop all the falling balloons. Why this clown wants to pop all the balloons is beyond me. Maybe he doesn't want litter or maybe he is a evil clown. Either way, you must pop them. Good thing you are wearing your pointy hat that makes mincemeat of those pesky balloons. So all you do is ride back and forth and try to position your pointy hat under the balloons and pop them. Once the screen is cleared, you start another. Easy enough? Well, you may be wondering what happens if you miss the balloon? You do have a backup plan, in the form of kicking the balloon back up. Not the best plan, but it helps.

Now this game may sound kinda boring to you. Well, things pick up on the second screen where you stack the balloons on your head. Makes a lot harder challenge. Then, in one of the first video game crossovers, Pacman pops up and eats the balloons. Yes, he must be part goat as he seems to eat anything. This alone makes it pretty neat.

As far as controlling the game, my best recommendation is the mouse as it is easiest to control your clown. And you need something fast when the action heats up and it will. Another of the forgotten

little games that I believe only made an appearance on the Commodore 64 (please feel free to correct me).

## THE MANY FACES OF.....STAR TREK:SOS

This is a new feature where I will look at the many different versions of the same game and explore some of the differences between them. I would like to thank Doug Saxon for this suggestion. I will put them in order of best to worst. I also gave them the Olympic medals for what place they come in, just for fun. Once again, these are only my opinion and yours may vary. Feel free to dispute them with me.

Our first game to look at will be Star Trek:SOS (or Strategic Operations System). The three versions we will explore are the Atari 2600, Atari 5200 and Colecovision. So let the games begin!

### Atari 5200 (Gold Medal)

This is by far the best version of the game as far as playability and presentation (i.e.:graphics and sound). There is one minor thing that keeps it from being great and that is the joysticks. While the lack of centering isn't a major problem most of the time, it can be quite a pain in the stages where you have to weave through the asteroids. If you take that away, this would be a excellent version of a great arcade game.

### Atari 2600 (Silver Medal)

Probably the best playing of all the versions. The skill level is hard enough to be a challenge, yet easy enough to get into. The learning curve is set nicely and while the graphics and sound aren't on par with the later systems, they are fine and everything is easy to identify. Out of all the Star Trek games, this is the one I play the most.

### Colecovision (Bronze Medal)

This is the best looking and sounding version out there! It is a near perfect translation of the arcade game. But there is one major flaw, it is way too hard. Those Klingons will smoke you before you can say "Beam me up Scotty". Too bad as this would have been a killer game. If you really like a challenge, this is right up your alley.

## Question of the Month

It is that time for yet another question from the classic game era. Another chance for you to give your opinion. I always enjoy hearing them and please keep sending them. This month we return to a truly classic question. As most of you are aware, Atari was owned by Warner Communications, a major conglomerate. Warner also owns DC Comics, the home of Superman, Batman, etc... Well, one would think such a combination would have led to many games created using the DC Superhero properties, but that wasn't the case. The only one to be made was Superman and it was a dandy little game. So my question is what DC Comics property would have you liked to have seen turned into an Atari game? For those who are unfamiliar with the DC Comic Characters, here are some of the more popular ones: Batman, Aquaman, Flash, Green Lantern, Green Arrow, Supergirl, Wonder Woman, Justice League of America, Atom, Hawkman and a whole lot more. So tell me which one you would like to see and if you have the time and imagination, what type of game it would be. Keep in mind the limitations of the Atari systems (you could make it for any of the three systems: 2600, 5200, 7800) and make it a character who was around at the time (as opposed to one of their newer characters).

Well, my game would star Wonder Woman and it would feature two different screens (mainly due to the limitations of the 2600) that would keep getting harder and harder. The first stage would have her trying to get to the other side of the screen while blocking bullets with here bracelets. You would either push the joystick up, down or to the left to block the shots. After you block 10 bullets, you would move onto the next stage. On the second stage, you would be in the middle of the room and all around you would be bags of money. There would be two crooks on the first level and it would go up by one the next time through. You have to lasso the crooks before they grab all the money. Of course they would be moving around. Of course the levels would get harder with faster and more bullets and more crooks and less bags of money.

### A Deeper Look At...

## A Deeper Look At Centipede

The version I am going to take a deeper look at is the Atari 7800. This is probably the best version for a home system out there. You get near arcade graphics and sound (not that Centipede is that complex of a game). But what makes this game great is the multitude of choices you have. There is the basic 1 player, 2 player taking turns, 2 players at the same time cooperative and 2 player at the same time competitive. This adds tremendously to the replayability. of the game.

While Centipede is a great one player game, with that pesky spider and all the different bugs, it really shines as a two player game. I personally would have never thought of putting two players on the screen at one time and the programmers should be congratulated for putting a fresh new spin on a classic. Playing cooperatively with another player is fun and great for spouses who tend to hold grudges when you kill them. Not only does it give the scores for each player individually, so you still have the bragging rights, but it also has a combined score, which is used to get you a free guy. This gives you a goal to strive for and can add to the fun.

Once the spouse is gone and you have a friend over to play, you move to the two player competitive mode. This is where things get really ugly. Not only do you have to avoid the oncoming waves of bugs, but you also have your buddy waiting to blast you to Kingdome come. This makes things really hectic and quite fun. Great party game!

This is probably one of the best games for the Atari 7800 and thankfully one of the cheapest. A boxed one will set you back about $5.00, a deal in any language. One of the reasons to buy this great system.

## A Deeper Look At Stampede

The version I am going to take a deeper look at is for the Intellivision, but it could be any as Activision wasn't well known for changing the games from system to system. This is one of those fun little games you will come back and play from time to time.

Stampede is a basic game and yet it captures the essence of classic games, good gameplay and the desire to get a better score as the motivation for continually playing it. You are a cowboy on a horse and it is your job to lasso all the cows on the screen. Sounds easy enough right? Well, nothing is ever easy in classic games. There are some cows that run fast, others slow. And then there are the occasional pain in the keister bull that just sits there. You are riding along and then you must quickly move over to get this stubborn bovine. Totally hectic. Plus there is the cow skulls that randomly are placed on the field that you better not run over. If you do then your horse will rear up and some cows will get by.

Lassoing the cows is only half the battle. There will be too many to easily rope up and sometimes you have to herd them doggies. This is done by nudging them with your horse and they run faster. This will give you some much needed time to clear out some other cows before getting back to them. Trust me when I say it sounds easier than it is.

If you would have put up a score of 3000 points, you would have qualified for an Activision patch, but that was then. While the game is very basic, it is still quite an enjoyable game and trying to get a score of 3000 is no easy feat. You should be able to lasso a loose copy for about $3.00 with a boxed version going for about $6.00. A good and affordable game!

# WHY IS EVIL OTTO SMILING?

Everytime I play Bezerk, I cannot help but wonder why is Evil Otto smiling? Is it because he knows

he is invincible? Or is it the thrill of the hunt as he comes after me? You would think with a name like Evil Otto, he would have a menacing grin on his face. He would want to scare you with a stare of death or something. Not Otto, he just bounces along after you with that silly grin on his face. What is it he knows that we don't? Maybe he is insane and his name should be Stark Raving Mad Otto. Probably too long for people and so they just called him Evil Otto. Does have a certain ring to it.

I was happy in the sequel, Frenzy, where when you shot Evil Otto, it would wipe that smile off his face. I don't feel a level is complete without wiping that stupid grin off his face. Once I did that, then I am satisfied to move to the next level. Of course, you can kill him, but he keeps coming back. This guy is worse than leftover meatloaf.

So next time you come face to face with Evil Otto, try to imagine why he is smiling. Just don't dwell on it too long or you will give him a reason to smirk as he stomps you into the ground.

## MODERN GAME REVIEWS

This is the section where I review the newer games out there. Some are based on classic games and some just capture the essence of classic games. You know where they put playability above graphics. So here are two more reviews, with both games available for the Sony Playstation.

### Rampage World Tour

This is one of those games I didn't even know existed until I went to Niagara Falls for my birthday. I found it at an arcade there and enjoyed it immensely. When I heard the Playstation had a version out, it immediately went to the top of my want list. I did finally get it and was I happy with it? Was it like the arcade version? Yes! It looked like a nearly exact port of the arcade game. The graphics and sound are great and there is literally hundreds of cities to destroy. Plus, the two player mode that made the original famous is firmly intact.

For the readers who never played Rampage World Tour and only played the original, you will be happy to know that the basic gameplay is the same. You still smash building, eat people and cause all kinds of havoc. But they added a bunch of new features. For starters, there are many more cities than before and there is a good chance the major metropolis you live near will be in the game. There are also many foreign cities, so the mayhem isn't limited to just the states. Plus, this time the screen scrolls, so you aren't just stuck on one screen, but several screens that make up the city. The cities also look somewhat different with more different types of buildings to destroy. Adds to fun. My one complaint is I would liked to have seen more different buildings that are relevant to the cities you are in. For instance, I was in Venice and nowhere was there any canals. Quite a bummer.

The animation is excellent with many objects moving around the screen. Lots of different people to eat and plenty of vehicles to destroy. Some real odd stuff pops up like a Space Shuttle for your destruction pleasure. You can also kick in buildings now and your monster can transform into a super beastie. Plus, there is cut scenes that add to the game (though they tend to get repetitious after awhile).

Overall, a very fun game and one that I whole heartily recommend for Playstation owners. A good one player game and a great two player game.

### Tail of the Sun

While this isn't based on a classic game, it has that classic game feel to it. There is that simplistic controls and it puts the gameplay ahead of the graphics. Nice to see in an age where you need every button on the already loaded joystick to play some of these games (especially fighting games).

The basic gameplay has you controlling a caveman (or cavewoman as you get to choose as your tribe grows) and wandering around the very expansive world. There is no set path to take and you are free to wander wherever your heart desires. The only goal of the game is to build up your tribe and to build a tower of mammoth tusks to the tail of the sun. Not the most ecologically friendly game, but times were tough back then and it was eat or be eaten. The world is truly huge and there is tons of places to explore. All the different temperature zones seem to be covered from deserts to the arctic and everything in-between. About the only thing missing is jungles.

The graphics are nothing to write home about. But there are good enough to keep you interested and you know what everything is. Trees look like trees and a mammoth is a big hairy elephant. There are dozens of different kinds of animals roaming around, some by themselves, others in mini herds. Some of the creatures I have seen include; mammoths, saber tooth tigers, apes, deer, bears, boars, buffaloes and many other creatures. All look like they would have back in the stone age, with the deer having an immense rack. Some animals will run when you attack them and others will turn around and whup on you. When you kill a creature, you are given the option of either taking the food back to the village or eating it yourself. As you may guess, you have to keep yourself nourished and animals aren't the only source of the vitamins and minerals a growing Neanderthal needs. There is also all kinds of plants laying around for you to munch on. Each one will help out a different part of the body.

While hunting animals and gathering food may sound kinda boring to you, there is also all kinds of hidden things for you to find. You can explore caves, cross the oceans and go to different islands. Plus there are different things to find like a Stonehenge, dinosaur tracks, alien bones and other oddities. Just when you think you have found everything, you stumble across a new animal or something else and the excitement begins anew.

I cannot recommend this game enough. If you are like me and the thought of exploring a vast and new land is your cup of tea, then this is the game for you. But if you are only into fast paced games and need lots of action, then pass on this game. It is only for the patient player.

## YOU KNOW YOU'RE A CLASSIC GAMING FANATIC TEST

After reading an issue of Next Generation in which they had a test to see if you are a hardcore gamer, I decided to do one based on classic video games. This was mainly because I took the test and only scored a gamer (the middle of the road score). This was mainly due to the fact that I am not into fighting games and lost alot of points there. I also have never played Resident Evil or Tomb Raider and again lost points. But I consider myself a die hard gamer and plan on proving it with the classic game test. I cannot help it if I would rather play another game of Galaga instead of Mortal Combat. So if you feel like me, take the test and see how you score. I tried to incorporate a combination of gaming skills, collecting, and gaming knowledge for an all around gamer. It is only for fun, so don't get upset if you score low, just play some more classic games and try again.

(You get two points for each question you answer yes to. There are 122 possible points plus bonus points, for a grand total of 130 points).
(A "*" means that the answer is at the end of the test. I just put the answers to the straightforward answers).

### YOU KNOW YOU'RE A CLASSIC GAMING FANATIC IF....

1. You have owned at least four of the five game systems from Atari.
2. You know which game system came before Atari 2600.
3. You know who George Plimpton is. (Bonus 1 point if you can remember at last two of his commercials.)
4. You ever just shot one enemy and then died on Galaga to get a 100% accuracy rating.
5. You ever knew the patterns in Pacman. (Bonus 1 point if you were ever yelled at by a arcade owner for spending too much time playing Pacman on one quarter.)
6. You ever argued which game is better, Mr. Do or Dig Dug.
7. You feel that Intellivision baseball is still one of the best baseball games ever.
8. You ever paid alot of money for a game you know sucks, because it is rare.
9. You own more than 100 different games.
10. You were given the choice between one issue of a old video game magazine and a year's subscription to a new gaming magazine, and you chose the old video game magazine.
11. You are on a first name basis with thrift store employees.
12. You feel that MAME is as important as your operating system.
13. You can name all the Mr. Do games.*
14. You were blown away the first time you saw Dragon's Lair.
15. You ever thought you had a chance to win the top prize in Swordquest.
16. You own the same game on multiple systems.
17. You have had your name and score put on an arcade machine.
18. You have taken more photos of your classic games, than you have of your family.
19. You can name at least three classic game programmers.
20. You even thought there is a possibility of sending in your high score to Activision and still getting a game patch.
21. The best memories of your childhood involve video games.
22. There was a fire at your house and you would risk the flames to save your video games.
23. You have played all the variations of Space Invaders on the 2600.
24. You can name all the ghosts in Pacman.
25. You have the button configuration of the arcade game Defender memorized.
25. You look for video games in movies you watch.
26. You ever traded a new game for classic games.
27. You would rather pay to play Ms Pacman than play Virtua Fighter for free.
28. You ever used the phrase "games were better then".
29. You know at least part of the "Pacman Fever"song. (bonus point if you own the record).
30. You would use a time machine to go back in time and get "Chase the Chuckwagon".
31. You ever played a game from Panda more than once.
32. The term "actiplaqued" is part of your vocabulary.
33. You ever yelled back at Berzerk or Gorf.
34. You ever sat down and thought about why a frog dies when he falls into the water (If you didn't guess it was Frogger, deduct one point).
35. You think cloning is alright because you can finally have someone to play classic games with.

36. You keep a log of your highscores on different games (bonus 1 point if you have them prominently displayed on your TV).
37. You have went through more Atari joysticks than shoes.
38. You know of at least two classic game Easter eggs, besides the Adventure one.
39. You can get all the way through Dragon's Lair without dying.
40. Despite owning a 2600 or 7800, you still own at least two of the Atari 2600 converters.
41. Despite owning the original games, you still bought the Activision Atari game compilations for the computer.
42. You know what the first handheld game system was.*
43. You can name at least three third party joysticks for the Atari 2600.
44. You can name at least eight Imagic games.
45. You were able to finish Pitfall II.
46. You ever compiled a score that would qualify you for a Activision Patch (bonus one point if you were ever sent one for your score).
47. You ever spent more than $25.00 for an add-on (AKA:trackball, steering wheel, etc...) just to play one game the way it was intended.
48. You spent alot of time and/or money to get a rule book for a game that you don't need any instructions to play.
49. You conquered the first two Swordquest games (bonus 1 point if you conquered the third game).
50. You can name all three different beverages the bartender served in each of the different versions of Tapper.*
51. You ever looked at an ostrich and thought of Joust.
52. You ever made it all the way to Earth on Gyruss.
53. You can name all the rankings in Gorf (bonus one point if you made it through all of them).
54. You can name the games these were sequels to: Millipede, Diner, Galaga, Stargate, Discs of Tron and Do Run Run (minus a half a point for each wrong answer).*Right answers at bottom.
55. You can name at least five classic games (home or arcade, but each game only counts once) that feature a gorilla in the game.
56. You can name five games from each of these systems, without any help (note:add one point for each system you get correct with a grand total of four points) Emerson Arcadia, Fairchild Channel F, Microvision. and Vectrex.
57. You can name the first home gaming system (bonus one point if you know the year it came out).
58. You purposely only took one quarter to the arcade.
59. You can name at least 10 unreleased games for the classic systems.
60. If you know what the following abbreviations stand for: UC, C, U, R, ER, VR, NR*

## How You Scored

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**130 points**- You are obviously obsessed with video games and should either own a company or seek professional help.
**110-129 points**-A true video game fanatic and someone who probably blew their college funds at the arcades.
**90-109 points**-Hard core classic gamer and someone who probably beats you to the the thrift stores or flea markets everytime.
**70-89 points**-Has multiple systems and probably has more carts than articles of clothing.
**40-69 points**-Your typical retro gamer. Is into the classic games, but not overly obsessed with them. You wouldn't spend a fortune for a classic game.
**20-39 points**-Part time gamer who may have been a fanatic in their youth.
**10-19 points**-You like the games, but cannot see what all the fuss in collecting them is.
**00-09 points**-You obviously just like taking tests and could care less for classic games.
**Negative points**-Have you even heard of Atari?

## Answers

#13-Mr. Do, Mr. Do's Castle, Do Run Run and Mr. Do's Wild Ride
#42-Microvision.
#50-Budweiser Beer, Root Beer and Mountain Dew on the 2600 version.
#54-Centipede, Burgertime., Galaxian, Defender, Tron and Mr. Do.
#57-Odyssey, 1972.
#60-UC=Unbelievably Common
C=Common
U=Uncommon
R=Rare
ER=Extremely Rare
VR=Very Rare
NR=Never Released
(minus 5 points if you thought these were different ways to order a steak)
By the way if anyone cares, I scored an 82.

# Finale

Well, that wraps up another edition of Retro Times. Hope you enjoyed the issue and enjoy taking the test. Be here in another month for another edition of Retro Times. As always, we are looking for any article suggestions and/or submissions.

Tom Zjaba

(All pictures provided by the Digital Press CD. To get your own copy, go to http://digitpress.com and order one).