Retrogaming Times

Issue #54 - February 20th, 2002

Want to find out when a new issue comes out? Check out these sites that post when a new issue of Retrogaming Times is released:

http://www.arcadeathome.com/
http://www.vg-network.com/
http://www.classicgaming.com/
http://www.emuhq.com/
http://www.mameworld.net
http://www.zophar.net/
http://www.retrogames.com
http://firebutton.org/
http://www.smsforce.com/
http://www.badvideogames.com/
http://www.kinox.org

If your site posts about Retrogaming Times on a monthly basis and is interested in joining the list of sites that help support this newsletter, email a link to your site and we will add you to the list! Thanks for all the support!

Table of Contents

01.	The First Replacement
02.	Commercial Vault by Adam King
03.	The TI 99 Interviews - David Ormand by Jim Krych
04.	The Games of Winter by David Mrozek
05.	The Many Faces of.....Beamrider by Alan Hewston
06.	Past Glories by Fred Wagaman
07.	Sites of the Month
08.	Another Classic Gaming Show!
09.	Speaking of Classic Game Shows
10.	Letters to the Editor
11.	Handhelds Worth Playing
12.	Video Game Lingo
13.	Conclusion

The First Replacement

Every gamer goes through a time in their gameplaying when an older system gets replaced. Much like how cars and girls (or guys for the female readers) replace the toys of youth, so does a new game system replace an older one. Do you remember the first time this happened to you? What was that first system that was like a trusted friend, only to be pushed aside by a newer, more sleeker system?

For me it was the Odyssey 2, a system that was my first interchangeable cart system (my first actual system was a pong unit, but I am just talking about cart systems). I spent countless hours playing such games as Quest for the Rings, Pick Axe Pete and KC Munchkin. Games like Great Wall Street, Monkeyshines and even Football were my companions through scorching summers and freezing winters. But that all changed the day the rival came.

As much as I enjoyed my Odyssey 2, it could not compete with the Colecovision. The new kid on the block offered something the Odyssey could never, arcade hits! While the Odyssey 2 sported a whole one arcade game, Turtles, the Colecovision had a whole slew of them! When my system came home, it came with two arcade hits, right off the bat. Donkey Kong the pack in game and my first game purchase, Zaxxon, were enough to send the Odyssey 2 to a second place status. After a few months, other games joined my collection. Games like Mousetrap, Super Action Baseball and Venture quickly made me forget about my old friend, the Odyssey 2.

Thinking back now, I felt sorta bad about the Odyssey 2. Sure it was just a machine and did not have feelings, but I still felt that I treated it badly. It could not help that the arcade games were not made for it. It was not its fault that Magnavox did not support it very well and it was squashed by the Atari 2600 (which was the system I asked for, but received the O2 instead). Maybe I should have played it a little more often, maybe I should have told it that I still cared. But I was cold and callous. I packed it up and put it aside.

Well, I am here today to say I am sorry, Odyssey 2. You were a good companion and provided lots of entertainment. I just wanted to say that while you may have been pushed aside for a newer system, you were still my first and will always hold that distinction. Please forgive me, please.

COMMERCIAL VAULT

by Adam King

Before I begin today, I want to bring up something. Back in December when I reviewed the ET commercial I asked how could Howard Scott Warshaw make the awesome Yar's Revenge and do the poor ET game. I received a couple of e-mails about that subject. Both Jonathan DeVowe and Jose Olivera Jr. explains that Atari wanted the game out by Christmas and gave Warshaw only five weeks to complete it, which isn't much time to do anything good. I guess he's not to blame for the debacle. Anyway, thanks guys for clearing that up. Now on to today's feature.

February is usually associated with Valentine's Day. But this year is different. This year February is about the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City (which is only 30 minutes from where I live.) So this month I searched for an Olympic sport commercial and found one. This month's ad is for Activision's Ice Hockey for the Atari 2600, which is noteworthy for featuring the late great actor, Phil Hartman.

In this ad, an everyday man played by Phil Hartman walks into a videostore and asks a clerk about the Ice Hockey game. The clerk gets Hartman all fired up by describing the exciting action in the game, which does contain a fair amount of violence.

CUSTOMER: "Do you have Ice Hockey by Activision?"
CLERK: "Think you're ready for it? One of the roughest video games around for your Atari Game System? Ready to battle for the puck?"
CUSTOMER: "Well.."
CLERK: "To inflict fast body checking?"
CUSTOMER: "Yeah!"
CLERK: "Furious stick checking?"
CUSTOMER: "YEAH!"
CLERK: "Ruthless tripping?!"
CUSTOMER: "I'M READY!"
CLERK: "You really think you're ready for all that?"
CUSTOMER: "I'M READY! I'M READY!!"
CLERK: "Fine. Cash or Charge?"

PICTURES:

"Excuse me, I would like the roughest toughest game you got."

"I dare you to try this baby."

This guy's gettin' ready for a brusin'

"GIVE ME THAT GAME! Please."

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 >:#).

The TI 99/4A
Interviews – David Ormand

by Jim Krych

Hi! Thanks for all the kind letters and words of encouragement out there, TI folks and others as well! In keeping with my series of articles on interviews, we interview a professional TMS 9900 programmer, and a very good friend and a great Brother too, David Ormand!

Hi David! Please tell us a little about your self and your computer background! And, your TI hardware setup? For those who may not know, David is a professional 9900 programmer-the CPU of
the TI 99/4A and 99/4. The Geneve uses a compatible CPU-the TMS 9995.

I have been a TIer for many years, having gotten the console kit less than a year before TI dropped the Home Computer. On the week after TI's announcement, the stores were dumping their stock
of TI equipment, so I got my mom to run down and we got a P-Box, 32K, RS232, and TI Disk Controller at a fire-sale price of a few hundred dollars. Moving up from the console/cassette recorder to a single-side, single-density floppy drive was like discovering a new world!

Not too long thereafter, I convinced my parents to spring for Extended BASIC, TI-Writer, and a Brothers electric typewriter that had an interface for a computer. My mother's days of staying up
with me till after midnight typing term papers were over!

About the same time my Dad and I discovered the Southwest 99ers User Group, which was a thriving club of thirty to fifty people. I got a 300-baud modem and started logging into the club BBS,
the Cactus Patch. I discovered shareware. I joined in with some club group-purchases of computer supplies, and participated in some group hardware projects, the classic "mounting two half-heights"
and the "IBM power supply retrofit". Through the group, I purchased a copy of Editor/Assembler, and started learning the guts of the TI-99/4A and how to get it to do stuff that BASIC just isn't able to do.

After graduating from University of Arizona, my Dad insisted I quit sitting around the house and get a job. I signed on with Hughes Aircraft Company, and after five years as a manufacturing and test
engineer, the economy had some hard times. I was on the layoff list, but just as I was due to go out the door, a friend I knew from church suggested I give a resume to a department which was looking for software-capable engineers. I cluelessly and fearlessly added my hobby experience on the TI-99/4A. God was obviously behind all this, because it turns out the group who reviewed my resume was working on TOW missile guidance set software, written in 9900 assembly, and my hobby with 9900 assembly language got me a job with a great work group and saved me from the unemployment line!

Since then, I've stayed with the 99/4A, and expanded it. I currently have in my house a 99/4A rig with a CorComp double-side double-density controller running a 5.25" drive, a SCSI card running a 250MB internal drive and a 100MB ZIP, a 1MB Horizon RAMdisk, and a 512K AEMS memory expansion. This system is intended to pull off the former Southwest 99ers shareware library, archive it on ZIP disk(s), and transfer it via shell scripts and Magic File Manipulator to my Linux box, to be burned onto a CDROM. Since this job seems to be a bit of a while off (too many projects, you know), my kids use it for games and educational cartridges. Most of my work is done on my Geneve, which also has a SCSI card running a 250MB internal drive, a CorComp DSDD card running two 5.25" drives, and a 3MB SNUG RAMdisk. I use it for my family budget (via MS Multiplan), quick printout jobs using Myarc Writer, games (sorry, nothing much more exciting than solitaire), and developing software in c99 and assembly. In my "lab", along with some other loose consoles and P-Box cards, I have a 99/4A with a CorComp DSDD card running a 5.25" and 3.5" drives and a 256K Horizon RAMdisk, which I use for transferring files to 3.5" floppies, testing cards and drives, and eventually for networking with some 486es I've got out there, as work on Ethernet and better RS232 devices for the 99/4A progresses.

Yes, I do have a Linux peecee, maybe to be supplemented with a PowerMac Linux box sometime, an Atari Falcon inside the house, and an Atari STfm for playing around with MIDI in my "lab". However, outside of an intent to keep up with the "real" computing world via my Linux box, I have made a die-hard decision to stick with the TI until the lights go out.

What exactly do you do for your company regarding the 9989? I mean what can be told!!!

The TOW (Tube-launched, Optically-tracked, Wire-guided) heavy anti-tank missile has been in Army service since Vietnam. About twenty years ago, the Army decided to upgrade their analog-circuitry Missile Guidance Set with a digital computer. Hughes Aircraft contracted Texas Instruments to design and build the MGS, and as our beloved company was wont to do, they used their own 9900 technology as the basis. There are two SBP9989 (radiation-hardened current injection logic) microprocessors in an MGS, each with identical memory cards with 48K of EPROM and 12K of static RAM. One processor executes the optical tracker ("daysight") at 20Hz, the guidance equations at 100Hz, and outputs the wire command signals via D/A converters. The other processor

controls the first-generation infrared imaging tracker ("nightsight"), does image-searching algorithms, and passes a position solution to the guidance processor via communications registers in CRU space. The software for both processors is written in 9989 assembly language, which we assemble and link using Texas Instruments development tools running under VAX VMS. The basic Digital MGS system is used on TOW launchers on ground tripods, HMMWVs, Bradley Fighting Vehicles, a few Marine vehicles, Cobra helicopters, and several foreign fighting platforms, particularly in NATO countries.

Our group did the software for TOW 2B (fly-over, shoot-down), the Block II maintenance upgrade, and several in-house mods to support enhancements and demonstrations for new missile types and new platforms.

When you first found out about it, what were you able to do with the 9900 clone, the SMJ68689? Any problems, solutions, etc?

Texas Instruments introduced the 68689 as a much faster upgrade to the military users of the 9989. I think it was too little, too late, since almost all development work any more is done in high-level languages like Ada, which is just too big for little processors like the 9989. As a result, the Army decided to do a "life-time" buy, and purchased all remaining stock of 9989 processors as a strategic reserve. So not only are we not likely to ever use a 68689, but we will see 9989s used in all legacy MGS derivatives ever to be produced in the future. Actually, newer TOW launchers use processors that can handle Ada, like the PowerPC and the Sparc.

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

I have historically been a "I don't want it if I can't build it" type of guy. I didn't want a calculator until I could build it myself - I almost succeeded with this, although the Poly-Paks calculator kit was a chip, a keyboard, and an LED display, so there really wasn't much to building it! I had the same idea with computers, and was drawing circuit board layouts and writing base code for the 6502 processor I had learned about in second-year digital logic at UA, when the wars between Atari, Commodore, and TI really heated up. I decided to postpone my do-it-yourself project and get a finished machine at the cheap $300 price. My Dad and I surfed the stores - Penneys, Sears, and K-Mart - collecting literature, until I sold my Dad on the future of the 16-bit 99/4A (and color graphics, too!). It still seems amazing to me that our orphan computers were sold as consumer goods off the shelves of retail stores.

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

I wrote a TI BASIC program that formatted a few characters into strategic block patterns and used them to graph math equations. I was pretty proud of it, although I'm sure my favorable recollection of it is colored by time. I saved it on cassette tape, wish I could find it again...

How long were you involved with the SW99ers?

Not sure, 15 years perhaps. I got to be secretary a few times, and vice president once or twice. The most fun we had was putting on Fest West in Tucson a few times and Phoenix once, in cooperation with VAST (Valley of the Sun TI UG). We met the TI personalities, saw the latest technology in action, and loaded up on software and other goodies ordinarily available only via catalogues and mail-order. We always tried to put on demonstrations at our meetings, and support our members right up to the end. Lots of friends and good experiences.

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

Fest West was good for this sort of thing. I saw the faces behind Comprodine and Notung, met Bud Mills and Gary Bowser and Don O'Neil, and more luminaries in the TI world than I can remember. I think I was most taken with Don O'Neil, because I am attracted to

hardware toys, and he was good at dreaming them up. I got his keyboard adapter, more for the possibility of messing with the TI's "operating system" in Console ROM than for the dubious privilege of using a peecee keyboard. Broken, now; I'm sticking with P-Box cards. Unless the latest thing I hear of materializes - using Flash EEPROMs to replace the Console ROMs!

What did you think of the AMS/SuperAMS cards, and please describe your work on them;programs, etc. (David was one of the initial investors and supports) Any funny stories?

There have been several memory expansion schemes for the TI, including RAMBO, SuperCart, and one brilliant-but-opinionated demonstrator at a Fest West who was running his own system out of Horizon RAMdisk memory. Of all these, I think the Asgard Memory System had the best shot at being THE definitive common expansion memory architecture for the TI-99/4A. For whatever reason, it didn't catch on, and by the time Asgard folded, turned the engineering into the Public Domain, Jim Krych got the SW99ers to help, and we actually were producing AEMS cards in quantities, the TI community was contracting to the point where there were not enough developers to take advantage of the new resources, or enough users to encourage developers to do so. All the same, it was a real privilege to be part of the AEMS story, even though the SW99ers did little more than provide funding, assembly, and sales service to the project. Jim Krych did all the serious leg work.

Most of the fun came when we got the boards and the parts, and had group parties to assemble and test the boards. There were maybe eight of us involved in this phase, and we built 100 cards at Jack and BJ Mathis' home. Unfortunately, to save money, we decided to use a very small card format, which lacks the keying of other P-Box cards that ensures they can only be inserted correctly, so there were a few instances of AEMS customers plugging their cards in backwards. One of our own, Shawn Baron, plugged his in backwards, and blew out every card in his P-Box. Another customer sent his back in for warranty repairs, but one look at the scorch marks assured us of what happened, and the futility of repair (we sent a replacement, and instructions to be careful to install it correctly).

You also wrote an emulator for the TI-an 1802, please explain further.

I imagine many of your readers are familiar with, or even members of, the Amateur Radio Relay League, and may know that the ARRL has put up satellites for radio hams to bounce signals off of, or communicate with other hams at great distances using satellite links. Turns out several of the big wheels of the satellite project live in Tucson, and a fellow Hughes employee who was linked to them knew about my passion for non-mainstream computers and processors. The stabilization system of the AMSAT is controlled by a radiation-hardened CDP1802 microprocessor - there are other processors in the satellite to control the communications and other systems of the satellite; if these get zapped, they can be reset via remote command with no great harm done, but the stabilization/orientation system is critical! Well, the 1802 is one of my favorite "orphan" processors, and I was glad to help the AMSAT software developers by creating an emulation of the 1802 and its I/O on the AMSAT. Of course, being the sort of die-hard I am, I decided to write it in K&R-style c99 on the TI-99/4A, and port it to the peecee afterwards. Part of my reasoning was, a few years before,
I got a friend to write an 1802 cross-assembler for the TI to support a project of mine, so I already had the tool on the TI to feed test code to the emulator on the TI. Got it working just fine on the TI, and had written it so the port to the peecee was a piece-o-cake.

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

First off, the TI beats the pants off any other home computer of that era. [Ooh, ooh, flame war!!]

Second, the 9900 processor family is just too unique and too much fun. Memory-to-memory architecture, beautiful and largely orthogonal instruction set, quick-n-easy CRU

input/output. I deeply regret the modern trend that the CPU is buried so deeply into the machine that it really isn't practical or even feasible to write assembly code. I also regret the fact that Intel has won the processor war on the desktop - the 68K family also has a beautiful instruction set, which I have used both on Atari's and industrial computers at Hughes/Raytheon, and the PowerPC RISC machine has an interesting instruction set, too. The trend is to use higher-level languages, from which all processors look and act pretty much the same.

Third, the TI has so much I/O to play with. The cartridge port is a great place to hack from. Best of all, it has a real card cage for expansion cards! I have built several protoboards (just digital I/O), some with RAM for writing device service routines. Fun, FUn, FUN!!

Fourth, a really fun community of people has grown up around the TI. Many are gone, and not a few have left this life, but the die-hards remain, some via the OLUG on Yahoo groups, others via comp.sys.ti, and many more I know remain, isolated yet defiant, unconnected to the Internet or any surface mail contact. The fact that new people are continually appearing on the OLUG is evidence to me that the TI has real staying power, both from the attraction of its hardware, the capability of even the early software, and the assistance and enthusiasm of its gurus and die-hard practitioners.

On the flip side, any bad experiences?

Well, not personally, but like any other small community, we have our shares of big egos and bombastic personalities. Many people have been badly burned by the reaction of some loud voices in the TI community, and many have left because of it. Maybe I have been more fortunate than most, or maybe I just take it for what it is - hot air - but it isn't real healthy.

At the same time, it's much better than what I have personally experienced in the Tucson Linux community, and what is reported, both by TIers and Atarians, as what goes on in the Amiga and Macintosh communities.

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

First, like I say, it's just so darn fun! Yes, I know the newer machines are more capable: better graphics, faster communication, way, WAY more memory, speed, and data storage. But there's something incomparable to seeing your little 1970s machine process its beautiful assembly code (or BASIC, or even c99 or FORTRAN-99!) that YOU wrote and do what you want it to do!

Second, after it's all said and done, it does most of what I want. Yeah, I've got a Linux box with Abiword for letter-quality word processing, and obviously it's going to do Internet communication that my TI will never be able to do. But the TI has a good text-only word processor, very good for fast jobs, and I know the convenient tricks to TI-Writer. Multiplan is perfectly adequate for home budget use. Games and educational programs on the TI are frequently better than anything on peecees or Macs, despite the comparatively primitive graphics. And again, there is a real kick to using a 20-year-old computer for common home computing tasks. Kind of like seeing a Model-T Ford chittering down Broadway, with modern Escorts and F-150s whipping past; it's GREAT to see from the outside, and you KNOW the people inside are having an absolute BLAST!

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

When I do my development work, I use My-Word on the Geneve, BA-Writer on the 99/4A, c99v4 for C-language and the standard TI Assembler for assembly code, and the RAG linker and libraries. Someday I will get out TIC (the allegedly ANSI-compatible C compiler for the Geneve), but c99 does everything I need.

On the Geneve, I work almost exclusively in GPL mode (TI-99/4A configured) except for

dropping back to MDOS 6.0 to move files between the SCSI hard drive and the RAMdisks. When I am in TI mode, or on a 4A, I use the DM1000 disk manager for file operations and the Birdwell Disk Utilities for sector hacking. At some point, I want to get and try the new German utilities for file operations on both standard floppies and SCSI drives for the 4A.

I'm not much of a games player, outside of a quick go at standard solitaire on the Geneve now and then (have to be very light on the keys), but my favorites continue to be Parsec (of course) and the Ray Kazmer Woodstock valentine Grog game. I am also enjoying old things like A-Mazing and Alpiner with my girls playing, not to mention helping with Meteor Multiplication and various Forsman and Millikan titles. Soon, I want to have exposed them to the joy of TI BASIC, and see what the next generation of TIers will do with it!

Any parting words for Retrogaming Times?

These are interesting years for computing and video gaming. Yes, the new platforms have taken over the mainstream, and in most cases, considering the demands of the new media, rightly so. At the same time, there is renewed interest in the old platforms, not merely by old-timers looking for nostalgia, but also newcomers discovering the old fun orphans for the first time. So keep up the work of putting the old fun stuff before fresh new eyes!

Thanks very much David! I’ve known David since 1993-1994, so we go back a few! Well, we got an “8” from Maximum PC for the Devastator! WOW!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

I am very curious as to what it looks like after I get it back, check out the article to understand-February 2002 issue. PC Gamer is next and I am told that will be in the April 2002 issue! It helps when they are right down the hall from each other! I feel like a small-town kid who just heard his song on a big-city radio station! And, we already have another reviewer in the wings too!

“Hi, my name is Jim W. Krych. I am a 32 year-old electronics technician. My products that I currently work on are the SMU models 236,237, and 238. I am also a 13+ year veteran of both the USCG, active, and the Ohio Army National Guard, reserve with B Co. 112th engineers. I can be reached at: jwkrych@adelphia.net or jwkrych@n2net.net I have a two-year-old son, Treyton, and he is the CEO of Treyonics! I have founded my own business and, of course, I named the company after my son Treyton! Our product is the Treyonics Home Controller System Model 9908. Better known as the…

Devastator

“Serious Gaming”

The Games of Winter

By David Mrozek, The Video Game Critic

If you've been watching the Olympics over the last few weeks, you may have been tempted to go outside and attempt some of these winter activities on your own. Don't do it! You'll just end up with a cold and a broken leg. No, your best option is to pull out your classic consoles for some old-school snow and ice action! Here are a few of my winter game reviews:

Atari 2600

Skiing (Activision 1980) B+
This game is fast, smooth, and slick. Like any good skiing game, the straighter you go down the hill, the faster you ski, but with speed comes danger. There are two modes of play: slalom and downhill racing. The slalom requires your skier to pass through a series of gates while avoiding the evergreen trees that litter the course. The novice and intermediate levels are boring, but the action is fast and exciting in the advanced levels. You can even play randomly generated courses. The downhill mode has no flags - you just try to make it to the bottom of the hill as fast as you can. In addition to trees, you also need to watch out for little gray moguls. By pressing the fire button at the right time, you can jump over these. The graphics are plain but smooth. The sound effects try to capture the sound of whooshing snow, but they sound too metallic. The game has ten variations in all, providing more than enough skiing action.

1 player

Winter Games (Epyx 1987) A
When I showed this game to a friend, he gasped "THIS is the ATARI 2600??". Winter Games looks that good! The graphics are smooth and colorful, and the characters are detailed and well-animated. The game begins with a nice rendition of the Olympic theme. Up to eight players (!) can choose countries to represent. Each of the seven events requires special technique, and they all provide challenge without requiring you to abuse your controller. The action gets underway with a nice-looking but overly-difficult Slalom event. The second event, Bobsled, gives you an overhead view of a smoothly twisting track. The Ski Jump is another tough event that features a picture-in-picture close-up of your skier, whose body position you need maintain. The Biathlon looks like the Slalom, but you need to synchronize your joystick with a heartbeat in order to make good time. This event also features periodic "shooting range" screens that test your reflexes. Speed skating requires rhythmically moving the joystick, and is the only event that lets two people compete head-to-head. Hot Dog is a ski acrobatics event that lets you perform combinations of ten different tricks. The final event, the Luge, is similar to the Bobsled, but allows the player to control his speed by braking. At the end of the game, the top three players are listed, but there's little fanfare. Overall, Winter Games is fun, challenging, and a fine showcase of 2600 graphics. I've seen this game on many systems, but this may be the most impressive.

1 to 8 players

Ice Hockey (Activision 1981) A
This is quite possibly the best sports game ever produced for the Atari 2600. It's a two-on-two Hockey game that really captures the essence of the sport. The graphics are bright and colorful, with nicely animated, multi-colored players and a puck that's easy to follow. The gameplay is outstanding, with plenty of fast action and pinpoint control. When you have possession, the puck moves back and forth across your stick, and your timing determines the direction the puck comes off the stick. Playing the angles is really the key to this game. Although there are only two players on each side, passing is surprisingly effective. Player control changes automatically between your forward and goalie, and the switch always happens at the right moment. You can even get physical in this game. By hacking violently at your opponent, you can sometimes disable him for a few seconds! The computer is a worthy challenge, but nothing can top the two-player action. This game is a sports classic.

1 or 2 players

Odyssey 2

Alpine Skiing (Magnavox 1979) F
This pathetic excuse for a skiing game fails to convey ANY sense of speed or momentum at all. Worse yet, it's INCREDIBLY easy. You simply guide your skier around flags that look like more like trees. You can pull down on the joystick to go faster, but you'll always move at a constant rate, which isn't very fast. Even with two people playing at once, this is a painfully dull game. There are three different events, distinguished only by the spacing of the flags. Man, does this suck.

1 or 2 players

Intellivision

Skiing (Mattel 1980) B
Here's a game that really captures the spirit of skiing. It's fast and exciting as you careen down the slopes, trying to stay in control while maintaining your speed. There are two playing modes: Downhill and Slalom. The downhill course would be the slalom in any other skiing game, with plenty of gates and side-to-side action. It's challenging and fun. The snow makes that satisfying "whoosh" sound as you round the gates. You can even jump over the occasional rock - very cool. The evergreen trees look nice against the white snow, and there's a nice-looking finish line at the end of the course. As much as I liked the downhill, I couldn't stand the slalom. The gates are closely spaced and it's nearly impossible to make it through some of them without coming to a near halt! You practically have to ski sideways across the mountain. It's entirely too tedious and difficult. Stick to the downhill and you'll be alright.

1 or 2 players

Atari 7800

Winter Games (Atari/Epyx 1987) B+
Here's another fine Olympics game from Epyx. Unfortunately, there are only four events, which is surprising when you consider that the Atari 2600 version has seven. The opening ceremonies are the same as in Summer Games, except there's some snow on the ground. In general, the graphics do a fine job of conveying a wintry atmosphere, with plenty of beautiful, snow-covered scenery. The first event is the biathlon, which is a combination of cross-country skiing and shooting. The key is to move your skier's legs to the beat of your heart (shown in the lower corner of the screen). Both the skiing and shooting screens look great and are easy to control. Unfortunately, this event runs a bit too long. The next event is speed skating, which lets you go head-to-head with a friend. You have to move the joystick rhythmically to the skater's strides, which is a good system. The next event - the ski jump - is the best. As you take off and soar through the air, you need to correct the position of your body whenever you start to lose balance. You get points for distance and style. The final event is the bobsled. There isn't much to this one. You just need to steer your bobsled in the opposite direction of turns to keep from tipping over. Overall, this is good stuff. It's too bad there's no closing ceremonies.

1 to 8 players

NES

Blades of Steel Konami 1988 A
Blades of Steel is clearly the superior hockey game for the NES. Everything about this game is top notch. The player graphics are large and realistic looking. The rink and arena also look great. The sound effects consist of digitized grunts and referee calls. There's even a nice disco music intro, and that song sounds awfully familiar. Best of all, you can bludgeon your opponent in fights, which feature close-up views of the action! The control scheme is intuitive, and you can easily control your goalie in the midst of the mayhem. This is not only the best NES hockey game, but it's really one of the best hockey games ever made!!

1 or 2 players

Ice Hockey Nintendo 1988 B
Although not as good as Blades of Steel, Ice Hockey plays nearly the same. It's a kinder, gentler hockey game with small, cartoonish players and no fighting. You can customize your team to be a combination of fat, medium, or skinny players. Passing and shooting the puck is fairly easy, but sometimes it's hard to tell which guy you control, and switching players can also be confusing. At least there are some cool "special techniques" that let you fake shots, "flip" shots, and even strengthen your defense. Ice Hockey isn't the best, but it's still a winner.

1 or 2 players

For over 1400 more reviews, check out The Video Game Critic at www.videogamecritic.net.

The Many Faces of...Beamrider

By Alan Hewston

Beamrider reminds me of the movie TRON. Yes, there are a few classic Tron video games, but not enough to make the MFof reviews . . . but let's still put you on an electronic game grid and let you defend it. {BTW, makes sure to see the new 20th anniversary DVD version of TRON and catch all the behind the scenes interviews and extras – great stuff. Look for the one guy's TRON hat where it spells tron (lower case) even if flipped 180 degrees. And let's hear a cheer for a TRON sequel and in the words of the mother of one of the actors, Re-res RAM! Re-res RAM!

OK, for a change here's a non-arcade classic, so in case it is not as familiar to you as the

arcade games I've added more background information. Activision's Beamrider made it to more systems than any of their other classic games. In fact, it is tied for third on the list of non-arcade games ported to the most classic systems - behind Miner 2049er and Demon Attack. See also RT issue #13 for Doug's MFof Beamrider, but he didn't review two of our medal winners here today. This game was designed by David Rolfe first(?) for the Intellivision under contract of Cheshire Engineering, and the 3 manuals that I have say that all other versions were made by Action Graphics. There is a lot more gameplay and strategy packed into this game than first meets the eye. If you've only tried the somewhat limited 2600 version, then please consider giving the other versions a try.

The Beamrider story has you defending the 5 lanes of each of 99 sectors of your space station's Restrictor Shield (a defense grid). You remain on the bottom beam of the screen while the sector scrolls downwards at you. Most of the obstacles and enemies come from above you, on the horizon, and advance downward at you. You cannot move up/down, but just left and right on the 5 lanes and fire your laser lariat in an effort to clear each sector's 15 enemy saucers. There are many other obstacles in your way and contact with anything but a Yellow Rejuvenator will result in the loss of one of you three ships. Collect a bonus ship every time you catch a Yellow Rejuvenator. You have an unlimited supply of laser lariats but they are not effective against all of the enemies and obstacles, instead, you have 3, and only 3 torpedoes per each sector (regardless if you lose a ship). These torpedoes will eliminate the first obstacle they come in contact with, so use those topedoes wisely, as they can really save the day. After clearing the sector, earn bonus points if you can hit the Sector Sentinel with a torpedo. Your best defense is to continuously dodge most of the obstacles.

In sector one you only face the White Enemy Saucers and their missiles. Up to 3 Saucers can attack and move all about the screen, even kamikaze. Their missiles only go straight down. As you eliminate the saucers, the on-screen counter decrements by one and a new saucer will replace it. When the counter hits 0, the sector is clear for the Sector Sentinel's slow, one-time pass across the horizon. Although the sentinel does not attack, they are not defenseless as swarms of Green Blockers will join in, which can kill you or at least prevent you from hitting the Sentinel.

With a few exceptions, most of your foes will move to the bottom of the screen or edge of the screen and exit. Some will be invulnerable (I) to your lariat, and must be avoided, or if you must, obliterated with a torpedo. Starting in sector 2, and every other sector through 16 (12 on the 2600), a new foe is introduced as follows: 2) are Brown Space Debris (I) that comes straight down, 4) are Yellow Chirper Ships that move down and across the sector, but never at you, 6) are Green Blocker Ships (I) select the lane you are in at the time they arrive, and move into that lane and then straight down, 8) are Green Bounce Craft (I) that bounce across the bottom of the screen making one pass in each lane, 10) Blue Chargers that come straight down, and if left alone then slow to nearly a halt and take several seconds to clear off the bottom. They're a real hazard, so make sure your laser lariat finds them and sends 'em back to the horizon ASAP, 12) Orange Trackers (I) that can only change lanes once early on, and then come straight down, 14) Red Zig Bombs that must be hit, whereupon they turn green, or they can move L/R at the last second and crash your party, and finally, 16) Magnetic Mines (I) that come straight down, but then pull you towards them, so you must move away from them or be destroyed.

When points are scored (White Saucers, Chirper Ships, the Sector Sentinel), they are temporarily shown on the screen in place of your running total. Bonus points for the Sentinel are awarded for the number of spare ships you have remaining. All point values increase as you progress through sectors. Everything else is worth zero points, and is just in your way to block your way or destroy you.

Between each sector/players's turn, the game stops for you to see the player number, score, ships remaining, and the sector number. This break is almost as good as having a pause added to each version – certainly a nice feature. During this break back at your Space Station (not shown on the 2600), a player can elect to drop out of the game at this time. This is indeed a unique feature I've never seen elsewhere. Moving forward launches you into the next sector. Most versions do have a pause feature for use any time during

play - which leads to a blank screen - and pushing the pause button again or in some cases any movement of the controller resumes play. The choice in starting levels at sector 1, 5, and 10 is available for all but the INTY and 2600. This is a nice option to practice and see the enemies not seen at the beginning of the game.

Classic Home releases (all by Activision): Intellivision ('83 David Rolfe), Atari 2600 (Cheshire Engineering, David Rolfe & Larry Zwick), Commodore 64 ('84 Jamie Faye Fenton), Atari 8 bit (Action Graphics for Activision) Atari 5200 (Action Graphics), and Colecovision (Action Graphics)

Categories: Gameplay, Addictiveness, Graphics, Sound & Controls

Make it to sector 14 plus a score of 40K (60 K on 2600) would earn you an Activision patch "Beamriders".

Doesn't this artwork make you think of the world inside TRON?

Have Nots: Intellivision (36)

The Gameplay is very good (7) and has everything save a starting level option. The Graphics are Crisp (8) and the Sound is Effective (7) with nothing missing. The Controls are good enough (6) to play, but I cannot enjoy this game due to the controllers, the lack of real (ie large, easy to push) fire buttons, and needing 2 precise fire buttons. If this was programmed like the 2600 where L/R on the stick is L/R and Up gives you a torpedo and the fire button sends out lariats, (or even down for the lariats) then it would be so much easier to play. The CV and 5200 also cause me significant problems but they get saved - see later. So, has anyone ever make a real Intellivision joystick – at a reasonable price – let me know. The Addictiveness is Enjoyable (8), and although there is no pause "button", Greg Thompson told me about 6 months ago, that pressing the 1 and 9 or the 3 and 7 simultaneously will pause nearly all Inty games. This sounds a bit harder than a single pause button, but it does work fine. Unless you like or can work around the standard Inty controllers, then just save yourself the agony and pass this version over. Otherwise it's a fine version.

Have Nots: Atari 2600 (37)

Typical of the 2600, the Gameplay is good enough (6), but limited and the worst of the lot. This version is missing the final 2 enemies, only allows 1 player, and has no start level variations. OK, so the A difficulty will make it harder, but 'cmon, unless you master this game, or wanted to play a two player game with one handicapped (but you cannot) then what is value added here? The Graphics and Sound are both Effective (7). The Controls are perfect (10), where the torpedoes are fired most easily by pushing forward. The

Addictiveness is also pretty good (7), but a true pause button and having all the enemies would help.

Have Nots: Atari 5200 (38)
As usual, the identical sister code on the Atari 8-bit will score higher just because of the Controls. I may have been generous in scoring the Controls as Impressive (8), but this assumes use of a better joystick like the Wico. The 2 distinct fire buttons must be easy to use with no chance of wasting a torpedo by accident. The Addictiveness is very nice (8), but may have been higher if not for the extra time needed to master the Control. All other scores match the Atari 8-bit below.

Bronze Medal: Atari 8 bit (40)
Unfortunately, the Graphics appear a bit shabbier than the leaders, but are still Cool (7). The Gameplay is Enjoyable (8), with all that the others offer. The Controls are perfect (10), using the 2600 scheme. The Sounds is Effective (7) and nothing is missing per se, but the CV and C64 both sound a step better. The Addictiveness is Nice (8), but should have been better, but there are a few minor problems. Once selected, the number of players cannot be change, and I could not delete any players either. One time, the game went on the fritz and would not reset itself - the graphics were everywhere, the game was not playable. A reboot was necessary for these if you have the disk version, but it is also available, but somewhat rare on cart.

Silver Medal Colecovision (41)
Let me start with Controls, which are Superb (9), but not without a hitch. As always seems to be my problem with CV, I need to start from scratch to see which of the 5+ possible controllers works best for each cartridge. Instead of getting a 6 or 7, the Super Action Controller came through and does the job - a bit rugged for moving - but dead-on in firing. I would not doubt that long time CV players would score Controls a 10. The Gameplay is Enjoyable (8), and no elements are missing. The Sound is Impressive (8) and the Graphics are Crisp (8), both matching the C64. The Addictiveness is also Enjoyable (8), but would have been higher without a glitch which got me twice. Somehow the final Saucer can leave the screen and never, ever return. I played for several minutes losing my torpedoes and all to no avail. You get no points scored, other than maybe a Chirper Ship and the only way out is to lose a ship. So this makes me want to play the next better version below.

Gold Medal: Commodore 64 (43)
Winning all the ordinals (Olympics term), ie the best score in all 5 categories, it is easy to see why this version is the best. The Gameplay is all there and Impressive (8). The Graphics are Sharp (8) and the Sound is Crisp (8), not missing any beats. The Controls are Perfect (10) using the 2600 scheme and the Addictiveness is Outstanding (9). The pause button [Run/Stop] is not quite as good as using the [space bar] on the Atari, but certainly better than a button on the control pad. If you miss the pause button here, nothing happens. But on the other systems if you miss the small button, and hit another, you could kill the game completely. This version is available on disk, cassette (in Europe) and is common (but for some reason elusive to me) on cart.

Come back next month when I review the Many Faces of Zaxxon on the Atari 2600, Atari 5200, Atari 8-bit, Colecovision, Intellivision, Commodore 64, Apple II and CoCo.

(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 I've recently updated my trades lists as well at http://members.core.com/~hewston/Hewston_vg.html)

Past Glories

By Fred Wagaman

I was discussing video games with a friend of mine the other day when he said, "You know, I think for the kind of video games that we like, our best days are behind us."

This got me thinking. Is this true ?

Or, more precisely, is it true for me ?

I haven't bought an X-Box. I don't have a Game Cube. The Playstation 2 hasn't found its way into my home yet.

Why is that ?

I was the guy that pre-bought my Playstation (paid for it with used Genesis games I might add). I spent a small fortune on a Sega Saturn the day of its surprise launch. I stood in line at midnight the night the Dreamcast hit the streets. I have more systems than the average person even knows exist.

Are there no good games ?

Hey, there are some good games on the newest systems. At least that's what I've heard. Metal Gear 2, DOA 2, Super Smash Brothers Melee.

Wait a second. Aren't they all sequels.

Is that the problem ? Is there nothing new ?

I've said this before, with all of the power in the new systems, how comes we're not getting new games. How come we're just getting the same games with prettier pictures and grass that blows in the wind ?

But I don't think that's the problem.

Maybe I'm getting old.

I celebrate the first anniversary of my 39th birthday this year. Maybe I'm no longer the target audience for the current crop of games ? I'd guess that most of the Teen and Mature games are targeted towards the 18-25 year old gamer, so that could be it.

Or maybe like your grandfather who sat around listening to his 78 rpm records (go ask an old person) of the Benny Goodman while Led Zepplin was new, maybe I just prefer the older games. Maybe they remind me of a simpler time, when dots were to be eaten and it was me against a million enemies with truly no way to win.

Maybe the old games reinforce my feelings of mortality. No matter how good you were in the old days, you were going to die. There was no ending. You never beat the game. The only thing you could do was measure yourself against other's high scores or against your own level. And we liked it. (It was also uphill to school both ways and we walked 3 miles in the snow in our bare feet.)

Nah.

I think it is a combination of things, including the ones I mentioned earlier, combined with a lack of time and a more frugal measurement of money vs. reward.

I've mentioned the lack of time in other things I've written. Between work, kids, fun, house and other commitments, I just don't have time to invest 4 hours a night for 2 weeks to play a game.

Then there is the money thing. New machines are $200-$300. Not really a show-stopper when it comes to funds, but a good chunk of change nonetheless. Games are $50, controllers $30. And for what ? Sequels to games I already have ? Games, that to me, I'll never get through. Then there is the 20 minutes even to get going in the game with all of the back story and cut scenes. I want to play. Right now.

So, until something comes along to change my mind, I'll have to agree with my friend. For me, the best games are behind me.

(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 picked up the newest US released portable, the GameBoy Advance. He liked it better the first time it came out. When it was called the Neo Geo Pocket. Fred can be reached at fcw3@mail.ptd.net)

Sites of the Month

Time to shine on a few more deserving sites. We look high and low across the vast web to find interesting sites for you. Enjoy!

Tunnels of Doom Tribute Page
Possibly my favorite TI 99/4A game, Tunnels of Doom was my first taste of a Dungeons and Dragons inspired game that did a valiant job of capturing the feel of the board game. With the ability to use different weapons, lots of monsters and other additions, it sapped away much of my youth. Well, here is a page for anyone else who enjoyed this classic:

http://java.sun.com/people/edburns/classic-gaming/tunnels/

The Log Book "Phosphor Dot Fossils"
Want a ton of information on classic games? Then check this site out! Reviews, snapshots and a sleek looking site. I found myself killing a few hours here. I think you will too!

http://www.thelogbook.com/phosphor/

Another Classic Video Game Show!

2/16/02 - The GOAT Store, LLC announces the Midwest Classic

MILWAUKEE, WI -- This summer, Milwaukee will host the first ever Midwest Classic gaming event! The event will be hosted by the GOAT Store, LLC and Marty 'Retro-Rouge' Goldberg, a writer for ClassicGaming.com and will feature everything Pong to classic computers. The event will also be home to arcade and pinball information, including a demonstration of how a pinball machine works by Dan Loosen and Gary Heil of the GOAT Store, LLC. The event coordinators are also working on bringing ultra-rare and perhaps even exclusive games and tons of great tournaments for attendees to enjoy.

The name Midwest Classic was selected from hundreds of entries that the GOAT Store, LLC received in a contest to name the event. For winning, Benjamin Heckendorn will be contacted and sent a package of goodies. Last year, the GOAT Store, LLC held Atari Jaguar Festival 2K1: Beyond Tempest, an annual gaming event for the Atari Jaguar. The event set attendance records, with some visitors coming from as far as Japan!

The Midwest Classic is tentatively scheduled for June 8, 2002. Ticket price has not yet been determined. If you would like to help with the show, or if you have any questions about it, feel free to email Dan Loosen (loosen@goatstore.com) or Gary Heil (heil@goatstore.com).

Speaking of Classic Game Shows

After quite a few problems, we are finally getting stuff set for CCAG 2K2. The Cleveland based video game show, which this newsletter is a proud sponsor, is finally in the planning stages. After a hugely successful year in 2001, with attendance of 125 people and nearly 50 tables of vendors, we were all ready for the upcoming year! Then a monkey wrench

was thrown into our plans. Since the show has been held at an armory the past two seasons, and since we are at war, the facility has become off-limits for non military purposes. There went our spacious and very affordable location. So we have been looking for a suitable replacement site, one that was large, easily accessible and affordable. We are happy to say that we may have found the place. While it is smaller than last year's and a fair amount more expensive, it looks to be a great location!

But with increased costs, we must make some sacrifices. Gone is the free admission and free tables. While we are doing our best to keep the costs of both down, we do have some exciting ideas for the show! Here is the tentative information (subject to change):

*The Show is planned for Memorial Weekend. This way it will be approximately a month after Phillyclassic and nearly a month before The Midwest Classic, so as not to compete.
*Admission right now is set at $2.00 per person (tentative to change). But with this, we are planning a special drawing! We are in the process of getting an actual arcade machine to give away to one lucky attendee! You will get a ticket with your paid admission and it will give you a chance to win! You do have to be present to win and are responsible for transporting the machine home. Right now, the arcade machine is undetermined.
*Tables are set now at $5.00 each (tentative to change) and we have a total of 52 tables, so expect them to sell quick.
*The show is getting its own website! The new site will be unveiled in the next few weeks.

Letters to the Editor

More inquiries about video games and all things fun. As I dig into the virtual mailbag, I pull out the following letters:

I am thinking of attending a classic video game show this summer, but I am not sure which one to attend? Any suggestions? signed Perplexed Gamer

I do get quite a few emails from people who want to know if they should attend this show or that one. While I am biased to the CCAG as I help out with it, I would have to say that it depends on what you are looking for in a classic game show. Are you looking to get the most carts to add to your collection? If so, then the Phillyclassic is the show to attend. It gets the most dealers, who are selling the biggest variety of games. If you cannot find it at Phillyclassic, it must be ridiculously rare. If you want to get the most exclusive new games for classic systems and if you want to meet the biggest collection of classic game programmers anywhere in the world, then the CGE is easily the best show for you. With a large stack of show exclusive games and dozens of game programmers and other people who helped shape the industry, you will be overwhelmed! If you want smaller, more relaxed paced shows, where you can just chat with fellow gamers and just have fun, then CCAG, The Midwest Classic and the Cincicon are all great shows.

There is alot of coverage for the TI computer, but not for any of the other classic computers. How about some coverage for the Commodore 64 or Atari 8-Bit? Signed Classic Computer Fan

Actually, Alan Hewston just did a great interview with the programmer of Space Taxi in the last issue of RT, so there is some coverage. But I can understand your desire for more coverage. Only problem is that while Jim Krych is our TI writer, we do not have anyone covering any of the other systems. If anyone is looking to join the newsletter and cover one of the other classic computers, please let me know. We would love to have you!

Hey, why don't you charge for issues of Retrogaming Times? I would gladly pay for new issues! Signed RT Fan!

I get at least one email a month from someone either asking why I do not charge for RT or from someone who wants to set up a pay site for it and take a percentage of the money. I will tell you the biggest reason why I do not charge for RT, vanity. Right now, we get over 5,000 readers of Retrogaming Times each month, with up to 2,000 reading it the first day. If I charged for it, that number would be greatly reduced, probably to about 100. While it

would be nice to make money off Retrogaming Times, I would rather reach a larger audience. It is pretty cool to tell people that I have a monthly newsletter that is read by over 5,000 people a month! Plus, I have a chance to give something back to the hobby and can help spread the word on new products, video game shows and help draw attention to deserving sites.

Handhelds Worth Playing

One area of collecting that has been getting more notice is classic video game handhelds and tabletops. Some of these command high prices (a few can go for a grand or more, like Star Castles), but how good are these to play? Well, I am going to start a new column, where I spotlight a few of the better playing handhelds out there. This way you can get a better idea if the handheld is worth buying for more than just a display piece.

Tron by Tomy

Possibly one of the best handhelds out there, as far as gameplay goes. Featuring three different screens to beat, each one different than the last, it really does a good job of capturing the feel of the movie and arcade machine. The first game is the famous light cycles from Tron. It plays quite well and is very enjoyable. You can move around and have a speed up button. You need to defeat the computer three times to move to the next screen.

The second challenge is a game of Frisbee. The computer tosses what looks like a frisbee (it is actually a disc, like Discs of Tron) at you and you have to catch it. Then you throw it back at the computer, trying to get it past them. If you can do this four times, then you win the round. Ditto for the computer, if they get the disc past you four times, game over.

The last game is probably the easiest one, or at least it seemed to me. You use the same disc to throw it through a shield to break it and then to hit the MCP and destroy it. From there, you start over.

The game features multiple colors, nice graphics and nice little sound. Even the back of the case is transparent. While the game does not offer multiple skill levels, it is one of the most varied and good playing handhelds. It sells for about $40.00 on eBay or a good shaped one with the battery cover.

Zaxxon by Coleco

Possibly the most loved and most collected of all tabletops are the Coleco ones. Each one looks like a mini arcade machine. Of all the Coleco tabletops, the rarest and best playing one is Zaxxon! This game is huge in size and possibly the largest tabletop out there. The level of detail on the machine is great, with the arcade look and even a little joystick that looks like the real arcade stick!

But even better than the looks is the gameplay! The game looks and plays like the arcade! From the very colorful screen, to the very good sounds to the extremely faithful gameplay, this is possibly my favorite tabletop! You really have to see it to appreciate just how great it plays.

The game uses a combination of mirrors and two different screens to create a 3D effect. You really do have to fly over walls. It is a marvel for a tabletop and if you ever have the chance to play it, I think you will be pleasantly surprised. The game sells for about $60.00-$70.00 on eBay for a good condition one with the battery cover.

Video Game Lingo

Another new feature that I decided to add is Video Game Lingo. Since we get hundreds of new collectors each month reading Retrogaming Times, I thought that I would explain some of the lingo used by classic gamers. This way you can sound like you are one of veterans of the hobby. Each month, I will put a handful of different terms that are used and tell you what they mean. Feel free to send in any you may have heard that you would like to see in here.

In the Wild-This term is used to describe finding a game cart, system or collectible at a thrift store, garage sale or flea market. The term "In the Wild" pretty much means that you did not buy it online or from a game dealer, but rather you found it in your search and usually means you picked it up at a bargain price. Think of it as getting your Thanksgiving turkey by hunting it as opposed to buying it from a grocery store.

Bira Bira-He is supposedly the god of video game collectors and if you pray to him before searching "in the wild", he will bring you good luck. For more information on this diety, go to the following website: http://birabira.chaosmagic.com/

Actiplaque-This is a term you hear quite a bit, especially when dealing with Activision carts. It is a condition when the label is mottling and begins to have spots. It happens most with Activision games, probably due to the glue they used or the labels, but it has appeared on other carts as well.

Third Party-The term is for any company that produces games for a console, but is not the manufacturer of the console. The first company to create third party games was Activision and soon after, companies like Imagic, Data Age and Starpath made games for different systems.

Overlay-This is a thin piece of plastic that gave instructions for games. The most common system for overlays is the Intellivision, where it would fit over the numeric pad and by pressing a certain number or symbol, you would get a desired action. There were also overlays for the Colecovision, Atari 5200 and even a few for the Atari 2600 (Sesame Street games among them).

Vectrex Overlay or Vectrex Screen-Both of these terms have been used to describe the colored overlay that went over the Vectrex screen. Since the vector screen was black and white, these screen were meant to add color to the games.

Hardwired Joysticks-Unlike the Atari 2600, which allowed you to unplug and change your joysticks, the original Intellivision and Odyssey 2 had hardwired joysticks. What this means is that the joysticks were connected on the inside of the game system and could not be replaced, unless you took the machine apart. While it made it next to impossible to lose your joystick, it also meant that when they went bad, you either had to take the machine apart or throw it out. You also had no choice in joysticks. Both systems later offered removable joysticks.

Return next month for some more video game lingo terms. Retrogaming Times wants you to be an informed and knowledgeable classic game fan.

Conclusion

Time to end another issue of the newsletter. I hope you enjoy the new sections and please send in suggestions for future articles or to existing articles. Once again, thanks to all the contributors who make my job easier. Much thanks! Also, big thanks to the growing list of sites that post about the latest issue of Retrogaming Times and help spread the word, we cannot thank you enough! Also, thanks to the readers who keep coming back and reading a new issue.

Before this becomes an Oscar speech, I will stop with the thanks. I need to wrap up this issue and hopefully with some luck and hard work, Bit Age Times #16 will be out on the 30th. It would make three months in a row that both newsletters came out. Hope I'm not spoiling you. If you want to contribute to the issue, please send any articles by the 27th. Time for me to go, enjoy the wealth of games that are available to you and the ones that are coming!

-Tom Zjaba

(This issue was done while listening to Lisa Loeb, Climax Blues Band, The Spinners and a bunch of TV and movie theme songs.)