Retrogaming Times

Issue #80 - The Final Issue - April 2004

Table of Contents

Go To Page Two

Go To Page Three

01. The Final Issue - Grab a Sandwich
02. Retrogamer Magazine - A Review by Tonks
03. A Very Wild, Wild Year by Jim Krych
04. Two New Video Game Price Guides
05. Retrogaming Commercial Vault by Adam King
06. Tonk's Vic 20 Reviews by Tonks
07. Silverball Addiction - The Final Chapter
08. Things Change by Doug Saxon
09. Where Do We Go From Here by Fred Wagaman
10. Top 10 Games from 1980 by Alan Hewston

The Final Issue - Grab a Sandwich

Welcome to the end of an era. After 6 plus years, Retrogaming Times is coming to an end. But it is going out in style! What you will see in this final issue is the biggest collection of classic game articles ever done on this site. Most of the past writers have returned to do a final article. Plus, I put no limits on how many articles they could submit or how long. I also decided to do versions of all the past favorites from MAME Reviews to Dr. N. Sane to a visit from Billy the Block. So as the title says, grab a sandwich as this is going to be a big read (and if you are using dial-up, it may also take a bit to load).

Retrogamer Magazine - A Review

by Tonks

What is the greatest monthly Retro Gaming magazine? Well Retrogaming Times of course! What are you, stupid? Let me rephrase that first question then. What is the greatest Retro Gaming magazine that you have to go into an old fashioned news agency and purchase with your hard earned money? The answer to that question would have to be, “Retro Gamer”.

Retro Gamer is a brand new magazine totally dedicated to the fan of retro gaming. The magazine comes from the UK and claims to be the UK’s first regular retro gaming magazine. I couldn’t believe my eyes when I first saw it sitting on the shelf of my local newsagent. I quickly picked it up, paid my money and rushed back to my office to read it.

And all I can say is, it is brilliant. I have never seen anything like Retro Gamer. No more settling for little articles hidden in the back pages of the major video game magazines. From now on, in every issue, it is over 100 pages jam packed full of wonderful retro gaming.

As stated, Retro Gaming is a UK magazine. Here in Australia we usually get all the UK magazines, but we get them about two months later due to them having to be sent from the other side of the world an a boat. As far as I have been told, not too many of the UK magazines ever get to the US, so I don't even know if Retro Gamer is widely available to American readers. (Please correct me if this is not true). But where ever you are from, I would whole-heartedly recommend that you track down a copy of this great magazine.

The first thing to grab me about Retro Gamer was the cover. It looks just like an old video game magazine from the 80s. Basic fonts and a terrific worn look make it look very authentic. The whole layout of the magazine looks just like the old UK video game magazines such as Zzap 64 or C&VG. There are plenty of big chunky headings and solid blocks of colour.

Upon opening up the magazine you are greeted with a brief editorial and a contents page. Then you come across a short but informative news section. The news section covers a number of current events and products relevant to retro gaming, such as Midway's "Arcade Treasure" for the PS2 and X-Box.

The first main article is a reasonably detailed look at Sinclair Research, the company that introduced to the world the ZX Spectrum. Being a UK magazine this is what I totally expected to see. The Spectrum was so huge over there in the UK and I didn't think there could be a magazine about retro gaming that didn't have something about the Speccy. There is a great amount of info about the Speccy as well as other home micros made by Sinclair including the ZX80 and the Sinclair QL. There are some nice photos of some of the hardware.

There is a very good article which takes a look at two of the most influential games ever, "Manic Miner" and its sequel "Jet Set Willy". These two games set the bench mark in 1983 for platform games and were released on just about every home micro at the time. Versions even came out a few years later on the Amiga and Atari ST. There are some nice screen shots and cover art.

The article that will cause the most controversy is their "Top 100 Retro Games". Retro Gaming has selected the ten most popular retro platforms and done a top ten for each. The ten platforms chosen are, Atari 2600, Commodore 64, ZX Spectrum, Amstrad CPC, BBC, Sega Megadrive, SNES, Atari ST, Amiga and Arcade. Remember this is a UK magazine, so these platforms are the ones that were the most popular in the UK. What should be of interest to any readers outside of the UK is the information on platforms you have never seen or had the opportunity to play.

No top ten or top 100 or any other top whatever can be free from controversy. There are many games in the top 100 I totally agree with, but there sure are many I don't. For example, in the Atari 2600 category there is no mention of River Raid or Asteroids, while games like Plaque Attack and Boxing are there. The C64 section leaves out classics like Turrican, Gauntlet, Bubble Bobble and the Sentinal in favour of questionable titles such as Airborn Ranger and Rimrunner. Many arguments will be had over these top 10s, and I look forward to future issues where the letters pages are sure to filled to the brim.

There are many other great articles in Retro Gamer. But space is running out in this article for too much detail, so I just make a mention to let you know what else there is.

There is an overview of the classic software label "Mastertronic". They made some fantastic games for the Vic 20, C64 and Speccy. There biggest selling game, "Formula 1 Simulator" Sold just over half a million copies.

Street Fighter 2 gets a great mention in an article that clearly shows how influential this great fighting series has been.

Lord of the Rings fans will be very interested in the article covering classic games based on the famous Trilogy. I didn't know so many games were made based on LOTR.

Horror games are given a good write up. These are games based on popuklar horror movies such as Friday the 13th and Nightmare of Elm St. I don't know if any of these games are really any good, but it makes for interesting reading.

Some great retro ads are reproduced. It is quite fun to read the info on some retro machines when they were cutting edge. For example, a Quantum 2000 computer with 2.4 meg Hard Drive for around $5000.

The magazine finishes with a review of various emulators so you know which are the best to use to upgrade your Pentium 4 to a C64 or NES.

Finally I must make mention of the excellent cover disk on the magazine. Yes, a cover disk is included. The PC compatible CD is jam packed with retro gaming goodies including 75 emulators and over 200 remakes of classic games. There is some great stuff here and you will have more than enough to keep you very busy until the next issue. I know that all that is on the disk is available on the internet, but how long would it take to down load 650 megabytes of stuff, particularly if you are still limited to dial up?!??

All up I think this is a brilliant magazine. It deserves to be very successful but it will only be so if retro gaming fans like ourselves buy it. So if you haven't got a copy of Retro Gamer yet, why are you waiting? If you can't find it in your local newsagency, then jump onto Retro Gamer's web site and find out about subscriptions. The webpage address is www.livepublishing.co.uk/content/retro.shtml

A Very Wild, Wild Year

By J.W. Krych

I first want to thank Tom for all these years of Retrogaming Times! And, to also thank him for having allowed Treyonics a place to do business before we were able to fly out on our own website. Thanks for all the memories Tom!

Okay, first things first. Active duty had gone well. Most of us are also here for a second year of active duty. While mostly law enforcement duty, we also do Army training as well. Being on this side of law enforcement has given me a tremendous amount of respect for that "thin Blue Line".

Treyonics grew big, real big! Who could have guessed just how much, back at the beginning of this activation! We got a marketing partner, Chris Uzal, to help out and our own website; www.treyonics.com.

The biggest changes for us came with the introduction of the Devastator II, rev. C. models. This marked the first use of CNC-based manufacturing for us! This has been a goal of ours ever since the very first Devastator production run. Secondly, we out-sourced the creation of the ground and wiring harnesses. It's no secret that we use the Minipac from Ultimarc. This all-in-one interface board uses a 2 x 20 pin header, as compared to the standard terminal blocks found in the I-Pac and Opti-Pac Plus boards. While it took a while, and we had a few hiccups (in the midst of a very large run of Devastator II orders), this process relieves us of a very time consuming task.

Finally, the rev. C. models brought the introduction of the Fultra-Trey+ spinner and the re-designed chassis that used bolts, vice screws, to connect to the top panel.

Our proudest moment came when we received a "Kick Ass" review from Maximum PC-nearly two years from the last review! Here is the URL to their site for the review:

http://www.maximumpc.com/reviews/game_controllers/review_2004-01-02.html

Just how busy did we get? This is what my room typically looked like! The two-letters represent different customers! This picture is titled “A Full Room”

(Hey, it keeps me busy and out of trouble!)

With our new digital camera, we were able to also provide “Progress Pictures” to customers, showing the various stages of assembly. In just one week alone, we outsold our entire first year of operation!

The year also saw the introduction of the “Configurator” on our website, and an online button tester-all but the “shift keys” can be tested. Thanks again Jason! Emu-Loader later included the Devastator II setup as a controller option!

I also received a lot of help, from buddies here at the base and friends/family. Thanks again to Kyle, Tim, Jeff, Fred, and Chuck! Even my platoon Sergeant commented that I was having my “worker elves” help out.

On the family front, Treyton keeps on getting bigger, and taller, and talks up a storm! At only 4½ years-old, he stands at 46” and 60+ pounds! He always surprises us with things he has learned at pre-school! Boy, these years have gone by fast!

Lori and I are busy with house projects. That is, on the days I am home! We all know here how lucky we are, performing Homeland Security while still being able to see our loved ones. It could be a lot worse for us, and each visit is a gift from God. Speaking of which, the Philly Classic was on the same weekend of a Treyton visit and that was much more important to me. Perhaps next years Philly Classic will be on a non-Treyton visitation weekend.

The laptop, a Dell Inspiron 8200 with 1 GB of RAM, has been such a help! From playing MAME32 .70, to testing Devastator II’s, to taking Skillsoft courses, and writing the Gyruss Story, it has been invaluable!

The TI world saw the introduction of two emulators in the MESS universe! The Geneve 9640 and the TI 99/8!!! TI even gave their blessings for the 99/8 emulation! Now how about that???!!! After all those years of denying requests for information on it! Wow!

The TI crowd, especially the Geneve users, hounded the MESS driver writer quite a bit to ensure a very good emulation. They also found out the hard way the indelible rule of emulation! That is, when a new version is released, that which once worked well is now broken! Some very good work by members of the TI community resulted in patches, or fixes included in later versions of MESS32.

Now, everyone can own a very nice Geneve system, even with hard drive images! Thanks Beery, and the MESS driver writer! Or, play with a 99/8!

They, the TI’ers, have also come up with a TI Hall of Fame website; www.ti99hof.org.

One thing neat for me was to see old friend and fellow AEMS Project member, Art Green!

Now, if they'd only have Tony Lewis on it! He's the only one I have never seen. Joe Delekto and I met way back in 1992.

Wow, 80 issues! And, as the old saying goes, all good things must come to an end. It has been some very interesting years, and articles. I am glad Tom can play MAME again, with the right controller of course!

There is talk of another CCAG. Lord willing, it may just happen.

The Gyruss story, http://www.gooddealgames.com/Fan_Fiction.htm, has been going slowly. More than I'd care to admit but it is being written. David and I are almost finished with the Saturn Chapter. And, we have the possibility of more artist work!

What a wild, wild year it has been. Tom, thanks for everything, including many issues of Retrogaming Times!

Hi, my name is Jim Krych. I am a proud father, beloved Treyton, and husband, dearest Lori. I am currently on active duty working alongside Air Force Security Forces and DOD Police. Looking forward to the next visit home, visit with Treyton, and finally being off of active duty. My company, named after Treyton, is Treyonics; www.treyonics.com. As a civilian I am an electronics technician, with Keithley Instruments. I enjoy MAME32, electronics projects, writing, working out, and a nice long run. My National Guard unit is B Co. 112th Engineers, Lorain Ohio.

Two New Video Game Price Guides

After years of having only an annual price guide, the video game industry will see not one but two new and published more frequently price guides. Both appear to be high quality and offer alot more than just prices. While some gamers will find this discouraging as many copies will end up in the hands of flea market vendors, used game store owners and thrift shop employees, many others will like having something that they can carry with them on their quest for their holy grails. As great as the Digital Press guide is, it is not very portable. But with a magazine, you can roll it up and stick it in your back pocket. Do that with the Digital Press Guide and you will rip your pants, which can be very embarrassing (especially if you are wearing your Pac-man boxer shorts).

The first one is called Manci Games and it is out now! It features a price guide with input from the Digital Press crew as well as Retro-Reviews, interviews and more! It will be carried online and at select stores. It shows alot of promise! It will be published monthly. Here is a link to the website and information on how to order it or where to find it.

http://www.mancigames.com/

The second price guide, Video Game Collector, is still in the works, but you can check out the advertisement that appeared in the Diamond Previews (this the the order catalog that comic, toy and game stores use to order new product). It was even a featured product, which is no easy feat. This one has also brought together a formidable lineup of people to work on it, including Leonard Herman of Phoenix fame, Albert from the Atari Age website and yours truly. Also with the first issue, you have a chance of winning a Nintendo system with 100 games! It will be published quarterly and the first one comes out in June. Here is the link:

http://www.vgcollector.com/

RETROGAMING COMMERCIAL VAULT

by Adam King

Well, the final issue of Retrogaming Times. Hard to believe it's coming to an end but I feel Tom has done an excellent job with this newsletter, and he deserves to go out with a bang.

So here we go for one last run. This month I have two ads for three arcade ports released for the Atari 2600. The first commercial is for Asteroids, the second talks about both Jungle Hunt and Kangaroo. Alan Hewston had previously covered Asteroids and Jungle Hunt in his "Many Faces Of.." column; I figured I'd do a little catching up.

Asteroids

This ad is done in a similar style to the Atari ad I covered in my first column way back in Issue 50. A family of Martians has become addicted to the Atari hit Asteroids, so much that the mother writes to Atari Anonymous asking what she should do to end this:

"Dear Atari Anonymous. Ever since my husband Luno returned from Earth with Asteroids, the new Atari home videogame, he and the rest of the family do nothing but play Asteroids. Luno says Asteroids is good practice for his interplanetary flights. Tell me, dear Atari Anonymous, with everyone hooked on Asteroids, what on Earth is a poor Martian mother to do?"
"New Atari Asteroids, now available for your home."

"Are you guys playing Asteroids again?"

"Beats steering the ship in real life."

"You need your energy so we can crush the Zaxxons."

"So not even the robot is immune?"

Jungle Hunt/Kangaroo

This ad concentrates mostly on Jungle Hunt, but includes a short blurb for another arcade port, Kangaroo. Here we find a woman, being lowered by a net into a boiling cauldron, while a bunch of savages look on. I'm pretty sure this is to represent the fourth level of the game, where the explorer tries to save his woman from the headhunters. After some gameplay shots she's begging us to buy Jungle Hunt so we can bail her out. We then get a

little info on Kangaroo.

"I know there's a reason for this."

"Better hurry, jungle explorer dude!"

"Where is that hubby of mine?"

The Commercial Vault CD is just about done. It has over 55 clips for many different systems, some I haven't shown all of you yet. Plus there some computer ads and a couple of food ads involving Atari and Pac-Man. It will be completed and for sale on April 20th, which means it should be available by the time you read this. For more information on how you can get this collection of clips, e-mail me at Hal_3000@rocketmail.com.

I guess that's it. I'd like to thank Tom for the great job he's done on Retrogaming Times, and giving me the chance to get my column in his newsletter. Hard to believe it's been over 2 1/2 years since I first typed the column, and I enjoyed every month. I was surprised how successful this series became, and wanted to tell everyone who supported the Commercial Vault thank you as well.

Is this the end? Maybe, and maybe not...

Tonks' Vic 20 Reviews

by Tonks

Well here are my last Vic 20 reviews. Before I go into them, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Tom so much for providing the classic gaming community with this brilliant on-line magazine. I first discovered Retrogaming Times a long time ago. It was only six issues old at the time. I thought it was just brilliant then, but had no idea of how good it was to become. It has been exciting to see the magazine develop and evolve over time. I don’t think there was ever a bad issue. There has always been interesting articles that has increased my knowledge of classic gaming. There has been a lot of fun and laughs as well. For each and everyone of us who are fans of classic gaming, we are indebted to Tom for his hard work, diligence and considerable amount of time he has sacrificed. Every month I looked forward to down loading the latest issue. There are many gaming sites out there – but I honestly think that Retrogaming Times is the best of the best.

I would also like to thank the many contributors who have helped make RT all it has

become. Alan Hewson, Doug Saxon, Fred Wagaman, Andy King, Jim Krych and others have all produced some great articles. These guys have been very encouraging as I wrote my first Vic 20 reviews. It has been great to chat with these new “friends” via email.

So let me just say that Tom is a legend!!! If you as a reader of RT haven’t taken the time to personally email Tom and thank him – then what are you waiting for? Do it!!! Now on with some final Vic 20 reviews….

MONEY WARS
Money Wars is a simple game where you must run to the right hand side of the screen, pick up a bag of many and then run back to the left hand side of the screen. Sound easy? Well there are arrows shooting constantly down on you that must avoid. Getting shot ends your life in a spectacular electrocution. This death scene is what makes Money Wars stand out from the crowd. The graphics and sound are average and game play gets repetitive fairly quickly. But the death scene is a real ripper. When an arrow hits you your little man gets electrocuted. He flashes wildly, turning into a skeleton. He then dies leaving an angel flapping its wings above him. It is a real laugh when it happens. There is an element of strategy in the game via the option to make your man run faster or use a shield. Pressing “A” makes your man run faster. Pressing “D” brings up a temporary shield. Doing either of these makes it easier to avoid the arrows, but doing so also causes a bonus point energy bar to rapidly drain. So you need to ask yourself, “Do I want maximum points or do I want to get across easier?” All up, a fun but simple game made more interesting because of the very funny death scene of your character.
My Score – 6.5/10

OUT WORLD
At first glance Out World looks a lot like the game Atlantis. But what we actually have here is a variation on Missile Command. Your job is to protect your city as well as your city’s rocket. Asteroids, alien craft and missiles come flying in toward your city. You must destroy them before they cause major damage. You control a cross hair with your joystick and you fire at the enemy by pressing the fire button. Moving the cross hair is simple, but you do need some practice to get it just right. It is easy to simply fly off to the edge of the screen if you are not careful. The graphics are fairly blocky, but they are very bright and colourful. The sound is above average, with some nice effects of your shooting and explosions. One nice element to the game is the animation in your city. Lights flash and change colour throughout the game. It doesn’t really add anything to the game play, but it is still a nice touch.
My Score – 6/10

PREDATOR
Here is one of those games that I wish more people could play so they could see what the Vic 20 is really capable of. This game is simply brilliant. It is an original game created by one of the best Vic 20 programmers, Tom Griner. Everything about this game is pure class. From the excellent graphics, sound, animation and fonts, it is all first class. The game play is similar to Joust. You control a little bird. Pushing up flaps his wings, helping him to fly. Left and right moves your bird about. Pressing the fire button makes your bird shoot. Your task is to shoot the enemy birds and then collect their eggs. Crashing into the enemy birds causes your bird to loose his life in a spectacular explosion. Your task is also made harder by the two trees standing in the middle of the screen. You cannot get past the trees. You have to fly up and over them. This is such a fun game, although it is hard. If I was to make a criticism I would say it would be nice to have a bit more colour such as some more green on the trees. A bit more colour would make the excellent graphics look even more impressive. One final excellent touch is when you get the high score. A little man walks out to a small rocket. He lights it and it shoots off in a shower of fire works. Great stuff.
My Score 9.5/10

PROTECTOR
Another wonderful game to really show what the Vic 20 was capable of. Protector is similar to a few different games including Scramble and Choplifter. You control a ship which must travel through a series of tunnels to rescue a group of little men. You also have a laser

cannon with which you can blast any hazards. Upon picking up one of the little men you must then take him to the safety of your base. Protector mixes up shooting, exploration and some basic puzzles to make a very enjoyable game. Getting through the tunnels can be quite tricky. Unfortunately the jerky scrolling doesn't really help. This is the main criticism of the game. Smoother scrolling would have made a much more enjoyable game. The graphics are great. Nice detail and very colourful. Sound is above average. The programmer really pushes the Vic's limited sound capabilities. Overall, Protector is a great game offering more than just basic reflex blasting.
My Score – 8/10

ROBOT PANIC
Here is a great frantic shoot-em-up. Like most of earliest shoot-em-ups, your ship is at the bottom of the screen. You can move left and right as well as fire your laser cannon. The aliens come swooping in from the top of the screen. Your job is to simply survive while trying to blast them out of the sky. At first Robot Panic doesn't seem like much. The graphics are simple and blocky and the back ground is just plain black. But once you start playing this game you discover that it is all pretty good. Lots of things move about on the screen, giving you lots to destroy. But this also means that there are lots of things that are out to destroy you as well. This keeps the game nice and frantic. Fans of Jeff Minter style games will love it. One final thing, the explosions of your ship when you die are great.
My Score – 7/10

SATELLITES AND METEORITES
What we have here is simply the best Asteroids clone for the Vic 20. This is a very good game, with lots going on to keep you on the edge of your seat. Graphically it is very good indeed. The satellites and the meteorites look very good with nice detail. There is some colour clash, but it is fairly minimal. The only think that detracts is your ship. I must admit it looks terrible and wish more effort had been put in. Sound is fairly minimal, but it does the job. The gameplay really shines here. Movement of everything is very nice and smooth. Some of the smaller segments of the meteorites shoot around really fast. One of the best aspects of this game is your own ship's thrust. You have a lot more control than most Asteroids variants. It has a similar feel to the thrust in Mine Storm for the Vectrex. All up, this is a highly recommended game, especially for fans of Asteroids.
My Score – 9/10

SPIDERS OF MARS
Wow!! This is a great looking game. Basically this is a Defender clone. But what sets it aside from most are the wonderful graphics. They are very colourful and move very smoothly. Each of the sprites are also nice and large, looking just like they should. You are a bee like creature flying over the surface of a planet. You must destroy the other insectoid creatures before they destroy you. The enemies include dragon flys, moths and of course spiders. The spiders drop down from the top of the screen. You must destroy them before they reach the bottom. If the spiders do reach the bottom of the screen they lie in wait for you to fly over them. Then they shoot out a huge laser beam to try and destroy you. This adds an exciting element to this game. I would say it is one of the best Defender clones available for the Vic 20, at least equal to Jeff Minters excellent clones.
My Score – 9/10

TOOTH INVADERS
Here is a fairly different sort of game. It is a kind of cross between an arcade game and an educational game. You control a little man with a toothbrush. You must run around the screen cleaning the decay off the eight large teeth with your toothbrush. Pushing the fire button turns the toothbrush into a toothpick so you can clean out the decay between the teeth. All this is made harder by the appearance of a tooth decay monster. He runs around putting more decay on the teeth. Unfortunately you cannot destroy him, but one touch and he will destroy you. If too much decay builds up on any of the teeth, they will turn green and eventually fall out. Graphically it is all fairly plain. Sound is nice with good spot effects. But the thing that grabs you in this game is simply the uniqueness of it. The fun of it might help teach some kids the importance of cleaning their teeth.
My Score – 7/10

In closing I would like to thank Tom for the opportunity to do these Vic 20 reviews. I love the Vic 20 and feel it never really gets the credit it is due. As I have hopefully been able to share in these reviews, the Vic 20 was home to some great original games as well as some arcade translations. If you haven't got the Vic 20 in your collection of Classic hardware, then I encourage you to get onto ebay and bid well, or keep a keen eye out at the markets or yard sales. Thanks to those who have written to me and expressed their love and memories of the mighty Vic 20. Feel free to drop me an email any time – tonks777@bigpond.com

Silverball Addiction The Final Chapter

The last two issues were mostly devoted to talking about Visual Pinball and Pinmame. I did some troubleshooting for you and talked about the programs. This issue will be devoted to reviews. I will do a handful of reviews of some pinball games you may find enjoyable and then I will end with some more links for you! I really do recommend this program to anyone who is a pinball fan as it will give you more enjoyment than most programs. And with more new tables every week, you will not be at a loss of games to play!

Q*Bert's Quest

I am sure you have heard, if not played Mr. and Mrs. Pacman and Baby Pacman, but did you know there was also a pinball game made about Q*Bert? Yes, this was a real pinball game and was released back in 1983 from Gottlieb. I was stunned when I found this out and it was one of the reasons that I tried so hard to find a way to get Pinmame to work with Visual Pinball as this program needs both to work correctly. Was it worth all the effort? Well, yes and no. Read on to find out why.

The first thing that you will notice about this pinball game is the odd flipper configuration. Yes, that is four flippers. You will also notice that it takes you a few tries to get used to them as each set moves in different directions (one flipper goes to the left and one to the right, yet they are controlled by the same button). But you will also soon realize that these two sets of flippers are one of the Achilles' heels of the game. While it is different and a nice gimmick, it makes the game a bit too easy. The only way to lose your ball (outside of tilting it) is for the ball to go down the middle. This is not too often and the game can get to be too easy.

The second problem that I encountered is the sound. Not sure if I am doing something wrong or not, but the sound is awful. The effects are for the most part pretty good, but some border on annoying and can ruin the fun of the game. I found that turning off the

samples improved the game, but it still had some problems. Hopefully this will get improved in a future version of VPinmame or someone can point out what I am doing wrong.

On a positive note, the pinball game does retain some of the elements of the arcade game. By hitting and running over certain targets, you can fill the pyramid, just like the arcade game. It even has the same sound and the lights on the pyramid flash just like the arcade. A very nice touch. It also shows most of the characters from the game including Coiley, Ugg and Wrongway. Not sure why Sam and Slick got left off, but my guess is they did not have as good an agent.

The pinball game is a neat little game and I do find myself playing it from time to time. But with the game being a bit easy, it is not one of my favorites. I was glad to see that Q*Bert received a pinball game and maybe someone will come up with a new version for Visual Pinball.

Caveman

This pinball table is famous for one thing, it was the first game to blend pinball with an arcade machine. Like Reese's Peanut Butter Cup, it took two great tastes that taste great together. That does not sound good. Well you know what I am getting at. Others followed like Baby Pacman and Granny and the Gators, but personally this is my favorite of the three.

What I think is the best about this one is that the video game part is more enjoyable than the other two. Baby Pacman is good, but a bit too hard for me. I guess it could be my nearing middle age reflexes, but I remember not doing too well at it in the arcade either. But Caveman, I can do quite well at. I have been able to beat all three levels of dinosaurs. And this is the main difference.

One thing I can say about all the video game/pinball hybrids is that the pinball part is nothing to write home about. There is some targets and a few bumpers, but nothing amazing. It is the video game part that is the draw. I found this true with all three of the hybrids. I am not saying the pinball is bad, just average.

Granted, the video game part is not a big deal either as it is just a maze game. You move around with your caveman and clobber the dinosaurs. Hit five of the brontosaurus and you get the next dinosaur. Problem is once you kill a dino, a T-Rex replaces it and is hot on your trail. This is where you must be careful. Unlike Baby Pacman, if you get eaten in the game, you lose a ball. But you have four tunnels that you can go into to get back into the pinball game. I suggest that you stay close to one of them as those T-Rexes are fast and will devour you in no time flat.

While neither the pinball or the arcade game would stand well on their own, the combination of both makes for a very enjoyable experience. Just be careful for those T-Rexes as they will end your game very early if you are not careful.

Mr. Do

While the first two tables were arcade releases, this one is a homebrew. From what I can gather, Mr. Do never had an official pinball machine made, but there are two homebrews. Out of the two, this is probably my favorite of the two. It really captures the feel of the arcade game and offers quite a bit of a challenge.

The biggest challenge in this game and it can be quite a challenge is moving from scene to scene. While the table does not change, if you meet the goals you get to see the scene number change on the left side. It may seem like a minor thing, but it is enough to keep me trying to get higher and higher. The goals needed are to get 8 cherries and four monsters. The cherries are easy enough as you can see them lined up as the red targets on the left side. But the monsters are tougher. You need to hit all the targets up at the top to get one monster. Do this four times and you can move to the next level. Much easier to say than to do.

A nice feature is that the game incorporates many of the sounds from the arcade game. This will bring a smile to your face as you discover another sound and there are quite a few of them. It is nice to see a game add non pinball sounds and have them work very effectively. Some games put in a bunch of sounds, but they are not always well used. But this one does a great job of it.

Much like the arcade game, this pinball table will have you come back again and again. While the high score is always a goal, you will also want to see how many scenes you can finish. Right now, I have been able to finish three scenes and that was a task. Cannot wait until I can complete four!

Adventure

Take one of the best Atari 2600 games ever and make a pinball table based on it and what do you get? You would guess that it would be a great table and know what, you would be right! This is table is done by Eala Dubh who is the same person who did one of my favorite VP tables, Wacky Races. While I was going to review Wacky Races, I decided to instead keep with a video game theme and when I found this table, I had to review it.

There are a ton of little touches that makes this game special. From the Atari logos on the bumpers to the dragon at the bottom, there many small features from the Atari 2600 game. And it offers my favorite part of pinball, knocking down all the targets and spelling something. In this game, you have to spell both Atari and Adventure. At first I was bummed that all the targets you knocked down went back up with each ball, but as I played it more and more I found that it actually made it more enjoyable. If you kept the letters you received from knocking down targets with each ball, it would be too easy to spell Atari and Adventure. But only having one ball to do it, makes it all the more challenging and when you finally do it, you get a sense of accomplishment.

The graphics on the table are gorgeous. I especially like the drawbridges that lead into the castles. A nice touch and really captures the spirit of the game. The music is also very nice. It is not too loud to drown out the pinball sounds, but loud enough to add to the game. It has a upbeat that goes well with the game. All in all, it is just a great pinball game and one of many great games from Eals Dubh. To download this and his other great tables (Wacky Races and Darius are probably my other two favorites), go to this link. I hope the author keeps this link up for awhile as he has done an excellent job with his tables and they should reach as large an audience as possible.

http://www.planetfur.com/~rfom/Tables/

Things Change

by Doug Saxon

The last time I wrote an article for Retro-Times was in 2000. Back then I was single, had just moved into a new apartment, drove a sporty 2-door coupe, and had a bedroom overflowing with classic video games. That was then. Now, I am married with a kid, own a small house, drive a family car, and have a bedroom overflowing with dirty diapers and lace. This is now, and I love it!

A year or so ago I embarked upon a mission that, back in 2000, I could never conceive of doing: Selling off my collection. I never thought I would willingly say goodbye to things like my CIB Romscanner, my Intellivision ECS module, my 7800 Tank Command, or my Donkey Kong Jr. tabletop. But those precious pieces of plastic now belong to someone else. Do I miss them? Not really. Rather, I'm glad that someone else can enjoy them. I still have quite a bit of my collection, but not nearly as much as I used to have. And it's slowly, but surely, shrinking.

Over the years in this hobby I've met a lot of great people. Some of them could be classified more as "gamers" while others could be classified more as "collectors". Some could even be both, but I think everyone of us favors one side of the scale more than the other. While I have always been a gamer, honestly, what really had me going in this hobby was the collecting…that unquenchable desire to amass as many classic video games as I could possibly find…for cheap. Back in my collecting days I would spend hours almost every weekend hitting different flea markets and yard sales in search of those $1 rarities. I would even hit the local thrift stores on my lunch breaks. And the impetus that kept me coming back was the expectation of actually finding something. Back then I would find all sorts of goodies so I could feed the flame with more fuel. These days it doesn't seem to matter how many flea markets and yard sales I hit, the goodies just aren't there anymore. Has the classic gaming supply really deteriorated that much? Or perhaps have more collectors appeared in the area cleaning out all of the bins full of Atari rarities before I get to them? Maybe both. But what really matters to me is that I just don't have the time or the desire that I used to have. The time I used to devote to the reckless pursuit of classic video games I now devote to my family.

What hasn't changed is the desire to play classic games that are fun. So although I wouldn't consider myself a collector anymore, the gamer inside of me is still going strong. I sure hope that desire doesn't go away. As I continue to part with my collection, perhaps I'll decide to just keep the games that I enjoy playing. Heck, I've even picked up some new games for play recently like the 2600 Adventure Plus hack and Marble Craze also for the 2600. Those are both keepers. But will I ever play games like Mines of Minos and Wall Ball? Doubt it. Definitely not keepers.

I remember one day several years ago Tom and I were hanging out and we were talking about collecting. I think he was actually in the process of downscaling his collection, and I couldn't understand why he was doing it. I even had the nerve to say that I would never sell off my Atari 5200 collection. He responded by saying something like, "Just wait, things will change." Well, guess what? I understand now. Things have changed. I don't know if his reasons were the same as mine, but that once beloved 5200 collection of mine isn't what it used to be!

Thank you Tom, for pumping out these issues of Retro-Times every month. Even though many things have changed in my life reforming my interest in classic gaming, I will most certainly miss reading Retro-Times every month. And that is one thing that I do NOT expect to change!

Where Do We Go From Here ?

By Fred Wagaman

As I write one last article for Retrogaming Times, I want to take share some random thoughts about games and the future.

In the history of mankind, rarely has a technology like computers made such a huge leap in power in such a short period of time. And video games, being basically a computer of sorts, have tagged along for the ride.

I looked back on some of the first articles I write for RT. It seems I started back on issue #10 and only missed an issue or two up until issue #69. That's a lot of words from someone who isn't a writer by nature.

So I'm going to go out with something short and sweet. I won't bore you to tears. Plus I'm officially getting near the end of my allotted quota of clichés.

Where are video games going ?

I believe that within the next 2 versions of video game hardware, the game as we know it will cease to exist. As carts gave way to CDs and CDs to DVDs so shall DVDs give it up to downloaded games. The writing is on the wall. In Issue #65, I made note that as more towns get wired for high speed access, game companies will control their content by never letting you put your grubby little hands on it. Maybe in 5 years, maybe in 10, but it will happen.

I believe that the online community of gamers will grow, but only if they can expand out from the fantasy worlds that currently dominate the field.

I believe that there are great games ahead of us and great games still unplayed behind us. Collectors and players like us will continue to find them and find places to tell each other about them. (Bombastic! for the PS2. Buy. It. Now.)

And I believe that playing games alone will never take the place of playing with friends and family. Whether that playing is video games or board games or card games or whatever, play is an integral part of life and if you stop playing, you stop living.

As Retrogaming Times comes to an end, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all of you who took the time to read what I had to say. I hope that you found what I wrote helpful, funny or in some way worth the time you took to read it. I appreciated the comments and emails I received over the years and thank you who took the time to write.

Fred has been playing games for over 30 years and actively collecting them for almost 15. The nearly 3000 (he thinks) 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 8 year-old, Metroid-loving son, Max and his 4 year-old, "Which Way do I go Daddy?" 4th player, Lynzie. Thanks for all the memories, Tom! He can be contacted at fcw3@mail.ptd.net

Retrogaming Times Top 10 Videogames from 1980

by Alan Hewston

Here are the results of your votes for the best video games having their original version released in 1980. As usual, I got some help from the RT staff to narrow the list down to 25 titles. Wait . . . 25? We usually have 40 titles, but the number of games that were recognizable, milestones, arcade favorites or just plain memorable gets much smaller as we go back too far in time – back to 1980. With no time to ask you for votes, I still posted to the newsgroups, RGVC, and then emailed everyone who had voted in these surveys in the past. We ended up with 90 voters - many thanks for all of your votes.

1980 was a very close four-way race, with "Pac-Man" emerging from the pack victorious. A whopping 74% of the voters selected "Pac-Man", breaking the previous #1 percentage held by "Marble Madness" for its 66% of the voters in 1984. OK, so now onto the winners.

Top 10 from1980
(# of votes) & Game Title
(67) Pac-Man
(65) Berzerk
(65) Centipede
(65) Tempest
(64) Missile Command
(56) Defender
(51) Battlezone
(50) Phoenix
(39) Adventure

(35) Warlords

The next 5:
(32) Crazy Climber
(30) Asteroids Deluxe
(27) Star Castle
(26) Rally X
(23) Space Invaders II & Deluxe

The remainder of the list, since you did not get to see the ballot: (20) Carnival, (14) Red Baron, (14) Moon Cresta & Super Moon Cresta, (11) Rip Off, (11) Monoco GP, (9) Space Panic, (7) Targ, (4) Polaris, (3) Space Zap, (2) Stratovox.

Special thanks to voter Mark Androvich for telling me that I forgot the milestone game "Adventure". Dooh! Good thing Mark's last name begins with an "A", since I mailed them out alphabetically, and he replied fairly quickly. Thus I was able to correct another mistake (delete Air Sea Battle – from 1977?), and email anyone who received the incorrect ballot. This was worth doing as "Billy the Block's Adventure" deserves its top 10 ranking.

See also the results for 1981, coming later this issue.

Click below to see the results from all the survey years:
http://my.stratos.net/~hewston95/RT/RTSurveyResultsGameoftheYear.xls

Go To Page Two