Retrogaming Times

Issue #85 - We are picking up steam! - July 2013

Table of Contents

01. Introduction
02. Video Game Hunter
03. WOW Moment
04. Sites of the Month
05. IPAD Reviews
06. Youtube Classic Videos
07. Conclusion

Introduction

Summer is heating up as is the newsletter. Despite having a vacation this month, I still found time to finish the newsletter. The consistent writing is good for me and gets my creative juicing flowing again. So crank up the AC, grab a cold drink and enjoy another fun and free newsletter.

Video Game Hunter

Not every hunt was successful. In fact, I probably went to as many wastes of time as I did to actual scores. Here is one of the first times I went on a hunt and came back empty handed. As I mentioned in an earlier issue, I had taken an ad out in a local paper that I bought classic video games. A man called me about it and told me that he had over 300 different Atari 2600 games plus a system, controllers and that most of the games were complete. He wanted $500.00 firm for the lot. I told him that I had to see the games but if his numbers and descriptions were correct, I would be willing to buy it. I went to the bank and took out $500.00 and proceeded to the address that he gave me.

It was a short ride to his house and I entered with excitement. It was still early in my collecting days and I think I may have had close to 150 different video games for the Atari 2600. So the idea of doubling my collection made me ecstatic. And the idea that most of the games were complete made me even more excited. I did not have many complete games at this time, maybe about thirty total. My mind raced as I tried to guess all the different games that may be part of the collection. Would it be some rare and expensive game like Swordquest Waterworld or Crazy Climber. Or possibly Chase the Chuckwagon, which was considered one of the holy grails at the time (or at least the newsgroups gave the impression).

As I greeted him and entered, I was taken to a room with a fireplace and there was his Atari 2600 collection lined up on a mantle around the room. He had them all lined up in alphabetical order. The first thing I noticed was the games were not complete. They were all loose. There was a box full of manuals at the end of the mantle and about a dozen boxed common games. I asked him where were the rest of the boxes as he said the games were complete. He said he had the manuals for almost all the games and that made them complete. This was the first misrepresentation and far from the last.

I then proceeded to count the games and came up with a few more than 200 carts. A third less than the 300 that he told me about on the phone. This was the beginning of a trend that I found in buying classic games, people often inflated the number of games they had. They seemed to round up to the next hundred, no matter how low the number was. So 202 carts turned into 300 carts, instead of 200. I learned quickly to count each and every cart before buying as it gave me some bargaining power.

With the number exaggerated and the completeness also fabricated, I went about looking at the variety and rarity of the games. Sure, I was getting less, alot less than advertised, but if the quality was there, then it would still be worth it. Let's just say it was strike three. His mention of 300 different games turned into 200 games with quite a bit duplication. His idea of different games was label variations. So while most people would look and see four Asteroids carts, he would see four different label variations and so they were four unique games. This went on and on as I saw numerous copies of Space Invaders, Pong, Combat, Missile Command and other common games. So the number of unique games was significantly lower than even the 200 that was the new number.

But he did have one rare game in the collection, or at least it was the first time that I ever seen it. It was the King Kong game and it did have the manual. But this was the only game that I did not already have.

After I told him of how much off he was from his original numbers, I asked him how much less he would take. He remained firm at $500.00, citing how rare his King Kong cart is. I told him that I could not go anywhere near that and asked if that was the best price. He said he was firm at $500.00. With that, I thanked him for the opportunity to see his collection and left.

WOW Moment

Sometimes a WOW moment is something small in a game. That is the case when it came to this month's WOW moment. It features one of my favorite arcade games that sadly was only converted to one classic system, the Atari 700. The game is called Food Fight and it features a WOW moment that I can still remember when I first experienced it.

The local arcade was always getting new video games in. It became an event when a truck brought in the new video games. This was the case on a Wednesday when the truck delivered a few new games to the arcade. I still remember gravitating towards the new game called Food Fight. With the colorful marquee, it attracted my attention. Everyone else was circling some maze game and a random arcade shooter. But I wanted to be the first to play Food Fight.

Once it was plugged in and it went through its initial setup, the title screen came up and I dropped my quarter in. The game was fun as I enjoyed throwing food at the chefs who came after me. I found the first few levels pretty simple and it was not hard to get past the chefs. Then the game ramped up as I found the chefs not so easy to defeat. But along came food like the watermelon that gave you unlimited food to throw.

Suddenly as I barely made it through a level and reached the cone before it melted and I lost my life, I was greeted by replay of the level. It featured some funny music and it was sped up a bit to make it more comical. I laughed and laughed as I saw this, which drew others over to see what the fuss was. I had no idea at the time what caused the instant replay and for days afterwards, I tried to replicate it.

As much as I still enjoy getting an instant replay on Food Fight, nothing will ever top that first one. It made me laugh so hard that I almost lost the rest of my lives. To this day, I still get a chuckle when I think about that WOW moment.

Sites of the Month

Here are a few more classic game sites for you to go to and enjoy. If you are a hardcore classic game, you probably already heard of the first one.

<u>American Classic Arcade Museum</u>
Everyone needs to have a goal in life. One of my goals is to visit the Funspot arcade and play the ton of games they have and check out the Classic Arcade Museum. With a list of games that makes any classic gamer foam at the mouth, Funspot is the mecca for classic gamers. Most arcades will have a Galaga, Ms. Pac-Man combo or some emulator based collection of classic games to play, but what arcade has such forgotten classic as Pooyan, Mad Planets, Congo Bongo, Satan's Hollow, Bagman and Wild Western? Now those are some forgotten gems. And add in some of my all-time favorites like Crazy Climber, Food Fight, Zookeeper and Tapper and you have a vacation destination. I just need to get the wife on board with it. Here is the link - http://www.classicarcademuseum.org/

<u>Raspberry Pi</u>
Ever wanted a computer to hook up to your televisions and use it to play classic games, but did not want to spend a ton of money? Well, the Raspberry Pi computer is for you! It starts at $25.00 and for less than $100.00, you could have an awesome little computer that will easily run all your favorite classic emulators. Here is the link - http://www.raspberrypi.org/

IPAD Reviews

I missed this feature last month, but I am back with two new reviews! As I said before, this has become the game platform of choice for me. And I tend to gravitate towards classic games. Go figure.

<u>Tapper World Tour</u>
Being a big fan of Tapper since its arcade debut, I was excited to see a sequel of sorts come out for the game. Yeah, it took a few decades to come out, but better late than never. One worry I had when it first came out was they would ruin it like has happened to other remakes. You know where they take a simple game formula that worked and throw so much stuff into it that it becomes a mess. Look back at some of the Hasbro remakes back in the 90's to get an idea of what I am talking about. Luckily with this game, they kept the formula intact and only added a little to the basic game play.

I will not go into the gameplay as anyone reading this most likely knows how to play Tapper. The same mechanics are in place, sling drinks and collect empty glasses. The only real difference is later on, they have patrons ask for specific drinks, which makes it like some cross between Tapper and Diner Dash. But it does not ruin the game, only makes it a bit more hectic.

One of the best features of the game is that the artwork is done by Don Bluth of Dragon's Lair fame. The bars and patrons are colorful and a feast for the eyes. You really want to see all the different bars, just to see what the next one looks like. You can check these out from the original game that is the original game with new graphics or a new story mode that has you going around the world, slinging drinks. Another new addition is you can choose to play as the original male bartender as a pretty female bartender. While they don't really differ, it makes for a nice change.

While one may wonder how a game like this would handle on an IPAD, I can say that is works really well! The touch screen seems made for a game like this as you can move your bartender around better than you could with a joystick and a button. It does take a few times to get comfortable with it, but once you do, it plays like a dream.

When you consider that it costs $2.00 for the game or what would have been 8 games of Tapper in the arcade, it is a steal. And if you are really cheap, you can wait for it to go on sale for a buck. Well worth it for a game that improves on the original.

<u>Q*Bert Deluxe</u>
I accidentally came across this game when I was in the app store and typing in names of classic games that I used to play. When I put in Q*Bert, this game popped up and I bought it immediately. It is a good thing

that I did as I do not see it in the App Store anymore. Not sure why it disappeared. My guess is the sales didn't warrant renewing the rights to the game. Too bad as it would probably see a boost in sales with the appearance of the Q*Bert characters in Wreck it Ralph.

The game offered various themes to play. There was the classic theme which was exactly like the original arcade. There is a modern theme that is the classic game with improved graphics. Then there are a bunch of interesting themes like Pirate, Ice, Space and others. Each theme has different boards, new enemies and its own look. While they all play the same, it is nice to try the different boards.

One nice touch is they give you choices for controls. You can move Q*Bert by moving your finger and he follows or you can use a virtual joystick on the side of the board. Either one works well, once you get used to it. Not as good as the arcade machine, but pretty good for a touch screen. It took about five games for me to really get rolling, but once it clicked, I was able to match my old high scores.

While the new levels are fun, I still find myself playing either the classic or the modern as I enjoy the original game the most. Maybe it is the familiarity of the game or the desire to try and put up a better high score, but at least 75% of my gaming on Q*Bert Deluxe is done on these two levels. Though I do wish they added Q*Bert's Qubes on the game. While I never played it much, it would have been a nice addition.

Overall, the game was a worthy purchase and one that I was glad that I added on my IPAD. It is a shame that it is no longer available for purchase. It was one of the rare apps that really got it right. It offered the original game for fans and it added a selection of new variations of the game for people that want variety. I wish more classic games would take this approach. It seems to be one or the other, but rarely both.

Youtube Classic Videos

With Q*Bert being mentioned in the newsletter, I thought that I would made him the focus of this month's Youtube Classic Videos. Back in the 80's there were video game cartoons of Pac-Man that most people remember, but there were also cartoons made of other characters. One of these featured Q*Bert and was part of the Saturday Morning Supercade. Here are a few of those episodes for you to enjoy.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jl0goTt0hEw

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fSYOuJQ1W-I

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gABowePQzY0

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UlJRK5Q3T9I

<u>Q*Bert Concept</u>
Not sure if this is an actual game or just a project that someone came up with. It looks familiar to me, but not sure. Anyway, it is neat to look at.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2OYDP44uV3c

Conclusion

Time to wrap up another issue. While the newsletter did not increase in size, it has remained the same size. I am hoping for a larger issue next month. Last month was not conducive to writing. Between vacation and my wife being hospitalized, the time to write was limited. But this month will be better, I feel it in my bones. That or I have the AC turned too low.

Tom Zjaba (This issue was written while listening to Maria Muldaur, Marmalade, Michelle Branch and Jan & Dean.)

Tomorrow's Heroes©Tom Zjaba 1997 - 2015

This archive has been simplified from the original source for preservation - links have been removed.