TOMORROW'S HEROES
RETROGAMING
TIMES
The Newsletter for the Retro Gamer in All of Us

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RETROTIMES #13

Introduction

Well, the first year is done and now it is time to get working on the second year! With so much going on in the industry and the market getting bigger and bigger, you need a place where you can come and read about the joys of collecting and playing games. That is where I come in! I offer you a place to tell your stories, read about the games available in both cart form and on emulation. So instead of grumping about how you were sniped on eBay or debating on how much to pay for that very hard to find game you really want, you can come and read about the simple joys of game playing. Think of us as a breath of fresh air in the market.

The Pitch

After saving up my money from my paper route, I was able to purchase the highly coveted Super Action Controllers for the Colecovision! These things were huge and just screamed out modern technology. Even better is that they came packed with the Super Action Baseball game, the one that I drooled over in magazines since it was first mentioned. No more one color characters like in Intellivision Baseball, I was going to have different angles, bigger characters and tons of fun!

After buying the joysticks, I invited my neighbor and friend, Mike Hudak over to play. We spent alot of time over the next week, battling for the World Series in fictional games. We took turns trying to get the Cleveland Indians to win the World Series (a much more ridiculous notion back in the mid 80's). Then something happened that completely changed the game forever. We discovered "The Pitch"!

In every game there are flaws and this game had an unhittable pitch. I cannot remember who accidentally discovered it, but it was soon known by both of us and the games became endless perfect games. No matter how we tried, we could not hit "The Pitch" and soon the game became very boring. Something had to be done to save the game as it was only a week old and Super Action Football was nowhere to be found.

After some debating, we finally agreed to ban "The Pitch" for the sake of the game. Soon our World Series quest returned and so did the fun. Sure, we occasionally snuck in "The Pitch" when we really needed it, but it was quickly followed by a chorus of boos. So its appearances became a very rare occurrence.

As I look back on this episode and try to remember how to do "The Pitch", I for the life of me cannot remember what it was. Sometimes it seems more like a product of myth than actual occurrence, but I know that someday I will be playing the game and it will return to me. Hopefully my competitive nature will not consume and I won't abuse it.

MAME Reviews

With another new version of MAME, I can finally play a game I have been itching to play for a long time. Ever since I played it on the Colecovision, I have craved the original arcade version. Will it live up to my hopes? Read on to see!

Up n Down

When I finally picked up the Colecovision version, I could not stop playing it. I fell instantly in love with the game and one could say it was love at first sight! Then I saw that it was emulated on MAME, I just had to have it. Beta version after beta version came and I still could not get it to work. There would always be some flaw in the game that made it unplayable. But I held out hope that it would be fixed by the next version. Well, my patience finally paid off and I now have a playable version of the game.

After playing a few games, I realized a certain truth about Colecovision games. That truth is that the games are always much easier on the Colecovision than the original arcade version. Much like Tapper, I was in for a rude awakening. After conquering the Coleco version and feeling like a hot shot, I was abruptly dumped back into reality with my tail between my legs. My first few games went quickly! We are talking sound byte fast! This is from a guy who breezed through five levels on the Coleco before I broke a sweat. But here it is more like five seconds and I was a victim of bad driving.

I had my work cut out for me if I was to regain my crown as the Up n Down champ. Many, many games later and I was really starting to get the hang of it. Sure I was lucky to get to the third level now, but it was satisfying accomplishment to do it.

The basis of the game is to drive your car up a road that curves and bends. You have to collect flags as you drive along and need to get all of them before you can move to the next level. The faster you can accomplish this, the more bonus points you can earn. But it is much more than just racing around and picking up flags. You have to dodge some slow moving cars that are always getting in your way. Unlike Bump n Jump or Spy Hunter, you cannot ram these cars. If you do, it is one less life for you. Think of your car as a Yugo, it cannot handle an accident without getting totaled. But you do have one means of retaliation on your side. You can jump over or onto the cars and either dodge the trouble or just squash the car and remove it that way.

Sound easy peasy right? Well, it would be if the road wasn't so crooked. See if you jump and go off the road, your car will crash and you can kiss another life goodbye. So you must be careful where and when you jump as it may lead you to safety or your doom.

All in all, it is a great game and the challenge is great enough to keep you coming back for more. While you may be able to conquer the game, it won't happen overnight. Then that is the sign of a great game, one that keeps you challenged, but not too hard as to chase you away.

Journey

I can still remember this game at the arcade. I laughed at it them and I still laugh at it. It is probably one of the dumbest games made. At least now I can play it for free and get all the way to the concert. I remember someone telling me about this awesome concert if you got all the way through the game. I kept thinking it was a game based on Journey, so how could there be an awesome concert? Maybe if I was a teenage girl. Well, I didn't bother back then trying to see the concert, I mean there were much better games to play.

For anyone who hasn't played this game, your mission is to have each band member retrieve their

musical instrument and head back to the ship. Once all five band members have done this, you go off to a concert with a looping song and a bunch of girls rushing the stage. Boy am I glad I didn't waste too much money trying to see this.

The characters in the game look silly. Each one has this huge digitized head attached to a little video game body. Sorta like a video game version of bobbing heads, only with rock stars. It is enough to evoke laughter in anyone who remembers the group. This alone makes the game worthwhile.

The actual gameplay is repetitive as you have to get your players through a series of obstacles, be it a platform or flying through a cave. Once you retrieve the instrument, the game changes and a new challenge appears. Nothing is more frustrating than getting all the way to the instrument, only to die on the way back. It is enough to make you erase the game forever.

Overall, it is a dull game with less than thrilling gameplay. It is a fun conversation piece and good for an occasional laugh. Beyond this, you are better off putting on a Journey album (always available at thrift stores) and move around some GI Joes or something.

Are Video Games the Next Hot Collectible?

There has been alot of talk about if and when video game collecting will take off. I have heard arguments from both sides and after weighing everything I heard and thinking about my experiences with other collectible markets, I have come to this conclusion. **WILL GAMES BE THE NEXT HOT COLLECTIBLE?** My answer is yes and no. Before you call me a coward for not giving a direct answer, here is my reasoning. Yes, video games are going to be a hot collectible, but I am not sure if they will be the next one. They should and alot of things are falling into place for them to be, but if I ever learned anything about collectibles it is that they are unpredictable. As soon as you think they will take off, another Beanie Baby type toy will come along. But mark my words, video games will take off and they will become a hot collectible. I am not saying this because I want to cash in on them. I am not saying this because I hope they do. I am saying this because I believe against my better wishes, that they will take off. There are way too many reasons for them not to. I will in this article attempt to give and explain the reasons I feel this is inevitable. Then you can make your own mind up on whether or not you think they will take off.

Memories Don't Come Cheap

IF there is one rule in collectibles, it is the more memories it brings, the higher the price it can fetch. People want to go back and recapture a piece of their youth. For kids growing up in the 1950's, it was a Mickey Mantle baseball card or a decoder ring. For our generation, it is video games. Like the kids in the past who collected baseball cards, we collected and played video games. We grew up on them and watched them go from simple pong to the high tech 3-D games of today. As more and more people reach a level of financial comfort, they will begin to look for items that remind them of their youth. I know as I did it about 4 years ago. I searched out some of the things I enjoyed in my youth and that is how I ended up in this business. As I relived my memories, so will other people want to do the same. They will want to get an Atari or Intellivision like they had when they were young. As more and more people begin to do this, the supply of systems and games will begin to shrink and force the prices up. An Atari system that sells for $25.00 today could conceivably fetch $100.00 or more in a few years. Granted there seems to be alot of systems out there, but that is because of the relatively small amount of people buying them at the moment. That can and will change and it will become a sellers market. Which brings me into point #2.

The Lemming Theory

If I have learned one thing from my time selling comics and other collectibles, it is that it doesn't take much to get people interested in something. For many of them, it is the mere thought of making money on something to get them to become overnight game collectors. For others it only takes a friend doing it to encourage them. Mark my words that when these price guides get out and people realize there is a demand for these games, word will spread very quickly. Soon the looks you get at garage sales and flea markets will change from a bewildered look to one of distrust as you are the tenth person that day to ask if they have any old games. It will not take much to set the market afire and it will happen. The one thing that will drive the market is the relative scarcity of the games which leads into point #3.

Over Ten Years of Erosion

One thing that classic games has going for it is that there has been over a decade of erosion. By this I mean that there is no new copies of games and systems being added and the old ones are slowly disappearing. Every year the amount of Atari systems and games out there is shrinking. Some are being thrown out because they have no perceived value. Without the internet, where would you sell your games? Odds are your local video game reseller has no interest in them. You can put them up at a garage sale, but what if they don't sell there? Many people just throw them out. Others are destroyed in fires, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes and other disasters. Still more break and either are non repairable or the owner doesn't know how or have the time to fix them. So every year the supply of games shrinks. Sure there were a ton of games made and there are still hundreds of thousands if not millions that are hidden in attics, garages, warehouses and closets. As the word spreads that

there is value to old games, many of these will resurface and be added to the pool. But if this market takes off anything like old toys have, then there simply will not be enough games to meet the demand and they will go up. Alot of this demand will come from cross collecting which is point #4

The Completist Theory

One thing that classic games has is cross collecting capability. By this I mean that there are alot of other collectibles that can overlap into classic games. A few obvious ones are the Star Wars, Star Trek and Disney collectors. Soon these people will realize there are video games out there that feature their collectible and they will want to own them. This will drive the price of these specific items up and eventually some of these collectors will be drawn into the market of video game collecting. Even some of the other lesser ones will bring in new blood. Some properties like Sesame Street, the Muppets, Dungeons and Dragons and especially movie buffs will find a nice selection of items to add to their collections. This brings me to my final point.

People Want to Start at the Beginning

As more and more people get into game playing, and if you look at the Playstation sales you can see that the market is growing, more and more will want to trace the industry back to its roots. Some people have a need to see the evolution of an industry and will want to experience a real pong system, playing Space Invaders on the Atari and the original Super Mario Bros on the Nintendo. They will want to own and be able to really enjoy these milestones in video games. Some will do it to get a proper perspective of the whole industry. Others will want to study the old games to get ideas on making a great game without all the glitz and glamour of today's games. Others will not know why they want to look back, it may be a curiosity because it was something they only read about in a magazine or heard an older sibling speak of. The same way that some kids are buying Star Wars figures even though they weren't alive when the movies were originally released. Like Star Wars, some games are classics and even if they are primitive by today's standards, they still hold the one true component of a great game, great gameplay! The secret ingredient that cannot be captured with full motion video or 3-D graphics or stereo sound. But instead with a certain magic that will bring the player back for another game, whether it was made today or twenty years ago.

So there are my reasons why I feel the market will take off. Don't get me wrong, I would rather see it stay small. I really enjoy the small town feeling that permeates it and really enjoy being able to trade with other collectors. Unlike many collectibles, this is one where the majority of the people are more interested in their collection instead of the value.

THE MANY FACES OF.....BEAMRIDER!

Beamrider is a very interesting game indeed. You are a ship on your way through an alien sector avoiding or destroying whatever is in your way in order to get to the boss or what is known as "The Sector Sentinel."

However, there are supposedly 99 different sectors! Each new sectors adds new challenge and more nasties! And each new nasty has its own unique form of attack. This game is very similar to Tempest. However, it definitely has an Activision personality. This game can be found on four different classic systems: Atari 2600, Atari 5200, Colecovision, and Intellivision.

Disqualified: Atari 5200

I am a huge fan of the Atari 5200. While many people despise the system because of its controllers, I have found them to be competent with almost all the games in its library (if they're functioning properly). However, with Beamrider these controllers just plain suck. Trying to get from beam to beam is a job that can only be done with a self-centering controller and perhaps only a digital controller. The floppiness of these controllers kill what is otherwise a good-looking game. Perhaps with a third-party joystick, such as Wico, this game would be better.

Bronze Medal: Intellivision

The Intellivision version of Beamrider suffers the same fate as the 5200 version except to a lesser degree. The Intellivision disc is fine with moving the ship, but after a full game of Intellivision Beamrider if your thumbs had a mouth they would say, "Please, play a different version!" This is a game that requires constant shooting and therefore constant pushing on the awkward Intellivision fire

buttons. Otherwise, this version is quite charming. Cool sounds and graphics. Overall, this is definitely a step up from the 5200 version.

Silver Medal: Atari 2600

I've been waiting to a do a review of this game for a while now. What kept me from doing it was the 2600 Beamrider cartridge had been eluding me, but I finally tracked one down recently. It was worth the wait, this version is impressive. Although graphically inferior to the competition, it plays really well. The game progresses the same in this version as in the rest and all the enemies are there, the yellow lips, the blue cognizers, they're all there. This is yet another good game for the 2600 by Activision.

Gold Medal: Colecovision

This version is superb. It plays good enough to win the gold with the standard Colecovision controllers, but even better with the Super Action Controllers...try it with them if you haven't already. The graphics and sound are best and play is the smoothest. I love the challenge of the higher levels. I can play this version for hours coming back trying to beat my high score or get to the next sector. I think my best so far is Sector 19 or 20. Anyone done better?
(Doug Saxon is an engineering student at the University of Cincinnati. He's mainly into 2600, 5200, Colecovision, and Intellivision. He's also a proud owner of a mint Chase the Chuckwagon cartridge which set him back $1. He can be reached via email at saxondj@email.uc.edu. Doug is also looking to complete the Atari 5200 set and needs these games. Bounty Bob, K-Razy Shootout, Quest for Quintana Roo, Star Wars:ROTJ-DSB, and Zenji. If you have any for sale or trade give him an e-mail.")

When the Game Just Isn't Enough?

Freebies : The stuff that we, as consumers (specifically video game consumers) get for purchasing an item in addition to that item.

Many stores use this gimmick to entice you into buying a game at their store instead of someone else's store. For many people, price is the determining factor when it comes to deciding on a purchase. But all other thing being equal, we all want more.

Right now, I'm listening to a copy of the Metal Gear Solid soundtrack as I write this. I got it for preordering the game from a local retailer. Some other retailers are offering Metal Gear notebooks as a premium. I probably wouldn't have pre-ordered the game if I didn't get this bonus. Within the last week, I've also gotten a Parasite Eve Poster and a NFL Blitz lenticular card (which is pretty cool). All this got me thinking…

What other premiums have been given away to us greedy game players over the years ?

Now, I'm not talking about the things that were licensed products based on games. Oh no, I'm thinking of only those items that could not have been gotten (or rarely gotten) through means other than game purchases.

Looking around my office, I see a few.

A Mario 64 keychain, Backpack and wallet.

A Final Fantasy VII collector's prepaid phone card.

A Final Fantasy VII T-shirt.

A SNES Stanley Cup Hockey Watch (who's battery is in desperate need of change)

A Donkey Kong Country plastic DK figurine.

A Neo Geo Art of Fighting eraser-like figures.

A Turbografx Devil's Crush coffee mug.

A Mortal Kombat pin from the pre-purchase giveaway.

Several game soundtracks including the one for Road Rash (3DO).

And, stored in a box somewhere, is a Atari 2600 M.A.S.H T-shirt.

This item is the earliest premium I remember receiving for buying a game. I'm sitting here, wracking my brain, trying to remember any premium prior to that. Oh sure, there were the "Buy this machine and get a free copy of a game from this list" offers. But I can't think of any buttons or T-shirts or (heh-heh) game soundtracks from the classic era that were offered to me prior to M.A.S.H. I mean, I didn't have to send away for it, I just took it home with me when I bought the game (And quite a bad game it was. I deserved much more than this lousy shirt for buying a dog like that.)

So I ask you, you who have survived the ravages of time eternal (at least in the video gaming sense), what items have you pillaged since the dawn of time ? What premiums did you receive in exchange for your patronage, your loyalty, your cash from the local purveyors of silicon ? What little nuggets of gaming historia do you have lying around in your coffers ?

What did I miss ?

Please send any lists of interesting items to me at

fcw3@postoffice.ptd.net

I'd love to put together a modern and classic list of freebies for publication in a future copy of this newsletter.

The music has ended. It's time to go.

(Fred Wagaman has been playing games for over 20 years and actively collecting them for almost 10. The 2100 + games that he has takes up most of his home office and living room. He lives in Denver, PA with his understanding wife Jennie and his 2 year-old, button-loving son, Max. He can be mailed at fcw3@postoffice.ptd.net. Fred remembers determining which cereal he would ask for based on the toy inside. Fred believes that fast food restaurants have taken advantage of this tribal memory by their selection of toys in their "Happy Meals".)

Ask the Programmer

Once again Andrew has been gracious enough to answer another question and give us a little more insight into the making of a video game and all the stuff we never know about.

Question-What was the easiest and what was the hardest commercial games you had to program?

Without a doubt, the easiest for me to program was Pacman Jr, and Super Pacman on the C64. When I first taught myself how to program games, it was in BASIC on the Atari 800 back in ooooh... 1980 or so. I did a Pacman variant back then... sort of worked OK, but the pacmen moved

clunk.....clunk.....(I hope you're a slow reader).... clunk.....

This was the point I really realized that I'd have to do it in machine code, so I did a manual line-by line translation to machine code. Worked about 300 times faster; that was a real hoot. Anyway, I'd refined my skills at programming Pacman type games by learning all about graphics, machine code, and pacman logic all at the same time.

Segue to about 6 years later and as a professional programmer I'm asked to do Super Pacman and Pacman Jr (official editions) for the C64. Pretty much a breeze; but for one glitch. I didn't get along with the artists too well back then - my opinion was that our art department - nice guys (even if they did smoke joints in the ladies' loo all the time, and fill the game backgrounds with naked women) - didn't really understand that 16 colours MEANT 16 colours. More often than not, we'd get really great looking art which was completely unusable. So I bitched a lot. With the Pacman stuff, I ended up doing all the art myself, which, if you know me well enough, isn't that surprising ;)

Anyway, there weren't too many dramas on the Pacman front. I always liked that game, though I must admit my versions had pretty much "seek and destroy" logic, whereas I understand the real-thing has some sort of pattern-based logic which could allow you to sit in certain places with immunity. I like the latter idea better - but like all things back then, one had to reverse-engineer stuff, and despite my pleas to the contrary, my boss wouldn't let me go on an extended company-funded research expedition to the local arcades.

The game that really gave me problems was without a doubt Bad Street Brawler on the NES. There are games that were "harder" to program, but this one made me the most miserable. And we're talking pretty damn miserable, let me tell you.

At about the time the C64 was winding down, the NES came along. As Nintendo wanted an absolute fortune to allow you to become a legit NES developer, and we were uh.... cheap.... we reverse-engineered the machine. A brilliant hardware guy (hi Adrian!) was the main guru on this thing, and as part of the reverse-engineering project, he was using a testbed program to trial different ideas, etc. I was working on a C64 game (yes, Bad Street Brawler) at the time, and Adrian was sort of copying the basic idea for his testbed. Fine, no worries.

But come the completion of the C64 version I am handed Adrian's testbed -"finish it"! Now, if you've ever programmed anything, you know what it's like working with other peoples' code. Horrible. But this was horrible taken to another extreme; a testbed program, a homebrew hardware manual full of "don't

know what this is for", and a programmer who's never programmed the machine before, with a tight deadline!

The years have mellowed my opinion of this situation. At the time I was rather critical of Adrian's programming, but to be fair it WAS a testbed, right? In any case, a lot of the comments were about what this caused the machine to do, not what the program was actually trying to do. And I guess I just plain didn't understand how crappy the NES hardware really was. It was all sort of black-magic programming.... "STA V6 ; don't know what this does".

I did manage to complete a basic version of the program, but the whole idea was pretty dumb - a side scrolling beat-em-up clone of a C64 game. The C64 had massive sprites, and the NES ones were teeny-weeny. After about 9 months development, the whole thing was shelved for a better idea. I think I resigned once or twice during that game - the only pay rises I ever got with that company were when I resigned, which was about 5 times, in all. I was pretty unhappy during Bad Street Brawler.

But not as unhappy as I was when, about a year or so later, my boss told me that they'd sold the game to Mattel, it was going to be released after all, and I'd be reworking it to Mattel's satisfaction - dig up the source code. The idea was that this would be the first Powerglove game, and that we'd change it all so that the moves would be powerglove driven. I resigned. Anyway, big pay rise later, and probably about 6 months (my memory is dim - I think this happens with extreme trauma) later... it was done. And now, I don't ever want to talk about this program again.

(Bio: Andrew Davie. Programmer for numerous games on many different platforms including Atari 400/800, C64, NES and SNES. Been making games in the industry from 1984 - present. Currently working on real-time 3D interactive movies. Contact email:adavie@mad.scientist.com)

A Deeper Look At.....

Here is another helping of three more games to take a deeper look at. So enjoy my observations and feel free to agree or disagree with me.

A Deeper Look At....Roc n Rope

This was one of those odd little games I used to enjoy playing on the Colecovision. I really don't know what the attraction is to this game, but I do enjoy playing it. Maybe I have a secret crush on the Bird of Paradise or I just want to see what comes next. I don't know, but I keep coming back to it.

As I eluded to, the game features the one and only appearance of the Bird of Paradise. Think of it as a prettier peacock. This bird flies to the top of a mountain and it is your job to get her. Sounds simple enough. Well, we all know that nothing comes easy in classic video games. This isn't a typical walk up the mountain to free the darling bird, no you have to go back and forth from one ledge to another. If you were a kangaroo, leaping would probably be the choice form of movement, but you are a lowly human and so you need a rope. Hence the name, Roc n Rope. You must take your rope and shoot it into some rock and then climb across. They were pretty clever when it came to naming this game. So you can easily just climb up that mountain and capture the bird.

Well, not quite. What good would a game be without obstacles? Thankfully, this game has a few opponents to keep you busy. They come in the form of dinosaurs and cavemen. Yes, what else would you expect to protect a bird of paradise? These guys of course are deadly to the touch and they will kill you if possible. But wait! You have a trusty weapon to fight them! What is that you say, a gun? No, you don't get any gun. Sorry, but no knife either. You are armed with a.....flashlight! Yesiree, you go to battle with your trusty flashlight. Doesn't exactly evoke fear in a person, does it? Luckily these beasties are scared of light and are easily stunned by it. Look at the bright side, at least they cannot accuse this game of being too violent.

So with your rope and trusty flashlight you must ascend the mountain. Along the way you can find eggs and feathers left behind by this very sloppy bird. While you don't need to collect these (at least I don't think you do, I always grab them because I want a higher score), they do add to the point total. Once you get to the top of the mountain and grab that dirty bird, the game does not end. Nope, it is off to a even more challenging mountain to save the stupid bird once again. A clip of the wings could really ease your life.

All in all, it isn't a great game. Sure the logic behind the weapon choice is enough to have you scratching your head, but I find it a fun game. It is a bit rare, so it isn't your cheapest game, but you can find a Coleco version for around $10-15.

A Deeper Look at.....Spiderman

I always referred to this game as the poor man's Crazy Climber. Both involve climbing up a building. Of course that is about as much as they have in common. But when one costs about $5.00 and the other goes for over $100.00, it is enough to satisfy you for awhile.

Spiderman in his own fashion, does not climb a building in the same way as most people would. Instead he swings up a building with his patented web shooters. This is actually pretty ingenious and I must commend Parker Bros for this. You shoot your webbing and then pull yourself up the building. You can also shoot it at an angle and then swing over to another part of the building. This alone is quite fun and worth the price of admission. Shoot the web and then pull yourself in, sorta like fishing for yourself.

While the web swinging is fun, there is an actual point to this game. Your arch nemesis, the Green Goblin has planted bombs on the building and it is your job to stop it from leveling the building. I personally don't see why the Green Goblin would plant bombs in a building full of his henchmen and why Spiderman would try to stop it, but I guess he must save lives, even the evil ones. As you progress up the building, these little guys pop out the window and try to cut your rope. When they succeed, you are headed to the ground to be pavement graphitti. Of course, you can shoot your web again and save yourself.

The one problem with the game is you cannot actually fight the Green Goblin. Sure he is there and can kill you, but you must just get past him and cannot even lay a glove on him. You can stop his henchmen by touching them and also can stop the bombs that are planted around the building. While the gameplay is limited, it is still a fun game and the graphics are actually quite good. You can tell it is the Green Goblin. I do recommend this game and it is a worthy addition to any collection.

A Deeper Look at....Bump n Jump

This has quickly become one of my favorite Nintendo games. Of all the versions I have played of this game, this is by far my favorite. I even like it more than the MAME version and that is saying alot.

Like Roc n Rope, this is a game whose title is appropriate. You need to drive along this road in a race of sorts and either bump the other cars off the road or jump on top of them. Simple enough to understand.

Of course, the other cars aren't the only obstacles. Here you have one of the worst racing tracks ever devised. I can guarantee it isn't a sanctioned track. Unlike most tracks where a hairpin turn is your worst enemy, this one features jumps over large bodies of water. One wrong move and you are racing the fishes. If this isn't enough there are buildings to leap over. Talk about some real bad planning.

One nice feature is the different levels, so you aren't always riding the same course. Nothing like a change of scenery to get the blood pumping. I especially like the third set.

I like the Nintendo version best because it handles great. You can weave in and out of those cars with great precision and jump those obstacles with no problems. The learning curve is also set just right. It doesn't get too hard too fast like the quarter chomping arcade version. This keeps you from getting discouraged too quickly. The graphics are also as good or very close to the arcade version. Overall, it is a great version and one worthy of adding to a collection. Be warned that it is a hard version to find. Of the thousands of Nintendo games I have come across, this is the only version I have ever seen.

Help Me Identify These

A few years back, I stopped at a garage sale and found a bag full of some odd carts. I bought them due to the fact that they were unique and they were quite cheap. The lady did not have the machine that ran the games and did not know the name of it. So I was in the dark of my discovery.

Over the last few years, I searched to find a picture of them on the net, but to no avail. I asked around and was given all kinds of answers; Emerson Arcadia from Canada, Imagination Machine, some strange European release. But noone ever had an exact answer. The carts themselves, while all boxed, are vague to the system. They are very generic in design with no dates or manufacturers. All they say is "For Use With Home Entertainment Centre MPT-03". The carts are all labeled MG301 to MG313. I do have all thirteen of the series and do not know if there is any others. I have supplied photos of one of the game boxes and another of the cart, rule book and overlays. The carts are shaped like a Super Nintendo game, where they are wider than they are long. Here is a list of the games that I have. As you can see by some of the names, they share the same names of some

Emerson Arcadia games, which makes me believe they may be a imported version. But the cart shape and size is totally different than an Emerson Arcadia, which confuses me.

I did one time see a cart for sale on eBay about two years ago. I contacted the person, but they were not sure of what it was. While I cannot remember how much it went for, I do remember it going for quite a bit.

MG301 Soccer
MG302 Capture (Othello)
MG303 Basketball
MG304 Space Mission
MG305 Baseball
MG306 Alien Invader
MG308 American Football
MG309 Video Chess
MG310 Bowling (3 Dimensions)
MG311 Break Away
MG312 Sea Battle
MG313 Missile War
(I know that MG307 is missing as I couldn't find it at the time of writing this article).

Hallowed Grounds

One thing my wife and myself have in common is the love of video games. While she doesn't collect them, she does love to play them. Problem is she is good at them, real good. It took her no time at all to surpass my best scores at Q*Bert 3 and Mr. Do on the Super Nintendo. Now she has blown my best scores out of the water and they aren't even close. These are two games I excelled at in my youth. While it is great to have the rivalry, she has left the Super Nintendo behind and has set her sights on MAME.

While many men would give their right arm to have a understanding wife when it comes to video games, it can be a bit devastating to see your high scores fall. I have nicknamed her Matilda the Hun as she doesn't stop until she rules the high score charts.

At first it was the sequels of Mr. Do. She now dominates Mr. Do's Castle and it only took her an hour to eliminate my scores on Mr. Do Run Run and Mr. Do's Wild Ride. But now she is headed for hallowed ground! I could overlook the Mr. Do games as they were ones I wasn't all that good at anyway, but now she wants the Zookeeper high score! This means war! Right now she is struggling and after the first day assault, my high scores remain intact. Her highest score to date is 72,000, while my highest is 133,000. I know it is only a matter of time before they fall like so many others, unless I take drastic action. I must increase my game playing to keep her at bay. I must put up scores to save the long standing records.

The biggest fear is once she conquers this, she will head for the most sacred of grounds, my Robotron and Crazy Climber high scores. Stay tuned for more reports on the battle to keep my name from being completely erased from the MAME charts.

Question of the Month

Like last month, I will ask a more direct question. I received the most responses last month of any question. I was also asked if I could compile the responses and give some results. So here are the results of last month's question.

The question was "Has emulators increased, decreased or not affected the time you spend playing consoles"? I received 96 different responses and here is the breakdown.

91 said it has decreased
5 said it increased

Guess that was pretty overwhelming! So with that in mind, here is this month's question:

<u>If you were able to collect all the games for a given system, would you then stop collecting for it and enjoy the collection, sell the collection off, or begin trying to collect different variations of the games (i.e.:label variations, overseas versions, etc...)?</u>

Personally, if I ever complete the Intellivision collection, I will keep it and just enjoy it. It has been fun trying to compile all the games and I really enjoy playing them. I couldn't imagine not owning Diner, Thin Ice and Tower of Doom.

eBay Notes

The latest trend in eBay is the overwhelming amount of Lynx carts that are popping up. We are not talking a handful as is usually the case, we are talking hundreds of them! Of course this is also

sending the prices down for the games. Where a Lynx cart used to fetch near $10.00 and sometimes more in the past, they are now selling for closer to $5.00. What caused all this? Word is that a person bought out a huge stash of Lynx games, much like the O'Sheas lot and are selling them for approximately $3.00 each on the west coast. From what I heard he has literally thousands of them, somewhere like 3000 or more of each title. Whether this is true or not, I cannot say. But with the major influx of titles on eBay, I would guess it isn't far from the truth.

Another trend I have been noticing is that while Atari 7800 games remain cheap, mainly due to O'Sheas, the price of Atari 7800 units is moving up. While you used to be able to get a system and a stack of carts (between 5-7) for $20-$25, that price has almost doubled in the last year. I now see very similar packages going for $40-$50. My guess is that since so many people have taken advantage of the O'Sheas deal for 7800 games, there is a big demand for systems to play these games on. At the present rate, it is not inconceivable to see a 7800 system sell by itself for $50.00 or more. You will also see the price of joysticks moving up fast as they aren't the most reliable. You can add power supplies to that group as they are not compatible with any others. So if you don't have a power supply, you cannot go to Radio Shack and get a new one, like you can for the 2600. As some begin to wear out, you will see the value of these move up, much like Vectrex controllers are always in demand.

What's Happening in the Newsgroups?

There was nothing to really report on in the newsgroups. Hopefully next month there will be more to report on.

Classic Video Game Commercial Tape

One of the items I received over the past month is a video tape full of classic commercials about Video Games. Sean Kelly has compiled a huge collection of these gems and it was a walk down memory lane to watch these. While the quality of some of these were fairly bad, overall it was pretty decent.

You get to see such memorable ones as the George Plimpton Intellivision commercials, the "Have you Played Atari Today" catchphrase, the Wizard of Odyssey and more! These will make you laugh, I guarantee it. Some are so corny and others are truly a product of their times. The Megamania one screams out "MTV". Others are sappy like the "ET" one. There are over a half hour of gems including some stuff you would never find anywhere else. This includes info on the next Odyssey system, the Atari 2600 computer system and the unreleased (and you will see why) Atari Jaguar commercials.

The price is $15.00 plus $3.00 for shipping and it is well worth it! This would be a great party tape and would be a hit. I am sure a few beers would really improve them. I do recommend buying this tape and since supplies are limited, you better hurry! Once they are gone, they are gone forever. To order go to: http://www.xnet.com/~skelly/

Return to Pacland-Chapter 3

AS I watched them patrol their home, I knew I had to pull out some of my tricks to get past them. So I headed back towards the bottom of the screen. It took awhile to get down there, as one does not realize the distance until it is traveled. Once down there, I opened my backpack and pulled out and pulled out an image projector. I placed it down and turned it on. There against the back wall was projected an image of Pacman. I fumbled quickly to resize it and then turned on a tape player of game sounds of Pacman eating dots. I then quickly ran off as the "wacka wacka" sounds could be heard echoing through the maze. I ran for the side and moved my way up towards the house.

As I predicted, the ghosts headed over to attack their enemy. Once they moved off, I headed for the house and jumped in. While I had no idea what to expect, I could never in a million years fathom the sights that laid before me. First off, the house may look small, but it is HUGE! I mean it was cavernous! But that was only a small part of the shock. Inside the home was an enormous pile of bones. As I went over and pulled one of the skeletons out, I noticed it was a skull attached to a very long spine. It was curved in shape and after a quick view, I realized it belonged to a Pacman. How many of these Pacman have died in the years? I couldn't begin to count the skeletons, but I noticed there were different shaped ones. Some were very small and some were quite large. There was even some beanies and bows laying around. I couldn't control myself and felt a dizziness overcoming me.

As I continued to look around, I saw tunnels that led off to somewhere else. The whole area was very dark, only illuminated by some glowing rocks that seemed to line the room. I quickly typed in "Get me the hell out of here!" on the computer. As I waited for the message, I saw the ghosts begin to pour into the room. I knew there were only a few seconds for him to beam me out before I would join the pacmen who have gone before me. As they neared me, I felt a terror going up my spine. The hair on the back of my neck stood on end as I saw the great creatures bearing down on me. Suddenly, I was transported away, with a second to spare! As I landed back in our world, I fell to my knees and thanked the man upstairs to be out of there. That is one place I did not want to return to.

As I regained my composure, we opened the backpack to take out the dots and analyze them. But as

I dug through the backpack, I found they were mysteriously absent. I know I put them in there and at no time could I think of an opportunity where I could have lost them. My only guess is that they do not exist outside of their world and so when I left it, they ceased to exist. My only hope is that the same holds true with the ghosts. If they could exist here and found a way to enter our world, who knows what havoc they could wreak.

The End

Finale

Once again the newsletter comes to a close. While it isn't as large as the past issue, it still is quite large. I hope you enjoyed it and hope to hear your comments, good or bad. As always, we are looking for contributors and welcome your articles. Tune in next month when I will give you a taste of what is to come in the video game market. With the market for classic games growing, we will see some changes in the market. Some will be good and some won't. I will give you a quick preview of what to expect and what to watch out for. Our little world is going to change and we must prepare for it.

Tom Zjaba

(All pictures provided by the Digital Press CD. Possibly one of the best deals out there. To get your own copy, go to http://www.xnet.com/~skelly/ or http://digitpress.com and order one).