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How to Setup and Play MAME

One of the questions I get asked many times each month is how to get MAME to work. Many people are looking for a certain game they enjoyed in their youth and when they hear about MAME, they get really excited and rightfully so! With over 1000 games to choose from, who wouldn't be excited about MAME? And with a price of FREE, you cannot argue with it. So with this article, I am going to try and help you to get connected to MAME and to play it.

First off, for anyone who is not familiar, MAME stands for Multiple Arcade Machine Emulator and as it sounds, it is an emulator that allows you to play a multiple of arcade machines, just like they were at the arcades. Even better than that, there has been some games released that were never at the arcades, prototype. Games like "Faster, Harder, More Challenging Q*Bert, Arcade Classic (with Centipede 2 and Missile Command 2) and others. These are games that you would never had a chance to play without MAME. Also, some games that were changed and unless you had the hard to find original arcade machine, you would never had a chance to play like Jungle King and the original Tapper.

You may ask where you can get MAME at. There are many sites that carry the MAME program and the roms. Not all sites carry the roms and some have some of the roms and others have all of them. Please note that many of the sites have links to the roms as opposed to having the roms. Just click below to go directly to these sites

http://www.vintagegaming.com
http://www.arcadeathome.com
http://www.classicgaming.com
http://www.emuhq.com
http://www.emux.com

These are just a few of the hundreds of sites out there. But these are ones that I have been to and can recommend.

How to set up MAME.

1.Download MAME program
2. Unzip MAME. (When you unzip MAME, you will see a bunch of folders as well as the main programs. These are the folders and what they mean:

*Artwork-This folder is where you put any background artwork you download. They should be left zipped. Some games like Armor Attack and Asteroids Deluxe have backgrounds you can put in that enhances the gameplay)

*cfg-This stands for configure and this is the folder that will keep track of the different control configurations for the different games.

*hi-This is where all the files for the high scores is stored. If a friend of yours comes over and smokes your best high score, you can find the file here and erase it ;)

*inp-I have no idea.

*Memcard-Not sure on this one either, don't worry about it.

*Roms-This is where you put the rom files of the games you want to play.

*Samples-This is where you put the sound samples at. Some games require additional sound files, especially games that use speech. Download them and put them here, zipped.

*Snap-This is where pictures of the games is stored. This way in the right hand side, you can see a picture of the game. You can make a snapshot of a game by hitting the "F12" button during gameplay.

*Sta-State files are saved here.

3. Download ROMs (these are the individual games)
4. Place these roms, zipped (you do not need to unzip them, a great feature of MAME as it saves you time and space), into the file named "Roms"
5. Double click on the file named "mame.exe"
6. Then select the game you want and double click on it (you may have to go up to the view menu and hit refresh. This will help it find the files you added. Whenever you add new files, you may want to do this).
7. Follow the onscreen instructions.
8. When the games is completely loaded, hit the "3" key. This will load in the credits.
9. Hit the "1" key for a one player game or the "2" key for a two player game.
10. When you are done with the game, hit the "ESC" key to come back to the main screen.

Controls

The arrow keys move you up, down, left and right.
The "Ctrl" key is button one.
The "Alt" key is button two.
The "Space Bar" is button three

Additional Tips

*Here are some extra tips for you. By hitting the "Tab" key when the main screen is up, you can get into a menu where you can do different things, including setting what keys you want. When you get in the screen where they ask for you to set the keys, all you have to do is move down to the key you want to change and hit the "Enter" key, which will clear it. Then hit the key you want to replace it and you are done. You can also find in this section where you can calibrate your joystick, if you are using one.

*If you want to stop the game in progress (for bathroom breaks, drink of soda, whatever) then hit the "P" key for pause. There is something they didn't have at the arcades!

*Keep in mind that a new version of MAME comes out about every two weeks. With each new version, you get more games available and some older games get fixed. But also some games get merged, which essentially means that there are more than one version of them out there and they put them all into one folder. So if you load a new version of MAME, then you need to check to see if any of the games you have are updated (or merged). If they are, you need to download the new rom and replace it with the older one, in order for it to work. So if you are one to constantly update your MAME, you need to do a little work.

*On the main MAME screen, you may want to explore the drop down menus. In the views menu, you will find different choices for how to display your roms. You can choose for it to only show the games you have roms for or for all the available games.

*To play MAME, you need a decent computer. I would estimate at least a 166 MHZ to play the more basic games and at least a 300 MHZ if you want to play the more modern games like Street Fighter and Smash TV. Also having a fair amount of RAM will help out. I

personally have a 433 MHZ with 64 meg of raam and it runs everything fine.

*One way to get better speed is to use the DOS MAME. It runs quicker than the Windows version. If you are like me and loathe DOS, then download the Arcade@Home front end, which uses the DOS MAME and runs in windows! It also has alot of other nice features! By far the best front end out there!

Hope this helps you out. I tried to cover many of the different aspects of MAME and to make using it as easy as possible. If you are having trouble, just email me and I will do my best to help you! MAME is a wonderful program and a Godsend for arcade junkies like me who do not have the room or the mechanical ability to have a bunch of arcade games. Plus, some of my favorite games are very rare and hard to find, not to mention expensive (it costs $100-$300 just to have an arcade machine shipped to you, if it is out of state). So MAME gives me the next best thing and for free, who can complain? I say a prayer of thanks everyday for MAME and for people like Nicola Salmoria and the rest of the MAME team. Without their efforts, it would not be possible.

MAME Reviews

This month, I decided to do reviews of a couple of cool two player games. Since my son, Joshua (only three and already a big game nut) loves to play them, I play more of them than many other games. So here is my review of two great two player games!

Golden Axe

This is one of the games that wasn't only popular at the arcades, but also on the Sega Genesis. It is your basic side scroller where you move along and fight different enemies in the Double Dragon mode. While it is a pretty good one player game, it is a really good two player game! It is always more fun to have a buddy to guard your back! The old "me and you against the world" scenario is what makes this game.

While some of the side scrolling fighters of this era had little story, Golden Axe delivers lots of story for you. You have to make your way across this wild land and save innocent people from orcs, giants, skeletons and more as you make your way to defeat the Death Adder. Along the way, the story slowly unfolds as you go from town to town. While it isn't any Oscar caliber story, it is fun and keeps you interested.

The villains are varied and some are downright tough! This game is the typical quarter eater, you know the type that get very tough, so you have to keep pouring the money in. While most of the bad guys are pretty basic, there are a few who are pretty cool. Plus, some come riding on dragons and these goofy looking, but deadly chickens. They aren't really chickens, but they look like some hybrid of a chicken to me. A neat feature is once you knock the villain off the animal, you can hop on and ride them. They each have a powerful attack, the chicken has a tail whip and the dragons either breath fire or shoot fireballs. These long range weapons can be quite effective in saving yourself. But be careful, if the creature gets hit too many times (with each hit, you are booted from it), it will run off. No animal likes to be abused and dragons and mutated chickens are no different.

Another nice feature is the magic. You can pick up these up, mainly by beating the tar out of these little thieves. You will be sleeping when these little buggers pop up. Just kick the daylights out of them and they toss magic potions and sometimes food that replenishes your hit points. A nice feature is each of the three different characters has unique magic and it gets stronger and more unique as you have more magic.

While with most of these side scrolling games, there isn't alot of replay value. There is only one way to go, so there is no branching story or anything like that to keep you coming back. This game does have one feature that encourages repeat playing, a rating system. Based on how many times you need to restart the game to finish it, you are rated. The fewer men or women used, the better your score. Of course, you need to finish the game to see your score. There is also a cute little animation at the end of the game.

All in all,. it is a very enjoyable two player game. Once you finish it a few times, you probably won't play it much, but it is always good to bring out when friends are over. Just watch out as you can hurt the other opponent.

Simpsons

Bet you thought I was going to review Gauntlet next, right? Sorry, I decided to review the arcade version of one of my favorite television shows. The Simpsons game captures some of the wackiness of the television show and it should be commended for this. Many of the characters from the show pop up in the many, many levels of the game (I played through at least 7 and the game wasn't over yet). Just about every character from the television show (up to the point of this game) are in there, including some of my favorites like the comic store owner and the three eyed fish!

In this game, you choose from four different Simpsons characters to be. At the arcade, you could have up to four players. While I guess you could on MAME, some fingers are going to get tied up on that keyboard. The characters are the main Simpsons family members, Homer who uses his fists, Marge and her sweeper, Bart and his skateboard and Lisa and her deadly jump rope. No sexism here. As you make your way through the game, you will find that besides your chosen weapon, you can also pick up items to throw at enemies. There are all kinds of things to grab and throw and the amount of interactivity is astounding! Shake a tree and get an apple for health. Shake it too many times and a creature pops out and tells you to leave it alone. There are also little surprises all over. Go by a door and hit the action button and see what happens. There are all kinds of surprises and you will need to play a few times to see all of them.

Between some levels, there are mini games. Most are ones where you must hit the controllers as fast as possible to fill a balloon or something. The better you finish, the more points you get. While nothing groundbreaking, they are a nice change of pace (and will make the purchase of a new keyboard a priority).

Like I said earlier, the game is huge! Each level is very, very large and there are many of them! This is one game that will make you happy there is a pause button. One nice thing is that each level is different and there are lots of surprises to be found. This and wanting to see what other characters there are is what will drive you. The fighting is average and the novelty of fighting with a vacuum cleaner or a jump rope wears off quickly. Also, the funny little things the characters say will wear thin real fast. I wish they would vary these more as you soon get sick of hearing the same one liners over and over and over.

The best thing about having the Simpsons on MAME is now you will not have to spend a fortune to see the end of it. At the arcade, it would have taken at least $10.00 in quarters to finish the game, unless you were some super game player. Now you can continue until you are tired of it. Plus, you can go back and make sure you discovered everything without spending a small fortune!

Classic Game Joke Contest!

For the holidays, I am going to offer a contest! I am looking for the best, original joke dealing with classic video games. It can be a knock! knock! joke, a riddle, whatever, just make it funny and make it about classic video games. The only rules are that it must be clean (no dirty Ms Pacman jokes, you can send them, but they won't count for the contest) and they must be original. None of those lame jokes from the Pacman joke book. So send in as many as you like and I will post the best ones!

You ask what the winner gets? Well, the winner will get himself an authentic "Barnstormers" patch from Activision! It may not be the original way to earn it, but times have changed! Where else can you get an Activision patch for a joke? So get them riddles and jokes together and email to me at tomheroes@earthlink.net. By the way, everyone is welcome to enter, including people who live in other countries and people who contribute to this newsletter! We exclude noone but myself! Plus, I can afford to mail this patch to the anywhere the US Postal service delivers to (if you live on a the top of Mount Everest or another planet, you must come and pick the prize up).

Here are few jokes I made myself to get you into the spirit. These jokes are not acceptable, so please don't send them to me. Have fun and win a patch!

1. Why did the chicken cross the road?

Because you are playing Freeway, stupid!

2. What did the beatnik say to his family when they were getting ready for their vacation?

Like Pac-man

Vector Flashback

By Fred Wagaman

The year was 1983. I was working as a Programmer/Analyst at the Americana Hotels Data Center located in the Host Farms Resort and Convention Center. It was a mere 2 miles from home. After working there for a couple of years, I had gotten tired of having my lunch in the Coffee Shop, so I'd come home, make myself a sandwich, turn on MTV and power up my Vectrex for an hour's worth of Web Wars and/or Minestorm before having to return to my desk. Ahh the fond memories…

Why do I bring this up now ?

Because for a brief period of time, I was taken back to those days.

I just received the latest Vectrex game. Yes, that's right. There is a new Vectrex game.

John Dondzila has put together a retro-classic in his latest release of games for the Vectrex. This collection, referred to as "Vecmania", contains 3 new games, 3 "remixes" of previous releases and 2 demos. All are modeled after classic games.

The game comes packaged in a plastic case with a full-color, wrap-around cover. The game itself is in a modified Intellivision game case. It is signed and numbered with a full color label on the front.

The first new game is Star Fire Spirits. The inspiration for this game is Star Wars:The Arcade Game. It is a multi level, first person space shooting game. If you ever played Star

Wars, this game will be immediately familiar. You start with 6 shields. As you are hit by enemy fire, you lose your shields. The game itself consists of three levels. The first is an open space level that has enemy fighters attacking you. You can destroy the ships as well as their shots. The second level has you flying over the surface of the “Dark Planet” avoiding enemy fire and shooting its bases and towers. The third level takes you down a heavily guarded trench where the ultimate target is the reactor shaft that will destroy the Dark Planet once and for all (or until the next level starts).

This is as close as we’ll ever get to Star Wars on the Vectrex. Sure, the enemy ships only come towards you and there isn’t the dogfight feel to the first level. Big deal. Given the limitations of the Vectrex, having a game this close to the real thing is a feat in itself. The surface and trench levels are very good. It’s hard to protect yourself from enemy fire. You must hit the enemy’s shot in the middle to destroy it. And it’s coming at you pretty quick. Six shields can go pretty quick.

The second new game is Repulse. I believe that this game is modeled after Reactor. Your ship is in an arena with a large, rotating fortress. There is an opening in the fortress. If you shoot straight down the opening you can destroy it. Inside the fortress is a smaller ship that will come out and shoot you if you take too long. This smaller ship can be destroyed, but not without hitting it multiple times. Your ship can also be destroyed if it comes in contact with the fortress. To make matters worse, there is an escort ship that can’t destroy you with its shots, but can make your ship bounce around the arena. Remember the part about what happens when you come in contact with the fortress ? You got it. That escort ship ends up frequently ricocheting you to an untimely demise.

Now maybe it’s my lack of skill or patience. But I found this game too frustrating to play for very long. Even with 4 ships and many games, I never came close to destroying the fortress. I did succeed in bouncing the escort ship into the fortress and destroying it, but it doesn’t stay dead long. With the other games on this cart, I don’t think I’ll be finding myself playing this one too often. One unusual thing with this game that I liked was the shooting process. The longer you held down the button, the farther the shot went. You can’t just keep hitting the fire button and expect to get anywhere in this game. That’s probably the secret. I’ll have to try that later.

The third new game is Birds of Prey. Fans of Phoenix and Demon Attack will love this game. There are 5 levels. Your ship is always at the bottom of the screen and can be moved left and right. You have your fire button and a temporary shield. When you activate your shield, you cannot move. And you shield takes a while to recharge. The first two levels have a formation of aliens at the top of the screen. Individual aliens will drop out of formation and attack you. The second two levels have formations of birds swooping above your ship. These birds can only be destroyed if you hit them in the center. The last level puts your puny little ship against the alien mothership and it’s escort. You must fire up the center of the ship, take out the shield and destroy the mother alien.

This is probably my favorite game on this cartridge. The control is dead on and the enemy attack's seem balanced. If I have a complaint, it is that the attacking enemies on the first 2 levels sometimes will go below your ship and back up into you. But believe me, that should be considered a minor complaint compared to the overall joy that this game gives.

This next segment of the cart could probably be called "John Dondzila's Greatest Hits". These three games are improvements on John's previous releases. Vector Vaders seems to have no flicker, the rocks in Rockaroids do spin and move at a quicker pace and Patriots didn't seem any different than the single cart version (although according to the instructions, multichannel sound has been added to it). Including these games on this cart is a real treat for the people that don't already own them. It's nice for those of us that do because of the improvements and the flexibility of having them easily selectable.

The last two things on the cart are demos of Abyss (Tempest) and Disc Duel (Discs of Tron). Both of these games show tremendous promise, but the desire by the author to complete them was lost along the way. Both are nice to have, but I wouldn't recommend getting this cart based on these demos. Think of them as the after dinner mint of a fine meal.

How much would you pay for something like this ? Seventy five ? Fifty ? How's about $20. That's it. Twenty bucks. You'll get more enjoyment out of this collection than most of the commercial games out there today. Bottom line = Buy this cart. Now.

The details are on John's website at <http://www.monmouth.com/~pcjohn/>

(Fred has been playing games for over 25 years and actively collecting them for over 10. The 2400+ games in his collection takes up most of his home office and living room. He lives in Denver, PA with his understanding wife Jennie, his 4 year old, button-loving son Max and his newly acquired 4th player, Lynzie. He sincerely wishes that some of the other creators of new games for dead systems (like the Lynx and Jaguar) would take a cue from John Dondzila and make their games at reasonable prices.)

Life and Video Games - The Philosophical Similarities

Life and video games are alot alike. While this may sound like a bunch of cow droppings, listen and learn. I originally came up with this divine enlightenment when I read Fred Wagaman's "Robotron and Life" article back in issue #26 of Retrogaming Times. It inspired me and I then took it to a higher level, why stop at Robotron, when classic games in general imitate life so closely? If you thought Fred was a bit odd after reading his article, you will probably have me committed after this one. But I am ready for the straightjacket and the rubber room! So read on and see if I am right or totally insane.

1. **No Matter How Good You Are, You Are Going To Die**-Space Invaders, Galaxian, Zaxxon, even Pong are much like life. No matter how good a player you are, no matter how much practice you had, you are going to die. Your game will come to an end, it is inevitable. Same with life! No matter how rich you are, or how healthy or talented, you will die. It is inevitable.

2. **There Is No Such Thing As A Free Ship**-One of the big things in classic games is that if you achieve a certain score, you get a free guy, another chance. But that man, ship, turn, whatever is not free. You cannot get it unless you pay to play. As the old saying goes, there is no such thing as a free lunch, same goes with video games. For you wise apples who say you can win a free game at Pinball or Mr Do, again you must pay to play in order the have that opportunity.

Now you MAME players may say that you can play all you want for free, but that is not true. That computer wasn't free, neither is the electricity. Someone is paying for it as was the time and energy spent making MAME available. So there really is no such thing as a free game or ship.

3. **Fame Is Fleeting**-As many washed up actors, athletes and musicians can attest to, fame is indeed very fleeting. Same with video games. One day you are the Burgertime champ and have your initials on the machine to prove it. Then they turn it off and there

goes your claim to fame.

4. **There is Always Someone Better**-No matter how strong or smart you are, there is someone out there that can lift more, think faster, drive better and play video games better. Out of 6 billion people, it is inevitable that someone is better than you, so just live with it. You may think you are the Zaxxon champ or Galaga king, but someone, somewhere can do better.

I know this is depressing, but that is life, so deal with it. Go play a few games of Q*bert and you will feel better. Always works for me.

THE GREAT WHITE NORTH OF RETROGAMES - ATARI 2600 PART TWO - ATARI & ACTIVISION

by Ryan Harrison

Atari

Atari manufactured game carts themselves are nothing special in Canada - if you picked up an American purchased version of an Atari game and a Canadian version of the same game, you'd find nothing different. The difference comes in the box, and the box itself. Atari had to follow the "Bill 101" laws of Canada, and decided to bring in packaging and instructions from Europe that were already in 5 or 6 languages including French and English. If you haven't seen a 5 or 6 language instruction manual for Atari, it's horrible! First you have to find your language, then since they had to put every language on each page, it made it a long, tedious task to read a couple lines, move to the next page and find the English, read some more, next page, etc. The coolest thing from Atari when I was a kid wasn't from Canada, but the United States. After a vacation in the US (and some Atari 2600 games purchased) I had a games catalogue! This Atari games catalogue was looked at over and over by myself and friends - it held dozens of games we never saw before, and just amazed us for awhile.

American kids probably had dozens of these catalogues, but if you sent them up to Canada during that time, you would have made alot of kids happy! It is extremely hard to find a NTSC 5/6 language box in Canada by Atari, the instructions are easier to find, and the game carts themselves are nothing new or special for the Atari 2600 collector.

Activision

Activision games are pretty popular in Canada - I think because they were the only 3rd party to challenge Atari in Canada on a large scale. Activision games came under the "INTERNATIONAL EDITION" format. They had multiple languages on the carts, instructions, and boxes - and that's all you got with your game. No special "badge" offers, just the straight goods. The cartridge labels are very jumbled with language, and then to not confuse the carts with the PAL version at the Activision plants, they slap this ugly "N" sticker over the label covering information - it was a pretty dumb move - they should have either had separate PAL and NTSC labels, or left a space for this extra label.

INTERNATIONAL EDITION

Activision games are available in Canada, and the US rarity for the games is the same as the Canadian rarity - except for the later releases which I haven't been able to find unless it is English Only. It was around 1984 that Activision games for the 2600 in Canada started to disappear off shelves and were replaced with Activision games for the then hugely popular Commodore 64.

(Ryan Harrison is a 21 year-old collector from Brantford, Ontario, Canada, who grew up on a constant diet of Atari 2600, Commodore 64, Nintendo, and Game Boy. Known locally as the guy "who keeps wasting quarters on that old Ms. Pac-Man game" at the local bar, he's the Sumguy you'll run into at the local Thrift in Southern Ontario looking for new stuff for his collection and hopes Bira Bira will find him Sumgirl that will take part of his mind off retrogames. He currently makes his own "label variations" as a Packaging Engineer with 3M Canada. Ryan can be contacted at ryan.harrison@home.com)

Check back next month when we focus on Atari 2600 variations in Canada from Coleco and look at CBS.

Truckin'

(Apologies to those that think this is going to be about the Inty game, and those who make their living off of the Transportation industry)
By Geoff Voigt

The date was November 18, 1999. I was on my way home from another Collector meet with the rest of the So-Cal bunch on the 17th, and a day of spending time with other friends in the Metropolitan LA area. As I was driving up the California State Highway 15 North, I was overcome with the need for some Polish Kielbasa and Eggs; stemming no doubt from the same devilish and masochistic part of my brain that still makes me play 2600 Pac-Man and Donkey Kong deep into the night at certain times. I made my usual turnoff onto the 395 North, and right there is the quintessential Truck Stop, goes by the name of The Outpost. I felt that it would be better for me to satiate my newfound need for Henfruit (cool term, huh? I got it from their menu..) and ground meat by-products right here, for where else can you get such a dish without getting odd looks from your waitress, but at a lone stop such as this? Nope, didn't think you'd come up with any other place.

When you enter the Outpost, it looks just like all the other truck stops you see in movies and television; the Orange vinyl seats and swiveling stools, the fading wood veneer on top of a particle board counter, the open rafters with florescent lights before them, the gumball dispensers still selling "Super Colossal", and Chicklets, and the familiar bank of blue and steel pay phones, but now able to take calling cards with a simple slide through the magnetic reader; the only visible concession to modern times. I decided to sit down at the counter, in a sparsely populated section; my view being a 10 gallon coffee maker that I guesstimated as having been servicing the transportation industry since about 1978.

Soon after I sat down, I was joined by some Truckers who sat around me, but my guess was that they really just wanted to let the road stop moving for a few minutes. The one to my immediate right, whose name I later found out was Clive (I am not making his name up; no matter how much you'd expect 'Clive' to be rolling 18 on the highways) took a look at me in my long sleeve green shirt, gray trousers, and Penny loafers, and made a very good observation: "You're not pulling a load, are you son?"

(I thought I was pulling a load; I had at least 4 boxes of miscellaneous Classic gaming materials in my trunk, but nowhere near the amount he was moving)

Clive was a big enough man, in a Black vest over a white T-shirt and jeans, with a Jack Daniels Baseball cap covering his graying hair. Clive deserved an answer. "No sir, just needed some coffee and dinner"

"You coming from the Vegas fight?" There apparently had been a Heavyweight title bout the night before; Holyfield -vs- Lennox? I didn't, and still don't, know who it was, let alone who actually won.

"Actually, no, I'm coming back from two days in LA after attending a meeting with others who have the same hobby as I do"

"And what's that?" It was an inevitable question.

"I collect the older video games; from about 1975-1984"

"Well that's a danged fool weird way to spend your time!"

"Well as you can probably tell, I grew up playing all those games, and now I can get all the ones I wanted back then."

"But why spend all your time trying to get the old ones when you can just go get yourself a Nuntindo and play the newer ones? It'd be whole helluvlot easier timewise?"

"There's something different about the older ones, something I like."

"You are a strange one.. what's your'e name, son?"

"Geoff"

"Well, Geoff, (by the way, I'm Clive, howdyado?), one of the things I've learned from travelling is that things don't change as much we think. But you're welcome to continue with your huntin'"

My Eggs and Polish came at about this time. There's nothing like a pile of cholesterol, Nitrates, and fried potatoes with more coffee to tell your arteries, "Hey, I care..." :/

Clive was tucking into his salad as well around the time I was eating; for a minute or two I thought my small conversation was over, but the end of his salad bowl proved me wrong.

"There was one game I liked from back then; that one with the Gorilla? You ever heard of that one?"

"Donkey Kong?"

"No! I said the one with the gorilla!"

Neither Clive nor I need an argument right now; discretion is the better part of valor; especially when you are grossly outnumbered....

"Hmmm.. I'll have to try to find the one you're talking about."

"Remember, it has a gorilla climbing the screen!"

"I'll keep my eye out for it."

"I liked Pac-Man..."

This came from the far corner of the restaurant; the one thing you forget that other lone diners do is listen in on other conversations.

"Pac Man, that big yellow game with the eating maze"

"Oh geez! That one was fun too!" Clive got the name right on that one, at least.

"Yeah, I can get most of those games, they're easy enough to find"

"So lemme get this straight, you travel the country, looking for these old video games?"

"Well no, not the country, but I do travel the surrounding area."

"For these older games that you play on a TV"

"Yep."

"Your'e not married, are you?"

"Ummm... no."

"Figures. I'm divorced, she didn't like all that travelling I did, but it was for work, and you do this for fun?"

"Uh huh."

"You kids today.."

The arrival of Clive's Meat Loaf and Mashed Potatoes saved me from further beratement, but by now the others were interested in picking my brain, I don't know If I had a big neon sign flashing "FRESH MEAT" behind my head, or if it was the fact that I was someone new to speak to. The Grilling had just shifted from back in the kitchen to at the counter, and I was the one sizziling. I had other diners just walk up and join in on the queries.

"Can these old games play on a Game Boy?"

"Some of the older games have been made for it, yes."

"Is Pong a Video Game?"

(Don't laugh; this one was asked)

"Very much so; one of the first"

The Waitress got into it. Dear Lord, help this lone soul!

"Will those games go up in value like my Beany Babies?"

(I hope you all appreciate just how much self control it took for me to not collapse laughing after she asked me this one. Besides, she had the ablility to pour not just Hot, but Blazing Hot Coffee on my lap if I did.)

"Maybe slowly, over the course of 50 years"

There were more people looking at my interrogation while enjoying their Chicken Fried Steak or Chili, but I had a feeling they were just liking the bonus spectator sport for a change.

After answering questions like that, the fact comes full in your face, and this wasn't the first time I had it brought to my attention; this hobby isn't exactly the most obvious one to the general public. While it's true that Classic gaming has made many inroads into the gaming and collecting field, the average person would have no inkling as to what we do.

Sometimes we spend so much time talking with other collectors and using "ER", "R", "Proto", and "Emulator" in our speech that we have to stop and look at what we do through different eyes.

As Clive sopped up the last of his gravy with his dinner roll, I was paying my bill. He looked at me and gave me a small question that still rises up from the back of my brain every so often, right next to Kielbasa and Pac-Man.

"Hey Geoff,"

"Yeah Clive?"

"What'chya gonna do after you get all the games?"

"That, my friend, will take a very long time"

"True enough, but it's bound to happen, if you stay with it."

Words of hope, and thoughts from the need for grease. Isn't the American highway system wonderful?

(Geoff Voigt's colon has yet to forgive him for that particular stop. But oddly enough, he has yet to play a marathon session of Pac-Man or Donkey Kong on his 2600 ever since eating that particular dish. Inquiries in the state of his digestive tract can be sent to <gvoigt@ridgecrest.ca.us>)

The Perfect Holiday Gift - 2600 Elmo

by Alan Hewston

Listen to your 2600 digitize Elmo's voice in **Elmo's Sing-Along Guessing Game.**

Word is that this new cart will ship in time for the holidays. Order yours, as supplies are limited. Don't wait to find one in your local thrift store. Tomorrow's Heroes expects their shipment by 11/31/99. Price was TBD at press time. Look forward to my review of this, the latest 2600 CCW video game after the holiday season. I can see the TV advert now; Elmo and Mr. Noodle sneak into your home fire up the venerable 2600. But will this Elmo game be a flop like the ET cart?

Now, the inspiration behind this obvious spoof. My 2 year-old daughter Samantha has just begun to play the children's games for the Atari 2600. It is really neat, because she doesn't need awesome graphics to enjoy time spent with Daddy. I help her move Big Bird, Cookie, Ernie, Oscar, and (Sammy's personal favorite) Mickey on the screen. The joystick makes Mickey the odds on favorite to win out in the long run. Before and after each game, I show and tell her who is the character for that cart. My big thrill came when Mommy, (the unbeliever, tired of Daddy's ever-growing collection) found out that Sammy knew them all - including Ernie.

This was really cool, because Ernie is not seen on the label, and not much in the game either. He's just a puny sprite when the Alpha ship beams him down to the planet. I wish that I had my camcorder rolling.

Later that night, while cleaning carts to add to my collection, Samantha decided to help. She appeared a bit disappointed after looking at them all. "Where Elmo, Pluto, Minnie . . . ?" Ah, the innocence of youth, wide-eyed, thinking that Daddy's games are ALL based upon her toddler heroes. But, no 2600 ELMO game. Had the crash occurred a little later, the CCW Character, Elmo (born in 1984?) would have been a hit on the home video game systems of that era.

(Alan, when not playing with his daughter, can be reached at hewston95@stratos.net. {still looking for 2600 Pigs in Space]. Samantha was disappointed that the Elmo label peeled back, but excited to see "Cookie" underneath. A 2600 Cookie Monster Munch in disguise. Elmo, Elmo, Where Elmo?)

The Future of Game Collecting!

by William Cassidy

"My friends, we are all interested in the future, for that is where you and I will spend the rest of our lives... and my friends, future events such as these will affect you in the future... my friends, we cannot keep this a secret any longer, my friends."

These words of famous futurologist Criswell (bonus points if you know what movie that's

from) serve as my introduction to what will be a series of Retrogaming Times articles wherein I will try to predict the future of the classic videogame collecting hobby, an article series that will gain me international notoriety since it starts with what may be the longest run-on sentence in history. In the articles, I'll offer my insights on the future of finds, collectors, prices, all while attempting to inject a little humor into things. For, as we move into the new millennium, the year 2000, the glorious undiscovered country of what is to come, the great expanse of possibilities will unfold before us like so many untraveled roads that stretch forward into the infinite horizon of life, or whatever.

Part 1 - The Future of Finds
Many doomsayers believe that classic games will soon become as impossible to find in thrift stores and flea markets as unsoiled underwear (not that I've looked or anything). Gone will be the days of picking up half a dozen ER games for a quarter apiece. Gone will be those times when you walked out of Goodwill carrying a dizzying tower of plastic cartridges, laughing triumphantly while blaring trumpets accompanied your exit (actually the sound of a Tijuana Brass album being tried out on an old record player).

Unfortunately, I have to agree at least partially with the doomsayers. "Doom, doom!" I say. But it's really not the end of the world.

Finds will dry up. For some collectors, in certain areas, this has already happened. The reason has to do with the source of thrift store games: the people who donate them. Most people who give away items to places like Goodwill stash stuff in the garage or the attic until their storage area explodes from overstuffing or they decide to do some spring cleaning, then they donate the whole lot. Then a collector buys the games, and they're out of thrift circulation, unless they're all Combats (which they are half the time). This cycle can continue as long as the masses still have old games lying around to donate. (The cycle of perpetual Combats will probably continue long after the sun has burned down to charcoal.)

Say about 20+ years ago, people were more likely to hang onto what they

considered old junk. Think of your grandparents. They probably had lots of old things hanging around their attic that they've accumulated over the years. Some things they kept intentionally, other things they just never got around to throwing away. Other things they kept to conceal the bodies (your grandparents were kind of weird). They were able to do this because they probably lived in the same house for most of their lives. People didn't move around then as much as they do today. Now, thanks to corporate downsizing and job transfers, people are forced to move frequently. Government statistics indicate most people move something like 30,000 times before they are 40 years old. They're not likely to want to haul around old gaming items (or bodies) they no longer want.

Since most potential donators of classic gaming items are the parents of children who played them in the early '80s, they are probably at least 40 years old. This means that most of them have probably moved in the past 10 years, or the period in which the games have fallen into disuse. That says to me that the 10-15 years following the demise of the classics (read "Crash of 1984") was probably when people donated their games, and thus the best period for finds. 1999 marked the 15th year after the Crash. Our "boom period" is drawing to a close, and we can probably expect finds to trickle off in the coming years.

We can express this mathematically using the numbers cited above: 40 years old + 15 years + 30,000 moves + 1984 Crash This gives us 32039, which is an interesting figure in that it tells us absolutely nothing.

That said, it's impossible to predict the exact timing of events. People have no limit to how long they can procrastinate, and there are probably still a sizable number of folks who have old games stashed in their attics. Who knows when they'll get around to cleaning them? And of course there's always the occasional old pack-rat who lives under a pile of junk in his living room, and whose games won't see the light of day until he dies, crushed under a pile of old milk bottles and cereal boxes he's saved since 1929.

Eventually his stuff will enter the market too (look for the "Crazy old pack-rat milk bottle special" on eBay). So I'm sure we'll see fairly regular "brag" posts in r.g.v.c. for the next 5

years at least. Even after that, there may never come a time when no one EVER finds any classic gaming stuff, it just won't be that often...

BRAG POST OF THE FUTURE:
From: cOlLeCtOr WhOsE CaPs LoCk KeY iS bRoKeN
Date: 06/25/2025
Subject: BRAG!!!

Hey guys, you won't believe it, but today I hit the Goodwill/Wal-Mart/Target Super Mega Conglom-O-Mart and Thrift Store, and under the usual piles of Playstation 12 datasolids (no one uses them now that Playstation 13 is out), I couldn't believe what I saw: black plastic rectangles?! 2600 CARTRIDGES?!?!?! Yep, they actually had Asteroids, Combat, Warlords, etc. I already had em but I bought 'em for old time's sake. Only set me back $50 too (#%!@$ inflation!) Haven't been this jazzed about thrifting since '07!*

As this imaginary message clearly proves, profanity symbols are funny no matter where you see them. That and classic games will turn up less often in the future.

The upside is that "neo-classic" items will turn up more frequently. Some collectors don't care about that as much, but a lot of them own neo-classic systems and are always on the lookout for cheap se--uh, I mean games. True, I'd rather find some good 2600 games than NES stuff at a thrift store, but I'll take the NES items if the price is right. A couple years ago I never saw NES and SMS stuff at thrift stores. Now I usually see a cart or two every time I go. True, it's usually a Super Mario Bros., but not every time (sometimes it's a SMB/Duck Hunt). It's still rare to see a Playstation game at Goodwill, but the fact that I've done so even one time is an indication of what the future will bring. As used game stores like FuncoLand quit carrying older systems, you'll see them pop up at Goodwills, usually for cheaper prices. Goodwills may charge $5 for those Duck Hunt carts, but they'll charge $5 for Panesian carts too. That (soft-core porn NES games) will keep collectors going to the thrifts, so they'll be on hand to grab up any classic items that happen to appear. So "Finds" won't go away, they'll just occur less frequently and their nature will change. Although it is kind of scary to think of the Dreamcast being considered a "classic" system worthy of "finding" at a thrift. And you thought you felt old now...

Join me next time as I gaze into my Crystal Castles cart and predict the future of YOU, the classic gaming collector. Hmm... it seems your future involves lots of Internet surfing and chicken wings... oh wait, that's mine.

(William Cassidy is classic gaming addict whose current goal in life is to save enough money to purchase a full-sized MAME cabinet. While not pinching his pennies, he maintains The Odyssey2 Homepage! at http://www.classicgaming.com/o2home)

Sites of the Month

Both of these sites featured this month had multiple people suggest them. So I decided to feature them now. These are familiar sites to long time classic game fans, but as I mentioned in the past, many of our readers are new to the hobby. So they may have not heard of these sites and especially what they have to offer.

Rolenta Press

While the site itself isn't overly huge, it is the home page of Leonard Herman, the author of a must read book for anyone who is a fan of classic video games. "Phoenix, The Rise and Fall of Video Games" is the definitive source for information on what went on during the Golden Age of Video Games.

Besides being able to order this must have book, you can also order his other book, "The ABCs of the VCS". But ordering books is not all he has to offer. He has a growing section of memorbilia with some nice ads, info on the extremely rare Magicard and more! While there is a limited amount of stuff now, the stuff is very interesting and not stuff you see everyday.

There is also some links on the page and some reviews. But as I mentioned before, it is the place to order these two fine books (which would be a great way to spend any of that

holiday cash). Click below to go directly to the site.

http://www.rolentapress.com

Digital Press
This is probably the best known of the classic game sites and for many reasons. The first reason is this is the home of the authoritative price guide for classic video games. The Digital Press Guide is both extensive and entertaining with plenty of pictures, information and more about every classic game imaginable.

But there is alot more than this at Digital Press. It is also the home of one of the longest running and most successful newsletters, also titled Digital Press (what were you expecting?).

But this site offers alot more than just a place to buy stuff! They have a chat room (which is linked to many other, including the one on my site), list of collectors, an extensive links page for classic game sites and more! There are contests, sound bytes, picture galleries and a whole lot more! You could spend days at this site (and many people have). So if you want one of the essential sites for classic games, then click below to go there.

http://www.digitpress.com

And you thought it was only a video game, hah!

The Menace From Outer Space
Chapter Two

The entire world held its breath as the ships began their ascent over the wall. There was a nervous energy felt throughout the world as these brave pilots made their way into the great unknown. As the ships headed over the wall, we all got the first glimpse of something that would change our very lives. We all knew once and for all that we were not the dominant species in the galaxy and all the arrogance and self assurance of the world was let out, like a balloon that sprung a leak.

On the other side of the wall was a vast city like structure. There were silos, radar dishes, buildings and fleets of space ships. "Holy mother...." was all we heard from the pilots. It was the last thing we heard too. Before we had a chance to get a real good look, the silos emitted missiles. Soon the space above the asteroid was filled with missiles and one by one the ships were destroyed. A few were lucky enough to avoid an instant death, but were quickly chased down by the squadrons of ships as they easily outmaneuvered and outgunned our men. The battle was over in minutes.

The entire world stood stunned. We had just encountered the most one-sided defeat in earth's history. Not a single casualty for their side. We didn't get off a single shot. There were no survivors, nothing. Just a grim message that life was going to change real soon and not for the better. Before we had time to mourn, a voice came over the television screens. With all the ships destroyed, we could not understand how this was happening, but with a technology as advanced as theirs, we figured it was possible. The voice said in a very deep and very menacing pitch "People of Earth, you have witnessed a very small amount of the power of Zaxxon. Tremble in fear, for I am coming and noone will be spared." The transmission then ended and every person you could see was frozen in

place. How can we stop this threat? Can we stop it? How long do we have? These were the questions on everyone's lips. After a few seconds of frozen terror, everyone began rushing here and there. It was like we all knew our time was severely limited and we better make the best of it.

For the next few days, all television programs were put on hold as constant reports came. There was a countdown til the Zaxxon would reach us. The scientist held news conferences as they all told their plans for stopping this menace, this menace from outer space. Some suggested sending nuclear weapons at the Zaxxon. Others suggested sending more ships, better equipped ones. Others suggested trying to reason with them. Every know frequency was tried in an futile attempt to reach the Zaxxon. Nothing worked and the countdown was getting smaller. We were down to five days and counting.

Then something happened that we did not expect at all. From out of nowhere, a fleet of ships appeared over our military bases on the moon and Mars. Within minutes, they crippled them and killed nearly everyone of our pilots, not to mention thousands of civilians, officers, maintenance men and others who were unfortunate enough to be caught in their fury. Hundreds of starships were gone along with thousands of tons of weapons. There was so much artillery on Mars that when it went up, it left a crater. A very large and ominous crater that will forever stand as a reminder of the sheer might of the Zaxxon.

Now there was nothing standing between the Zaxxon and Earth. Even the satellites we sent out so many years ago were all destroyed. It was coming right for us and there was nothing we could do to stop it. Nothing but pray and boy were the churches full. Everyone was converting to whatever religion had an open seat. Didn't matter which, just so long as some God heard your prayers and forgave your sins. The end of the world was coming and it was time to make up for a life of self indulgence.

It was in these most gloomy times that heroes are forged. I was about to play a role in this and only God knew for sure the outcome. It was at this time when my classmates and myself were called in. With many of the experienced pilots dead, they had to resort to bringing in the new recruits. As we were huddled together in a room, a general came up to a podium and began to talk to the twenty plus pilots in the room. "Men, we normally don't call upon such raw recruits for such a dangerous and important mission, but under these circumstances, we have no other option. Starting tomorrow, we are going on a crash course and will have you up and ready to fly in 48 hours. Anyone who wants to back out now, this is your chance. I cannot guarantee any of you will return from this mission, so we will understand if you want to leave now. Just know that when the aliens come to kill you and your family, that you allowed it to happen. When that alien kills your mother or your sister, know that their blood is on your hands." he said as he glared out at the room. After a few minutes, noone stood up. Noone dared to. We would rather face death from an alien invader than the shame that came with turning your back on your planet, on mankind in its most dire hour. He then added "Good, then get some rest as it may be the last time you get to sleep." He then walked out of the room. One by one we got up and walked off.

Tune in next month for the chapter three.

Conclusion

The final issue of the Millennium (aren't you sick of that stuff already)! As I look back at the progress this newsletter and the site in general has made over the past year, I cannot help but be pleased. Our readership has quadrupled over the past year and continues to grow! And more and more sites are kind enough to let people know when a new issue is done. So if the world doesn't end, look for another issue on the 20th of January as we begin a new year, decade, century and millennium! Have a safe and happy holiday and make sure you have plenty of batteries for your handhelds, so if there is any Y2K problems, you can still play video games!

Tom Zjaba