

# Retrogaming Times

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## Received My 15 Minutes!

As Andy Warhol said, in the future, everyone will get 15 minutes of fame. Well, I have received mine! It all started with an article in the San Jose Messenger. Then a week later it was reprinted in the Columbus Dispatch! But it does not end there, I was then contacted about doing a radio interview with News Radio 610 in Columbus. I went on that evening at 6:10 PM (right after Paul Harvey, talk about a tough act to follow) and stayed on until 6:35! They had people call in and I answered questions for them about video games. It was a great time! If they ever send me an audio copy of the tape like they said, I will put it on the website. So there you have it, my 15+ minutes of fame!

## Questions of the Month

We have a stack of good questions this month. I am relying on some help from my fellow gamers to get some answer here. While I know a fair amount, I do not know it all.

*I never understood why the VIC-20 gets more attention than the TI, do you know? I can't see any thing at all that makes the VIC better than the TI, even gaming wise. I*

***thought I would ask an insider. Thanks!***

## ***Toucan***

The Vic 20 was and still is more popular than the TI for a number of reasons. The first reason is that the TI promoted its computer for educational and home productivity. If you see the early commercials with Bill Cosby, they really emphasized these points. Because of this, it got a stigma of being a kid's computer, a label that still sticks. While there were a lot of good games for it, programs like Early Learning Fun and Numbers Magic did nothing to help this.

The Vic 20 on the other hand did not have this stigma connected to it. Even to this day, children programs are reviled by hardcore gamers. When Sony started the Playstation, they would nicely kick out anyone who wanted to do educational or kiddie games for the Playstation. They didn't want any association with these games. They have of course changed, now that they have sold a ton of systems.

The other big advantage that the Vic 20 had was that they had some well known arcade games available. Games like Omega Race and Gorf were on the Vic 20 and not the TI. What did the TI counter with as far as arcade games (actual licenses and not clones like TI Invaders) were Blasto and Munchmobile, two totally unknown arcade games.

So the TI was known as a kiddie computer and it did not have known arcade games. The Vic 20 was known more for older computer players and had some known arcade games. While this may not be fair, that was the perception.

Also, Commodore was more aggressive in pricing. The Vic 20 was cheaper than the TI computer (also it was cheaper to make) and knowing how Americans will put more emphasis on the cost than anything else, it is easy to see how Commodore won out.

***I was curious if you know of any video game controller covers. I eat chips all the time when I play, and I don't want to keep messing up my controller. Do you know of any such products? Signed A Real Munching Gamer***

Interesting. I have never seen such an item, nor have I ever heard of any such device. Any entrepreneurs looking to make some money? What would you call such a device? Crumb Catcher? The Joywrap? Controller Cover?

***Hey Tom, Nice site.***

***Think you may be the man to name this...***

***There was an arcade machine that was out at about the time of dragons liar, I think it used the same technology. It was a like a motor bike racing game but futuristic, you sat on the seat. I used to love the game when I was a kid, any idea what it could have been ?***

**Thanks.**

This one has me stumped and I spent way too much of my life in arcades. Anyone know? Email me and I will forward it along.

***I used to go to the Stanford bookstore in the early 70's and put quarters into a large machine that I think was powered by an early HP computer. The game was really great and I wonder what its name was and if there is a PC version. It had a central 'sun' and each player had a spaceship controlled by a joystick. Each had a limited number of torpedoes and limited fuel. The joystick had a trigger to fire the torpedoes and forward accelerated the ship, left rotated it left, and right rotated it right. You could select the gravity of the sun, the edge behavior (wrap around, reflect, etc.), and various ship parameters and torpedo parameters. It was great because the ships had inertia and really responded realistically to engine firings and the influence of the sun's gravity made the paths of the torpedoes and ships complex forcing you to really think ahead and start accelerating early to avoid being hit.***

***If you have any idea what this was and if something similar is around I'd love to know. I'm sure it's thousands of times simpler than lots of the modern games but it was a lot more fun.***

While this sounds a lot like Solar Quest from Cinematronics, that game was released in 1981. I was thinking some of the early games like Computer Space, which was released in 1971 or Star Trek, which came out in 1972, but neither game features a sun that I am aware of. Anyone have any ideas?

## **Hypothetically Speaking**

By [Fred Wagaman](#)

NOTE: This article is pure speculation. It should not be viewed as a solicitation of items for sale or any sort of announcement of a future sale. It is what it portends to be. Hypothetical. At this point.

I have games. Lots of games. Lots and lots and lots of games.

I don't have time to play. Very little time. Very, very, very little time.

I have limited storage space.

As the song says, Something's got to give.

So I'm thinking about unloading my game collection.

Some of it. Most of it. Probably not all of it.

So, hypothetically, if I would do this, how would I go about doing it ?

When I lost control tracking my games about a year ago, I had over 2,500 different games. I'd guess I've added between 100-300 since then. These are unique titles. There are a few titles I have multiples of. Plus the hardware I've accumulated over the years. So I'm probably looking at 3,000+ pieces.

Do I put it in one giant lump and sell it that way ? I'd probably get the least amount of money for it (compared to the other ways). Money isn't really the object here anyhow. The hassle would be least, except for the packing and shipping. One sale and done. Someone gets a tremendous collection to start, add to their existing collection or to liquidate at their leisure. Ebay would be the obvious choice for something like this, but a private auction on the newsgroups could work too.

How about grouping the machines, accessories and games together ? Put the Atari 2600 stuff in one lot. The Microvision in another. It would probably make more money than the first choice. It could be done over time and the packaging wouldn't have to be done all at once. A very attractive possibility.

Another method would be a variation of the above. Cherry-pick the best/rarest/expensive stuff from each machine and sell it individually. Then lump the rest of it together and sell it as a lot. This would allow more advanced collectors to get something without having to buy a lot of duplicates and would also allow a new collectors to jump right in and get a boatload of stuff.

How about setting up a website and selling each piece individually ? That would be a lot of work and would require each piece to be priced individually. Then, what do I do with the stuff no one wants ?

What about taking all of the stuff to a show ? The next one in Philly is about 8 months away. It would probably take me that long to get myself organized. I'd need to price everything and rent a truck. But I'm still left with the question of what to do with the leftovers. Auction ? Donation ? Hmmm.

One of the big questions I'm wrestling with is what to keep. Do I set a limit on the number of titles I keep ? Say 500 or so ? Or do I keep the "better" games for each system ? What about the newer systems ? What to do ? What to do ? What to do ?

What would you do ? Hypothetically speaking that is.

*(Fred has been playing games for over 25 years and actively collecting them for over 10. The 2500 + games that he has takes up most of his home office and living room. He lives in Denver, PA with his understanding wife Jennie, his 5 year-old, button-loving son, Max and his 2 year-old, 4th player, Lynzie. If you have any ideas for him, he can be contacted at [fcw3@postoffice.ptd.net](mailto:fcw3@postoffice.ptd.net) .)*

**Classic Gaming Expo, Here We Go Again!**

by [Geoff Voigt](#)

I'm starting to hate the trip to CGE; really. Not the Expo itself, not that at all, rather the travel to Las Vegas from my place. Last year it was traffic on the I-15, this year it was the mythical "Back Way" to the City that I had procured from some retirees at the local Cottage Cafe. You see, I live an hour West of Death Valley, and they showed me a route using roads going through the lowest place of elevation in the United States (-282 feet below sea level), and on the map, it looked shorter than the usual 58 to I-15 path used. The reality is that the roads are severely windy, with tall drops on the side you're driving.



(Can this be where they buried all those Atari carts?)

Don't go through Death Valley, in August, in late morning, with the heater going for fear of the engine overheating. I think my brother Robert and I made it to Beatty, NV, just about the time I could no longer feel my feet. Original projected time to get to Las Vegas:

1:00. Real time achieved: 3:30. But enough about all that...Friday evening, My fellow SC3 members and I hosted our second CGE party. While hectic, I'd do it again in a heartbeat. I'm keeping the details brief about the party; if you really want to read more about it, -hit our website- [[www.classicgaming.com/sc3](http://www.classicgaming.com/sc3)] and there'll be pics and whatnot in a day or two.

What was there Fri night:

### **Major homebrew projects:**

\*Joe Grand and SCSIsde\* (<http://www.mindspring.com/~jgrand/atari>). Joe was an attendee last year of the party, and so this year he returned the favor by giving a sneak preview of his homebrew 2600 game, SCSIsde, the night before CGE. Easily the main attraction of the night, everyone had to have a crack at the game. Joe's got the ROM image on his website for playing via 2600 emulators if you missed getting a SCSIsde cart, or CGE itself, don't fret. Hozer Video <http://www.netway.com/~hozervideo/> will have carts soon enough, if not already.

\*Tim Snider and the much talked-about Venture 2\* Not to be outdone, Tim had a copy of Venture 2 for play. Think regular Venture with new mazes and odd features. One of the rooms I played had a hidden exit. I believe this will also be Hozer-ized for everyone.

\*Ward Shrake's Astrocade and Emerson-Arcadia multicarts\*

While not able to attend CGE himself, Ward deputized some of us SC3'ers to represent his project. The EA multicart has every known game on it, including Funky Fish, what appears to be a EA port of 2600 Combat, Crazy Climber (not the real arcade game, but a clone thereof), and the mythical ports of Tekhan arcade games: Pleadies, The End, and Jump Bug. The Astrocade multicart currently contains every imaged cart, such as rarities like Ms. Candyman, Treasure Cove, and 3 different ROM versions of Muncher, the Pac-Man clone. Look for an in-depth look at this project(s) and a quick Q&A with Mr. Shrake in a later issue of RT.

And once again, the CGE planners and guests came by for a few beers, pizza, Thai food, some Colecovision, and a round of dirty jokes. It wouldn't be fair to say that they crashed it, mostly because I made a point of making sure they knew where we were. I'm kinda strange that way. I'm also going to make sure they know where to crash us next year too, it's gonna be fun! :)



(Seth jammed throughout the night.)

"We promised the Band a bit of a rest between sets"

-CGE planner late Sun about 8-Bit weapon's CGE schedule

'Seth', a LA-based band focusing on remixes of old game songs and well-versed in the use of old computers to make modern Techno music was on hand all weekend to entertain the Expo attendees. Much has been made of their use of a modified Commodore 64 (a band after my own heart! Cool!) for some of their songs. The C64 looked strange; it has a mini-musical keyboard installed over the regular keys. Word is that the C64 runs off a custom cart with music software on it. [www.brainscream.com](http://www.brainscream.com) is their record website.





(Welcome one and all! The greatest show on....wait that's copyrighted.)

"The only place you'll be able to find that is at this show!"

- atari2600.com booth attendee regarding 2600 Up N' Down

After the haze of the night before cleared up, it was time to get down to the Expo floor. A Grandeur of Gaming, Video Valhalla, just a whole Freakin' bunch of cool stuff awaited!

### Exhibitors/sellers:

CGE Productions: on Sat afternoon, four CGE exclusives were put up for sale: the Colecovision versions of Pac-Man, Dig-Dug, and Joust. Pac-Man is excellent, and is possibly the best home version of the game I've ever seen. Joust is missing sound, but otherwise complete. Dig-Dug is complete, and is arcade-perfect. There was also 2600 Elevator Action; in a reproduction Atari Silver box and label. EA is incomplete, and is missing sound, gravity, and the spy doesn't come down on his own when you jump. More of a curiosity that a game. Show it to other collectors so they can see it for themselves.

One of the Expo's bigger problems was the unanticipated demand for the repro Protos. only 40 of each were made; and the line for purchasing them started an Hour and a half before they were to go on sale. Tickets were given out, so basically the games were sold an hour before they were to go on sale. The Expo planners have said that a new method will be in place next year for exclusive game purchases.

\*Intellivision Productions/Retrotopia had their new production, "Intellivision Rocks!" up for play. It's the newest PC/Mac Inty emulator pack with The Activision and Imagic games on it, including several prototypes; Mattel-produced Space Shuttle (not the Activision version) Game Factory, Robot Rubble, Magic Carousel, and League of Light, a great game everyone should get to play. Also at the booth were some T-card protos, such as Party Line, and some that can't be released because of copyright issues: Rocky and Bullwinkle, Flintstones Keyboard Fun for the ECS, the Colecovision version of He-Man, and the 2600 versions of Loco-Motion and Treasure of Tarmin. They've also come out with a new T-shirt that should be in their website: [www.intellivisionlives.com](http://www.intellivisionlives.com)

\*B&C ComputerVisions was selling many Atari package deals, and liquidating much Lynx and Jaguar products; they even had a few Spacewar 2000 carts for the Jaguar! It's first

person, and a playable demo station was set up for exhibit. [www.myatari.com](http://www.myatari.com) [www.atari2600.com](http://www.atari2600.com) had possibly every conceivable rarity for all mainstream classic systems up for sale. Prices were, well, 'Sigma 2 on the bell curve' to be tactful, but basically any grail wanted was there. On sat., 50 copies of 'Secret Agent', a Data Age proto went up for sale. The gameplay is much like Kaboom, with some other shooter elements thrown in for difference.

\*United Game Source had Non-US 2600 stuff, like the infamous Boom-Bang, Dschungle Boy, and Bobby Geht Nacht Hause. I had never seen many of these Imports before; why did so many of their labels have black borders with a cartoon panel inside? Just a random thought. [www.unitedgamesource.com](http://www.unitedgamesource.com)

\*Songbird Productions exhibited the In-progress Gorf 2000, the much consternated Battlesphere, and had a Lynx and Jaguar link-up station for play. They were also selling their previous releases. <http://songbird.atari.net>

\*Infogrames displayed their current Atari products: Pac-In-Time and Frogger 2 for PC, and the Dreamcast Atari Anniversary Collection. But what was most intriguing about their booth were 2 posters on the wall of upcoming titles: 'Dig Dug Deeper' and Ms. Pac man: Search for the Golden Crown. I've been promised screen shots of both games, and they'll be in this webzine as soon as I get them; probably in a month or two. (please be patient!)

Ikarion Software showed off their latest efforts on the Game Boy Advance; completely in those GBA development carts. [www.ikarion.com](http://www.ikarion.com)

\*Digital Press had back issues for sale, another print run of their DP Collector's guide (YES! THANK YOU!), and one of the new games for sale: Ms. Space Fury. Image a gameplay blend of Pac-Man, Jumpman, and Miner 2049'er controlling a Female version of their mascot, the 'Space Fury' Face (does Sega know about this; Joe?).  
[www.digitpress.com](http://www.digitpress.com)

\*Blast From the Past Amusements had many, many Full-sized Arcade games for sale and show. Some of the remarkable games this year from them included, Gorf, (one of the owners had some unprintable things to say about Midway's putting the paint \*right on\* the control panel) Mappy, with it's big-sized Marquee, and a restored Donkey Kong. At one of their side tables, spare control panel overlays, marquees, and Side art could be purchased for anyone doing some restoration of their own. The Overlays and Side Art are apparently new reprints, but whomever did them got them -spot on-; the texture is the same, they have the same colors, everything. There's even just the original copyright! Very cool!  
[www.arcadeclassics.com](http://www.arcadeclassics.com)

\*Good Deal Games showcased their unearthed Sega CD games, and generally had stuff for sale. They'll talk you ear off if you give them the chance! [www.gooddealgames.com](http://www.gooddealgames.com)

\*Classic Gamer Magazine accompanied the table with GDG and Syzygy. Their newest product is a CD of all 6 of their issues to date. Also at their part of the table was where an Expo attendee could pick up a 3rd. Ed. copy of Leonard Herman's "Phoenix: The Fall and Rise of Video Games"; just from the printers. It's bigger than the 2nd. Ed. Much, much



bigger... [www.classicgamer.com](http://www.classicgamer.com)

\*Syzygy Magazine finished up the triumvirate on Table 12. With 4 issues under their belt, and a much different look than when the magazine started at CGE last year, this is one magazine to look for in the future. [www.syzygy-magazine.com](http://www.syzygy-magazine.com)

X-Gaming sold their Arcade Controller, a huge beastie for every modern system to date; just add the adapter of your choice. [www.xgaming.com](http://www.xgaming.com) sells this thing, and their other game controllers made by them.

\*Neo-Geo Freaks (or Neo-Geo World; my notes are fuzzy on this. I'll get corrected...) had an obscene amount of Neo-Geo games for sale; about half of which were Japanese imports! Also on-hand was a small N-G arcade unit for play, and some developer's tools for sale (Wideboy, et.al.).

\*Twin Galaxies officiated over Scorekeeping in both the arcade and Home system fronts. This year was their first attempt at a Space Duel Team Doubles tournament. Other Games featured were Mad Planets (why is this game suddenly becoming such a hot one? I have no idea...), Gorf, Mappy, and home games like Kaboom and Asteroids. I even took a crack at the Intellivision Diner world record; missed it by 20,000 points or so. But if you know the tricks, 20,000 is peanuts. Next time, Mr. Pepper, next time.....

Oh yeah; [www.twingalaxies.com](http://www.twingalaxies.com). You have to register to get into the meat and potatoes of the site; but it's free. No big deal.

\*Uncle Zip's Entertainment, North West Classic Game Enthusiasts, and Schell's Electronics shared a larger table in the back corner. Uncle Zip is none other than [get name] the developer of the 5200 Trac-Ball; he had a Trac for home systems made out of arcade parts that he did back in the day for Atari, amongst other curiosities. NWCGE had some rares for sale, and had Lee Kruger's Mock-label 2600 carts on display. They are very, very convincing. Schell's Electronics was selling the much-awaited Cuttle Cart for the Atari 2600; once known as the SuperDupercharger, this device is able to load 2600 games, via sound files, much like the original Supercharger. But what the Cuttle Cart can do is load almost -any- ROM; barring Pitfall 2 and maybe one other. No more memory limits, or looking for rare carts. Uncle Zip doesn't have a website to my knowledge, but you can go to [www.nwcge.org](http://www.nwcge.org) for those guys, and [www.schells.com](http://www.schells.com) to order a Cuttle Cart. I was also informed that the Intellicart (the first Schell's project) has now been phased out.

\*Tim Arnold and the Las Vegas Pinball Club were running raffles the entire weekend as a fundraiser for the local Salvation Army. They're also looking for a place to store Tim's enormous pinball collection; reportedly at over 10,000 machines in varying states of repair. No URL available.

### **SAT. KEYNOTES:**

"We've done several movies, a few TV specials, and we're still best-known for those 16 minutes of Game Footage!"

-Don Bluth, on the profile of his animation company; and the persistence of Dragon's Lair.

"I went out and bought a big stack of the things. The Gal at the Post Office counter didn't believe me when I told her that I programmed that game"

- Bob Polaro, on discovering that his 2600 Defender game was on the 80s Video Game stamp

First Keynote was Atari programmers. Last year it was split between 2600 and 5200 programmers, but this time they all were in one. Rob (Demon Attack, Night Driver, Fathom, Missile Command) Fulop, Steve (Quadrant, Garfield, Asterix, Taz) Woita, Bob

(Road Runner, Defender, Desert Falcon) Polaro, and John (5200 RS Soccer, Gremlins, Xari Arena) Seghers were on the podium. John Seghers talked a bit about his aborted 5200 ET project (pulled because of market forces), Bob Polaro expressed his thrill on being on a stamp, so to say, and there was discussion about the suddenness of the crash.

Arcade Programmers dealt with a gem-collecting bear, a timeline for Bally Midway, and video footage of a lost sequel. At last year's CGE I made a point of tracking down Jamie Fenton to ask her about 'Ms. Gorf', a title I had heard about in hushed circles and in obscure web references. This year we were treated to video footage of the game's development. The game played much like Robotron, with the 2-stick control configuration, lots of Gorfian robots, etc. The photos I got are very, very blurry, and I apologize, but I just didn't want readers to only have description of the game to run on.



(A fuzzy version of Ms. Gorf. It was really cool in person, honest!)

Apart from Ms. Gorf, both of the people responsible for Crystal Castles were there. Franz Lanzinger and Susan McBride discussed its origins. At first, it was a project called

'Toporoids' a 3-D adaptation of Asteroids that would have the rocks flow along the slopes of the Topographics of the maps. As the game developed, Franz played Pac-Man and wanted to shake it up, and change the method of getting dots. The solution came with having the enemies also collect the gems, and an irregular scoring scheme. Bentley Bear was originally an alien, but apparently marketing turned him into a bear.



(The men behind Dragon's Lair. Many a quarter was lost to their creation)

For the first time in years, all 4 people responsible for the creation of Dragon's Lair were together; Rick Dyer, Don Bluth, John Pomeroy, and Gary Goldman. Discussion turned to how to make the most with the least amount of animation: reverse frames, reuse cells where possible. They also expressed their happiness at the enduring quality of the Dragon's Lair game. Don Bluth stated his opinion that it was all about the characters; "If Dirk was blue or green, it wouldn't have worked. Red showed his fire and nobility" a small story about the origin of Daphne (the Princess in the game) came out. Apparently the only way to get the proper appeal and character for her was to raid a Playboy collection...



(Don Bluth holding a poster of the Dragon's Lair movie poster!)

One of the biggest rumors in Classic gaming was also put to rest: Don Bluth himself said that we can expect a Dragon's Lair Movie in late 2002. Three scripts have come down the pipe, but only this third one has all the humorous elements that the game has, and everyone involved in the game believes that it has the feel of the game.

"The movie starts with a thief entering the royal castle, with intent of kidnapping the Crown Prince for ransom. But right as he's entering the castle, there's a Coup De'Etat involving a Black Wizard.. riding a Dragon..." apparently Dirk's feud with Singe is deeper than we think...

"As he gets to the Prince, he finds that there's two children; a decoy baby, and the real

Prince. Not knowing which child is which, and in the chaos of the Coup, the thief flees with both children, and raises them, never knowing which is the real prince."

During the course of the movie, Dirk meets Daphne, and Mr. Bluth mentions that he's found a way to have her stay the way she is (consummate Blond in high-heels) in today's movie atmosphere.

#### Dragon's Lair 3-D:

Clint Dyer showed the work-in-progress with a special treat: the game starts with a 5 minute animated movie by Don Bluth Studios! This is the first new Dragon's Lair animation in over 15 years, not counting the Ruby-Spears Television series. There's also a animated ending, but obviously that wasn't shown. All of the original characters show up in this PC game, and all the original Laserdisc rooms are adapted into DL 3-D; Rooms seen were the Burning Ropes, self-sealing wall, Rolling Balls, Spinning Balls, Black Knight, and new sections of the tower involving the Giddy Goons; whom we were led to believe are the standard 'Cannon Fodder' in this game. Dirk gets the ability to fly (you have to see the animation for that...) and light his sword on fire! Interesting... No word on when to expect it out, but some of the consoles mentioned were X-Box, PS2, and Gamecube.



(Joe Decuir giving aspiring homebrewers everywhere some hope.)

Every 2600 Homebrewer, and aspiring homebrewer, attended Joe Decuir's speech on the 2600's technical layouts. Part Pep-rally, part War Room, the feel in the room was reminiscent of a General briefing his troops. Mr. Decuir has even allegedly said that now that he's retired, he might get into the homebrew scene himself! Most of the talk went over my head, but at one point Mr. Decuir even had me considering a Homebrew project; and I was just in there to get some pics and a bit of the speech...

#### THE AUCTION

"It's Odyssey, who'd waste their time faking an Odyssey Proto?"

-John Hardie, at the Sat. night auction introducing a 'Freedom Fighters!' proto. (it went for \$50)

"Well, I'm hoping it pays for my plane ticket here!"

- Rob Fulop, talking about the Cubicolor he brought for auction. (It went for \$550.. this is NOT a typo!)

Sat night's auction was interesting to attend. The starting bids were very fair, the items up for bid were definitely in the higher echelons of Rarity and demand, and it was great to be there if just for the entertainment of watching some of the prices climb: some of the items and prices:

A complete Videopac (European O2) collection, including a boxed Phillips Chess

Module, Parker Bros. games, (for those that care; the color of PB Videopac carts is a turquoise-ish silver. Kinda like 5200, but more blue.) and other European-only games.  
Final Price:\$400

Starpath Supercharger Demo unit; boxed: \$525

loose 2600 Tooth Protectors:\$150

the final copy of 2600 Elevator Action: \$50

The Last 'Treasure Chest' copy of Venture 2: \$200

and finally...

Loose 2600 Demolition Herby: \$45 (I'd wanted one for years!)

One of the things that made me want to chew off my own arm was an Atari Video Music that was sold to the book; (starting bid \$150) I couldn't afford it, and would have been the first arm up to get it if I could have. Time to go cry in my coffee... :(

"Go away, we didn't back untill 3 AM last night..."

- Fellow SC3 suite attendee, at about 8:30 Sunday morning

Sunday was more subdued than Sat., and you could tell that many of the attendees didn't have that pick up that we all had the day before. But there was some unique things happening...

"Hello and welcome to Extended Play from Classic Gaming Expo!"

- Kate Patello, one of the hosts

The TechTV videogame show "Extended Play" taped their 'bumper' sequences at CGE on Sun. Sometimes it was difficult to keep away from the wires and cameras; those cameras have the capability to steal your soul, you know... But anyway, the CGE edition of Extended Play is airing at the time of this writing, and should be in the tape trader network soon enough. [www.techtv.com/extendedplay](http://www.techtv.com/extendedplay) will help you find airdates.

### **Sunday Keynotes:**

Regretfully, Ralph Baer was sick, and couldn't attend CGE this year. But there were "Get well" cards for everyone to sign.





(The Blue Sky Rangers!)

The Intellivision group keynote was fun, and much of the discussion turned towards the difficulties Intellivision Inc. has been having regarding securing the re-release rights to the Data East and Tron properties. Apparently now that Data East USA is no longer, it's just made things worse to get Burgertime, Bump N' Jump, Loco-Motion, etc. The Tron license was recently sold for X-box, so maybe some sort of sublet arrangement can be reached.

Another Keynote was 'Alternative distribution'. Atari and Activision had the 'Electronic Pipeline' project, and a commercial was even made (see photo). Running on a lost section of FM radio, the 2600 could pick up games for play. Another method involving Kiosks at malls was discussed. Pre-dated the popularity of the Internet, but the idea were already there.

The Activision Keynote was somewhat dry, from what I've been told. It was learned that we came this close to only having one life on Pitfall; but apparently play testing changed that.

### **THE YEAR OF THE HOMEBREWS:**

"I have to make more of those carts for those who couldn't get one! God I hate taking the stickers off the old carts..."

-Joe Santulli, on the problems encountered in assembling Homebrews CGE 2001 had several 2600 homebrews debut: Tim Snider's Venture 2, Joe Grand's SCSIscode, Brian Prescott's Rush Hour and Base Defender, Ebivision's Allia Quest, and Vault Assault (author forgotten; help?). Digital Press' Ms. Space Fury, a Colecovision game

is mentioned in their booth listing. Some of the games, in their current incarnation, were CGE exclusives. Those not able to attend CGE were naturally upset, and the demand for the homebrews was beyond estimate, like that for the CGE protos. While most Homebrews will be available via Hozer Video, Ailla Quest should be available at [www.ebivision.com](http://www.ebivision.com). So the games themselves will be still around, but in different labels.

### **THE MUSEUM**

"Please no touching, and leave your bags and backpacks at the door"

- Plaza security guard for the museum; about once every 30 seconds.

Once again, some of the Museum items were 'Gotta Haves' but there were some new



things not in last year. Like last year, I skipped pictures of stuff everyone's seen on the web quite a bit, and went for stuff people may not have known existed:

The Atari 5200 Hotel unit: made for hotels by Spectravideo.

Some various Table tops: I was lucky enough to play another copy of the Pengo TT, and it has everything: Diamond blocks, eggs, you can even freeze the wall.



(If this picture does not excite you, then you are not a handheld collector.)

Here's a Pocket version of Star Castle. I got permission to place the quarter by the game so others can get an idea of the scale. (tiny lil' sucker!)]



The 'Tutankham' really is that small. The Cocktail-like design just adds to the coolness factor.

I was floored when I saw this! I never knew that there was a VFD tabletop of Dig Dug \_anywhere!\_ It appears to only have Pookas, but I didn't take a deep study of the game to see if Fygars are in it. Batteries were in it, so one could watch the demo mode.

'Ya know kids, nothing says the 80's like puffy stickers. Colecovision Puffy Stickers give a good excuse to put them in the museum.

We all went home broke, tired, and happy we came. Next year will be many major anniversaries for Classic Gaming (Atari, Vectrex, Colecovision) so something good is apparently in the works.

No word yet on the date for next year.

*(Geoff Voigt is currently sleeping. Thanks to specific book purchases, the latest revision of the [rec.games.video.classic FAQ](#) is now back on track, and may see posting as early as late Aug (2001, that is). Look for his adventures with those meddling kids every weekday at [gvoigt@ridgecrest.ca.us](mailto:gvoigt@ridgecrest.ca.us)).*

## **The Many Faces of . . . Spy Hunter**

**By Alan Hewston**

This review was created while the Spy Hunter theme, "Peter Gunn" played continuously in my mind. Spy Hunter was one of, if not the first games to combine the driving and shooting genres and did well enough at the arcades in '83 that it eventually spawned off a not-so-well-known sequel Spy Hunter II, in '87. As you know, there were official classic home versions released for the Atari 2600, Colecovision, Commodore 64, and the Apple and Atari home computers. A handful of more recent platforms also saw Spy Hunter as a port as well.

As secret agent 007 . . . oops, they couldn't come out and say that. This game is based upon secret agents like James Bond and their various super cars that came heavily equipped to fight the bad guys on the highway. In your ultra-equipped turbo-charged spy mobile, your mission is to use your unlimited supply of machine guns to shoot up the bad guys or run them off the road, namely, the Road Lord, Switchblade, the Enforcer, the Copter (called the Mad Bomber in the arcade), Barrel Dumper and Doctor Torpedo. You should avoid the innocent drivers on the road, who can cost you points if you shoot them, but then again, they can also cause you to crash as well. In this vertical scrolling shooter game, your primary fire button shoots your unlimited supply of machine guns in the direction you are headed. This will eliminate 90% of the traffic. For vehicles behind you, armored vehicles, and those in the air, a second fire button (or set of controls on the CV) activates the special weapons - only available from your weapons van. Always be on the lookout for your Weapons Van - let that big rig get ahead of you on the road and then drive up the ramps into it. You are rewarded with a limited supply (usage) of: oil slicks, smoke screens, or anti-helicopter missiles.

Besides driving on the road, Spy Hunter also had a boathouse and a speedboat for chasing the enemy agents on the water. You may be forced to use the waterways - warned via a text message to detour left, as the bridge is out ahead. But there are also some chances to enter the waterways on your own. Once past the boat house you come out on the other side in your Spy Hunter speedboat. The waterways are somewhat more dangerous and require slower speeds due to the many small islands that must be avoided. Another change in pace can be found when the road conditions change to icy (I've not seen any other type of condition alerts).

You begin each game with only one life, but you have 999 counts on a timer (about 90 seconds) where you get unlimited lives - that is, the weapons van will pull up and give you another spy mobile as long as time remains on the counter. Points were earned primarily

for your driving distance but also when you "rubbed off" the enemy agents. Extra lives are earned for scoring 10k, 18k, 30k and every 30,000 up to 120k.



Arcade Game Designed in 1983 by: Bally Midway George Gomez & Tom Leon.

Classic Platforms: Atari 2600 (Sega), 8 bit (Sega), Colecovision, Apple II and Commodore 64 (Sega). No luck with any programmer credits.

Categories: Gameplay, Addictiveness, Graphics, Sound & Controls

More info on Spy Hunter can be found at:

<http://147.208.187.228/popopedia/shows/arcade/ag1136.php>

### **Disqualified: Apple II (N/A)**

Once again I've disqualified this platform, only because I do not own an Apple II or any other disk-only system. I cannot have or review all classic games/platforms.

### **Have Nots: Atari 2600 (33)**

The 2600 does a good job including most of the Gameplay elements (6), including all the enemies, the special weapons, and 2 skill settings (A or B difficulty). There is no pause other than that after each new spy mobile is deployed you can sit along the roadside until you are ready. There are no detours or road condition messages reported to you, and no chance to chose the waterways/boathouse. Instead, at some points along the road, activity automatically freezes up and a transition to the waterway (speedboats) occurs - and then eventually back again to the road. The 2600 version of the waterway is nice in that it uses up the entire width of the screen with water, making for more enemy boats, but there are far too few land/island hazards to avoid. The beginning game timer starts at 99 (seconds?), instead of 999 counts. The Controls are nice (8), but a little awkward due to the use of a second joystick port's fire button for your special weapons. The original packaging came with a Joystick Coupler that allowed you to place your two joysticks together so that one was in your hands to control and the other mounted just above it. Thus the second stick's fire button would then be right above the primary joystick's fire button, as close as you can get it to your "firing" thumb. If you do not have this coupler, or a Super Action Controller (for the Colecovision), your Spy Hunter enjoyment could be lessened a bit, but, you can always find a way to make the second fire button more handy, or simply play the game without using any special weapons.

As my writing deadline approached I noticed that the Digital Press Guide notes about a modification to a 7800 controller to play Spy Hunter. I will publish any information that I get on this in the future, as it would probably work for 3 of these 4 versions reviewed here.

The 2600 Graphics are decent (6), but clearly its worst feature. The screen is very dark and hard to see. The timer, score and weapons information is displayed at the top and bottom of the screen, quite the contrary to what you'd want in a vertical scroller - as this shortens the length of the road displayed. This same, inefficient layout occurs again on the

Atari 8 bit and C64 ports, but not nearly as detracting as here. The Sound is good (6) but missing some of the effects, and limited use of music. The Addictiveness is cool (7), and compared to many 2600 games, you'll find this one worth coming back to for more. Food for thought: Do the initials WV on top of the 2600 spy mobile stand for the programmers name, Weapons Van, or perhaps it is Volks Wagon, in reverse order?

### **Bronze Medal: Commodore 64 (39)**

Coming up just short in the battle for a Silver, the C64 version could have improved its Gameplay. Albeit nice (8), there is no pause button and no choice for what special weapon to use. If you have 2 or 3 of the special weapons, the C64 and both Atari versions cycle through the weapon that is used for that press of the fire button. You get one, then the next, then the next. This works, but is a bit clumsy, especially if you need that anti-helicopter missile like NOW. The Controls are crisp (8), but unless you have a good way to work that second fire button (see the Atari 2600 above). The Graphics are enjoyable (8), but the score, timer and messages are displayed at the top/bottom of the screen. Easier to see, but taking up part of the screen that can better be used as roadway. The Sound is also crisp, (8) having a nice musical score of "Peter Gunn". Unfortunately the music gets interrupted whenever there is a break (crash or transition) in the action. The audio clues and effects are all there but the volume does not seem consistent. The Addictiveness is very good (7), but I am disappointed. Perhaps its due to the high level of difficulty, or the actions of the sadistic Weapon's Van driver (trying to get me killed). It is frustrating in both the C64 and the 2 Atari versions trying to get on the truck and then the weapons van drives back out onto the road after you have loaded up. The C64 version can be found on both cart and disk.

### **Silver Medal: Atari 8 bit (40)**

Having a pause button is probably just enough to win the Silver Medal, as the Gameplay is outstanding (9). The Escape key toggles the pause. All the C64 comments apply for this version's worst feature, the Addictiveness (7). The Controls are very nice (8), but have the same drawback with 2 fire buttons / sticks. The Sound is nice (8), but as was the case for the C64, programming or H/W limitations, the musical score does not keep flowing. Maybe this is good since there is no way to toggle the music off. The Graphics are crisp (8), better than most 8 bit games I've played. The Atari 8 bit version can also be found on both cart and disk.

### **Gold Medal: Colecovision (46)**

Wow! a perfect Gameplay score (10). Everything is here, a pause, 4 difficulty levels, special weapon selection, and a Weapons Van warning icon - to alert you that the van is present. Neat stuff! The Controls also get top billing, with an outstanding (9), due to use of the Super Action Controller. No cycling through your weapons, just squeeze off the weapon of choice - on demand. The Sound is fantastic (9), and cannot be improved upon much. The musical score never ends . . .hmmn, that could be a bad thing too. The Graphics are fantastic (9), and the screen is laid out with the score on the left - maximizing the visible road length. The Addictiveness is superb (9), making this is the port that you'll really want to keep coming back to.

Come back next month when I review the Many Faces of Gyruss for the Atari 2600, 5200,

8bit, Commodore 64 and Colecovision. Alan Hewston, who's looking for TI-99/4A versions of Star Trek, Pac Man, Ms. Pac Man, Frogger, Robotron, Centipede, and other carts for this column, can be reached at [Hewston95@stratos.net](mailto:Hewston95@stratos.net)

## Sites of the Month

I peer into my crystal ball and look far and wide for two more sites to spotlight. Here are my choices! Enjoy!

### Vectrex Overlays

While I usually do not spotlight sites that sell stuff as much as I do people who offer content, this site offered something that should be pointed out! As you can see by the name of the site, they sell Vectrex Overlays! Granted, they are new ones and not the originals, but if you picked up a Vectrex cheap and multicart, this is a great place to get some overlays! At \$6.00 each, you are not talking a major investment! While I have not personally ordered any, I have known people who have and they were quite impressed with the quality of the overlays.

Not only can you get the classic Vectrex overlays, but there are overlays for the new games as well as some of the protos. These include Dark Tower (a very nice looking overlay, I might add), Patriots (my favorite Vectrex game), Rockaroids and Vectror Vaders! The website can be found at the following URL:

<http://home.earthlink.net/~mfmurdock/Vectrex/vectrex.htm>

### Adventurevision

It is the most expensive, least supported and most sought after of the classic systems. Most people never played it and even fewer can afford it. A system sells for \$1,000+ on eBay and there are a total of 4 carts for it. Want to know more about this elusive little critter? Then check out the Adventurevision website.

The site offers pics and info on all four games, the system and more. There is a list of people who own the systems and more! If you are one of the very fortunate few, email the site and have your name immortalized! The site is well done and a great place to find out all you need to know about the system you will probably never own. To check out this site, go to the following URL:

<http://www.adventurevision.com/>

## "The New Zealand Story" "A native gamer's point of view part 3 of 3"

Aaron Wheeler (NZ), from New Zealand  
Interviewed by Alan Hewston (RT) of the Retrogaming Times staff

**RT:** What classic home computer systems were available and popular in NZ?



**NZ:** Early computers to NZ came from all the major countries, Like the BBC, Spectrum, Lynx, Electron, ZX81 etc from the UK; Atari, Apple & Commodore from US; and Sega SC3000 from Japan, etc. But back in the early '80's our customs had huge tariffs on computer hardware and software. 50% over and above the value + postage in some cases. This made computers pretty expensive in NZ back then. Even so, the BBC, C64, Spectrums, and to some degree Atari's and Sega SC3000 were still pretty popular, with Apples being used primarily in the schools along with TRS 80's and C128 machines. Most of them being replaced by PC's around '87.

The Commodore 64 was certainly the most popular in the early to late 80's Then the Amiga 500 took over, and it seemed everyone had one. Most of my friends had C64's and I was the odd one out with a Sega SC3000H, and then an Atari 800XL. With the usual 'My computer is better than yours' type thing going on. Although I remember showing some of them some of the later games on the Atari 800XL, and they were quite impressed. (Can't remember what I showed them now.)

**RT:** Were disk drives or other peripherals over priced?

**NZ:** Disk drives were more affordable in NZ than other overseas (to US) markets, like the UK, so most people, if not all, had DD's come late 1983. Before DD's, most people did have tape drives. I still remember sitting down at a 'borrowed' Atari 400 and loading "Salmon Run", and "Getaway", and "Lemonade Stand" from Cassette tape. :-)

**RT:** Is the packaging of computer software or game cartridges much different down under?  
Multi-languages?

**NZ:** Most games have the multi language manuals, although the game is usually all English. Usually French, German, Dutch, Japanese, English, Italian. Depends on the manufacturer, and the Game System

**RT:** What was your first computer system?

**NZ:** In late 1985 I got my first 'real' computer, a Sega SC3000H computer. My parents bought it off our neighbors who were upgrading to a C64. This had a great, easy to use, Basic, which allowed me to teach myself to program simple games. With a fairly cool adventure game being my pride and joy. I just wish I'd kept the tape I'd saved it to. The SC3000H had some pretty groovy cart games, like "Monaco GP", "Congo Bongo", "Sinbad Mystery", to name the best three. So these kept me busy for the next 2 years...

**RT:** Which Atari computer was your first and how many since then?

**NZ:** In 1987, I remember seeing a advert in the local newspaper, Atari 800XL, DD, software for \$100 US. I don't know how I did it, but I got my dad to let me ring up about it, and then got him to take me to see it. I've never before wanted something so badly, as that day, and that Atari. I guess Dad could see that too, and even though \$100US was pushing his budget at the time, he wrote out the check, and drove home with a extremely excited son in the car next to him. I had that 800XL until around 1994, when for some reason, I



decided that the Amiga was the computer I needed, and sold the Atari for \$50US, to help pay for the Amiga. This is one of the most regretted decisions of my life. I had lots of programs I had written, but I sold them with the Atari. I'm still kicking myself to this day. The other bad decision of my life was, letting my Mom sell the Sega sc3000h after we got the Atari back in 1987. If I'd known that they were so rare, I would've held onto it. Today I now have: 3x Atari 400 (40k, 32k, 16k versions) 3x Atari 600XL (2 with ram upgrades 64kb) 3x Atari 800XL (one boxed) 1x Atari 65XE 4x Atari 130XE (one boxed) 2x Atari XEGS (one boxed) The Atari 65Xe is my latest addition to the collection. For some reason they are very hard to find here. I'm now on a search for a Atari 800. I know there must be one in NZ somewhere!!

**RT**: Were Atari software titles easy to find there, or did you mostly mail order from US / UK or Australia?

**NZ**: Atari software was pretty much non-existent here in NZ around 1987. We had one store which had a few Atari XE cartridges, but I couldn't afford them. So I had to settle for what came with the computer, and what my dad's friend had in his collection. Our local Atari Users Club WACE was good, with lots of PD coming from them. This certainly kept me busy, trying to learn basic by looking at other's programs.

**RT**: What about software piracy back then?

**NZ**: Heh, well, I remember my friends with the C64's all copying their games between them, with not a original disk in sight. But as I had an Atari, I couldn't indulge in the same sort of mindless pirating. Although being a teenager, and with virtually no support for the Atari Computers after 1988, most of my disks were copies off the US/UK Crackers scene, with names like Mr Bacardi (UK), and Yogi the bear from Jellystone Park (US), appearing frequently on the loader screens. Obviously now, I realize that pirating helped to kill off several of the major systems of the time, but back then, I doubt anyone gave it a second thought. It's a shame really, as I wish the Atari 8bit Computer systems had a few more years life back in the day, as I'm sure we would've started seeing some excellent games get produced for it, like what came out of Europe in the early 90's like "Mission" etc. I also wished that Sega had sold the Sega SC3000 in the US, as we may have seen some more games created for it too...as it is now, there aren't very many games for that system. Admittedly, they went on to bring out the Sega Mark III, and then the SMS, so I guess it wasn't so bad. But I've always enjoyed the possibilities that a 'computer' system gave the user. Not just games, games, and oh, more games. ;-)

**RT**: It'll be great to have a basic review, of the SEGA SC3000 with pictures of this computer system, which I must admit to having never heard of before. Maybe you can write an article / review about the Sega SC3000, its games, peripherals, memory etc? Let us know.

**NZ**: I certainly can write up a review of the SC3000, and will as soon as possible. I am working on some new web pages on my website covering the SC3000 computer and SG1000 console. I will be providing various NZ Magazine articles and complete mags for the Sega Computer line, plus Many tape software will be available, with screen shots etc. But for now, Michael Davidson has a page on the Sega SC3000 at

<http://www.retrogames.co.nz> . Be sure to check that out for information on these pre-SMS computers.

**RT:** Do your friends still have their old computer or video game systems? Expanded even more or just moved on to the newer ones?

**NZ:** None of my friends have their original computers... the C64's or Atari XE's have all been replaced first by Amiga's, and then PC's. Unfortunately, I wasn't collecting at the time of them getting rid of their original stuff, so didn't buy any of it from them. There was one exception, in that a friend had been running a 'client' database in BASIC on his Atari 130XE since the mid 1980's, and in 2000 he changed to a PC based program for doing invoices, keeping track of clients, etc. So I did get his Atari, and Disk Drive. Still going strong after 16 years of use every week day. 'They don't make 'em like that no more!'

**RT:** Did NZ have many computer magazines, clubs or any fan magazines?

**NZ:** There were many Computer Clubs here in the 80's most dealing with one type of home computer, Like WACE (Atari), and the Sega users Club (SC3000 computer), and others for C64, Amstrad, and PC, etc. But by the early 90's most had finished or had joined up with the PC users clubs. The Sega Users Club, ran it's own Magazine (Glossy for the first few years, and then plain paper for the last year). This is a great resource for Sega SC3000 and SG1000 information and programs. The mags, are highly sought after, so I'll be scanning mine and putting them online at a later stage. There were a few other magazines released here for a variety of machines...like: Bit's n Bytes 1982 to 199\*? [PC, BBC, Apple, Sega, Atari, C64, Spectrum, Sord, Oric, Lynx (not the Atari Lynx)]. Computer Input 1983 to 1987? (Sega, Atari, C64, Cat, Apple...etc) And many PC based mags.

**RT:** Your Atari 8 bit computer home page is pretty good, and provides a lot of information in one place for Atari 8 bit computer games than I've seen anywhere else. Well done! How did you get started, and did you get much help from others to get and keep things growing?

**NZ:** When I setup my page originally, there were no good places to get Atari computer game images. Previously, Yogi's FTP site was the best, but his great site was down more than it was up, so I saw a need, and decide to try to fill it. I never thought that 3 years later, I would still be online with it. My primary desire for the site, is to provide the disk images to the Atari fans. And although I get asked frequently, I cannot provide the support, that many need to be able to understands & run the emulator(s).

The current layout was designed by Andy Middleton (UK), with a couple of slight changes by myself. The logos were designed by John Mckechnie. I started to expand the site to include 2600/5200/7800/LYNX/and was going to include JAG, but have had very little time to continue with these plans. The reviews section got off to a great start, with many great reviews for games coming in. It's now waiting for me to put them online, I'm only about 50% done so far. Hopefully in the near future, I can drag myself away from my classic collection, and get to work with it.

**RT:** What other plans do you have for your site?

**NZ:** My main goals are to, get the recently dumped games online. To add a section with details about my collection, featuring pictures, and as many details as I can on the item. I'd also like to add a Sega SC3000/SG1000 section & a Fountain section as these are also high on my 'like' list. I have a large bunch of rare NZ Sega Users Magazines, which was a glossy mag from 83? to 86 for Sega users in NZ, I'd like to scan these, and put them online for everyone's benefit.

**RT:** Are you more of a collector, a game player, or a tinkerer, and do you still write your own games?

**NZ:** I'm a collector by nature, and if I like something, I go all out to get everything for it. Spending all my money while I'm at it. ;-) But I also love the old games, and can't see the point in getting a 'modern' console, when my PC plays 'those types' of games anyway. Give me a Atari 8 bit any day! I certainly don't write my own games these days. I haven't done any programming for 5 years now.

**RT:** Tell us about collecting now and how the Internet and trading has helped make collecting significantly better for you?

**NZ:** It has opened up the doorway, so to speak, to other collectors worldwide, and trading is almost as much fun as finding a cart in the 'wild' I enjoy trading, and am over the 100 mark with trades in the past two years. I'm mainly after Atari carts with over 150 Atari 8-bit carts in my collection, I only need another 250+ :-) I can see the end of the rainbow! Software on Disk is not desired as disks are getting pretty close to the end of their life now. But cartridges are great, and work as if they were brand new even though they are 15+ years old. I was averaging around 10 new Atari 8bit carts for my collection every month, when I first started using the Internet to trade, plus hunting in the wild.

**RT:** I almost forgot - PAL is used everywhere in NZ, right? How does that affect your ability to get games to play?

**NZ:** Yes it is PAL here, and that is often a problem when trading overseas. With systems like SNES, Megadrive, etc, being a pain to trade, having to make sure I get a PAL cart. (I realize that there are mods that can be done) I'm just glad the Atari 8-bit carts don't come in the two flavours NTSC/PAL, and work in both systems.

**RT:** Finally, are there any clubs, classic video game shows, or other similar gatherings?

**NZ:** I don't know of any classic gaming clubs in NZ, although there are still a few computer clubs left, mainly dealing in PC stuff now. Local collectors keep in touch with each other, and we do many trades amongst ourselves. But we have never organized a meeting or a show as such.

**RT:** Thanks a bunch for this long 3 part interview - and stuff was even left on the cutting room floor. Hopefully, you've helped me to enriched our readers and gave them a small sampling of New Zealand culture as well as your own personal experience growing up. We look forward to hearing from our readers if they'd like to see a report on the Sega SC3000 computer as Aaron is putting together notes for that now.

(Aaron Wheeler can be reached at: [atari@paradise.net.nz](mailto:atari@paradise.net.nz) and check out his home page "Holmes Atari 8bit Games" @ <http://homepages.paradise.net.nz/atari/> . Alan Hewston can be reached at [hewston95@stratos.net](mailto:hewston95@stratos.net)

## **The TI 99/4A "What Might Have Been: Part I" Home Computer 99/8**

By [Jim Krych](#)

Every computer company has them, the "what might have been" prototypes. More often than not, these never released systems could have played an important factor in the survival of the company, or in the case of TI the continuance of it's home computer division. TI had several upgrades or clones of the 99/4A. The 99/5(Wax Wing), 99/4B, and the 99/7 were ideas that TI had to upgrade the basic model. In the rough and tumble computer world of the early 80's, these probably would not have stood a chance.

It is easy in our 20/20 hindsight to say that the IBM PC would steamroller all competition and for definition of what a "home computer" should be. There have been those saying that no matter what TI put out, it would not have done much. However, I would like to remind them that the Commodore 64 survived well into the 1990's, in the world of Amiga's, ST's, Macs, and early Windows PC's. With the addition of GEOS and more advanced software, you can't argue with millions of C-64's being sold up to the very death of Commodore itself.

TI targeted the wrong computer in the VIC-20. Wrong target, wrong enemy, and wrong time. And, it cost them dearly. And on that infamous "Black Friday", in October of 1983, they threw in the towel. But what if they would have officially released the one computer that could have made an impact? And which computer would that be?

The Home Computer 99/8.

In the mid 1990's, while doing work for Asgard Peripherals, I had a chance to be able to talk to the chief engineer of the 99/8(known as the Armadillo Project). Unfortunately, this individual was again working for TI so he was not able to answer all of my questions; I had to submit the list of questions to TI first. But, I did get tremendous amount of insight from him. He was also behind the 99/4B, and the design of the TI Peripheral Expansion Box.

His name is Mike Bunyard, also known for his book "The Bunyard Manual". Just as a side note, I almost was able to get him, and Tony Lewis to work on a hardware project for the TI!

The 99/8 was indeed compatible with previous TI software, but it is in my opinion, that trying for 100% is what really hurt them at TI. And here is why:

The 99/8 is much faster than the 3.3 MHz TMS9900 in the 99/4A. Its processor was a modified TMS9995 (with the on board 256 bytes disabled) running at 10.7MHz-clocked to the TMS9918A VDP chip. Remember the GROM chips, being clocked at 447 KHz? In the 99/4A you need NOP's in your code to get the whole thing to work well together. Now

imagine a much faster processor, and a faster clock speed!

I have in my disk files the “Bugs” list of the 99/8. And the GPL/GROM issue was very serious. In the end, TI just wanted ROM compatibility.

But what else did the 99/8 have? What would have made it so much a contender against the C-64?

It had a built-in P-Code system

It had a TMS52C00 Speech Synthesizer on board. It seems only one cart would not work with this, and it was planned for re-release.

The Hex-Bus interface. This would have allowed easy peripheral access to a whole slew of add-ons, without the need for the PEB. This is basically a 4-bit bus with other control signals. Compared to the Commodore’s serial disk drive, this is much faster. And, RS232, and other peripherals were ready for this bus, with third-party possibilities. One lawyer at TI I talked to had a 99/8 with two Hex-Bus Disk Drives, sitting in his garage!

You could even “Set Speed” for slow, TI 99/4A speed, and fast.

The VDP 16K memory was entirely set up for video!!!

And the standard sound chip was included.

But even more so, the entire OS was redesigned from the ground up. Taking advantage of the faster and more powerful CPU on the 99/8. Most noticeable was Extended Basic 2.

The 99/8 came with 64K of memory, and Extended Basic 2 was able to use almost all of that! Even more amazing is that the 99/8 had a memory mapper, the 74LS612 is very similar to this chip, that would allow a total of 15 Megabytes of memory! And, Extended Basic 2 would allow the uses of that memory! Automatically. I remember seeing a 99/8 video in which the stock system was run, with the 62K memory available. But, when the memory cards were plugged into the PEB(with a modified PEB connector card), the 99/8 and Extended Basic 2 reported over TWO MEGABYTES ready to use!

The memory paging of the 99/8 was done in 4K pages, and the registers are located in the >8000 area. So there was a method by using XOP’s (Extended Operations) to force more and more memory available in XB 2.

I also have the 99/8 source code. Some of the comments by the programmers are funny, especially to the 15 Megabyte limit! It provides a fascinating insight to what was being tried and accomplished. And almost all of it is well commented.

Because of the VDP memory being used strictly for video, XB 2 also had a bunch of video modes to play with: standard graphics mode, Text mode, Multi-color mode, and bit map. But you also had modes in which the upper 1/3 screen was bit map and the lower 2/3 text, or 2/3 bit map and the lower 1/3 text. And we also had a whole range of graphics commands.

It was all there, ready to be used, a powerful system, to allow the next generation of games, and speed to allow for what you needed!

The Hex-Bus would have allowed for cheap disk drives, and eventually even a hard disk could have been designed. With peripherals being daisy-chained together. Myarc had designed a hard drive system for the 99/8, using a modified version of their WDS 100 system and running on the PEB. The only add-on would have been an expanded memory module to fit into the 99/8 expansion bus.

While talking to Mike Bunyard, I learned something very interesting. The number "250" is often quoted about. This refers to available 99/8's. There are two variations of the 99/8. One is the telephone type connection for the expansion bus, and the other is the card-edge connector. It seems that the telephone type connector is of the 250 number. The card-edge belongs to a much more numerous variety! So, there were more than 250 99/8's made. Only God knows where they are now, and this is not to start a new debate on the subject. Apparently a 1000 PCB's were created.

The 99/8 still exists in engineering drawings somewhere at TI. And, with various collectors showing them around. What an opportunity for the emulation crowd! But in all seriousness, the 99/8 is an interesting footnote to the history of TI and to that of personal computing. With the great crash of 1984 to video game consoles, and the rise of personal computers, the 99/8 could have been right there, slugging it out with the C-64.

And with the introduction of either the 9928(with 64 sprites), or the 9938(and all of the modes it has including true 80-column mode), perhaps even a Home Computer 99/16 based on the tremendously powerful TMS99000. With the incredible Macrostore ability of this CPU, you could have extra instructions to the chip done in the internal hardware! Imagine GPL running at CPU speeds!

History would have been very different.

This article was written while listening to the soundtrack of the movie Apocalypse.

*(Hi, my name is Jim W. Krych. I am a 32- year old technician, with an Electronics Diploma and a soon-to-be finished Computer Programming and Operations Diploma. I am currently employed at the finest maker of electrometers/nanovoltmeters/etc., and my particular product line that I work on is the Source Measure Unit (SMU) model 236,237, and 238. I have a 2-year old son, his name is Treyton. I enjoy retrogaming and things that go with that. : ) My email address: [jwkrych@n2net.net](mailto:jwkrych@n2net.net))*

I have formed my own business! All other projects prior to this were carried by other companies, so this time it's all in my hands, with a lot of prayer and help from others! The company's name is Treyonics, in honor of my son!!! Our flagship product is the Treyonics Home Controller System, Model 9908, better known as the.....

## Devastator

"Serious Gaming!"



# The Rules of Galaga

By David Mrozek, The Video Game Critic



If there's one video game that's passed the test of time, it's Galaga. This classic space shooter was the unofficial sequel to Galaxian. Galaga may not look like much, but it incorporated many original new elements like tractor beams, power ups, and unique stages. And more importantly, few games have found such a perfect balance between playability and challenge. For many players, the music itself instantly brings back memories of their childhood. Over the years, there have been versions of Galaga made for many home consoles, and there have even been a few sequels. Before I review all of those, I'd like to share with you the ten basic rules for playing Galaga.

10. Don't wait! Line up your ship and start shooting BEFORE the aliens appear. You can usually take out a few as soon as they enter the screen. This is the closest you can get to cheating in this game. You'll need all the help you can get, so do it!

9. Try not to shoot all of the "boss" aliens who line up on the top of the formation. These guys are your key to getting double shots. Be sure to leave one or two alive (unless you already have the double shot, of course).

8. When a boss projects his tractor beam, let him capture you, but ONLY if you have a ship in reserve. Getting captured with no ships in reserve is probably the most humiliating thing that could ever happen to you in your life. Just hope that no one is watching.

7. While the tractor beam is taking your ship, resist the temptation to shoot, as you may inadvertently destroy the boss who's attempting to capture you. On the other hand, if your last ship is being captured, shoot like hell!

6. Once your ship is captured, he's taken back to the formation, where he's vulnerable to your own shots. BE CAREFUL not to shoot your own ship. Another way to lose that ship is to shoot the boss who has your ship while he's still in formation. This is almost, but not quite as embarrassing as #9.

5. You can run, but you can't hide. Stay out of the corners! You may be able to get away with that crap in the early stages, but this cowardly tactic won't work for long.

4. Beware of the scorpions. Late in the game, three scorpions will descend down the screen. Naturally, you'll be tempted to shoot them all for big bonus points. The term for this is "glory seeking", and all too often, you'll take unnecessary risks just to get them. And don't worry if you miss the last scorpion, he'll circle back onto the screen, giving you one last chance.

3. Hopefully you'll acquire your double shot before entering the challenge stage. If so, you **MUST** score a perfect (40/40), or else be ridiculed relentlessly by onlookers. It's tough to make perfect with the single shot, but there's simply no excuse if you have the double. Hey, nobody said life was fair.

2. This rule is based on an interesting phenomenon. It turns out that a single remaining Galaga bug is more difficult to shoot than a whole squad of 15. Scientists have yet to explain this.

1. This rule holds true about 90% of the time. After you've acquired the double shot, you'll probably do quite a bit of damage for a while. But once you lose one of your ships, chances are, the next one will also be gone within only a few seconds (30 max). It all has to do with the demoralization that occurs after losing your firepower. Even veteran players become so upset that they lose their composure.

## **Galaga Game Reviews:**

### **ATARI 7800:**

#### **Galaga (Atari 1987) B**

Atari put out many video game favorites for the 7800, and this is one of the most popular shooters of all time. Similar to Galaxian, the enemies fly in patterns before settling into their formations. By sacrificing one of your ships, you afford the opportunity to double your firepower later. How does this version compare to the arcade? It's pretty good! The graphics and sounds are very close to the arcade version. I noted two minor differences however. First, your ship is smaller, making it easier to avoid fire. Second, your firepower is weaker, making it difficult to wipe out enemies in the challenge stages. Still, it's a worthy addition.

### **NES:**

#### **Galaga (Namco 1988) A**

This home version is surprisingly close to its arcade counterpart. In fact, the graphics, music, and gameplay are nearly identical. In case you're not familiar with Galaga, it's a classic shooter along the lines of Space Invaders, featuring dive-bombing aliens and a double-shot power-up. Galaga ushered in a lot of gaming concepts we take for granted today, and it has stood the test of time amazingly well - it's still very enjoyable and addicting. This version is a bit easier than the original arcade game; Galaga veterans are likely to run up some big scores. Although holding down the fire button will fire continuously, you can shoot twice as many shots by tapping the button. This is the next best thing to the actual arcade version.

## [Turbografx-16:](#)

### **Galaga '90 (NEC 1990) A+**

An A+?! Has the Video Game Critic lost his mind?? No, Galaga '90 is SO extraordinary that it pretty much justifies buying a whole Turbografx 16 system. Okay, I'm a huge Galaga fan, but I didn't think any sequel could match the brilliant gameplay of the original. Not only does Galaga '90 push the classic gameplay to new heights, but it even manages to preserve the basic look, sound, and control that made the original such a winner. Like the old Galaga, levels consist of space bugs flying around in patterns before settling into formation. There are a wide variety of enemies here, including some fat turtle-looking things that burst into nice explosions. Some enemies drop bombs. Others merge into larger foes. Like the old Galaga, you can double your firepower for sacrificing a ship and rescuing it. But you knew that, right? But what would you say about **TRIPLING** your firepower?! Holy cow! This game is out of control!! In addition to the normal and challenge stages, there are scrolling "boss" stages that add some spice. The background music uses the style of the original game, but expands on it. The graphics are smooth, colorful, and vibrant. There are even some non-intrusive, nicely drawn background graphics. This is a top-notch shooter, and a **MUST** for every T16 owner. And don't be afraid to use the turbo feature on your controller; this game was tailor-made for that.

## [Playstation:](#)

### **Namco Museum Volume 1 (Namco 1995) B+**

This collection of old arcade games includes Pac-man, Galaga, Pole Position, Bosconian, Rally-X, New Rally-X, and Toy Pop. These games are exactly the same as the arcade versions. Pac-man, Galaga, and Pole Position are true classics. The Bosconian and Rally-X games are also fun, but Toy Pop isn't very exciting. The virtual museum feature is interesting at first, but the actual content of the museum is disappointing, consisting mainly of instructions, tips, and old ads, most in Japanese. (This goes for all the volumes). Still, it's just icing on the cake when combined with games of this caliber.

### **Galaga Destination Earth (Hasbro 2001) F**

Somebody needs to tell Hasbro to **STOP** doing these classic game "updates". I've been a big Galaga fan since 1982, but this is a disaster of mammoth proportions. I think I hate it. They've taken the old Galaga, incorporated modern 3D graphics and fancy sound effects, and sucked every last bit of fun and excitement out of it. The game is mission based (yawn), which I suppose it gave Hasbro an excuse to incorporate a bunch of CGI cut-scenes (Zzzz...). The game begins with some old-fashioned Galaga action, except with some very mediocre 3D graphics. Unfortunately, this stage doesn't capture an ounce of the fun of the original. After that, you're off to a series of horrendous first-person 3D stages, where the graphics are so cluttered that you can't tell what's going on. Other elements of Galaga, like the double-shot and challenge stages are included, but these are also poorly executed. Hasbro has taken a great game and watered it down with every boring modern game cliché it could come up with. No thank you!

For 1300 more game reviews, check out the Video Game Critic's site at [www.videogamecritic.net](http://www.videogamecritic.net)

## End of an Era

After selling classic game systems online for over 4 years, I finally decided to stop. Don't get me wrong, I will still sell carts, manuals, joysticks, boxes and overlays, but I am done selling the systems.

While selling systems has always been a losing proposition, the profit you would make from the carts would easily offset it. It was more of a service to classic gamers than a profitable product line. With the amount of time invested in cleaning and testing systems and controllers as well as the number of controllers that went bad or needed fixing, it was a labor of love.

As much as I enjoyed selling systems to people who were reliving childhood memories or experiencing them for the first time, it has become too much of a hassle to continue. While selling systems always resulted in numerous emails or calls from people who could not get them up and running, I did not mind doing my best to help. I even helped people who bought systems from other people. But more and more people would just send a system back, without emailing first. I would get a system back that was supposedly dead, only to set it up and have it working fine. Then I had to email the person and absorb the cost of sending it back.

Dealing with people who could not set up a system was troublesome at times, but I did not mind. But a worse problem had come up that completely soured me on selling systems. I would have people buy a system off me and then send back a different system and say I sold them a dead system. This first occurred to me about 3 years ago, when I had a seller demand a 6 switch, woodgrain Atari. After I sent it to him, I received an email that the system was dead and he was sending it back. What came back was a 4 switch, Sears brand system. From that day on, I wrote down the serial number of every video game system I ever sold (they are located on the bottom of the machine). I even let people know that I kept track of these, yet I still were getting people sending me back machines that I did not sell them. It finally came to a head, when I had a customer do a charge back on their credit card after I told them I would not replace their system, because it was not the one I sent them.

So it is once again a case of a few bad apples spoiling it for everyone. As much as I want to sell classic systems, it is not worth the time or aggravation for the little money involved. I just wanted to let everyone know the reason behind this decision.

## Phoenix, The Review!

The newest edition of Phoenix, The Fall and Rise of Video Games was released and I decided it was time to get a copy. I had read part of a friend's copy, but never got around to getting my own copy. One reason is that I am a procrastinator and it was too easy to forget to mail out a check. But this time, Leonard Herman made it too easy for me to order. He offered Paypal and I had some extra money in my account, so I zapped the money to him and waited for the book.

After numerous weeks, the book arrived (note that I preordered it, this has nothing to do with his shipping). The first thing I noticed is the size of the book. It is quite large (388 pages) and offers a lot of reading. Do not expect to read this in one sitting. The book is broken into chapters, each one dealing with a different era of video games. It goes from before video games, all the way to the modern era (ending with the year 2000).

The book starts with a wonderful introduction from Ralph Baer, the father of video games. From there, it gets right into the subject. Leonard's writing style is very similar to the USA Today. It is right to the point, without all the filler that many writers fall prey to. He does not prescribe to the Charles Dickens method of writing (for people who do not know, Charles Dickens was known for excessive descriptions, especially in the classic, "A Tale of Two Cities", which was written as a series in a newspaper, where he was paid by the word), which is quite good. Also, he remains very neutral in his writing, with no real bias showing. Too many video game writers, especially game reviewers in magazines, let their personal preferences get in the way of their reviews. Leonard does not fall in this trap, he is very much down the middle of the road. This is refreshing in itself.

The book is essentially a history of video games. It tells what happened and when. There is some information on the companies and some of the people who shaped the industry, but there is nothing real deep. Don't expect to find out the complete history of Nintendo or Atari, rather just the most prominent facts. You must keep in mind that you could easily do a book this size, just for Nintendo or Atari. There is just too much stuff that has happened in the video game industry to get too deep into any one subject. Leonard does a good job of covering all the vital information and even gives some attention to the smallest of systems.

This edition features lots of new pictures. They are black and white, but look very good. They really add to the book and make it more enjoyable. There is also a section in the back with a list of video game links. I was quite surprised and honored to find my site among them.

If you are a fan of video games (and if you are reading this newsletter, the odds are very good that you are), then you owe it to yourself to read this book. The price is very reasonable and there is enough reading to keep you busy for awhile. Plus, you will come away with some knowledge of the industry and make yourself look that much smarter, the next time you are discussing video games with a friend. It would also make a great gift for the video game fan that is tough to shop for.

The book can be ordered from the following website:

<http://www.rolentapress.com/>

## **Wild Cart Kingdom, The Conclusion**

In our last episode ([issue #45 of Retrogaming Times](#)), Marlin and Jim were headed to the flea market to find the elusive Atari.



As we neared the flea market, the sense of excitement hit us. Would we finally find the elusive Atari? Could we tag the animal and be able to track its movements, to better understand its lifestyle? What are the mating habits of Ataris? How big is their territory? These are questions that needed to be answered. We must act in haste if we are to study these rare creatures in the wild, before they disappeared for good.

As we started down the rows of vendors, we heard some strange noises. Jim first heard the cry of a neglected game system. The low pitched whine that can barely be heard by humans, but thanks to our high-tech hearing apparatus, we can hear this faint cry. As Jim ran past the crowds of bargain hunters, he saw the source of the noise. Under a table, pushed aside and out of sight, was a cardboard box. As Jim reached down and pulled out the box, he was both amazed and let down. While he did find a very rare and forgotten, Sega Master System, he did not find an Atari. The system was cold and scared and kept whimpering for electricity. Jim pulled the poor creature out and stroked away the inch of dust that had covered its once proud pelt. Before he could do anything else, the cruel vendor shot over and yelled "\$10.00 for the box, you can get double that on eBay." While our funds were limited (stinking Mutual of Omaha cut us off a long time ago), he could not see the creature suffer anymore. He pulled out the money and handed it to the man.

As we walked down the next aisle, Jim whispered words of encouragement to the poor beast. He kept saying "We will play some Phantasy Star, maybe some Sonic". It seemed to work as the system was soon in better spirits. It is always tough to see a system so neglected, so mistreated. But, much like the horse that was put to pasture when the car came along, the old video games systems also get pushed aside as newer, more powerful ones are introduced.

After a few more rows, our spirits were waning. Were there any Ataris left in the wild? Would we be able to find one or was this a fruitless effort? What were we going to eat, now that Jim had blown our lunch money?

As we reached the final row, our search was finally rewarded! On a tattered blanket was a herd of Ataris. They laid there, absorbing the rays of the sun. One of the old theories about Ataris were put to rest. They are not only social creatures, but they also mingle with the different species. There was a great Atari 5200, overlooking the herd of Atari 2600s. There were at least 5 animals in the herd, with a variety of attachments and carts. As we approached the woman, she offered us the whole lot for \$35.00. I put my haggling ability to work and soon I was able to get them for a mere \$30.00. I pulled out the last of our funds and bought the great herd.

As we headed back to the ranch, I knew that all the game systems would need alot of tender care before they could be reintroduced into the wild. We would need to work carefully with each one, bringing them back to health and tagging them, before we thought about giving them a second chance. But we can now rest with the knowledge that some great Atari's still roamed this planet. Future generations would not be deprived of seeing these mighty beasts that once roamed the world.

**Intruder Alert!**



Time for a new prose story. This time I decided to tackle the game Berzerk. Hope you enjoy it and please send any feedback. Encouragement is very necessary.

### Chapter One - From the Blackness

Head throbbing, pain shooting through my body. As I struggle to regain consciousness, I try to remember what happened and who did it. I slowly sit up, only to find my legs too weak to lift me any further. I struggle to keep my balance as the haze is slowly lifted from my head. As my senses begin to work again, I first hear the sound of crackling. With my eyes still closed, I try to pinpoint a direction it is coming from, but I cannot target its location. It sounds like the crackling of a hundred fires, coming from all directions. I cover my ears to drown out the overwhelming sound. As I block out most of it, the pain in my head subsides. It is now suppressed enough for me to open my eyes. As I look around, I see nothing as I am surrounded in total darkness. I grope around in the darkness to find a light, a doorway, something. My groping, my fumbling leads to nothing. Maybe if my body allowed me to move more than a few feet, I could find an exit of some sorts.

As I struggle to my feet, a spotlight immerses me in light. I try to hide from its intensity, but I cannot escape it as it easily follows my clumsy attempt to get away. As I struggle to avoid the light, I hear a voice call out "Human you must survive the maze to gain your freedom. Be warned that my robots will be ready for you." As the voice comes to a halt, the room is illuminated. As I look around the barren room, I see that it is made of steel. The walls have a shine to them. A few feet from me is a gun of some sorts. I crawl over and pick it up. I slowly rise to my feet and shake the cobwebs from my head.

Without warning, a door opens in front of me. It literally opens as a part of the wall, just rises to reveal another room. As I look around the room that contains me now, I see there are no other exits. My fear of the unknown is overcome by my sense of survival. As much as I fear what lies ahead, I have no options left here. I slowly work my way out of the room. As I leave the room, I hear a voice bellowing the same message over and over "Intruder Alert! Intruder Alert!" I do not know its meaning, but I am quite certain that I will soon find it out. With my gun in my hand, I make my way into the new room, to face an unknown peril for reasons that I do not know and probably cannot comprehend.

**Tune in next month for chapter two!**

## **Conclusion**

Another issue finished and one more step closer to issue #50! I told you that I would finally finish the Wild Cart Kingdom story and start a new prose story. Hope you enjoy them and please give me your feedback.

Next month you can see my review of Venture 2, the very hot and very controversial game by Tim Snider. Is it worth the hype? What exactly is the treasure chest edition and are you missing out by not owning it? Tune in next month to find out!

Also, it is time for another issue of Bit Age Times, our other newsletter. Look for a new issue on the 30th, with a new writer! Until next month, keep your classics well dusted!

-[Tom Zjaba](#)

This issue was done while listening to Tracy Chapman, Nirvana, Tony Braxton and Todd Rundgren.