

Retrogaming Times

Issue #73 - September 2003

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CLASSIC ARCADE CLONES

by [Tonks](#)

With this series of reviews, I thought I would take a look at some of the Vic's clones of popular arcade classics.

[ARACHNOID](#)

Arachnoid is a Centipede clone with a few slight twists. The main twist is that there are more than just one centipede to kill. In fact, it doesn't take long for the screen to be filled with creepy-crawlies, with you blasting away as fast as you can. This makes for a difficult, yet not frustrating, shoot-em-up experience. Shooting is not as straight forward as you might think. You can't just blast away as fast as your trigger finger will allow. If you shoot too soon your previous bullet will just disappear and be replaced with the new one. This means that shooting away madly simply causes all your bullets to disappear only millimetres above your ship. You need to time your shots properly to allow for maximum impact. Graphics are simple, with very few colours, but they are quite effective. The little centipede segments have a great crawling animation to them, with little legs scampering them about. Arachnoid is a good variation on Centipede and recommended especially to fans of the original.

My Score - 8/10

[JELLY MONSTERS](#)

This is it! The best Pacman game on the Vic as well as just about any of the classic consoles and computers. Jelly Monsters is just perfect, with excellent graphics and sound and most importantly, gameplay. It just oozes quality. It is a real shame Atari couldn't have

got Jelly Monsters to be the official version. They would have had the best version available and made a killing - as well as avoided the huge embarrassment of having the official version suck so bad on the Atari VCS. The graphics in Jelly Monsters are huge, taking up the whole screen. Everything is very well defined and looks just as it should. There is some flicker in ghosts, but nothing that detracts. If you are a Pacman fan then you simply must have this game. But be warned! Rumors on the net claim that Atari weren't too impressed with this being released so they put some pressure on and Jelly Monsters disappeared. Therefore the cart is very hard to get hold of and getting one on ebay will set you back quite a bit - but it will be worth every cent!!!!

My Score - 9.5/10

[RADAR RAT RACE](#)

Rally X isn't a widely known game, but to those who are fans, it is a ripper. Radar Rat Race is an excellent clone of Namco's classic. Commodore simply removed the cars and replaced them with rats. And instead of chasing down flags, it is cheese. Apart from those minor differences, this is Rally X. Rumour suggests that Commodore tried to get the official license for Rally X, but were refused. So they changed their original code and released this game instead. Graphics are very good. Everything looks good. The radar is implemented very well and keeps an accurate record of what is happening. Sound is minimal but good. But again, gameplay is where Radar Rat Race really shines. Start playing this and you won't be putting it down for a long time, it is just so addictive.

My Score - 9/10

[COSMIC CRUNCHER](#)

Well the above three reviews are of three excellent clones of some arcade classics. But to show that I am not a biased Vic 20 fan, I review a real stinker. Cosmic Cruncher is a Pacman clone. But where Jelly Monsters excelled, Cosmic Cruncher falls down in just about every area. The graphics are terrible, sound is horrible, in fact the game is just bad, bad, bad. It is games like this that gives the Vic 20 a bad name. Also due to the cart being very common, Cosmic Cruncher would be found by some checking out the Vic and their opinions would be tarnished by such a poor game. There is just nothing I could recommend about this game except maybe you could place the cart under a wobbly table leg to stop it wobbling.

My Score - 3/10

RETROGAMING COMMERCIAL VAULT

by [Adam King](#)

Greetings, gamers. This month I can actually bring back an old tradition. With Alan Hewston reviewing Congo Bongo, I decided to do a double feature about that under-appreciated company, Sega, the makers of Congo Bongo. Nowadays Sega is making games for all the systems, but as we all know, this is not the first time Sega was just a third-party publisher. Before the Dreamcast, before the Genesis, before the Master System, Sega was just a software company putting out ports of arcade hits for most of the major game and computer systems. For this month I have the commercial for Congo

Bongo, as well as another Sega title, Buck Rogers.

I apologize for the less-than-stellar screen-grabs, but the tape I had didn't have these ads in the best condition. I just had to make do. Hopefully I can find better versions for the CD.

Congo Bongo

This ad is made up entirely of animated game screens instead of actual gameplay. As the explorer moves around each level, a voiceover that sounds like Groucho Marx spouts out some one-liners. This ad even has a laugh track.

(We begin with the first level, with the explorer dodging the nuts thrown by the giant monkey)

"Say, a funny thing happened when I started to play Congo Bong. Hey, these nuts are crazy!"

(Later in the level he confronts three monkeys as they toss him into the water below)

"Who are these guys? Hey fellas, let's not get carried away. Oh no!"

(Now he's in the next level and has to cross the river, which is filled with baddies, by hopping on stuff)

"Maybe I'll go for a swim. On second thought, maybe I'll go for a walk."

(He makes it across and gets past a blue rhino to get to the big monkey)

"Hey lady! This is a one way street! Hey, that's the guy I've been looking for."

(And for the big finish)

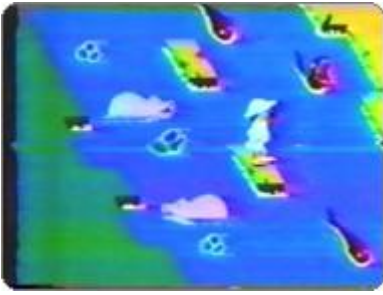
"Congo Bongo. From Sega. It laughs a long, long time."



"So here I go up this hill. Or staircase or whatever it is."



"Do any of you know what time it is?"



"Why can't they just build a bridge?"



"Out of the way! I want that ape!"

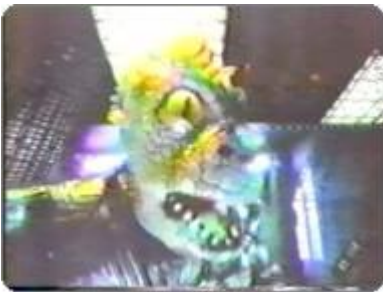
How come I can't get a laugh track when I play Zaxxon?

Buck Rogers

This is an 80's ad if I ever saw one, and I have seen many. This spot is just like all those 1950's B-movies. Two guys in alien costumes are under attack by an Earth game player, who's plowing through their defenses by playing the game.



"Check it out, dude. We're scary aliens."



"Forget the costumes. Worry about that guy killing us."



"We're losing to this dork? That's more embarrassing than these costumes."

Words fail me.

Time to sign off for another 30 days. As far as the upcoming CD-Rom is concerned, I can always use some help getting the ads together. So search your old videos, and if you find something I can use, let me know. Plus I may go ahead and throw in a few computer ads, like the TI994 and the Commodore 64. Until next time, keep gaming and look out for the monkeys.

The Many Faces of...Congo Bongo

by [Alan Hewston](#)

The previously advertised "Montezuma's Revenge" will be delayed a few months. Instead, we bring you the Many, Many Faces of "Congo Bongo". In fact, a whopping 10 classic home versions. Knowing that the end of the life of the Retrogaming Times (RT) may be drawing nearer, I figured that now was a good time to pull out this well-known many-faced classic. Unfortunately, Sega (and/or their programming team at Beck-Tech) may have done the worst home conversion job ever, porting this title badly to so many consoles. The most common versions, the Atari 2600 & C64 cart certainly didn't help make me a Congo Bongo fan. Looking at our voting totals for the Retrogaming Times 1983 VG class, I can't help but wonder if the weak home versions impacted your voting as well (14 votes out of 85). But don't be completely turned off like I was. Read along, and/or play along at home and see if you can tell which 2 versions merit some PT every once in a while.

You control what appears to be a pacifistic (he's weaponless) hunter through 4 jungle areas, overcoming the terrain and other hazards, mostly caused by the wildlife that he should be out hunting. Some reckless simians and their leader Bongo the gorilla. The game starts with an intermission scene where Bongo sees you asleep at your campfire, he grabs a log from the fire and gives you the "old hot foot". The action scenes then begin and you chase him through the jungle in hopes of revenge. Maybe that's why you have no gun. Anyhow, you begin at "Primate Peak", then "Snake Lake", "Rhino Ridge" and finally, catch him at "Lazy Lagoon". All scenes are done in three-quarter perspective, plus there's further intermissions as well. Once you catch him, the whole chase scene starts again, and in each harder level (run through the jungle) the hazards are worse – probably more animals have been alerted to your presence - chasing their beloved Bongo.



My collection of "Snake" & "Scorpion" artwork.

Arcade: by Sega

Home versions: nearly all by Sega – no programming credits found.

Most titles screens note 1983, but these some are unconfirmed:

1983: (AP II, Atari 8 bit, 5200, C64 2 vers - cart (C64C) & disk (C64D – US Gold), INTV, TI-99, Vic 20.

1984: (Atari 2600, CV)

Classic Sequels: None

Home Version Similarities: Except those in <>, all versions have: an option to use keyboard control <5200, CV, INTY, 2600>; background (tempo) music throughout each screen; a life timer <TI> for each screen, with more time added as the levels increase; safe areas (initially) where nothing can harm you; a jingle when you die, followed by an angelified version of you flying heavenward; a musical interlude congratulating you as you finish each stage; all 4 arcade screens <C64C, 2600, TI, INTY, Vic 20, 8 bit, 5200, CV (3 screens)>; a bonus life at 10K <TI, AP2, CV>; all motion and paths are aligned either 45 or 90 degrees <TI, C64C>; there is an audio effect with every move you make <C64C, Vic, 2600, 5200, 8 bit> (representing scoring points); and another heard any time you jump <Vic, AP2, 2600>; At "Primate Peak", Bongo overlooks his animated <C64C, TI, AP2> waterfall and casually tosses 2, 3 coconuts <TI (one)> at you. Then there's a one way sloped path downward <TI> followed by a chasm that is tedious to cross. A landslide makes this a one way crossing <TI, Vic 20> that leads to 3, 4 overactive monkeys <TI (none), 2600 (2)>. Jump repeatedly to shake monkeys off your back or they'll send you over the cliff. At "Snake Lake", you'll have to hop on a moving hippo's back to reach Bongo, but not after crossing a series of small islands filled with Scorpions and Snakes. At "Rhino Ridge", you must react and move quickly across the prairie. There are 3 charging rhinos that must be dodged, outsmarted or jumped. In the process, be sure to avoid the deadly puddles and jump over or hide (from the rhinos) in several mole holes. But hurry up, because a head hunter can bury you alive inside those holes. At "Lazy Lagoon" the action slows down and even Bongo takes a nap. The tedious task of leaping across the lagoon using lily pads, standing rocks, floating hippos, and gigantic fish is very frustrating, but rewarding. Once you get across, you can grab that fire log back and give Bongo the works. But, whoa, watch out for that charging rhino, who comes out of nowhere – he must have been following you and Bongo from the prairie.

The CV is the only version where you select a starting level (1 thru 4). This is great for practicing the harder levels, like taking on 4 rhinos at once. Some versions are programmed so rudely, as to begin the game, or a mini demo before you have decide if 1 or 2 players will partake in the chase. The pseudo demo on the C64D and APll simply loads and views each of the screens in succession (10 seconds without any action), until you can begin a new game at the title screen. Nearly all versions have NO pause, and most do not display a high score, and in fact, your score is not considered important, and it is removed from sight, in deference to the title screen. A few versions make the best of their limited machine capabilities, mostly graphical, by having 2 sets of characters per screen.

One set is always off, and then at the right point (across the screen), the first set goes away and the second set is activated. This may seem cheap, but it is a clever programming tool, and thus on the <(2600) coconuts are replaced by monkeys, (APll, C64D, TI & INTV) lily pads & hippos are replaced by fish & rhino>. Likewise, the 2600 and INTV alternate between displaying the score and countdown timer. A few versions are more like the arcade – displaying the score, bonus timer, level and lives all very nicely. There's even the arrow on the screen pointing at Bongo (ie theexit for that screen). The Intellivision & 2600 are the only versions with an intermission screen. Note the prominent cartridge artwork of the scorpions & snakes, only to find the disk versions (C64D & Apple II) are the only 2 that have them in the game. Overall, most classic home versions will frustrate Congo Bongo fans.

[Disqualified: C64 Cart version \(32\)](#)

My First reaction is that there are only 2 game play screens so how can SEGA call this an arcade remake? 'tis not a terrible game, but it gets DQed this month, since there is a much better version for the C64, on disk, by US Gold. Gameplay is respectable (6), with all the basic elements in play, but I subtracted 1 pt. per missed screen. The Addictiveness is mediocre (5), with too much difficulty and frustration in jumping all the way across the Lazy Lagoon. This is somewhat difficult on all versions, but perhaps harder here because the 45 & 90 deg angles are off, not as much as the TI, but do require adjustments along your path. You'd stop playing this version even before I tell you that the disk version is superior in all ways. Graphics are good enough (6) to enjoy, but lack color & animation. Controls are well done (9), as good as it gets with this three-quarter perspective alignment. You may get pretty good, but you'll still fall victim to the angles from time to time. This cart is pretty easy to find, but pass on it - unless you are a collector.

[Have Nots: Atari 2600 \(28\)](#)

My first reaction was choke and puke. But then I started to realize how hard it would be to make the 2600 do what is accomplished here. Oh well, it is still pretty bad attempt at Congo Bongo, but kind of unique none-the-less. The second screen is actually fun to play, and perhaps they should have just made the first screen simpler and more fun as well - not three-quarters perspective. Gameplay is blah (5), with most of the basics in place, but missing 2 screens. The first screen is hard to discern what is what and where you are allowed to go and where not to go. After a lot of trial and error your appreciation and Addictiveness may not seem too bad, almost good (6). If you can hang in there, you'll

enjoy the second screen more and then hopefully get to see the cute intermission. There are start options of slow and fast control, and 3 or 5 starting lives, but these options do not really add anything to the game or your enjoyment. Collision is a mystery. The Graphics are helped by the animated river, but otherwise feeble (4). There's not a lot of color variation and the details are chunky and coarse. Again, Screen 2 looks better. The Sound is barely passable (4) with no sound effects from start to finish. You enjoy the chimes and tunes for starting, dying & finishing a screen, but the background tempo music is pretty annoying. Controls are as good as it gets (9). The best feature of this title is that screen 1 scrolls to 2 downwards, providing a great transition - and you actually scroll with it.

Have Nots: TI-99 (32)

My first reaction was that if there's no timer, then why keep score? With only half of the screens provided, the Gameplay is marginal (4) at best - heck there's only 1 coconut & no monkeys on level 1. By level 3, the monkeys do arrive, and I tried playing with them, but they did not hinder me at all. Finally, a weird control / layout scheme, with paths that are not quite 45 or 90 degrees makes you constantly adjust your angle. The Addictiveness stinks (4), since the difficulty is way too hard to consistently make jumps over the Lazy Lagoon. The terrible collision detection is the final straw to guarantee this baby sees very little PT in your TI cart slot. The Graphics are fair (5) but fall well short of the TI's capability to depict Bongo's world. Bongo looks like the devil on the Lazy Lagoon. The use of solid colored white & black objects are an eye sore & hint a rushed programming job, or lack of effort. The Sound is a misfit, being quite crisp (8) and refreshing. The music is pleasant and the effects are all there making it among the best. Controls are a little off (8) and not consistent - possibly due to the angle thing or just the difficulty again.

Have Nots: Vic 20 (29)

My first reaction was this is playable, but childish. Bongo looks like "Pizza the Hut" [from "Space Balls"] Gameplay is decent (6), just missing 2 screens. The Addictiveness is OK (6) but frustrating that the game is over the score gone and you're back to the intro screen - in like 3 seconds. So much for the score again, and then level 2 does not seem any more challenging (different) than 1. The graphics are so simple that you can clearly tell where you are, where you want to go, and where not to go. Bad news is that this is due to the blockiness and lack of detail. No hidden tricks, but no color, no nice jungle looking colors (hello! - where's the Green?), no detail either. Thus Graphics are passable (4), and let's not forget the simple white & black characters again. Oops, almost forgot, the river animation is great for the Vic, but probably not memorable at this point. The Sound stinks (4) - just like the 2600 - no effects, just music is plain wrong. Yech. Controls are as good as it gets (9). Jan 1985 Computer Games mag completely trashed this version - not a surprise, but they should have noted that most all SEGA versions of CB were terrible.

Have Nots: Atari 5200 (30)

My first reaction was that this looks like crap for the 5200/8 bit, and why is there a delay from the time you die to when it let's you know that you died. The Gameplay is adequate (5), but suffers from only 2 screens and is a strong contender for the worst physics ever - in a commercially released VG. Where did they dream up this stuff. How does our hunter jump and curve in 3 directions at once? This may explain how hyperactive jumping can

get you into no man's land. You end up under, behind, next to the path or something. You can keep moving, scoring points, but never make it back alive. This glitch and having died several times on the monkey plateau from "nothing in particular" are annoying. The INTY also has some screen path glitches, but you can learn these nuances and return to normal space. Despite all the glitches and setback, the Addictiveness is fine (6) as the difficulty starts off more easily and builds more gradually. But, I doubt you'll keep playing until you figure out the collision detection. If that isn't enough, SEGA went and took away the standard features of the controller, including the pause. Dooh! The Graphics are good (6) compared to the previous losers, but a big let down for this system. The river animation is OK, but there's little graphic detail or variety but plenty of poor color schemes. Sound is good enough (6), but there is no sound effect for scoring points, ie moving. Controls are pretty good (7), but the analog control bytes. Try NOT moving and falling off a wet hippo's back.

Have Nots: Atari 8 bit (32)

My first reaction was this is identical to the 5200, and gets the same scores, but has a better control scheme - digital. Controls are thus as good as it gets (9). Available on cart and disk.

Bronze Medal: Apple II & Intellivision (35)

A tie this month earns us a bonus fourth medal winner.

Apple II

My first reaction was "all white characters again?" And, a good laugh as Bongo the ape looks like Super Mario. I think the rhinos are way too large, but maybe this is to make up for them being slow & stupid. The Gameplay is impressive (8), pretty much all there, including all 4 screens. This trend continues with enjoyable (8) Addictiveness. This title may drive you insane until you realize that the collision detection requires you to jump/land/walk 2 pixels inside whatever the boundary is, not just 1 pixel clear. Despite this malady, there is a fully functional pause <Esc>, and a demo of sorts. After a brief stretch of inactivity, your disk drive will sequentially load each of the 4 screens, then back to the Hi-Res title screen. Graphics are mostly very good (7), with sufficient detail, color choice and multi-colors. But there are those ugly, single colored (white) characters almost everywhere. The mediocre (5) Sound almost knocks this title off the medal stand. Despite the full set of musical scores, there is no sound effect for jumping, and then there's those darn internal AII speakers. The Controls are less than fantastic (7) with a bit of a struggle to achieve digital control with analog sticks. As usual, available only on disk, and despite repetitive screen loading, it only takes 5 seconds to load the screen (and view it), & then another 5+ more and you're playing it.

Intellivision

This version is so darn rare that I wanted to DQ it, but then IntelliSteve came to my rescue and answered all of my detailed questions on every aspect of the game. I intend to play this title in person some day, and hope that these review scores are pretty accurate. Gameplay is decent (6) with the basic elements but missing 2 screens. The Addictiveness is fine (6), helped by the intermissions, but then set back by a rather challenging version to

play. Then there's the same old story - poor collision detection & SEGA once again stripped away a standard pause - built into a controller. Graphics are exciting (7) with good animation and use of multi-colors. Details are lacking, but color choices are great. Sound is sharp (8) probably among the best. Controls are a bit off (8) where L=L, & R=R, but U & D are aligned 45 degrees - huh? This will take some time getting used to, not to mention wanting only 4 directions out of the 16 directional controllers. Fat chance. Cart is so rare that you need not worry about ever finding it.



The C64 Disk version is truly a lost classic.

Gold Medal: Colecovision & Commodore 64 Disk (41)

These 2 titles really stand out from the crowd - and both deserve the gold.

Colecovision

My first reaction was surprise to see 4 skill level choices - maybe the CV programmers, not SEGA did this game. Turns out these are start level options, which helps the Addictiveness to be outstanding (9). Practicing each of the skill levels is a great fun, and a bonus pt is earned since the standard CV pause <*>, was left in-tact. The Gameplay is cool (7). Pretty much all there, just missing the easiest screen to program, "Snake Lake". Dodging 4 rhinos on level 2 is quite a challenge. But be forewarned - the end is near once you see yourself dance like Fred Flintstone driving his car. Slipping your feet, like on a banana peel, right after you kick the Green monkey off its resting spot. You feet keep moving, but it is still possible to move and jump and squirm and somehow jump across the chasm - but just cruel to keep dying over and over. Graphics are sharp (8) with nice animation, coconuts bouncing on the dusty hillside, plenty of colors& detail. Sound is crisp (8) and possibly the best. Controls are as good as it gets (9), with no further points lost for using the CV controller to still have a pause.

Commodore 64 Disk by US Gold

My first reaction was how did I not know about this version. I guess the Europeans got it first. Gameplay is the best & very nice (8), with all 4 screens and even the addition of a snake on screen 1 in higher levels. Addictiveness is highly fun (8) with a way to pause the game that may not have been intended. Plug both sticks in & then move down once on the stick that does not control the game and this toggles a pause. I'm sure this is a software glitch (er uh feature of the code), but it works like a charm every time. Sure, it's weird & awkward, but it works without locking up the game. On the negative side, the disk loading time between levels is too darn long & takes its toll on your enthusiasm. But there

is the same pseudo demo as the APII - a tour of all 4 screens. The Graphics are beautiful (8), with lots of color, variety, detail, shadows, depth perception & animation. The main character is the worst feature and a bit dorky looking as well, but . . . Sound is also crisp (8) and is all there. Controls are as good as it gets (9). As noted, this version is only available on disk.



C64 Primate Peak.

Thanks: To Steve Orth for his Intellivision help – see his reviews, screenshots and love of the Inty at:

<http://www.intvfunhouse.com/games/cobo.phtml>

I'll continue to press hard to review many of the popular titles through RT issue #100 & hope that this great, free fanzine can continue until then. Please provide encouragement & feedback to myself, Tom and all of our writers. If/when the RT dies, I'll continue writing these reviews on my own site, probably not as regularly. This is a labor of love, but without the monthly commitment I wouldn't feel sense of service to the community. I obviously spend too much time researching, play testing, writing 7 re-writing these reviews, but I like to be thorough. They force me to keep in touch with my hobby and the games that I grew up with. I hope that you enjoy reading these as much as I do writing them.

Come back next time for another 20th Anniversary tribute to 1983 in The Many Faces of "Crystal Castles" on the Atari 8 bit, 2600, Apple II, Sinclair Spectrum & C64. I'm missing the Atarisoft C64 version, but I'll see what I can do. Alan Hewston, can be contacted at:

Hewston95@NOSPAMstratos.net or visit his site at http://my.stratos.net/~hewston95/VG/Hewston_vg.html

Great Classic Christmas!

This Christmas is looking to be a great classic Christmas for owners of new game systems. Two great game compilations are due on the Playstation 2 and X-Box and one will come for the Gamecube.

The first one, **Midway Arcade Treasures** will feature 24 classic arcade games with a ton of great ones. Here is a complete list of the games:

Blaster
Bubbles
Defender
Defender II
Gauntlet
Joust
Joust II
Klax
Marble Madness
Moon Patrol
Paperboy
Rampage
Rampart
Road Blasters
Robotron 2084
Root Beer Tapper
Satan's Hollow
Sinistar
Smash TV
Splat!
Spy Hunter
Super Sprint
Toobin'
Vindicators

As you can see, there is a good mix of classics as well as some of the great games from the late 1980's to early 1990's. And for a retail price of \$19.95, how can you go wrong? That is less than \$1.00 a game and with games like Root Beer Tapper, Satan's Hollow, Robotron, Rampart and many more, they are well worth that buck! I already have mine preordered.

Intellivision Lives!

From the Classic Gaming Expo came the announcement of the Intellivision Collection. Over 50 games, interviews and more. It will be out for the Playstation 2 and the X-Box with no mention of price or exactly what games there will be. It will feature a pizza parlor that you are at and there will be arcade games that you go up to and play. Each one will be themed to a certain genre (space, sports, etc...). It will be interesting to see what new stuff they have and if they offer the ability to save high scores and other features that gamers really want. As far as what games will be on it, look at the two Intellivision Lives! collections that were released on the PC and you should have a good idea of what to expect. My hope is that they have as many of the INTV released games as possible. I know my favorite Intellivision game, Diner will not be there because the main character is owned by another company (it is a sequel to Burgertime). Hopefully Thin Ice, Tower of Doom, Thunder Castle, World Series Baseball and a few others. I do not expect to see any of the Activision or Imagic games as Activision has already talked about doing a sequel of sorts to their Activision Anthology and putting the games from other systems on it and this would be a big selection of unique games to add to that collection.

By the way, I played a demo of Pitfall Harry, another sequel to Pitfall and I can say that I was not that excited by it. It is pretty much Crash Bandicoot with Pitfall Harry who looks a bit like a cross between Jeff Corwin and Rowen Atkinson and that is not a compliment. While it would have been really cool about a decade ago (and I must say it is better than the past three sequels, the lame PS1 game, the Mayan Adventures and the awful Super Pitfall for the NES, but that is not much of a challenge), it is pretty much average at best now.

Letters to the Editor

They keep coming and coming, the good questions as well as the downright weird. Here is another sampling:

First off, just wanted to say that, after stumbling across your site, I found what I consider to be a great newsletter, and I read through most of every one of the back issues. :) The question...

Older issues seemed to indicate that, maybe at one time, you had some sort of e-mailing list for the newsletter, true? Since I can't find anything of the sort on your site, I assume that either I'm mistaken and this either never existed or it no longer exists, also true? I just wanted to make sure that I wasn't missing anything before I set a reminder on my Palm to visit your site once a month. :)

Also, while I have a bit of your time, here are two more "shot in the dark" questions, which have been nagging me for some time, that I figure you may possibly be able to answer, given your demonstrated deep level of involvement in classic gaming...

1. Does a comprehensive list exist somewhere that shows all of the Atari 2600 games that allowed for, rather than two-players-taking-turns play, two-player >simultaneous< play (i.e. Combat, Ice Hockey, etc)?? I've seen a short list of games where three or more players could play, but realizing that it might be a bit larger, I'd really like to see a list like what I'm asking about. If you have one or know where I can find one, it would be much appreciated.

2. (This one is less important...) I remember playing an arcade car racing game where I was able to select my car, even including whether I wanted a manual or automatic transmission. Choosing the former even introduced the need to use a clutch and shift gears, and I think (not completely sure) that this game was one that also gave feedback through the steering wheel (i.e. shaking on rough ground, resistance in turns, etc). Does that ring a bell?

As far as the email list, I once offered a no frills version of Retrogaming Times that I emailed to people. But then someone contracted a virus and tried in vain to blame me as well as other places he downloaded from (it was an email with numerous people being contacted) and threatened to sue over damage to his computer. While nothing ever came from it, it was enough for me to just quit that as it was not worth the chance of a lawsuit.

As far as the other two questions, my guess is Digital Press would be the best place to find out about the Atari 2600 games list. That or AtariAge.com, both of which have a ton of information about stuff like that. As far as the racing game, I am sure one of the readers will know about it as they always seem to know the answer to arcade questions. Hopefully we will have the answers in the next issue.

When's Retrogaming Times #73 Coming out? In case you didn't notice it's now October. I need my fix of Retrogaming Times!!!

Where does the time go? I remember when I used to have plenty of time to get it done, but now I look up and it is late once again. At least the price has remained constant. I do try to get it out on time, but with the half off sale I am running now, I have been overwhelmed with orders and thought of not doing an issue for a few months until things got back to normal, but I decided to rough it out and get it done. To give you an idea how busy I have been, I have gone a whole week without playing a single video game, talk about needing a fix.

i was wondering if someone would know the actual town where the covered bridge and house were located in the movie, Beetlejuice? i am looking for a place to move and would like to move to this kind of area. thank you for your help.

This one just came out of left field. I have gone from a classic game guru of sorts to a real estate agent for the bizarre. While we are on the subject of houses, I would love to live in the Addams Family house from the TV show. Now that would be cool! Of course living at Michael Jackson's house with your own amusement park and zoo would be cool (as long as you did not have to sleep in the same bed with him).

i was wondering if you knew how many levels the game H.E.R.O has. I recently started paying it again on my trusty c64 where i reach level 19 ok. I loved playing this when i was young and i still do now :)

I was wondering if the game has an end level at all or whats the highest level that someone has achieved.

I will once again ask the readers of this publication for an answer. I know that I never got further than level 15 (and that was back when my reflexes were sharper). Once again look for an answer next month (hopefully).

A Retrogaming Times Milestone!

Time once again to honor another milestone for the newsletter. This issue will be the 40th Many Faces article done by Alan "Pitfall Harry" Hewston. To show such dedication is truly amazing and the amount of work he puts into each one is nothing short of amazing! It is one of the reasons this newsletter has been successful and ranks as favorite feature for many readers of RT. Great job Alan, the body of work you have contributed is amazing!

Atari 2600 Tank Game Reviews

By the Video Game Critic,
www.videogamecritic.net



Battlezone (Atari 1983) A

This amazing first-person tank game looks and plays flawlessly. In fact, this Atari 2600 edition is arguably more fun and playable than the 3D arcade version! The action is fierce. Enemy tanks turn on you quickly, and the super tanks are extremely elusive. Flying fighters approach in a zigzag manner, forcing you to shoot or run. The slow red flying saucers don't present a threat, but being worth 5000 points, they are a constant distraction. Like the UFOs in Space Invaders, you just can't resist taking a shot at them. Although this version of Battlezone offers no vector graphics or barriers, make no mistake - the game is still played in a 3D space. If a tank shoots you from the side and you back up in time, you can actually see his missile whiz by in front of you! Daddy like!! It's even possible for other tanks to unintentionally shoot each other! Graphically, you couldn't ask for much more. Your moving treads are visible on the bottom of the screen, and the mountainous backgrounds are plain but colorful. Your enemies are blocky but well defined and easy to identify. The gameplay is smooth and fast moving, and the controls are dead-on. A useful circular scanner at the top of the screen indicates the position of your enemies. In terms of challenge, there are few games on the 2600 this intense, and it'll give your wrist a serious workout.

Recommended variation: 2

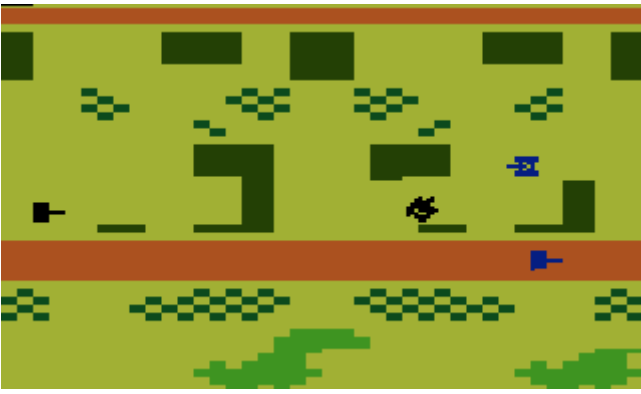
1 player



[Robot Tank \(Activision 1983\) B-](#)

I first got acquired this cartridge when returning a defective version of Atlantis to a nearby mall back in the early 80s (would you believe it had Cosmic Ark on it?!). The guy working there, who didn't seem particularly interested, said I could exchange it with any other game on the shelf. Seizing the opportunity, I grabbed Robot Tank, which was priced at an exorbitant \$36. Since I had only paid \$10 for the defective Atlantis, it was quite a trade. I executed the exchange swiftly and fled before the dude could realize he'd been played like a piano. Anyway, Robot Tank is a first-person shooter along the same lines as Atari's Battlezone, but if Battlezone was a simulation, then Robot Tank is pure arcade. It's not realistic at all. Only one tank appears at a time, and it only shoots if it's in front on you. Incoming missiles look like large blocks, and can be evaded by simply rotating your tank until they disappear from view, which makes no sense. Your missiles are guided and often collide with incoming shots. The enemy tanks move quickly and erratically, making this feel more like a target shooting game. What's good about Robot Tank? Well the graphics for one thing. The terrain moves smoothly as you roll your tank over it, and the mountains in the background look much better than those in Battlezone. But the main gimmick is the time of day and weather changes, which are announced with some cool-looking alert text. As the game progresses, day turns to night, and each day brings a random weather condition, including rain, snow, and fog. The weather affects the handling of your tank as well as your vision. During the night, you must rely almost solely on your scanner to track down the enemy. A cheap strategy I've discovered is keeping your enemy behind you until daylight. You couldn't do that if there were two enemies at a time! There's only one skill level. Overall, Robot Tank is a good-looking game but it doesn't have nearly the depth of Battlezone.

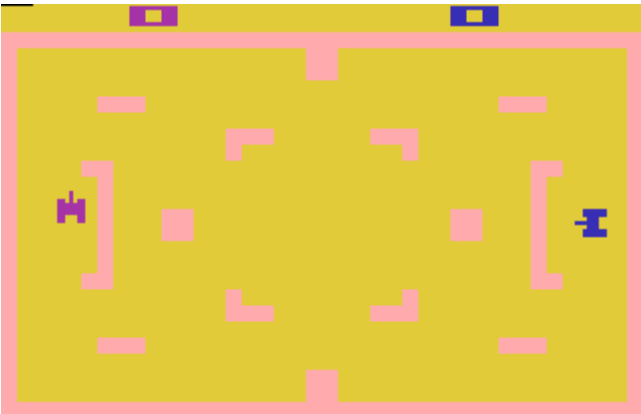
1 player



[Armor Ambush \(M-Network 1982\) B+](#)

Considering how popular Combat has remained over the years, it's surprising that you don't hear more about this gem of a game. I always figured that Combat 2 would have been a lot like this. It's a two-player tank game with variable terrain and two tanks on each side. You simply pull back on the joystick to switch control between your tanks. The random environments consist of roads, grass, forest, and water. Certain terrain will slow you down, but in general your tanks move pretty fast. There are also barriers that you can ricochet your bullets off of. The animation is smooth, and the missiles are large and easy to follow. It all adds up to a great tank battle game.

2 players



[Combat \(Atari 1977\) B](#)

This game is an enigma. Back in the 80s, all of my friends detested it, and they even made fun of its simple graphics and gameplay. But now, twenty years later, everybody I talk to swears up and down that Combat is one of the greatest games ever made. It's bizarre, but I can't deny that the game offers some good competitive one-on-one action. Each game variation challenges you to outshoot your opponent over a 2 minute, 16 second time period. The tank variations have loads of options including different mazes, guided missiles, bouncing missiles, and even invisible tanks. The fact that a tank is relocated after taking a hit reduces the opportunity for additional cheap shots. Few will argue that the tank pong variations are the best of the bunch, with wild and unpredictable matches. The biplane and jet variations are less exciting, but still worth a look. You can fly your plane off one side of the screen and appear on the other, and clouds are an option. The three planes vs. one bomber variation never seemed fair - the bomber never really has a chance. Combat is an old, simplistic game, but after all these years it's finally getting some

respect.
2 player

Combat 2 (Atari 1982) NA

This old prototype was recently released at a Classic Gaming convention, but to be honest, it's not much of a game. Yes it's playable, but it pales to the original Combat. There are some interesting new concepts, but the game just doesn't play very well, and definitely feels unfinished. Combat 2 looks a lot like M-Network's Armor Ambush, but unlike that game, this is a simple one-on-one tank battle. A blue river divides the top and bottom of the screen, and there are two bridges crossing it. The rest of the screen is full of scattered blocks. Depending on the mode, you can either ride underneath the blocks (tree mode) or have to go around them (wall mode). Either way, you can shoot the blocks to clear them out. In some variations you can actually lay out these blocks yourself before the game, but this time-consuming task isn't worth the effort. Tank control is different from the original game. Here, you adjust the tank's speed, and it moves forward on its own. It's not very effective, because you can't go far without running into something anyway. Tanks can sustain multiple hits before blowing up in a small mushroom cloud. The game ends when either player depletes his supply of tanks. If you're looking for fun, look elsewhere. The game is shallow, and it's easy to see why this project was shelved.

2 players

Want to read more? For over 2000 more reviews, check out www.videogamecritic.net

Sites of the Month

Sometimes it takes awhile to mention a site. A great site can occasionally get overlooked. This is a case for the first site that I will put the spotlight on. It is a great site that has been around for quite awhile, but it has been my error to finally point it out. So here we go!

INTV Funhouse

One of my favorite systems was and still is the Intellivision. This site offers possibly the most information about the system on the net (maybe even rivaling the Blue Sky Rangers site and they created the games). Pictures, overlays, info and more. If you love the Intellivision, then this site is for you. And with the Intellivision collection coming this Christmas, it is a great place to build up your excitement for the Intellivision games. Click below to visit:

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

Quarter Arcade

People are always asking me where they can find an original arcade machine? Well, here is a site that sells machines, marquees and a whole lot more. Go forth and spend.

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

Conclusion

Well, it is done. Did not think this issue was ever going to be done. I had the articles, but not the time. And now we have the holidays coming. Want to know something? This issue marks the start of the seventh year of publishing Retrogaming Times. For the record, 72 issues divided by 12 months makes 6 years and that makes issue #73, the start of year number 7. That is just downright scary to think that I can ramble on about classic games for the better part of a decade. If I keep this up much longer, I will have to go visit Dr. Sane myself.

Time to mail it in for the month. Have alot of orders to pull and updating the comics part of the website.

-[Tom Zjaba](#)

(This newsletter was done while listening to Todd Rundgren, Jason Mraz and John Denver).