

Retrogaming Times

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Still Going!

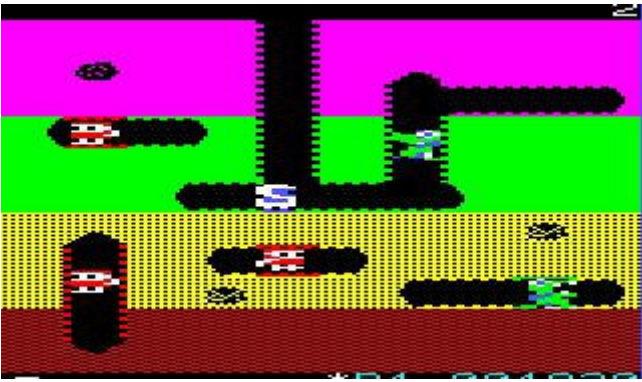
Well, issue #75 has come and gone and the newsletter remains. To be honest, with the burden of selling on the website gone, I have a renewed spirit for doing RT. That and a new computer, one that does not crash 4-5 times a day (at the most inopportune times, like after doing alot of work on RT and not saving for awhile), makes things much more enjoyable. Oh and the ability to play MAME again really helps put a person in a better mood. I have been MAME-less for about a year and a half, if not longer. But now I am enjoying it, along with a Devastator II controller. So look for another 25 issues of Retrogaming Times. I will make it to issue #100, but after that, I may take a break from it.

Vic 20 Reviews

by [Tonks](#)

In this set of reviews I thought I would focus on a few official arcade conversions for the Vic 20. There are quite a number of good arcade conversions. Unfortunately there are also

a few real shockers. So hopefully right here I can help steer you in the right direction.



DIG DUG

This is one of my favourite arcade games and one that gets a real work out on MAME. So as a teenager when I found that Dig Dug was available for the Vic 20 I was over the moon. I was so excited that I got my Mum to put the game on lay-by so I could pay it off over the next few weeks. When I finally made that last payment I rushed home to play one of my favourite games. And boy was I seriously ticked off. The game just looks terrible. Huge blocky sprites and a tiny squashed screen. I was devastated. But these days I find the game pretty good. Sure I still think the graphics are pretty bad, but the actual game play is very good. Everything zips along at a nice pace and the sound effects are very good too. Overall though, this is a disappointment and Atari could have done a much better job. MY SCORE - 6/10



GORF

Now I must admit that I have never really enjoyed Gorf on any system I have ever played it on. I don't really know why as I love just about every classic shoot-em-up. Gorf on the Vic 20 is yet another blocky affair, but at least the graphics are fast and colourful. In my opinion this version plays better than the Atari VCS version. There are four different levels to Gorf, each being a slightly different variation of other arcade games. The first level is like Space Invaders, where you have to shoot four lines of aliens as they march slowly across and down the screen. The second is a bit like Galaxian, with two mother ships and eight aliens constantly diving at you while showering you with laser fire. The third is a more original level with a ship circling around while asteroids shoot toward you. The final level is where you face off against the mother ship and is sort of like the final level in Phoenix where you need to get a few shots through to hit the ship core. This does make for some good variation and some hectic game play. So if you are a Gorf fan, then I believe you

could add a couple of points to my final score. But if Gorf has never really turned you on, then you may get bored a bit too quickly.

My Score - 6/10



FROGGER

I love Frogger on the Atari VCS. It is a good game that was very well programmed. Unfortunately the same can't be said about this version of Frogger for the Vic 20. Graphically it is okay, but it all looks a bit squashed. The worst part of the game is the jerky movement of everything. There are other games out there that show the Vic 20 can do some nice smooth animation. In my opinion it looks like a Frogger clone written in BASIC rather than a supposedly professionally produced game. In fact I have some Frogger clones that were written in BASIC that move far more smoothly. Overall, this is still a playable game of Frogger, but it is quite a disappointment when you think of what could have been produced.

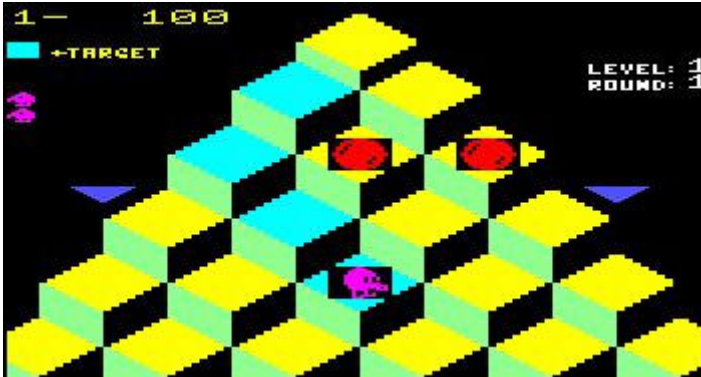
My Score - 5/10



PAC MAN

Now here is an interesting game to review. Pac Man on the Vic 20 shows so much potential to be a fantastic game. The Pac Man looks good, the ghosts look good, the sound is good, the speed of everything is just about perfect. But there is one problem - WHERE IS HALF THE MAZE GONE!!!! To make it fit within the Vic's limited screen, the programmers have left out about a full third of the maze. However, this problem doesn't take away too much from a pretty impressive version of Pac Man. While it is a huge improvement on the Atari VCS version, it falls far short of the brilliant Pac Man clone "Jelly Monsters".

My Score - 7/10



Q-BERT

This is a really fun game. There are some graphical glitches in the Vic 20 version, but none distract from the game play at all. While the graphics are a little blocky, it is easy to tell what is what. The whole screen is used to good effect rather than trying to squash it up too much. The main graphical problem is that all the characters are surrounded by a black border. I assume this was to prevent colour clashing and keeping the game speed up. The skill level seems to be a bit higher than other versions of Q-Bert I have played. The enemies, particularly Coily the snake, really come after you, pouncing as soon as you go anywhere near them.

My Score - 8/10

CENTIPEDE

The Vic 20 version of Centipede is a great game. Everything you would hope to find in a good version of Centipede is here. The graphics are very good, with everything well defined and certainly an improvement on the Atari VCS version. The mushrooms look like mushrooms rather than just little squares. Your character also has more shape to him. Speed is pretty good. The centipede can really shoot down the screen and he is right on top of you before you know it. Sound is good, but limited to mainly white noise effects. Perhaps the only thing to distract a little is some colour clash as the centipede winds its way down through the mushrooms. But this certainly doesn't detract from the quality of the game play.

My Score - 8/10



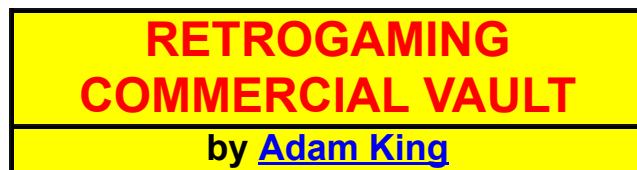
DONKEY KONG

Another good arcade translation marred slightly by some blocky graphics. But, the

graphics are colourful and everything is recognizable. Sound is good, with all the nice bouncy effects done very well. The game play is really good, with everything operating at a good speed. This is as good as any other version I have played. One of the best aspects of this version of Donkey Kong is that all four levels are present (at least I believe four levels is what the original arcade game had. If this is wrong, please feel free to correct me). Also there is the little taunt between levels asking you how high you can go. I think this is a great version and one that will please any fan of the original, as long as you can put up with the blockiness of the graphics.

My Score - 9/10

(Hi, I am Tonks (Andrew Tonkin). I am a big fan of classic gaming from Australia. I am married and have two boys who love to play Dad's ever growing collection of classic consoles, computers and games. I would love to here from other Vic 20 fans. Perhaps you might like to send me your list of favourite games for the Vic and I could compile them for a future RT article. So take up the challenge. I can be contacted at tonks777@bigpond.com)



Gather around, gamers, 'cause it's time for another double dose of TV commercial goodness. This month's column is several things in one. When I started working on the Commercial Vault CD, I decided against simply gathering all the ads I downloaded and burning them to a CD. I decided to actually record my own clips so everyone can enjoy them without special programs. One upside is I discovered some ads that are NOT available on the internet. I decided this month to give you a sneak peek at two of the exclusive ads you won't find anywhere else.

The two ads I decided on are Gyruss and Q*Bert. Both of these are arcade classics put out for all the major systems by Parker Bros. Both these games have also been covered by Alan Hewston's "Many Faces Of", so this is also a make-up column as well.

Gyruss

Thus unusual ad is out to show how Gyruss is more exciting than other space shooters. First they show bored kids playing "other" shooters, then this ad shows a gameplayer spinning in midair to keep up with the ship on the screen.

"There are space games, and there are space games."

"Now, there's Gyruss, hot from the arcade. Nothing moves like Gyruss. It's planet by planet warfare, you're attacked by enemy ships, satellites, and meteors in a relentless search for, uh... then more enemy ships, more satellites, more meteors. Now you can buy [other space shooters], or buy Gyruss, the more hyper space game."



"I'm so bored playing Star Ship."



"This game's so fun I'm spinning in my seat."



Everybody now: "Dizzy..I'm so dizzy.."



Maybe a black hole landed in his living room.

Makes you wonder if the power goes out while he's in mid-air, doesn't it?

Q*Bert

This animated spot features Q*Bert as he gets in shape for his home video game. He talks about being an arcade star while we watch gameplay footage from the Colecovision version. What does we have to say about his success? Let's let the man himself explain.

"I'm Q*Bert, and I've got all the right moves. I've got the legs, too. First an arcade game, now my own home video game. I'm ready for anything. Staying away from creeps like Ugh and Coily takes a quick mind, and lots of fancy footwork. The longer I hop around, the more they're out to get me. UGGHH! When they said fame would go to my head, they

weren't kidding."

"Now for all popular systems."

"It's not easy being Q*Bert, but it's fun."



This is how the Q-man stays in shape.



Gettin' ready to jump on the pyramids.



Q*Bert after a hard day with the boys.



Another shot of the icon himself.

You'll be happy to know Q*Bert doesn't say the word @!#?@!. Instead he says @!?! on the Colecovision screen.

That's all for this month. I hope this gives you a taste of what's to come. There are other ads, but I'm going to keep them under wraps for now.

I now want to address the possibility of covering Nintendo ads in the 'Vault, now that Tom

has decided to include Nintendo and Sega coverage in the newsletter. If you think I should go ahead with this, let me know.

Happy holidays, everyone, and I'll be back in 31 days for more commercials.

MAME Reviews

After a very long hiatus, MAME Reviews are back! Now that I have a new computer, I can once again enjoy the greatest emulator ever made. Here are the games for this month.



Peter Pepper's Ice Cream Factory

I had heard of an arcade sequel to Burgertime and as far as I know, this is it. It is on some odd Cassette version, which means there is a two minute wait for it to load at the beginning (which makes me believe it is not an arcade game). It has some elements of Burgertime and also some from the Intellivision only sequel, Diner (which is in my opinion the best Intellivision game and sadly, one that will never be ported to any other system).

This game keeps the two dimensional view of the original Burgertime. Once again, you are moving up and down ladders as you try to make ice cream cones. This is where it borrows from Diner, you can kick the balls of ice cream and send them at the awaiting cones. This will also run over any enemies that happen to be in the way of the big ball of frozen goodness. And you will need them as there are a bunch of bad guys in this game and they are quick. They are also smart, no stupid hot dogs in this game. Also, this time you do not have any pepper to work with. Instead, they give you the ability to jump. While this is a nice power, I would have liked to get some pepper or maybe some salt to defend myself with.

The game looks good and there is a wide variety of foes. You have strawberries, jugs of milk, donuts and what looks like a scale. And you better get to know them as they will be after you and you will die often. That is probably the biggest drawback about the game, it is too hard. I played about 30 games and have yet to get past the first level. This is coming from someone who has zoomed through the first five levels on Burgertime without too much trouble. This is by far the biggest drawback and detracts from the game.

Being hard would not be bad if it was fair. But the enemies have the ability to float over

holes that you need to jump over. They also move faster than you and when they respawn, they can pop up on the sides and kill you. Then you add in the ice cream scoops that are sitting on the bottom level, the ones that need to be kicked upwards and you have a very serious challenge. Too much of a challenge if you ask me. Couple this with the long loading time and you have a mediocre sequel.



Chameleon

One of the nice things about being away from MAME for so long, is that there is a whole new world full of games that were not available the last time I played. One of them is a cute little game called Chameleon. The game was made in 1983 and really has a classic feel to it. You are a chameleon and your goal is to eat all the chicken eggs and kill all the chickens. Sorta think of yourself as Perdue's worst nightmare. Being a little chameleon, you have one power and that is your tongue. You use it to attack chickens and to pull yourself up levels. And it comes in handy as you will have your hands full. There are a lot of eggs to eat and quite a few angry chickens running around.

The game starts off easy enough as there are a lot of eggs to gobble up. Just go up to them and shoot the tongue and you can eat them up. But watch out as the chickens are not too keen to you eating their babies and will come after you. You need to hit the chickens three times with your tongue to kill it. The first two just stun it. And you need to eat all the eggs and kill all the chickens to move to the next level. A nice little touch is that if you let an egg go too long, it will hatch into a dangerous little chick. Much like their parents, chicks can kill you. You are just a little lizard after all. And if this was not enough, you have a big buzzard that throws what looks like very dangerous Easter eggs at you. The buzzard cannot be hurt, so don't bother.

A few nice touches are how you can climb around the levels like a lizard. You will soon realize that you need to move around as there are eggs that are on the other side of the screen and since you cannot jump over a hole, you need to go down and back up to get there. You can shoot your tongue out from below to get the eggs, which is a nice touch. There is also a warp log that will send you from one side to another, much like Pacman.

Another nice touch is that the levels are different. The second level is a mine level which offers new challenges. This adds to the desire to keep playing as you want to see what is up next. Overall, it is a cute little game and a fun game to boot. The character is very cute and I am happy they did not saddle him with some lame name. I would rather just be a

chameleon than end up being called Changy the Chameleon or Leon the Chameleon. It is always nice to find a little treasure like this game. Once again, it is a game that without MAME, would most likely be lost to most people forever.

What's Your Favorite Video Game from 1984?

By [Alan Hewston](#)

It was almost twenty years ago . . . 1984 which was a decent year for classic video games but will always be remembered as the year of the classic video game "crash". You'll also recall that this was "the" transition year from the "joystick" era into the "Joypad" & "Light Gun" era. There were the usual lot of unique games to arrive; but also several good sequels were made; we saw the remainder of the first wave of laser disc games hit the arcade; home computer games took an even bigger market share, but made a leap forward in their games' graphics and complexity; a handful of light gun games became memorable; and the Boxing, Karate, Kung-Fu and Wrestling games ie fighting genre really came to life.

Maybe I've played too many games, but unfortunately, 1984 pretty much represents the point in time where games started to blur together for me perhaps for you too. The number of unique video games on home cartridges or at the arcades, to that point in time, combined for over 1500 titles, and was fast approaching 2000. Not including any diskette based games. Yes, new games were plentiful, but with so many titles out there, they began to look like the last one you just played - from any given genre. At some point the theme or titles started to sound the same, and the name no longer clued you in to what type of game it was.

I've again compiled a list of 40 of the most well-known video games who had their initial release in 984. If I've missed any, please let me know and vote accordingly. Vote for 10 that you enjoy playing the most. Today, tomorrow, yesterday, whenever. Pick your 10 based upon any criteria or platform - arcade, emulation, new console version, older systems, computers etc. No need to rank them, just cut and paste 10 in your reply alphabetical order preferred. If you only like a few then vote accordingly.

Vote ASAP & I'll compile the list for next month or so. Click and scroll across the list below and <edit copy> them, then click on "email here to vote" & paste the list in the email body. Simply delete those you do not like until you get to 10 or fewer. Thanks

1942

Antarctic Adventure

Archon II

Beyond Castle Wolfenstein

Bomb Jack

Bristles

Bruce Lee

Championship Lode Runner

Circus Charlie
Do! Run Run
Duck Hunt
Elite
Excitebike
Firefox
Ghostbusters
Golgo 13
Hat Trick
Hogan's Alley
Karate Champ
Kung-Fu Master
Marble Madness
Mikie
Mr. Do's Wild Ride
Pac-Land
Paperboy
Pitfall II
Punch-Out!
Quest for Quintana Roo
Raid on Bungeling Bay
Raid Over Moscow
Rescue on Fractalus
Space Ace
Space Taxi
Star Wars: Return of the Jedi
Summer Games I & II
SWAT
Tag Team Wrestling
Three Stooges, The
Timber
Wild Gunman

[Email Here to Vote](#)

Note subsequent surveys will not continue on into 1985 (just yet), as those games pretty much complete the transition into the Bit Age Era. Instead, we'll back track to do 25th anniversary surveys of 1979, 1980 and 1981 first.

Alan Hewston, can be reached at hewston95@stratos.net. He'll use your feedback to influence the games reviewed in the "Many Faces of Articles of the Retrogaming Times in 2004.

Letters to the Editor

Since I took my email address off most of the pages on the website, I get alot less email

(especially the junk mail, I now do not feel like every citizen of Africa is emailing me about putting millions into my bank account), which means the letters to the editor may become a little more intelligent. But then I can be wrong. Let us start off with our first NES question:

My friend and i had an argument about SM3 (Super Mario 3), I was wondering if it is possible to get to the eighth level by using the two flutes you get in the first level?

I cannot answer this one as I never really played the game. I am not very good at platform games that typically avoid them. But if someone wants to send me the answer, I will forward it to the person.

My friend and I had a disagreement. We both agreed that one person rode an ostrich in the game Joust. But what about the other bird? I said it was a stork and my friend said it was a crane. Please settle our bet.

Alot of disagreeing this month and so close to Christmas. For the answer, you are both wrong it is an owl! Just kidding. You are right, it is a stork.

I read in a magazine that Sinistar was the first game with speech. Is this true or was there a game with speech before it?

There were a few games with speech before that. Sinistar came out in 1982, but was preceded by Gorf and Space Fury which came out in 1981. And before both of those came Berzerk, which was the first game with speech in 1981.

MAME Controllers, How Much is Too Much?

A growing segment of the video game market is the arcade controllers, specifically ones developed for use with MAME and other emulators. What started as a small garage business, has since grown into a handful of companies offering everything from a simple one joystick with a handful of buttons for about \$70.00 to a huge, elaborate stick with all the bells and whistles for about \$700.00. But what is too much controller and how much do you really need? To help out here, I am going to go over some of the different features offered and what games take advantage of these. Hopefully this will help you in your decision making process. Having owned two different arcade controllers (the now defunct V-Stick and the Devastator II) as well as having tried out the Slickstick, X-Arcade and the now defunct Arcade2000 joystick, I have a pretty good take on MAME controllers. This article is not going to be a comparison of the different sticks, but rather just letting you know how much of a stick you need and why you should or should not consider which options.

The first thing to consider is that with a MAME controller, you really need to look more at what the stick offers and how much it will improve your enjoyment of the games that you like to play. This past sentence is the most important advice I can give you. Do not put the cost first, do not put the looks first, but instead look at what are your favorite games and whether the controller you are buying will improve the enjoyment of those games. If

there are no trackball games that are among your favorites, then do you really need a trackball? If you really love Robotron, should you even consider a controller that does not offer two 8-way joysticks? These are important things for you to consider. And for this reason, there really is no single joystick that is perfect for everyone. It really depends on your personal tastes.

Another thing to keep in mind is that the average used arcade game is going to cost you \$500.00. This is if you are picking it up. If you are having it shipped, it will cost another \$200.00-\$400.00 to have it crated and shipped to you. And while there is no substitute for playing the actual arcade game, you will have a single game to play. Unless it is a multigame or a Neo Geo cart system, it is just one game to play. And if we have learned anything, more choices are better. I am not saying that you should not buy original arcade machines. If you have the money and space for them, go for it! They are a great piece of video game memorabilia to own. But for most people, it is not an option. They take up a lot of space, cost a lot to buy and can cost even more to maintain and repair. But with a MAME controller, you can easily hook it up and play and then store it away when not in use. And if you are a person who wants to walk the straight and narrow and not play games you have not paid for, there are many great commercial emulators out there that can give you nearly 100 different games to play. Between the two Atari compilations, the two Bally/Midway and the Namco collections, there is plenty of games to play.

Let us look at some of the different options that you have and which ones are the most important. I will also list some of the most popular games that take advantage of these options.

6 Buttons - In the early days of MAME controllers, some joysticks (like my beloved V-Stick) allowed up to 4 buttons for one player games and two buttons per joystick for two player games. While this was nice in the early days of MAME when most of the games emulated only used one or two buttons, it soon became obsolete. Trying playing a two player game of Golden Axe with this setup and see what I mean. Or for that matter, play some Defender and see how lacking it was. It was easy to see that extra buttons were necessary. To be honest, six seems to be the perfect number of buttons. Any more is too many and any less is too limiting. Six will pretty much cover any game from the 1970's to the 1990's.

Two Joysticks - One of the first innovations offered with MAME controllers was offering two joysticks. This was nice for two players games that offered cooperative gameplay as well as games that took advantage of two joysticks. This soon became a staple of MAME controllers until recently when cheaper and smaller one joystick models came out. While these smaller models do take up less space and are more affordable (most under \$100.00), are they too restrictive for most gamers? Here is a list of the two player games that would require a two joystick controller or you end up with one person using the keyboard.

Two player games that use two joysticks at once - Joust, Joust 2, Wizard of Wor, Golden Axe, Altered Beast, Timber, Space Duel, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Double Dragon, Simpsons (and for that matter any of those arcade games from the late 1980's), Puzzle

Bobble, Tetris, Bomberman, Legendary Wings, Rampage, Gauntlet, Bubble Bobble, Snow Bros, Rip Off, Armor Ambush, Toobin and any of the hundreds of fighting games like Street Fighter II, Mortal Kombat and others. Plus throw in all the two player sports games and you have a ton of two player games.

If that is not enough, there are a nice selection of games that are best played with two joysticks at one time. These include many of the great classics including Robotron 2084, Crazy Climber, Crazy Climber 2, Smash TV, Black Widow, Krull, Wacko, Kosmic Kroozer, Snake Pit and Munch Mobile. While this list is smaller, many people would pay the extra money just for the big three - Robotron, Crazy Climber and Smash TV. All three are well loved and awesome games. If any of these games are among your favorites, then two joysticks is a must have. There is no better way to play Robotron or Crazy Climber than with two joysticks. Buttons cannot replace it.

The next popular add-on is the trackball. While the list of games that take advantage of it is not that big, we are talking about some of the most beloved games in arcade history. Take a look and see how many of your favorites are on this list: Centipede, Millipede, Missile Command, Crystal Castles, Marble Madness, Major Havoc, Rampart, Birdie King, Golden Tee Golf and Atari Football. While the list is not as comprehensive, try playing Centipede with a mouse or a joystick and you will see how much you miss having a trackball. For myself, almost every game on this list is a favorite of mine (with Rampart and Centipede leading the way), so having a trackball was a no-brainer for me. But how many of these games are favorites of yours? Keep in mind that a trackball will increase the cost of your joystick by about \$100.00, so it is not a cheap choice. But if you must play some of these games and want the arcade experience, then the costs is worth it.

Another popular add-on is the spinner. But there are two things to keep in mind with spinners. One is there is a very limited number of games that use them. They really are for the die hard fans of these games. The other thing to consider is that most spinners need to be lubricated once or twice a year to keep running fine. This means taking your controller apart and it is something that most people do not want to do. Two controllers that offer nearly frictionless spinners are the Devastator II and the Slickstick. Here is a list of the games that are improved by having a spinner. While not a big list, there are some classics among them: Tempest, Tempest Tubes, Tron, Discs of Tron, Arkanoid, Super Breakout, Omega Race and Warlords. For Tempest fan (and there are alot of them), a spinner is a necessity. But if none of these games are among your favorites, this may be a feature you can live without. Once again, it will increase the cost of your controller as spinners are not cheap. It will also increase the size of your controller.

Another feature that has recently popped up is an extra four way joystick or even some joysticks that can switch between four way and eight way. Take it from someone with experience, if you only have a choice between four way or eight way joystick, take the eight way. You can play four way games with an eight way joystick and most of the time the difference is not that much. But playing eight way games with a four way joystick is a whole different story. Don't think that eight way joysticks are just for fighting games. There are many classic and neo-classic games that benefit from having an eight way joystick. Here are a few: Robotron 2084, Sinistar and Space Harrier to name a few. Now don't get

me wrong, a four joystick is superior to an eight way for games like Ms. Pacman and Q*Bert, but you can play them with an eight way and do fine. But if you are a big fan of maze games, you may want to consider this addition.

A small feature that is relatively new to the MAME controller scene, but one that can make a difference is having a joystick with a button on it. This is a fairly inexpensive option (usually adds \$20.00-\$30.00 to the cost of the controller) and one that makes a difference in a handful of games. Try playing Battlezone without this feature and you will see how valuable it can be. Without a joystick with a button on it, you have to stop moving your tank while one of your hands hits a button to shoot. This makes you very vulnerable and will affect your scores. But with a button on the joystick, you can shoot while moving. Discs of Tron and Tron both benefit from this small feature.

So there you have it, a list of all the most popular add-ons for MAME controllers and what games benefit from having them. Sure there are other features you can add like a flight yoke, but at some point you have to say how much is too much? I hope this helps out for all the people who are considering getting a MAME controller. Here are the web sites of some of the most popular MAME controllers:

[Devastator II Controller](#)

[X-Arcade Controller](#)

[SlikStick Controller](#)

The Many Faces of...Mr. Do's Castle

by [Alan Hewston](#)

We welcome back Mr. Do! in his first of 4! sequels, where he once again must collect all the cherries on each screen, or eliminate all the bad guys to move on to the next one. This time his cherries are at home, amongst the 7 floors of his castle, but invading Unicorns and the ever popular "Alpha" monsters are out to get him. Hmmn . . . In fantasy fiction, I've only seen Unicorns portrayed as the good guys - in fact usually they are very good and just beings. Does that mean Mr. Do! is the "Bad Guy"? Perhaps he didn't pay his taxes on those cherry orchards and the law enforcement arrives to collect him or his taxes. Regardless, on all home versions the enemies look nothing like unicorns, but perhaps horned trolls.

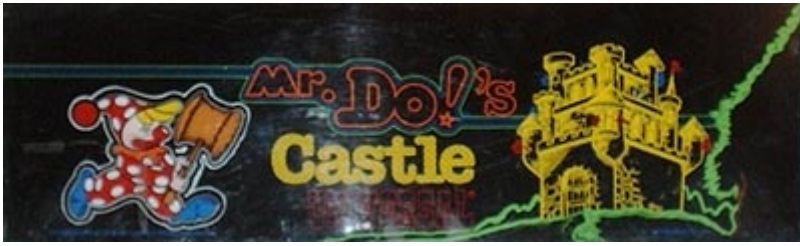
Mr. Do! is chased through the 8 rooms (scenes) of his castle. He can walk L/R and climb U/D, and diagonal U/D. When not climbing he can stop and swing his hammer L/R in the direction he faces. Mr. Do! misses having a projectile weapon, but, alas, he probably doesn't want to unleash his "Power Ball" weapon - to go bouncing around inside his home. Too bad because his hammer is only good for hitting something right next to him, but it can destroy the Alpha Monsters and temporarily push back his lesser enemies. For the nastier ones he had better run early and often to keep his distance from any unicorn as their touch means death. His best bet is to use his multitude of ladders (don't forget Tom's reminder to

be grateful for our ladders) to trick the bad guys. Every screen has a continuous vertical ladder along the entire length of both L & R sides - not the case on the arcade version. There are a few short vertical ladders connecting adjacent floors, but most of the interior ladders are special, slanted ones. They're also one floor high, but only the bottom portion is anchored to the floor. The upper portion of these ladders can be kicked and thus moved to a second position. The push/kick detaches it from the top and it rotates across a gap in the upper floor to reach the other side. If you kick while an enemy is coming up, he'll go for a ride and get redirected away from you.

The most important element in the game are the blocks in the floor. Some of the floor is solid, or has ladders, but most contain a visible block, which your hammer can smash out of its place, downward. Try to time your swing to send the block down onto your enemies and they will be eliminated, scoring you points. Once these blocks are knocked out, ala "Lode Runner", a gaping hole will make Mr. Do! fall through, but all enemies will temporarily get stuck in them. If you hammer the unicorns while they are trapped in a hole, they will fall down until they hit a floor below, but you score no points. You should consider this as a defensive measure only, especially since repeated smashing of unicorns will eventually turn them into a nastier color variation. The first (easy) unicorns are Red, and they're not too smart, or fast, these will turn into the Green variety, which are smarter and faster still, which then turn into the even smarter, and faster, Blue variety. The Blue ones will not chase too long before they get nasty and clone themselves and double in number. They cannot be knocked through the holes in the floor, and cannot be pushed back by your hammer. Now, if you did not hammer the unicorn when it gets trapped in the hole, it will repair the hole, then climb back out. You can sometimes eliminate unicorns by smashing the floor block just as they are about to step onto it. Points are scored in proportion to how nasty the unicorns are, plus bonus points are awarded for additional floors they fall when being smashed by a block. You always earn a meager amount of points for knocking out any floor blocks, including the ones the unicorns build, and then there's bonus points for touching the shield.

Do! starts each life/scene on the bottom most floor, which is solid and has no blocks to knock out. If this is your second or more life used on this scene, then all blocks, ladders and items remain as they were when you last died. Plan accordingly, as you may trap yourself into multiple deaths, quickly ending the game. The Unicorns arrive at the top floor, which is also solid, and has only two ladders connecting to it - those at the screen edges. This floor has only one object, a locked door which opens as soon as you collect all three keys. Behind the door is a magic shield that when touched changes all Unicorns into Alpha Monsters and they will flee you for a limited time. The Alpha Monsters wear the letters from the word "EXTRA". When you see the screen flash, beware, as they soon all turn back into unicorns. You earn bonus points for catching and eliminating the Alpha Monsters, and if you are able to spell out "EXTRA" on the castle's flag pole, you earn an extra life. The final object on screen are special skull blocks that come in pairs. These pairs hold together a length of blocks, and thus if both are smashed, then all blocks will fall. This makes for an effective way to drop blocks on your enemies. The remaining floor then acts as if it is solid but looks like floor boards. The apple from "Mr. Do!" is shown in the arcade game, but not at home, and is not used. The Asian version of the game is called Mr. Do!

Vs. Unicorns, and at least two ROM versions are known to exist. The later version has the hidden replay Diamond. The music, plethora of sound effects, animation and loads of activity and motion make this game both eye candy and ear candy. End each scene by smashing all blocks containing cherries, or by vanquishing all enemies, or when you earn an extra life.



The lovely marquee.

Arcade: 1983 Universal

Home versions all in 1984 by Coleco and/or Parker Brothers

Atari 2600, Atari 8 bit, 5200, CV and C64

Arcade Legacy: Mr. Do!, Mr. Do's Castle, Mr. Do's Wild Ride, Do! Run Run, Neo Mr. Do!

Home Version Similarities: Except those in <>; all home versions have: no choice of start level; no gameplay options or difficulty settings; no demo; and have crummy looking unicorns – trolls? Fortunately most versions have: a continuous set of several musical scores and many sound effects; 7 floors to the castle <2600 (6 floors)>; 8 scenes <2600 (4)>; both vertical & slanted interior ladders <2600>; background details, including windows <2600>; 16 difficulty levels of action <2600 (8 levels)>; letters “EXTRA” will be placed on your five flagpoles < CV (1 pole), Atari 8 bit & 2600 (0 poles); you must collect ALL the letters that you need to earn an extra life, repeat letters do not help <2600 - any 5 letters, as all have “+” on them>; unicorns knocked through the floor continue on their way <2600 return to top>; Blue unicorns will clone <2600>.

Disqualified: Atari 5200 (33 or 41)

My first reaction was frustrating controls. I tried 2 carts, all of my possible controllers, regular, track ball, Wico, and even the Masterplay Interface, but had no luck in controls. Once you get on a ladder, you cannot almost never move left or right. And it appears to be programmed to make you re-center the stick after each L or R move. Maybe I have rotten luck, but my hardware & controls work fine on other 5200 games. Thus Controls are either a (0), or if my cart's ROM is bad, then an average 5200 score of (8) might be good enough guess. Besides, the Controls, the game seems identical to the Atari 8 bit computer version. Parker Brothers - of course stripped out the pause button. Cart version is fairly rare.

Have Nots: Atari 2600 (35)

Almost disqualified due to its extreme rarity, but you can still enjoy it via emulation, or using the .wav file on a modified Supercharger or (my preference) a Cuttle Cart. My first reaction is expecting this game to be really watered down on the 2600 - but they did a decent job of

capturing most of the arcade essence. The Gameplay is clearly limited in the play area being only 24 blocks 4X6 versus 5X10 for most versions.

This and a reduced number of ladders, solid spaces and enemies is difficult to overlook. Most of the changes are not too bad, just different than the arcade. All the extras like flashing keys, clones, flag poles, letters, slanted stairs, and a warning when changing back to unicorns take their toll, but still the gameplay is decent (6) and much more complex than most 2600 games. The unicorn color sequence is changed to Red, Yellow, Green, but they appear to function the same as the arcade. Stairs cannot be kicked once a monster gets on it and the scoring is very much simplified. If you're a huge Mr. Do's Castle fan, then you may be disappointed, but if you're a 2600 fan, you'll be impressed. The Addictiveness is good enough (6) that you'll have some fun. Prepare yourself for a learning curve on where to stand and swing. Get used to standing almost of air to get the job done and be warned about awkward collision detection. You cannot use the hammer to push enemies back, but at least you can quickly reset this version as you learn all its differences. The Graphics are not bad (6) and despite mono-colored objects, overall there is enough detail to determine what is going on and several colors per scene. The score is visible during gameplay, but in between lives, it is replaced to show the number of lives remaining and letters towards the "EXTRA" life. There's not much animation, and as you see all the gameplay elements unfold, there's another learning curve to figure out what everything looks like and what it means. Just hang in there and pretend it is the arcade version. The Sound is very good (7) with wonderful and changing musical scores. Trouble is zero sound effects are included. The music takes over all sounds with five musical scores - which fortunately tells you what you really need to know. The

Controls are perfect (10).

Bronze Medal: Atari 8 bit (43)

My first reaction was how cheated we are that there are no game play options on a computer version. Parker Brothers (Coleco perhaps) – should be flamed for this. Despite no options, the Gameplay is very nice (8), pretty much all there save for the keys flashing and flag poles, which are replaced by spelling out the word "EXTRA". This version has one additional block in screen width, giving it a larger 5X11 playfield than all others. Addictiveness is fun to play (7), but again they took away a pause feature and you may not be able to <reset> every time without rebooting. The Graphics are enjoyable (8), but this may be pushing it as the monsters only have one color, and the details and animation are not that great. Sound is awesome (10) with all musical scores and all but one effect (squishing of an Alpha Monster). Controls are perfect (10). Cart version was only released via prototype, but you can easily find this one on disk or use an SIO2PC cable or emulator.

Silver Medal: Colecovision (45)

My first reaction was there is a pause button! <*>. Nothing else works but the fire button, and moving.

Thanks Coleco./PB. The Gameplay is better than, but matches the Atari score (8). There are flashing keys and one flag pole with room for all 5 flags. On this version only, if you hit the unicorns in head too often, they turn the next color. Addictiveness is very fun (8), with

the pause adding a point. The reset button is quick as you skip the 15 second CV BIOS. The Graphics are outstanding (9) with more details, better animation and colors than the Atari. Still only mono-colored monsters. Like the C64 below, all lives bonus letters, score, and the "scene" + number are displayed. Sound excels like the Atari (10), but still missing a squish for the Alpha Monsters. Controls are perfect (10) if you use an Atari controller. This would preclude the use of the pause, but you may play flawlessly using the CV or Amiga controllers.

Gold Medal: Commodore 64 (46)

My first reaction was disappointment since there are almost no gameplay options - but this game is incredible in the other categories. I can easily say this version is the best in every category. The Gameplay is impressive (8), with the added choice of 3 or 5 lives (unsure if this adds more/less difficulty), and the only version with a two player game. Addictiveness is pleasant (8) with a pause <F7>, and quick restart via <restore>. The Graphics are a work of art (10) using every part of the screen, two player scores are along the top wall, the five flags wave along the top of the screen and nothing is missing from the game. Full multi-colored objects, animation clarity and details. Even a changing basement color with each scene. The Sound is also magnificent (10), with all musical scores, and all effects well done: startup, background, falling unicorns, falling Do!, 3rd key, shield, hitting blocks, squish Alpha Monsters, repairing blocks, kick stairs, death, end level, EXTRA life, clone, death, game over. Controls are also perfect (10). Bad news is its only available on disk, but try emulation if nothing else.

Thanks: Special thanks to Steve Knox who helped suggest a few things to get a few of my games up and running when my deadline was almost up. Steve also traded me the Atari 8 bit disk version a few years ago.

Come back next time for start of the 20th Anniversary tributes for 1984, with the long awaited, Many Faces of "Pitfall II" on the Atari 2600, 5200, 8 bit, C64 ,CV, Apple II & Intellivision (just kidding, I know everyone wished there was one for the INTY?) Contact Alan Hewston at: Hewston95@NOSPAMstratos.net or visit the Many Faces of site: <http://my.stratos.net/~hewston95/RT/ManyFacesHome.htm>

Sites of the Month

Once again, I will list a site that sells classic games. Now that I am done with that, I am more than happy to point my former customers into their direction. I know that you need classic games and I am more than happy to help you get them.

Packrat Classic Games

I first saw a link for a Atari Christmas Ornament that they offered (sorry, but I am pretty sure they are sold out now). But after checking out the site, I found it to be a very nice site with alot of stuff for classic game fans. They offer systems, games and more and they have a very large selection to choose from. Check out the site at the following link:

<http://www.packratvg.com>

2600 Shadows

While checking out the Packrat site, I saw a link for this site. I followed it and found an interesting video game idea. It is for a Kiss game for the Atari 2600. While the game was never made, it is an interesting concept and I am sure it would have been much better than the horrible Kiss Pinball game that was released for the Playstation. Check out one man's dream for a Kiss video game for the 2600. We all need a dream.

<http://www.angelfire.com/tv2/atari2600/>

Conclusion

This issue is now done and it is time to wish everyone a happy holiday! No matter what your faith is, I hope the holidays are good to you and your family. I know that I look forward to enjoying some time with the family. Check back next month as another issue will be here for you to read in the new year. Yes, it is almost 2004 and time to get new calendars. Now if we could get someone to do a classic game themed calendar, that would be nice.

-Tom Zjaba

(This issue was done while listening to a bunch of songs from the 70's like "Sweet City Woman" by the Stampede, "Moonlight Feels Right" by Starbuck and "Love the One You're With" by Stephen Stills.)