

Retrogaming Times

Issue #77 - January 2004

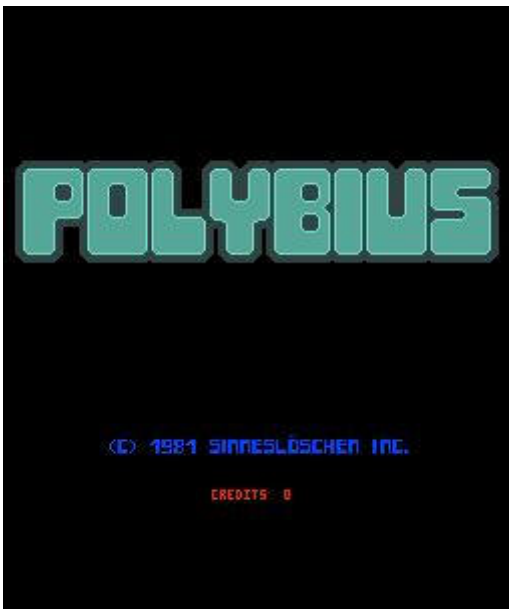
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Polybius, Fact or Fiction?

Even classic video games are not without conspiracies, hoaxes and legends. One of the most famous is the landfill of ET carts. You can find people who will claim it exists and those who say it doesn't. Another urban legend of the classic game community is of an arcade game called Polybius. This game which was made by a German company or was it Atari under another name or was it the government doing experiments? Whoever is responsible for the game, it supposedly made anyone who play it end up with nightmares and scared them off video games forever.

There were supposedly only a few made and test marketed in Oregon. Men in black would come to collect information from the game. They disappeared after a few weeks and were never seen again. All that remains is a picture of the title screen and the memories of the few who were lucky enough to play it (or lied or imagined they played it). Personally, I think it is a hoax, but who knows. Here is the screen shot and some links to sites with information about the game (very little information):



(Real game or fake screen?)

http://www.toolband.com/news/letter/2003_09.php

<http://www.gooddealgames.com/articles/Videogame%20Urban%20Legend%20-%20Polybius.html>

<http://coinop.org/g.aspx/103223/Polybius.html>

<http://www.kuhilas.com/tom/polybius/>

MAME Reviews

The arcade love affair has been rekindled. With the love in the air, it is time to look at a few more of the games that have taken my time this month.



Popper

Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. At least that is what has been written. Personally, when a game like Popper imitates a great game like Q*Bert and completely ruins it, I find it hard to consider this flattery. Imagine the concept of Q*Bert, but with dull characters,

buggy controls and just a lame game. If you can imagine that, you are probably imagining Popper. In concept, it is a Q*Bert clone. You are jumping on a bunch of platforms to turn them a single color. There are creatures and objects moving around this pyramid like playfield and avoiding creatures. All you can do is jump and throw something that looks a bit like a boomerang or a white wrench. I do not know what good this throwing object is, because even if I hit something, it just went through them. Oh well, at least there seems to be an infinite supply. Another power you supposedly have is the ability to jump on top of someone. But good luck doing it. I tried in vain and could not jump on anyone. But then I couldn't clear one board either.

While Q*Bert had great controls and it was easy to move the supreme noser around after getting a hang of the controls. But with this game, good luck. The platforms are moving and I am guessing that is why I tend to jump the wrong way. But even when things look to be going well, I will do a jump and my character moves in a different direction or goes two blocks instead of one. This can be very annoying, especially when my character (I am guessing he is a rabbit, but not completely sure, it could be a dog or some other animal) tends to jump into the water and die. Maybe he is a lemming. And the worse is you are jumping for a block and miss it all together. I do not know how he does this, but it has happen often. I see the block and I jump at it, but for reasons that defy logic, I miss and plunge to my death.

Graphically, the game just does not look good. It looks more like a homebrew game for the Commodore 64 or Atari 8-Bit than a real arcade game. Not exactly one of its strong points. Then there are the villains. You have a bird that looks like a parrot and some creature that may be an armless lion or a clone of the Lorax. Not sure what it is. There is also something that falls down that looks like a cheap radio. How I miss Coiley and Ugg and Wrong Way.

In closing, the game is weak. The source of inspiration is good, but the final product is bad. Shoddy controls, lame graphics and weak characters is more than this game can overcome. Stick with Q*Bert as that is a sure hit.



Super Burgertime

Last month, I reviewed a different Burgertime sequel, Peter Pepper's Ice Cream Factory. As you can see, there are more than one Burgertime game out there. But will this one be

a worthy sequel like Diner or a let down like Peter Pepper? To start with, this game came out much later than any of the other Burgertime games. Where Peter Pepper came out in 1984 (and the original Burgertime came out in 1982), this game was made in 1990. So it was appealing to a different audience and had to be a different game. Also, it came out in a time when games were made to eat as many of your quarters as possible and this game fits that profile to a T. Unlike any of the previous games, this game features some very 90's changes. These are the ability to continue and the boss battles.

The first thing you will notice about this game is that it is much brighter than the previous game. Everything is so colorful. It reminds me quite a bit of the Neo Mr. Do game for the Neo Geo. It borders on gaudy with the graphics and especially the color palette. The second thing you will notice is that there is a lot more bad guys this time. Not only in variety, but also quantity. A good dozen creatures will swarm upon you and you have little time to react. Not only are there a lot of bad guys, but some have different abilities. A few take more than one hit of pepper and at least one (the giant pea) can shoot stuff at you (pea pods). Each new villain and there are many of them, will take a few deaths to learn their special abilities.



The levels are unique in design. While they are very reminiscent of the original with burgers to put together and ladders to go up and down, there are a few differences. First off, you cannot just walk over the burgers. You need to jump on them. They are higher than the levels and you need to jump up on them and then keeping jumping to knock them down a level. I found it easiest if you push the controller down while pushing the jump button. Otherwise, you jump up and can get hit by a creature on the level above. Also, some levels need to be scrolled to complete. It is definitely not your old Burgertime.

A good thing about this game is you do not run out of pepper. At least I never was able to run out. And with the amount of food coming after you, this is a very good thing. There are special weapons you can pick up, like giant spatulas, that are along the sides. These allow you to whack the daylighters out of the food creatures at a safe distance. There is also a difference with the pepper. Now after you stun someone, you can go over and kick them off the screen. A great way to clear the board for a few seconds. But be warned that some creatures, like the giant pea, need more than one shot of pepper to stun them.

Overall, this is a very fun and enjoyable game. It does not have the near perfect balance

of the original Burgertime, but you must remember that it is set up to get you to part with all your money and in that regard it succeeds. It is not the play through multiple levels on a single quarter that you remember. But it is fun and if you can get past the very gaudy level design (see above picture for a perfect example), you will find a very fun game.

Letters to the Editor

Before I get to the letters, I received a few letters telling me about stuff in the newsletter. Read on!

In the "letters to the editor" section, you state unequivocally that the first arcade game with speech was Berzerk. In point of fact, both Berzerk and Stratovox came out in 1980, and nobody's sure which one actually came out first.

Gotta give Taito their due,

larry

I completely forgot about Stratovox. I now remember playing that game in the arcades so long ago. Anyone know which game came out first? I always assumed Berzerk was the first game with speech, but you know what they say about people who assume.

Hello. Another great issue. I especially enjoyed the Vic 20 reviews.

This issue's MAME reviews included Peter Pepper's Ice Cream Factory. It really was an arcade game, though I don't think it was very widely distributed. It ran on what was known as the DECO Cassette System, a clever arrangement from Data East that allowed cabinets to be easily converted to play different games. In some ways, it was the spiritual forerunner of the Nintendo and Neo-Geo cartridge-based arcade game cabinets that came along years later.

All the games used the same standard hardware. Each game was encoded on a special tape and sent with a security module for installation into the DECO cabinet. When the new wore off of that game, you just swapped in another cassette and module and replaced the marquee and you had a fresh one. Since arcade games were only turned off after closing, the wait for the game to load the next morning apparently wasn't a big deal. There are a lot of games for the system that I've never heard of outside of MAME. Data East released some games as both dedicated stand-alone cabinets (with ROMs) and as DECO cassettes.

-Bryan

Thanks for the info on the DECO Cassette System. Before MAME, I had never heard of it.

Do you know to whom I can correspond regarding getting the Mr. Do games produced for the X-Box?

The last release of the Mr. Do game, was the Super Nintendo release by a company called THQ (in 1995) and the Neo Mr. Do for the Neo-Geo (in 1996). Not sure who owns the rights to the series now as Universal went out of business back in the video game crash. The company Vivendi is called Vivendi Universal, but not sure if they are the same company. But to be honest, I do not think there is enough demand for a Mr. Do game for the X-Box. Now if you were to do a compilation disk with all the Universal arcade games (the four Mr. Do games, Ladybug, Cosmic Avenger) then you may have some interest. But then again, Universal didn't really have enough games that people heard of, so it probably would not do well either. Probably the only way you will play Mr. Do on an X-Box is through emulation and that requires a mod chip.

RETROGAMING COMMERCIAL VAULT

by [Adam King](#)

Welcome back. A new years brings new things, and with that new TV commercial goodness from yours truly. I do have to say that I've been doing this column for over two years now, and I never expected it to be the success it became. Oh, sure, I figured one or two people might get a kick out of it, but it seems every reader wants their Vault fix. I just want to say thanks again for your support.

With that out of the way, to business. Looking back, I've done commercials for the big three: Atari, Intellivision, and Colecovision. For this edition I have a couple of ads for the "other" system, the Odyssey2. This system was the real first competitor to the Atari VCS before the Intellivision, plus it regularly claim to be more advance because of it's computer keyboard. But once the INTV arrived, followed by the Colecovision, the Odyssey was quickly swept under the rug. Here are a couple of ads that did make it to the airwaves.

[Odyssey2](#)

Our first ad is a general ad for the O2. It features several animated images while a voiceover lays out what the Odyssey2 is. Please note the clip I got is in terrible condition, so that why the screengrab's don't look the greatest.

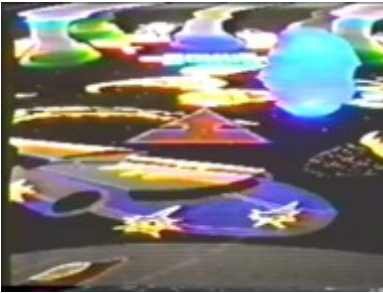
"Odyssey. Video game fun. Computer keyboard challenge. The entrance to an alternate world of fire-breathing dragons, hard-hitting slugger, arcade wizards, outer space blizzards. More than 40 games in all. Odyssey. The excitement of a game. The mind of a computer. All for the price of an ordinary video game. Odyssey!"



Herald the arrival of the Odyssey2!



"Give we your wussy Atari games or I'll roast you!"



All together now: "He's a pinball wizard..."



A galaxy of carts.

Pick Axe Pete

This ad for one of the O2's carts, Pick Axe Pete, features an old man surrounded by crystals. We learn that he's the "Wizard of Odyssey" and he's plugging the aforementioned game. Note that in some spots it was hard to understand what he was saying; the transcript is from what I was able to make out.

"The Wizard of Odyssey! What video game you up to now?"

"Oh, I'm up to my eyeballs, in a mineshaft, with Odyssey2's new video game, Pick Axe Pete. Picker Pete, escape up the ladder, smash the boulders, now, now, grab the music key too, score! The keyboard lets you change mazes to make the mineshaft even more menacing. Pick Axe Pete from Odyssey2, where the keyboard is the key to greater challenges."



The Wizard at work in his crystal palace, or whatever.



"Who needs Pitfall when I got Pete!"



"See this keyboard? No SELECT switches here."



"The keyboard IS the key!"

George Plimpton he isn't.

That'll do it for this month. I'm hoping to wrap up the CD project in the near future. I just need the get the time and energy to do it, not to mention a few more clips out there somewhere. Until next time, remember nobody beats the Wiz! (Oh, wait, that's someone else.)

The Many Faces of...Pitfall

II

by [Alan Hewston](#)

If you're a regular reader then you probably already scrolled down to see the final scores (shame on you), but hopefully you're back up here again. Yes, I've been eager to write this review but waited patiently until it was 2004, to make for another 20th anniversary review. As expected, "Pitfall II" is the first game for 1984/2004 – especially since it's my personal favorite from '84. We've had requests to do this game a long time ago, but I put it on hold – mainly since it took me over 2 years to finally find the CV version for a fair price. I also acquired a couple more versions since then, plus the "Cliff Hangers" patch (earned by scoring 99,000 points). I'm glad that I waited, but even happier to hear that Tom will press onward to RT issue #100. I'm saving the many, many, many faces of "Frogger" for RT 100 – I hope that you can wait. It'll be tough, since this is just before the holidays. Speaking of which Doug Saxon said hello over the holidays and still reads every RT issue and enjoys what I have done with this column. Don't forget to take a peek at the RT archives and see if Doug and I agree as he wrote the Many Faces of Pitfall II back in Retrogaming Times issue # 11.

WARNING/SPOILERS: These "Pitfall II" reviews will provide a handful of hints, and some suggestions to help minimize your playing time en route to conquering this game. But nothing will be blatant or IMHO ruin your experience. That said, before you go and fire up one of your machines to play "Pitfall II", I highly recommend that you do NOT use a map from the Internet – just not right away. The map is the same on every system, so don't worry about that. The thrill of the mapping experience belongs to you first. OK, so if you want no more hints, even slight ones, then play the game first, then come back and continue reading this review later.

If there is anything negative that can be said about "Pitfall!" and "Pitfall II" it surely would be that once you complete the game, you may no longer desire to play it again. But then you can still play until you reach perfection. Next stop . . . find the Atari 5200 & Atari 8 Bit computer versions and play them until you complete the Lost Level. In these "Adventurer's Editions", once you complete the regular game, you can then, and only then, play the Lost Level. You'll be in for a real treat, but also some anguish as the difficulty is off the charts. Trust me in that no one will EVER score a perfect game on the lost/hidden level of Pitfall II. There are new enemies, the Ant, the Hyper-Bats and Attack Frogs, all of which are more plentiful and incredibly difficult to master. Need I remind you that you cannot even practice this game unless you make it through the regular level. I hope some day write a review (with a memory assist from VCR footage) of this Lost Level in the RT. But similar to Tom, I recently got a new home PC. Lots of free time was lost fighting to restore and archive the old PC, but then I gave up and bought a new one. This review almost didn't make it in time.



Home versions all in 1984 by Activision – first on the Atari 2600 (by David Crane). Atari 8 bit & 5200 (Mike Lorenzen), CV (Robert Rutkowski), C64 (Tim Shoter), CoCo ('85 or '88? By Steve Bjork & Monique Ellison from SRB S/W), Apple II (adapted by Microsmiths), Sinclair Spectrum (Software Conversions, distributed by Firebird), and the MSX (Activision, distributed by Pony Cannon).

Arcade: Pitfall II was brought to the arcades in 1985 by Sega (who bought the rights from Activision), but it's not generally accepted as being better than these home versions.

Disqualified: Sinclair Spectrum, MSX, and CoCo (Color Computer)

I do not have these versions, which is the only reason they are disqualified. The Spectrum version I've read good reviews on, but most were disappointed by the limited color and graphics, which were always advertised using the C64 screen shots – and not saying so - devious. I've not learned much about the MSX version, other than there were 8+ other Activision titles done on this system as well. I actually have the CoCo (Color Computer) cart, but cannot play without the requisite CoCo III system. It's labeled "Super Pitfall", but really is a port of "Pitfall II", with the same music. Thanks to Curtis Boyle's site:

<http://nitros9.stg.net/> he has 3 screen shots and a brief description, good enough to confirm that the game is the same. Unfortunately, the Digital Press Guide reports that the gameplay is "horrific", making for the only "misfire" of all the excellent programming done by CoCo expert Steve Bjork. Looks like decent animation & OK graphics, just limited to 4 colors. Some day I hope to report on this first-hand.

Home Version Similarities: All versions below have: no choice of any start level, no difficulty options, nor any other game choices; but all have a quick reset; a demo that is exactly the same every time on every version; the music is non-stop, playing the same tune over and over, but with changes when finding treasure, friends, and the balloon. All

versions have the cross signs where you return to each time you are injured; a river with a neat waterfall; a Rat that prevents you from going directly to the final screen; your friends Rhonda, Quickclaw the cat and the lost Raj diamond. All versions use identical maps, same exact locations within each room of all hazards, treasures and ladders - all within a pixel or two. Very consistent! Unlike Pitfall!, you cannot jump downward into the ladders going down. This was always a safety feature I liked on Pitfall!. Jumping into them prevents an accidental fall down them - not so here, so beware. You can still move the stick down while moving L/R to climb downward. [Late edition – looks like you can jump into the ladders on the Apple II version - Hmnn.]

Have Nots: Atari 2600 (46)

My first reaction was pity the original does not win a medal here. But Mr. Crane won't mind as he knows that this version always ranks among the best games ever for the 2600, and tops on my 2600 MFof list. Keep in mind I'm reviewing this version first, even though others scored lower.

The Gameplay is superb (9), matching the 2600 "Pitfall!" score as it pretty much keeps the basic premise and action the same - searching rooms for treasures (and lost items). There's nearly a complete overhaul in the cast of bad guys with the only returning hazards being the Scorpion and the usual Pitfalls (ladders, holes and now cliffs). There are no: swamps, pits, vines, campfires, snakes, rolling or sitting logs and no crocodiles. Instead, new dangers include the Vampire Bat, Electric Eel, Poisonous Frog and Giant Condors which will all do you harm via the touch. Unlike the prequel, you cannot perish, instead hazards touched will drain you of your energy (score/points). The action then freezes while you are taken back to the previous safety zone (crosses which look like plus signs). The further away you are from the last cross touched, the longer it will take and the more points that drain (score scrolls downward). You still lose 100 for falling down a ladder, pit, or cliff. You'll definitely want to make a map while hunting for all the treasures to find quickest/safest way around. Use your skills for jumping, climbing, and avoiding all pitfalls and dangers. There are new skills for swimming (easy), properly falling off cliffs (oops another hint), dodging vampire bats vertically (Dooh! another hint), breaking a balloon (argh – another good hint), and ducking (actually timing going under the plethora of Condors and Bats). There are many rooms to explore and some paths still lead to dead ends, but now there are several one way paths/traps where you cannot retreat or go back. Instead you must continue on, or take a much longer path to get back, and in some cases you can never get back (another hint) without starting over. The addition of the Balloon is fantastic, but hopefully not too frustrating. If you know nothing more about it then do not cheat now, find it yourself. Rest assured, once you are sure that you have covered all the rooms you can, then look for the obvious and you "Might as well Jump". All home versions I've reviewed have every gameplay element in place and have identical maps & placement of hazards. There's almost no variations thus all have at least superb (9) gameplay, matching David Crane's original "Pitfall!".

The Addictiveness is outstanding (9) for all versions and you'll not easily quit playing this one – you just have to try and try again until the game ends with you reaching the end, or you giving up. Returning to the crosses and losing points may not seem a fair means to

subtract points, but it less frustration. Much better when you can continue deeper into the adventure, especially when mapping, than if the game ends after only 3 mistakes. Mapping is much easier knowing that you have unlimited lives & time. You can rest indefinitely in many places – not so when you were frantically mapping or dodging hazards in “Pitfall!” watching that clock counting down. The sequel only takes 13 to 15 minutes (depending upon version) to complete – when not delayed. So you can learn to play, practice and explore for hours, then once you are ready to play to complete it, you won’t spend all day. I practiced about 30 to 90 minutes a night for about 3 weeks until I perfected my skills on the 2600, then another 3 to 4 nights each to perfect yet 3 more versions. But getting to that point perfection point will take time, but you certainly get your money’s worth. I’d suggest completing at least 75% of the map first, then go back and practice the first 3 enemies until you are nearly flawless (15 in a row) at them. The Bat, the Condor and the Scorpion. David Crane put these right up front for you to practice - how convenient. The first 2 will consume your life as you try to finish the remaining 25% of the game, trying to make that final 25 level ascent. Oh yes and you should already have mastered jumping the Scorpion! There is no pause, costing the 2600 one point. Despite many places to stop indefinitely, a pause would still help if you really need a break and are stuck between 2 Condors and/or 2 Bats, or you are mapping this game solo. Once mapped, pay attention to those few stretches where you have no breaks, and take a break just before you reach them. I’d also suggest, take a break and stretch your feet and clear your mind every time you get zapped back to a cross. Don’t forget a map maker’s best friend is the VCR. Record while playing, then go back and map later. You can also use the VCR playback to practice and observe the starting positions of the Condor on each screen. The Graphics are outstanding (8), scoring the same as, but clearly better than the original. There’s a decent amount of detail, more colors (9+ colors), variety, mutli-colored hazards and more and better animation (like the waterfall), plus perfect clarity. Unfortunately, there is not much on-screen action for any version, so I could not bring myself to score any version a 10. The medal winners are a little more detailed, and just as colorful thus I only scored this an 8 - probably the best looking 8 ever!

Sound is a work of art (10) about as good as it gets for classic “joystick era” games. Not only do the effects and music work well together, but the music flows smoothly and is non-stop. I enjoy the music during the Balloon segment. I think this is the circus high wire act music, which is called? "Sobre Las Olas" (“Over the Waves”) by Mexican composer Juventino Rosas. Don’t forget that Activision added an extra chip into the cartridge to make all this extra sound possible, which also explains why your Supercharger or Cuttle Cart won’t run this ROM. As usual, Controls are perfect (10). The cart is not that common, but a well worth the \$10 price tag.

Have Nots: Apple II (36 or 38)

My first reaction was that this version is not well known, but aside from emulation, this disk-only version may be easier to find (in North America) than any of the disqualified versions. Hopefully your S/W & H/W are compatible, unlike mine where the ladders, pit openings, and room barriers are all invisible – this adds considerable frustration, or challenge to the quest. I blotted this out from my scores as I’ve seen the correct screenshots. The Gameplay is superb (9) and complete. I’ve not finished this version, but

have seen every unique screen and every action sequence save for the final victory dance by Harry. The Addictiveness is very fun (8) but there is no pause, and then the sequence of returning to the crosses is just too slow. It's like putting salt into your wounds, so try another version before taking on this added frustration. The Graphics are effective (7), with good animation, a little multi-color, and about 8 colors total. There's too much orange and not enough brown. The backgrounds have some detail, but always only black or white dots. Finally, Harry changes colors, but is usually a putrid Black and Blue. The Sound is acceptable (5), with the usual effects but add in a couple more points if there actually is music. Sorry – I want to be fair due to my S/W and H/W incompatibility – and will revise this later if I find out more. Controls are very good (7), but again seem to suffer from an incompatibility, or you can only jump using the keyboard Apple buttons, not the fire buttons, but a perfect game should still be a possibility with one hand on the stick and one on the keys. As usual this is on diskette only.

Have Nots: Colecovision (46)

My first reaction was to agree with Doug Saxon that this version is different (from the winners). Gameplay is all there and great (9). The quick restart is the <*>, and a unique choice of <#> will kill the music but not the effects. The Addictiveness score is both increased (for the pause < 0 >), and decreased (too frustratingly slow when retreating to cross), but is still fantastic (9). Be careful not to reset when you really only wanted to pause – as these button are next to each other. The Graphics are wonderful (8) with good animation and use of about 11+ colors, but not as much detail, or multi-colors as the medal winners. Most objects are larger and simpler – but just different. Sound is flawless (10) and Controls are perfect (10) – even using a CV controller – thanks to the slow pace of the action. I've not yet found the time to master this version, but Doug told me once that it version is the hardest to finish, which seems likely since the Scorpions are a pixel or two too large – making them really hard to jump. Still well worth the \$15 price tag, and the best CV game in the MFof.

Bronze Medal: Commodore 64 (48)

My first reaction back in college was to wait to map this with a VCR some day. The Gameplay is complete and fantastic (9). The Addictiveness is magnificent (10), with all the best so far, plus a working pause <Run/Stop> key. Simply move the stick to return to action. The Graphics are well-done (9), but also the most unique. There's great animation, loads of detail, and at least 10 colors. There's a lot more brown & green tones, which is definitely more realistic (especially the brown headed Harry), but then this makes for a significant challenge to overcome since Harry's head and the Condor's brown are not that unlike. The details, realism, mutli-colors (save for Harry) are the best of the lot. The screen is fully utilized (wall-to-wall) awesome. The current "score" pretty much hangs there and gets in the way, but what it covers up is not even seen on other versions. This added screen height makes mapping a whole lot better, safer and you can see much more action here, and there's lot's more room to dodge the bats now. Sound and Controls are awesome (10) as well. With the most common cart (\$6 price tag) and a diskette version, you should find it pretty easy to find this one. Don't forget this also ranks as the highest scoring C64 game to date. Too bad Tim Shotter wrote this code to match the 2600 version from scratch. Mike Lorenzen used the 2600 code directly and modified any 2600 machine

specific code to work on the 8 bit computer. While Tim was still debugging code, Mike coded up the entire Lost Level on the Atari.

Gold Medal: Atari 8 Bit Computer & 5200 (49)

Score these 2 identically – with noted differences. My first reaction was that these guys deserve a score of 50. But then I went over everything many times so that I could justify every score and finally decided that although clearly among the top 10 in graphics of all 250+ games reviewed to date, there is just not enough action to merit a 10. Darn!

The Gameplay is a work of art (10), scoring a bonus point for the added Lost Level. Possibly the weakest 10 yet, but I've been consistently generous in this category. The Addictiveness is awesome (10), no doubt helped by the desire to reach the lost level and the use of plethora of pause keys. The <Start> key will reset the game, but any other key on the 8 bit computer will pause the action. I betcha the play testing on the Lost Level made this come to be. The 5200 uses the standard <pause> button. And ,just like the C64, moving the stick will un-pause. The Graphics are first-class (9), but again, missing sufficient action to warrant a 10. There is nice animation, at least 11 colors, some multi-colored backgrounds and several multi-colors objects, good color mixtures and detail. Besides adding more action, a little more detail and use of the entire screen would be the only things to improve. The Sound and Controls are both perfect (10). That's right! With a Masterplay Interface or a Wico controller on the 5200 you can still master this slow-paced game. I did it while the VCR tuning was drifting in and out of TV channel 3. Several times I ducked a Bat or Condor just after my TV screen went to TV commercials – too late to bail out and retreat. A full second later, after AOS (NASA term - Acquisition Of Signal), there was Harry still on his perfect game. Never again will I try recording using a weak 5200 signal. With the 5200 cart at (\$8) this is a great game to try out. But if you have joystick malfunction/phobia then forget about it. The Atari 8 bit computer cart is about (\$22) pricey. So, you may want to seek out the diskette version or emulation.

Search the net: You'll find a lot of goodies on the original and sequel. Try searching on both "II" and "2" and you can read for quite a while. Especially see Ben Valdes site at: <http://members.tripod.com/~PitfallHarry/>

And some ads at: <http://www.randomterrain.com/a2m/ads7pitfall2.html> and of course Tom's at: <http://www.tomheroes.com/Video%20Games%20FS/game%20ads/pitfall%20ad.htm>

Despite receiving my 15 minutes of fame for achieving a perfect Atari 2600 score on "Pitfall!", I know that I accomplished much more playing "Pitfall II". Although again incorrectly credited by Twin Galaxies as having completed the first perfect game on both 2600 games (Pitfall! & Pitfall II), I am likely to have been the first to have achieved a perfect game on 4 different versions of "Pitfall II". The only other player who may have done so first is VG player extraordinaire, Todd Rogers, aka Mr. Activision, who was the first to get many perfect Activision game scores on the 2600, Intellivision, C64 and more. I have contacted Todd before and he's still willing to do an RT interview - we could all use some tips from the Champ. Finally, unlike Tom, I've still not gone to any of the CGEs,

where I would love to finally meet David Crane.

Come back next time for another 20th Anniversary tribute from 1984, "Ghostbusters" or "Montezuma's Revenge" on the Atari 2600, 5200, 8 bit, C64, CV & Apple II. 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

More cool sites to sent you to. I actually have more than usual this month (been lucky enough to have people send me more links than usual. Keep sending them and I will do my best to give them the spotlight for the month.

Compy 386

Here is one of those cute little flash animated cartoons. This one is quite clever with some classic game stuff in it. The best part is that at the end, you can actually play the games he is talking about. Try it, it is quite fun.

<http://www.homestarrunner.com/sbemail94.html>

Armchair Arcade

Rejoice! Another online classic video game newsletter and it is quite good! Lots of pictures and well written articles! I really enjoyed the first issue and cannot wait to see more. Let us hope it last longer and comes out more often than some of the other newsletter. Here is the link:

<http://www.armchairarcade.com/aamain/news.php>

Gravitar

One must admire someone who is willing to invest so much time and energy into a website about a single game. And when they choose a game that is not a mainstream hit, it is even more amazing. Such a man is Dan Coogan, who has created a very nice site devoted to the Atari game, Gravitar. If there is anything you ever wanted to know about Gravitar and I mean anything, Dan has it on his site.

<http://www.cooganphoto.com/gravitar/>

Education 80's Style

While this has nothing to do with video games, I am sure anyone who was around when Atari was new, would remember these little shorts on television. You may have watched them between episodes of Pacman or Dragon's Lair, while eating your Donkey Kong cereal. These brought back lots of memories for me, especially the "Time for Timer" ones.

<http://www.angelfire.com/retro/gartwo/>

Play Games - Win Money!

Video Game Player Promises Thousands of Dollars in Prize Monies to Players Who Break

Selected Video Game World Records

FAIRFIELD, IOWA - January 17, 2004 - Cash prizes have been promised for top high-scores achieved during the course of the new year 2004. And the money is coming straight out of Robert Mruczek's own pocket - nearly \$3,000 dollars in bounties. Mruczek, who is most well known as Twin Galaxies' Chief Referee, says: "I want to prime the pump and get players tackling old world records that have not been beat in some time. I think its good for the hobby."

What is a bounty? It is a cash reward promised to individuals who attain an established goal in a designated time frame. In this case, the goals are high score thresholds designated by Mruczek on many different titles on the NES, SNES, Magnavox 2, Dreamcast, Playstation, PS2, X-Box, N-64, Colecovision, Atari 2600 and arcade coin-op platforms.

"This is a very significant offer," says Walter Day, Twin Galaxies' Chief Scorekeeper and editor of the forthcoming Twin Galaxies' Official Video Game & Pinball Book of World Records. "Robert Mruczek is a devoted supporter of the gaming hobby. In fact, he is one of the hobby's leaders in civic activism, willing to put the needs of the hobby ahead of his own gain. The only other player who has put his own money up to encourage competitive playing was Billy Mitchell, who issued a famous poster in 1999 that offered thousands of dollars in prizes for high scores on dozens of classic arcade games from the early 1980s." To see Mruczek's list of bounties, go to <http://www.twingalaxies.com>

For more information, Contact Walter Day at Twin Galaxies at (641)472-1949 or walter@twingalaxies.com

Conclusion

A smaller issue, but it was on time! Hope you are making it through the very cold winter (unless you are one of the lucky ones who lives somewhere that doesn't get snow). Tune in next month as I will be talking about my new found love, Visual Pinball and some of the very cool tables available. Also, I may start a new video game prose story. Until next month, keep warm and keep playing your video games!

-[Tom Zjaba](#) (This issue was done to total silence. And I found it quite boring.)