

Retrogaming Times

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Last Chance

If you ever thought about writing for Retrogaming Times, this is your last chance! With issue #80, Retrogaming Times will come to an end. After 6 and half years, I have decided to put the newsletter to rest. There comes a time in a man's life when he runs out of things to say about Pacman and Space Invaders. When something that used to be so easy to do has become more of a chore, it is time to walk away.

If anyone wants to keep the newsletter going, the website and/or the newsletter are available for sale. Just look for the email at the bottom of the page and email me and make an offer.

On a positive note, look for the next issue to be the biggest issue yet! I am planning on doing a bunch of articles and I hope that some of the past writers will return for one last hurrah! Also, maybe some of the readers who have been on the fence about submitting an article will get one in. And if you have a website you want to be spotlighted, sent it along, I will try to mention every relevant one that I get.

Please do not feel bad about the newsletter ending, instead look at the 80 issues that are there for you to read! For 80 months or over 6 1/2 years, Retrogaming Times came to you free each and every month. And that is something worth celebrating.

RETROGAMING COMMERCIAL VAULT

by [Adam King](#)

Turn off that game of Space Invaders, because the 'Vault is in session. This month, since I'm starting to cover 8-bit Nintendo and Sega games, I figured I'd spotlight a pair of commercials from late 1986 for both systems, one Nintendo ad, and one Sega ad. With the Master System released a year after the NES, the competition between both systems was certainly one for the ages, even

though it wasn't at the level of say the Genesis vs. the Super NES. Anyway, I'm about to show you how Nintendo and Sega promoted their respective systems.

Nintendo Commercial

In the early days of the NES, Nintendo would often play off a sci-fi theme for the system. This is more evident in this early ad, which seems to be a takeoff of the movie Alien. A trio of game players are exploring a space station when screens showing Nintendo's first wave of games spring out at them. What else can they do but play the latest games from the Big N?

"What will the future bring from Nintendo? More hits like Super Mario Bros. Arcade hits like Kung Fu. Nintendo has the most video game hits. Hogan's Alley. Duck Hunt. And more like Baseball, and Excitebike. And you can play them only in the Nintendo Entertainment System. NOW YOU'RE PLAYING WITH POWER!"



"Careful, guys, we could get attacked by Super Mario Bros."



"AAGH! Kung Fu just leapt out at me!"



"Another one! Kill it! Kill it!"



"This whole Nintendo thing is awesome."

Sega Commercial

Sega took a slightly different approach. This early ad shows a father and two kids playing the Sega system as gameplay footage is shown. Instead of a specific setting, the ad is done in front of a blue background with light rays shining from an unknown source. An announcer names of the advantages of the system, also showing off several accessories, including the 3D Glasses.

"Sega challenges you with the ultimate video game: The Sega Master System! With twice as much memory as any other video game. Advanced video technology like scrolling backgrounds, graphics with 64 colors, digital sound, and Light Phasers. And you can add to the excitement, with Sports Pads, Controls Sticks, and the first video games ever in 3D!"

"Sega's the one."

"The Sega Master System. THE CHALLENGE WILL ALWAYS BE THERE!"



Look at this family enjoying their neat system



"We're so happy we picked Sega instead of the gray box."



"I love the Light Phaser!"



Make your own caption for this scene.

As you just read, both sides took a different approach. Sega talked about their system and its

specs, while Nintendo chose to concentrate on the games for their game box. Now compare "NOW YOU'RE PLAYING WITH POWER!" with "THE CHALLENGE WILL ALWAYS BE THERE!" and you which which slogan grabs your attention more. We could get into the way Nintendo took control of the industry, but wouldn't you know it, I just ran out of space. Tune in next month for more commercial goodness.

I do have some words left about the Commercial Vault CD. I promise that no matter how many clips I have it WILL be finished by the end of April, maybe earlier. I have 50 clips, so hopeful it should be enough to satisfy your appetite.

Silverball Addiction Part Two

Last month I gave you a quick taste of Visual Pinball and Pinmame. This month we will get a bit more in depth as I will do some deep reviews of pinball games, talk about some tricks to improve your pinball performance and give some links to some of the coolest tables out there. If you are a fan of pinball in any fashion, then this is for you!

Let us start with the programs themselves. Visual Pinball is very simple to setup and play. And it is nice because you can create your own tables with ease (unless you want sound and scoring, then you need to do a bit of programming). Even my 8 year old twin boys are making tables and they have come up with some bizarre tables (imagine a ramp right there as you shoot the ball and this is one of their more normal ideas). This is the beauty of it, the program is both very powerful yet very accessible. It is a thing of beauty and it was created by Randy Davis and for unknown reasons, he just stopped updating it back in 2002. But the website that started it all is still up and it is a good place to start on your pinball journey. <http://www.randydavis.com/vp/>

Pinmame on the other hand is still being developed and it is more or less what makes the animations and stuff in the more modern pinball tables. It allows an accurate recreation of many tables that would be lacking if only emulated on Visual Pinball. So think of Visual Pinball as the program that creates and runs the table and Pinmame that does the fancy stuff. Put them together and you get some amazing results. Here is a link to Pinmame: <http://www.pinmame.com/>

Once you get these up and running, you may find some problems crop up. The first and most important thing I can tell you is to make sure you have all the right paths in Pinmame. To do this, I first recommend a front end. VP Launcher is probably the best of the front ends. Here is a link to it: <http://vplauncher.rolandscholz.de/>. Once you have this set, you can pull down the VPinmame menu and pick "Show VPinmame Information". From there you will see where to set paths. This is important to do.

The second thing I would recommend is to make copies of all the scripts and put them in with the tables. The tables will be in the Visual Pinball part of your program. I do not know why, but you can get error messages if you just have the scripts in the script file. But doing this has made quite a few table work that would not work before. I do not understand the logic behind it, but it works and that is good enough for me.

For resolution, I found the following to be the best: 1024 x 768 x 32. To set the resolution, you need to go into the Visual Pinball program. In there you will find a pull down menu called "preferences." Inside there you will find the one for video options, sound as well as controls. I was originally running it at 640 x 480 and the difference is night and day.

Another problem you may come across is sound. While some pinball machines do not have sound emulated completely or that well, most are quite good. But to get the best sound, you need to upgrade your Direct X to the latest version. I did this and some tables went from annoying noise to sweet music.

Enough boring stuff, let us get to some reviews. I will try to do a more in-depth review of some of the tables that have really kept me busy. I will review three different tables, one real pinball table, one original one and a different one. This will give you a full taste of some of what is available.



Road Runner

This table was made by Atari back in 1979 and it is based on the classic cartoon series from Warner Brothers. The first thing you will notice about the table is that it is very colorful, much like a cartoon. It is also visually appealing. But one thing I will warn you about it is that it is a very fast game. That ball can zoom around like a real roadrunner, so you do not want to play distracted or your game will be over very quickly.

What I like about the game is there is a decent amount of stuff to do. Once you knock down the targets, there are balls behind them that you can knock around. There is a few different places to hit your ball and gain some speed. About the only real drawback is that once you get going in the game, you can build up quite a bit of bonus and each and every ball it gives you the bonus points. While it is nice for your score, it can take quite awhile to get through all the bonus points by the time the fifth ball rolls around.

The sound is great with lots of classic sounds from the cartoons. From Wile E. Coyote talking at the beginning to the "beep beeps", it really captures the feeling of the cartoon. There are a few funny ones that pop up, especially after you lose a ball. You also get the whole theme song at that beginning, which is a blessing and curse. It is cool to hear the classic song, but it drowns out all the sound effects at the beginning of the game. What I usually do is wait for it to end before I begin playing. I use this as the time to grab a beverage or snack.

A few nice features is that it support up to four players at once. This is nice for some family battles and with the wacky bonus points, you really do not know who is the winner until the final ball. It also keeps high scores, which is always a big plus for me. I like a goal to strive for and with it, I know what the goal is. It shows the top four high scores.

All in all, it is a very fun and very colorful table. It plays great and has some major speed to it. There is enough to keep you busy and despite the few flaws, it is a nice table.



[World Series 1937](#)

This is one of the odd kind of games that has sprouted up. While Visual Pinball started as a pinball simulator, we have seen many incarnations. People are trying to emulate shooting games, pachinko and flipperless games. This is what was commonly referred to as a bat and ball game. You simply hit a button to pitch the ball and then use the other button to swing at it. A very simple game, but it is the extras that make it special.

To start with, this game features the Yankees from 1937. For people who are not sports fans, this is the era after Babe Ruth and the early days of Joe Dimaggio. This game captures some of that magic with an announcer who tells the name of each batter and a crowd that cheers and even vendors. To make it even more fun, there is a few little extras like a small bit of the Joe Dimaggio song as well as a snippet of the famous Lou Gehrig speech.

The mechanics of the game are simple enough. Hit the ball and if it gets past the fielders, you get a hit. Depending on where you hit it, the hit can be anything from a single to a home run. Try to score as many runs as possible before making three outs. Right now, my top score is 5 runs. For some reason as soon as I hit five runs, I just fall apart. Is it a mental block or a curse? Who knows, but it is fun trying to top it.

While you will not play this as much as you would most pinball games, it is a nice and very quick game. It is a little variety and hearing that Joltin Joe song always brings a smile to my face.

Here are some links to some of the different sites where you can find visual pinball tables:

Here you will find Mr. Do Run Run, Reactor and more!

<http://www.vpforums.com/go.php?url=http://www.angelfire.com/games3/robbway/>

This site has a wide range of tables, including one with Dr. Zoidberg from Futurama, a flipperless Frogger and a bunch inspired by anime and 50's Sci-Fi novels.

<http://www.sahasales.com/Anthias/>

This site has some cool tables including Magic the Gathering, BabyPinbot and Centipede.

<http://members.lycos.co.uk/kinghanco/Welcome%20to%20my%20tables%20to%20download.html>

This site only has four tables, but they are among four of the best! F1 is possibly the nicest table you will find and surpasses many of the tables you find at arcades. Jetson is great fun as are the others.

<http://s93261444.onlinehome.us/>

This site offers a selection of authentic tables and a few original ones like Hexen and Psycho.

http://perso.wanadoo.fr/jiveforyou/Pinball/Site/Jives_mods.html

Lastly, here is a link to a bunch of original tables. This site puts a list of all kinds of original tables for you to check out.

<http://www.public.asu.edu/~checkma/pinball/originals.html>

Digital Press Unveils Online Game Database

This has been on our list of projects for a long, long time and I am happy to announce that the BETA version of the Digital Press ONLINE Collector's Guide is now a reality!

It's not PDFs. It's a searchable database that lets you filter and view your game lists thousands of different combinations, and then view all of the details for the games themselves. For example:

- You're going hunting for Sega CD games. You can simply call up a complete list of US released - Sega CD games and print it out. Now you've got your rarity list "cheat sheet" with you on the hunt.
- You're interested in all of the DP recommended Atari 2600 titles. Select Atari 2600 and check off the "recommended" box and whammo!
- You're looking for games by that guy - what's his name? - that did Barnstorming. Look up Barnstorming, click on the game from the list, and when the designer's name appears in the game details, click his name - instant list by designer!
- You're curious what arcade ports were made for the Intellivision. Easy.
- You want to see all of the games that were supposed to be released in 1985 and never were. A breeze.

- You want to get all of the Atari systems into a single list, showing only those games that have Easter Eggs (tricks). Piece o' cake.
- You want to see screen shots of every Earthworm Jim game. Advertisements too. A cinch!
- You want to see every game with the word "Mario" in the title. Child's play!
- You want to list all of the 8's, 9's and 10's for all US systems, then sort them from rarest to least of the rare. No sweat!
- You're really just into the history and lore. Pick a company, a system, a game, ANYTHING. read the game description, which will have links to other similar games in the genre, on the system, by that manufacturer, developer, etc etc etc

Oh, you probably want that link!

<http://66.92.250.36:8080/DP/cmf/search.cmf>

The Many Faces of...Ghostbusters

by [Alan Hewston](#)

Following the successes of Pitfall! & Pitfall II, David Crane kept on bringing us more great concepts and games – designing “Ghostbusters” for the C64. Activision worked very hard to get all 4 home versions released quickly enough to capitalize on the movie’s release. The manuals all note that Mr. Crane gives personal thanks to Gary Kitchen & staff, and Tim Shotter & Sam Nelson for their help in making the tightest S/W deadline in Activision’s history. I’d say they were successful at releasing the game while the movie was still hot or in time for the Holiday rush or both. No previous movie-based game was as successful as “Ghostbusters”. In some cases the previous movies games may have been released: only on one system, too late, but were not a good, fun or playable game, or rushed out the door with bugs or unfinished etc. Yes, Ghostbusters broke a trend of mediocre or terrible movie tie ins, thus satisfying fans who want good games based upon their favorite movies and the S/W companies who don’t want to spend or a lose lot on licensing fees.

2004 is the 20th anniversary of Ghostbusters, which our Retrogaming Times voters selected as the 10th best video game having its initial release that year – just edging out “Space Taxi”. Ghostbusters is very memorable, very playable, has an ending, and continuation, benefits from the movie tie in, was released on 4+ classic platforms, and also introduced us to a couple new gaming elements. [Correct me if I am wrong]. Home games saw for the first time in “Ghostbusters” 1) the use of passwords to continue the game at a later time, and 2) karaoke! More music is better.

While karaoke does not add to the game’s play value, it is part of the overall entertainment experience you paid for - and then some on the C64 version where hitting the space bar adds speech synthesis, shouting “Ghostbusters”. Karaoke may have helped the ongoing (at that time) process of merging the various entertainment worlds of music, video games & movies. “Tron” had a lot to do with this merging as well, and soon afterward all movies, soundtracks and their

accompanying video games were attempted to be co-released, or at least that was a goal where one product could feed off of the other. By the late 80's you could easily add in action figures, toys, board games, music videos and others as well.

The use of passwords is huge as it opened up a whole new means to play games longer by coming back later. This changed the paradigm for playing games. Sure there was always saving games to cassette or disk, but passwords were simpler and foolproof (as long as you saved it somewhere safe). Password and code features became more fully utilized in the NES era for multiple purposes such as: more money or skills; to gain stamina or hit points or levels of experience; additional or better weapons or more inventory; start playing at level 2,3,4 . . . ; to have earned or collected various objects, or completed tasks in a quest; to unlock specific doors or barriers; and many more. The “Ghostbusters” passwords are valid on all 4+ home computer versions.



The “Slash” or “not” symbol became very popular due to Ghostbusters – as in “No” Ghost.

Arcade: None.

Home versions: all in '84 by Activision, with Electronic Speech Systems of Berkeley CA
Commodore 64 (also by Richochet/Mastertronic) David Crane & Music by Adam Bellin, Graphics
by Hilary Mills.

Atari 8 bit, (Glyn Anderson), Atari 2600 (Dan Kitchen), Apple II (Robert C. McNally), Sinclair Spectrum (Activision/James Software, with Speech by David Aubrey Jones) MSX (Pony/Cannon/Activision)

Classic Sequels: Ghostbusters II (home systems) & “Real Ghostbusters” 1987 (arcade & home systems)

“MMM” = abbreviation for the Stay-Puft Marsh Mellow Man.

Home Version Similarities: Except those in <>: all home versions have: only one level/version to

play; but passwords <2600> to give you a boost in starting funds; karaoke sing along <2600> with bouncing ball <AP//>; a pause <2600>; a series of screens to show the action similar to the movie: a) setting up your franchise with a \$10K budget & multiple choices such as vehicles <2600> & equipment; b) view the 4X5 block city map to see locations of Roamers and Slimers (inside flashing red buildings). Watch for the MMM alert, and use up to 5 dollups of Bait - hit the letter "B" <2600 flip right difficulty switch> - which attracts the MMM to you and prevents a city block from destruction; move your GB icon about the city - it leaves a visual trail <2600> and if you have an intensifier, you'll notice buildings change color <2600> when a Slimer is coming there soon; c) drive the streets on that specific route, see your vehicle and its gear <2600> and try to vacuum the "Roamers" d) arrive on location to capture each Slimer at various city buildings - but don't take too long, don't cross the streams & don't get slimed, e) recharge your backpack, empty all traps & refresh your 3 GB men at HQ; f) when PK energy reaches 9999 the game ends if you've not earned a profit, if you did see the Stay Puft Marsh Mellow Man close up and duck past him into Zuul – then watch sparks fly while closing the gateway to the other dimension. The quicker you capture Slimers, the more money you'll earn. Catch them just as they appear, cause if you wait too long they will escape – right in front of your eyes; check your status – hit the space bar <2600> often to make sure that you can actually bust another ghost. Don't plan a long route only to find you have filled your traps, ran out of power, or your men need a rest at HQ. You'll hear the non-stop playing of the GB theme song – well done & full length, but still repetitive hearing it constantly for 15+ minutes each round. A music toggle would have been nice, especially in favor of more sound effects or speech. The C64 & Spectrum versions also have speech during the game - when you capture the Slimer "Ghostbusters", or if you miss, then "He Slimed Me", and when you get squished by the Marsh Mellow Man, "Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha" There's no demo mode on any version either.

Not included in the manual:

You are not warned that every time you hit "B" you use one of your 5 ghost Baits. You only see one on-screen (all 5 on the Atari 8 bit version), but trust me they are used/gone on all computer versions if you keep hitting "B". After-the-fact the status bar will remind you that you do not have any Bait!! What? I clearly bought Bait? So be careful to only hit the "B" button once per desired use – you may need all 5. The game does not play any harder due to your income – same regardless of having \$10,000 or \$999,999. The Gatekeeper and Keymaster are seen wandering around the city <2600>, but are not part of the action per se.

Disqualified: Sinclair Spectrum (N/A my guess 42)

DQ only because I do not have a Speccy. The Sinclair Spectrum community (worldofspectrum.org) continues to post more & more valuable resources about their system & its games online. A "Sinclair User" magazine review & screenshots online tells that it has speech & all the same screens & inventory as the C64 – & yes the Karaoke too. They've scored this a 7 out of 10, all the time preferring to see/hear the better graphics/music of the C64 & not seeing Zuul.



Spectrum archives screenshot - nice detail - limited colors.

Have Nots: Atari 2600 (37)

My first reaction was “impressed” to discover this on the 2600, and to find it very playable. The startup choices are essentially useless with no car choice or optional/upgrade equipment. There’s pretty much no tradeoff in buying gear and no status bar. The Gameplay is fairly good (7) albeit simplified, but still keeping all essential play mechanics nicely in place. No choice if you want a PK Energy Detector . . .no problem, no need to spend time searching because there’s always a “Slimer” waiting somewhere. Just set the path and go! This speeds up all the action, eliminating sitting & waiting and searching & driving. Finally, all driving has been significantly shortened – way cool. Without the status line, even more time is saved. When you are required to go to HQ – only HQ is lit up. Go there ASAP, and then it’s back to catching Slimers. Addictiveness is (8) enjoyable, and this is the version to have small children play, as there is no reading. Earn \$10K more than you started the round and you get to see up close the MMM. Bad news is this and most versions have no warning when the PK energy hits 9999. Suddenly you’re under the MMM’s feet. Better be paying attention and not be moving the joystick “up” when this happens – or 1 GB gets wasted fast. He’s really hard to duck under, but it’s really just a \$2K bonus round. Regardless if you get squished, you still continue on to another round. You’ll probably keep trying for a while, but playing for 15+ minutes only to have the MMM squash you in 10 seconds is no fun. So, besides practicing or going for a marathon game/score, there’s no need to keep continuing. This is because the game plays the same each round . . . re-purchase the exact same items, no changes or upgrades, just load up and “Go get her boys”. Good news is you can pause/break, possibly indefinitely on the MMM screen and/or on the setup screen, but I’ve not experimented much. A 2600-unique problem is the MMM alert can occur any time, and whatever you were doing (about to snag a Slimmer) – FORGETABOUTIT. You’re instantly shown the map screen & deal with the MMM alert. This would be great, if the controls were a little better. Toggling the right difficulty switch is not a good choice as you may disturb the game power supply, or cart (Activision carts barely fit properly) or worse, you could cause static discharge to an exposed joystick port. If you flip the switch back and forth, then it does not work – just quickly flip it once & it works. Graphics are effective (7) and fairly colorful but are not detailed. Beside’s capturing “Slimers” and ducking under the MMM, there’s not a lot of overall action. On location with Slimer - the GB vehicle is missing here & the L/R range is shrunk. On the map – there are no details & only 3 Roamers max. Driving - you see right through your vehicle – a Station Wagon? Why not the ‘63 Hearst? The only gear seen is your vacuum. There’s some animation, the GB are mutli-colored, but only one actually departs GB HQ. The Sound is not bad (6), but it is pretty much all music. The only effects are the forklift during the franchise screen and the vacuum. Controls are outstanding (9). The stick is perfect, but then using ghost “Bait” is not as user friendly as the keyboard “B”. 20/20 hindsight says press the fire button when vertically in between buildings. The 2600 cart is not too rare, but for \$10 a worthwhile investment – some fun PT & its more collectible than most. Finally, there was not an Activision patch established for this

game – too bad, as that would have been highly sought after.

Bronze Medal: Apple II (39)

My first reaction was enthusiasm hearing speech at the start, but that's it – nowhere else. In one word, this version can best be described as SLOW. The joystick moving on the setup & map screen is slow, the vehicle drives REALLY slowly (starting up & slowing down), the Slimer screen is a bit slower, and finally, the disk drive is accessed EVERY time (I tried both original and pirated copies) you change screens. Only 6-7 seconds, but it breaks up your concentration and really adds up, not to mention the wear on your disk & drive. So, the Apple was clearly taxed to hold everything in memory, but it pulls it all together quite well (9) with all Gamplay elements all in place. Graphics are beautiful (8) with mutli-color, decent animation & good details. Sound is average (5), with the full musical score playing non-stop, but then almost nothing else. There's one sound effect unique to this version - adding road noises which match your driving speed. Semi-realistic, but the clicking noise is more irritating than cool. Controls are great (9) for the most part, but then the analog nature hinders the action. Positioning the GBs versus a Slimer cannot be done quickly - move far left, then stop, tap the stick to the right just enough for the GB to look right, then fire button. Argh! While mapping, you'll overshoot streets and then pay for it driving longer. Addictiveness is still enjoyable (8) with the usual AP// pause <ESC>, but SLOW. The game is long and then when you finally reach Zuul for your moment of glory - boom – it is done & gone alltoofast.

More annoyances: Slimer screen – L/R range is too narrow & Slimers pass through your streams. Overall a fun game, but the slowness may haunt you. To see more AP// screenshots & learn more about this version, look for next month's interview (part 1) with Apple // "Ghostbuster", Robert C. McNally.

Silver Medal: Atari 8 bit (44)

My first reaction was disappointment that this only came out on disk, and then finding out the speech is only in the karaoke intro, and not in the game. Gameplay is all there and superb (9). There IS a brief status warning when the energy reaches 9999. Addictiveness is awesome (10) with passwords (account #) and the pause is <ESC>. Graphics are not as good as the C64, but are still impressive (8). It's great to watch the skyscraper scroll downwards in front of you as you ascend to the top of Zuul. The worst graphics are found in the part of the game that is played the most . . . GB men look like crap verses the Slimers. Kudos for this version showing the Bait on-screen, in fact all 5 can be seen simultaneously. Sound is pretty good (7), but cannot compete with the C64's extra voice. Unlike the C64, the "Ghostbusters" cry <hit space bar> interrupts the flow of the karaoke music. Same story as all the others - besides the music, there is not much else in effects. Controls are excellent (10) and with practice, you'll have no problems hitting the <ESC>, <Space Bar> and when you want. Available only on disk. An online review of this version can be found in the "Antic" archives.

Gold Medal: Commodore 64 (46)

My first reaction hearing "Ghostbusters, Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha" was an instant desire to play this game and see & hear everything that it had to offer. This "ear" candy and the karaoke are enough to bring you back to see it, even if not to play the game – as I've shown this to friends, just to show them it. No doubt an influence for your buddy to go buy this game too. The Gameplay is all there (9), outstanding, but as is the case for all versions, options would help. Such as difficulty levels, or harder as you acquire more money, or set the duration (PK level other than 9999), or even a practice screen. Like the 2600, there's no warning when the PK energy hits

9999. Addictiveness is magnificent (10) with passwords and a pause <R/S>. Without a doubt, the heart of the Ghostbusters game is the capturing of the Slimers - the C64 version does this the best – with the widest playfield, the GB men have 3 colors, their ionizer streams seem to reach a little higher up, the trap activation is a magnificent display. What cannot be seen in a screenshot is the action here is more under your control and not that of luck. Your skill with the 2 GB determines the outcome of catching that “ugly little spud”. The enthusiasm of the “Ghostbusters” cheer can make your spine tingle, or make you want to shout YEAH!! Kick some Ghost butt baby! I want to be challenged, not just sit back and watch the game’s randomness decide the outcome. The speech is not needed in the game, but as you can guess, it adds a lot in my score book compared to watching the GB boys dance silently. All versions get an addictiveness boost from the movie tie-in. It’s more fun when you are playing characters from a movie – pushing that score from ~9.5 to 10! This version seems to me the hardest to sneak past the MMM – so expect to play it more often. Graphics are outstanding (9) but limited due to “not much” on screen action. The details, animation, multi-colored objects and color variety are the best. Sound is the best as well, quite impressive (8), with speech and a huge range of musical instruments. Controls are perfect (10). Available on disk & cart (but fairly rare HES – maybe only in Australia).

Ghostbuster Vehicle Options (I don’t think their speeds really different in the game?)

\$2000, Compact, 75 MPH, 5 items;

\$4800, '63 Hearst, 90 MPH, 9 items;

\$6000, Station Wagon, 110 MPH, 11 items; and

\$15,000, High Performance, 160 MPH, 7 items.

Account numbers – here are some <Name>(Number)[\$dollars]: <Owen>(list)[\$720,000] , <Owen>(06165134)[\$728,600], <Andy>(777)[lots ?\$?], <>(458)[\$1,000,000] but you always lose, <>(62313600)[\$17,200], <>(0250600)[\$30,200].

Thanks for help from Tom MacLaren (again) for the Apple // version, Steve Knox (again) for the Atari 8 bit version, and Matt Gauslin for the C64 version & 8 bit box. Finally, this review was written with a certain Ray Parker Jr. song running amok through my head.

Come back next month, and hope that I tackle the biggest selling game from 1980, in RT issue #80, and the Many Faces of “Pac-Man” on the Apple //, Atari 2600, 8 bit, 5200, C64, CV, Intellivision, TI-99 and Vic 20. Contact Alan Hewston at: Hewston95@NOSPAMstratos.net or visit the Many Faces of site: <http://my.stratos.net/~hewston95/RT/ManyFacesHome.htm>

8-Bit Face Off

by [Adam King](#)

It's time for Round 2 of the battle of the 8-bit systems. Looks like I got some good feedback so far from the last one, so let's see how far this goes.

This month we put the computer classic Ghostbusters on the grill. With Alan Hewston covering the Atari and computer versions in "The Many Faces", he suggested I tackle the NES and Sega versions. This may be one of the few times we match the two columns, so how could I say no?

Anyway, the games here follow the same formula as the earlier computer/Atari versions: go to the shop, buy equipment, go to the haunted buildings and catch the ghosts for cash. However, while on the other versions the game ends if you get past the Marshmallow Man who guards the Zuul

building, the two 8-bit versions feature some additional scenes, which follow the movie closely. First you have to scale all 22 floors of the Zuul building, as ghosts chase after you. At the top floor you get to engage the evil Gozer in the final showdown, as the Marshmallow Man is climbing the building after you. You better save the world fast.

The games are just about exactly the same on both systems, except for some features I'll mention, so we'll just get down to the nitty gritty on each one.

Ghostbusters NES (1988 Activision)

First of all, once you start the game, you don't begin from the shop. You have to drive from the GBHQ to the shop in order to buy your equipment. If you run into any cars, you lose money, and if you crash too much you may not arrive with enough to buy what you need. Also in this version, you have to manage your fuel during the driving sequences. As you drive to your destination, you consume fuel which you can replenish by snagging fuel barrels along the road. If you are out of fuel, your ghostbusters will have to push the car to the gas station (GS) to refuel so you can keep going and this will cost you some money.

The graphics aren't the best, on any version. All the scenes lack any detail, including the characters, and the buildings are just plain. There's hardly any sound effects, but you do get a nice rendition of the Ghostbusters theme song that plays over and over. On the title screen when you push START a voice clip yells, "Ghostbusters!" The controls take some practice to work, but once you get them down they're workable. As far as challenge goes, the game gets repetitive at times. You just drive around, catching ghosts and buying items. This starts to pick up once you reach the staircase sequence. Unfortunately it becomes extremely difficult to get past. You have to rapidly push the button to get up the stairs, and the ghosts close in easily unless you draw them away with Ghost Food. Odds are you will die in a matter of seconds. Also there's no continues and no way to save your progress. Once you turn the power off, you have to start over.

Ghostbusters SMS (1988 Sega)

Fortunately this version is not as frustrating as the NES port. You start right from the shop, so you can get what you need to begin your little enterprise. In fact, the Sega version presents you with a few more options, including which car you start with. You have to figure economy vs. speed, so choose wisely. You don't have to worry about fuel during the driving sequences, but you do have to worry about barriers labeled STOP that can crash your vehicle. On the map screen, you can see two people wondering around the city. I'm told they are the Key Master and Gate Keeper, but if you touch them you lose some money. Also this version actually has passwords to save your progress and the money you make, so you don't have to start over empty handed.

The graphics are colorful and detailed, far better than the NES version. All the characters and the buildings are bright and colorful. On the title screen they display the lyrics to the theme song with a "follow-the-bouncing-ball" ball. Cute. On the other hand, the music is painful to listen to, especially since it repeats endlessly, and there's not much in the way of sound effects. The controls are smooth and easy to use, once you get the hang of them. As I mentioned, you'll have an easier time in this port than in the NES version, though you still have to spend most of your time driving around catching ghosts. The building scene is much easier to get through here; you simply use the D-pad like a normal game, unlike the NES version. You'll still be hounded by ghosts, though. The passwords are a plus as well.

Analysis

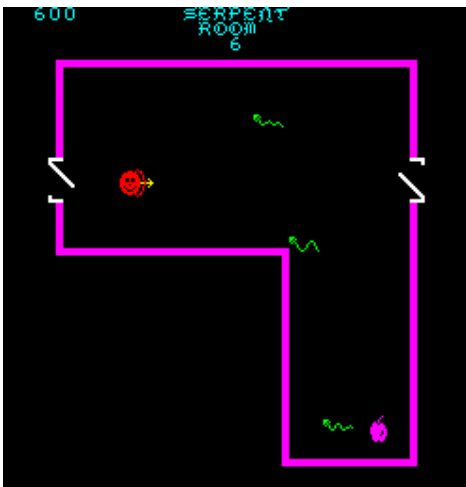
I think it's pretty obvious which version gets the nod. The Sega version outshines the NES port in almost every aspect, and is just more fun to play. One can easily live the music, or just hit the MUTE button, you probably won't miss too many sound effects.

Winner: Sega

So now the Nintendo and Sega systems have one win apiece. But there's still plenty of game ports to go through.

MAME Reviews

This month, I went to the bottom of the alphabet to find two games to review. Two are classics and one is a game that I heard of, but never played. Journey with me to the arcade for two more MAME reviews!



(Is it me or do those snakes look like something that would fertilize an egg?)

Venture

Back in 1981 when this game came out at the arcades, it was about as close as you would get to playing Dungeons and Dragons. It featured multiple levels, different rooms, treasure and lots of monsters. Sure, there was no magic and you could not go up levels, but those were simpler times. It was nice to play something similar to Dungeons and Dragons.

The game has you controlling Winky, an adventurer who looks like a relative of Evil Otto of Berzerk fame. Your weapon of choice is a bow and arrow. It must be one of those Hollywood bows as it never runs out of arrows. That or Winky is carrying around a huge quiver full of arrows. Your job is to go into each of the four rooms per level and get the treasure. Simple enough. But the problem is that each room either has monsters in your way or traps. And if this wasn't enough, there are these big creatures that look like something from Space Invaders that roam the halls and if you linger too long in a room, will come in and kill you. Unlike the room monsters, these creatures are invincible.

The first thing I noticed when playing the arcade version was it was alot more difficult than the Colecovision version. The arcade near my house as a youth never had a Venture arcade machine, so I was not too familiar with it. The first version I played was the Colecovision and I mastered it. I could beat the game without too much problem and I would never lose a guy on the first level. Well, the arcade version was a whole different story. To start off with, the hall

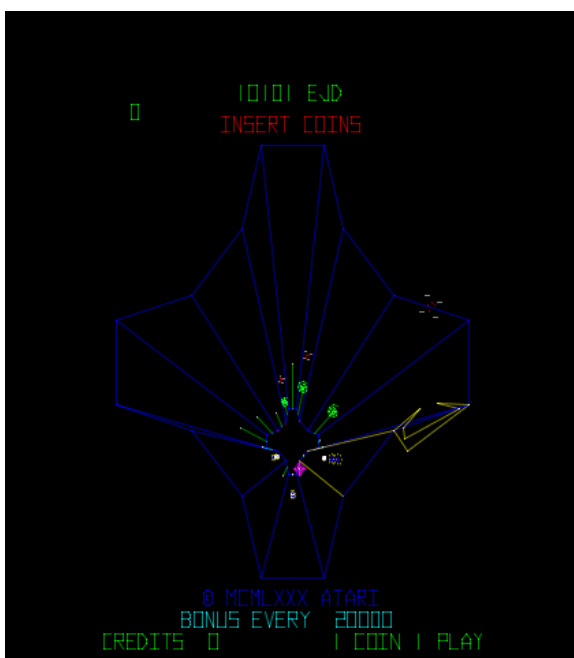
monsters were faster, more plentiful and came into the rooms quicker. In the rooms, some of the monsters were quite good at dodging your arrows, where on the Colecovision, they were slow moving targets.



(This is where I learned the meaning of being teased.)

What is nice is that there are multiple levels. Each level has four rooms and once you complete all the rooms, you move to the next level. It is also nice that they show you how many of the treasures you have found and how many are left out there. One thing I must warn you about. When you first look at the large screen that shows all the treasures (it only shows the ones you found, the others are just question marks), it gives you the illusion that there are a bunch of levels and a bunch of different treasures to find. The truth is that after three levels, if I am correct, you go through the same levels again. And once you get through all the levels and find all the treasures, you start over again. I was bummed when I found this out. I was hoping for a screen saying great job or something. Oh well, such is life.

Venture is a fun game and while it was a shock to find out how much harder the arcade version is over the Colecovision version (you think I would have learned from Tapper or Up n Down), I still enjoy it. While better dungeon games have come, it is still nice to go back to a time when we dreamed of what could be.



(Screenshots do not do justice, especially when it is a vector game)

Tempest

One may question why it took so long for me to review a classic like this game. It is one of the most loved arcade games and the updated version on the Atari Jaguar, Saturn and Playstation kept the game alive in the hearts and minds of gamers the world over. I will tell you why I never bothered to review this game before, I never had a controller that made the experience enjoyable. Before I received my Devastator II, I had to play this with a mouse, joystick or worse a keyboard. While it is still a great game, the experience was sorely lacking with the inadequate controllers. But with the Devastator II and its frictionless spinner, Tempest is suddenly great fun again! If I only could find a version of Tempest 2000 to play on it, I would be in heaven (I just love that voice "Super Zapper recharge").

This is one of those games that it is very easy to get into "The Zone". Once you get past the first half dozen levels, things get prettty hectic and this is where pure reflexes takes over. And when you have a smooth spinner, you can just fly around like a bat out of you know where. And with rapid fire, it is easy to keep those things at bay.

Probably the biggest challenge with this game is how to use your one super zapper you get per level. On the early levels you will find that you do not need. Too bad you cannot store them up. When the later levels come, you will find that you could use a bunch of them. This is where the problem comes. Do you use it the first time things get hairy or do you try to rough it out and keep it for later. This will keep you on your toes as the worst feeling is when you die and you know that you could have survived if you used the super zapper. Of course it is pretty depressing when you use it early and wish you had it later when they throw everything at you.

One of my favorite aspects of the game is the amount of creative level designs they come up with. As the levels increase, so does the uniqueness. This keeps you going as you want to see what outlandish design is around the corner. That and putting up a high score that is worthy of bragging about.

Tempest is a true classic and a game that really needs the proper controller to get the most out of it. Granted, getting a arcade controller that comes with a spinner is not cheap, but when you play a game like Tempest, it will be worth it.



(Birds, fungus, everything in this game hates you.)

Zwackery

Sometimes you come across a game that may be too difficult for its own good. The only thing more confusing than the name is the controls. It is like the programmers decided to go out and create a game that was more difficult to control than Defender. Don't believe me, check this out, you move with the joystick, you aim with the spinner. You shoot with one button, pick up with another and I still have no idea what the other two buttons are for. I think one is for shield and the other is a mystery to me. This is too bad as the game is quite fun.

This game has you playing a wizard. You have to move around levels and find keys to move on. From everywhere and I do mean everywhere comes creatures that cause you harm. Soldiers are walking around, arrows get shot from who knows where, birds drop stuff on your head. It is like someone painted a giant bulls eye on you and everyone is doing their best to get you.



(Yes there are even boss battles. This game has everything but good controls.)

The graphics are nice and there is a good variety of different places to go. From castles to what looks like a forest, you are not limited to a single screen. There is also a wide variety of creatures to battle and a ton of different things to pick up. But it is so tough to move and aim and shoot that you will go nuts. Luckily the Devastator II has a button on the joystick, so I could default the shooting button to that and it made things easier. That was until I needed to pick up a key and then I would get pelted by those pesky birds. The one problem is that the creatures just keep regenerating, so you really need to just grab the key and run.

I really wanted to like this game. The main character is pretty cool and I like the premise, but I just wish they made it a bit easier to control. I do not want to even think about playing this with a keyboard and mouse. It would be enough to drive a person mad. If you are up for a challenge, try the game. Just be prepared to get frustrated, I guarantee you will.

Sony Is Breaking the Rules

In the history of video games, there are certain unwritten rules. These are rules that have always been kept throughout the years. But recently some of these rules are being broken. What were once a certainty are now completely unknown. Without the rules, all chaos will break loose. We really need to do something before it gets any worse. Read on and see what I am rambling about.

In the past, when you bought a peripheral, you knew that it would get minimal support. Whether it was a trackball for the Atari 5200, the Intellivoice for the Intellivision or the steering wheel for the Colecovision, you knew there were never more than a handful of games that would ever use it. It made it easy for collectors down the road to get all the games that went with a certain device. Granted, the rule was challenged some in the Nintendo era. Their lightgun did support more games than any other device, but they quickly halted that and kept the rule alive. Plus, you have to applaud a company that makes a robot that is practically useless. Nintendo understood the meaning of minimal support. Sega was just as good at it. The Master System had its share of devices that were for the most part, overlooked. The 3D glasses, the light gun, they are all proof that the rules were being enforced.

When the 16 Bit era came along, things got messed up some. The Turbografx and the Sega Genesis both offered CD players that had quite a bit of support for them. They argued that these were more closer to systems and not peripherals, so they could give them more support. It looked like the rules were doomed. People feared the next generation of game systems. What other rules would be cast aside?

Just when all was bleak in the world, came two systems that proved the rule was still in effect. The Sega Saturn decided to make up for their earlier blunder with the Nights controller. A controller that was made for just one game. Now that is the way it is supposed to be! While the Saturn did not sell very well, it was applauded for making things right. But it was not the only system that tried to help. Good old Atari, the people who created the rule in the first place (we cannot forget the kid's controller, the keypad, the trackball and the Star Raiders controllers for the Atari 2600), decided to implement it once again. With the Atari Jaguar, they released a CD Rom drive and gave it minimal support! They showed Sega and NEC how to do it right! Leave it to Atari to set the standards!

But now the rules are doomed again. Sony in their infinite wisdom has decided to actually support their devices. Are they mad? Do they know the repercussions that could result from

this? Look at the headset, it should have worked for the two Socom games and maybe one more game. That is the rules. But now everyone is supporting it. EA games allow you to talk online. Lifeline is all about the headset. Karaoke Revolution allows you to make a fool of yourself at home with only your dog watching. Manhunt supports it. What gives? What is wrong with these companies? Now they are even supporting the Eyetoy. You can add your face to MLB baseball and there is another game coming for it. It is madness, sheer madness. Luckily Capcom is trying to keep the rules. You can pay a fortune for a Steel Battalion controller and use it on two games. That is better. That is the way it should be. But not everyone is following their lead. It will take more than this to offset the blatant disregard for the rules. We need something to happen or everyone will begin supporting their devices. I shudder to even think about that.

Sites of the Month

With the next issue being the last issue of Retrogaming Times, you have one last opportunity to have your site brought to the attention of thousands of gamers. I will try to fit in as many relevant links as I get sent next issue. So if you want your site listed, send it along! My email address is at the bottom of the page. Now onto this month's sites:

Le Geek

Scanning over the net brought me to this nice little site. It has a nice selection of reviews on the site as well as issues of The Atarian magazine you can check out and more. It also has some nice scans of all the different game variations for some of the classic Atari games. Want to know what all the different versions of Space Invaders there are, this is the place to look.

<http://www.abscape.org/legeek/index.htm>

Video Game Wiz

Here is a site that offers support to homebrewers. No, not the beer makers but the people looking to make their own Atari 2600 games. They have cases, design kits and more. If you ever thought about making a sequel to ET or Pitfall meets Pacman, then this is your site!

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

Starroms

This is an idea that should have been implemented years ago. Put up a site that offers gamers a chance to legally buy game roms. In concept, it is a good idea, but two problems. First, they only have Atari games and second the prices vary. While I can understand that they are new and it will take time to get more games, they really should come up with one set price per game. Whether it be a buck a game or two bucks a game, just have one simple to understand price. As the old business saying goes "KISS - Keep It Simple Stupid". But it is a very good idea and one that I hope does well.

<http://www.starroms.com/index.php>

Conclusion

Come back for a huge issue next month. I will do extra reviews, spotlight more sites and hopefully some of the past writers will come aboard for one last issue. It will be fun and it will be a nice finish to a long run. See you next month!

-[Tom Zjaba](#)

This month's musical selections are a bit odd. For reasons that I cannot explain, I just cannot get enough of the Olivia Newton-John song, "Have You Never Been Mellow". Call it middle age nearing, call it too much stress, I cannot explain my sudden fascination with this song. Other songs that inspired this newsletter were old favorites "Bigfoot" by the Legendary Jim Ruiz Band, "9 Coronas" and "Fish Heads". What can I say, I listened to comedies and sappy love songs. Guess that makes me sap happy.