

Retrogaming Times

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The Long Wait

Hello video game world! Yes, I am still alive and kicking. It has been a long time since the last issue, about 8 years, but here is a new issue. Will it take another eight years for another issue? I have no idea. Just felt like writing another one and so here it is. I decided to go back to my roots and start small like the early issues (go back to my roots, sounds like a Rocky movie). I will just talk about a few games and have some fun. Many things have changed in this time, but my love for video games is still there.

New System, Old Game

Since its debut, I have owned an Apple Ipad. Actually we bought it for our son, but the whole family uses it. It has become my main gaming system, despite having a PS3 and XBOX 360 in the house. Something about the simple games brings back memories of a time when I was young and games did not need an instruction manual to learn how to play. It brings back the memories of finding new games at arcades, only now it is the app store.

What really amazes me about the Ipad is how I can transport around a ton of classic games, an idea that would seem impossible when I was growing up. If someone told me that I would be able to play a bunch of Atari 2600 games, arcade games, Vectrex games and even Commodore 64 games on a device that I could carry around with me, I would have labeled them insane or an extreme dreamer. But I can do all that and so much more. It still amazes me.

While playing classic games is great, I also enjoy the remakes of classic games and some of the new games available. Games like Tapper World Tour, Space Invaders Infinity Gene and Pac-Man Championship Edition have breathed new life into classic games. And the best thing is that every day there are new games. And you can get great games for under a buck or free if you are patient. Look for some reviews of Ipad games next month.

Video Game Hunter

I decided to start telling some of the stories about my video game hunts. I started off collecting and eventually ended up with so many games that I went into business selling them as well. Each month, I will

tell a story from the many adventures, both the big hauls and the total failures. Yes, there was a time before the advent of ebay that the garage sales and flea markets were overflowing with video games and all you needed was time and money to score some great deals.

I will start off with my first score and the one that rekindled my love for classic video games. It was a modest score in value, but it was worth so much more in nostalgia. I think every serious collector can remember their first find, the one that began their obsession.

It started off simple enough. I was coming home from work one evening in the summer. It was around 6:30 PM and I was only minutes from my house. I had my comic book store at the time and I would stop at garage sales looking for comics, baseball cards and action figures to sell at the store. I found some good deals and enjoyed the hunt. As I was nearing home, I saw a garage sale that was still open. I was surprised by the late hours and decided to check it out. I did not expect to find much as the garage sale had been going all day and was most likely picked over.

As I made my way through the usual collection of clothes, glasses and other garage sale fodder, I saw a box under a table with a sign that said video game system \$25.00. It captured my attention and I bent over and pulled it out. Inside was a Colecovision video game system with a stack of cartridges. Memories flooded me as I remembered owning one as a kid. It was my favorite system of my youth and the first game system that I personally bought. There it was sitting in the box begging me to take it home. I looked through the box and was surprised to find box controllers still connected, the power supply and and rf box. The carts were in a generic case. I counted 12 games and also saw a stack of manuals at the bottom of the box. I picked up the box and took it over to the lady selling it. I offered her \$20.00 for it and she gladly took it. I probably could have gotten it cheaper, but I wasn't worried about the price at the time. It was the nostalgia and that does not have a price tag.

When I returned home, I couldn't wait to plug it in and start playing. I went to the spare television in the basement and hooked it up. I crossed my fingers as I hoped the old system still had some life in it. I had faith the cartridges still worked as they have no moving parts, but the game system and controllers is a different story. I hooked it up and switched the rf box for channel four. I plugged in Donkey Kong and turned the system on. I watched as the Colecovision logo appeared on the screen. It worked! But I did not play right away as I soon remembered the fifteen second wait for the game to start. I had forgotten that annoying little fact about the Colecovision. But I was patient and soon I was playing Donkey Kong. Even after all these years, it still looked very good. Not as great as I remembered, but still quite good.

Over the course of the night, I played all twelve games that came with it. Some were welcome memories of games of my youth. Rounds of Zaxxon, Mousetrap and Venture brought brought back fond memories while games like Space Panic, Cosmic Avenger and Looping brought new memories. As I looked over the twelve games, I found a plethora of gaming. The list features all the most common games of the system, but at that time I knew nothing of rarity. To me it was just lots of fun. Here is the list of games - Donkey Kong, Donkey Kong Jr, Zaxxon, Venture, Mousetrap, Ladybug, Cosmic Avenger, Space Fury, Space Panic, Looping, Smurf Rescue and Pepper II.

So that is how I became a classic game collector and later a classic game dealer. Nothing like that first fix of nostalgia to make you a junkie.

WOW Moments

Think about other mediums and how there are moments that make you go wow! In the movies, think about a scene that made you go WOW! A few that come to mind for me is the T-Rex attack in Jurassic Park, the rolling boulder in Raiders of the Lost Ark, the first 20 minutes of Saving Private Ryan, you get the idea. Now think of video games and any WOW moments you experienced. Whether it be pure action, when you found something by accident or just something that made you go WOW! With that in mind, I

will try and point out a WOW moment in a video game for me. Some will be pretty big and others more subtle, but they are moments that I will never forget.

One of my favorite games of all-time is Dungeon Master. I was a fan of Dungeons & Dragons since its early days and I always dreamed of someone capturing it in a video game. At the time, Dungeon Master was as close to a video version of D & D as you could find at the time. It had the ability to build up your character, the actual casting of spells and the limitations like how much weight you could carry and needing to eat and drink. But that was now what WOWed me. It was a small, subtle addition that was so ingenious it has stuck with me forever.

As I was battling a mummy (one of the early monsters in the game), I was walking backwards to get away from it. My characters were weak and I was trying to use range weapons to weaken the mummy. As I came to a door, I pushed the button to shut the door. As the door came down to block the mummy's path, something completely unexpected happened. The mummy stepped under the door and blocked its path. In most games, it would mean you could not escape the mummy. But in Dungeon Master, the door kept trying to close on the mummy, crushing it in the process. Yes, the door became a weapon! I found that I could kill creatures with a door! It was so cool that I was amazed. I spent alot of time after that, smashing poor monsters with doors. Later on, I also found you could creatures over pits and then remove a rock or other weight and make the floor open under them, dropping them to their doom. A game that added some of the ingenuity of D & D! You could kill monsters in many different ways, not just with weapons or spells. It was truly a WOW moment!

Conclusion

This issue has come to a conclusion. I want to start small on my reunion tour. Check back in the beginning of May for the next issue (hopefully). If you want to write for the newsletter (please no reviews, every classic game has been reviewed to death), keep in mind these minor rules - Keep it clean, Keep it relevant, Keep telling yourself that you will not get paid. But on a positive note, quite a few writers used the old Retrogaming Times as a launching pad for successful careers as writers, website operators and other endeavors. So you can know that while I continue to remain unknown, you can move forward and become someone.

-Tom Zjaba (This issue was done while listening to a selection of songs from Triumph, Three Dog Night and the Doobie Brothers.)

Tomorrow's Heroes©[Tom Zjaba](#) 1997 - 2015