

# **Retrogaming Times**

**Issue #86 - One more issue completed - August 2013**

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## **Introduction**

Summer is over half over and the first thoughts of back to school are creeping in the minds of kids. This is the time of year when you can go to almost any retailer and hear someone say "Back to school already? It starts earlier each year." You can come back in a few months and hear the same conversation about Christmas. But in the world of games, this is the time of year when we are looking for any tidbit of news we can about the upcoming systems. Will the XBOX One or the PS4 be the dominant system? Will this be the final game system to have physical games? These and many other questions are being speculated to death in newsgroups, message boards and in game stores. It will be interesting to see who comes out on top.

## **Video Game Hunter**

When you hunt games, you will come across some strange people. I met my share of interesting people, but this story is about the creepiest people that I ever encountered. I received a call from my ad in the paper from a young woman who said she had a Colecovision with all the adapters and over 200 Coleco and Atari 2600 games. She wanted \$150.00 for the whole lot. I told her that I would be interested if the number of carts was correct and everything worked. So we arranged a time to come see the collection.

I went to the house with my oldest son, Alex, along for the ride. He was only three years old, but with my wife very pregnant with twins, I did not want to leave him home. So he joined me in my hunt. I arrived at a normal looking house in a suburb. I was greeted at the door by an attractive but very shy girl. She welcomed me in the house and without making any eye contact, told me she would go downstairs to get the games. I stood in the kitchen as I waited for her to come back with the games. While she was gone, a man wearing nothing but a pair of leopard print underwear walked into the room. He asked if I was here to buy the games. I told him yes and he asked me how much I was going to pay for them. I told him that I would have to see how many games there were and the condition but that his significant other offered them to my for \$150.00. He started to laugh and said there was no way she was selling them that low. He said they were worth at least a grand. Right away, I knew this was a waste of time.

While his state of undress made me uncomfortable, it was his collection of guns that really made me squirm. All around his house were gun racks on his walls, each one with multiple rifles on them. This included a few assault rifles. This made me question my sanity. I should have ran right there, but my curiosity got the best of me and I needed to see if the games were any good.

In the fine tradition of game hunting, this one was a total whiff. She brought up a couple of boxes with a Colecovision, an Atari adapter, a turbo steering wheel and a roller controller. She was right about the adapters. All that was missing were the super action controllers. And all the adapters and the sytem had their original boxes. I was getting excited, but trying to temper my enthusiasm as the nearly naked, gun collecting nutjob brought down one of his rifles to either show me or intimidate me.

The game carts were a let down as the 200 turned into less than a hundred. And they were mostly common games. A few decent games, but nothing worth getting shot over. She asked me if I was interested and I said that I already owned all the games but I was interested in the Roller Controller for the Coleco. It was the only adapter that I did not own. She asked me how much I would give her for it. I looked over at her significant other with the assault rifle and gulped. I said I would give her \$50.00 for it. She said yes, but he quickly jumped in and said "We cannot sell that for less than an hundred bucks." I politely said that it was too much. He then went on how he gets over a hundred for an Atari 2600 system with no games. I just held my tongue. She then jumped in and said it was her games and she wanted to sell it for \$50.00. He then told her to shut the hell up. She left the room, visibly upset. I said that I was going to leave and grabbed my son and left the house as fast as possible. That was the last time I took my son to a house to buy video games.

## **Ouya A Short Review**

I have been wanting a game system for my bedroom for quite awhile. I wanted something that was small in size and had built in wifi . With the PS3 in the living room, I was looking for an affordable system to play when the other televisions in the house are occupied. My first attempt at this was the Onlive game system. It met the size criteria but unfortunately it was not WiFi. This meant it had to be played in the living room as that is where the cable box is wired. Then I tried the Vizio Co-Star as it let you play Onlive with WIFI. That system was so bug riddled that I ended up selling it on ebay a month after buying it.

I was almost ready to give up my quest, when I heard about Ouya. It could play games you buy in their store and it could play Onlive games as well as a bunch of emulators. And it was tiny in size and only a \$100.00. I decided to wait until after it came out to see the reviews before making the committment. I learned the hard way about being an early adopter. After the Co-Star, I was not making that mistake again. This time I was reading some reviews and making sure it was a good product.

After it came out, the reviews were coming out. There were some complaints as there always were, but most were about the company itself as opposed to the product. People complained about how long it was taking to get their system. Others complained about the lack of communication from the company. They said their customer service was less than stellar. There were some concerns about the joystick, but people were able to make it so they could use a PS3 controller. And there were complaints about a lack of quality software for the system. But considering it was only out for a few weeks, that is to be expected. But soon the emulators started to appear in the store and the reviews became more and more positive.

While a lack of good games was still a problem, the ability to play Atari 2600, Colecovision, Commodore 64, Atari ST, Commodore Amiga, NES, Super NES, N64, Playstation, Sega Genesis, Turbo-Grafx, Gameboy Color, Gameboy Advance, Nintendo DS, NEO GEO and NEO GEO Pocket made sure there was no shortage of games to play. And with more emulators rumored to be coming out or ones that you can side load, the system became a nice little emulation machine that you could easily hook to any HD television. Add in hundreds of games you could try before you buy and the selection of games is amazing. And there are literally new games added daily, sometimes a few times a day. It is nice that my wife can now play some of her favorite games without switching systems. It is especially fun for her to play

Intelligent Qube and Devil's Crush on the same system. And with our Turbo-Grafx dead as a doornail, it is nice to have this available.

The emulators are not perfect yet, but with the exception of the Playstation one, they are free. While the Playstation emulator works surprisingly well, you have to map out the buttons for each game, each time you play it. Most games are set to the right controls, but if the game uses Start or Select, you need to program them. I hope an updated version will arrive that fixes this. And some like the DS are a bit choppy. One nice thing is you can add an external drive so you don't fill up your paltry 8 gib of storage. It takes a little to get the games to know where to find the roms on an external drive, but once it is set up, you are good to go.

As far as the games for the Ouya system, I have mined a few gems from the diverse collection. A free game called Plane Loopy is good fun. It is similar to Barnstorming in design with designs from the endless runners that are so plentiful as apps for Apple and Android systems. It is quick, easy and fun! Another great game is Dig, which is essentially a Qix clone. You are digging out a site and need to dig out 75% of a level while avoiding a mummy and other enemies. Beast Boxing Turbo, a game that has been ported from the Apple Store is an updated version of Punchout! But instead of crazy human boxers, you are fighting crazy monster boxers. The graphics are very good, the challenge is enough to make you have to use strategy and not just outpunch your opponent. It costs \$4.99 for the full games and is worth it. Another game I really enjoy is called Ravensword and is also a port from the mobile devices. It is a smaller version of Morrowind or Oblivion, but still alot of fun. The graphics, while not as great as the aforementioned games are still very good. There is some collision problems that occassionaly pop up and the enemy AI is a little weak. I found that if you came across a creature that was too tough to beat, you just get it to chase you. Then you head to a rock or a hill and climb up and keep shooting arrows into it while it keeps walking in place.

So if you are looking for a good game system that doubles as an emulator machine and don't have alot of space or money, the Ouya is your machine. For \$100.00 (buy it on Amazon and get free shipping, will save you \$15.00 from buying it direct), you get a great system that is about the size of a coffee cup. Just don't expect it to replace your PS3 or XBOX 360.

## **IPAD Reviews**

This month, I am going to review two apps that came and went through the store very quickly. Both were removed within a few days or first appearing and if you blinked, you missed them. But I was lucky enough to get both before they disappeared.

### **MAME**

Yes, MAME, the most famous of the emulators was available for your IPAD or IPOD. It did not remain for long. Word spread quickly and people grabbed it ,knowing it was going to be pulled. I was able to be among the lucky ones to download it and really enjoy it! It plays just like you would expect. I did need to find the version 37 roms to get them to work with it, but once I was able to find them, I tried it out and it was great to have a whole arcade on the go! Want to play Donkey Kong on your IPAD, but know that Nintendo will most likely never port it? Well, with MAME you can play a perfect arcade version along with Donkey Kong JR, Mario Brothers and a host of other arcade classics. And the program was free! Granted, you will never get an update but it is still a great little program that I am happy to own.



### Monino

One of the most requested games for the Apple devices is Super Mario Bros. And it is one game that will probably never be released for the platform. But a Chinese company figured they would give people the next best thing. No, I am not talking about the Great Giana Sisters (that is in the app store) or Sonic the Hedgehog (he is also present and making Sega a ton of money). They figured they would give you a blatant ripoff of the game. Monino is Super Mario Bros. The only thing it is missing is the name and the level of polish you expect from a Nintendo game. Otherwise it looks and plays just like Super Mario Bros. In fact, it looked so much like the real thing that so many people bought it to make it reached the top ten chart for the day. It had almost as many downloads that day as Angry Birds and that is saying something. But it's success also put it on the radar and it was very quickly that Nintendo brought it to Apple's attention and they pulled it. Yes, the game lasted only one day but it still is talked about. It is as close as you can get to playing Super Mario Bros on your Ipad without jailbreaking it. I was lucky enough to buy it and while I do not play it much (it does not control as well as the original), it does make for a fun conversation piece.

Here is a review my son did of Monino - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m1gkzuDPIag>

### **WOW Moment**



Many games followed the formula set by Galaxian. You know when a squadron of ships comes after you. But one game took the idea and turned it upside down. I am talking about Gyruss and it provided me with a WOW moment that still awes me to this day. I still remember seeing the game and playing it for the first time. At first I thought it was just another Galaxian clone. They already had Gorf, Phoenix and countless others. But I figured that I would try and see what was different about this game.

It only took a few moments for the WOW moment to hit. Once the game started, I started moving my ship towards the left when suddenly I found myself going around in a circle. I stood there with my jaw agape as I could not believe what was happening. You could move in a complete circle. While it may seem pretty trivial today, it was groundbreaking at the time. Before, you were always stuck on the bottom of the screen in shooters. But in this game, you could move all around the screen.



There is a price to freedom and that is it takes time to get used to it. To say my first game of Gyruss was short would be an understatement. It was over in a few minutes. But the next game lasted much longer. It wasn't long before I was headed back towards Earth.

Gyruss has always been among my favorite games and still is to this day. While I have never made it all the way back to Earth, I vow to one day finish my mission. The game may have WOWed me, but it has not beaten me.

### Missed Opportunity

Years back when MAME was first coming out on the PC, I thought about how much I enjoyed all those old video games. Especially some of the obscure ones. And for a moment, I thought about some of these companies and wondered what happened to them. We are all aware of the big companies of the era like Atari, Activision, Nintendo and Sega. But what about smaller companies like Tago who made the arcade game, Anteater. Or what about Valadon Automation who created Bagman? I thought that it could be a good idea to go around and find these obscure titles and see about buying the rights to them. If you could get enough of them, maybe I could license it to a company to make an arcade title for release. With a fancy interface and a dozen or more classic video games, you could have something that would sell.



(Anteater and Bagman, who forgotten arcade games.)

Well, the idea came and went and to be honest, I was not in a financial situation to pursue it. But now with the popularity of apps, it made me think about this idea again. These little games would be perfect apps for Apple and Android devices. The games are small, fun to play and at a low price would probably sell well enough. Who knows, someone may have already done it. I know a similar thing happened in the music industry years ago when artists like Paul McCartney and others bought the licensing rights to other artists catalogs. But as far as I know, it has not happened in the game industry. I would just take someone with time and money to track down all these old companies and see who now owns the rights to the games

and make offers for them.

## **Classic Youtube Videos**

Here are two more Classic Youtube reviews for you to enjoy. Hope you enjoy them as much as I did.

### **Sonic For Hire**

The first one is actually a bunch of videos starring Sonic the Hedgehog as he is for hire. These are very funny but they are a bit mature with the language. Here is the link for them -

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B2gU9r8by5A&list=PL6yREmIYj7MG5-MggL4NspKvUzXI0oQT6>

### **Starcade**

Here is a link to a bunch of episodes of Starcade, the old video game show that featured arcade games. Brings back some memories! Here is the link -

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=spVXk4GPnAU&list=PL15C4AECB0BF312FF>

## **Conclusion**

Time to wrap up another issue. I had fun making it and hope you enjoyed reading it. Hopefully I will be back next month with another issue! Keep reading feel free to send some feedback.

-[Tom Zjaba](#) (This issue was done while listening to Train, Tori Amos and Wild Horses.)

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