Retrogaming Times #30

February 2000

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MAME Reviews

Not having any real standout games in the latest MAME version, I went back and played some of the games that were emulated earlier. So enjoy these reviews and have fun playing those games.

Blasteroids

I am a big fan of Asteroids, especially Asteroids Deluxe. So after finishing a game of Asteroids Deluxe, I started going down the list of games that I have and came across Blasteroids. Hmmm, sounds like Asteroids, let's give it a try. I have had this game for quite awhile, but never really played it. So I decided it was time to give it a whirl.

When you start playing, two things are noticeable. First, it plays like Asteroids. Guess the

name actually fit. Secondly, it may play like Asteroids, but it sure doesn't look like Asteroids. This is one of them spruced up versions of Asteroids. You know where the asteroids look more realistic and spin. Sure does look mighty purty, but does it play as well? After a few games, I realized that I missed my old Asteroids. Not that this game isn't good, but there is something charming about the sheer simplicity of the original. This one is a bit too modernized for these old bones.

One of the most noticeable differences between this game and the original is that you do not die when hit by a rock. In this game, you can get hit numerous times before dying. You have one of them nifty health meters that goes down with each hit and every shot. It also goes up every time you hit something, so you are in constant struggle to keep from running out of energy. So you end up with one eye on the asteroids and one eye on the energy meter, which can cause you to go cross-eyed over time.

Another new feature in this game is the ability to switch ships. In the grand tradition of Transformers and whatever other series allowed you to transform into something else, Blasteroids allows you to become more than meets the eye! You can be a little ship that is fast, a medium ship or a very big and very slow ship. Each has advantages and disadvantages in regards to shooting, ability to take damage and speed. The nice thing is you can switch back and forth to your heart's content. If you are someone who is very indecisive, then you may want to avoid this game.


(Are you scared? Mukor thinks you are!)

The last and biggest difference from this game and the original, is that there is an actual mission. You are not just wandering around aimlessly in space, trying to clear the space paths or something like that. You actually have an honest to goodness mission! There is this big head that floats around space named Mukor and thinks he rules space. Think of him as a poor man's Sinistar. He actually is pretty silly looking, like something out of Johnny Socko or Ultraman (or for you younger readers, Mighty Morphin Power Rangers). But don't let this butt ugly creature scare you, he is pretty easy to take down. But first you need to clear all the screens to even see the ugly mug.

While the new challenges and additions make it a interesting game, they couldn't capture the sheer terror of being stuck in the middle of an asteroid shower, knowing that if they hit you, it was all over. While the changing ships and the mission are nice additions, they are

just window dressing. They do little to make this anything more than a modernized version of Asteroids that has been watered down in the process.

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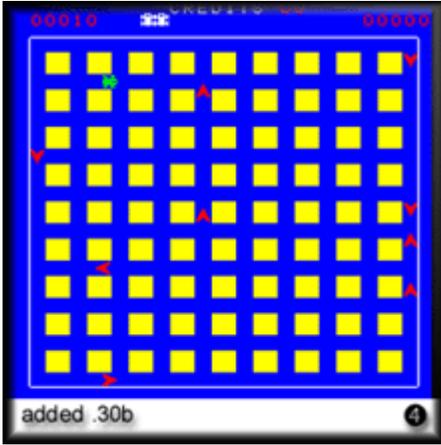
Targ

There are always those simple little games that drive you crazy. Games like Tetris and Hunt the Wumpus are ones that I find myself playing over and over, despite their simplistic nature. Well, Targ is another of those games. Everything about it screams out old, ancient and archaic. It is a simple game from a simple era. But like many classic games, it is the gameplay that is the main selling point!

When you first look at the game, you can imagine it as a public domain game. It looks alot like something a high school student would do. You have a bunch of blocks in rows and there are ships that come down them. I am being very generous in calling them ships as they are very generic in design. The look like the letter "v" and you look like an ugly green car. As you race up the rows, you try to shoot and destroy all the enemy ships. They do not shoot back, but instead take off and try to outflank you. They have sheer numbers on their side (ten to one). Simple right! Well, it is harder than it appears. Those blasted ships may start off by coming right at you, but they soon begin to avoid your bullets. To make matters worse, after a little while, a ship that looks like it belongs in a Star Trek game pops up and comes after you. Unlike the other ships, this one comes right after you. It is like a homing missile. It also makes a very annoying siren sound as it chases after you.

If you clear a level, you get a bonus and start all over again. Like I said, it is a very simple game! But it is fun and a bit addictive in its own way. Sure, it cannot compare to some of the other classics that came out the same year like Pac-man and Defender, but it is still a fun little game and worth a few rounds. But be careful as you may find yourself playing alot more than you bargained for!

Top Ten Unemulated MAME Games

A long time ago, I did an article about what games I would like to see added to MAME. They were games like Ripoff, Joust 2 and Munch Mobile. Well, all of them have been added! So I am one happy camper! But, being an American and always wanting more, here is a list of more games that I would like to see added to MAME. Keep in mind, that if they never added another game, I could die a happy man. But I found a site that has a huge list of all the games that are not part of MAME. Here is the URL for anyone

interested.: http://www.arcadeathome.com/btribble/mm2.html

So as I dug through the list, I found quite a few games that I would really like to play. Some are old favorites of mine, others are ones that I never played, but intrigue me. But all of them would be great to play! So read on and see what my new wish list is!

10. **Tunnel Hunt**-After reading an article in Next Generation about this game and how often it was delayed, I would like to actually play it.

09. **Dungeon & Dragons series**-I love these games and the Sega Saturn CD is so darn expensive.

08. **Slither**-You can always use another trackball game. Plus, the Coleco version is not the best and the Coleco trackball is only decent.

07. **Buck Rogers and the Planet of Zoom**-Not the best game, but would like to see what the original arcade version looks like. I have only played the Colecovision version for so long.

06. **Captain America and the Avengers**-Always liked this side scrolling beat em up. Not only did it have a bunch of cool Marvel heroes and villains, but villains would pop up to help you out!

05. **Hard Drivin**-I spent way too much money on this bad boy. It was cool to do loops and crashes and not have to worry about your insurance going up!

04. **Primal Rage**-I was always a fan of Harryhausen, O'Brien and other stop motion animators and this game paid great homage to those men who made stop motion animation so cool! Plus, there is no 7th Voyage of Sinbad video game to play, so this is as close as you get. I personally would like to see a game with all the Harryhausen creatures doing battle!

03. **Subroc**-One of those arcade and Coleco games that I really enjoy. It is one of those intense games that you can lose yourself in!

02. **Namco Classic Collections #1 & 2**-These include three games each (#1 has Galaga, Xevious and Mappy and #2 has Dig Dug, Pacman and Rally X) and feature two player simultaneous gameplay. That is just too cool

01. **Peter Pepper's Ice Cream**-Burgertime sequel that I never even knew existed. The only problem here is this game is so rare that it is doubtful that it will be emulated anytime soon. But we all need to dream!

Classic Video Game Show!

Another classic game show is going to take place. The PhillyClassic will take place in Philadelphia, PA on the weekend of April 14-16. You can order advance tickets for only $6.00 each or $8.00 on the day of the show! It will have a tournament, auction and more! Quite a deal for only $6.00! That is less than it cost to see a movie! So if you are in the

neighborhood or looking for a reason to take a trip, check out the PhillyClassic, it is sure to be a great time! Here is the URL to the official site:

http://members.aol.com/davidn9000/philly.html

Sites of the Month

Two more addresses on the information superhighway that you should check out! Once again, I give two sites the spotlight, so go check them out and keep sending in your submissions.

Retrocactus

The name is a bit odd, but the site is top notch! Site proprietor, John Biehler, started it off to show the development of his arcade cabinet. It has since grown into a site about all kinds of video games. Everything from Atari 2600 to the Turbo Grafx is covered here. He has filled the site with lots of great screen shots and info about the various systems.

One nice feature is his downloadable Retro Wallpaper! One is the familiar Atari symbol, while the other is the Vectrex logo. Sure beats the usual wallpaper you see. Look for more in the coming months.

One nice thing about the site is if you look at what's new, you see that he is always adding more stuff. Every couple of days, he is creating a new section or adding to a new one! So there is always something new to look at!

He does not stop with just game systems, he also has stuff about computers and handhelds! So there is something for everyone. If you don't see something you like, wait a few weeks and you may. A very good job and getting better all the time! Check it out at the following URL: http://www.vannet.com/retrocactus/

MAMEZine

Ask and ye shall receive! Last month, I was asking if there were any other classic game newsletters on the web and lo and behold, I get an email. This is a new fanzine that is dedicated to MAME. It currently has two issues out and boy are they big! If you like reviews, I mean really like reviews, then go to this site! He does as many reviews in one issue that I do in ten issues of RT. The reviews are consise and very good! Each has a picture, a review and some ratings. A very nice job.

While the bulk of the newsletter is reviews, there are also sections on emulation sites, top 10 lists and more! Aber does give you alot to read! Like RT, this is not a quick read. So grab a cool beverage (or in this weather, a warm one), a snack and sit down and read. I know it gives me something to look forward to!

Here is the URL to issue #2 - http://mameworld.retrogames.com/mamezine/.

MAME Cabinet Update
By Fred Wagaman

As some of you remember, I wrote an article a while back about putting together my own

MAME cabinet (see [issue #24](#)). Since that time, I have enjoyed countless hours of play with this set up. Most of my time has been spent playing Robotron 2084, but I, and my family have played any number of other games.

Christmas was hosted at our house 3 times this past holiday season. My family, my wife's sister and her family and the rest of my wife's family were at our house on different days over the holidays. The active machines in the game room were a Roadblasters upright, a Lifeforce upright, a NES setup (with a 110-1 cart) and the MAME cabinet. The machine that got the most attention was the MAME unit. I think that was because of the variety of games it offered. Some of the younger ones wanted to know how it was put together, while the older people wanted to know if there was a way to make money by building those things.

I almost had my parents (who have been divorced for 20 years) talked into playing each other in Tetris. I would have paid money to see that. Big money.

But since the beginning of this project, I've been thinking of ways to improve both the appearance and function of the machine.

I was able to pick up a ROBOTRON monitor glass in decent shape from ebay at a reasonable price. I was surprised how much better it made the machine look.

Watching the machine being played over the holidays really brought to the forefront of how underpowered my CPU was (AMD 150+). I've wanted to upgrade my MAME CPU for a while, but just didn't have the money.

Well, that's not really true.

What it came down to was I didn't want to mess around with something that was working. You all know how it goes. You try to improve or upgrade and the next thing you know, you have a fancy paperweight. My reluctance and common-sense was finally overridden by the desire to play more, better, faster. So last month, I bought a new motherboard and CPU (AMD K6-2/450) and settled in to begin the process.

I waited until the family was out of town. I really didn't need my 4 year old "helper" around when I was doing this. After sliding the cabinet out from the wall, I removed the CPU unit and began the process.

It was 7:30 PM.

The process should have been simple. Unplug the cards and cables. Remove the motherboard. Put the new motherboard and CPU in, plug everything back in, set the bios and I would be back in business. The whole process shouldn't have taken more than 2 hours.

Instead it took until 2 in the morning.

Everything went as planned until I went to get the bios to recognize the disk drives. After fighting it for 30 minutes, I came to the conclusion that my main disk drive had somehow

crashed. It was gone; dead; kaput; a late disk drive…. a paperweight.

Fortunately, I had a spare drive. It was smaller, but it would have to do. After much searching, I found my WIN98 CD and began the laborious process of reloading everything. Now maybe other people are more organized than I am. And maybe other people keep better track of their hardware CDs and diskettes. This MAME machine was originally put together with spare parts that I had lying around the house. So I did not have an easy time finding my video and sound setup disks. At least I had plenty of time to search while WIN98 loaded from the old 8X CD-Rom drive.

Did I mention how much it hurts to kneel on a screwdriver ?

Once the hardware was running, I had to reload MAME, the Arcade-at-Home front end and all the ROMS. Since I do my downloading on other PCs, most of my stuff was on CDRs. And what wasn't was easily copied and reloaded back into the machine.

It's now 1 am. Everything is running. I disconnect the CPU from my test monitor and reinstall it into the cabinet. I reconnect the controls, monitor and sound and slide the cabinet back where it belongs. I power up and decide to try just one game to make sure everything works.

It's now 2 am. I've set a new personal high score on Robotron. The Simpson's work perfectly. The Neo Geo games even run well. Sure, it's taken a lot more work than expected. And a lot more time. But it was worth it.

And for another enhancement. A few weeks ago, I was introduced to another emulator called RAINE. It originally started out as an emulator for Rainbow Islands, but has since expanded to include a lot of Taito and Jaleco games. If you are a fan of Bubble Bobble, Puzzle Bobble or horizontal and vertical shooting games, I recommend you give this a try. You can find more info about it at <http://www.rainemu.com/> or <http://www.arcadeathome.com/> in the Arcade EMU section. I installed it in the cabinet and I have been having a blast with it.

I guess I'll have to change the name of the my cabinet from the MAME cabinet to the EMU cabinet.

So what's next for the cabinet ? My disk drive is almost filled. I have a 17 gig drive waiting in the wings. I also have a 16 meg AGP video card to install. I'm also considering replacing the PC trackball that's screwed onto the control panel with a HAPP controls arcade trackball and PC interface. And if I'm going to mess around with the control panel, I might as well replace the WRESTLEFEST overlay with a ROBOTRON. And, while I'm at it, I'd like to replace the hacked keyboard with an encoder.

But not for a while. I hate to mess with something that is working.

Fred has been playing games for over 25 years and actively collecting them for over 10. The 2400 + games that he has takes up most of his home office and living room. He lives in Denver, PA with his understanding wife Jennie, his 4 year-old, button-loving son, Max

and his newly acquired 4th player, Lynzie. If anyone is interested in rectangular-shaped, 1½ pound paperweight that was a disk drive in a former life, he can reached at fcw3@postoffice.ptd.net.

The Future of Classic Video Games

by [William Cassidy](#)

Prepare yourself for the third and final installment of my Future of Classic Videogaming article series!

In this episode, radioactive mutant insects from the year 5000 terrorize our intrepid classic gaming heroes!

Either that, or it's about the future of prices.

This is a sore spot for many collectors, so read on only if you dare. OK, now that you've dared, I will be the bearer of bad news and say that prices will go UP. But hey, come in off that window ledge; it won't really be that bad. I predict prices will only increase significantly on the very rare items. Common stuff might go up few bucks, but that'll be it. Mid-range Rares will go up a little more, but not enough that you won't be able to afford the games you want. The UR one-of-a-kind prototypes will always be expensive, and will probably reach monumentally ridiculous prices as longtime collectors find that they have almost everything else available. They'll start shelling out big bucks to pick up that prototype that will complete their collection, especially since they won't be spending as much on the other stuff. But this won't really affect the rest of us, other than seeing a plethora of "Can you BELIEVE what this guy paid on eBay?!?!" posts popping up on the newsgroup.

Profiteers may surface in the short term, but they will only affect prices for a short time and there's no law that says you have to buy from them. Eventually, they'll sell out and their stock will circulate among collectors at "reasonable" prices. The thing to remember is that this will always be a buyer's market, except for the really rare stuff. An economist might say that the reason for this is that supply will probably always outstrip demand, but that's why economists are boring and no one ever talks to them at parties. I say it's because we are cheap.

Say someone is selling a rare Atari 2600 cart I want. He's asking too much money for it, so I look somewhere else. Even if I don't find that specific cart for sale cheaper, I will probably find another game to spend my money on. If other collectors value the game about the same as I do, the seller won't sell it until he lowers the price. Simply put, we're cheap and will refuse to spend our money on items that are priced too high (unless they're really rare). We can call our own prices and still buy stuff, because there's almost always something else you want (it's the nature of being a greedy bast--I mean, "collector"). There just aren't enough collectors to drive up demand that much, so prices probably won't get out of hand.

However, prices will gradually rise as thrifts no longer produce cheap cart bounties and things get broken.

Carts hardly ever fail, but labels will deteriorate, driving the scarcity of "mint label" carts

higher. You like your cart minty fresh, don't you? However, there are enough collectors who don't care about label conditions to hold this price increase to a slow pace. Also, with more of us taking better care of our collections, deterioration will occur more slowly. The exception of course is Activision carts, which apparently were glued together with sulfuric acid.

The area that will suffer the most from old age is hardware. That and your sex life. Electronic components fail after so many years go by. We're already witnessing the demise of one system: the Milton Bradley Microvision. How many of these units still have a working LCD screen? In a few years, will any of them still work? If more people were actually interested in *playing* this system, prices could go through the roof. However, interest is low enough that prices remain relatively stable.

This won't happen with the next most threatened system: the Vectrex. Vectrex has more sophisticated electronics inside it, so it's more likely to fail. Vectrex systems are already valuable; as they start to fail, they're going to get really expensive. What's more, their special hardware means that they can't be authentically emulated, not really. It just not the same without the dedicated Vectrex monitor. Vectorheads will clamor for replacement consoles if theirs fail, so be prepared for some price increases in about 10 years or so. If you want a Vectrex at all (and you SHOULD, my friend), you may want to take the plunge and get one now. They won't get cheaper unless someone uncovers a warehouse full of them. That outcome is unlikely, though not impossible, but if it does happen, one thing is certain: it won't be me who gets lucky enough to find it. In any event, it's a good thing you can rewire Genesis controllers to work with the Vectrex, so we won't have to worry about being able to play the working consoles that remain.

Worry not, 2600 fans: I see no reason why we can't be assured of having working consoles for our entire lifetimes. There are so many that they can't all fail. Then you have all the clones: Coleco Gemini, CV Expansion Module #1, etc. Plus, the circuitry inside the 2600 isn't all that delicate. Other hardware may fare a little worse. There may indeed come a day when not a single 5200 controller works properly (some say that day was here in 1984). Odyssey2's may become scarcer since they are somewhat prone to chip failure. Neo-classic-wise, working NES's are going to be much sought after since they will have a large collector base and the front-loaders never work right. Luckily there are so many NES consoles that a shortage is unlikely. And for now anyway, at least you can buy replacement cart contacts from MCM Electronics. But I would recommend that if you really enjoy playing the NES, you should buy a top-loader now before they become even more expensive.

Other than consoles with specialized hardware like the Vectrex, I don't think we have too much to worry about. But in a few years, I expect to see a few collectors who enjoy electronics making some money on the side by repairing consoles. Their primary job will be replacing old capacitors that can no longer hold a charge. Other than that, I can't think of anything that would routinely go wrong with most consoles. And our game libraries aren't going anywhere, either: cartridge ROMs are nearly indestructible, but let's thank those who took the time to archive the Supercharger games and EPROM-based games: their media may all bite the dust eventually.

Because of this, I'm going to climb off my soapbox and onto an even higher soapbox for a minute... There, can you hear me in the back? Good. Now, let me say: if you have an EPROM based prototype that's not already available, PLEASE get it archived! There are plenty of guys out there who will be happy to copy the EPROM to an emulatable(?) form and return your cart to you, all the while treating it like the museum piece that it is. Having the ROM data available won't hurt your prototype's value any, but if the EPROM were to succumb to bit-rot it would hurt not only you but the entire collecting community. If you're worried about rendering it "worthless" by making the data available, don't: the people who would pay top dollar are only willing to pay that amount for the historical value of the cart itself, not simply for the playable game. It's like making prints of the Mona Lisa available doesn't hurt the value of the original painting. And, if you're planning on holding onto the cart for a while until the value "peaks," that's not a good plan. First, bit-rot could kill it. Also, by waiting you're betting on two competing variables: collector interest vs. inflation.

You *might* get more money in the future, but that money will not be "worth" as much. We KNOW inflation will increase; but will collector interest? If you want to sell it, it's your business, but do us crazy game players a favor and sell it before bit-rot sets in.

Sorry to put the rest of you through that.

Well, I think that wraps up my little diatribe. I hope you enjoyed reading this little article series on the future of classic videogaming. In general, I think our gaming future looks bright. I plan to stick around in this hobby, and I hope the rest of you do too.

([William Cassidy](#) is classic gaming addict whose current goal in life is to save enough money to purchase a full-sized MAME cabinet. While not pinching his pennies, he maintains The Odyssey2 Homepage! at http://www.classicgaming.com/o2home).

The Many Facelifts of Pacman
The old chomper may be 20 years old, but he is looking better than ever! Sure we all heard about Pacman World for the Playstation, but that is not the only new Pacman these days. Two classic Pacman games were given a facelift and they both look spectacular! And the best part is these are both free! We will look at one this issue and the other next issue.

The first one is a revamped version of the old Atari 2600 game. You know, the one you all love to hate! Well, here is someone who decided to redo the game and make it the way it should have been (do keep in mind that the orignal Pacman was only 2K). Rob Kudla, decided to redo it and did a fine job! Pacman never looked so good on the Atari 2600! Now if we can get him to redo ET, but that is too much to ask of anyone.

You can download the game to use on an emulator and see some screenshots at the following URL:

http://www.kudla.org/raindog/pac26.html

Interview with Rob Kudla
After checking out the game, I thought I would see if the Rob would be willing to talk more

about the new version of Pacman and other projects. He was gracious enough to allow an interview, so here it is!

Question #1-When did you first decide you wanted to redo the 2600 Pacman?

Rob-I first thought about it about a year ago when someone on rec.games.video.classic suggested it might be possible to hack Ms. Pac Man or Jr. Pac Man into a more enjoyable simulation of Pac Man. Then after I heard Ebivision demonstrated and immediately pulled their totally new version of Pac Man at Classic Gaming Expo, I decided to do something to soothe my wounded 12-year-old inner self. ;) Even then it wasn't until I found Frank Cruz's page of 2600 hacks on gameovernet.co.uk (he'd done a Space Invaders hack and I had also recently done one to get "in practice") and he had a mockup of what such a Pac Man hack could look like.

Question #2-The original Pacman was 2K (if I am incorrect here, let me know), how big is your version?

Rob-I think the original Pacman was actually 4K, but I haven't actually looked at a binfile of it. Mine began life as Ms. Pac Man, which was 8K and so is mine.

Question #3-What was the most difficult part of the project? Any unexpected problems arise?

Rob-The most difficult part of the project was either moving the bottom energizers out of the corners to where they are now, or making the fruit stay on screen for an appropriate length of time. Without the source code

it wasn't very obvious how Atari's programmers handled either of those things, trivial as they may seem. The only unexpected problem was my own inexperience, and I kind of expected that ;)

Question #4-I notice that most of your classic video games that you are >working on are for the Atari 2600, why is this?

Rob-A number of reasons. One, the 2600 seems to be the best-documented of the old machines, probably because it's the most common. Two, I have a little bit of 6502 assembler knowledge from way back in my Commodore 64 days and the 2600 uses the same CPU. Three, the 2600 has such a reputation for being tough to program, and yet there are elegant ways around many of its limitations and many have been documented in recent years. And last, you can't overlook the importance of having a strong community around a machine to share your hacks with.

Oh yeah, and it's fun and rewarding too :)

Question #5-Are there any other classic systems you have thought about doing games or improving existing games for?

Rob-Yup, I started a hack designed to make KC Munchkin for the Odyssey2 look more like Pac Man. I may well end up trying to write a Pac Man from scratch for it if I find some time

and good docs, but I've been discouraged since the American O2 can't display yellow and I think that's important to a Pac Man clone. I've also started hacking the Vectrex a little since I still have one of those in cold storage back home (with light pen AND 3D goggles - eat that, ebay hounds :P), but there's nothing to show yet. And all this 6502 coding has made me want to do a little Commodore 64 coding again ;)

Question #6-Has most of the response been positive for it? Do you get requests to improve other Atari games and if so, which ones get the most requests?

Rob-Yes, the most common complaint has been about the death sequence, which upsets me too in its non-arcade-like-ness ;) Overall people seem to really dig the hack, though, and I appreciate the criticism I did get. I've had a few people suggest I start this project over using Jr. Pac Man so I could get the maze exactly right, but it would scroll vertically and I don't think that would really cut it. No other requests that I can think of, though.

Question #6-I saw you are working on a Ballblazer version for the Atari 2600. While ti is in the early stages, how much of the original do you think you will be able to retain?

Rob-Well, the new game is not going to be an exact copy of Ballblazer of course, though I hope to capture some of its flavor. I think I should be able to capture most of the play mechanics of Ballblazer - assuming I don't run out of CPU cycles animating the backgrounds (even in their not very convincing state!) It may be that you can't look sideways as you could in Ballblazer for example, and the music won't be as good as what they could do on the 8-bit computers, and of course there's the perspective being wrong. But the real test will be how well it plays, and that's what I'm most concerned with. I feel pretty confident I can make it play well, slightly less confident I'll get it done anytime soon ;)

Question #7-I see you are a big fan of emulation. Which emulators are your favorites? Which games were you really excited to see emulated?

Rob-Well, of course there's MAME, king of all emulators ;) though lately I discovered MESS32 and my interest in emulation has been kind of reborn. I like Stella and PCAE for Atari emulation but would love to see a MESS driver for the 2600, since they both have issues with Windows NT which I'm often forced to use. No, I'm not volunteering to write one right now! ;)

As far as which games were exciting to see emulated, I only discovered emulation when I was searching the web a few years ago for a PC version of Mappy, probably still my favorite arcade game. I suppose that would be the really exciting one because it led to everything else. I was also floored the first time I saw Sonic playing on my screen and looking a lot better than the PC version I had shelled out for (and didn't crash Windows!) But I'm most amazed at seeing things like the Adventurevision and Odyssey2 getting emulated (both by Dan Boris,) poorly documented machines without that much of a following so the fact that they're working now is a near miracle.

Overall I would rather see more open-source emulators of old systems than some of the projects I've seen in the last couple of years where it's, "No, we're not going to release the

source because some l4m3r might try to copy it, so shut up about it or else we'll discontinue it." Grow up, kids. Emulation is a way to bring extinct machines back from the dead and preserve them for the future. I would rather stick with the old stuff.

Thanks for the interview and for everyone interested, you can check out Rob's site at the following URL: http://www.kudla.org/raindog/games. You can reach him by email at the following address: kudla@ties.org

Letters to the Editor

Q: I know that you've had requests to discuss the Bally Astrocade before.Maybe you can post this inquiry and a your reply. I have the Bally Basic cart and know that there were 3rd party cassette games made as well as a newsletter that provided homebrew (or Bally Inc.) generated program listings. One could type these up, save them to tape and have the game for later. Does anyone know if there are games out the for the Astrocade that are made public domain, or is there a CD project. A CD project like the Cyber Punks did for the Atari 2600 with the Super Charger, or then there is the Intellivision Lives CD. Thanks for any help. Signed I. Jaun Tmoregames.

A: I have never heard of such a thing, but that would be great! The hard part would be tracking down all the public domain games. If anyone knows about anything like this or even a site that has a bunch of the public domain roms for the Bally Astrocade, let us know.

Q: All you ever talk about is MAME, how about some of the other great emulators?

A: This issue, I talk about EmuDX and I have mentioned MESS before, but you do have a point. But MAME has the most games and is the most universally known, so that is why I gravitate more towards it. Maybe I will dedicate an issue to talking about all the different emulators.

THE GREAT WHITE NORTH OF RETROGAMES - ATARI 2600 PART FOUR - DATA AGE, IMAGIC, AND M-NETWORK
by Ryan Harrison

Data Age
One of my friends when I was younger had this huge fascination with the band Journey. No one else liked Journey, but he really loved the guys. One day he came to school, and was going on and on and on about how there is a game he saw in a magazine for the Atari 2600 based on the band Journey. For years and years we made fun of him for listening to Journey (I think on an episode of the Canadian TV show "Degrassi Jr. High" Journey was mentioned as a crappy band). Anyways, I just thought he was a liar for years, until the late-1980's when I discovered the Data Age game "Journey Escape" on a trip to the United States. Data Age never released games in Canada, and maybe we're lucky they didn't - I haven't played Journey Escape in years, and I don't plan on picking it up anytime soon...

Imagic

Imagic released most of their library in Canada, and I always though Imagic games were the best. The labelling/boxes for the Canadian Market were multi-lingual with 4 or 5 languages on them, but for the life of me I can't find a multi-lingual instruction manual. I keep finding lots of english only instructions, but no multilingual ones - maybe Imagic got lazy on the instructions since they first made their appearance in Canada in 1983 and didn't care anymore during the US video game crash. The "international" editions of Imagic games had no pictures on them, but still had the fancy metallic labelling. Not all games were released in the Canadian market by Imagic, I picked up "Moonsweeper" and "Fathom" on a trip to the United States once, and my friends all wanted their own copy of Moonsweeper - unluckily for them, Moonsweeper was never released in Canada, and neither was Fathom, but no one like playing Fathom since it was too complicated (I still haven't beat the game..).

M-Network
"Hey Ryan, how did you get that Intellivision Game to work in your Atari 2600?" - that is the question that I was asked when I bought a copy of "Super Challenge Football". M-Network games flooded the market and were really cheap - but they didn't arrive until the mid-1980's in Canada. Most of the common titles are everywhere in Canada, but there is no variation from the US versions. I suspect Mattel saw the crash in the US, and shipped a couple truckloads of games to Canada to try and dump on a new market. I recall Mattel getting in trouble for not having French on their packaging, not a common occurence back in 1985 for video games that had no text/speech. In Canada now, if your game is in English (text, voices, etc) you only need English packaging since it's doubtful someone who speaks french is going to purchase a game all in English anyways, but I don't recall Mattel's excuse other then that they paid a hefty fine.

Ryan Harrison is a 21 year-old collector from Brantford, Ontario, Canada, who grew up on a constant diet of Atari 2600, Commodore 64, Nintendo, and Game Boy. Known locally as the guy "who keeps wasting quarters on that old Ms. Pac-Man game" at the local bar, he's the Sumguy you'll run into at the local Thrift in Southern Ontario looking for new stuff for his collection and hopes Bira Bira will find him Sumgirl that will take part of his mind off retrogames. He currently makes his own "label variations" as a Packaging Engineer with 3M Canada. Ryan can be contacted at ryan.harrison@home.com

Check back next month when we focus on Atari 2600 variations in Canada from Milton Bradley and Parker Bros.

Story from the Cabbage Patch
by [Doug Saxon](#)

OK, the other day a couple of my classic collector buddies and I got together for our monthly gaming bash. It's a fun evening where we usually drink a few beers, play a few games, and curse at a few games. The cursing usually comes from the losers of our Bomberman games, but for this occasion most of them came while we were playing the Colecovision. Yes, for some reason, I suggested we play Cabbage Patch Kids: Adventures in the Park, because it's a pretty fun game. If you haven't played it before, it's very similar to Pitfall in that you continue in one direction dodging obstacles and gaining points. The biggest differences in this game are that instead of Pitfall Harry you are a cute little redheaded Cabbage Patch Doll and instead of snakes and alligators to evade, you have poison ivy, bees, and bouncing blue balls.

Anyway, so we powered up Cabbage Patch Kids and I played the first game. To say this as humbly as possible, I played alright making it pretty far into the game. However, the whole time I was playing, my buddies were relentless with the jokes about how "this game sucks, it's for babies", "I can't believe you are playing this game", etc. So after I was done I sat back and gave them the opportunity to play. The next 30 minutes had to be the most intense head-to-head Cabbage Patch Kid playing anyone could ever experience! It was also some of the sorriest Cabbage Patch Kid playing anyone could ever experience also! For example, the one buddy played and lost all three of his lives without scoring a single point! I mean, come on. A few minutes ago he was laughing at the game saying how easy and stupid it was, and now he can't even score a point? It was classic. And to make the experience even funnier we heard some of the nastiest obscenities ever. I began to feel sorry for this poor little cabbage doll scrolling across the screen.

Anyway, it is a pretty cool game despite its reputation for being a game for pansies. Give it an unbiased shot some time and I think you'll see that this game can challenge players older than 7 years old.

(Doug Saxon is a classic game fan with a complete Atari 5200 set (minus protos). All email can be forwarded to: saxondj@email.uc.edu.)

The Menace From Outer Space - The Conclusion
As we flew out into space, I was amazed at the calmness of space. Knowing full well the horror that awaited us, I expected space to have the same chaotic feel to it. I half expected to be attacked the moment we were engulfed by the blackness of space. But instead, I found myself very calm and relaxed. It was the first time in days that I wasn't on the edge. Even though I only trained for days, there was a certain confidence. I really felt in control of the ship and was confident that I was going to save the day.

Our flight to the Zaxxon was a short one. Since it had been moving towards us, I knew that it would only be a matter of hours, before we were upon it. As we first saw the monstrous asteroids in the distance, we couldn't help but feel our stomachs tightening up into little knots. Ahead of us stood almost certain death. We knew the chances of coming back were

remote at best. The thought of dying out here in this cold, lifeless space was terrifying, but not as terrifying as the thought of failure and what would become of our planet. So we all swallowed hard and headed out towards the Zaxxon.

As we neared it, some of the ships broke formation and headed into different directions. We were all briefed beforehand on our assignments. I knew that we had some tricks up our sleeve, but what they were, I have no idea. My mission was simply to fly in and cause as much trouble as possible. My ship, while not one of the special ones, had been modified. It was faster, could withstand more damage and had greater firepower than the ships that came before it. It was superior to the ones that met their demise when the Zaxxon was first discovered. As the mighty asteroid came closer, my squadron headed right at it. As we made our way over the immense wall, we got the first glimpse of the city below. All around were ships that were beginning to ascend towards us. There were mighty radar dishes that were turning in all directions and missile silos that just began to shoot out missiles to greet us. I knew it was my time to act. As the engineers showed me, I opened a panel and was greeted by a selection of buttons. They were in three color sequences. There was a blue, then green and lastly a red button. I went and pushed all the blue buttons, which armed the missiles. Then I moved to push the green buttons which moved them into place. As I was flying down, I saw some of the enemy ships coming towards my squadron. I knew that my timing had to be perfect. As I flew down towards the silos and what appeared to be storage tanks for fuel or something else, I locked on the target and pressed the first red button. WHOOSH! The rocket flew straight at the storage tank and I pulled up on the controls to avoid the coming explosion. When the rocket hit, there was a huge explosion. An inferno erupted and the enemy ships that were following me, caught the brunt of the explosion and were obliterated. I let out a loud cheer as I flew in and searched for the next target.

A few of my buddies weren't so lucky. Jack, who was flying in to take out a radar dish, was hit by one of the missiles. His ship was destroyed before he could complete his mission. Willie also died quickly. While he was able to destroy some of the enemy ships before they got off, he was also taken out by a missile. It popped out from under him and he never saw it coming. A great sadness overcame me, but I knew that I had no time for tears. If I was going to live, I had to strike and strike hard. Up ahead was another storage tank and I set my sights on it. This time I shot the rocket off and took a hard turn to the left. As the rocket hit, the explosion was even greater than the last and this time it also took out some of the enemy ships.

As I straightened out, I saw some enemy planes coming after me. I knew that they were faster and would catch me quickly, so I dropped as low as I could and started shooting everything in sight. If I was to die, I was going to do as much damage as possible. I saw a radar dish and what looked like some tanks, up ahead. I hit the last two red buttons and sent some rockets towards them. Then I pulled the controls straight up and flew right past the amazed ships. If the move wasn't so unexpected, they would have shot me. Before they had time to react, they were caught in the explosion.

Up ahead, I saw one of the experimental ships. It flew right at a base of enemy ships and crashed into it, setting of an explosion like I had never seen. As my ship was rocked by the

explosion, I realized it was a kamikaze ship and was packed with explosives. All of sudden, I didn't feel so bad about not being chosen. As the asteroid began to shake from the explosion, I pulled up and headed to the next one. As I looked back, I could see that there were only a few of us left. We had destroyed one of the asteroids, but at what cost? There were still many more to go and we were down to about six ships. At this rate, we would have no chance.

As we flew into the next asteroid, I looked at the remnants of the squadron and saw there was only one experimental ship left. As we flew in, we noticed that most of the ships had already left. There were still the missiles and some enemy ships, but most of us were able to avoid them. As we flew further in, we only lost two more ships. One to a missile and one hit the accursed energy fences. Once the last fence was passed, we found ourselves in a huge, open area. There were no missiles or ships or anything. Before we had time to question this vast emptiness, we saw something incredible coming. A great robot, standing over a hundred feet tall headed towards us. If there was sound in space, I am sure it would have made a terrible noise, like thunder. As it neared, we heard in our heads, "Beware the power of Zaxxon!" It was enough to make me want to turn and run. But I stayed in formation as we headed towards the great behemoth.

Two of the regular ships were first to attack. They broke formation, one to the right and one to the left. As they did, they sent out a flurry of missiles. As the missiles flew towards the Zaxxon, great plates opened up and out shot a flurry of missiles. Not only were the oncoming missiles destroyed, before they reached their target, but the ships were also obliterated. That left the experimental ship and myself. The experimental ship was the next to fly in. As it flew in, a bunch of missiles began to shoot out. I had never seen so many missiles come from one ship. It was like there were weapons on every inch of the ship. But none of them reached the Zaxxon as it let out another volley of missiles, even greater than the last. Soon the ship was completely destroyed and nothing but dust was left.

Fearing for my life, I pulled up and flew out as fast as I could. I knew that I had no chance to defeat the Zaxxon and to stay was suicide. As I flew back towards Earth, knowing that my days were numbered, I heard a message coming through on the radio. "What's the status, over." I paused for a moment and said "Everyone is dead except me sir. We destroyed one asteroid, but the Zaxxon killed the rest of us, over." As I looked behind me, I saw the mighty Zaxxon, standing there like he was gloating. It was almost enough to make me want to go back and kill him, but another message came across. "Come on home, we made a pact with another race and with their help and the knowledge you have acquired, we are going to destroy the Zaxxon, once and for all. So head back here and Long Live Gorf!" That was the final message I heard as I headed back to Earth.

THE END?

Top 2000 Classic Games (or as the editor likes to call it, the List that even Mythicon Makes!)
by Alan Hewston

OK, it's the year 2000 and we're still sick of all those lists of the best of the Year, Decade,

Century, Millennium. But then how about a list of something that we all love - Classic Video Games! In order to limit this list, I'd like to make it just classic home video game cartridges and Arcade games made before 1984. This date is not hard and there is always room for your feedback. Also there should be no duplication from one platform to another for games like Miner 2049, Frogger, Pac Man, Atlantis, and River Raid etc. We only want to count them if they are unique - one game listed for each unique game.

2000 Games is my goal, but we may exceed that, or fall well short.

Atari 2600 Circus Atari will add up to several games, one for each unique game within. Rip-off games and clones will be tough to make a ruling on, but we can always leave them in to start with an "*". Logic would dictate that Atari 2600 Kool-Aid Man and Intellivision Kool-Aid Man both be included. They have the same name, but are clearly unique games.

As a first cut, I've heard that there are about 600 unique Atari 2600 games.

Probably more like 800, but then this may take some time to verify. I'm sure that a lot of the information out there is in the Digital Press Guide, or on someone's Atari 2600 database. Then making a quick count of unique games for the Atari 5200, 7800, Atari Home Computers, Commodore 64, Vic 20, Bally Astrocade, Odyssey 2, Vectrex, Fairchild, Intellivision, and Colecovision; I am up to around 1200 games. I dropped duplicate games each time I looked at the next system. Then, it is probably a safe bet that there are 100 or so more games within a game as in Video Olympics. If we throw in about 300+ Arcade game which did not have a home version on cartridge, then we're around 1600-1700 games.

A tough task for me is to count cartridges from the CoCo, TI-99 and TRS-80 home computers. I know very little about them other than there are mostly productivity carts for them. I'm hoping to get some help from you there, to cut the fat off (productivity and educational games), and get to the meat. Maybe another 100 or so there.

But, before I decide to take on such a huge task, I'd like to hear from you.

I am not going to start the list unless you tell Tom that this would be a neat list to have, and one that we can all contribute to. It would be an ongoing project that hopefully we can complete this year. I think that 2000 is a good goal to reach, even if we come up short.

Other thoughts: I do no think that we want to add hand-helds to this list.

Picking a date for the Arcade games is tough, and not including NES and SMS will offend some people. But then we'd easily exceed 200 games then. If you think that I should GO for it, then let Tom and I know.

Finally, if Tom actually published this article, then I think that means he's willing to dedicate space on his site to post them - but only if you agree.

(Alan has recovered very well from Colon Surgery, and when not making up useless lists, has begun playing more video games lately. He can be reached at hewston95@stratos.net).

Odds & Ends

1. In the everything old is new again category, we have more remakes coming. Another Pacman game, Frogger II and a new Galaga round out the list of games. Where is the Dragon's Lair 3D game?

2. Classic Gaming Expo has been announced for July 29-30th. It will once again be in Las Vegas and Ralph Baer has been signed on as a guest again. I will give more details as they come out. Here is the URL for more information: http://www.cgexpo.com/

3. There is another video game newsletter that is online. Like MAMEzine, it also deals with emulation. It is from the guys at Zophar's Domain, one of the oldest emulation sites. It is a monthly newsletter and can be found at the following URL: http://www.zophar.net/newsletter/.

eBay Notes

This month I am going to do something different. Instead of telling you some of the trends on eBay, I am going to give you some suggestions for purchasing games to sell on there. While some people roll their eyes and get defensive at the very mention of selling on eBay, I find it a great way to raise extra income for your collection.

For this issue, I am going to pretty much concentrate on handhelds. If you are like me, you see a decent selection of these at thrift stores and flea markets. But they can be a risky proposition. Unlike the carts and consoles, they are more likely to be broken. But you can protect yourself from purchasing a broken one (I learned this after being burned a few times). Here is what you do, first get a fannysack (you know those little pouches that you wear around your waist and make you look like a kangaroo). After you get this, go to the local dollar store and buy up a bunch of batteries. For best results, you should purchase at least 2- 9 Volts, 4-AA batteries, 4-C batteries, 4-D batteries and at least one watch battery. Then you put them in your fannysack and you are ready to test those systems!

The next thing is you should familiarize yourself with the values of the different systems. You could look at rarity lists, but almost everything on those are listed as ER and the rarity is not always the reason for value with handhelds. Alot has to do with nostalgia as is the case with the Mattel handhelds. Lucky for you, I have been doing a Handheld/Tabletop/Game & Watch Price Report. So you can use this to get a basic idea of what these sell for.

So you now have the batteries to test them and an idea what they are worth, what next? There are a few little things to keep in mind when looking for handhelds for resale. The most important is that they have battery covers. Half the value of a handheld is the battery cover. Honest! Take away that battery case and watch the value plummet. While you are checking the battery cover, look for rust on the battery connections. The second thing is for the sticker to be present and in good shape. This is especially important with ones that had instructions on a sticker. Lastly, when you test them, don't just make sure they power up. You need to test all the buttons to make sure they work. Is there a clean connection or do you have to smash the buttons to get them to work? Also make sure that there a good picture and sound. These will make a big difference in the amount that you get.

While a boxed unit will fetch alot more money, good luck finding it. But don't fear as loose ones will command good money if they are in good, working order and complete. So take a little time to check out those handhelds before you buy them. Sure, you may get some strange looks, but it is better than getting a DOA unit.

Video Game Challenge
I received alot of positive feedback on this topic, that I decided to do another installment. This time I will pit two of the Pac-man inspired games against each other. As you know there were alot of maze games after the success of Pac-man, but not all of them set themselves apart. Two of them took the basic formula and created exciting and fun games from the genre. These are our contestants, Ladybug and Mouse Trap. I will use the arcade games for the comparison as it is the fairest way. So read on and see who wins the Video Game Challenge!
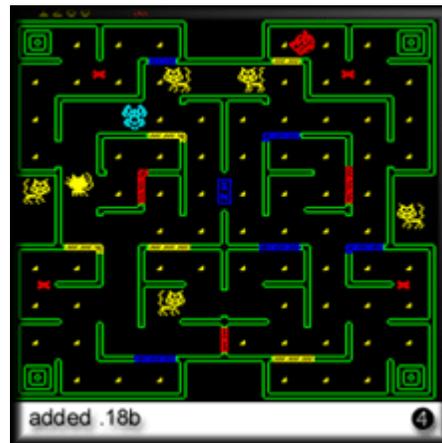
Ladybug   VS   Mousetrap!

Gameplay
Ladybug-A very simple and straightforward game. You move your ladybug around the maze and try to clear all the dots. What really makes this game fun to play is that it is just a joystick, making it a very easy game to learn. But the gameplay is quite deep as you not only clear mazes, but can also spell words and get bonuses. There are different letters that if ran over when they are a certain color, will spell out a word. There are also hearts that will raise the amount of points you get. This adds some strategy to what would be a simple maze game.

Mousetrap-This is the game for the person who has the dexterity to master it. While it is a simple maze game, where you have to clear all the dots, you also have control over different color doors. By hitting one of three buttons, you open or close doors. There is also the different bonus prizes that keep coming and the dog bones that allow you to turn the tables on the cats.

Verdict-Ladybug is an addictive challenge that will keep you coming back for more. Mousetrap is a fun game, but the initial learning curve is very steep. Also, all the buttons can be make it hard to concentrate on the game itself. Point for Ladybug.

Addictiveness

Ladybug-There are many things that will grab you about the game and keep you coming back. Besides the simple gameplay, there is the challenge of spelling out "Bonus" and "Extra." Also, there are the different kinds of vegetable and the different kind of foes to keep you wanting to see what the next one is.

Mousetrap-The challenge of mastering the controls is enough to keep you coming back. Add to that the large variety of bonuses, with one new one added each round and you have some incentive to come back.

Verdict-While both have their addictive qualities, Ladybug is deeper and offers more motivation for repeat play. Point for Ladybug.

Graphics
Ladybug-Like the controls, the graphics are quite simple. The different enemies range from pretty cool to downright ugly. Even the ladybug herself is not much to look at.

Mousetrap-While this game also has simple graphics, they seem a little more polished. There seems to be rounder curves and the animals just look a little better. The mouse is quite cute and even the dog has a bit of character.

Verdict-Both games are a little plain in the graphics department, but Mousetrap is a bit more polished. Both are close, but Mousetrap wins by a whisker. Point for Mousetrap.

Sound
Ladybug-While the tune is sorta catchy, the sound as you move around the maze and pick up the dots is a bit annoying and grates on your nerves. There isn't alot of variety either.

Mousetrap-This is one area where Mousetrap shines! Every few levels you get a new tune! The sound effects are pretty good too with the barking dog and meowing cat.

Verdict-This one isn't close. Mousetrap rules in the audio department! Point for Mousetrap.

Controls
Ladybug-A simple four way control is all you need. The ladybug moves around with ease and can move those walls with no problem.

Mousetrap-A fine example of how less is more. While the ability to switch the different doors is unique, it is also an exercise in frustration. It takes numerous games to get it down and even then you don't totally have it. Then you add in the dog button and you have your hands full.

Verdict-While Mousetrap offers more total control, it also offers more frustration. Ladybug on the other hand is simple and is the kind of game that anyone can pick up and learn to play. Point for Ladybug.

Overall Score-Ladybug 3 Mousetrap 2

Final Remarks-The games are actually as close as the score. If Mousetrap dumped a few

buttons or found an easier way to control all those different colored doors, it could be a dead heat. Too bad as I really like Mousetrap, just go crazy when I die from hitting the yellow button instead of the red.

Conclusion

We have reached the big 3-0! Still surprised that I can keep coming up with articles. Guess one day I will run out, but until that day, I will keep pumping them out! Finished another prose story, let me know if you want to see another one or not. Also, any suggestions are welcomed.

Check in next month when I will have a review of Crazy Climber 2000, Pacman World and the new Q*Bert. That's right, we are having a themed issue! We will look at the trend of video game remakes on modern systems. So fire up the Playstation, Nintendo 64 or PC and get retro!

[Tom Zjaba](#)

This issue was done while listening to The Police Greatest Hits while trying to drown out Alphabonk Farm, possibly the most annoying children's program ever made.