

Retro Times 5

The Newsletter for the Retro Gamer in All of Us

January 1998

Introduction

Welcome to the fifth issue of Retro Times, the classic video game newsletter that tries to be as fun as the games we cover. This issue will deal a lot with sequels. Unlike the modern games (and the movies), the classic games had a lot of great sequels. Many were much better than the original and some were even completely different games. So sit back and enjoy the issue as I attempt to make this sequel bigger and better than the last four issues.

What Happened to My Jungle King?

At my local arcade, one of the biggest thrills for a gamer was to be the first to play a new game. Whenever a delivery truck arrived with new games, we would be battling to be the first to play a new game. Since our gameroom was a test market for the Northern Ohio area, we got all the new games. But it was special to be the first. Everyone would watch you play and it was all fresh and new.

Well, one day I was at the arcade during school hours. A doctor's appointment or something got me out early and I was allowed to leave the house after it was done. There was little time left in school afterwards and so I headed to the arcade. When I got there, the familiar delivery truck was there. As I headed over there, I saw they were unloading some pinball machine. While I liked pinball, my true love was video games. As I entered the arcade, which was pretty much empty, I noticed there was a new game set up. It wasn't turned on yet. I read the title "Jungle King" and was curious. What kind of game was it? My imagination went wild. Well, the owner came over and said "Guess you get the privilege of being the first to play it" as he turned it on. I pulled a token out of my pocket and stuck it in. As I pushed the start button, I heard a familiar yell. Wow, a Tarzan game. I ended up putting in about two dollars that day. I was able to finish the first board and get to the rocks on the second level. I came away with a new found arcade favorite.

Sure there were only four boards to play, but I kept hoping later levels would bring new challenges. There were some like the monkeys on the vines, but that was about it. Still, I enjoyed the game. How couldn't I not enjoy it? I was the first to play it. That was a privilege that no one could take away.

One day when I entered the arcade, I noticed something was different. My Jungle King was gone. In its place was a game called Jungle Hunt. Was this a sequel to the game? I rushed over to the empty game, something that was very strange for a new game. I put in a token and hit the start button. What I saw shocked me. Instead of the Tarzan clone, there was some dolt in a pith helmet. Who is this goof? I quickly noticed there was no yell. Why did they ruin my game? I asked the guy working there about it and he told me about the lawsuit from the Burroughs estate because of the similarity to Tarzan. Needless to say, Jungle Hunt wasn't a favorite of mine. Sure it was basically the same game, but the differences were enough to turn me off. I got a quick lesson in copyright infringement that day and part of my childhood innocence was lost.

CLASSIC GAME SEQUELS

One of the best things about the classic era is there were many great game sequels. Many of the best games were sequels and unlike many of the sequels today, a lot of them were more than the same game with more enemies, more weapons and more levels. Innovation was a constant in classic gaming and while there were some remakes that just added a few new features, most were completely new games. I am now going to take this time to look at some of the great sequels of the classic era. As always, feel free to send me the ones I missed. I am sure there will be a lot of them.

Donkey Kong Jr-While the basic theme is the same, the gameplay is anything but a copy. The levels

are way different than the original. Jr Kong has so many more things to do than Mario ever did. Plus, the whole role reversal is a stroke of genius. While Donkey Kong is great for its simple and addictive gameplay, I think that DK Jr is a better game. Greater challenges make this a more enjoyable game. Plus, all the new bad guys are quite interesting. I personally like the chain level best.

Galaga-Sure the basic gameplay is the same in both games. But why fix what isn't broken. Instead of completely changing it, they went and revamped the game. With the addition of the tractor beams, ability to have two ships at once, the bonus levels and especially the ratings at the end made this a much, much better game. So much that it is a classic that has stood the test of time.

Ms Pacman-Where Pacman was flawed, Ms Pacman is nearly flawless. As the commercial says "She is more than Pacman with a bow". First off there are new mazes, not the same one over and over again. Then you add in smarter ghosts, moving bonuses and you have a whole new game. Anyone who could play the original for hours were in for an awakening. Goodbye to the patterns. This is one unpredictable lady.

Mr. Do's Castle-While the original is a better game, this is a fine example of how different a sequel could be. What you have is a totally new game. Only Mr. Do and the letter creatures are the same. Instead of digging around, you are running up and down levels while dodging unicorns. And the other two Mr. Do sequels are equally different and unique. Talk about an ambitious series.

Q*Bert's Qubes-Basic concept is the same, but the execution is alot different. This time you have to rotate the blocks, something that take a bit getting used to. Gone is Coiley and now he is replaced by a boring rat. While not as good as the original, the differences are enough to interest you.

There are many more, but I have other articles to write. Many more sequels like Stargate, Joust 2, and others can be discussed. As you can see, creators had the ability to keep coming up with different ideas. It was a different time and in my opinion, a better time.

Dumbest Classic Character?

Who is the dumbest (as in intelligence) of the classic video game characters? There are many that can wear that crown. Coiley comes to mind. So does a few of the ghosts in Pacman. But my vote for the stupidest of all characters has to be the hot dogs from Burgertime. Is anyone dumber than these encased meat scraps? How many times have you thought you were finished when these morons walk right past you. How many times have you been able to lure them onto a bun of doom? They are the lemmings of classic games. Some would say they are unpredictable, not stupid, but I beg to differ with them. These guys are just plain stupid! But I guess when your brains are made up with whatever meat scraps were laying around, you cannot expect Mensa material. If you do not agree with me and want to defend the hot dogs or have an either denser candidate, please email it to me.

MAME 0.30

For anyone who hasn't got the latest version of MAME working, you are missing out on alot! First and foremost, there is a plethora of new games added. These include many of the games I really, really wanted. Games like a working Zookeeper, Food Fight, Gauntlet, Frenzy and a game I completely forgot about, Monster Bash. I was in heaven with these new games and now am having trouble thinking of games that need to be added (The only ones I can think of are Joust 2, Toobin, Turbo, and Rampart, not a classic but could have been).

Secondly, sound has been added or improved in many games like Star Trek and Donkey Kong Jr. Speech has also been added to Wizard of Wor, Space Fury and Gorf.

There are many other features and once you tinker with it, it is worthwhile. Makes one get excited about future versions. So go download it and have a field day.

MAME Reviews

With so many games to review, it was real tough limiting it to three. So I chose the games that I was most excited about and reviewed them. So here we go!

Discs of Tron-After playing this at Videotopia, I couldn't get the game out of my head. One of my all-time favorites and one that was never released on the home consoles. Sure you had Tron's Deadly Discs for the Intellivision, but it paled in comparison to this gem. It is you versus your opponent in a confined area. You can throw up to three discs at him, while he does the same to you. You either dodge or deflect his shots. Of course, there is a limited number of deflections. You start with seven. You move around a disc and at later levels, jump back and forth from disc to disc. All the while you are aiming and trying to take out your equally mobile opponent. While it doesn't have the same controls as the arcade, I found a mix of keyboard and mouse works best. Use the mouse to aim and shoot and the keyboard to move your guy. There are also computer insults to keep you riled. Just a great game and one that I longed to play at home.

Satan's Hollow-Another of those games that I enjoyed in my youth was Satan's Hollow. While the ultra religious out there may frown on a name like that, they should know that you are battling the devil. It plays quite a bit like Phoenix, complete with force field. There are differences as Satan's Hollow came out later and is more advanced. You start out trying to build a bridge by moving pieces from one side of the screen to the other. In the meantime, circling demons are shooting and diving at you. You can shoot them or if they get too close, turn on the force fields and watch those demons fry. Ha! Ha! Ha! Once you finish the bridge you move to another level where you must beat a demon who tosses pitchforks at you. Oh yeah, there is also the big kahuna himself who pops up and sends a wall of flames at you. Ouch! One of those twitch games that is fun to relieve stress and scare the willies out of the devoutly religious.

Jungle King-After years of being stuck playing the legally correct version, Jungle Hunt, I was thrilled when I saw Jungle King among the ROMs. The first time I loaded it and heard that familiar yell, I was smiling. This is the true Jungle King and not the goofy guy who replaced him. Not even the Rice Burroughs Estate can keep me from reliving a childhood memory I thought was long lost. I missed the way his hair change colors on each different stage. We used to laugh ourselves silly about this. He starts with the familiar black tresses and then jumps into the water and they magically turn yellow. We figure he was swimming in a pool of bleach. Then he pops out of the water and begins jumping rocks in his new red hair. Must be the dust from those red rocks that roll down the hill. Finally, he goes against the killer natives in his now purplish hair. Guess he had to go punk to scare them savages. But you soon finish and start over in your familiar black hair. Wait! What is this? Yellow hair again or is that sorta brown? This guy has more hair colors than Madonna. Still a fun game and we welcome you back King, even if you are a Tarzan clone.

Pizzatime?

I have read a few places now about a game call Pizzatime, a sequel to Burgertime. My question is does this game really exist? Was it an arcade game, just a prototype for the consoles or a computer game? How is the gameplay? Is it any good? I am a huge fan of Burgertime and would love to play this game. So I am asking you the readers, does anyone have any information about this game? I long to get more information. Any help is greatly appreciated.

Goodbye to a friend.

Well, after nearly 16 years of devoted service, I must say goodbye to a loyal friend. My Colecovision has finally given up the ghost. The very same one I bought eons ago with my earnings from Coleco stock has now quit working. After countless hours spent with her during those early days and almost as many in the past four years since I got back into the classic games, she has finally decided it was time go to silicon heaven (where all the dead calculators go, according to Kryten from Red Dwarf). I take this time to thank her for all the years of tireless service. Thanks for the companionship you provided and the memories that will always be with me. While I will most likely get another Colecovision to replace her, playing the system will never be the same. You never forget your first true love both real and electronic.

Storing manuals

One of the toughest things to store is the game manuals. They are flimsy, made of paper and easily damaged. Leave them in the sun and they fade. Get them wet and they warp. Put them in reach of a

child and they are history. So how does one store these to protect them from the elements and yet keep them within reach? There are many answers and it mainly depends on how much you want to spend and how serious are you about keeping them in the best shape possible.

There is always the tried and true shoe box. The main problem is that they can move around a lot and they will begin to bend. It also doesn't offer much protection from children or pets. A second and better option is Tupperware. Get a decent sized storage chest and you can seal them in there. If it is waterproof, you can rest easy when flood season comes. But once again you have the problem with them warping. This can be fixed by either putting them in a comic book bag and board or in sport card pages. You can put them in either the two pocket or four pocket and then stick them in a binder. Both of these options are more expensive, but if you have the rule book to Chase the Chuckwagon, you would be foolish not to protect it.

I'm sure there are numerous other methods of protecting your manuals. But the best protection is a bit of prevention. Simple things like keeping them up high and out of the reach of kids. Keeping them out of direct sunlight. Having them on a shelf or something sturdy that won't let them fall down. They may not seem very important to you now, but the day will come when you wished you had kept them because they got too expensive to replace.

A Deeper Look

This month, I will look at two sequels in honor of my theme month. Two games that were the sequels to all time classics. Did these do justice to their famous brethren or did they come up short? Read on and find out my take on them.

A Deeper look at Diner

This is one of those gems that I was completely oblivious of until a few years ago. When I heard that Diner was a sequel to Burgertime, I had to own it. After months of exhaustive searching I was able to get my mitts on a copy. Was the search worth it? You bet! This is one of the reasons why I will never give up my Intellivision. It takes the basics of Burgertime and improves them. Instead of the unsanitary walking on food, you have to kick the trash down to the bottom of the screen. With games like these, no wonder fast food workers never get any respect (that and their ability to mess up the simplest of orders). The dumb, but familiar hot dogs return to bother you along with a mean mug of root beer and other pests. The pepper also returns as the last resort weapon. This time there are no buns to drop on people, but you can kick trash at them (that just sounds so bad). The trash is in a round shape and rolls quite nicely. Another big change is that there is now a quasi-3D look to it. While they strive for a 3D look, it really isn't. There is some depth, but it is hard to determine if you are above, below or right in line with an enemy. I have lost a few Peter Peppers this way. There are now ladders and steps to move from level to level. There are three levels, with you starting on the top level and the trash randomly placed around.

Some nice features in this game are the opening and closing floors that pop up a few levels in, and the changing signs in the background. These make the game more interesting and keep you wanting to see more. The levels also change and keep the game fresh. Overall, this is a great sequel of a true classic and one that is worth seeking out.

A Deeper look at Frogger II: Threedeeep

Unlike the new version of Frogger, this sequel kept the simplistic movement of the original. Just a joystick to move your amphibian around with. No super tongue or monster croaks. So how is this game different from the original? Well, this time you got to go through three different stages before you complete the first level. You start underwater and then you move to above water and finally you get airborne. Each stage offers some new challenges, but the basic gameplay is the same. Move your froggie to the end to a safe haven.

You start underwater where you have to battle currents as you move upwards. If you stand still, they will move your frog towards the edge. There are baddies that you have to avoid including nasty fish. There is also a turtle whose back you can jump on and he will move you upwards. Get enough froggies to the holes in the logs at the end and you get to go upwards. Here you have to hop on

hippos, whales and other creatures to get to the top and hop on the life preserver that is being pulled by a tugboat. One difference is that the water doesn't kill you in this game. Thanks to some environmental cleanup, your frog can survive the water. But if he falls in the water on this level, he goes underwater and back to the past level. This does get a bit aggravating. Finally, he gets to go to the skies where there are dragons and pelicans to ride on. You can also bounce on the clouds. Oh yeah, there is also a time limit to complete this in. Talk about pressure.

While it is a more involved game than the original, I don't think it is a better game. It is still a very good game and will keep you involved for hours. Just missing that special magic the original had. I do recommend it.

Question of the Month

It is that time again to ask a new question. Time to get some feedback from the readers. I had alot of feedback on the last question. There were many unreleased games that people wanted to see. So I will try and come up with an equally interesting question. This month's question is "What Classic Game were you really anticipating and ended up letting you down?" This doesn't have to mean the game wasn't good, just you expected more from it. Or if you want, it can mean the game was terrible (AKA: Pacman for Atari, a regular heart breaker).

Well, the game that really let me down was Advanced Dungeons & Dragons for the Intellivision. While it wasn't a bad game, it didn't really incorporate any of the features of the paper version of the game. Guess I just expected too much from the game. That and the fact that I traveled an hour on bike with two of my friends to go buy the game, probably added to it. I remember how excited we were when we heard of it and talked about it for weeks if not months. What would be in it? What monsters would be included? We had arguments over what the game should be like. But when it came out and we played it, none of us could expect the final product. Oh well, the high expectations of the youth.

Finale

While I have alot more I wanted to add to Retro Times, but time ran out. So next issue, I will have reviews for a new game for the Atari 2600 that may be coming out in cartridge form soon (let's hope as a computer cannot replace the joy of playing on an old television with the Atari and those dandy joysticks). It is called Oystron (you can find it at <http://www.primenet.com/~nickb/oystron.htm>) and it is a good game for the action lovers out there. I will give you a full write up on it next time. Also, I will be going over the Digital Press CD (go to <http://digitpress.com> and order your copy or you can follow the link from my web page to it) and giving you my opinion of it. Plus, once again I will try to expand the size and add all the usual stuff. So keep those joysticks firing and see you in a month!

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