

Retrogaming Times

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Table of Contents

01.	Silverball Addiction
02.	MAME Reviews
03.	Vic 20 Reviews by Tonks
04.	Retro Game and Computer Party
05.	The Atari Times 2004 Compendium
06.	Letters to the Editor
07.	More TV Controllers Coming
08.	Retrogaming Commercial Vault by Adam King
09.	Retrogaming Times Top 10 Video Games from 1984 by Alan Hewston
10.	Sites of the Month
11.	New Computers - Classic Controllers
12.	The Many Faces of Montezuma's Revenge by Alan Hewston
13.	8-Bit Face-Off by Adam King
14.	Conclusion

Silverball Addiction

When I got the Devastator II joystick, I envisioned myself playing arcade games until the cows came home (and living in an urban setting, that could be a long time). But little did I know that I would share my arcade gaming time with another denizen of the arcades, the pinball machine. You expect arcade machines to be played on computers and MAME does a fine job of replicating them. Sure it is not the same, especially with racing games, shooting games or other games that are hard to replicate the experience at home. But Pacman or Space Invaders is no problem. But when you think about pinball, you think of standing in front of a very large machine and the thought of that at home is not a thought that comes to mind. But I must say that the combination of Visual Pinball and PinMAME have changed my mind. Between the two programs, which work in tandem, you have a very good attempt at recreating the pinball experience. From the sounds and animations of newer machines to the feel of the flippers and the physics of the ball, the games play very well. Mix these with the Devastator II with its pinball buttons on the side and you get an even more authentic feel.

Granted it would help to have a very large monitor to really capture the feeling, but even with my 17 in monitor, I found myself enjoying it. And with a nearly endless amount of tables available (not really endless, but there is easily about 1,000 tables out there) and more each week, there is no shortage of variety. But let me tell you that it can be a bit tricky to get the two to work in unison. But I found a site that has a download that blends the two perfectly, so all you need to do is set some paths and add games and you are ready to go! Here is a link to get you started with the program, a how to set it up instructions and enough tables to keep you busy.

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

Now onto the tables. There are four different kinds of tables that I will discuss. They are classic tables, modern tables, original tables and flipperless tables. There is a big selection of each available and you can find some great choices among them. I will talk about some of my favorites and give you a few links.

The first is classic tables. These are the pinball tables from the 1940's to the early 1980's. These are the simple ones with no digital displays, animations or multiballs that were prevalent in modern tables. While these are simpler, they are quite addictive and there is a lot of great gameplay. Plus one thing that does not plague these like the newer tables is that you do not have looping music to distract you from the great gameplay.

[Stars](#) - This one was made in 1978 and is full of stuff to do. A great looking and great playing table

[Dodge City](#) - A simple table, but one that I found myself playing quite a bit. And considering it was made back in 1965, that is saying a lot.



[King Rock](#) - Nothing that special about it, but since my dad owns this table and I played it quite a bit in my youth, I have a soft spot for it (I also found another table that we have, Polo). Plus that queen sure is purty.

[Jack in the Box](#) - One with a bunch of targets to knock down. I like knocking down targets.

Next we will look some of the more modern tables. These add some of the cool stuff like animations, multiball and in some cases even video games. Here are a few of the best:

[Creature from the Black Lagoon](#) - With all kind of cool drive-in animations, it is really cool. Also there is a lot to do.



[Baby Pacman](#) - Switch between a video game and a pinball machine. Very cool!

[Caveman](#) - The first of the video game/pinball hybrids. Not as cool as Baby Pacman, but still quite cool.

[Adventures of Rocky and Bullwinkle](#) - One of my favorite tables. Great sound, lots to do and just cool!

Last, we have the original tables. These are the ones that were not based on actual tables, but completely made from scratch. Some of the most unique and enjoyable tables are here.



[Mad Magazine](#) - This is without a doubt one of the best tables of all. Great sound, nice table and some cool surprises. This is better than many of the real tables.

[Wacky Races](#) - Another incredible original table. Just looks and plays so well you swear it was a real table.

[Reactor](#) - Based on the not so popular arcade game, it is a very unique looking and playing table. But that is a good thing.

[Bubble Bobble](#) - A simple but enjoyable table based on the very popular arcade game.

Check back next month when I will talk about some of the oddball pinball type games as well as do some deep reviews of some of the best pinball tables available on VPinname. Also, I will give some

links to find some cool original tables and a few tips on how to get it working the best (I had to learn the hard way).

MAME Reviews

Let us dig through the huge stack of games to find the fun, the strange and the odd. This month, I once again come across an unknown game and also decide to take a second look at a classic. So read on and find out what you are missing.

Roller Jammer

It is not every day you get to play a roller derby game at the arcades. And it is even rarer that the roller derby takes place outdoors. Leave it to a company as bizarre as Nichibutsu to come up with a bizarre game like this. These are the same guys who made climbing the side of a building fun (Crazy Climber) as well as calling a game Frisky Tom.



(It is you versus the Blue Man Group.)

To best way to summarize what Roller Jammer is would be imagine if you took the game Bump n Jump and instead of cars, you had roller derby people. Then instead of an overhead view, you instead had a third person view. If you can imagine this, you will feel right at home with Roller Jammer. It is very much like Bump n Jump. Both games involve you going down a road to a finish line. Both have you jumping over obstacles and both have you pushing your opponents off the track. Roller Jammer allows you to punch to the right or left and to jump. As you go along, there is a bunch of members of the rival team. You have to pass ten of them to get to the next level. In the meantime, they are pushing and punching you as you head down the winding track. And in the vein of Bump n Jump, you cannot go off the track. Yes, the grass is quite deadly and will kill you. Actually, you do not have lives, so it really just eats at your time. And you thought crabgrass was bad.

One thing that I did not understand, where is the rest of your team? As far as I can tell, it is you against a dozen or so members of the other team. Talk about having the odds stacked against you. But you are pretty tough, so I guess you can handle it. I was able to blow through a few levels with no problem. The first level is actually a time test. You have to go around cones as you make your way to the finish line before running out of time. But after that level, it is you against a whole team and things look pretty hard.



(Oh Mickey you're so fine, you blow my mind!)

You may be asking about jumping and how it comes into play. No, you cannot jump on top of the other team, like you can in Bump n Jump. But there are deadly puddles of water that you have to jump over or they will.....slow you down. Yeah, it is pretty lame. There are also some letters you collect that give you points and occasionally it will give you more time.

One thing that I do like about the game is the billboards. Much like the billboards in Pole Position, these are also set up to advertise. There is one with the Nichibutsu logo as well as ones for their various games. I saw billboards for Crazy Climber, Moon Cresta and Seicross. There were a few others. It is a nice little touch. But you have little time to sight see as you are soon ganged up on and the road is very curvy.

All in all, I found it a fun little game. Not a great game, but it was enjoyable. The action is very fast paced and will keep you going. Just another of the many odd games from this odd arcade company.

Jungle King

This is one of those games that I have very fond memories of. You can see a story that I wrote about it back in a very old issue of Retrogaming Times (issue #5 to be exact). And I cannot believe that I have not done a proper review of this game (I did a really lame review of it back in issue #5 of RT, but it was my first MAME reviews, so I was just getting my feet wet). So here it goes, a real review of the first and only real version of this game, at least to me.

When you start playing this game, you will soon realize why there was a lawsuit. The looks and sounds just like Tarzan. If they had him yelling something like "I am going for you dear" instead of doing the Tarzan yelp, they may have had a chance in court. Even my kids thought it was Tarzan and they had little exposure to the king of the jungle.

The game consists of four mini games, each one different. This was quite a feat back in the early days of video games. Most games consisted of one screen, let alone three scrolling levels and a different ending level. I applaud the developers of the game as they really did a good job capturing the feel of Tarzan. You have swinging on vines, fighting crocodiles and saving Jane from natives. Don't really remember Tarzan jumping over boulders, but guess it was easier to do then have him jump over animals or something.

The first level has you swinging from vine to vine. Once you get the hang of it, it is quite easy. At least it is on the first level. On the second level, they add monkeys that can be a real pain. The best advice I can give you for playing this game is to remember that there is a bunch of extra time on the timer. You would need to really be slow to not make it in time. And you do not get any bonus for finishing with time left. So whether you have one second or a hundred seconds left, it does not matter. So take your time and you will do fine with the vines.

The water level is a bit trickier. While you can kill the crocodiles with your knife, you can only do it when their mouths are not open. If their mouth is wide open, you will get bit. Best to hold back and wait for them to go through the animation and open their mouth and then attack. You can avoid them, but keep an eye on your air. Once you get close to running out of air, you better surface and fill it back up. It will not look good in the obituary section to see that Tarzan...err I mean the Jungle King died by drowning. Not exactly a valiant way to die. At least let a croc kill you. It may mean that you have to have a closed casket funeral, but at least it will more manly. Also watch out for the bubbles as they can immobilize you for a few moments and that is all the crocs need.

The third level has you jumping over rocks that are rolling down a hill. They are red and give me the impression that they are from a volcano or something. But at the end you jump on top of the last one and do the Tarzan yell. Of course he could be yelling because he just found out that the rock is burning hot and he is cooking the soles of his feet. This level is pretty straight forward. You need to time your jumps, but that is pretty easy to do. If you see a very large boulder, just run underneath it. It is only hard if you hesitate. Keep moving and you should blow right through it.

The last level has you avoiding two natives and trying to save your wife or girlfriend (not sure if Tarzan ever married Jane) before she becomes the main course. All you have to do is jump over them and jump on her. The only trick is to wait for Jane to get low enough that you hit her and not miss. Of course some people at the arcades used to time their jumps for some rather interesting poses. I remember the snickering that went on at this game and it was easy to realize why Namco renamed Pac-man when they brought it over here. Again, it is patience that is needed. If you wait for the natives to come together and then part, you can easily jump between them. Just look out for the spears that they occasionally jut upward. I almost never get hit by them, but instead die from missing the girl and ending up in the pot.

The funniest thing I found about this game is how the Jungle King's hair would change colors from one level to the next. The man went through more hair colors than Madonna. Made me wonder what was going on? Don't believe me, take a look at the many shades of the Jungle King's mane.



(He begins with traditional black hair)



(Swimming in bleach as his hair goes blonde)



(Check out the fire red hair. Maybe it is the dust from the rocks)



(Now he goes punk purple. Too cool!)



(And the ending has him as a brunette.)

I joke about his tresses, but the game is solid. It is fun and a really cool game. While Jungle Hunt is the same game, the thought of swinging around as some old explorer in a pith helmet just is not the same. Oh well, at least with MAME we can play the original.

VIC 20 REVIEWS

By Tonks

Here we go with another bunch of reviews for the Vic 20. But before we do, here are a some Vic 20 web sites you might want to check out. The Vic doesn't seem to be very well represented on the world wide web, but here are a few that will give you plenty to read if you are interested in learning more about the mighty Vic 20.

[CARTZILLA](#)

Ward Shrake deserves some kind of Knighthood for the awesome work he has put into CARTZILLA. What CARTZILLA is, is a review and list of every Vic 20 cartridge known to exist. Ward focuses on game carts, but utilities and memory expansions get a brief mention.

Ward has obviously spent many hours and weeks and months hunting down and collecting Vic 20 carts, then documenting them and giving quality reviews. Lots of interesting facts are also given. So extensive is Ward's research and archiving, that it would be quite accurate to say that if the Cartridge isn't mentioned here in CARTZILLA, then it just doesn't exist.

This would easily be the best source of information about Vic 20 games that is available on the internet. An invaluable resource, one that all Vic 20 fans should feel indebted to Ward for creating.
www.funet.fi/pub/cbm/vic20/Cartzilla.html

[VICE EMULATOR](#)

Here is the ultimate Commodore emulator. VICE emulates the Vic 20, C64, C128, Plus 4 and the PET. As with most emulators, VICE isn't as good as playing with a real Vic 20. But as Vic 20s become harder to find and components break down and cannot be replaced, Emulation is the next best thing.

I must admit that I prefer to use PC-VIC as an emulator, but development seemed to stop on that about 5 years ago. VICE is in continual development and each upgrade makes the emulator better and better. Log on, download the latest version of VICE, find some game downloads and "up-grade" your PC to a Vic 20.
www.viceteam.org/

[FUNET](#)

Here is a site just bursting at the seams with information on the Vic 20. Everything from game lists, hardware specs and heaps of downloads can be found here.

This was the place that Ward Shrake archived all the game carts that he collected. Sadly these have been removed from the site due to copy right infringement. Hopefully this might some day be sorted out and all the ROM images will be restored.

However, while the ROM images was my main reason for visiting this site, there is still heaps of other stuff to keep you coming back.
www.funet.fi/pub/cbm/vic20/

And now onto some reviews.....

COSMIC JAILBREAK

Here is a real fun twist on the Space Invaders theme. In the centre of the screen is the Cosmic Jail, holding three alien criminals. Lining both the left and right hand sides of the screen are other aliens with just two things on their mind - to release their captured friends and to blow you to pieces. The aliens move in from the side towards the jail. When they reach the jail they take a piece of the jail away. If they can remove enough of the jail they can save the alien criminals and it's game over. Your job is to shoot the aliens before they can destroy the jail. This is easier said than done as the aliens constantly fire at you and as the game continues on the aliens steadily get faster and faster. This an excellent game. Graphics and sound are basic but functional. It is another example of gameplay winning out. The pace of the game is good and you very easily get sucked right into the game.

My Score - 8/10

STAR BATTLE

Star Battle is a Galaxian clone, and a pretty good one at that. One of the big debates with Vic 20 fans is which is better, the official Galaxian by Atarisoft or this clone by Commodore. My opinion is "six of one half a dozen of the other". In other words, both have their praise points and both have their faults. Graphically Star Battle is pretty good. The sprites are monochrome, but are very well defined. They certainly look better than the blocky ones in Galaxian. But I don't think they move as smoothly. It just seems a little rough to me. However, this is not to say this is a bad game. It is very enjoyable and one of the better arcade shooters on the Vic. Perhaps the main problem with Star Battle is that it is one of the rarer carts out there and one not many people may have the chance to enjoy.

My Score - 8/10

SUPER AMOK!

If you have been reading my Vic 20 reviews since I began writing them, then you would know that I reviewed a game called AMOK! in the very first reviews I did. Well here we have the sequel, and what a great improvement it is. Super Amok is like Amok on steroids. Everything is just better. Better graphics, better sound, better gameplay, better game. Super Amok is a Bezerk clone. You find yourself in a simple electrified maze surrounded by killer robots. The aim is to kill the robots and escape from the room before they get you. Take too long and a swarm of smaller aliens come out and try to run you down. This has a similar effect to Evil Otto in Bezerk, but the good news is that these smaller aliens can be killed. Super Amok is a brilliant game. Like Star Battle, it is quite hard to find. But even if you have to fork out a few dollars on ebay for it, it will be well worth it.

My Score - 9/10

THE SKY IS FALLING

Okay, what we have here is a game that is meant to be aimed at kids. So if we can all cut out the macho charades, there is a game to enjoy. The game instructions tell you that you are to help Chicken Little catch the pieces of the sky as they fall to earth. What we have here is a clone of Kaboom - or to perhaps be a little more accurate, a clone of the very ancient Atari game Avalanche. You use the paddle controllers to move your basket back and forth across the bottom of the screen and catch the falling pieces of sky. This is made harder as your basket becomes smaller as you reach higher levels. The game is very basic, but I just become so addicted. Perhaps I need to attend "The Sky is Falling Anonymous". Or maybe I am just crazy. But I really like this game. The biggest problem I face is when my six year old son beats my high score. Also a little more colour would have made the game better to look at instead of all the one colour.

My Score - 6/10

FOURTH ENCOUNTER

Here is an interesting game that just fails to reach its full potential. Fourth Encounter is shoot em up with some similarities to Megamania on the Atari VCS. Waves of very weird looking aliens swoop down and around the screen. As in most shoot em ups, your job is to blast these aliens to bits.

Technically this is an impressive game. The way the screen scrolls in and out of the screen between levels and the huge amount of sprites that can be on the screen is all very impressive. But the repetitive gameplay just lets it down from being a real classic. A bit more variety and it would have been a winner. But that is not to say you won't get quite a few hours of great fun with this game. The graphics are very good. Sound is good but the death sound does get annoying after a while - a good incentive to not die.

My Score - 7/10

(Tonks - (Andrew Tonkin) is a retro gaming fan from Australia, whose first ever game machine was the Vic 20. He now has 14 Vic 20's and isn't entirely sure why?!? Tonks and his wife have just found out that in August their family of four will be increasing by one. Does anyone out there know of any classic games for five people?????)

Retro Game and Computer Party

There will be a retro game and computer party on June 19, 2004, at the Trefpunt, Kerkweg 21, Maarssen, Holland.

We have already invited the

- computermuseum
- classicgaming.nl
- * retrogames.nl
- SNES web
- De CVML
- The Bonami computer museum
- de Spellenmarkt
- HCC Games
- HCC MSX
- HCC Sinclair
- HCC Basic
- HCC P2000
- HCC 6500 etc.

We will try to get all fans and active groups together. Look at this website for more details:

<http://commodore-gg.hobby.nl/juni19.htm>.

THE ATARI TIMES ANNOUNCES THE COMPLETION OF THE 2004 COMPENDIUM

WINTER HAVEN, FL - The editor of The Atari Times (www.ataritimes.com) has announced the completion of the annual paper-based book titled the 2004 Compendium. A limited-run of copies have been printed to accommodate the demand.

The book includes 102 page issue of news, features, reviews, and previews for all Atari home systems that have appeared on the website over the past year. These include articles for the Jaguar, Lynx, 7800, 5200, 2600, home computers, and even the arcade systems. In addition, the 2004 Compendium includes nearly 20 pages of previously unreleased material as well as a color cover.

Gregory D. George, editor and writer for The Atari Times commented, "As always, it was an exhausting month coordinating the creation of the book. But I always enjoy working on it!" He continued, "I was very pleased at the final outcome of the book and the articles included are some of the best ever."

The pricing of the 2004 Compendium is \$14.00 plus \$4 for continental U.S. shipping (outside the continental U.S. air mail shipping is \$8.)

More information about The Atari Times 2004 Compendium can be found at <http://www.ataritimes.com/store/compendium.html>

The Atari Times is a web-based newsletter devoted to all Atari game systems. Updates to the site are on a weekly basis. Visit <http://www.ataritimes.com/> for Atari related news, previews, reviews, and feature articles.

Letters to the Editor

Put an article about a game that may be a hoax and you get a bunch of emails. From intelligent to downright wacky, we got a stack of letters. Here is a sampling of some of the emails:

"Hi,

I have something to say about this game. Its not really much. I am German and I was very amazed when I read that it might have been made by an German Company. I can say that it was definatly not made by an german Company.

The first thing is that the Company is an Ltd. Usually german Companies add of America to their Name like Volkswagen did. Volkswagen in the USA is called Volkswagen of America Ltd. So the Company would have called "Sinneslöschchen GmbH". Then it would be definatly a german company. The german term for Ltd is GmbH.

The Name sounds very Strange. If you translate the Name into English it makes sense. It would be sensorialerase oder sensoryerase. Whoever decided to give this "company" a name just startet learning english and / or just grabbed a dictionary and putted two words together that it sounds like german. If he could speak german he would have given the name "Sinneslöschung".

"Sinneslöschung" makes sense and doesn't sound weird. By the way, it makes no sense to give the company the name what their product will do. It would be the same if a computercompany would call herself Calculating Ltd because computers calculate. I also have taken a look at your links. One report says that all the people who played the game had some kind of amnesia after playing the game or have been waken up in the night screaming. That might be the reason why someone decided the name "Sinneslöschchen".

That was the normal letter. Now here are the odd ones:

If you mention this game again, we will be forced to pay you a visit. Consider this your only warning.

Guess I never was very good at listening. Hopefully they will bring cake when they come to visit.

I remember playing this game back....no wait I don't remember the game....wait I do remember. What were we talking about?

Sounds like me before a big test.

My friend's brother's friend's sister knew a guy who helped design the game. But he just disappeared. Really!

My guess is that he was eaten by the alligators in the sewer.

If you send me \$1,000.00, I will email you the rom.

Hey, aren't you the guy who tried to sell me those Parker Bros protos?

Now onto the regular part of the Letters to the Editor.

So like when are you going to release a magazine and start making some money off this newsletter?

I have been asked this question at least 50 times. The problem is that I saw what an excellent job that was done with Classic Gamer magazine and they could not stay in business. I cannot see myself doing any better than they did. As far as making money off it, I have begun this month to put in a donation box for people who want to donate money to the website. Now that I do not sell product anymore, the cost of the website comes from my pocket. Granted, I do get a little back from the ebay banners (the only ones that ever paid off), but it does not cover the costs. So if you want to make a donation, it is appreciated.

So what is your favorite video game based movie?

This is a trick question, isn't it. Since most of the video game based movies are bad, I can only think of a few that I would watch more than once. I was one of a handful that did enjoy Resident Evil. Don't really care for the games (hate the way your player moves, it just annoys the daylights out of me), but I liked the movie. Granted, I am a big fan of zombie movies, so that really helped.

While I did not think the first Tomb Raider was a great movie, it did have Chris Barrie in it (I am a huge Red Dwarf fan, my all-time favorite TV show). Oh yeah, Angelina Jolie was easy on the eyes.

More TV Controllers Coming!

With the success of the Atari controller as well as the Namco and Intellivision controllers, it is only expected that more are coming! So get ready for this holiday when there will be a plethora of choices for classic and neo-classic game fans!

1. A re-released Activision TV Games with Pitfall!, Atlantis, River Raid, Spider Fighter, Crackpots, Freeway, Tennis, Boxing, Ice Hockey, and Grand Prix.
2. Another Namco TV Games with Ms. Pac-Man, Galaga, Pole Position, Xevious, and Mappy.
3. Marvel Spider-Man TV Games featuring 5 original Spider-Man games.
4. Capcom TV Games including 1942, Ghosts 'N Goblins, Mega Man, Gun Smoke and Side Arms.
5. Midway TV Games including Mortal Kombat, Spy Hunter, Rampage, Joust, Defender I & II, Robotron:2084, Marble Madness, Smash TV, Super Sprint and Paperboy.
6. Radica's Genesis controller-shaped Arcade Legends Sega Genesis unit will house seven older Sega games including Sonic the Hedgehog.
7. Arcade Legends Space Invaders, meanwhile, comes with a simpler ambidextrous controller at a lower \$24.99 price point. In addition to the original Space Invaders, it's to include four other Taito

classics: Phoenix, Lunar Rescue, Colony 7, and Qix.

That should be enough to satisfy any gamer! As you can see, there is a large variety of games available and the prices that range from \$20.00 to \$30.00, they make great little stocking stuffers (hard to believe I am talking about stocking stuffers in February).

RETROGAMING COMMERCIAL VAULT

by Adam King

It's that time once again to dip into the Vault and bring out another pair of commercials from days gone by.

Throughout the 1980s, the big selling point of most game systems was arcade ports. Ever since Space Invaders for the Atari VCS, eager players were almost salivating at the thought of being able to play their favorite arcade games at home, without waiting in line or blowing 30 dollars worth of quarters. The challenge was to get the game as close to the arcade as possible, and hence the hook. A prime example was the Atari 5200. Atari put out many commercials promising arcade-like graphics and gameplay, including the two examples below.

Both these ads can be viewed and downloaded from the Atari Historical Society (www.atarimuseum.com).

Commercial 1

Our first ad takes place in a white room with a 5200 and TV screen set up to resemble an arcade machine. A game player walks in and begins playing the 'new' system as an announcer gives us the scoop on the system, saying it's like having your own arcade machine.

"Arcade players, get ready. The new Atari 5200 SuperSystem is here! With a controller so advanced it play arcade. Graphics so real it looks arcade. With arcade hits you can't play on any other system. No other home system can touch it. The new Atari 5200 SuperSystem. It's as good as you are. Maybe even better."



Remember that song by Cream?



"Quarters schuarters. I got my Supersystem!"



"Come on, I'm just as good as this machine."

Commercial 2

One interesting feature about the 5200 is it was one of the first systems to have a PAUSE button on the controller, so you can temporarily freeze the action and resume it later. This ad tells of the 5200's arcade-like capabilities, and mentions that very feature. You probably remember this ad. After a comparison between Atari and arcade games, we see a teenager play the system, until he gets a phone call from his girlfriend Judy. So he uses the handy PAUSE feature to take the call.

(First we get some comparison between arcade games and their 5200 ports)

ANNOUNCER: "This is an arcade game shows Centipede). This is the new Atari SuperSystem (shows Atari version). Arcade(shows Defender). Atari SuperSystem (shows Atari version).

(At this point we see the guy in the screengrabs play his 5200)

ANNOUNCER: "You may like the SuperSystem better. It has some of the best arcade and sports games. Even does something no arcade game can."

MOTHER (offscreen): "Telephone! It's Judy!"

ANNOUNCER: "Let's you freeze the action."

(The boy smiles and presses the PAUSE key before saying, "Hello, Judy?")

ANNOUNCER: "The new 5200 SuperSystem."



"Time for some arcade-at-home action."



"Uh-oh. A phone call. I can't leave my machine. Or can I?"



The magic button.

Time to sign off for another month. As far as the CD goes, it's about 67% finished. I hope to wrap it up in the next few months. Thanks for reading and remember, the 5200 is as good as you are. Maybe better.

Retrogaming Times Top 10 Video Games from 1984

By Alan Hewston

Here are the results of your votes for the best video games which had the original version released in 1984. As usual, I got some help narrowing the list down to 40 titles for you to vote on, but probably made mistakes by not including: Beach Head II, Impossible Mission, Karateka, Spellunker & Wavy Navy. Also Montezuma's Revenge from 1984 was thrown into the 19083 survey.

Most voters were RT readers, but some were drawn from posting in RGVC and still others are fellow gamers that I asked (bugged) for their votes. With 92 votes, we've surpassed the previous survey for 1983 – many thanks for all of your votes. I did not yet make a collage of 1984 games but maybe for next month.

Every one of the 40 classics received at least one vote, but "Wild Gunman" and "SWAT" obviously should have been replaced with titles omitted from above. 66% of you voted for "Marble Madness" giving it the greatest percentage of votes in our 3 years surveyed '82, '83 & '84. And . . . as I suspected, the transition away from the classic "Joystick" era caused several of you to question the games on this list – often not liking many, or even knowing 10. The average reply dropped to only 8.48 games selected per voter, out of a maximum 10. '82 and '83 had 9.61 & 9.36 respectfully. OK, so on with the winners.

(# of votes) & Title
(61) Marble Madness
(55) Paperboy
(54) Pitfall II: Lost Caverns
(39) Punch Out
(37) 1942
(37) Summer Games I & II
(32) Karate Champ
(28) Excite Bike
(27) Bruce Lee
(24) Ghostbusters

Those that just missed it:

(23) Space Taxi – just missing, despite a vote from the game's creator.
(22) Kung Fu Master
(22) Rescue on Fractalus
(21) Star Wars: Return of the Jedi

(21) Beyond Castle Wolfenstein
(20) Championship Lode Runner

If you'd like to see the complete results and the plans for future surveys (as always work in progress), then click here:

<http://my.stratos.net/~hewston95/RT/RTSurveyResultsGameoftheYear.xls>

For feedback, or to help in my future surveys (1978 & 1979 especially), contact Alan Hewston at hewston95@stratos.net.

Sites of the Month

Things will be a bit different this month. Besides the two sites that I usually spotlight, I am also going to put a link to a very interesting article. Since most of us grew up during the Golden Age of Video Games, we have fond memories of the arcades. For many of us, a trip to the arcade to play the latest video games and pinball machines was a highlight of our youth. But as we all know, the arcades are a dying breed. It is getting to a point where our kids will never get to know the joy of the arcades, like we experienced. Much like our parents going to drive-ins, there are quite a few people today who never experienced a drive-in movie. So read the following article about the State of the Arcades as I think many of you will find it quite interesting.

<http://www.1up.com/article2/0,4364,1526151,00.asp>

Now onto the Sites of the Month!

Atarimania

If you want a site with a ton of stuff about Atari systems and computers, then this is the site. It has a ton of screen shots of carts, systems, catalogs and more. There is a lot of information to read. You could get lost on this site and suddenly realize that four hours have gone by. It is a very impressive site.

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

Dragon's Lair Project

For many of us gamers, Dragon's Lair was a turning point in our video game lives. While the gameplay was shallow, it showed us the future of video game graphics and it was hard to look at other video games the same after that. You can tell its appeal as versions of the game are still selling to this day. Not too many games still sell after 20 years. Here is a site dedicated to Dragon's Lair and pretty much all Laserdisc games. Enjoy the site and remember a time before Dragon's Lair when graphics weren't as important.

<http://www.dragons-lair-project.com/>

New Computers - Classic Controllers

With all the emulators available, both commercial and non-commercial, gamers have a wealth of classic and neo-classic games available to them. From Atari to Nintendo and every other system you can imagine, there are no shortage of games and emulators to play. But play a few with your keyboard and soon you will be begging for a classic controller. Well, if you are partial to the Atari 2600 controller or think the Nintendo 8-Bit game pad is the best, you are in luck! There are two different companies that offer either classic controllers that are modified to work on the PC or

adaptors that allow you to use your classic controllers. This is a dream come true for many classic gamers who want to play all the games on the PC but still have the original controller.

The first company is called Retrozone and they offer modified Nintendo 8-Bit and Super Nintendo controllers that work on your computer. They look just like the original because they are the original. They just had some modifications to allow your PC to be able to read the inputs. Price is \$25.00 per controller or for five dollars less, you can order a kit and do it yourself (personally for \$5.00, I would rather let someone else do it). They even offer a service where you can send in a controller like a NES Advantage and have it modified! Here is a link to the site:

<http://www.sealiecomputing.com/retrozone/>

The second company is called Black Chopper and they offer an adaptor that can be expanded. With the adaptor, you can add on modules that allow you to use different controllers. They currently have modules that support Atari 2600 controllers, NES, Super NES and Sega Genesis. They are also working on ones for Colecovision, Turbo Grafx and more. While the Unitibblue Adaptor (as they call it) is not cheap (\$80.00), the expansion modules are quite affordable. It is only \$15.00 for each adaptor, so you can expand easily and inexpensively after the initial investment. And if they keep adding on more, it will be one that you can keep adding to! Here is the link to their website:

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

The Many Faces of...Montezuma's Revenge

by Alan Hewston

After a false start last fall, this month's hero is finally "PJ" aka Panama Joe, who stars in "Montezuma's Revenge". I'm now using the Parker Brothers release date of 1984, whereas the original Atari 8 bit version by Utopia software was 1983. My confusion about what date to use probably does not matter. In our RT 1983 survey it finished tied for sixth place. Montezuma's Revenge is one of those titles most people love at first sight . . . and why not? It's a colorful action/adventure game with PJ – our happy go lucky explorer. He isn't into violence, he likes adventuring, collecting treasures and he stayed in school – to get his archeology degree, of course. So here goes yet another (really long) 20th anniversary review.

NO Spoilers

Almost no spoilers, so go ahead and read ASAP. If you've never played Montezuma's Revenge and/or never made a map, then now is a good time to make one, or use an existing one online. Unlike Pitfall! or Pitfall II, where making a map is critical, or should be considered a significant part of the game's overall experience - I think that you need not feel guilty starting out with a map. Sure, if you like making maps, then go ahead as it is fun and easy. You'll score points more easily too, but go ahead and play without one as well. If unsure, a good compromise would be to set up a VCR to record your game(s). Then play them fresh "out of the box" without a map, using your memory, skills and senses to guide you into the unknown. Then at some point, stop and watch the video and make your map chamber by chamber. If this becomes a chore, then use someone else's map – but DO NOT use any information on which path to take. The key to this adventure is not so much the map itself, but knowing how to label and use one effectively. MR is a good combination of an action, puzzle, maze and adventure game all in one. IMHO, without a map, you should still be able to guide PJ through completion of 3 or more levels and have a blast humming "La Cucharacha". Beyond level 3, a map will be really useful unless you have memorized each chamber's layout and location. Fortunately, levels 4 to 9 all look like level 3.

Parker Brothers

Bad News: Is that the game is by PB who doesn't credit its programmers and usually disables the pause buttons. Good News is that you almost never need to pause the action in this game. It would still help about 5% of the time, such as when you need a break or need to read the map and are stuck between 2 action-filled chambers. In most rooms, you'd just park PJ in a safe spot & take a break. Bad News: is that the map is not the same for all versions. It is completely different on the Sinclair Spectrum, Atari 2600, and on the original Atari 8 bit version by Utopia. Good News: is that all other Parker Brothers versions use the same map, with every object identical to within a pixel or two. If you are playing the Spectrum or 2600 version, then the map is much simpler, so you really should try to make your own map. Overall, I'd say that Parker Brother's found a great game here, just begging to be made into sequels and even a MR Construction Kit - with Championship MR in the wings. The game is easy to learn, builds up gradually yet is hard to master. Quite addictive and very deep in content & size. If you've never heard of this game, it's not PB fault that the crash came along and their video games department got lost in the shuffle. Read about a modern version of MR and a recent interview with the (16 year old back then) designer Robert Jaeger at:

<http://c64.users2.50megs.com/mirror/f-montezuma.htm>

I wonder if there are any TV commercials in the RT treasure vault?

Chambers

Inside Montezuma's fortress are 100 chambers in each of the 9 levels. Each level's map and contents are identical every time you begin it and only change (inside rooms) due to your actions. There three colors of doors that are locked thus blocking your progress. But for each locked door there is exactly 1 key of the same color inside that level. Each chamber's floor plan is fixed and the first time that you enter its contents will always be the same. Once you pick up or use an item, make an enemy go away, or unlock a doorway, then the next time you enter that chamber, it will be as you changed it. The enemy creatures will always be waiting at the same locations and moving the same directions every time. There are: doors (Red, Blue & Grey [I call them White] to be unlocked), keys (colored R, B, G), ladders (Up & Down), conveyor belts (moving L/R, fast or slow), poles (Down only), ropes (U & D), Swords (will vanquish a Spider or Skull), Torches (illuminate rooms on this level only), Amulets (5 seconds of invulnerability to enemies), Jewels (collect them), fire pits (touch turns PJ into a puff of smoke), flashing laser gates (deadly when "on"), force field floors (disappearing on / off), and enemy creatures (Snakes, Skulls & Spiders – all deadly to the touch). The Skulls can either roll L/R or bounce L/R. Spiders can move 4 directions and climb ladders! Snakes are stationary, but invulnerable to the Sword. Neither Skulls nor Spiders can jump, but they can move overtop of other creatures.

Pixel by pixel there may be slight size variations from version to version – but everything is essentially identical. Montezuma's fortress is a pyramid, with PJ starting each game on the top floor, where you choose which level to begin at 1, 2, or 3. The goal is to reach the treasure vault at the bottom and then continue on to the next harder level. Levels 1 & 2 are only 50% & 60% filled, but all others use all 100 spots. As you progress further into a level (ie descend to lower floors), you'll eventually reach the "Darkness", which really adds some charm to this game. Not to mention gloom and doom and a real challenge. It moves one floor higher each difficulty level, until level 9 which begins completely in the dark. By "dark" it is meant that you cannot see the floor plan or any items to collect. The walls, ladders poles, ropes, floors, conveyer belts and doors are not seen. Fortunately you can see the creatures, force fields, laser gates and fire pits. With each harder level there are more hazards, more and faster enemies, and finally, some really deadly creatures. They will look just like the ones you've been used to, but can only be eliminated by a sword. Up until then, every enemy killed is removed from the game in that chamber. This is not the case for these special defenders who

will keep coming back until you use a sword on them – so beware! One more Sword might make the difference in continuing the game, or dropping all remaining PJs to one deadly foe.

Not Random

Within each chamber the only random events are choices made by the Spiders when they reach intersections, where they either switch paths, reverse, or continue onwards. The creatures do not come after PJ, they simply move the full extent of every path. Globally, there is no randomness factor that impacts the rest of the action elsewhere. Within a level, the objects that you acquire and the sequence that you use them will affect the remaining choices for what paths are readily available. For example, if you've filled up your inventory with its max of 5 items, then you must use one before you can acquire another. This applies to the treasures (Jewels), even though they are not shown in your inventory. So, if you have 5 items, but no Red key, then you must use another item first, in order to pick up a Red key & unlock that Red door in your way. Sounds simple, but you should complete your map and then plan out your conquest in advance. Sometimes the best path will include back tracking. The easiest or best path for you may be different from level to level and your actions on one level do not affect any other levels.

Blocked

You may find your self blocked by locked doors, but all doors can be unlocked. There is always a key that you can get to somewhere in that level. Unfortunately, that key may be tough to acquire & lead to your death as well. Besides walls & doors, some barriers may not seem obvious. Dropping or sliding down where you cannot climb back up makes for a possible one way path. There may be another way to go around the level and eventually return to that spot, but the path is essentially one way. Still other actions within rooms make it very difficult (or time consuming) to retrace your steps (ie reversing past 2 Spiders). Some paths are completely blocked by an enemy or hazard. Finally, there is also a hidden one way door as well.



Arcade: None

Original: Atari 8 bit original version (1983, Robert Jaeger, Utopia – concept by Mark Sunshine)

All other home versions by Parker Brothers 1984.

Apple II, Atari 2600, Atari 5200, Atari 8 bit (2nd unofficial? version), Colecovision, Commodore 64 & Sinclair Spectrum.

Classic Sequels: None – but my daughter enjoys “Montezuma’s Return” on GBA.

Home Version Similarities: [where Utopia = Atari 8 bit version by Utopia] Except those in <>: all home versions have: not much of a demo, but a choice of 3 start levels (1, 2 or 3) <Utopia, 2600> with 9 levels in all <2600 – only 3, Utopia ?>; the same maze with every room identical and your score, inventory, lives remaining and current level are displayed at all times <Spectrum, Utopia, 2600>; continue any game once on level 1 <2600, Utopia>; darkness moves up one floor per level; there is no timer, but limited time in the vault; bonus lives every 10K, and then 20K after level 3. The sound effects are plentiful, but there's only a little bit of music – heard when you collect the treasures & earn bonus lives.

Disqualified: Spectrum (NA)

The Sinclair Spectrum had its share of Parker Brothers titles and this one should play well. I do not have this system to review it for you, but there is a nice map under the name “Panama Joe” at: <http://www.zx-spectrum.wz.cz/>

A gamer named “Pavero” made this map but may not realize the game is actually called “Montezuma’s Revenge”. See my map of this version as well. At a glance, it looks to be closer to the Utopia version than the other PB versions. Makes me really want to try it on an emulator and see level 2 etc.

Have Nots: Atari 2600 (39)

My first reaction was that although the game is watered down it is worth playing. Too bad they did not incorporate multiple creatures & allow for several more levels. But they did find ways to make stationary hazards (laser gates) more unique and difficult. Regardless, the Gameplay is very good (7) with limitations to displaying the lives remaining, having a smaller map (25 chambers) and only 1 start level. The treasure vault is a room with 1 Jewel that pops up and you move to it, grab it, then another pops up etc. Level 3 repeats for the duration of the game. Addictiveness is enjoyable (8) and will keep your coming back for a while. The lack of variety and depth does hurt. Also, the screen size and close proximity of objects to the exits leads to more accidental / frustrating deaths. Graphics are effective and really do the job (7). The animation is not too bad, but the limited number of items in motion, details and object size compared to each chamber are important, yet missing. The Sound is pretty good (7), with only a few effects missing. Controls are perfect (10). The cart is a little rare, so for the same price, buy the CV version.

To get some 2600 help, see tips from Mark Androvich at: <http://www.geocities.com/TimesSquare/Lair/9260/mont.html>

WARNING This Atari 2600 map tells you where to go:

<http://members.tripod.com/~PitfallHarry/images/MontezumasRevenge/MontezumasRevengeLvl1.html>

Ben Valdes, RT reader and occasional writer has made the above colorful maps of the 3 levels of the 2600 version. Ben has the “Pitfall Harry” site and made those fantastic Pitfall! & Pitfall II maps and more. Many thanks from us to Ben for his efforts. Check out his entire site and tell him hello and thanks.

Have Nots: Apple II (42)

My first reaction was the game is well done, among the best AP2 games reviewed to date. The Gameplay is all there and super (9). The only difference that I spotted was the Amulet does not effect the “look” of the creatures. I am unsure how much of the map is identical as I’ve not played past level 4.

Addictiveness is awesome (10) with the all the thrills plus a pause button <0>. But then, having not played it a lot, there was a glitch which if frequent would hurt severely. After completing level one, I got bounced out of the treasure room and into room 98 where the game crashed. Graphics are

impressive (8), but could use a little help in making the animation less choppy. The game also plays a bit slowly, which can take some time getting used to. Otherwise the details, color, clarity and action are right up there with the medal winners. As expected, the Sound is good enough (6) to enjoy. The added musical score at the beginning is not enough to make up for the crummy effects sounds, and the “squeaky toy” sound made EVERY time you jump. 1 or 2 effects are missing as well. Controls are well done (9) with a choice of keyboard and setting up your own keys. But the analog controls and slow game speed keep it from being perfect. Available on Disk only.

Once again, many thanks to Tom “DigitalDinos.com” McLaren for his continued Apple II assistance.

Have Nots: Atari 8 bit by Utopia (43)

My first reaction was that this is not MR, but a cheap hack. With apologies to Robert Jaeger as I had played the other versions first. This one is the odd man out, since Parker Brothers did not release this version. Perhaps there was no official PB version for the Atari computers but there was a version made that looks like the 5200 port. I also had to use my 1200 XL as the 800's would not work properly. Gameplay is impressive (8) with all the same essence found in the PB version, but different. You only get to choose to play level one, but by “FRYING” my system, I had a harder version show up (3 Skulls instead of 1 on the first chamber). So I'm pretty sure there are higher levels, but I ran out of time. The first thing you'll notice is an annoying bat that shows up if you take too much time. This just makes things harder, but why wasn't it included in the PB versions. The map is not well conceived since there is only one path that you'd ever follow thus 31 of the chambers are not needed to complete the level. There are 34, instead of 7 rooms with no creature (Empty) at all. Most, if not all of these rooms are glitches where a Skull is visible just off the top edge of the room. Perhaps the game was unfinished – and rushed out the door. There is a major glitch where a chamber is one way that should not be (Room 23 to 33). Several other minor things like the Spiders behaving differently, and fake exits that are not really there. Room for room, without checking closely, all the chamber layouts seem identical to the PB versions, but the contents have been varied, mostly missing and the map is just screwed up. There are only a trivial number of doors and keys seen. All this really makes it look like someone hacked the PB version and didn't put it together in a way that makes any sense. But, in reality it was the first version. The entrance to the treasure vault is replaced by Montezuma himself. This was dropped by PB – but not sure why. He stomps and if you are on the ground you die. You better get that almost impossible White key to acquire the only torch to see when he is stomping. Addictiveness is very fun (8), but too frustrating. With the path already set, there is no planning needed, so few choices for what to do. The bat makes you panic too much, but it can be dodged at times. Fortunately, there is a pause <Space Bar> so you can stop and take a break any time you want. The worst impact to the early design of MR is your # of lives remaining is only shown when you earn or lose a life. Keep track of them or else. The Hall of Champions (deleted by PB) keeps track of your high score efforts. Finally, the rooms do not reset when you die, so you had better exit and come back in to reset them. The reason I discovered this is via a feature (bug) that was not properly play tested (or maybe it was) and will exhaust all your lives. Room 7 (on my map) has fire balls on the bottom of the ropes – awesome – why wasn't this in the PB versions? These balls move up slowly eating away the rope. Really cool, but this is the wrong room to have them as only one mistake and all your lives will be lost with nothing you can do. There is a bit of a demo showing how PJ moves. Overall these 2 categories probably deserve more points taken away, but those added elements are cool then there is something neat about having another version to play – albeit an extremely challenging version. Graphics are great (9), loaded with action, animation, color, variety, the darkness effect, and details. The title screen is unique to this version. Sound is pleasant (8) and you may think I've overrated MR in general, but there are an awful lot of well-done effects in place in all versions. This version also has a background noise always playing. Not sure if I care for it yet. Controls are perfect (10). Available only on disk.

The 8 bit map by Peter is at:
<http://mapy.atari8.info/montezuma.php>

Bronze Medal: Colecovision (44)

My first reaction was disappointment that the pause was removed. But instead this allows you to swap in and use those Atari sticks without thinking. Colecovision controllers were clumsy for me (usually are not too bad) but with Atari I score them perfect (10). The Gameplay is fantastic (9) complete. The Addictiveness is superb (9). The Graphics are a step down from the rest, having less animation, less color and detail - but still very enjoyable (8). Sound is crisp (8) same as the others. This cart is a little rare, but worth the money. This version finishes fourth, but then only if we assume there was an official Atari 8 bit computer version by PB. Oh yes, there is a glitch seen in later levels in room 98 that leads to repeated deaths until you exhaust your supply. I now stay clear of that room, and so should you.

Gold Medal: Commodore 64 & Atari 5200, Atari 8 bit (45)

Atari 5200

My first reaction - this game is unplayable without a Masterplay Interface. It could be some poor programming, but the Analog sticks and even the Wico sticks do not appear to work. So just give up unless you have a MI or the new 5200 controller adapters. The Gameplay is well done (9) and complete. The Addictiveness is wonderful (9), despite missing the stripped away pause. The Graphics are first class (9). The Sound is pleasant (8). Controls are perfect (10), but only with the right controllers.

Atari 8 bit Computer – PB version

My first reaction - this game was not officially released that I can tell, but let's not penalize it either. I am pretty sure that there exists a hacked version of the 5200 – as seen in a hacked or prototype title screen. But there still may have been a PB version, just not released. Regardless if there was an official PB 8 bit computer release, it would likely match the 5200 scores – where one was the original the other the port. If so, then there is hope that this version (which I do not have) has a pause added, has no H/W conflicts, and no controller problems. Thus this is the version to get and play.

Commodore 64

My first reaction was I'll never forget seeing the "darkness" for the first time, and then figuring out how to illuminate the lower chambers. This version matches the scores of all other medal winners. The Gameplay is well done (9). There is the annoying feature of the original disk banging the 1541 drive really hard several times. The Addictiveness is outstanding (9). The Graphics are super (9). Note that the Grey keys are actually a light Blue on the C64. Sound is very nice (8), probably the best. Controls are perfect (10). For unlimited lives, and a chance to map out this game, try resetting the machine several times and then poke 36190,230 I had no luck, but it could be something requiring an add on cartridge to do this. This version is only available on disk.

More Maps

To see my own unfinished efforts at mapping done on an excel spreadsheet see:

<http://my.stratos.net/~hewston95/RT/ManyFacesofMRMaps.xls>

Feel free to ask me any questions about them.

An exercise for our "bit age" era students is to find out if the SMS version uses the same exact same PB map. I am pretty sure it does, and there are codes to star playing at various levels.

Come back next time for another 20th Anniversary tribute from 1984, "Ghostbusters" on the Atari 2600, 8 bit, C64, & Apple II. Contact Alan Hewston at: Hewston95@NOSPAMstratos.net or visit the

8-Bit Face Off

by Adam King

This is a column that I decided to do, and may continue to do if there's enough interest. Not to sound blasphemous, I like the pre-crash era, but my favorite era of gaming has to be the 8-bit wars between the Nintendo Entertainment System, and the Sega Master System. Between the two systems we got some amazing games, and a few were actually released on both systems. Since Tom has opened up Retrogaming Times to include the two systems I just mentioned, I decided to take a look at games released for both the NES and SMS and see which system got the better game.

First I should clear up a couple of things. This column is NOT meant to compete with Alan Hewston's excellent "Many Faces Of" piece. My column may serve the same purpose, but I'm covering later titles, while Alan still does his Joystick-era comparisons. Also I know that ports of arcade games were released on the Sega Genesis, the Super NES, and others, but this is strictly between the Nintendo and Sega systems 8-bit systems. It wouldn't be fair to compare 8-bit games to their 16-bit cousins, so no 16-bit games here.

My first comparison will be Double Dragon. Everybody's familiar with this famous game that started the street-fighting genre, but if you missed out, here's the lowdown. Double Dragon is about two martial arts brothers, Billy and Jimmy Lee, who learned to survive on the streets. The evil Black Shadow warriors have kidnapped Billy's girlfriend, Marion, so the brothers set out to rescue her. It's four missions of street fighting action as you and a friend take on an army of thugs. Your main weapons are your fists and a selection of special moves, including jump kicks, uppercuts, headbutts, and others. You can also find weapons along the way and use them against your foes. Many enemies attack you, including Abobo, Linda, the Chintai, Williams, Lopar, and the big man, Willy, who's the last boss.

This game was such a hit in the arcades that naturally everyone was hoping for a home version, and they got it. In fact the slogan was, "Never stand in line to play Double Dragon again." Double Dragon was one of two games released for the NES, Sega, Atari 2600 AND Atari 7800, the other being Rampage. Let me just say that neither Atari version is worth your time. The NES and Sega carts are good in their own ways, but which is the best.

Double Dragon NES (1988 Tradewest)

First out this game strays from the arcade version quite a bit. First of all there's no two-player simultaneous option, though the NES version does have a one-on-one versus mode which is decent. Nevertheless Billy Lee is on his own here. Also you don't start out with all your special moves; you have to earn them. You get experience points when you defeat your foes, and every 1000 points earns you a heart and a special attack. The levels have changed as well. Some are longer, others have new parts to them. All the arcade foes are here, but there's a bonus at the end of the game. If you beat Willy, your real final boss is Jimmy Lee. That's right, you have to battle your own brother to win the game.

The music is excellent and sounds just like the arcade tunes, while the sound effects are just okay. The controls work great. It's not too hard to pull off special attacks once you receive them. This version is not as frustrating as its SMS cousin. The lesser enemies aren't too hard to beat and go down with several good hits. Plus there's not as many cheap hits. You'll still get a good workout, though. If you die, you start from the spot you perished at. One major factor is there's no continues. If you lose all your lives you must start back from level 1. Arcade purist may dislike the changes, but

the new areas are fun to fight through. While this game is slightly hurt by the lack of a two-player co-op mode, the versus mode is pretty fun, especially for two players.

Double Dragon SMS (1988 Sega)

The SMS version, on the other hand, is very faithful to the arcade version. The levels resemble the coin-op for the most part, and the two-player simultaneous gameplay is intact. When you start you have all your special attacks right from the get go, so you can toss enemies and hit elbows all you want. Not much to say here except this is strictly Double Dragon gameplay here. Punch and kick your way to the end.

The graphics are pretty good. The stages look very close to the coin-op, and the characters have good animation. Though some characters look weird, especially Jimmy, who has blue hair! However there is much flicker, and that brings things down a little. Unfortunately the sound doesn't fare as well. The music is okay, but the sound effects are awful. The controls take some practice to master, but once you do you'll be able to bust out special moves with ease. The biggest strike against this game is that it's very difficult and frustrating. They take too many hits and always seem to get in cheap shots before you take them down. Plus sometimes your hits don't register properly. You do get continues in this version, which let you start from where you left off, and you will need them just to get to level 4! It's better to play with a friend so the enemies have someone else to beat up, and it helps a little.

Analysis

This first edition of the Face Off is a tough call. Both games do their job in capturing the spirit of Double Dragon. My rule is you can have the best graphics and sounds anywhere, but the bottom line is how fun is the game, and does it do a good job duplicating the arcade gameplay. Don't forget that a game doesn't have to be a 100% faithful translation to be just as good as the arcade (i.e. Space Invaders for the Atari 2600). Therefore, while the Sega version is the more closer of the two to the arcade coin-op, I'm going to give the NES version the nod here. The NES version is just slightly more satisfying to play through. The Sega version is still a fun and excellent translation, but if the difficulty was toned down, it would have taken the top spot. As it stands the NES gets the slight edge and wins the first round.

Winner: NES

Conclusion

This is possibly the largest issue in a few years. We have not had issues this big since we were in the 30's (there were some big issues back then, feel free to go back and check). Good to see the first 8-Bit Article done by Adam. I have one planned, but never got to it this issue. I must admit that I have been playing too much pinball. Add that to MAME, JAVA Dungeon Master and the recently purchased Activision Anthology for the PC (Yeah, I have the PS2 version, yet I still get the compute version. What can I say, I got it for \$5.00 plus shipping on ebay and it has more games and most importantly high score that can be saved. Just wish they let you put more than one high score per game and let you put initials as well as having more games save high scores but it is a good step in the right direction.), you have one person who is ignoring vital stuff like laundry, meals and Retrotimes. Good thing I am not selling anymore (other than ebay) or I would really be in trouble.

Come back next month as I continue to review MAME games as well as pinball games. There are plenty of great games to point out and some cool links for you!

-Tom Zjaba

(Finally went back and put the correct email address for all the old issues of RT. If you sent an email

and never heard back from me, it is quite possible that you sent it to a dead email account. That or you asked where to find roms for games.)