

Retrogaming Times

Issue #75 - November 2003

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The Polls Are Closed

We asked the big question and got some responses. While it was alot less than I got in previous questions, it was a fair amount. I remember when I could ask something and get 300-500 responses. Now, I do not even get a hundred. Anyway, here is the final vote.

35 votes - Yes, I want some coverage for Nintendo and Sega

28 votes - No, Keep it Pre-Crash coverage only

As you can see, it was fairly close. But the amount of total votes is quite discouraging. Oh well. So starting next issue, we will open coverage to include Nintendo 8-Bit, Sega Master System and Turbografx. I know some people emailed saying that there was Bit Age Times for coverage of these systems, but the truth is that Bit Age Times is history. I do not have the time or desire to do two newsletters anymore.

Intellivision Lives and Midway Arcade Treasures - The Reviews!

If you have a Playstation 2, there are now two more classic compilations to add to your library. Both just recently came out and are priced at \$19.99! Hard to go wrong at that price, right? Read on and find out.



Midway Arcade Treasures

We will start with the Midway Arcade Treasures. It is essentially the three compilation disks released on the Playstation 1, now in one collection. For the low price of \$19.99, you are getting 24 classic arcade games. Almost every one is a great game. Personally, I really like being able to go from early 1980's classics like Joust, Robotron and Root Beer Tapper to later hits like Rampage, Gauntlet and Klax. There is enough variety that you can find a game for anyone. There is also a good selection of multiplayer games like Joust, Joust 2, Rampage, Rampart and Gauntlet. It is nice that many of the small problems that were in the earlier versions (framerate problems with Spyhunter and others) and the games are now better set to work with the dual shock controllers. You can use the dual shock on games like Robotron and Smash TV to better emulate the arcade game. Sinistar works much better with the new setup and is easier to play. Overall, the games work and look better.

One problem I found is the menu. While I applaud Midway for trying something different with the Egyptian Hieroglyphics, I do not think it works. It is quite confusing at first, especially since the picture that shows up when you go over a hieroglyphic does not always say the name of the game. After awhile, you figure out all the games, but at first it is quite confusing. But on a positive note, you can easily bounce back and forth from one game to another.

A big bonus is that it allows you to save high scores. This was one big sore spot that I had with the Activision Anthology. This is what adds a ton of replayability as you try put up a score that your friends and family will not be able to beat. Such a little thing, yet it makes a world of difference.

The extras are nothing major. There is some interviews that were on the earlier compilations and some extra information or pictures. Overall, it is a nice addition, but nothing major. I wish they did a little more in this department. Heck, they could have sent someone to the Classic Gaming Expo and got a bunch of new information, interviews as well as a bunch of photos. Oh well, I guess the budget was tight.

The only real gripes I have with the collection are the lack of support for other controllers. There is no trackball support for Marble Madness, despite having it on the earlier compilations. This is a bummer, but not a big deal. The other gripe is the lack of Burgertime. I can understand some of the other games not included from the earlier compilations (Irem wanted too much money to include Moon Patrol, reportedly and Infogrames who now owns Atari did not want to give the rights to Millipede and Crystal Castles, again reportedly). But Burgertime is a bummer as it is one of my favorites from the earlier collections. My biggest dream would have been to not only have Burgertime, but have as an unlockable, Diner. I know it is a pipe dream, but we all need to dream.

Overall, it is an awesome collection and at the low price of \$19.99, it is a no brainer. To put it into perspective, it would have cost you twice as much to get a single game from this collection

on the Nintendo 8-Bit that it costs to get 24 games with extras on this one. And you are getting a nearly arcade perfect version to boot. And with so many great games, you will find this fast becoming one of your favorite compilations.

Here is a complete list of all the games:

720

Blaster

Bubbles

Defender

Defender 2

Gauntlet

Joust

Joust 2

KLAX

Marble Madness

Paperboy

Rampage

Rampart

RoadBlasters

Robotron 2084

Root Beer Tapper

Satan's Hollow

Sinistar

Smash TV

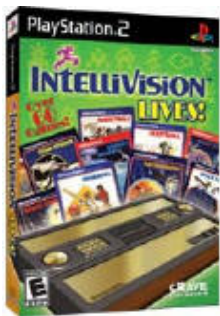
SPLAT!

SpyHunter

Super Sprint

Toobin'

Vindicators



Intellivision Lives!

Once again, I am reviewing the Playstation 2 version. This is because I have a PS2 and it is the first one out. Like the Activision Anthology collection, the Intellivision Lives offers you a ton of games, some unlockables and some songs to listen to. The two are very similar, but this is a good thing. So let us look at the pros and cons of this collection.

The first thing you will notice with the game is the look. It really does have the feeling of being in a pizza parlor during the 1980's. There are arcade machines around that have different games on them, grouped together by genres. There is also a jukebox that works as a way to change options and some photos on the wall that open up a history of Intellivision and interviews. It is

quite easy to navigate around the place and it is quite nice. About the only things that I would have added would be a few oddball mini games. You pass a dart board, how about allowing you to throw a few games? Not a big deal and it probably would have detracted from the Intellivision games, which are the stars of the show. One thing I must mention is that you need to pay attention to different lists of games as there are more than it shows. This is pretty much limited to the sports arcade machine. It may say Baseball, but there is really two games under it. You have the original and World Championship Baseball. So if you take this into consideration, you will soon find that there is well over the 60 games advertised, probably closer to 65.

The games themselves are well emulated. They look great (or as great as they originally did) and the sound is dead on. Nice to have the music playing in Thin Ice and Thunder Castle, two games that really had outstanding music. For the most part, they work great with the Playstation 2 dual shock controllers and there is even force feedback in some of the games. This will surprise you the first time as it is something that you do not expect from a classic game. It is nice that there is some extras with every game. You can view the box art, read some production notes on the individual game and there are different game modes available. These are very similar to the ones on the Activision Anthology with the modes being reversed, upside down, many small screens and bouncing screen. These add a little, but most people will stick with the original mode.

Each arcade game has one game that has a challenge on it. This challenge will unlock something, either a classic commercial or one of the unreleased games. Most of the challenges are pretty easy to do (score 20,000 points on Astrosmash or get 300 points on Frog Bog). The average person can unlock most of them in a single day. A few may be a challenge, but none are that hard. Also nice is the ability to save high scores on some of the games. You must remember that many of the games would not have a need for this. Baseball is one that there is no need to save high scores, but it is nice to be able to on Frog Bog or Shark! Shark! It is also nice as you can view these from the game menu to see who has what scores. Nice feature and a must have in all future compilations.

There are some negatives with the compilation. First off, getting a game ready can be a chore. You have to use the select button to pull up a game overlay and then use it to choose how many players and other settings. Big problem with this is that the overlay is so small and so hard to read that you cannot tell what you are hitting. For most games, it is no problem, but for some like Utopia or Las Vegas Black Jack and Poker, it can be a real pain. Also, games that require alot of use of the overlays (like the aforementioned games), it will be a hassle to pop in and out all the time. While some games have many of the commands mapped to the controller, some require too many buttons for a PS2 controller. I also question some of the choices. Do we really need Baseball and World Championship Baseball? The latter is the same game with a few improvements, one player mode, fly balls and the player slides into the base. Wouldn't it have been better to add World Series Baseball instead? Also, I was bummed to find that Tower of Doom was the only one of the D & D trilogy to be ported. I know they did not want to pay royalties, but couldn't they use the development names like they did on the computer version? I hoped to find Minotaur as Treasures of Tarmin was called. Last, why did they split the unreleased games between the X-Box and PS2 versions? Wouldn't it be better to just offer all the unreleased games on both versions? I do not understand the logic of this one, except that they are trying to get classic gamers to buy the same game twice. Cheap.

Outside of these few flaws, this is an awesome compilation and once again it is very reasonable priced at \$19.99. I would recommend getting it quickly as most stores are either not carrying it

or only carrying a few copies. I preordered mine and the store that I got it from was sold out immediately (granted they only got 6 copies, all of which were preorders). So it may turn out to be a collector's item in its own right. By the way, I really enjoyed the song "My Intellivision" that is one of the songs available to listen to. If anyone has an MP3 of this song, please send it my way, I would really enjoy having it to listen to. A great song.

Here is a complete list of all the games (keep in mind that the three games that made up Triple Action are listed individually):

01. Armor battle
02. Astrosmash
03. Auto Racing
04. b-17 bomber
05. Backgammon
06. Baseball
07. Basketball
08. Battle tanks (part of Triple Action)
09. Biplanes (part of Triple Action)
10. Body Slam Wrestling
11. Bomb squad
12. Bowling
13. Boxing
14. Brickout (unreleased game, needs to be unlocked)
15. Buzz bombers
16. Checkers
17. Chip Shot Super Pro Golf
18. Crosswords
19. Deep pockets pool & billiards (unreleased game, needs to be unlocked)
20. Demo cartridge (as it says a demo cart)
21. Factor fun
22. Football
23. Frog bog
24. Golf
25. Hard hat
26. Hockey
27. Horse racing
28. Hover force
29. Hypnotic lights (unreleased game)
30. Las Vegas poker & black jack
31. Las Vegas roulette
32. Magic carousel (unreleased game)
33. Math master
34. Memory fun
35. Motocross
36. Mountain Madness Super Pro Skiing
37. Night stalker
38. Pinball
39. Racing cars (part of Triple Action)
40. Reverse

41. Royal dealer
42. Sea battle
43. Shark shark
44. Sharp shot
45. Skiing
46. Slam Dunk Super Pro Basketball
47. Slap Shot Super Pro Hockey
48. Snafu
49. Soccer
50. Space armada
51. Space battle
52. Space hawk
53. Space Spartans
54. Spiker Super Pro Volleyball
55. Stadium Mud Buggies
56. Starstrike
57. Sub hunt
58. Super Pro Decathlon
59. Super Pro Football
60. Tennis
61. Thin ice
62. Thunder castle
63. Tower of doom
64. Utopia
65. Vectron
66. Word hunt
67. Word rockets
68. World Championship Baseball

Inside the Many Faces of...

by [Alan Hewston](#)

Is it soup yet?

For about 6 months now I've been telling myself and a fellow VG collector at work, Tim Roach, that I'll post my Many Faces of data (spreadsheet) online. The contains the scores and other data and from all of my articles & research for the games on the following systems: Apple II, Atari 2600, 5200, 7800, 8 bit computers (XEGS), CoCo, Colecovision, Commodore 64, Intellivision, Odyssey 2, Sinclair Spectrum, TI-99, Vic 20 & Vectrex. I kept tweaking it to make it better, and adding more data and realized that it is good enough for now. I also had to set up the html files for posting it online etc. OK, you want to see it already . . . right? So click on the link below and then come back and finish reading this article later.

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

Years of Research

People have asked me why I've done so much work and also what do I use to base my scores on. Let me start with the research. I've been working on the Many Faces of project for over 4 years now. My work began well before you read my first review, the Many Faces of Q*bert in

Retrogaming Times (RT) issue #33. There was a lot of research that I felt was necessary I were to do a proper job filling the hole left when Doug Saxon gave up the reigns. I could have jumped in right away, but I'm sure now that I would have made far too many mistakes and am glad that I took my time getting prepared for the task. I knew that I could make the reviews more complete and appeal to a larger audience if I expanded to include all classic 8 bit systems of the day (at least, those in the US). I wanted to become more intimate with the libraries of all the 8 bit systems, and since I did not begin retro-collecting until 1995 or 96, I had a lot of catching up to do. At that time, I was also helping Tom Zjaba with his Arcade Conversions list (see below) and if nothing else, my findings would be used for more than one cause. I didn't realize how much work would be involved but it was a work of love that grew and grew. I planned to review titles that were both popular, had many faces and I actually had them all, or most of them. Not having all the games I needed made things difficult, but also narrowed the choices of what to review each month. Despite my large and still growing collection, many popular titles were skipped because I was missing 1 version. Initially, I went ahead and reviewed relatively popular titles, as long as I had all of them, without regard for possible the TI-99 and/or Apple II versions. I didn't think that I'd ever start finding anything, but productivity and edutainment carts for the TI and it was futile to worry about the Apple II unless I received a huge infusion of games, especially since I had none, and no AP2 H/W either. Once I actually acquired those systems & some games, I quickly researched their games and then constrained my monthly choices even further now I could not exclude these systems either. All versions or nothing. My earliest articles leave much to be desired, and my ignorance was shining brightly with plenty of mistakes then. Fortunately, a few of my mistakes lead to reader feedback and offers of assistance which I gladly took advantage of, ultimately leading to a much better product.

Classic Arcade Conversions

Tom got me started with his terrific Arcade Conversions list at:

<http://tomheroes.com/Video%20Games%20FS/Arcade/arcadecon.htm>

I was able to help Tom beef up his list, and ask if it was OK to take his list one step further. This lead to . . .

2000 Video Games

The research was now three-fold. 1) Arcade Conversions for Tom, 2) 2000 VG - all carts and arcade versions on all classic home systems, and 3) The Many Faces of articles. The data was shared by each of the three projects, so this really inspired me to dig in deep. I finally reached over 2000 games and published those results back in late 2000. I have since forgotten the current tally, but you can see the 2000 VG list and more about it at:

<http://my.stratos.net/~hewston95/VG/2000VG.html>

This list became a compilation of every game ever made for (mostly US) home systems on cart or as an official re-release of an arcade game. Tom warned me, or wished me luck in not getting divorced in the process of tabulating every cart out there. Fortunately, I had a very understanding wife. While I've not maintained this list much recently, it still may be the only one like it out there of course, besides Tom's Arcade Conversions list, which started it all.

In Search of the Many Faces

Besides learning which officially released versions existed, I had to make some reasonable plan for how to acquire more games. I only needed to have them on my machine to play, such as on a multi-cart, a Cuttle cart, or via floppy disk etc. I decided early on that I did not want to use emulation for my reviews, rather, only the real McCoy in the actual controls or keyboard. This lead to even more games being skipped over, but there were still plenty of faces out there. I am glad that I passed on emulators, as it makes me feel better about the quality of my reviews.

Repeat Faces

After several requests, I went back to revisit several titles that Tom Zjaba or Doug Saxon had done earlier. By including all home versions I made several readers much happier about this project. Yes, I still owe those TI-99 fans a review at the now silver medal winning Q*bert. I did not have the game back then, but I do now and its scores merit it a Silver Medal. There are still about 7 such AP2 ports, and a couple C64 games that I now have and hope to review some day. These versions show up as holes in my data collected and this encourages me to fill them in.

20th Anniversaries

Too bad I didn't think of this sooner. By focusing on titles that were 20 years old (from their initial release), it made it easier to select my monthly reviews & limit my searches on ebay as well :-). This process quickly got enhanced by adding reader feedback. RT and RGVC readers were more than happy to pick their favorite games by year and knew that their vote counted for something as well. This change did push back many big name / popular titles on my planning list, but not too far. 2004, (20th anniv of 1984) will be the final year, as most 1985 titles escape the bounds of the joystick era (Fred Wagan term). In 2004 & 2005, there'll be a few 25th anniversary reviews (1980 titles) plus the remaining big named titles until we reach issue #100. Some will be incomplete, but that is OK. If you look at my spreadsheet you can see my complete (but never final) plan. I plan to review 12+ of the many, 15 versions of "Frogger" for the Retrogaming Times milestone 100th issue.

Statistics & Scores

With so many scores, now 40+ titles & 240 versions, the data is very meaningful and carries some momentum. Past data is used to keep the scores of my current reviews in line. I compare the scores by system, game and category to make sure that the results are more consistent. Should I score that as a 6, 7 or an 8? If over time I'm off by 1 point, its close enough, but 2 points would be bad. So, I look at the data and decide if the current scores are too high/low or the older scores are too high/low and make a change. I also only want the very best to earn a 10. Controls scores are a little different. We expect, and know that the programmers try to perfect their code to maximize the control, but the same cannot be said about graphics and sound. They have to meet a deadline and the game must be playable (controllable). Make sure to look at the composite scores of each game (as a set of all versions) and all games for a given system. At a glance you can tell how good the various systems perform when compared to each other. Actually, what we see is limited by how much programming effort or skill went into the game's code, the play testing, and improvements. Some games were not finished/released or were rushed to meet a deadline, and thus are a shadow of what they could have been.

Commercial Interruption

We interrupt this long article to thank one of our sponsors, the Classic VG Commercials in the Retrogaming Times by Adam King. Adam and I have been able to make a few issues work

together with our review of the same titles. Many games have come and gone and we've missed our chance to combine efforts, but there are still a few more that we'll try to simulcast - so stay tuned.

Biased

I am partial to playing the systems that I grew up with, namely the 2600 & C64. But I think that I've done a decent job of keeping my scores unbiased. I've challenged my own scores and sometimes it may be possible that I've been too hard on the Commodore 64. I've received the most reader feedback on the Intellivision. Most agreeing those Controls scores should be poor, but others hoping that I'd given the INTY better scores. I probably score the Intellivision controls a little higher than I would personally score them. I figure that if I really, really used them more I'd be upping those scores anyhow. As mentioned above, I have gone back and changed some scores. Over time, I've found inconsistencies, and after the review, went back and changed about 80 scores. Most have been changed for all versions of a specific title all scores were +! Or -1 for the Addictiveness, Sound or Gameplay. Others were specific to one system, such as the Inty Controls where I may have been too critical at the time of the review. There's also the Inty pause feature (my ignorance) that I had to go back and add 1 point several places. Overall, more scores went up, but they should all be pretty consistent. Feel free to specifically ask or challenge me, why did game X on system Y score a 6, but another game on another system scored a 7. I may very well go back and change it. Also note that the medal count is based upon the revised scores.

How Many, "Faces" are there?

Unfortunately, we know that all good things must end, and at some point the Retrogaming Times will be no more. There are still plenty of games out there, possibly as many as 150 more with 3 or more official versions. At my present pace, we will get at most 35 more in by RT issue #100, at which point I am likely to be burned out and only do then when I can. Regardless of how things go, I plan to keep reviewing these and saving the results online. Until there are no more faces remaining, I hope to keep this project active. On my spreadsheet there is also a column that says how many titles are left for that system I think I calculated this based upon RT issue #100.

This is a rough count, but gives us an idea of how evenly the games are getting selected. The 7800 has done really well, but is also a system that may have best been placed in the next era of game (ie NES and the joypad era). The CV scores pretty well with a large number of versions, and also fewer duds than the C64 and Atari. The C64 and Atari 8 bit have the largest libraries, and among the best scores. That should be a good clue to tell you what systems are best to play games on. They are both plentiful and score well most of the time. This is also a good indicator that I made the right decision to include the home computer systems in the Many Faces of project. Hopefully the larger number of faces and systems has brought in more readers and critics alike. Those who only like the platforms or cart versions can still use my sheet and pull off data to compare just those head to head as well.

Bit Age Faces

Yes, at some point, I eagerly began researching for the next era of games, the bit age. Trying to get them into my collection, and hoping to do similar reviews in Tomorrow's Heroes Bit Age Times newsletter. But I never had enough time to get very far, nor did I have the experience playing these games as much. The data was a little harder to acquire online, at least at the time,

and so maybe in 20 years, or after I exhaust the Many Faces of the joystick era, I will begin this task. Better to do one job well, than two jobs poorly.

Many Thanks

There are many players & collectors and/or their sites that I owe credit for my research and help in making this a great project to be leading. I'll not try to list them all, but hope that you'll understand that I may have forgotten you, but yours efforts have been appreciated. First of all, I need to thank my very understanding wife, Kathy, who was, is, and ever shall be upset with me for all that I now have collected, and reminds me over and over that we should move into a bigger home to showcase my collection. I don't know if she will ever forgive me, or Tom for helping me to get going on my collecting sprees. I'm sure that I would have ended up a big time collector anyhow, but Tom deserves credit for assisting me, but also warning me not to get burned out either. Of course were it not for Tom's site and his Retrogaming Times then none of this would have been possible. Thanks again for Doug Saxon allowing me to take over the reigns, and for trading to me the Odyssey 2 version of Q*bert which launched my era in taking the lead in this project. Many thanks to Twin Galaxies referees Robert Mruczek, Ron Corcoran, and most of all Stepen Knox who have helped significantly in my reviews when I was in a bind. A huge asset has been Matt Allen who knows the C64 games better than almost anyone. Special thanks to Jim Krych and the Greater Cleveland area TI chips club for helping me to learn about the TI-99 so quickly. Likewise another local guy, Tom McLaren who assisted me with his favorite classic system, the Apple II. Without his efforts in hardware, and software, there would be no reviews on this great classic system. There are several online sources that have helped, but no one resource has helped me more than Digital Press Guide and their gang of experts. Joe Santulli has also helped me directly. Without their collector's guide, I may never have gonedown this path at all. Some of the best locations are Gamebase64, Blue Sky Rangers, 2600.com planetsinclair and the Giant list of Classic list of Programmers.

<http://dadgum.com/giantlist/>

James Hague maintains this Giant list and while I check it almost every month, I've thanked him and have hopefully since repaid my debt by contributing to that list as well. I've shared my research into specific systems, then compile it for him to add to his list

Many Faces Site Upgrades

As I've mentioned before, I plan to keep working this project and revising things online. But I'm not much of a web editor, so nothing will look nice, nor will things be revised too often. I feel a certain obligation that if I stop writing these reviews for the RT, then it will be my fault if the magazine ceases to continue. I also feel that it is a great way to provide something back to the VG community, possibly a historical archive in some respects. Per the request of several readers, I'll try to compile unique screen shots of each version as well as my photo collages and post these online. This will take some time but I should at least be able to post the ones that I still have stored electronically. I can only put a few pictures in each issue of the RT, but can put lots more on my own web site. Thanks again for your interest and support.

Alan Hewston can be reached at hewston95<NOSPAM>@stratos.net.

Letters to the Editor

This first letter is not the first one I have received. I have received several. While I can sympathize with the people who were ripped off by whoever this company is, I cannot help but get upset by the people who just go into a search engine and start accusing the first place they find. This is one of the nicer letters that I have received. Just another reason why I will be removing my email address from the website in the near future.

I am not sure if I have the right company, but there have been several debits to my bank account from Fortune Builder. I have denied them through my bank. I do not recall purchasing anything from this company. If there is an account in my name, XXXXXXXX, please let me know and e-mail me an audit of my account as I do not recall having one. I would like to know what this is all about

As I said, this is one of the nicer ones. Most people have emailed and swore at me, threatened to sue me and other fun stuff. And it is all over this following page on my website (which comes up first on Google):

http://www.tomheroes.com/Video%20Games%20FS/video%20games/coleco/fortune_builder.htm

Guess I will have to put a disclaimer on this page as well. This reminds me of when I was approached by an attorney warning me that his client owned the rights to the term "Mountain Madness". I told him to talk to the Blue Sky Rangers who coined that name for their Intellivision game back in the 1980's (Mountain Madness Skiing). There is always something hilarious in the classic game world.

Here are some of the results from the question: "What classic video game would you like to see made into a movie?"

-Adventure for the Atari 2600. It would rock to see those dragons in CGFX.

-I would make it NO VIDEO GAME EVER. Noone wants to see another good game made into a poor movie. Not ever again.

-How about Elevator Action (Returns)? Either one would be good. The first one would be a little more simplistic action movie and the second one could be more of a special effects movie. The actor? Governor Arnold of course!

-Syndicate - Actually wrote a treatment for it once, but never did anything with it. Would make a cool TV show, lots of blade runner action.

-Pong in 3-D!

-Not sure what the story would be, but I would like to see a Joust movie.

-Dragon's Lair and not a cartoon either.

**THE SINCLAIR ZX
SPECTRUM**

By [Tonks](#)

Well, Alan Hewston put up the challenge and I thought I would have a go at it. That is, inform some of you people, particularly many of the American readers of RT, about the Sinclair ZX

Spectrum.

When the topic of Retro gaming and classic computers comes up, the most regular things discussed seems to be Atari, Commodore 64 or early Nintendo. But in England and to a lesser extent Australia, you cannot even bring up the subject without someone talking about the Speccy (The Sinclair ZX Spectrum). While it is almost totally unheard of in the US, the Spectrum was the biggest selling home micro (that is what they call small computers in England) ever. Millions of Spectrums were sold through out Great Brittain with many more sold throughout Europe and as far as Australia and New Zealand. Thousands of games were released for the system. Some sources say there has been more games made for the Spectrum than any other single system (except the PC).



The Sinclair ZX Spectrum was released in England in April 1982. The philosophy behind its launch was to create the cheapest colour home computer on the market. Two versions were initially released, one with 16k RAM and one with 48k RAM. Obviously the 48k version was vastly more successful. 48k was a large amount of memory at the time, and combined with high resolution colour graphics and a built in sound generator, the Spectrum sold rapidly. In fact it took less than 18 months for Sinclair to sell its first million Spectrums.

But by aiming to make the computer for such a low cost meant that a lot of short cuts had to be made. The keyboard is made up of little rubber keys. This made the Spectrum look more like a toy than a computer. There were no joystick ports and games had to be controlled by using a combination of squishy rubber keys. Perhaps Sinclair's most unusual cost cutting trick was to actually use faulty 64k memory chips.

The graphics, while being quite a high resolution of 192 x 256, only two colours could be used in any 8x8 square, one for the background and one for the foreground. This caused the infamous Spectrum colour-clash. Some very clever programming gave some games a great mix of bright colours, but sprites were nearly always mono-coloured and backgrounds looked very bland when compared to those of the very colourful Commodore 64. The Spectrum has a palette of 8 colours, but with the very useful BRIGHT attribute programmers could effectively produce up to 15 colours.

Perhaps the weakest aspect of the Spectrum was its sound. Unlike the C64's brilliant SID chip, the Spectrum only had a very basic beeper controlled by a simple BEEP statement. It was single channel, making the vast majority of games sound awful. I have always found it better to have

some loud music playing when I am using my Spectrum.

But as with the majority of classic computer and video games, it was the gameplay that really shone through. As already mentioned, hundreds and hundreds of games were produced for the Spectrum. They nearly all came out on cassette tape. There were the usual arcade translations as well as some incredible original games that are regarded as absolute classics today - games such as Jet Pac, Manic Miner, Jetset Willy, Chuckie Egg, Knight Lore and many, many more.



Jet Set Willy



Jetpac

Some of England's greatest game programmers started out programming games for the Spectrum in their own bedrooms. Perhaps the most famous of these is Microsoft's \$300 million baby Rare. The Stamper Brothers started off programming for the Spectrum under the name of Ultimate. And they were certainly the ultimate programmers, creating mind blowing games that pushed the humble Spectrum seemingly way beyond its limits. Some of Ultimate's most well known and loved games include Pssst, Cookie, Atic Atac and Sabre Wulf.

In 1986 Sinclair sold the Spectrum to Amstrad. Amstrad quickly brought out "upgrades" of the Spectrum, the +2 and the +3. The +2 had a built-in tape drive while the +3 used a 3inch disk drive. Both computers also had proper keyboards.

Despite strong competition from the Commodore 64, the Amiga and the Atari ST, the Spectrum continued to sell right through to the early 90s. But by 1992 it pretty well breathed its last. But with literally millions of people for whom the Spectrum was the first computer / video game system they ever owned, the spectrum will never be forgotten. Particularly in England the following for the Spectrum seems to be as strong as ever. Emulation is a huge business. There are very good Spectrum emulators available for the PC, Mac, Amiga and even the Dreamcast has one. So with a bit of searching around the emulation sites you can very soon have an emulator and dozens of games so you can checkout for yourself what all the fuss is all about. Or

if you have a few dollars to spare, why not have a look at ebay where you can regularly find dozens of Speccys and hundreds games up for auction.

The Sinclair ZX Spectrum is one of the true classics in the area of Retro Gaming. In some ways it was a shame the vast majority of Americans never got to experience the Spectrum in its heyday. Also, there is no way I could do the Spectrum any real justice in this one article. If you would like to get more information on the Spectrum, then check out the following web pages.

www.old-computers.com

This great has information on hundreds of classic computers. It features some great info on the Spectrum as well as some very good pictures.

www.nvg.ntnu.no/sinclair/

This site is better known as Planet Sinclair. There is loads of info about games, peripherals, software and other computers made by Sinclair. One of the more interesting parts of the site is the information on the games industry relating specifically to the Spectrum.

www.crashonline.org.uk/

In the U.K. many magazines were released for the Spectrum. CRASH was arguably the best. Its focus was mainly on the games. It quickly became the biggest selling computer magazine in England, selling over 100,000 copies a month at its peak. This site has an extensive amount of information as well as scans of all the covers and reprinted review examples from each issue. Brilliant site.

www.worldofspectrum.org/

This is where you will find everything you need if you are interested in emulating the Spectrum. There are heaps of emulators available for your PC, Mac, Amiga, Dreamcast, Gameboy Advance and even your Nokia phone. There is also well over 7000 games available. Hardware enthusiasts will also find lots of information about hardware specifications.

(Tonks is a keen retro-gamer from Australia. He is married and has two sons who just love playing with their Dad's ever growing collection of conoles and games. Tonks collects mainly Vic 20, Amiga, Vectrex, NES and Commodore 64, but generally just loves videogames. Tonks values your comments and he can be contacted at tonks777@bigpond.com).

RETROGAMING COMMERCIAL VAULT

by [Adam King](#)

Greetings, gamers, and welcome to back to RCV. This month is also dedicated to George Plimpton, who passed away on September 26th. He did a lot of things during his writing career, but of course we remember the two years he spent bashing Atari and glorifying Intellivision. So I decided to serve up another double dose of Plimpton, doing what he does best.

[Intellivision vs. Atari](#)

This was one of the early Plimpton ads. He tries to make his pint by showing off both systems' basketball and soccer games. We see Atari gameplay footage compared with Intellivision footage, meant to show us which console is better. BTW, this is the second commercial in the series; he did a previous one comparing baseball games.

"I've been making more comparisons between Mattel Electronic's Intellivision and Atari. Different games, but the same results. Look at Atari Basketball. And Intellivision. I think Intellivision plays more like real basketball. Here's Atari soccer. And Intellivision. Again I find Intellivision more sophisticated and lifelike. If you try them both I think you'll find the clear winner is Intellivision, from Mattel Electronics."



"Gather around, children, for a little look 'n' learn."



"Witness the battle of the Basketballs."



"I think I made my point. Atari bad. INTV good."

This ads does do a good job making Mattel's point clear.

Intellivoice Module

Our next spot is for Mattel's Intellivoice module, the box that gave some INTV games speech. Plimpton shows that the Atari just has blippy sound effects, yet the Intellivision can actually do voice clips.

"I'm about to show you something new for Intellivision that will revolutionize the way games are played and compared. First, here's a popular Atari game. Now don't look."

[Plimpton covers the screen with his hand, and we hear Asteroids]

"And here's new Space Spartans for the Intellivoice module."

[Plimpton again covers the screen, and we hear several voice clips from Space Spartans]
"New Intellivoice. Now that Intellivision talks, you can tell the difference with your eyes closed."



"Time for another lesson on why Intellivision rules."



"Hey! No peeking!"



The magic box that makes it all possible.

Geez, Mattel was attack Atari on all fronts, weren't they?

That's it for this month. I know you're wondering about some of the ads I'm going to feature on the Commercial Vault CD. Next month I'll offer a sneak preview at two ads you won't find anywhere else. Until then see you next month.

Rest In Piece, Mr. Intellivision.

The Many Faces of...Dr. J and Larry Bird go One on One

by [Alan Hewston](#)

I couldn't find the time to squeeze this review in last month, but it's still pretty timely since the NBA season just tipped off 3 weeks ago. And of course this is yet another 20th anniversary review of the games from 1983. As the first sports title in Many Faces, it may seem a little out of place from the typical reviews - arcade games, platformers, collect-em ups, shoot-em ups - but let's give it a try.

Electronics Arts has a great reputation for sports video games and those beginnings started with games like One on One and programmer/designer Eric Hammond. Eric first put us “into the game” by emulating the skills and actions of 2 of his favorite NBA stars. We then play 1 on 1 versus a computer or human opponent, using their talents and ability, not ours. The manual gives us the NBA stars perspective on the half-court match up, and how to play offense and defense. We also learn that Larry Bird insisted that fatigue be programmed in as a major factor in the game. Similarly, Eric tells us that he was unable to include hook shots, but in the future, given enough CPU memory . . . This was one of those games that stood out and made you take notice back in 1983. The sound was not great, but the plethora of gameplay options and overall re-play value were phenomenal – like nothing ever seen before, and surely raised the standards for all sports games to follow. Likewise, ask your friends and find out how much PT they spent on this game, playing it to death - trying to win. Even then, they’d have to swap sides to win with the other NBA star. This was damn frustrating game, trying to defeat the computer, cursing at it, determined that it was cheating. You’d want to smash the joystick to pieces, but this just added more fuel to the fire, as you became even more obsessed with winning - especially if it WAS cheating. Yes, this title should bring back some strong emotional memories of “you versus the computer” on some game, some system from your younger days.



The standard Many Faces of collage.

Original Version: Apple II ('83 Eric Hammond, Electronic Arts/Micro-Fun)

C64 ('84 ?Eric Hammond?, EA) Atari 8 bit ('87 Atari/EA), 7800 ('87 Atari/Man Development Corp.)

CV ('84 Chris Oberth, Micro-Fun), Sinclair Spectrum '85 (EA/Ariolasoft), CoCo ('85 Steve Bjork, SRB Software/EA)

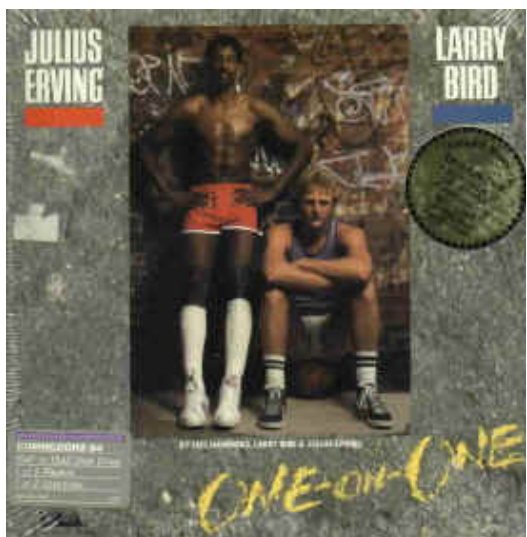
Classic Sequels: At least one . . . “Jordan Vs. Bird 1 on 1” (C64 '88, Joe Hellesen EA)

Home Version Similarities: Except those in <>, all versions have: a demo <CV>; use about 70% of the floor of the half-court; a choice of 4 skill levels (Park & Rec, Varsity, College, & Pro); several choices for game duration (2, 4, 6 & 8 minute quarters or the first to reach a certain score, selectable from 01 to 99; a choice of who gets the ball out next; three point shots; a backboard that can be smashed <CV>, followed by the janitor cleaning up a million pieces (how many of you were ROTFLOL – the first time you saw this?); ability to steal the ball, or block shots, but possibly getting called for a foul; the referee <CV> jumps out to call the foul - provides a text message naming the foul or event; scoreboard keeps track of all fouls; you can then shoot

free throws; including a bonus if the field goal was made; a slow motion option <AP2, CV & C64>; a 24 second shot clock; instant replays <CV> for awesome plays; a net that goes swish every time <AP2>, (regardless if it was “nothing but the bottom of the net” – ESPN term); a meter to track your fatigue; and 3 time outs to completely rest your fatigued player; hot streaks shooting if you were en fuego; a pause <CV?>, and anytime access to the options menu <CV?, AP2? unsure?> to change settings & then resume the same game. On a scale of 1 to 10, the Gameplay on most versions goes to 11!

Have Nots: Sinclair Spectrum (N/A my guess 28 to 36?)

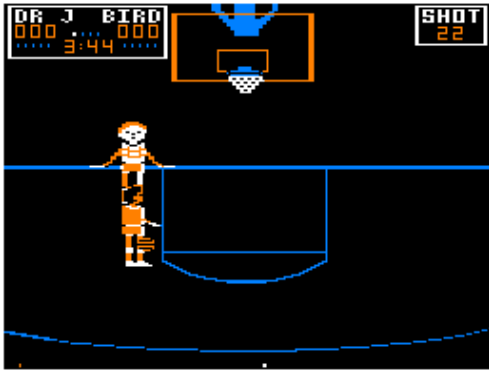
Once again most US readers (including me) have not seen this system in action. If you have an interest in reviewing the Spectrum’s Many Faces and comparing & scoring them for us, we’ve love to have you. Fortunately I found a “Crash Magazine” review of this cassette/diskette port (on Planet Sinclair) but it was all negative. The photo on the box was misleading showing the C64, whereas the spectrum graphics were ‘appalling with monochrome players’ & one player’s shirt/body is transparent – ‘ see the court markings right through him’. The review plus screenshot reveals that all of the options were in place, including using 2 controllers via the spectrum interface box. But, the physics were poor like ‘they are walking on the moon’ and terrible sprite underlap - ‘other player could nick the ball without being anywhere near me’. Overall this game is ‘neither addictive nor playable’ – but it has lots of options.



This cover preferred over the one showing a C64 screen.

Have Nots: CoCo TRS-80 (N/A my guess 35 to 41?)

Since I do not have a CoCo disk drive, nor this disk-based game, I cannot properly review it. But from Curtis Boyle’s reviews at: http://nitros9.stg.net/coco_game_list.html plus the screenshot and then knowing the premier CoCo programmer, Steve Bjork was at work here, it should be a winner. 2-player joystick mode and all significant elements and options are likely. Sound would be unknown.



CoCo Screenshot reveals that most features are present.

Have Nots: Colecovision (35)

My first reaction is it's semi rare, so many of us will not have it, but then you're not missing much as this title scrapes the bottom of the CV barrel. Gameplay is the worst of any version, but is still very good (8) overall, with nearly all elements. This port has terrible physics and a fluctuation in the speed of the action. This port seems incomplete & CV fans deserve better. There's no demo, no slow mo, no replay, and no crashing backboard - that I could see. I could not commit a foul but the scoreboard shows lights where fouls would be. Addictiveness is very good (7) but missing the usual pause. The Graphics are adequate (5) to play the game, but depressing. The players are monochromatic with no detail and little animation. A large chunk appears missing from their mid section so that the upper body is disjointed and the overall height is distorted. They look like space aliens, or at least Manute Bul. This glitch/feature makes it even harder to follow the action. The ball is also very puny and hard to tell where it is relative to your hand. Despite having the best crowd cheer of any version, the overall Sound is blah (5). There's no swish, no crash and no music any time. The Controls may require a lot of practice, but are otherwise excellent (10).

Have Nots: Apple II (35)

My first reaction - This version came first and it might finish last. The Gameplay is awesome (10) with everything in place. The Addictiveness is fun (7), but would be better if the two-joystick mode was easy to use (if it even works at all - I had problems). Two players using only 1 joystick is even worse. Instead of remaining fixed all game or all quarter and take turns after each quarter, it pauses after each possession change to "swap joystick and keyboard - hit any key to continue". Talk about killing a game's rhythm. The standard pause is the <Esc>. Graphics are beautiful (8), possibly the best, with numbers on their jerseys, and more color, clarity and detail than any other. Unfortunately, Sound ranks among the most annoying (3) of all time. The dribble and time expiration sounds are fine, but the ref's whistle is very shrill, and then the most important aspect of the game (making baskets), results in long loud screech - representing the crowd cheer. There's no sound for actually making a basket mind you, no backboard crash, and no music. You might as well just turn the sound off and save your ears the agony. Controls are very good (7), but you'll probably score it higher if you're an AP2 aficionado. I cannot get my joystick buttons to work (this is about the 5th AP2 game I've encountered like this). Must use keyboard alone, or combine the always hard to use analog stick & hit APPLE keys to fire/shoot. Disk only.

Bronze Medal: Atari 8 bit (41)

My first reaction was why was this port & the 7800 not released until '87? Gameplay is perfectly

excellent (10) & very complete. Use <start> to enter/change gameplay options and <option> for time outs & slow motion. Addictiveness is wonderful (9) using <select> to pause. I should note that I've penalized all versions and none will get a "10". Any game where you want to destroy the joystick or call the computer a cheater deserves a drop in score. So, yes, it is a 10 in re-playability, but too damn frustrating. Graphics are pretty good (7), but a step down from the AP2. Sound is fair (5) with a poor crowd noise and no music. All other effects are in place. Controls are flawless (10). Available on cart & disk.

Silver Medal: Commodore 64 (42)

My first reaction was the keyboard commands are not obvious. The Gameplay is excellent (10), only missing slow-motion . . . but then I can't justify a lower score just for that. Enter the gameplay options menu via either <restore> or <F1>, then move and select options using <F5> & <F7>. "B" and "J" activate the time outs (this also works on the Atari 8 bit version, and something "T" ? works on the AP2). Addictiveness is wonderful (9), with a pause <Control>. The Graphics are pretty good (7), with less color but more animation. They got sloppy in trying to add too much detail and the players are messy. The Sound is about the best, respectable (6), with introductory music and all effects are in place and sound good. Controls are perfect (10). Disk only.

Gold Medal: Atari 7800 (43)

My first reaction is who is the "Man Development Corp."? Every feature is perfect and Gameplay is hall of fame bound (10). All console buttons are active: <reset> activates menu & allows resume, <select> enters slow-motion mode. Addictiveness is super (9), the pause is <pause>. Graphics are of all-star caliber (8) with a really nice wooden parquet floor. The detail, clarity and colors are better on the AP2, but animation & physics are smoother here. Sound is not bad (6) having the same comments as the C64. Controls are a little awkward with the mandatory 7800 sticks, but perfection (10) is achievable with practice. Use the right fire button for time outs.

Notes:

Two-on-Two. Can you imagine that next, small step upwards in evolution that could have occurred? What if the programs for the Atari 8 bit and even the C64 were enhanced just a little bit more to play 2-on-2? Perhaps passing would have been tough (try push button to shoot & hold the joystick towards the teammate if passing, otherwise it is a shot). Use 4 joysticks (Atari 800 & 5200 4-port) for 4 players, or use 2 sticks, plus keyboard for 2 joystick port systems. Always give the joysticks to the human players, be it cooperative (both taking on the PC), or competitive (each has a computer partner). Allow all combinations of 1 to 4 human players, each choosing one of 4 or 6 NBA All-Stars. Keep Bird and the Dr. but add 1 or 2 more pairs of NBA stars having the same player type, such as "big men" or "point guards". These pairs, just like Bird & Dr. J would have equal skill/ability and comparable size and speed. Teams would always be 1 player from each pair but would provide many combinations. You could play 2-on-2, 1-on-1 (each having a computer team mate), or 2 humans vs PC. Could have been one of the ultimate 80's computer party games? Let me know what you think.

Errata. I received word of an Atari 8 bit site http://www.atari8bit-software.de/index_e.htm worth looking into. It has instruction manuals and information including an Atari XE (upgraded) version of Crystal Castles. The 8 bit version that I reviewed was bootlegged to disk, but unreleased. It was ported to the 5200. The XE cart version may be better than the C64's gold-medal winning port. I was unaware there was a cart/disk difference. Maybe some day I'll be able to borrow or find this pricey XE cart, or a disk bootleg copy. My apologies.

Come back next time for another, the final 20th Anniversary tribute for 1983, with the Many Faces of "Mr. Do's Castle" on the Atari 2600, 5200, 8 bit, C64 & CV. Alan Hewston, can be contacted at: Hewston95@NOSPAMstratos.net or visit his site at http://my.stratos.net/~hewston95/VG/Hewston_vg.html

A New Philly Game Show

Everyone has heard of the Phillyclassic game show that has been going on for the past four years. But now there is a second game show in the city of Brotherly Love. Can a city as big as Philly support two game shows, especially when both are more slanted towards classic games? Interesting question. But if anyone can pull it off, the team of Adam Harvey (or as he is known in the newsgroups as BuyAtari, the bigtime Atari collector) and Chuck Whitby of the Intellivision Gaming Network fame, has as good a chance as anyone.

But it will take more than just some well known people in the game industry. They have a few things against them. First off, they are going against a well established game show that will only be a month away (the East Coast Gaming Expo as it is called will be held on February 13th and 14th, while the Phillyclassic will be held on March 20th and 21st

If that is not enough, they decided to put the show on Valentine's weekend. A video game show is not exactly the romantic trip that most women are craving from the man in their life. And let us not forget about a little thing called snow. February is a horrible month for weather and some people may not like the idea of carting game systems and games through a foot of snow.

But even with some obstacles, the show has potential. It has some good leadership and is in a very populous city that is in very close proximity of many other large cities (we are talking within driving distance of New York City, Baltimore, Washington DC, Pittsburgh and other major cities). So there is a large base to draw from.

It will be interesting to see how well another Philly based show does. It can be nothing but good for the industry. Here is a link to the official site:

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

Sites of the Month

Let us turn the spotlight on a few sites that deserve mention. The first site is one that I may have mentioned before, but even if I did, it is so good that it deserves to be spotlight twice. It is none other than **Good Deal Games**. This site has so much information that it would take you days to go through it all. And that is not counting the ton of games, both original and the new games that they have for sale (yes, they have acquired the rights to several never released games and brought them to market for game fans). If you have not checked this site out, now is a great time to do it. Also check out RT contributor, Jim Krych's Gyruss story that is in the fan fiction on the page. Here is the link:

<http://www.gooddealgames.com>

Toucan's TI-99/4A's Cartridges

Bryan has been a long time supporter of the newsletter and a huge fan of the TI computer

system. He has finally put his passion into a website for all to read. While it is still in development, the site shows a ton of promise for fans of the classic game system that never got the respect it deserved. Check out this site at the following URL:

<http://www.whitech.com/toucan/index.html>

Conclusion

I actually have a good reason for the issue being late this month, I got a new computer and my old Frontpage would not work. But I went ahead and got a new version, so hopefully I will be able to tinker with it and learn some of the new features. Also with a new computer, I will be able to play MAME again and with my own Devastator II coming next month, I may start up the arcade game reviews. I must say it is nice to finally have a new computer, my last one was bought in summer of 1999 and it was quite obsolete then.

Check back next month as we offer another issue. Now with all my merchandise sold, I can concentrate on adding to the website for fun. It should make me more pleasant in the newsletters as a day off from work will actually be a day off.

-[Tom Zjaba](#)