

Retrogaming Times

Issue #70 - June 2003

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The Vic 20

by [Tonks](#)

Most people who are into classic game collecting seem to have a classic system of choice. It seems for many that the Atari VCS is that system of choice. While I certainly love my Atari and my ever growing collection of games, my own personal system of choice is the Commodore Vic 20.

The Vic 20 is one of the forgotten gems of the classic era of video games. It seems that most people fit into one of two categories. They either know nothing at all about the Vic 20 or they believe that the Vic 20 was an underpowered failure. But to the few enlightened people, the Vic 20 is a fantastic machine with many excellent original games and translations of arcade classics. What I hope to do with this series of articles is to highlight the Vic 20 and some of the great games that were released for it.

The Vic 20 was made by Commodore. It was released in 1981. As with all classic systems, the specs seem ridiculously basic by today's standards, but for 1981 the Vic 20 was at least equal and in some ways more advanced than the rest of the competition. In fact the Vic 20 was the first colour computer made available for under \$500.

Here are some basic specs for the machine, straight out of the box.

CPU - 6502 running at 1.01MHz

MEMORY - 5k of which 3.5k was usable

GRAPHICS - 22 x 23 characters, 176 x 184 pixels, 8 text colours, 16 background colours.

SOUND - 3 voices plus a white noise generator, programmable volume control

KEYBOARD - Full qwerty typewriter style keyboard plus 8 programmable function keys

BASIC - The Vic 20 came with BASIC built into the ROM

The Vic 20 was quite successful. From what I have been able to discover, over one million were sold in the USA. It was also successful in Great Britain and other parts of Europe.

Many programs were released for the Vic 20. These came on one of three media, cassette tapes, ROM cartridges or floppy disk. However, only the most advanced business software came on disk. The majority of the games came on tape, with most of the better games released on ROM carts. Due to the fact that anyone could freely release games for the Vic 20, literally hundreds and hundreds of games were released on tape. These ranged from very good to totally abysmal.

These really bad games, usually programmed in BASIC is what I believe gives the Vic 20 a bad name as a games machine. But little do many people realise that over 200 games were released on ROM cart. These games represent mainly the cream of the crop when it comes to Vic 20 game software, and are at the very least comparable with the Atari VCS. These are the games I will mainly stick to in my reviews.

Unfortunately for the Vic 20, but perhaps great for video gaming overall, two years after its release Commodore introduced to the world the Commodore 64, a machine that would go on to sell in the millions world wide. In 1983 the C64 was the X-box or the PS2 of the day. With its fantastic graphics, brilliant sound and a whopping 64k memory, game manufacturers quickly jumped aboard this new platform. Software for the Vic 20 ground to a halt and before too long the Vic 20 was relegated to the distant memories of the few and just plain forgotten by the majority.

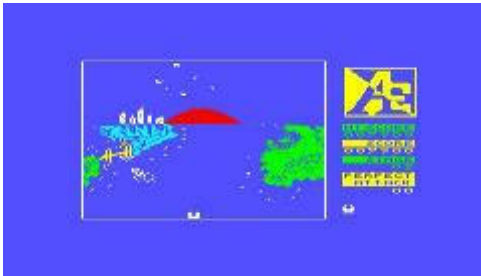
SOME OF THE GAMES



ABDUCTOR

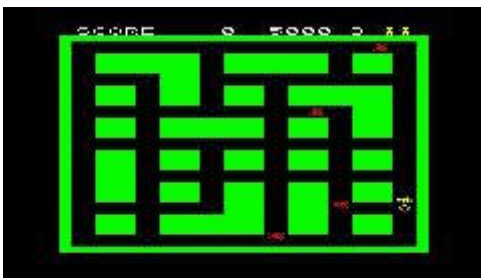
A fast and furious shoot-em-up from Jeff Minter. The aim in abductor is to protect the human race from being abducted by alien invaders. You have eight men at the bottom of the screen. Aliens swoop around the screen. Occasionally an alien dives down and abducts one of the men. You then have just seconds to shoot that alien before it disappears at the top of the screen with the abducted man. Shooting the alien saves the abducted man. You must destroy all the aliens and continue to save at least one man or else it is game over. Game play starts off good but quickly becomes just a test on how fast you can push the fire button. But despite the repetitiveness and simple game play, it is the

graphics you want to check this game out for. The way the aliens swoop around the screen has to be seen to be believed. With each level the amount of aliens on screen gets larger and larger. You can have literally dozens of aliens swooping about all over the place and the action suffers from very little slowdown. A great programming effort I must say.
My Score - 7/10



AE

This is a fantastic shoot-em-up. It takes the basic Space Invaders game play and enhances it with some wonderful game play touches. Aliens swoop in from the side and continue to swoop around and dive as they drop their bombs on you. Shooting your own missiles back is very different. When you press the fire button a missile is launched, letting go detonates the missile. The longer you hold down the fire button the higher the missile will shoot. When the missile detonates it makes a small explosion. A well placed shot can destroy a whole wave of aliens. It is a little like the effect in Missile Command. The graphics in this game are simply brilliant. There is some great detail in the back drops, giving them a 3D effect. The back drops are of various things including a city, a space station, a moon base and outer-space. This is certainly one of the best shoot-em-ups on the Vic 20. It is a hard cart to find, but well worth your effort.
My Score - 9/10



ALIEN

Alien sees you stuck in a Pacman type maze being chased around by red aliens. To defend yourself you can dig holes around the maze. When an alien falls into one of the holes you can then fill it in, killing the alien. The aim of the game is to simply capture and kill all the aliens on the screen. The number of aliens and their speed increases with each level. Graphics are very simple. The aliens are average, but you man is very poor. Sound is also just average. But it is the game play that shines. I find the game a lot of fun and tension really builds as you race around trying catch the aliens. When an alien falls into a hole you have only a short time before he breaks free. This adds some minor strategy to the game when an alien is captured and you are a distance from it. Do you go and try to kill it, or do you keep away because of the risk it might break free and get you?
My Score - 7.5/10



ALIEN ATTACK

This is actually the first game I ever bought for my Vic 20 back when I was just a lad. I saved up my pocket money for ages to buy the game. Until then I had to be happy with games I typed up from magazine listings. So I suppose there is some sentimental attraction. Alien Attack is a variation of the classic Space Invaders style shoot-em-up. There are three levels in all. The first level has wave after wave of aliens scrolling down the screen at you. You must either shoot them or dodge them to stay alive. The second level is a bit like the mother-ship level in Phoenix. There are eight aliens inside the mother ship that you must destroy to clear the level. This is made difficult by the relentless attack of more diving aliens. The third level sees you flying your ship through an asteroid belt, doing all you can to avoid the asteroids until you come out safely on the other side. The game then goes back to level one and continues, just a lot faster. While the sentimentality makes me love this game, in all honesty it is pretty average. Graphics are simple and sound is limited to just your ship's firing (though it is a good sound effect) and nothing else. Simple but repetitive fun.

My Score - 7/10

ALIEN BLITZ

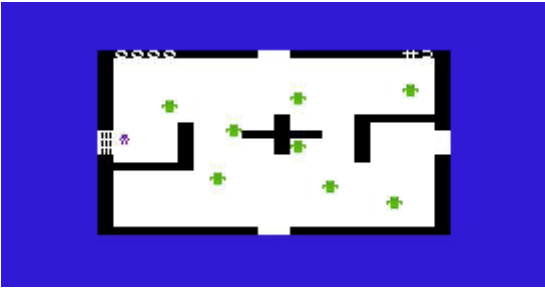
Alien Blitz is a Space Invaders clone, and not a bad one it is too. Game play is very similar to the arcade original. The tension really builds as the aliens get faster and faster as you shoot them down. The graphics are well defined, but everything is in monochrome, blue background and white ships and shields. While this makes it fairly faithful, I would like to see more colour added. The graphics are a reasonable size too, not like the over sized sprites in the official Atari 2600 version of Space Invaders. The sound isn't much, just some wimpy sounds when you shoot. One annoying glitch in the game is that often when you make some very minute moves to the left or right to escape an alien missile, you tend to flick back, sometimes right back under the missile you are trying to escape. Overall, this is a pretty good Space Invaders Clone, but it is not quite as good as Commodore's Vic Avenger.

My Score - 7/10

ALIEN SIDESTEP

This is a fairly strange and very basic little shoot-em-up. Alien Sidestep is one of the many variants on the Space Invaders theme. It gets its title from the fact that when you shoot at the aliens above you they sidestep, meaning that they dodge back a space to avoid your fire. Game play quickly becomes very boring as there just isn't enough variation. The graphics are simple but nice and brightly coloured.

My Score - 5/10



AMOK!

If you are a fan of Bezerk then you will you might really like Amok! Amok! is a Bezerk clone, and a reasonably good one it is too. The graphics are simple but do the job well enough. The only real let down in the graphics is your weedy little man. A slightly bigger sprite would have made a big difference. There is also some minor flicker, but nothing that really distracts. Game play is just like Bezerk. Clear the room of alien robots and exit as soon as you can. But there is no Evil Otto like character. This takes away a lot of the extra tension, meaning you can just take your time killing the robots. I believe this makes the game a bit too easy. This is a fun game, but it was greatly improved upon with the sequel, Super Amok.

My Score - 6/10

CHOPLIFTER!

Here is the game that almost challenges Omega Race as the best Vic 20 game. Choplifter was a very popular and successful game on the C64. All the elements that made the C64 version so good are all here on the Vic. The graphics are very good. There are a number of terrific little touches in the graphics such as the flapping flag on your base, the little POWs waving to be rescued and some very good parallax scrolling in the stars and as you cross your boundary line. The object of the game is to rescue your POWs from the enemy. As you fly your helicopter into enemy territory you are attacked from the ground by tanks and the air by jet fighters. There is some good sound, particularly the whooshing of your rotor blades. Choplifter was programmed by Tom Griner, one of the leading game programmers for the Vic 20, who made quite a number of excellent games for the Vic, arguably pushing it further than any other programmer.

My Score - 10/10

GRIDRUNNER

This was the game that really convinced me that the VIC 20 was a great games machine. It was created by the legendary Jeff Minter. Gridrunner is an intense shoot-em-up. While it has some similarity with Centipede, it has enough original ideas to stand on its own right as a brilliant original game. A centipede like creature snakes its way down the screen towards you. When you shoot one of the segments it splits into two and both segments continue down the screen in opposite directions. Each level sees the centipede creature get bigger and faster, then two appear and then three. Within no time there are segments flying all over the place. Every segment that you shoot leaves behind a mine that slowly grows until it shoots out a missile straight down the screen. Bad luck if you happen to be sitting right under the mine when it releases its missile. The other things you have to watch out for are the two laser-guns that move up and down the left hand side of the screen and

back and forth along the bottom. The two laser-guns periodically shoot out a long laser, laying more mines wherever their two lasers intersect. This sure is one hectic shoot-em-up, just what Jeff Minter has always excelled in. The Vic 20 is quite limited with its sound, yet Minter has created some very good and gutsy sounds. This is certainly one of the best Vic 20 games. It was released on cart and tape.

My Score - 9.5/10

LODE RUNNER

Not many classic gamers haven't played Lode Runner on at least one of the multitude of machines it was converted to. Therefore I won't waste too much time describing the game except to say Lode Runner is one of the earliest, and best, platform games. The Vic 20 version is just as good as any other I have played, and I have played most. The graphics are great and clearly defined and control is precise. One way this version differs from the others is that it is a little slower. While this does make some of the movement a bit jerky, I believe it makes the game a little easier and more playable.

My Score - 9/10



OMEGA RACE

Alan Hewson covered this game in one of his excellent "Many faces of..." articles where he rightly gave credit where credit is due. Perhaps some may have been surprised to see a Vic 20 game win a silver medal, but one play of the Vic version of Omega Race and you very quickly realize why it won. To put it simply, this game is absolutely brilliant. The graphics, sound and most importantly, the playability arguably make this the best game to appear on the Vic 20. Omega Race is a shoot-em-up, not a racing game as the name may suggest. You are in a rectangular arena where you have to eliminate a number of enemy drones and mines before moving on to the next level. Your ship (which looks like the ship from Asteroids) can thrust about the arena, rebounding off the walls. There is a lot of inertia, so you must be careful and keep your ship under control. If you are not quick to destroy all the enemy drones, one of the drones begins to rocket around the arena, firing its missiles everywhere. There are loads of options in the game. You can play with keys, joystick or paddle. You can change the amount of ships you start with. And you can change the background colours and the colours of the ships. Overall, this is a game that really shows what the Vic 20 is capable of.

My Score - 10/10



SLAP DAB

I love this game. It is a fairly simple painting game where you must paint the whole screen with your paint. You fill up your brush with paint from your "home base". As you move your man around the screen he leaves a trail of paint behind him. But watch out! When you paint over a monster, he begins to chase you around the screen. Monsters are invisible until they are painted over. You then have to continue painting while avoiding the monsters. (two per screen). Monsters can only travel on painted areas, which allows you to paint creatively to try and trap the monsters for a little while. As you paint a gauge slowly runs down until you are out of paint. You must then return to your "home base" to fill up again. The graphics in the game are pretty good. I particularly like the monsters. Lots of colour is used well. Sound is great. When you paint there is a good slopping noise. It is a very addictive game, but it does get a bit repetitive. A bit more variation and it would have scored a point higher. Slap Dab comes only on tape, and it is an unexpanded game. It is amazing what programmers could do in 3k.

My Score - 8/10

(Tonks is a reader of Retrogaming Times since issue 6. He is married and has two young sons who also love spending a lazy Sunday afternoon playing with Dad's ever expanding videogame collection. Tonks can be reached at tonks777@bigpond.com or andrew@milduracofc.org.au).

Atari 5200 Pac-Man Game Reviews

By the Video Game Critic, www.videogamecritic.net

Pac-Man (Atari 1982) A-

Pac-Man not only passes the test of time, it actually improves with age! I swear I have more fun playing this now than I did twenty years ago. Boy, I can't wait for another 20 years to pass – then it will really be awesome! Seriously though, this cartridge must have been a slice of heaven back in 1982. The maze, sound effects and gameplay are nearly identical to the original arcade game – down to the intermissions! The gameplay is FAST, noticeably faster than the arcade, which makes it more fun and challenging in my opinion. Blinky is particularly aggressive. The wobbly 5200 controllers might cause you to miss a few turns at first, but they actually work well once you get a feel for them. The only fault I could find with the graphics is the single-colored ghosts which look like they belong in the 2600 version. But with eight difficulty levels, Pac-Man is always a good time.

Ms. Pac-Man (Atari 1983) A

Little. Yellow. Different. Better. Not only is this a better port of the arcade game than 5200 Pac-Man, but the changing mazes and bouncing fruit make it a better game in general. It

may run a little slower than 5200 Pac-Man, but the graphics are much higher in resolution, and the mazes and heart-warming intermissions are identical those found in the original game. The ghosts now have white eyes and the fruits are easy to distinguish. Unlike the ultra-fast 5200 Pac-Man, this game plays at about the same speed at its arcade counterpart. You get five lives to start with, but this is offset by smarter ghosts that tend to change directions unexpectedly. With solid control and a variety of skill levels, Ms. Pac-Man is practically flawless.

[Jr. Pac-Man \(Atari 1984\) A](#)

Jr. Pac-Man is remarkably good but often lost in the shadow of his parents. This new edition added something quite innovative – mazes so big that they don't even fit on the screen! That's right, as you move Jr. around, the screen scrolls sideways to display the part of the maze you are working on. You'd think it might slow down the action, but in fact Jr. Pac-Man is faster and wilder than its parents. The screen scrolls relatively smoothly, and our little hero zips around with unabashed youthful exuberance. The graphic quality of the maze and ghosts are about the same as Ms. Pac-Man, but these huge mazes are much more satisfying to clear! Instead of fruit bouncing around, there are little toys, although it's often hard to tell what they are. The control is excellent. The only thing missing is intermissions! Jr. Pac-Man is only available from www.atariage.com, so I recommend you head on over and buy a copy.

[Super Pac-Man \(Atari 1984\) D](#)

How can you screw up a Pac-Man game? By tinkering with the formula too much and creating an ugly-looking game with confusing gameplay. This is one Pac-Man incarnation that no one loved, and few even liked. The gameplay is unnecessarily complicated. Instead of eating dots, there are objects like fruit and hamburgers housed in areas of the screen enclosed by gates. By touching scattered keys, you can open these gates and access the items. In addition to the standard power-pills, there are also "super" pills that transform you into Super Pac-Man, who is twice the size of the normal Pac-Man. Super Pac-Man can eat right through gates and is not harmed by the ghosts (they get "skinny" to show their fear). Unfortunately, Super Pac-Man isn't a good fit for the narrow maze corridors, and controlling him is like driving a car around your kitchen. Another problem is that when you eat a power-pill the ghosts flash blue and yellow. Not only does this look awful, but it's hard to distinguish from the normal ghost colors which include blue and purple. There are some timed bonus stages thrown in where you can run free in a ghost-less maze, but it's not particularly fun. And every level is the same boring maze layout. To be fair, this is a very close port of the arcade game, so if you're one of the five people who liked that, you won't be disappointed. Otherwise, I'd only recommend this to people who don't want to have fun with their video games – namely collectors. Super Pac-Man for the 5200 is only available at www.atariage.com.

Want to read more? I have over 1850 reviews on my site! Check it out www.videogamecritic.net

One of the Draws

It is always fun to show a young gamer some of your old games and check out that look on their face. You know the one, where they wonder how someone can enjoy a game with such primitive graphics and most being made up of a single level. In an age where you have games that let you explore entire cities as well as jump from planet to planet, it can be a bit strange to play a simple game like Space Invaders or Asteroids. But there is a draw to these games that many new games cannot offer. This draw is quick gameplay that is simple and addicting. That is it in a nutshell.

While a game like Grand Theft Auto or Final Fantasy may offer a ton more than Pitfall or Missile Command, they require something that many gamers do not have, lots of time. You need to put aside hours to sit down and play these games, while you can play a quick game of Keystone Kapers or Jungle Hunt in less than 15 minutes before work or while you are waiting for a pot of water to boil. Try doing that with most modern games and you end up being late to work or burning a pot.

So while the new games do offer a different and very enjoyable experience, the classic games also offer a great video game experience in a easy to fit in your schedule size. So when you do not have time for a full course video game meal, pull out some classic games and enjoy a quick snack. And like potato chips, you may find that you cannot play just one!

COMMERCIAL VAULT

by [Adam King](#)

Greetings, gamers. For this month's helping of the Vault, I have two commercials for a pair of Atari arcade ports: Ms. Pac-Man and Vanguard. I also have some more info on the upcoming CD.

Both commercials can be downloaded from The Old Computer Dot Com (theoldcomputer.com)

Vanguard

This commercial features three game players in some white room, trying out Atari's latest shooter, Vanguard. We watch them as they go through the games levels, each claiming to be an expert on that part of the game. Then along comes the stereotypical big dumb jock, who takes the joystick and attacks the game's boss, the Gond.



"Watch all of us play one game together."



"Say, you think we should turn around and see what's behind us?"



"My turn, little men."

[Ms. Pac-Man](#)

This commercial featuring the first lady of the arcades features several scenes that may not go together on paper. First we find a trio of kids in a locker room. One of them asks another, "Hey Joey, what's she really like?" Joey answers excitedly, "She's the most exciting woman I ever met," making the others go, "Yeah?"

Suddenly we cut to some gameplay footage with the announcer saying, "Atari introduces the woman of the year, Ms. Pac-Man! Just like the arcade classic, four different screens, floating fruit, even pretzels!"

Next the Ms. herself bursts in and does a short dance number, singing, "Honey, dont'cha know, I'm more than Pac-Man with a bow!"

And the finish: "Reach for Ms. Pac-Man. REACH FOR ATARI!!!"



"You do know she's only a game sprite, right?"



The Ms. herself, in all her 2600 glory.



Not only can she chomp ghosts, she can dance and sing too.

Don't forget, she's more than Pac-Man with a bow.

Now I want to talk about the CD I'm working on, so you don't get the wrong idea. First off, I'm not going to just cobble together all the videos I downloaded off the Internet and burn them to a CD. I want to put some real effort into this. Here's the facts thus far:

1. The Commercial Vault CD is just that: a CD. It's not a Video CD or DVD or anything like that. This does require a CD-Rom to work. You'll also need Internet Explorer, but not the Internet. This is because the interface for the CD is basically a bunch of HTML files.
2. All the clips will be in MPEG format. This way you can enjoy the clips on almost any computer, without the need for special players or codes. Besides, MPEGs have much better quality than RealPlayer and Quicktime, so that's a bonus.
3. So I'm not accused of stealing other people's work, I'm recording all the video clips myself. However I will still accept help where I can get it. If any of you wish to donate some clips, I'll be sure to give you credit.
4. It's just going to be video game commercials. No computer ads, like Apple or Commodore. The Atari computers may still get in; I haven't decided yet.
5. The CD will have more than just commercials already on the Internet in some form. You'll find a few rare and exclusive ones as well.

That's all I got so far. I still don't know when the CD Will be released, or how many clips will be on the disc. If you have any questions, comments, or whatever, beep me at Hal_3000@rocketmail.com. That's all for now.

By the way, Stardate 7800 will return next month, so don't worry.

The Many Faces of...Jumpman & Jumpman Jr.

by [Alan Hewston](#)

Here's another 20th Anniv. Many Faces of, as we salute the 1983 home computer game "Jumpman" and its sequel "Jumpman Junior", also released in 1983. All the same contestants return from last month, and again all were made by Epyx. Funny thing is that "Pitstop" was made on cart and its sequel only on disk. "Jumpman" is the other way around - on disk and its sequel "Jumpman Junior" is on a cartridge. Was this to deter piracy? Epyx knew we liked the original - so we'd buy the cart but could not copy it. If so, hopefully the sequel secured more royalties or profit this way.

"Jumpman" is one of those really good games that I unfortunately put aside, for too long - with hopes of coming back again to complete the job of learning and mastering each level - ultimately to complete each mission. Both the original and sequel are a type of game usually referred to as a Collect'em Ups. As this name implies, you collect objects on the screen to complete each level, and typically, one or more of the following change from level to level: the level's layout, theme or design; the number and location of the objects to collect; varying enemies, but usually some common to most levels; unique hazards or changes to the layout as you collect objects; traps and surprises; limited extra skills, abilities or magic for our hero. Most Collect'em Ups are of the platform variety, where each level is exactly one full screen. I may be in the minority, but I also consider that there is a second type, being similar to adventure games, where the level is bigger than one screen, but the main object is still to collect all or a certain number of prizes to complete each level. In either case, the faster you collect the objects, the more points you earn, and in some cases the bonus timer also represents your current life, which you lose if it expires. If you enjoy games like "Lode Runner", "Wizard", "Boulderdash", "Miner 2049er" & "Space Taxi", then you'll surely like "Jumpman" & "Jumpman Junior" as well. Another common denominator to these games (which is second nature now days) is the naming of each level or round - really cool stuff back then - and adding a little more re-playability factor, as you want to know what every level is called. Some Collect'em Ups (Miner 2049er) force you to collect all the prizes on each level in the same life, and if not, start collecting them all over again - very frustrating. "Jumpman" counts every prize only once and even if you fall to your death, you'll still get credit. Not to mention that while falling if you are lucky you'll fall onto more prizes and collect them, with the possibility of completing the level - and if so, that "Jumpman" is not lost. It's not over until those stars dance around your head.

Jupiter "Jumpman" must defend the Jupiter headquarters from invading Alienators & defuse the bombs they've laid in each of the 30 levels of its skyscrapers. Without spilling the beans, I'll just give away the names of the first 8 levels: "Easy Does it"; "Robots I"; "Bombs Away"; "Jumping Blocks"; "Vampire"; "Invasion"; "Grand Puzzle I"; and "Builder". [From the manual] You'll see a skyscraper made up of girders, ladders, bombs, and sometimes floating elevators, up-ropes, and down-ropes. During play you'll encounter many hazards, such as speeding bullets, floating blocks, pesky robots and other

unpleasant visual shocks.

Home Version Similarities: Except those in <>: all home versions have: A demo of sorts <AP2>; 5 game variations, Easy (levels 1-8), Intermediate (levels 9-18) <AP2>, Advanced (levels 19-30), the Grand Loop (all 30 levels), and Random (levels 9-30 random order), a great option; names (theme) to each level; choice of 1 to 4 players; 8 choices for on-screen game speed (changeable before each new life or level); saves high scores to disk; congratulatory screen for when you finish - "Mission Completed". The addition of a multi-player (4) option is usually not significant enhancement, but it is here - and I recommend trying it for two reasons. 1) While learning the levels, it is best to practice over and over again the same level, so why not just make it 4 times in succession; and 2) because "Jumpman" is a diskette based game, by practicing or playing this way, you'll save wear and tear on the disk & drive, as the players each play one after another until they complete the level or end their game, and then the next level loads from disk. Obviously a better option would have been to allow practicing any level, any time, but hey it's only 1983. One significant problem that I hated, back then and now, is referred to as a double death. The Bombs Away (level 3) and maybe others the enemies are not reset, so be careful as you can get killed twice for only 1 miscue (seen on the C64 & 8 Bit so far).

The Many Faces of...Jumpman



Arcade: None

Home versions: All by Epyx & Automated Simulations

unless noted, design, program & music by Randy Glover in '83

Commodore 64, Atari 8 bit, Apple II

Sequel: Jumpman Junior

Bronze Medal: Apple II (36)

My first reaction was getting bored watching the screen slowly scroll down to begin each level. Since this was a common graphics technique back in the late 1970s' and early 80's, there's no penalty here. Gameplay is impressive (9) with incredible variety and options. It may seem to be a simple game, but there are a huge number of game elements and many surprises hidden here, just not all used at once. The puzzle levels are especially unique. Missing from the AP2 version is the choice of the Intermediate level. The Addictiveness is enjoyable (8), but loses a little for the added difficulty of the controls and glitch(es) in getting stuck on ladders – not seen on other versions. [This is not the same glitch (or feature) that allows one to climb too far up a ladder and then fall off it.] Here, you get stuck on ladders with the only escape being to Jump off - clearly a bug – apparently unique to the AP2 version. The Random game is great for giving you a chance to see and practice any level above 8, albeit not when you want, but makes it addictive. The Graphics are (7) very good, but could be better. On a screen by screen basis, every level on every version is perhaps a 6, but factor in the huge variety of enemies, hazards and other tricks, traps, changes in layout, changes in enemy movement . . . and there is an awful lot more going on graphically that most people give this game credit for, or when taken at a glance. The Sound is mediocre (5), missing a lot of effects and not much music, not to mention the usual penalty of having crummy internal audio only. Controls are effective (7), but degraded by poor programming. This game is called "Jumpman" and the actual JUMPING and moving are split. Jumpman moves only via the joystick but the Jump is accomplished by the <Apple key>, not the joystick fire button. Poor choice. Even if they were combined, it still seems that there is some slop in the code that makes it harder (unforgiving) to maneuver here than the other version. You'll die early and often.

Silver Medal: Atari 8 bit (43)

My first reaction was the only drawback may be that this game never made it to cart format – so that more players today will discover it. This game is quite a gem, on all versions, and you may find it to be very addicting and deserving of much more accolades that I can offer. Gameplay is outstanding (9) and extremely creative. Addictiveness is super (9) and you'll want to complete all the levels and keep coming back to improve your time and bonuses. The only negative is that there is no pause, nor did Randy Glover program a stop/pause in the action between player turns or levels. Major Bummer! There is a slight delay/warning for player # 1, 2, 3, 4 to swap the joystick. Graphics are simple yet (7) very good and creative and combine many elements when you look at the overall game. Better color, more multi-color objects and more animation and enemies at the same time would have appeased the critics. Sound is (8) enjoyable, with nice music between levels, as you die and sufficient effects to enhance the game. The most dramatic effect is combined with graphics for the crumbling downward scrolling when your last life is lost. This cool, but otherwise unimportant effect only made it to this (possibly the first) version out of the 6 combined Jumpman games reviewed here. Controls are perfect (10). A bit rare to find the original disk now days.

Gold Medal: Commodore 64 (44)

My first reaction was - no surprises here. Use the same scores and comments from the Atari 8 bit version again – plus . . . the ladders bug has been fixed so that you cannot

climb too far and fall off. Graphics are the best here (8), sharp and more detail and color, plus multi-colored objects. It is likely that this version is the most common on diskette as well.

The Many Faces of...Jumpman Jr.



The Alienators have previously attacked the Command Station in "Jumpman". In "Jumpman Junior", they are now invading the Substation on the far side of Jupiter. Jupiter's super secret agent, Jumpman, tries desperately to restore communications, he sends an emergency request to you, his promising apprentice, to drive back the Alienators by defusing all the bombs throughout the substation.

Other Similarities: Except those in <>: all home versions have: The same format as "Jumpman", with additional hazards – moving walls and electrocution traps. Still 1 to 4 players, but there are no game variations – just 12 levels, which become random, only after you complete the first 12 in sequence. Each player's speed is now set at the beginning of the game only, but displayed on screen.

Arcade: None

Home versions: All by Epyx & Automated Simulations unless noted, design, program & music by Randy Glover in '83 Commodore 64, Atari 8 bit, Colecovision ('84 programmed by Chris Capener)

Rumor Mill (Epyx had several TI-99 titles in the works, including this one)

Bronze Medal: Atari 8 Bit (42)

My first reaction was there are only 12 levels. Did Epyx have an in-house "Jumpman" construction set/kit or design competition for this sequel? Perhaps their entire staff contributed to these additional unique & killer levels to further challenge us. Although there are cosmetic changes, the Gameplay for the sequel remains outstanding (9) on all versions. Addictiveness is enjoyable (8), with even more creative levels, but you'll probably not have quite as much fun as the original. The increased difficulty and lack of any options

or randomizer make it much harder to play all the levels. So . . . you'll have to earn it. But a quick intro provides a screen shot of each of the 12 levels - not seen on any other version. The Graphics remain very good (7), but are still a little dull compared to the other versions. The Sound is pleasant (8) on all versions, but once again, only the Atari has the crumbling screen effect when you lose your final life. Controls are perfect (10) on all versions. These carts are rare, the hardest to find, but you may find a bootleg on disk.

Gold Medal: Colecovision & Commodore 64 (43)

Colecovision

My first reaction was how cool to see this game make it to a console. The same scores comments as the Atari version apply here – except . . . again the ladder bug has been fixed so that you cannot climb too far and fall off. The Addictiveness is superb, (9), gaining a point over the others with the added pause ["0"] and un pause ["8"], but only if using the CV controllers. Controls, are not quite perfect (9) when using a CV controller for such a precise timing, high-speed moving and jumping game. The graphics are sharp (8) and more detailed, a step up from the Atari. This version is a bit rare.

Commodore 64

My first reaction was once again - no surprises here. Gets the same scores and comments as the Atari version . . . but the graphics on the 64 are much sharper (8), and have more multi-colors. The carts are just slightly uncommon, making it the best choice for you to seek out. Note that the C64 & CV share the same set of levels, but these differ from the Atari. Any "Jumpman" fan would want the Atari version as well.

Thanks: To Jeff Golas at the Philly Classic 4 who gave me a good price for the complete C64 version of "Jumpman" Final words: OK, so where is that "Jumpman" Construction Set? & Why didn't it come out on the Lynx (made by Epyx)? It's overdue, so maybe the current platforms will revive and expand on this classic. Well, we know that "Jumpman" is still popular today - voted as your 14th favorite VG from 1983. Download some music for the SID player at <http://www.lemon64.com/music/sid/GAMES/G-L/Jumpman.sid>

Come back next time for yet another 20th Anniversary tribute in The Many Faces of "Frogger II: Threedeep" on the C64, CV, 2600, 5200, 8 Bit and Apple II. Alan Hewston is can be contacted at: Hewston95@stratos.net or see his website at http://my.stratos.net/~hewston95/VG/Hewston_vg.html

MAGFest Show Information

MAGFest website is <http://magfest.dreamingcrowforge.com/>

Currently, entry badges for MAGFest are \$25 via paypal or \$30 at the door. If you can get something of a money-order sort postmarked and in the mail with a June date, I'll take \$20 in the mail.

If you want to be a dealer at MAGFest, the tables are \$90. I can't go lower than that as

we're already taking a loss on dealer tables (I promised they'd be less, so they are), but on the bright side, it IS lower than last year, and it still includes one complimentary dealer's entry badge.

One thing I should point out is that we are currently advertising that we will have a 24 hour dealer room. This does not mean that you NEED to be at your table at the entire con, but rather that you are able to be at your table the entire con. MAGFest security staff will be available to watch your stuff while you're not at your table.

We will have artist tables available *hopefully* free of charge if you don't intend to bring your business. We won't be able to watch those tables as closely, but roving staff will still check on them.

The dates are set for Halloween weekend, Fri Oct 31 - Sun Nov 2, at the Clarion Inn in Williamsburg, VA. I put a small blurb on the website's information page about staying at the con hotel if possible, because it really helps me. Please read it, even if you don't heed it.

The Pause Button

It is amazing how much difference one little button can do. Growing up in the age of classic games where such a thing did not exist, I can say how much I would have loved a pause button during the classic age. Imagine that you are putting up a huge score on Pacman and nature calls. In the past, you had to either cross your legs or end your game. But with a pause button, you could go do your business and come back and pick up where you left off.

While this may seem like something trivial now, it was a big deal back then. You really had to gut it out and keep playing. Kids have no idea how good they have it. And don't even get me started on game saves. I could go on and on about game saves.

Letters to the Editor

What will they ask? What will we bother to answer? Hint, it will not be where you can download a game.

Why is it that all the classic games get lumped into one era, while you have an 8-Bit, 16-Bit and so on with the newer games?

This is just my opinion, so take it for what its worth, but I feel that is because of the "Great Crash". Most people tend to view the video game industry as "before the crash" and "after the crash". In actuality, there are three distinctly different eras in the classic game age. Each one has its own systems and battles. But with the huge success of the Atari 2600, it helps to blur this as one could argue that the Atari 2600 was the big winner in two of the three eras. But to give you a better idea, here is a breakdown of the three different eras.

Era 1 - The Pre-Cartridge Era

This era is made up of pong and pong related systems. With the a few exceptions, this

era did not offer the ability to play games on your system that were not already programmed on it (the original Odyssey would be one of the exceptions). This era ran from 1972 to about 1976, when the Channel F debuted.

Era 2 - Early Cartridge Era

This is the era when the cartridge based systems first appeared. It started with the Channel F, but soon the Atari 2600, Odyssey 2, Bally Astrocade, Emerson Arcadia and the Intellivision also appeared on the market. This era also brought about the first portable cartridge based game system (Microvision), the start of third party software, licensed games and a whole lot more. Most of the foundation for the video game industry began here.

Era 3 - Second Generation Cartridge Era

After the industry had been created, the evolution began. Improvements in graphics, sound and the size of the games were prominent in this era. The new systems which were competing with the last generation of systems were the Colecovision, Atari 5200 and the Vectrex. Arcade translations became big business and there was a rush to sign as many different arcade games to port over as possible. The level of complexity of the games also increased as we saw more and more multi-level games and strategy games.

Hope this helps out a bit. As you can see, the classic age of video games was more than just one era. Each one improved upon the previous one and new systems came and went.

Conclusion

Issue is done. Took a long time, but unlike the Rolling Stones, time was not on my side. Been putting in major overtime at work (gotta grab it while it is there) and there just did not seem to be any time. Hopefully it will be fixed by next month. Well, get out to those flea markets and garage sales and get some deals (I know they have been bone dry for me so far).

[-Tom Zjaba](#)

(This issue was done while listening to No Doubt, John Mayer and Neil Young).