

Retrogaming Times

Issue #64 - December 22nd, 2002

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End of an Era

All good things must come to an end and so has part of the Tomorrow's Heroes website. In the past, I had done price guides for different items. It started with a Marquee price guide as I collected marquees and could not find prices for them. So I started to compile prices to get a better idea of what an average price was for different marquees. I told a few people about my list and they thought it would be cool to put on my website. So I did and it was fairly popular. I eventually added a Handheld/Tabletop price guide as well as a Memorabilia price guide and eventually one for Nintendo 8-Bit games.

Then two things happened that brought a halt to the further development of the price guides. First, I added a day job, which restricted the amount of time I had available to do these price guides. The second thing was eBay changed their site to a point where it was not so easy to retrieve the information. From their fragmentation of categories to other changes, it went from a fairly easy task to keep them up to date, to being a major burden. So I eventually just left them alone.

While I did not update them anymore, what I did continue to get was emails and phone calls from people who wanted to buy items on the price guides. Despite very large disclaimers (which noone bothered to read) to ebay banners proclaiming that if you want an item, to look there, people kept asking for Tron marquees or I Took a Licking From a Chicken handheld game (I get at least 5 people a month asking for this game). So I finally decided to give myself some rest and just delete the price guides. As much as I liked

having them and as much as people enjoyed them, they had outlived their usefulness and are nothing but a burden. So if you come to the website and look for one of these price guides, you will now know what happened to them.

The Many Faces of...Star Trek: Strategic Operations Simulator

by [Alan Hewston](#)

Just in time for Star Trek: Nemesis, we continue our 20th anniversary salute to the arcade hit, Star Trek: S.O.S. This game was released in conjunction with many Trekkers consider as their favorite Trek movie, Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan. The arcade game was based upon a simulation of battling Klingons and Nomad, but all the action is in 2 dimensions. Coincidentally, ignoring 3-D attacks (above/below) was Khan's fatal tactical error in the movie. 2-D (or pseudo 3-D) is sufficient for this excellent simulation game. Fascinating - ST:II is the only Trek movie that does not have an actual Klingon or Klingon ship in it. The other 9 all do. Instead, the beginning of the movie shows us Lt. Saavik taking the famous Kobayashi Maru test / simulation. This is the "no win situation" that only Kirk had defeated. [But he cheated by reprogramming the simulation.] So, just like most video games, "Star Trek: S.O.S" puts you in that no win situation – eventually you WILL lose this game. It is a logical conclusion.

The manual says that you run the Enterprise (hereafter shortened to E!) play the role of Captain Kirk, but it's more like playing Sulu, Chekov & Scotty combined as you have complete control of the helm and weapons. Use the sensors and view screen to take immediate action based upon what you see and hear. You have both impulse and warp drive and phasers and photon torpedoes. It may sound a bit simple, but there is a lot going on, making it one of the most complex arcade game to that date - definitely one worth learning. Too bad the original arcade monitors were prone to catching fire, making them really rare today. See RT #7 where Tom does one of the first Many Faces of reviews.



<Defend your Star Bases and find and destroy Nomad>

Arcade: by Rob Zdybel, Sega 1982 & Home Versions: unless noted, all by Sega
1983: Vic 20 (Eric J. Popejoy), C64 (Joe Sengir), 2600, 5200, Atari 8 bit,
TI-99 (Sega & later by Texas Instruments). Finally, in 1984 the

Colecovision port.

Rumor Mill: Intellivision version was in the works by Sega.

Other Trek games, close but not the same: ST: Phasor Strike, '79 Microvision, and for the Vectrex, 1982, ST:The Motion Picture, an excellent game where you battle Klingons in true 3-D action.

Home Version Similarities: All versions have: Star Trek theme music at the beginning; only one E! (ship) per game with an unlimited supply of phaser fire; SBs must be defended and when docked with add 1 unit to your otherwise limited supply of photon torpedoes, warps and shields; more points are scored for not using the SBs; enemies & their weapons will damage E!, once they are close, not just on contact; all other damage from ramming, collision with debris, or Klingon plasma bursts shows up as a reduction first in shield units, then torpedoes, then warp units, the next hit ends your simulation; there are 10 sectors (levels) of increasing difficulty on all home versions that I have manuals for, compared with 40 missions at the arcade. None of the home versions offer any gameplay options, but the CV does have a choice of 4 difficulty levels. Every version does at least a decent job with sound effects, such as phaser and photon fire, enemy weapons, impulse and warp drive, docking, nomad moving about, and the drones draining away anti-matter. Your score remains on-screen until the next game begins.

Additional home version elements, except for those Missing In Action (MIA) <listed here>: six <C64> rounds to each sector, first two rounds facing Klingons, the third round <TI, C64, Vic, CV> is a time-limited bonus re-supply round where up to 4 SB can be found, alternating every sector between an asteroid field & meteor shower; two more rounds versus Klingons, and the final round versus Nomad, his weapons fire <CV> & mines; after nomad has escaped or is destroyed, the next sector begins; the scanners display the Klingons in distinct colors which determines their purpose - to attack A) the E!, B) SBs or C) when SB are destroyed all Klingons will ram the E! <Vic & TI - all Klingon ships look alike>; a solitary, unique colored Klingon ship is a secret anti-matter saucer/drone that attaches to E! to drain warp units; a signal alerts you when you have phaser lock on a Klingon <TI, CV, Vic>; an on-screen indicator with up to 6 colors alert's you to the E!'s remaining shield units <CV & TI>; a red alert sounds when your shields are gone <Vic & TI>; an overlay for the controllers came with many of the versions; up to three <2600> SB must be defended which are green (and/or filled) then turn blue (and/or empty) when docked with, then flash red <TI, 2600, Vic> once their shields are half way gone; your photon torpedoes show up on the scanner and explode into a ring of effective area (2600, 5200, 8 Bit); music plays when you destroy Nomad (TI & Vic); a pause is provided for a few versions except the (2600, C64, Vic).

Have Notes: Vic 20 (31)

My first reaction was that SOS is too complicated a game for the Vic, but we saw how good the Vic "Robotron 2084" could be. The Gameplay is good enough (6) to be playable. The biggest problem is the action is s-l-o-w-e-d when facing the full compliment of Klingons. The above MIA game elements also hurt the Vic version a lot. This is the only version with a high score stored. The Addictiveness is decent (6) enough to keep you going. The Graphics are mediocre (5) and detract significantly - but every element is

displayed - albeit poorly. The Sound is a bit harsh sounding, but overall is respectable (6) and save for missing music after destroying Nomad, I think that every sound effect is included. The Controls are responsive (8), but the E! seems to move too be controlled too slowly compared to the other versions. When all action is slowed it's even harder to turn, as compared to moving forward. Also note that all systems without a controller that can be held so that 2 fire buttons (phaser plus photons) are easy to use without any error or accidents - were penalized 1 point. ie all but one home version of SOS.

Have Nots: Atari 2600 (39)

My first reaction was this is too good a game for the 2600. It is scaled down but very worth while. If you like simple games, rate this one higher. The Gameplay is impressive (8) and is pretty much all there. The limit of 1 SB instead of 3 and thus fewer attacking Klingons keeps it from being among the best. Fewer Klingons also cuts into the randomness of the Klingon threat. Addictiveness is enjoyable (8) - a pause would surely help. Graphics are limited and blocky, but good enough (6) to catch most of the gameplay elements. There are no visible E! photon torpedo fire. It's still there in the gameplay, just too bad it was not added visibly. Sound is a bit limited in variety and quality, but still sharp (8) and nothing is missing. The Controls are super (9), but hurt by the complexity of the game and only 1 fire button.

Have Nots: Atari 5200 (39)

My first reaction was that the 2 "Wico controller" fire buttons really work well. The Gameplay is fantastic (9) the best out there, having only one trivial MIA. The Addictiveness is enjoyable (8) with great replay value, but I did not add in the usual bonus for the pause button <pause>. Fortunately the manual warns you that after 2.5 minutes the game resets. Ah 'cmon, what good is 2.5 minutes. The Graphics are smooth and effective (7), but not in the neighborhood of the medal winners and completely ignoring photons on screen is a shame. The Sound is all there and pleasant (8), but just not quite as good as the medal winners. The Controls are pretty good (7), but the steering is a disappointment considering two excellent fire buttons on a Wico controller. Perhaps its just poor programming as too many accidents happen steering and warping the E! Quick, pinpoint firing and maneuvering control is also lost, and forget about the standard controllers.

Have Nots!: Atari 8 Bit (41)

My first reaction was why can't I see my photons fire. All comments about the 5200 apply here as they did not change the game, other than the obvious controller differences. The pause button is the <select> button - making me wonder if I ever missed that before. This seems like a poor choice, but is used in other 8 bit games. It's only one keystroke away is the only other button used in the game, <reset>. Likewise, the non-ambitious programming continued as the 2.5 minute pause is still in vogue here. Dooh! The Controls are outstanding (9), but again, only one fire button. This game can be found on cart and disk.

Bronze Medal: Colecovision (42)

My first reaction, typical of many CV arcade games, this version is too darn hard on level 1, not to mention difficulties 2 through 4. The Gameplay is impressive (8) save for the

MIAs. Although a shield color indicator is lacking, a unique enhancement is a circular display of shields around the E!, just like the movie displays. Also, despite lacking the bonus round, there are unique bonuses given at 20K and (I think) upon completion of each level. Another unique element is that Nomads mines when destroyed may lead to a chain reaction. The Addictiveness is enjoyable (8), with the best use of the pause <*>, but that is erased by the difficulty of the game. It's so difficult - what's that point of the harder difficulty levels. The Graphics are sharp (8) and detailed, but not as colorful and smooth as the C64. Sound is wonderful (9) with the best Trek music of them all and all the effects done well. Controls are a mixed bag (I tried both controller choices 1 & 2 for 6 different controllers). The best I got was a (9) well done, by using the Super Action controllers. These should have yielded a 10, but they honestly do not work right. Hoe did this make it out of play testing? You need to select the Standard Controller option and then get partial use of the SA Controller. At least you've been warned. This is the only version with any rarity and could set you back about \$20.

Gold Medal: Commodore 64 & TI-99/4A (43)

Another tie this month. Despite their significant differences, I'm certain that you'll agree they both deserve a medal.



<C64 version really looks nice, but is not without its flaws.>

Commodore 64

My first reaction was that the Klingons do not move enough. But upon closer inspection the difficulty builds up more gradually here. And it appears the Klingons are programmed to stay put and fight cautiously (not much honor and glory in that). They prefer to stay safely out of your phaser range and pound you with torpedoes. But, once you run from them, they will pursue. The Gameplay is very nice (8) but the MIAs drop it a notch below the Atari computer. The sector/round is not displayed unless you destroy Nomad. The Addictiveness is pleasant (8) and 'tis very much a version that you'll want to play over & over. The gradual increase in difficulty is great, but there is no pause, as both the disk and cart versions, the <F7> does not function as a pause as it says in the manual. I tried all other buttons as well. The Graphics are wonderful (9), easily the best with no baggage. Sound is great (9) where the music and all effects are on par with the CV. The Controls are fantastic (9), but again, there's only one fire button. If I scored 100 points total, this one would barely eclipse the TI. Available on cart and disk.

TI-99/4A

My first reaction was that the talking was too limited. It sounds really cool, but there's only a few phrases, "Entering Sector X.Y", "Damage Repaired Captain", "Avoid Mines", and "Excellent Maneuvering Captain". I may have been too generous scoring the Gameplay as pretty good (7). It's not much better than the Vic and too many elements are MIA. You may be tempted to boldly play another version. The Antimatter drone is very effective and stubborn in this version. The Addictiveness is outstanding (9) and gets the top billing with a fun version that has a working pause.

"." This button stinks for some games, but there's no problem finding a good break in the action to locate it. Graphics are sharp (8) and the Nomad round really fills up with action as Nomad's weapons and mines stick around for quite a while. The shields are uniquely displayed on the viewer as a mesh that is lit up when you are hit. The Sound is awesome (10) if you have the Speech Synthesizer peripheral. The music and effects are probably not as good as the CV, but pretty much all there. The Controls are well done (9), but only when using an Atari controller.

Come back next month, for the RT second best video game from 1982 (as voted on by you), "Joust" and its 8 faces on classic home systems for the Atari 2600, 5200, 7800, 8 bit, TI-99, C64, CV & AP2. I need your help with the TI-99 review as I do not have that cart. Alan Hewston can be reached at: Hewston95@stratos.net

COMMERCIAL VAULT

by [Adam King](#)

Greetings, gamers. With Alan reviewing all those Star Trek games, I'd thought I'd tackle another famous space game. Plus I'm covering the runner-up in the Top 20 list.

Both these ads can be found at the Atari Historical society (www.atarimuseum.com).

Star Raiders

Like I said my first commercial is for the Atari smash Star Raiders. The entire ad consists of gameplay footage, but what's interesting is the computer voice that's intimidating you.

"You're flying in the Atari galaxy. We play rough out here. Sure, you have an attack computer, and photon torpedoes. Ooh, nice shot, flyboy. But there's 40 of us, one of you. Checkin' the map, Star Raider? We know where you are. Bye-bye, Star Raider."

"Star Raiders, the home videogame that's only from Atari, and only for systems made by Atari."



Be careful, they play rough out here.



Don't take too long; they know where you are.



A victim of a technicolor explosion.



Be careful, they play rough out here.

Great, now everyone's going to be too intimidated to play this game now. Way to scare off your customers, Atari.

The Fly

This ad, which was no. 2 on the Top 20 list, was originally shown in movie theaters. I'm not sure if it was shown on television or not. Anyway in this two minute piece we see an Atari programmer in action. He looks at a fly and it gives him an idea for Yar's Revenge. Thing is the game comes to life before him. But he doesn't stop there. He also creates Asteroids and Star Raiders.

"A fly. I'll have a mutant fly. Hello, Yar. You'll need some protection. Ion zone. Uh uh, chick chroma. Intensify. Okay, now you'll need some weapons. You'll need a formidable enemy. The Qotile. Watch it Yar he has a lethal drone. There's some other tricks up his sleeve. Spiral. Go. Ooh, good move, Yar. Now, I have a surprise for you: a Zorlon cannon. Use it Yar. Fire again. Got him! Heh heh heh, that's revenge; Yar's revenge. This could be fun, this could be a lot of fun like Asteroids. Yeah, that's it. Get em' get 'em. Beautiful. Watch it. Disintegrate. Now let's go into deeper space. Galactic map. Okay, sector 11, hyperspace. Sights in. Zylon warships. Attack. Photons. Star Raiders. That's it, Star Raiders. That'll

keep them on their toes. Let's see what we can come up with next. We're Atari. We have the vision. And we invented the technology to bring it home, to you."



A small fly can lead to big games.



"From nothingness, I have created Yar."



Watch out for the spiral.



More technicolor explosions



Careful, you could get hurt by the rocks.



"Just checking my giant galactic map here."



Star Raiders, without the ship.



Heavy "wow" factor here.

All I can say is "Ah-mazing!" Certainly one of the best ads I've ever seen. You definitely have to check this out.

Power Off

by Geoff Voigt

For the 3 of you that care or keep track of this stuff, it's been easily more than a year since I last did anything for RT; and there's a reason for that. It got to a point in my life that all I really cared about was how large my collection was, what's new in the Game Collecting scene today. Sure, I'd pay lip service to trying to get into college, do something else with my life, ect. but I never did anything about it. Why should I, when I could be out thrifting or "making a contribution" by writing up the rec.games.video.classic FAQ? So anyway, I'm here to lay out all the crap that has happened to me because of this hobby/former obsession.

1:My compulsion has contributed to the loss of two jobs. When I lost the first one, what ran through my mind was "Oh \$@&*! I just got CV Mr. Do's Castle! Now I'm gonna have to sell it!" Not something more appropriate like Oh \$@&*! I gotta get another job!" What ran

through my mind when I lost the other job can't really be printed, other than there would have been two very happy Donkeys and one incredibly pained Former Supervisor, if I'd had my way. But I digress....

2: I believe that I've probably lost 5 years of my life because of Classic Gaming. The obsession was that strong. Go back to the top and reread my quote up there. That's time I could have been using for more art, socializing with new people, or improving my standing in life.

So what made me snap? when I realized that for those 5 years, I had been so close to getting into a 4-year college that all I had to do was go there, and that my 'hobby' had been holding me back. So I made the right decision: I didn't go to CGE 2002. (this is why RT didn't have any CGE coverage; blame me) Instead, I got my stuff in gear, and came to California State University, Los Angeles. I turned off the hobby for a while; and it felt great.

But the temptations still exist, and old habits can still come back up, whether it be a N64 Worms Armageddon, or Import Goodies (living in San Gabriel is crack-house central for this stuff) creeping into my shopping bag. Yes, N64 W:A is a big rare, but do you really need it? No.

I'm not saying anything shocking when I say that we have some obsessive compulsives here in the Classic Gaming scene; just look at some posts on RGVC and other web-based message boards. Yes the Entertainment Weekly gaming article has some errors, but does it really matter? I don't think so. The answers are close enough to count for most of the general public, and they're gonna forget 2/3 of what they read in the thing anyway, so why worry?

Yes, I've made some real, true friends as a result of my doing the collecting thing, and I value their friendship. If you're in a similar situation, you should too. Hell, go spend time with them, just make it a trip to the beach or a museum or something.

Recent events in the 2600 homebrewing scene have brought all this home to me again. guys, (and the gal or two that do collect too) ITS JUST GAMES. TAKE SOME TIME OFF. Breathe a bit, spend time with your children/wife/ other family, and let that \$10 2600 Crazy Climber slide by on Ebay. You won't crumble into dust if you miss it.

I didn't.

(Geoff Voigt is currently out enjoying some sunshine. No personal attacks on any person or website were intended in this article. irascible38@coldmail.com is his obviously munged E-mail address. Make appropriate adjustments to contact him)

Letters to the Editor

Whenever I put a strange letter in this section, it usually means that I will get a stack of even more insane letters. It is like a contest to see who is the most bizarre reader of RT.

So with that in mind (guess I am just a glutton for punishment), here are some even stranger letters. As I said in the past, I do not make these up, I actually get them and I have forwarded a few to Fred and other regulars of the newsletter, so I have people who can back me up. Honest, I am not this insane.

Hello,

If you are a reliable supplier of the below equipment I am going to need the following:

1. A mind warper generation 4 Dimensional Warp Generator # 52 4350a series wrist watch with memory adapter.

2. The special 23200 series time transducing capacitor with built in temporal displacement.

While these time pieces normally go between \$5,000-\$7,000 a piece, I am having a hard time finding a reliable supplier.

Teleport to me within the next 48 earth hours and I will pay \$40,000 2002 US cash. Please only reply if you are reliable. Send a (SEPARATE) email to me at:

Looks like another person who wants to go back in time and buy up all the Atari prototypes and ultra rare games at much cheaper prices. Could this be BuyAtari in disguise? We all know he has the money to afford a time machine.

Hello!

I am from ARGENTINA and would like to know if you could send me only a picture of LINDSAY WAGNER she is the love of my life, please help me to get it.

I can feel your pain as I have also dreamed of having Wonder Woman tie me up with her lasso and make me tell the truth. But I cannot help you with any photos (sorry, but I am keeping all them for myself....errr...I mean I do not have any). Good luck in your search as she is worth the effort.

What do you mean it was Lynda Carter that was Wonder Woman and not Lindsay Wagner. You mean I just told the world about my Wonder Woman fantasies for nothing. <Blush>. Anyway, I cannot help you with Lindsay Wagner either. Unlike Lynda Carter, I do not have any fantasies about the Bionic Woman.

Just recently read your newsletter, it's pretty cool. Just out of curiosity, how far can you get in Crazy Climber? I haven't played it all that much and made it to the third building once, but that was when it was set to 6 lives. Plus, what hand do you prefer to lead with?

That last one is pretty stupid but maybe not stupid enough to get in the newsletter as some of those really strange ones I've seen. They're pretty funny.

Anyway.

One time, I went up five buildings. Usually I can get through two with no problem and sometimes through the third building. As far as what hand do I lead with....let me think about it....is it the right hand.....no wait, it is the other right hand.....that is right, I lead with my left hand. Not sure why, but I use the left hand to lead. Now if you ask me which hand I use to lead when dancing, I would really be confused.

Just wanted you to know that I, and I'm sure many, offer monthly thanks when we see your latest posting. Hope you have a great turkey day!

I also think I might have an answer re: downloading games from your site. Many of the sub-titles within articles ("The Many Faces of..." being a good example) are both bolded and underlined. Now, I'm sure that for many people familiar with the web, if not experienced, underlining is shortcut for linking. I'll bet many people just assume that you have links to all of the roms hidden somewhere in that title and they are just getting frustrated by not being able to access them.

Oh well, whaddyagonnado?

Cheers!

That explains that. Guess the overuse of [blue underlined words](#) is enough to drive a person [crazy](#). So I better limit its use, so as not to [make people think](#) that you can [DOWNLOAD ROMS HERE!!!](#) Sorry about that.

Information Please

By [Fred Wagaman](#)

It seems like only yesterday when I first started cruising the internet. Dial-up speeds of 14.4 bps (quickly bumped to 28.8) and late nights in my office. Ah yes, those were the days.

Now we have gigahertz processors and DSL/Cable modems. Things move along at lightening speed and more and more words, pictures and sounds come flooding through our PCs.

But the reasons we use the internet really haven't changed.

We use it to entertain, to inform and to be informed, to buy and sell, and to link up with like-minded people from around the world.

One of the first things I stumbled across when I got online was a mailing list of Turbografx-16/PC-Engine fans. This list was my first real introduction to other game people on the net. It wasn't long until you could tell who the experts were, who the wannabee experts were and who were just jerks. Since it was a moderated list, the jerks didn't stay around long. I made contacts (and some friends) through this list from as far away from me as France, England and Japan. I had access to games I would have never thought possible for me to

get. I was able to get a NEC Supergrafx system and games from this list. (The Supergrafx was to be NEC's answer to Nintendo's Super Famicom/Super NES as a replacement for their PC-Engine/Turbografx. Only 5 games were ever made that ran on this system though it was backwards compatible.) I bought the machine from a person in Canada (getting ready to move back home to Hong Kong), I bought 2 games from a person in California, 2 from a contact in Japan and traded for the last one with a person in France. In addition, there were frequent "list-only" sales and auctions. This list grew large enough to spawn separate lists for Sega and Playstation fans. The list has cooled somewhat, but is still alive. Almost all of the sales and auctions have moved to Ebay, but occasional questions and comments still pop up. The list's headquarters can be found at <http://joyce.eng.yale.edu/~bt/turbo/> .

As a side note, the owner of the list has created the first home-brew game for the Turbografx. The game is called "Implode" and has been described as a reverse Tetris.

After being on the mailing lists for a while, I jumped into the Newsgroups. There were places for what seemed like everything under the sun. Literally hundreds of messages a day would go through rec.games.video and others. Keeping up with the different groups took hours. The signal-to-noise ratio was very high. Between spammers and flammers, a lot of what went on in each group was junk. There were no moderators. It was free speech at its best and worst. There was plenty of people selling and buying things, but it became almost too much to follow. Plus if I was looking to buy something, I'd go to Ebay.

Ah, Ebay. The word will one day be used both as a blessing and a curse. A single site that brings the world together in a frenzy of buying and selling. You can go there and find just about anything. And so can everyone else. Instead of getting bargains from the mailing list, or negotiating trades with friendly people on newsgroups, you could "be sniped" at the last second by some other buyer. But that was OK, because whatever you were looking for would probably show up again soon anyhow.

But where to video game fans get together and discuss things ? I missed the days of an on going debate of what the Japanese PC-Engine of Castlevania was really called (Castlevania: Circle of Blood or Castlevania: Rondo of Blood or something else ?) or how to pronounce Graidus (well maybe not that one).

Being involved with some other types of gaming communities over the years, I've been introduced to moderated forums. Some web sites that have message boards about particular topics and have them broken down by subsets. I've been involved in forums for Collectable Card Games and Collectable Miniature Games for a couple of years now. They offered the freedom of a newsgroup with the moderated control of the mailing list. Some of the groups even have swear filters to keep the nastier members under control.

Now it has probably been around for a while, but I recently found the Digital Press forum at <http://www.digitpress.com/forum/> . Joe Santulli and the rest of the crazies from Digital Press have a pretty decent forum going. There are sections for "News" and "Buying and Selling" along with categories for fans of Fighting games and Shoot em ups (SHUMPS). It's moderated, so (hopefully) most of the spammers and riff-raff are kept out. Having seen some good forums and some bad over the years, this one seems pretty good. Check it

out.

Fred has been playing games for over 25 years and actively collecting them for almost 15. The 2500 + (he thinks) games that he has takes up most of his home office and living room. He lives in Denver, PA with his understanding wife Jennie, his 7 year-old, Smash Brothers Melee-playing son, Max and his 3 year-old, 4thplayer, Lynzie. He admires the people that come up with clever screen names. He fears he will always be "fcw3". He can be contacted at fcw3@mail.ptd.net

The TI 99/4A
Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!!!
by [Jim Krych](#)

It has been rather hectic around here.

As I type this, tomorrow, and in just a few short hours, I will be married! Everything has been moved up here, so now the Krych Kickback has four computers in it, plus the Devastator II workbench! Two PC's, a Falcon030, and a Geneve.

We have been very happy with the response to the Devastator II! We hope to have a review in Retrogaming Times next month! One thing is for certain they are much easier to build than the original Devastator!!!!

I have had some time to reflect upon the last year. The CCAG, PhillyClassic, the Devastator and the Devastator II, the magazine reviews. Getting the Geneve for such a great price was a great gift! Now, if I only had the time I want to play with it! But oh well, a little here and a little there!

Treyton has taken to playing with the Devastator II boxes when he visits, pushing all the buttons to see what they do. I am so glad the new design allows it to be unplugged while the PC is running. You see, we also have a new kitten here and he just loves to climb on keyboards and the Devastator, and since those buttons can activate things on the desktop that can mean trouble!

The subject of disk drives has come up again on the TI server. I suppose that many of the computers from that era are also having discussions about this subject, every now and then.

You know, I would love to see a Dream Team of the TI hardware experts get together and design a new clone-based on an FPGA replication of the TMS9995. We do have some experts left in programming, so it is just a matter of getting the other side of the equation.

Hardware-emulation is something that has become much more possible due to the increasing capabilities of the FPGA's, and the downward price for them. But, hardware is always more expensive than software emulation. But it is one thing to run the emulation, and quite another to run something you can actually touch and hold.

I think that it may be time to really look at Don's motherboard replacement project again.

Except this time, use FPGA's to accomplish what we need. Let's say, maybe a 48MHz 9995 clone, V9938 emulation, 1MB SRAM, perhaps a certain amount of flash ROM, GRAM simulation. Don, Michael, Thierry, and others, what do you think?

And before I forget, the Good Deal Games website has the first chapter of the Gyruss story, please check it out and tell us what you think!

To all of you out there, a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! Enjoy time with you families, and all the neat gadgets you may get this year! Thanks Nick, Fred, Tom, Thomas, Jeff, Martin, Joe, Andrew, Andy, our Devastator customers, and of course my lovely wife, Lori! See ya soon, little Treyton-Merry Christmas!!!

“Twas the night before Christmas,
And all through the house,
Not a button was clicking,
Not even the mouse.
The Devastators were hung,
In the stockings with care,
The material was Spandex,
So they would stretch, but not tear!!!

The Geneve was quiet,
Just waiting it's said,
While visions of Tomy Tutor games,
Played in its head.

And the trusty and fun,
Atari Falcon030,
Was watching it all,
Knowing the next “TwoInOne”
And “Lost Blub”
Would be everyone having a ball!”

“Hi, my name is Jim W. Krych. I am a 33 year-old electronics technician. I am also a 14-year veteran of both the USCG, active, and the Ohio Army National Guard, reserve with B Co. 112th engineers. I can be reached at: jwkrych@adelphia.net or jwkrych@n2net.net I have a three year-old son, Treyton, and he is the CEO of Treyonics! I have also been blessed with a beautiful wife her name is Lori!!! I have founded my own business and, of course, I named the company after my son Treyton!

And now, Treyonics is proud to present the Treyonics Home Controller System, model 9908(RF/LF)!!!

Better known as...



Atari 2600 Racing Reviews

by The Video Game Critic, www.videogamecritic.net



Enduro (Activision 1983) A-

This racing game is awesome! Enduro is simply brilliant in both design and execution. At first, the graphics don't look all that special. Two curved lines converge into the horizon to give the game a 3D look. Simple mountains move across the background. The cars are only single colored, but they are high resolution and scale into the foreground very smoothly. I like how my car's wheels spin. At first you may mistake Enduro as a Pole Position knock off, but it has some innovative features that put it in a league of its own. First of all, the game is divided into "days", and you need to pass a certain number of cars each day, indicated by a counter on your dashboard. The cars whiz by in groups, and it's fun to see how many you can speed by without a collision. But the excitement *really* builds as night turns to dawn, and you need to pass those last few cars before sunrise. Adding variety is the constantly changing weather conditions, which include rain, snow, darkness, and fog. These are not only visually represented well, but can even affect the handling of your car. Enduro never gets dull, but it can take some time to play, and there is no way to bypass the early stages.

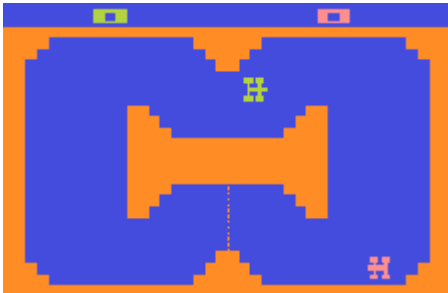
1 player

Street Racer (Atari 1977) D

Street Racer may be the most cringe worthy game ever to be inflicted upon the 2600. You only need to glance at it to see just how bad it is. The fat, ugly vertical bars that separate the split screen action are accompanied by the worst looking, blockiest car designs ever witnessed in a video game. Let's face it, games like this give the 2600 a bad name. Only the sheer number of variations keep this game afloat. The 27 variations let you dodge cars, slalom gates, shoot jets, or catch numbers using paddle controllers. While the two-player action is reasonable, the one-player modes feature a "computer opponent" who does nothing but sit there the whole time (AI circa 1978!). You can play four players at once, but good luck finding three other people who can stomach these horrendous

graphics. I remember buying Street Racer as a kid because it was so cheap (\$19.95!), but I was never crazy about it. The number cruncher variations were always the favorite around my house, probably because the games ended quickly, unlike the others that seemed to go on way too long.

1 to 4 players



Indy 500 (Atari 1977) A-

This classic racing game is a lot of fun and easy to play. The required special controllers are simply paddles which can be rotated continuously in any direction. All you do is steer your little race car around the screen-sized track. Game variations not only provide a variety of tracks but completely different types of games. In addition to the basic racing games, there are variations where you need to crash into a randomly placed square, play tag with your opponent, or race on ice. All tracks have a time trial mode so you can even play solo. Nothing beats the two player action though. The only fault I could find with this game is the excessive number of laps required to win the two player games. Especially on the tougher tracks, making one lap can take awhile, but requiring 25 laps to win is a bit much.

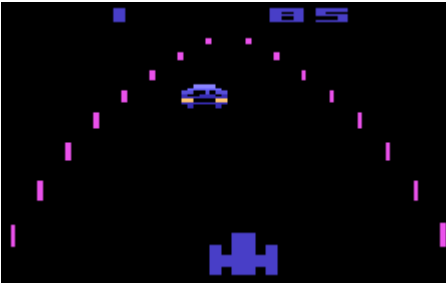
1 or 2 players



Sprint Master (Atari 1988) B+

This is an excellent version of the mildly-popular arcade racer that looks like an updated Indy 500. You control a small car that moves around a track that fits on a single screen. Nine tracks and several modes of play are available. You can adjust the number of laps and even set the track surface to be black, dirt, or ice. Each track has a completely different design, and some even feature ramps, overpasses, or gates. The tracks and cars look terrific, and randomly-placed icons allow you to improve your traction or speed during the race. The computer is a fair challenge, but going against another person is always more fun. So what's the problem? Well I wasn't crazy about the joystick control. It's too bad this game doesn't support the Indy 500 driving controllers! But overall Sprint Master is still one of the best racing games for the 2600.

1 or 2 players



Night Driver (Atari 1980) B

This first-person driving game does a surprisingly good job of conveying the illusion of speed. Unlike the original black and white arcade game, which just had posts along each side of the road, this game even has oncoming cars and an occasional tree or house on the side of the road. There are three 90-second courses of increasing difficulty, and also a random track. It's fun to try to top your high score on the harder tracks, because you tend to do a little better each time you play. The main sources of difficulty are the hairpin turns that you see on the advanced tracks. These require good anticipation, and if another car is coming, you're toast. So what's the secret? Just go easy on the accelerator when you anticipate a tight turn is coming. Going slow is much better than crashing. My main beef about Night Driver is the lousy graphics. Whoever programmed this was no artist, that's for sure. I'm convinced that he never intended to keep that stupid looking "car" on the bottom of the screen, but never got around to fixing it. The oncoming cars are round and look like monsters. Night Driver also contains some "no time limit" variations, which I recommend to drug-addicted players who want to zone out on this game all night long.

1 player



Pole Position (Atari 1983) B+

Pole Position is the grandfather of all racers, and while this arcade hit was certainly scaled down for the Atari 2600, it's still a remarkably challenging and addictive game. The illusion of speed is conveyed well, despite a complete lack of scaling scenery. The background is pretty sparse, consisting of mountains and clouds, but you won't notice them anyway. Your car is multicolored, but the oncoming cars look horrendous. They come into view as yellow blocks, and appear to morph into yellow castles. At least the animation is smooth, so if you run into one, you can't blame the game. The gameplay surpasses the graphics, thank goodness. You begin each game with a qualifying lap, and since it's really easy, it gets to be a pain after a while. But once the real race gets underway, you'll realize this game is no joke. Your car accelerates automatically, and the fire button is used for the brake. It works well. Pushing up and down on the joystick allows you to shift gears between high and low. The game really keeps you on your toes. Although they only appear one at a time,

oncoming cars change lanes unpredictably, so keep your thumb near the brake as you approach. No roadside scenery means you can always pull off the road, although it will slow you down. You begin the race with a 59 second time limit, but your time is extended as you complete laps. Good sound effects include passing engines and squealing tires. I like how the game keeps a running score at the top of the screen. This Pole Position is tougher than it looks. Try to score 50,000 and you'll see what I'm talking about.

1 player

For over 1700 more reviews, check out The Video Game Critic at www.videogamecritic.net.

Sites of the Month

Tune in and drop out for a little while as we check out a few more classic game sites that will interest you.

The Super Console Wars

Awhile back, I spotlighted this site and its great flash movie, The Gamempire Strikes Back! It was a blend of video games and Star Wars and was incredible! Now a new chapter is up and it is once again just as good as the first. A ton of classic game references are in there! So hop over and check out both great chapters of this story!

<http://www.discomedia.com/consolewars/>

3D Arcade

This cool site has a huge list of classic and not so classic arcade machines that are replicated in 3D, so you can look at them and use it as a guide for machines you may find that need some work. There is also info on pinball machines and other cool stuff. Check it out and enjoy!

<http://3darcade.mameworld.net/index2.htm>

TOP 20 CLASSIC COMMERCIALS

by [Adam King](#)

Now it's time to show you what you said were the top 20 commercials of all time. Thanks to everyone who participated.

Here we go..

- 20) Frostbite
- 19) Star Trek SOS
- 18) Congo Bongo
- 17) Mcdonalds & Atari
- 16) Atarisoft: "Your computer fits the arcade hits".
- 15) Wizard of Odyssey

- 14) RealSports Baseball with Billy Matin.
- 13) Burgertime
- 12) Atlantis
- 11) Chopper Command
- 10) 7-Up commercial featuring Pac-Man
- 9) Pitfall
- 8) Demon Attack
- 7) E.T. under the Christmas tree
- 6) Pole Position
- 5) Atari Prism commercial
- 4) Joust
- 3) M Network
- 2) The Fly commercial

And the top commercial of all time is..

Megamania!!

That's right, Megamania has been chosen as the best classicgaming commercial of all time. Since I already reviewed the Megamania ad, I chose the Fly commercial to be covered this month in the Vault.

Retrogaming Times Top 10 Video Games from 1982

By [Alan Hewston](#)

Here are the results.

STOP! OK, now that you're back after peeking at the list below, I know that many of you were eagerly asking who won. For the most part there are no major surprises, although I didn't expect to see Burgertime in the top 10. I collected responses from you here directly, emailed and got replies from most of my VG friends and also posted on RGVC. I'll post a link to these results on RGVC. Overall, I had 58 voters (497 votes) and think that most of them understood what I wanted, but we'll do a better job the next time for 1983 & 1984. Voters can pick up to 10 games that were first released (at arcades or home systems and any subsequent ports), which are their favorites today. I also need to do a better job checking my list as I forgot to include "Turmoil" (thinking it was a 1983 game), one of my top 20 favorite games of all-time, which is also well loved by our editor, Tom. This poll may also guide me in selections you are most likely going to want to see (like Joust!) in the Many Faces of reviews. Here they are (with number of votes):

- Robotron 2084 (35)
- Joust (32)
- Burgertime (27)
- Dig Dug (25)
- Pitfall! (25)
- Q*bert (25)

Zaxxon (24)
Moon Patrol (23)
Donkey Kong Jr. (22)
Tron (22)

Thanks to all those who voted. Especially a few voters who were pretty close to matching the overall results. Dane G., Steve "Flash" Juon and Chris Ivie voted for 9 of the top 12 vote getters. Good votes indeed!

For complete results contact Alan Hewston at hewston95@stratos.net. OK here's a few more that just missed it . . . Mr. Do! (19), Pole Position (19), River Raid (17), Jungle Hunt (15), Time Pilot (15).

Classic Game Coal

In the classic game market, most carts fall under one of two categories. They are either really fun to play games that are not worth much or horribly made games that are worth alot of money. As with most things in life, there are exceptions. That is where this list comes into play. It is what I call Classic Game Coal. It is those games that have the rare distinction of being both a bad playing game as well as being pretty much worthless. These are the kind of game that if you got as a kid, it wasn't much different than getting a lump of coal in your stocking. Due to time restraints (as you can see by the very late publication of the newsletter), I am going to limit it to Atari 2600 games. Feel free to send in more suggestions for this system or any other.

Amidar
Basketball
Coconuts
ET
Firefly
Football
Hangman
Homerun
Human Cannonball
Karate (Froggo)
Night Driver
Pacman
Racquetball
Seahawk
Seahunt
Sorcerer
Spiderdroid
Sssnake
Star Fox
Strawberry Shortcake
Swordquest Earthworld

Conclusion

I would have loved to write more, but time ran out and I have been busy as a bee. There was actually a third article from both Alan Hewston and Adam King, but the size of the newsletter was getting up there and I was running out of time, so I will put them off until next month. But we did get a few old faces back and it was a very full issue. Hope you have a happy holidays and stay safe!

-[Tom Zjaba](#)

(This issue was done while listening to my two favorite groups, Pink Floyd and Tears for Fears.)