

Retrogaming Times

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COMMERCIAL VAULT

by [Adam King](#)

Greetings gamers! This month I have a pair of interesting commercials, but first, a pop quiz.

TRUE OR FALSE: You can only play Atari 2600 games on an Atari 2600.

Believe it or not, the answer is FALSE. In 1982, the 2600 ruling the industry, with the Intellivision and Colecovision close behind. Realizing that Atari games are always going to be popular, Coleco and Mattel decided to try and convince gamers to buy their respective systems by saying that their platforms can play 2600 games as well. How, you may ask? By introducing adapters to allow players to use 2600 software on the INTV and Coleco. Mattel had the System Changer, and Coleco has the Expansion Module #1. Interesting thing about these ads is that they feature lots of Atari boxes, and the INTV spot has screenshot fo Atari games. Wonder what the folks at a certain gaming company though about these.

Both these ads are not available online, but will be on the CD (see below).

[Intellivision II \(System Changer\)](#)

Up first is an ad for the Intellivision II, featuring their adapter. Here we find a kid wearing goggles as he zooms down a hallway filled with Atari games. This ad is more aggressive than the Coleco spot since it claims to play more games than the Atari or Colecovision. Plus unlike the Colecovision ad, it actually shows screenshots of 2600 games.

"Finding the best video game system is a tough game to win. Who plays the most games? The best-selling games? Intellivision II! Add the new System Changer and play all Atari 2600 games. The most games. The best-selling games, like Q*Bert, Enduro, Burgertime. Intellivision II has the most going for it. More games than Atari or Coleco. Over 430 games. Get Intellivision II. It's got the most going for it."



Where do I get goggles like that?



Look at all the boxes. Must be an Atari ad.



WHAT?! This isn't Atari?!



We're now flying into some Atari game screens.



OH! THE IRONY!

[Colecovision \(Expansion Module\)](#)

Our next ad is a commercial for the Colecovision that said that their system played the most games with the Expansion Module 1. They originally had planned a series of expansion modules for the Colecovision, and decided the first would bring 2600 games to their system. They also proclaimed to play the most games ever.

"This is the arcade experience on your Colecovision, and we bring the arcade experience home. With arcade graphics like Donkey Kong with multiple screens, just like the arcade game. Arcade controls, and Colecovision is an expandable system. Plug in the first Expansion Module and play all Atari VCS compatible cartridges. More arcade games than any other video system. Now, bring the arcade experience home because YOUR VISION IS OUR VISION. COLECOVISION!"



Again this is NOT an Atari ad.



From out of the screen into your living room.



Watch out for that laser, dude.



The magic box that makes it happen.



More Atari boxes in an non-Atari ad.

Were either of these modules successful? Hard to say, but my guess is that many players just bought Atari's and forgot about the two systems. Can't win for trying, huh?

Now for more information on the upcoming Commercial Vault CD. All I can say right now is all the ads will be simple MPEGs, so they should play on almost any computer without any special players or drivers. The target date for completion is the end of this year, but maybe it'll be finished sooner than that. Any comments, questions, and especially submissions can be directed at Hal_3000@rocketmail.com. Until next time, keep gaming.

The Many Faces of...PitStop & PitStop II

by [Alan Hewston](#)

Once again it's racing month (Indy 500), and although I'm not a racing fan, I love racing video games. Here's yet another 20th Anniversary edition of the Many Faces, as we salute the 1983 home game "PitStop", and its awesome sequel "PitStop II". The name says it all here. "PitStop" represents a milestone, being the first multi-platform racing game to add the "pit" element. This combines action, reflexes, strategy and racing together as never seen before. You can drive your best, but still must rely on your pit crew to take you all the way to victory road. You can't just watch the road, other cars, and your tires, you need to check that fuel gauge, lap counter and map to figure out if you can make another lap before you must pit. Don't run out of gas, blow out a worn tire, or crash into any other cars along the way.

Home Version Similarities: Except those in <>: all home versions have: gameplay choices of 1 to 4 (non-simultaneous) drivers; a race of 3, 6 or 9 laps; at a skill level of either "Rookie", Semi-Pro" or "Pro"; your choice of a single race, a mini circuit, or the Grand

Circuit. The 6 world famous race tracks are: Monaco, Le-Mans, Kyalami, Albi, Jarama & St. Jovite. Each track has directional billboards & trees as scenery. On-screen are your car and the computer driven cars; an overhead map of the track; number of laps completed; the time elapsed; speedometer; start/finish line; and your present location (flashes). Your racer has: a different appearance than the others; primarily that each of the 4 tires has individual signs of wear (colors change) and must be replaced before blowing; a fuel tank gauge, which if the fuel is overfilled resets to zero. The pit area is located just before the finish line showing up as an extra lane on the track. In the pit area, there is a view of the raceway, where you will see & hear the roar of other cars zoom by; your 3 member pit crew; 1 changes tires (1 @ a time – to & from the new tire stack), 1 refuels, & 1 waves and flag when clear to return to the race. Not shown during the race or after is the skill level chosen. Each racer's elapsed time, place of finish and purse (money won) are shown as well as the cumulative circuit standings (ranked by money won). Every race you win earns \$50k for 1st place and \$25k, \$15k & \$10k for the next 3 finishers), plus \$1k for each lap completed. The money & place only mean anything if there is more than one racer. The computer drivers do not factor in, just the humans can place and earn money. Ultimately, you should track your times to beat - on future races.

Controls are: push the fire button or forward to accelerate or maintain top speed; steering is left or right; pull back to brake; do nothing to slow down. Having 5 sets of controls and one that is repeated (accelerate) is perfect. You can switch between fire button and forward to rest the thumb.

Unfortunately the roadway physics, hereafter called physics, are not up to par in "PitStop" as you can maintain the top speed around every turn. The G forces even in a hairpin do not throw you or slow you down. Thus in all 3 versions the challenge is not on the track(s), but only the traffic. This violates, what I would call the first law or requirement of racing games. "Maximum speed all the time" makes unique race tracks worthless. Oh yes - the zeroeth law is to race versus opponents. There's no pause during the pit or race, but you have an unlimited break between each race in the circuit races. Press the button to advance.



The Many Faces of...PitStop

Arcade: None

Home versions: All by Epyx in 1983

Commodore 64 (Jamie Faye Fenton), Atari 8 bit (?), Colecovision (?)

Sequel: Pit Stop II – see below.

Silver Medal: Commodore 64 (39)

My first reaction was that back in the day, I forgot this title once the sequel came out. The Gameplay is impressive (8) but the other drivers do not swerve (violating what I'd call the second law or racing games) and should be a little more plentiful. Your speed change is unrealistically small when you bump into other cars. The Addictiveness is good enough (6) to bring you back to try all of the race combinations - each of them is a unique racing experience. Planning the right pit strategy for 9 laps over all 6 courses of the Grand Circuit is pretty cool - especially when your opponent (s) has to endure the same challenge. The Graphics are sharp (8) and seem to be the most smoothly flowing. The Sound is very good (7) on all versions - with adequate effects, but not much music. Controls are perfect (10). Fairly common on cart and disk. The diskette version was later distributed by Eurogold and I've seen mention from CBS Europe as well.

Silver Medal: Atari 8 bit (39)

A tie for the Silver. My first reaction was that the crowd noise at the end of each race was pretty cool, so why didn't the others 2 versions add that. The Gameplay is impressive (8) and all other scores match the C64. 1 problem that's worse here is that the driving speed sound, & slowing down & speeding up is way out of sync - or something. Perhaps ignore what you hear. The Addictiveness is good enough (6). The Graphics are crisp (8) & the most realistic, but the pale tire colors will take quite some time to learn and quickly assess the damage. The Sound is very good (7) - added crowd cheers, but no music. The Controls are perfect (10). Available on disk and cart.

Gold Medal: Colecovision (41)

My first reaction - Did the crash prevent us from seeing a CV "PitStop II"? The Gameplay is superb (9), with better physics, more aggressive computer drivers & the bumping really slows you down. The Addictiveness is very good (7), scoring better with more realistic drivers and greater difficulty. The roadway is a bit narrower & the computer drivers are actually aggressive & more plentiful. Sometimes harder does not mean better - but after all, what's the point of the PitStop if the race is too easy? Trade off: Driving slower/safer, or like use the pit & be a dare-devil. The use of the CV driving controller also doesn't hurt to give you that extra replay or thrill. The Graphics are impressive (8), probably the best - with multiple colored computer cars. The tire colors, although a bit loud & unrealistic, makes them the easiest to determine wear. The Sound is very good (7). The Controls score a perfect (10), since there is no pause, you can choose any controller. This cart is a little hard to find, but well worth it for CV fans.



My own screen shot showing the C64 split screens on "PitStop II".

The Many Faces of...PitStop II

Ladies and Gentlemen! Start your engines! That's right, the ladies are invited to drive/play here as well - and some of them will finish in the money. With yet another racing simulation milestone, "PitStop II" brings us a split screen for simultaneous two player racing. Each half of the screen is for one player, or the average computer driver. View your race and theirs at the same time. See their map (location), tire condition, fuel, speed etc. The sequel combined all the elements from the original "PitStop", & adds Head-To-Head (H-T-H) racing - which blew away all racing games that ever came before. H-T-H means nasty tricks like braking hard in front of the other guy & the ultimate - shoving 'em into the pit!!! This was especially fun when they did not know it was coming or even possible. "PitStop II" also brings us much better roadway physics, better graphics with a scrolling horizon (mountains); a speedometer number; a turbo boost in speed; & real computer racers. Regardless if you have a human opponent, 8 professional computer drivers compete for the victory points earned in each race. Every driver's time & points are tracked for each race & cumulatively for the Grand Circuit. With the same choice of 3, 6, or 9 lap races & 6 new race tracks, plus the Grand Circuit, amounts to 21 very unique racing experiences, all which can be tried & conquered with the difficulty set to "Rookie", then "Semi-Pro" and finally "Pro". A huge amount of replay value indeed! Playing both with & without a human opponent, over the gamut of possible races would yield an amazing 126 combinations. Take that "Space Invaders"!

OK, so who are your opponents? On the C64 there's Diedra Dipstick, Tina Turbo, Sheila Strut, Penelope Pitstop, Earl Sump, Terrence Tierod, Raymond Rollbar and Lamont Lugnut. The Atari & Apple II share the same set of 8 drivers: Ralph Racer, Willie Wheels, Austin Healey, Tires Malone, Earl Slick, Stockton Karr, Pattie Waggon and Otto Mobile. We also have a combined total of 7 new race tracks this time. The Atari & C64 have 6 tracks, 4 of them in common are "Brands Hatch", "Hockenheim", "Sebring", and "Watkins Glen". The C64 also has "Roven Les Essart" & "Vallelunga". The Atari also has "Fuji" & a repeat - "Kyalami" The Apple II version has 3 nameless tracks - oh for shame.

The Turbo Boost, as mentioned above, adds yet another new element of racing strategy - going above the top rated speed, but at the cost of consuming even more fuel. By

pressing both the fire button & forward at the same time, you could see and hear yourself race even faster. The computer racers already know the track & how much and when to boost and refuel - it's up to you to learn as well.

Other Similarities: Except those in <>: in all 3 versions have: improved physics <AP II>; full speed cannot be maintained around all curves <Atari>; no more really slow computer cars <AP II>; a pause could be used at any time <C64>; while in the pit, there's no longer any cars seen or heard driving by; the computer racers will change lanes <Atari>; you could pit immediately and thus practice your pit skills <Atari, AP II>; the 3rd pit crew member with the flag was removed – simply click on the driver to drive away <AP II>; the speeding up & slowing down process was much smoother, gradual <Atari, AP II>; and finally your name can be typed in for each race. The victory points, earned from first place through seventh are 9,6,4,3,2,1,0 . . . Not shown during the race is your name or the number of laps in the race or skill level chosen, but these can be deduced from looking at the race results. This marks the first game review that is only on diskette, unfortunately no version of "PitStop II" was made on cart.

Arcade: None

Home versions: PitStop II - all by Epyx in 1984 unless noted

Commodore 64, (Dennis Caswell & Stephen Landrum), Atari 8 bit (by Synergistic/Epyx, James McBride, Tom Warner & Lloyd Ollmann Jr.), Apple II (Robert Clardy, Ivan Manly & D. Stinnett)

Rumor mill: A CoCo site once listed this on disk by Epyx 1985, but the site is N/A.

Bronze Medal: Apple II (30)

My first reaction was that Apple II owners got cheated - even with well-known programmers here. The Gameplay is respectable (6), but even worse than "PitStop"; the track & curvature is almost meaningless as the physics do not apply to what we see on the roadway. There are only 3 race tracks & no turbo boost. The velocity changes are unrealistic & hard to visualize & understand. For lack of a better description, the controls work in pseudo analog. Each press in a direction steps you up a notch faster in speed or curving. There are 3 to 6 levels for each direction Forward, back, Left and Right. There is no extra lane for the pit, rather, press "P" when you see one of the two "P" signs & you enter. The pit functions much like the original, with 4 crew members. 1 fuel, 1 tire man above, 1 below and 1 flag man.

The Addictiveness is respectable (6) but the increased skill (swerving) of the other drivers & lack of physics in knowing which way you car will swerve make this very frustrating experience. There is no continuity, just keep pressing buttons to speed up and slow down, left or right without some reason why in advance other than if you do hit another car - you crash and burn. You can apparently get tire wear and crash from doing nothing at all - that I could tell. The Graphics are OK (6) and the flow and scrolling are not too bad. But the car detail is horrible and tiny, & all the cars look alike. The map and tire wear indicator are too small & hard to see. The tire wear indicator is a separate, small window. The Sound is feeble (4) and this ultimately ruins this game. You have noises & effects in the pit and as your speed changes, but you are clue-less as to what is going on with the audio. The

Controls are nice (8), but I am probably being too generous. For use only during the one player game, you can use the joystick, which doesn't seem to cut it. But for two players use these keys: driver 1. [L, R, accelerate (or up), brake (or down), and select (in pit)] are ["K", "L", ":", ":", "." and "O"]. For driver 2 they are "A", "S", "D", "X", and I think - "W".

Silver Medal: Atari 8 bit (42)

My first reaction is cacophony! The sounds are like noise and even more annoying with 2 racing. It's hard to tell if that groan you heard was tire damage or not. A groaning (tire damage?) sound gets cut out (overridden) when you use the turbo boost. This factored in with bad collision detection make it difficult to determine what is causing tire damage. [Warning, the entire set of pixels or car sprites, both visible and invisible pixels will result in a collide with other cars – so guess where your boundaries are and stay clear.] The Gameplay is impressive (8), but still suffers from the bad physics – such as you can race full speed around any hairpin. Of course, there may be tire damage occurring, but hard to hear or see if it is the case or not. The car's left/right movement is sluggish & you cannot get the "feel" of the road. The computer drivers don't change lanes & there are too few of them, especially on "Rookie". Changes in speed are unrealistic & not much transition, especially the jump in speed when toggling the turbo boost - all or nothing instantly. The Addictiveness is fantastic (9) and the pause is toggled by the <space bar> and nearly all the control keys as well – very nice. Besides the above mentioned problems, the Graphics are wonderful (9), nearly as good as Atari "Pole Position", but with split screen. The Sound is awful at times, but good enough (6) to tolerate. Controls are perfect (10) with 2 Atari joysticks in control. With a lot more programming effort, the Atari version should have made a closer run for the gold.

Gold Medal: Commodore 64 (47)

My first reaction - Awesome! All games I had at that time got put on hold indefinitely. Everyone on my dorm floor wanted to see & play THIS game. Although the enhanced game play options were enjoyed, the most desirable element was the H-T-H racing. Just beat the other human & ram him off the road if you could. No peaceful cooperation on the road here – but instead possibly the world's first cyberspace road rage. The Gameplay is a work of art (10). No holes were barred in this very realistic simulation. You can even practice your pit crew skills, by pulling into the pit at the start of the race – no need to wait to complete a lap. The Addictiveness is sensational (9) only missing a "10" due to no pause feature, other than the pause between each race. The challenge and replay value is incredible. Easy to learn, but requires both a marathon for the 9 lap Grand Circuit and white knuckle driving to master. The Graphics are top notch (10) with smooth flowing action, realistic color in every detail. A small block of each of your tires has some color to very clearly indicate the tire wear. Unlike the Atari, the lap counter correctly says "laps 0" when it means zero laps have been completed. The Sound is crisp (8) with great clarity and effects. Unlike the Atari, the engines sing together in beautiful harmony. You can tell with your eyes closed that your opponent has slowed a bit & then hear them accelerate back to full speed. The Controls are perfect (10) with 2 Atari style controllers. The diskette version was distributed by Epyx, then US Gold. A must have title to your collection. Add a little more music, push it a notch with some speech synthesis (like arcade "Pole Position") and give it a pause and I'd be hard-pressed to not give this baby a perfect

score.

Come back next time for another 20th Anniversary tribute to 1983, with another "game & sequel" special with the Many Faces of "Jumpman" & "Jumpman Jr." for the same set of computers as this month. Atari 8 bit & C64 on both versions, and the Apple II for "Jumpman" & CV in the sequel. Alan Hewston is can be contacted at:

Hewston95@stratos.net or http://my.stratos.net/~hewston95/VG/Hewston_vg.html

Are Retro-Games Relevant ?

By [Fred Wagaman](#)

I was reading through the Forums over at Digital Press (www.digitpress.com) when I came across this link (<http://www.ukresistance.co.uk/>) (WARNING: Some foul language on this site).

It got me thinking.

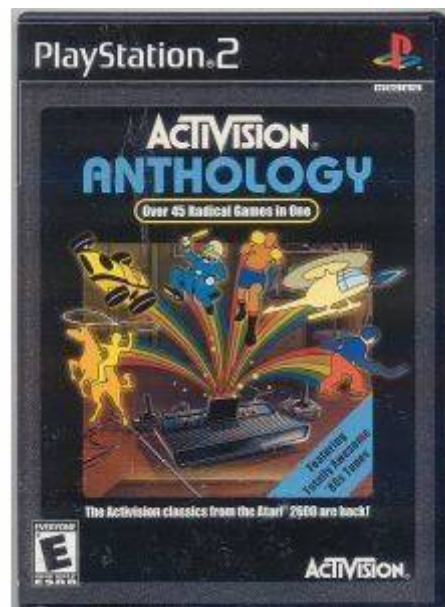
Except for a small number of hard-core, retrogaming fans (like many readers of this site), who really thinks about, cares about or even likes old games?

Somebody must. Otherwise, none of these would ever sell.



These are found at some of the game chain stores. The description, from Gamestop's website is:

The Atari 10-In-1 TV Games, is a plug and play 8-bit gaming system that contains 10 classic and beloved Atari videogames in one Atari 2600 authentic joystick replica. Ten great games in one small controller!



Also, classic collections like this would not have a market either. So there is a market for retrogames out there.

But why?

(Side note: Why is it that the same darn 4 or 5 games keep getting released on some of these classic collection ? Don't we already have like 16 different versions of Pole Position, Dig Dig, et al ? And why only release 4 or 5 on a single disk ? We already know that the entire Atari 2600 collection complete with an emulator and interviews and background material could fit on a single DVD along with the widescreen version of Joysticks. Stop jerking us around and give us some meat when you release these things. The Activision Anthology is a great start.)

Are the games better then than they are now?

Face it. There is definitely some crappy games being made today. And for certain, some of the best games of the past are better than some of the dregs of today. But if you take the best of today and compare it to the best of yesterday in presentation, depth and value, generally speaking, today wins.

I offer the premise that, while they use the same basic components as the past (CPU, input device, monitor, etc.), today's games are not the same as yesteryear's games.

("And now more from Captain Obvious")

The experience you get from today's game and the value for your dollar that is required to be successful in today's marketplace requires games to be different. Player's expectations concerning graphics, sound and overall story are much higher. Today's players will not tolerate a game that does not give them a substantial "return" for their \$50.

Have you played Kingdom Hearts ? Beautiful game. But it takes almost 40 minutes of training to even start the game ! Most action/adventure games have to take the time to orient you to their world and their control scheme. You cannot, with most games today, just

pick up the game and play.

That is great, if and when you have the time to devote to playing a game for 2 hours.

But the games of yesterday offer something different.

Simplicity.

The simple pleasure of plugging it in, turning it on and playing, all with in 60 seconds. With 1 or 2 buttons, you don't even have to read the manual. Just move and shoot. (Or just shoot. Or just move. (there weren't a lot of choice in the old days ...)

You could play as long as your skill would keep you alive, or as long as you felt like it. There was no "end" of the game. No goal (except a higher score). The game could be different each time you played it, not a just a scripted series of enemy encounters. You could develop a strategy.

Older games are like eating a candy bar or grabbing a bag of chips when you're a little hungry rather than cooking a four-course meal. A quick fix of what you are hankerin' for without having to invest a lot of effort.

Retrogames are just like any other "retro" items (cars, music, movies, etc.) You either appreciate them for what they are or you just don't get it.

Fred has been playing games for over 25 years and actively collecting them for 15. The 2500 + games that he has takes up most of his home office and game 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, 4th player, Lynzie. This will be Fred's last article for a while. Fred will be spending the next several months on hiatus, trying to get his game collection organized. He can be contacted at fcw3@mail.ptd.net

Stardate 7800

by [Adam King](#)

Welcome back. This month's edition of SD7800 is a salute to one of the best third party companies ever, Activision. For over 10 years Activision has been a staunch supporters of the Atari machines, releasing many great original titles. Even into the late 80s Activision continued to release games for the 2600, and produced a pair of arcade conversions for the 7800, Double Dragon and Rampage, which are reviewed this month.

It's no secret that both games were monster hits in the arcade, and were both candidates for the home systems. The interesting thing is both games were released on all three major 8-bit systems: the Nintendo Entertainment System, the Sega Master System, and the 7800, as well as the 2600jr. However Activision, again known for great original games, did terrible arcade ports on the 2600, and Double Dragon and Rampage were no exceptions. The 7800 versions, on the other hands, were MUCH better than their 2600 brothers, but they still had to compete with the NES. Are they in the same league? Let's find out.

[Double Dragon](#)

Everybody's familiar with this famous game that started the street-fighting genre. You play Billy Lee, who along with brother Jimmy, is out to rescue his girl from the Black Shadow Warriors. It's four missions of street fighting action as you and a friend take on an army of thugs. You have a limited amount of time and energy to get through each level. Your main weapons are your fists and a selection of special moves, including jump kicks, uppercuts, head-butts, and others. You can also find weapons along the way and use them against your foes.

I really wanted to give this game high marks, seeing how much better this game is than the 2600 port, but Activision dropped the ball on this one. The graphics look like the arcade featuring all four arcade levels, and the sprites, though blocky, do look more like people than the 2600. Plus unlike the NES version, this has the two-player simultaneous action that made the game famous. However, this game is not fun to play for one reason: it is extremely difficult. Enemies seem to take forever to kill, while they have no trouble finishing you off. It's tough to even get past the first mission. The game does use both buttons for the attacks, but the special moves are hard to use, and the enemies seem to swat you out of the sky anytime you try a jumping attack. The biggest thing is there's no extra lives; you lose all your men and that's it. Sorry, folks; looks like Nintendo and Sega win out on this one.

Score: 5/10

[Rampage](#)

This famed title was obviously inspired by all those monster movies of yesteryear. Several humans have been transformed into monsters, and they immediately go on a rampage. The best part is you get to play as the monsters. One or two players can smash their way through over 80 cities, and the object is simple: destroy all the buildings to move on. You can choose from George the ape, Lizzie the lizard, or Ralph the wolf (who is NOT in the NES version), even though there's no real difference. However, you'll meet resistant from the citizens of each city, in the form of tanks, helicopters, and soldiers shooting machine guns. Your monster can recover lost energy by eating the people in each building, but gulping down the wrong thing can hurt you. If you lose all your energy, you'll revert back to normal.

Just like Double Dragon above, Rampage is a HUGE improvement over the 2600 game, in terms of just about everything. The graphics are very good, with good background and cool animation for the characters. The sounds have a great opening tune and good sound effects. The controls use the two button setup well and are a welcome change from the 2600 one button setup. The only minus I have with the game, as well as all the other versions, is that there's no end. If you lose all your energy, you can hit one of the buttons and boom you're back up for more action. Plus leveling city after city does get monotonous after a while. Other than that this is a great arcade port, one of the few good ones from Activision.

Score: 8/10

Well, that's one plus and minus, but overall it seems Activision had lost their magic in the late 80s, and it's a shame that such a great company became a shadow of itself.

And now I close with an interesting letter found in an old issue of Atarian magazine:

Atari Beats Nintendo

Dear Editor:

At Christmas, I asked for a Nintendo system but my parents got me an Atari 7800 instead. I was amazed at how much better the Atari games are than the Nintendo ones, especially Mario Brothers and Winter Games which are my favorites. Also, the Atari controllers are much easier to use than the tiny Nintendo ones. Now all my friends come over to my house to play with the 7800.

Derek Jacobs
Ft. Worth, TX

Thanks for the nice words, Derek. Obviously we are biased, but we think the Atari systems are better than their competitors too.

If only the rest of the industry felt the same way.

Changing Inspiration

One of the great stories in video game history is how Toru Iwatani was eating a pizza and looked down and saw the character of Pacman (pizza had one slice missing). This created the character who went on to become the first big star of video games and still a well known and enduring character to this day. But what if Toru Iwatani was eating something different at the moment when inspiration struck him? How different could have the character been? So with this in mind, here is my personal take on how some different foods could have changed the character of Pacman.

[#1 - A Plate of Spaghetti and Meatballs](#) - Imagine a Pacman in reverse (what would conceivably be Crush Roller). Your main would be named Noodle Man and have two meatballs for eyes. The maze would be a large white linen and you would have to smear your red sauce over it to finish the level. The ghosts could be replaced by sponges or other cleaning items that try to stop the mess.

[#2 - Turkey Dinner](#) - Make the lead character a scared turkey who runs through the maze eating corn that has been dropped. He is being chased by four pilgrims who are trying to make him into Thanksgiving dinner. The powerpills would transform him into a powerful eagle who could then swoop down and take out the pilgrims. The fruit could be replaced by side dishes like stuffing, rolls and yams.

[#3 - Hot Dog](#) - You must run around the park as hungry dogs chase you around. You pick up packets of condiments as they chase. Grab a powerpill and transform into a Dog Catcher and grab those puppies (don't ask the logic, it is the Chocolate Oreos talking).

Sites of the Month

Since I did an article on Pacman, it is only fitting to have a site dedicated to the game. So with that in mind, here is the sites of the month!

[Puckman](#)

For anyone who does not know, Puckman was the original name for Pacman (puck shaped). But Namco feared what vandals would do with that name, so they changed it to Pacman. Here is a site that has a ton and I do mean a ton of information about the biggest selling arcade game ever.

<http://www.vanschip.com/puck-man/main.html>

[FreeFun Games](#)

This is one of many sites that offer Java Applets of classic arcade games, including Pacman. Nice way to have some fun and it is free! Enjoy!

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

Letters to the Editor

Digging through the mailbag, I find so many letters that I cannot answer. Someone somewhere must have told the masses that I can find any game for anyone. I get emails every day from people wanting this rare game or that rare game. I get asked where they can find games for every system from Atari to X-Box. Sorry, but I do not have the time to search all over the net for games for people. Maybe someone wants to offer a pay service that searches and finds the lowest price for any game for a small fee. Sounds like a winning idea. I can send you a ton of business.

What is the strongest weapon that a classic video game character had?

There is something out there that causes such thoughts. It may be a combination of junk food with sleep depravation, I do not know but I know that I have been personally afflicted with it and from the letters I get, I see many others also have. As far as what weapon is the most powerful, my choice goes to Mr. Do's exploding ball. Long range and deadly results.

Why is it that so many gamers want complete games? Do you really need the instructions to play most games? I thought the boxes were supposed to thrown out? What is up with this?

One thing I will never understand is how people will justify being anal for a hobby of theirs, from putting a protective sleeve over a Beanie Baby tag to keeping action figures in their packages, unopened and that is fine. But when a hobby like collecting video games has

people willing to pay big money for a box or manual of a rare game, they do not get it. To answer your question, people want the item to be as close to what it would have been off the store shelf. It isn't so much that they need the manual or the box, but it makes the item complete and a boxed game just looks so much nicer than a loose cart. The boxes sometimes had nice artwork as did the manuals (especially the Activision ones).

Is it true that eating the old gum that comes in a pack of Pacman or Donkey Kong cards could kill you?

While the gum is usually hard enough that you could turn it into a knife and do damage that way, you will not die from eating it. You will end up with a terrible taste in your mouth and may get a whopper of a belly ache, but you should be fine (at least physically).

Missing the Arcades of Yesteryear

For any gamer growing up during the 1980's, one thing that will be etched into your memory is the arcade. If there is one segment of gaming that truly excelled in the golden age of video games, it was the arcade. The variety was staggering, the hits were continuous and the amount of gameplay you could get for a quarter was amazing. While the home consoles of today can run rampant over their predecessors, the arcades of yesterday can surpass today's.

Walk into an arcade today and you see a handful of genres done over and over. There are fighting games, gun games, driving games and a few others and that is about it. But back in the day you had all kinds of games. From a ton of maze games and space shooters to unique games like Zookeeper, Tapper as Jungle King. There were duels in Joust and blasting bugs in Centipede. The hopping of Q*Bert to racing in Pole Position. Who can forget Burgertime, Crazy Climber, Tron or Defender? it was a glorious time with so many great games that one wished for a much bigger allowance (I was lucky enough to have a paper route to pay for my arcade habit).

But as I walk around a new arcade, I always find myself thinking about those glory days (cue in the Bruce Springsteen song). The whole experience was fresh and the developers really tried to create new and different experiences. Sure there were clones, but for even they offered some different experiences. Pacman spawned many more maze games that offered different experiences. From Ladybug to Mousetrap to Crush Roller, the games were different enough to capture our money. The experience was unique enough to get us to return.

So as I frequent the small handful of arcades that can still be found (mostly at amusement parks), I shed a tear for a time that is gone. I miss the excitement that a new game would bring. I miss the enjoyment that I could get for so little money. But most of all, I miss the fun. It was a hangout, an experience and an integral part of my childhood. Too bad that my kids cannot experience what I did as the arcades of today are just shells of what they used to be.

Austin Gaming Expo

If you enjoy videogames (and if you're reading this you certainly should!), then you'll want to mark your calendar for July 26th if you're in or near Texas. The first annual Austin Gaming Expo has been announced, to take place at the Marriott Austin North from 10am through 8pm. Featuring vendors with a wide variety of gaming merchandise to play and buy, arcade games, new game releases for classic game consoles, tournaments, door prizes, and more, there's something for every videogame fan. The show is being sponsored by several popular classic gaming organizations and many vendors have already been lined up, with more to be announced shortly. You can find all the details of the event at <http://www.austingamingexpo.com>.

Conclusion

It is late, it is short, but at least it is done. Getting harder to keep doing these. Anyway, enjoy the summer and find some time for your game systems. Like pets, they need constant love and affection.

-[Tom Zjaba](#)

(This issue done while listening to Three Dog Night, Little River Band and that accursed Jigglypuff Pokemon song that I am so addicted to.)