



Retrogaming Times Issue #49 - September 19, 2001

Table of Contents

01.	Atari Age's Call For Help!
02.	Venture 2 the Review!
03.	Interview with Tim Snider (Venture 2)
04.	Interview with Leonard Herman (Phoenix: The Fall and Rise)
05.	Senseless Acts of Violence by Fred Wagaman
06.	The Many Faces of.....Gyruss by Alan Hewston
07.	Intruder Alert
08.	Some Thoughts on 09-11-01 by Jim Krych
09.	Letters to the Editor
10.	Conclusion



Atari Age's Call For Help!

While interviewing Tim Snider (see the interview later in the issue), I was informed of a wonderful project from the guys over at Atari Age. They are getting people to donate items for an auction that will raise funds for the people who were affected by the tragic events of September 11th. I was able to talk with Alex Bilstein, one of the people responsible for the Atari Age website. He let me know some more information about this auction and how we as collectors can help out.

#1-I just heard about this charity auction. can you give us some information on it?

Andrew Davie and Joe Grand came up with the idea of auctioning off some of their homebrew games for the September 11th relief fund. They approached us about it and we thought we might be able to help promote the auction with our site. The response has been fantastic, and people have already offered to donate some wonderful things. Ebay has established the Auction for America program in which they waive all the standard auction fees, and payment can be made online directly to the relief fund. We think the

auction will show how generous the classic gaming community can be.

#2-What kind of items are you looking to be donated?

Classic gaming software, hardware, books, and memorabilia are all welcomed. Basically, anything that is rare, unique, or unusual in some way. We're looking more for quality of individual items, rather than quantity. That said, we want to have as many quality items as possible.

#3-Besides donating items and bidding, what other ways can classic gamers help out?

Spread the word to other classic gamers about the auction. Give blood to the Red Cross or give money to one of the relief funds, and . You can donate online as little as \$1 to the September 11th Relief Fund at www.unitedway.org

Venture 2 the Review



I have bought and played video games since the days of Pong. During those years, I have seen some interesting packaging for video games. From the Cinemaware games with their unique look to the very reflective Imagic boxes, video games have had their share of imaginative ways to capture our attention. But there has never been a video game with packaging like this! While a photo is nice, it really has to be seen to be appreciated. The game comes in a little wooden chest. Not just a chest, but a nicely done chest, with gold trimming (not real gold, but it sure looks purty). While this alone would be enough to impress anyone, it is only part of the package. When you open the chest, you find some filler paper that is gold in color and is to give the impression of a chest, overflowing with gold. Nestled inside the tissue like paper is the cart and the instruction manual. Each cart is individually numbered and has a custom label on it. The entire job is top notch!

The game itself is pretty much a remake of the original Venture. The rooms are the same, but the monsters and treasures are different. If you played Venture, you will see alot that is familiar. But as you play the game through, you will find some very nicely drawn creatures. Even the big hallway monsters are given a sprucing up.

While it is a very nice game, it is essentially a nicer looking version of the original. There are some surprises in there, but most of it is the same. This is not a bad thing as the original Atari 2600 version was not given the respect it deserved. Like most of the Coleco games for the Atari, it was quickly put together and it showed. But Tim's version shows

alot of care. You can see that he wanted to do a better version and he succeeded.

I really wish there were more levels and some different rooms, but considering I have no programming experience, who am I to talk? I know that memory constraints are a big part. There is only so much you can do with the limited space. But if you liked the original Venture, it is safe to say that you will enjoy this one even more! A very enjoyable job! The game can be bought at Hozer Video Games at the following URL:

<http://webpages.charter.net/hozervideo/atari/2600.html>

Interview with Tim Snider

With all the stuff that was written about Tim Snider after he announced this game and especially after he decided to pull it from CCAG, I thought it would be great for Tim to tell what happened with Venture 2. So, I set up an interview with Tim and I think you will find it very interesting. As with all my interviews (including the interview with Leonard Herman that comes next), I just list the questions and the responses to them.

[#1-A sequel to Venture, what made you decide to do this? A fan of the game?](#)

Tim-I am a HUGE fan of the original Venture for the Atari 2600. Games like this, Adventure, Crypts of Chaos, Haunted House, etc., were my first tastes of computerized adventure gaming.

[#2-How does this game differ from your other projects, the Mystery Science Theatre, HozerQuest: Thrift Store Simulator or The Blair Witch Project?](#)

Tim-I've described V2 as "more than a hack, less than an original." Programming-wise, it was the first time I diddled around with the actual code rather than just alter the sprites - though I did that too. I took the original Venture II code and created new rooms, creatures, and surprises. It was quite an undertaking. I also handbuilt each cart that was sold, because I wanted to learn how the EPROM, circuit board, and hex inverter came together to make a working cart. V2 was a hardware as well as a software lesson for me. Lastly, I wanted the presentation of V2 to be special, so I came up with the idea of custom-designed treasure chests for the cart to arrive in. I just thought it'd be cool to have the box represent the game's concept - like if Intellivision's Dracula game came in a coffin or something.

[#3-The treasure chest and the whole packaging is great. What made you decide to do this?](#)

Tim-Not sure. I guess I thought it'd be cool to have one and I thought other collectors might feel the same way. So I went ahead and made one for each of the 24 carts I sold.

[#4-How much time did it take to build one of these treasure chests?](#)

Tim-I bought the treasure chests in bulk from a local hobby store. (though it took three shipments before I had enough. They kept under-ordering.) My wife and I handpainted each one, then added the gold "banding" and laminated box label. All said, the boxes took 2 months from start to finish. Each cart I hand-wired took about 2 hours to do - if I did it right the first time. Else, I had to remove the solder, find out where I made my mistake, and re-do it. (I only had the 24 EPROMS and couldn't afford to order more.) And, I have a real job from 9 to 6 each day, so everything was made after 7 p.m. weekdays and on the occasional weekend. All told, the assembly for everything took a little more than 3 months or so.

[#5-Was it the time it took to build the treasure chest, the costs or both that made you decide to limit them?](#)

Tim-Well, they weren't going to be "limited" per se, because V2 was originally going to be released at Ohio's CCAG meeting. Since it was a smaller meeting and since I was going to release them without any fanfare, 24 carts would've been enough for the folks there. However, the original shipment of 24 EPROMs were lost in the mail and didn't arrive until after CCAG had come and gone. So, I figured I'd churn them out for CGE2K1 so I could get them into the hands of collectors. Granted, the cost to put these together was tough to initially lay out, but it was the time it took to do each cart and box that limited the number created. I was only making as many as I could – I was never trying to create some "false sense of rarity." Also, since I was planning to turn over manufacturing to Randy at Hozer Video Games, I didn't feel that these first 24 were any more special than the others Hozer would create. They just happened to be the "first" ones released.

[#6-Did the sales of your earlier games, play any part in the decision to limit the initial run?](#)

Tim-Uh, no. The V2 run was not "limited." They were just the first 24 released to the public.

[#7-There was alot of interest in the cart, before it was released. Did this surprise you?](#)

Tim-Bluntly, hell yes. I created V2 because it was a game *I* wanted to play. I figured there might be another 20 folks out there who wanted a copy as well. I was unprepared for the demand. Perhaps this was naive-ness on my part, even though I had made arrangements for Hozer to take over distribution. As far as I was concerned, anyone who wanted a copy could get one. But too many people wanted the "extra-special-jiffy-keen-custom-made-author-produced" boxed treasure-chest version, and they were willing to make life miserable for me until they got their way. It's sad really. Ironically, since CGE 2K1's end, V2's been available at Hozer for a month now and I don't think one order has come in for it. It begs the question, "Who was demanding those initial copies: game-players or collectors who wanted only to fill their holes?"

[#8-If you knew how much negative feedback you would get on the limited nature of the cart, would you have still gone ahead with the treasure chest edition?](#)

Tim-Nope. I would've made one for myself and sent the BIN to Hozer for mass-production.

I'm very proud of what I created, but I'm also very soured on the experience. I'm working on a new Atari game called They've Risen, but I don't think I'll do anything other than write the game and send it to Randy at Hozer for distribution.

[#9-Was there anything other than the uproar in the newsgroup that led you to pulling the cart from its release at the CGE?](#)

Tim-I had e-mails sent to my personal computer telling me they were going to track me down at CGE and demand a copy of V2 until I relented. I was taken to task on various classic gaming message groups. I was called a variety of names and basically bludgeoned. I didn't need the headaches, so I pulled the "general release" and sold the treasure chest copies to folks I've dealt with in the past.

[#10-When you went to the CGE, how did people respond to you about the cart?](#)

Tim-I was ready for a ton of backlash, but the people I met were surprisingly complimentary. I think most folks saw what was going on and thought the name-calling was out of line. We agreed most of the name-calling and attacks were coming from folks who weren't able to get to CGE and felt they were missing out on something special. Some of the other homebrewers thanked me for taking the heat. Those who played V2 and saw the chest first-hand gave me a lot of positive feedback, which was all I was looking for in the first place.

[#11-Are there any plans on any other runs of the treasure chest edition?](#)

Tim-Never again.

[#12-There was a treasure chest edition of Venture 2 that sold at the CGE. Did you provide it or was it someone else?](#)

Tim-That copy was literally the last copy I created. I contacted the Digital Press guys and told them I had one left. I really wanted to get this into the hands of a collector, so I asked if auctioning it off was a bad idea. They loved it, and gave me the green light to place it up for auction.

[#13- Were you surprised by the \\$200.00 price it fetched?](#)

Tim-Completely. I sold the copies I made for \$20 each. I expected - maybe - \$50 or \$60 for that last cart. The bidding completely overwhelmed me.

[#14-Back a few years ago, a copy of your Mystery Science Theatre cart was put up for auction by another collector and fetched a nice sum on eBay. Which one surprised you more, what Venture 2 sold for or the Mystery Science Theatre?](#)

Tim-Both went for more I would've expected.

[#15-For people who missed the treasure chest edition, but want to play the game, how can they get a copy?](#)

Tim-Hozer has the game for \$16 which includes a cart with a "general release" label and instructions. The BIN is floating around out there on AtariAge and other classic gaming sites.

(I would like to take this time to thank Tim Snider for the interview. I know it was tough for him to speak about it, but he really wanted to let people know what happened and why the game was pulled from CGE.)

Late Breaking News!

After doing this interview, Tim Snider emailed me with this big news!

Hey Tom,

Quick update to the Q&A I did. I have to completely change one of my answers. Please add this answer in place of the "Never again" I answered to the question - "Do you plan on making any more of the treasure chest versions?"

After promising myself and others that I would never make another V2 cart and box, it turns out I will be making one more treasure-chest edition after all. The gang at [AtariAge](#) are putting together a classic game auction with all proceeds to benefit the victims of the WTC/NYC terrorist attack.

In an e-mail I received, they said that they're trying to get highly collectible items and donations from homebrewers. I had one more chest made up that I was going to keep as a memento. However, I can't think of a better reason to break my promise and churn out one more V2 cart - to be given the designation "Epsilon".

I plan to donate this final Venture II cart to this very worthy cause. My hope is that it brings in quite a few bucks for these folks.

If you want to bid on this item or any of the other items and help a very good cause, go to the following URL:

<http://atariage.com/features/auction/>

Interview with Leonard Herman

Last Month, I did a review of Phoenix, the Fall and Rise of Video Games. This excellent book chronicles the history of video games from the very beginning, up to recent times. I thought it would be great to do an interview with Leonard and find out a little about how the Phoenix project began and how he feels about the industry. When someone puts as much time and effort into a project like this, they tend to get very close to the subject. With this in mind, I wanted to see a little into the mind of the man. So if you ever wanted to know a little

more about Leonard Herman and his great book, this is your chance!

[#1-Tell us a little about the history of your Phoenix book, how it came about, the reasons, etc...](#)

Phoenix actually began in the early '80's. Back then there was so many games available for the Atari, some good and many bad, and many many of them were clones of each other but there was really no way to distinguish what they were. I decided to write a buyer's guide that would summarize these hundreds of games. The result was ABC To The VCS (A Directory of Software for the Atari 2600). Since I wanted the book to be complete and contain every game for the system, this resulted in a problem that it could never be completed. Obviously when new games stopped coming out, there no longer was a need for such a book.

When the Nintendo Entertainment System became popular I thought about doing the same type of book for that system but decided against it. But I wanted to write some kind of book about videogames. Then I realized that I had so much information about videogames lying around in different forms, that maybe I could compile this information and write a book about the history, since such a book did not exist at the time. The result was Phoenix.

The title Phoenix was used for several reasons. One of course was because the industry died and a new one arose from its ashes. Another is because of the Phoenix game by Centuri which was used by Atari in a lawsuit again Imagic. Lawsuits abound in videogaming history. Finally, the new book was born after the original book, ABC To The VCS, died.

Surprisingly, the Atari fan has asked me to release ABC To The VCS anyway. So in 1995 I put together a 160 photo booklet that contained minuscule print. I'm now contemplating putting out a second edition which would be professionally bound and include all of the prototypes and homebrews that have been found or released since the first book came out.

[#2-Where did you get all your information? Was it difficult to find the information?](#)

Most of the information was gleamed from press kits and magazines. Most of the information existed before but never in one place. The hardest part was when I was presented with conflicting information and had to write what I believed was the truth. This was before the Internet was popular.

[#3-What changes are in the 3rd edition?](#)

a) First of all, the size. The original Phoenix books were 5 x 8. The new one is 8.5 x 11. The 2nd edition contained photos but in many cases they were too small to see so I rectified this by making the book, and typeface, larger.

b) The 3d edition adds an additional four chapters to the 2nd, bringing the history of videogames up to the end of 2000.

c) Additional photos throughout.

d) Known errors have been fixed - particularly the definition of 'bank-switching' which

haunted me from the first two editions.

e) Focus-On sections: In-depth-columns featuring people and places which go beyond the normal history.

f) Cover gallery of American videogame magazines and books.

[#4-After doing three editions of this book, which one posed the greatest challenge?](#)

Each one poses its own special challenges. In the latter two editions I had to figure out a way to make the book better than the previous one in ways other than adding new chapters.

[#5-While compiling the information, were there any old video game myths that you found the truth about and were surprised by them? \(AKA-the real origin of Donkey Kong's name, the reason for the first Easter Egg, etc...\)](#)

I didn't know that Warren Robinett left Atari long before his name was discovered in Adventure. In the first two editions I wrote that Warren hadn't been reprimanded by Atari because they were happy with the publicity they received. This was updated in the third edition when I learned that he wasn't even with the company any more.

[#6-Are there any video game companies that you have less respect for, after doing this book? Any you have more respect for?](#)

Every company had its share of good and bad. I have no respect for Tramiel's Atari even though I am an ardent Atari supporter. On the other hand, I have never been a fan of Nintendo during their monopolistic days but I am admiring them more and more now.

[#7-Lawsuits are a big part of the history of video games. Was there a specific lawsuit that you felt the verdict was wrong?](#)

I've always felt that Nintendo got off too easy in 1991 when it threatened dealers not to charge less than \$99 for each NES unit. It's punishment was to send \$5 coupons to all NES owners who purchased the unit during the particular time frame. Everyone had to purchase a Nintendo product to use their coupon so Nintendo wound up winning anyway.

[#8-Is there video game, a system or a company that you felt made a considerable contribution to the video game industry, but is largely overlooked?](#)

Yes, Magnavox. They introduced the very first videogame console but they always take a back-seat to Atari. The truth is that Magnavox didn't know how to market their product and Atari did. Later, Magnavox released its Master Strategy Series which brought together videogames and board games. It was a great innovative idea that never caught on.

[#9-There is an old saying that "History repeats itself". Do you find this to be true in the video game industry? Do you find companies making the same mistakes as previous companies?](#)

The crash of 1983 was caused by a lot of cheap crap on the market that was selling in place

of the expensive stuff and causing a domino ripple through the industry. We now have brand-new games for the Playstation which cost less than \$10. There is just too much product out there and not enough disposable income to keep up with it.

[#10-There is a saying in the video game industry that the market will not support more than two systems. Do you find this to be true of the video game industry in the past? Do you think with the rapidly increasing size of the industry that this is still true?](#)

The only times we've ever had a successful third machine is when the third one was a bargain machine. For instance, the 5200 and Colecovision fought it out but the 2600 was still popular because it was an inexpensive machine at that time. We've never had three machines in the same price range to successfully compete. In the early '90's the TurboGrafx-16 had no chance against the Genesis and SNES. The Saturn and Jaguar were losers against the Playstation and N64. Even the Dreamcast, which many cite as the best machine out there, couldn't hold its own against Sony and Nintendo. It will be interesting to see how Microsoft fares. Hype will carry it initially but where will it go from there?

[#11-If you could go back in time and view any event in the video game industry, what would it be and why?](#)

The time when Nintendo offered the NES to Atari. Imagine what the industry would be like today if Coleco did not run Donkey Kong on the Adam!

[#12-If you could go back in time and run any video game company, which one would it be? What would you do differently?](#)

I think Coleco. They were players almost from the beginning. They were innovative (they introduced the first steering controller) and they had a great machine in the Colecovision. But they threw it all away by developing the Adam which eventually destroyed the company.

[#13-How has the industry responded to your book?](#)

The 2nd edition was received favorably. It was used in college classes and I was told that many developers have it on their bookshelves. The 3rd edition isn't selling as briskly. One reason, probably, is because Amazon doesn't carry it. Also, there haven't been any reviews out as there had been with the 2nd edition. I think a lot of people don't know it's available

Senseless Acts of Violence

By [Fred Wagaman](#)

With the horrible tragedies that have occurred recently, it has become difficult to write about something like video games. My heart and prayers goes out to any and all that have been affected by this. Either directly or indirectly.

Like some movies (Spiderman, Collateral Damage), some games that were scheduled for release have been sent back for editing due to some scenes that depict the New York

skyline. Some have been removed from the shelves because of box art with exploding buildings. Some have storylines that hit a little too close to home right now. One of the most recent game requiring some modification is the highly-anticipated Metal Gear Solid: Sons of Liberty. Sega has delayed the release of Propeller Arena. Who knows if they'll ever release it.

Video games are a fairly recent entrant when it comes to forms of entertainment. They've been around about 25 years. And while we've had lots of things happen in the world, nothing on the scale of what we witnessed on September 11, 2001. I heard people say it was like watching a movie or a video game.

I prefer my entertainment to be a distraction from real life.

I want to do things and see things that don't happen in real life.

I don't know about you, but it is going to be a while until I can play certain games without wincing

(Fred has been playing games for over 25 years and actively collecting them for over 10. The 2500 + 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 5 year-old, button-loving son, Max and his 2 year old, 4th player, Lynzie. Fred can be reached at fcw3@mail.ptd.net).

The Many Faces of . . . Gyruss

By [Alan Hewston](#)

Gyruss is one of the most well-remembered fusion of music and video games of all time. The fantastic musical score that plays throughout - "Toccata and Fugue in D Minor" by Johann Sebastian Bach, engulfs you like an ocean wave and doesn't let you down off the surf board while it is rolling in. It's quite a rush, and can put you deep into the gaming "zone". Why didn't all games have cool music like this? Soon after, most arcade hits did.

Gyruss is mostly a hybrid of Tempest and Galaga. Like Galaga, formations of ships enter each stage in attack waves, swoop about and fire at you and then settle back down into a central formation. You circle about their formation and always point and fire inwards while they rest in a space well (Tempest). Actually it is more like you and the enemy ships are moving through a circular space corridor, or worm-hole. After the fourth attack wave arrives, a set of three satellites appears outside the formation. When the middle satellite is eliminated, you are given dual shot (firing) capability. Having this dual shot capability is a must, especially to survive the later stages, and to score the maximum bonus points in the chance stages. Until all ships are destroyed, a few ships at a time break away and dive towards you, attack, and then settle back into formation. Other perils include large meteors that come hurtling outward at you, and a pair of ships that work together with a deadly force field between them. The meteors cannot be destroyed, but taking out either of the force field ships knocks out the force field as well.

When all threats are vanquished, you complete the stage and are now one warp closer to your destination, Earth. You begin the game 2 warps from Neptune and then 3 more warps to reach each planet inward in the solar system. After reaching Earth (quite a challenge at the arcade), you'd start the entire sequence all over again, beginning at 2 warps from Neptune.

One of the unique aspects of the game was the controller choice. Instead of using the same rotary paddle from Tempest, an 8 directional joystick was used to move around the circumference. Awkward at first, it becomes second nature to push the stick around the circle in the direction you want to go.

You receive a slight break in the action upon reaching each planet, and its chance stage. Shoot all 40 (4 sets of 10 formations of) ships to earn the maximum bonus 10K. Otherwise 2000 points per ship. Your ship cannot be destroyed in the chance stages, only score points. Destroying an entire formation before it completes a maneuver (warp stage), or leaves the screen (chance stage) and you earn even more bonus points. The warps from Mars to Earth are extremely difficult due to the fierceness of their attacks and maneuvers. You earn a bonus ship at 60,000 and every 100,000 points thereafter.

Arcade Game Designed in 1983 by: Centuri for Konami, by Yoshiko Okamoto.

Classic Platforms all done by Parker Brothers: Atari 2600, 8 bit, Atari 5200, Colecovision, and Commodore 64 (Joe Hellensen 1985).

Categories: Gameplay, Addictiveness, Graphics, Sound & Controls



All 5 classic carts, and a partial C64 screen shot - (sorry about the poor quality).

Have Notes: Atari 2600 (24)

It almost appears that the 2600 team tackled their biggest programming challenges first and then stopped working on the project. Those challenges being the magnificent musical score and creating an always outward moving star-field effect. IMHO, they did a great job on both of these features - but was it worth letting most of the essential elements suffer? The Sound is downright pathetic (3). The musical score is quite impressive (for a 2600 game) but there are no other audio sounds at all - Nil! Nothing! The Graphics are marginal

at best (4) being mixed bag with the dazzling moving star-field but little else. A significant portion of the game is missing, and I'm penalizing it here in Graphics. The buildup and formation of the enemy fleet is non-existent. It's not that they are invisible, they are NOT in the program. This certainly adds to the duration of any game played, because if you don't get them before they move into formation, you have to wait for them to slowly emerge from the nothingness later. No chance to blow them away while they're sitting ducks. Despite the poor graphic quality, and limited number of ships (objects) that can be displayed, there is little confusion as to what is important on the screen. Your weapons fire is small and white, the enemy's is small and yellow. And then everything else should be avoided or destroyed. So I guess it works for me.

The Controls are nice (8), but seem sluggish. Maybe it's just the slower speed that you are allowed to circle about in the 2600 version. The Gameplay is fair (5). Not counting the lack of both sound effects and the formation of ships, additional elements missing are: the force field ships, a pause, any text indications of bonus points, and the ever popular last second Meteor - which rushes at you just when you thought the stage was cleared. Fortunately the 2600 does offer 4 levels of skill difficulty and a choice of either 3 or 5 lives to begin with.

Have Nots: Atari 5200 (36)

Two words - "Analog Sucks". That pretty much wraps it up here. Seriously, the Controls score is almost passable (5), but that is because I split the average between a zero (what it is nearly worth) and perfection, assuming that the expensive/elusive Masterplay Interface will make all things bright and cheery. I struggle or don't succeed at all in moving from the northern to southern hemisphere and vice versa. They're coming right at you and . . . nope your controller won't let you move - ugh! It is also difficult to move to an exact spot, or once there, twitching about like a spastic Atari paddle controller that needs a good cleaning. All too often the sticks may take over and move you to one of the 4 primary directions, at Midnight, 3, 6 or 9 O'clock. The Addictiveness is good (6), but it gets penalized for the sluggish/lack of Controls as well. Playing long enough one may learn to operate in a limited area of the screen and survive long enough to reach several planets but . . . All right, let's skip to the all "digital" Atari 8 bit version below.

Bronze Medal: Atari 8 bit (41)

Making a strong run for the Silver, the Atari 8 bit version is a fine game indeed. The Controls are perfect (10). The Gameplay is superb (9) and includes a pause and all other game elements except for

difficulty levels. The Sound is crisp (8), with a wonderful musical score, but some of the effects seem cheap and unpolished. Unfortunately, the Graphics are only decent (6), offering little to no sharpness to any of the objects. But the Atari 8 bit (& 5200) has no problem with animating all the objects smoothly in this motion-filled game. The Addictiveness is quite enjoyable (8) and you'll be motivated to keep trying until you make it to Earth. The game is available on cart, disk and emulation, and better to play this one over the 5200. The Graphics, Sound and Gameplay notes and scores apply to the Atari 5200 as well.

Silver Medal: Colecovision (43 or 42)

Reading the CV manual at the last minute delayed this article, almost missing my deadline. You see the manual says that there is the usual CV on-screen menu with 4 starting levels, each for 1/2 players. But then something I've never heard of before, if it is even possible, it mentions a pause feature using the right fire button. I tried 2 different systems with my only cart and got the same result. No menu, no options, no pause - just 1 or 2 players. Likewise, I had Ron Corcoran, the Twin Galaxies Atari referee try his cart and 2 emulator ROMS and he confirmed my results. OK, so I'll write this as if the manual is correct, but subtract 1 point if not.

The CV port may have the best, superb (9 or 8) Gameplay, including a pause, difficulty options, and all other elements. There may be a glitch in the 2 player game, or my cart. I lost a ship on the first wave of a stage, only to find that when that player resumed play there were no more waves. The formation, although not complete, was done forming and what ships were there came out for attack, not allowing a chance for the satellites, or the dual shot capability. The Controls are outstanding (9), but only when I put aside the CV controllers and play it with an Atari stick. Hmmn, but then can one pause, other than using a Y-cable, or playing the 2 player version?

The Graphics are crisp (8), and smooth, but not quite as appealing as the C64. The Sound is outstanding (9) and rivals that of the C64. The Addictiveness is very nice (8), hampered only by the fact that the game is much harder to play than the other versions. For example, in later stages, the enemy can rotate around the screen faster than you. If they catch you, and they will, and you do not have dual shot capability, and are not firing just as they are overlapping you, you become space debris. All 6+ lives can go really quickly on any one of the Mars to Earth stages. Can you say Sextuple-Death (as in double-death times three)? I've been frustrated this way about 5 times now, but its still a fantastic version none-the-less.

Gold Medal: Commodore 64 (47)

What a score! The best ever. The Controls are perfect (10). The Sound is magnificent (10), quite possibly the most well deserved "10" I'll ever hand out. Not only is the musical score incredible, but all the sound effects are excellent and not lacking or skipped over in any way. The uplifting music fills every phase of the game, from the start-up warp, to the waves of attackers rushing in, to making it to each planet, and then adding up your bonus points. The Graphics are terrific (9), the best of the home versions. Everything is crisp and clear. The Gameplay is superb (9), and would be complete if there were starting difficulty options. The Addictiveness is great (9), but there are probably a handful of classic arcade games out there that you'd rather be trapped alone on a desert island with - but not too many. Finally, this version is not so difficult to play as to keep you from reaching the Earth. The game is available on cart, disk and emulation and is well worth acquiring.

=====

OK, why didn't Parker Brothers make a TI version of this game? Given the same quality programming PB included in their other arcade hits, I'm sure that the TI port would have beaten the CV and maybe pushed the C64.

(Come back next month when I review the Many Faces of Star Wars: the Arcade Game for the Atari 2600, 5200, 8bit, Commodore 64 and Colecovision. Alan Hewston, who is looking for TI-99/4A carts of Star Trek, Pac Man, Ms. Pac Man, Frogger, Robotron, Centipede, and others for this column, can be reached at Hewston95@stratos.net or if to trade http://members.core.com/~hewston/Hewston_vg.html).

Intruder Alert

Chapter Two

Into the strange room, I am thrust. As I look around my new surroundings, I notice that the walls are are very plain. No ornamentation of any kind. Just a dull, uniformed look to the walls. One is just like the next. As I look down what appears to be a corridor, I see robots moving around at the end. They move in a quiet manner as they slowly move closer to me. As I look the other way, I realize there is only one way to go. Down the corridor, are other hallways that flow into this one. As I think more about it, I realize that this is some type of maze and I must find the exit.

Once my mind is made up, I run down the corridor, towards the oncoming robots. As they near, I see them raise their hands. Suddenly, the peaceful looking robots appear much more sinister. Their hands had long and very dangerous looking pinchers. The level of danger had just risen. I grabbed my gun and shot at the robot. It immediately was zapped into pieces. As another robot moved closer, I also took aim and shot it. Then I looked around to make sure there were no other dangers. Once I was certain that the place was safe, I went over to examine the robot's remains. I grabbed a piece of the metal to better examine it. As I picked up the piece of metal, I felt a burning sensation. The piece was still hot and was scorching my fingers. I flung the piece towards the wall. As it hit the wall, there was a loud zap, much like the sound of a hundred bug zappers, all going off at once. The walls are electrified! I had to be careful.

With this added knowledge, I proceeded with caution. I would need my wits to get out of this one alive. As I turned up the hallway, I looked to see different paths. I had the choice to go forward, go back or turn right. My hunch about being a maze, appeared to be true. Wonderful, just wonderful. Now I needed to know if my gun would have enough power to get me through this maze. Since I was unfamiliar with this weapon, I did not know how much power it had. I examined the gun, carefully and found that it appeared to be a normal laser gun. There was no settings, no gauges to tell how much power was left. I did not even see a place to put new power cells.

Before I had a chance to make my move, I heard the following phrase "Intruder Alert!" It came in a voice that sounded as sinister as it did mechanical. As I turned around, I saw the strangest form of death, coming right at me. Half expecting some immense robot, armed to the teeth with weapons or something like that. What I found instead was a large, bouncing smiley face. It was bouncing over the walls and right towards me. It kept repeating that infernal phrase, "Intruder Alert", over and over. I shot at it, but the bullet did not seem to faze it. It kept coming, faster and faster. I turned to run and saw a group of robots up ahead. I proceeded to run right past the slow and plodding machines. As I

looked back, I saw the giant smiley face land on the robots and crush them. This only made me quicken the pace. If it could destroy a hunk of metal, what good would my flesh and bones be against it?

As I turned a corner, I saw a doorway. Normally, I would proceed with great caution, but this was not a normal situation. I rushed through the doorway, with as much speed as I could muster. As I came through the other side, I saw more robots, only this time they were red. Before I could do anything, they shot at me. A bullet struck me in the chest and I screamed in pain. Then everything went blank.

Tune in next month for the next chapter!

Some Thoughts on "9-11-01"
(This Month's article is postponed due to the NY/DC Attacks)

By Jim Krych

It was not supposed to be this way. We are America, the world's only superpower. No one would dare attack us. We've put men on the moon, won the Cold War, and out produced everyone as the "Arsenal of Democracy". The most highly technological society on the planet. People come from all over to us, to find a better life.

On September 9th, in the Year of our Lord 2001, all that changed. In a matter of a few short hours, the World Trade Center was in ruins, and the Pentagon had been hit. Thousands killed, and many to be never seen again.

We will long remember where we were when we first found out about the attack on the USA. The horror of the pictures, the live video of passenger jets being used as human bombs, the buildings collapsing as we watched.

This was our Pearl Harbor, and many WWII vets have said that this day was even worse.

While we would have preferred to have made our mark on history by other means, it is now time for Generation X to step up to the Plate of History. History demands it, and, we have no choice.

It is heartening to see the unity in the American people, across all lines. The seeking of God for answers, and for comfort. If the intent was to terrify and panic us, then they, whomever and wherever they may be, have failed. But, we have been forever changed by the events of 9-11-01.

The outpouring of support has been overwhelming. People from all over are helping out and doing what they can. You are seeing our best as Americans, in the worst of our tragedy.

I call upon my fellow countrymen, to not repeat the mistakes of the past. I pray, that you do not accuse our fellow Arab Americans with what a minority extreme have done. To not

persecute our fellow citizens, because they are of an Arabic background. If anything, we ought to be supporting them, in this great test of National Character.

You see this hits close to home for my family. One of our Jewish relatives, married a Muslim, he is from Morocco. And, one of my Brother's in Christ, Chuck Abdouch (mentioned in my other TI articles), who had helped me many times before, is of an Arabic background. Brothers in Yeshua Hamashiach, as we Jews call Jesus the Messiah.

Pray then, for the families of the victims.

Pray then, for the many who are risking their own lives trying to search through the rubble.

Pray then, for the many who are trying to help.

Pray then, for our leaders, that they may do what is right.

Pray for our President, George Bush, and his family and his staff. He has a burden not seen in many years. Pray that he makes wise choices, being patient, yet decisive.

Pray for our military leaders. And, for those in the US Military, of all the branches-active, reserve, and guard. And, their families and loved ones. This will not be a quick war, but long and protracted. The battlefield will be abroad, as well as here at home. Across many different fronts and situations.

My own unit, B Co 112th Engineers, has not yet been called, but we are ready should the President need us, as are all Guard units in the State of Ohio.

History has called us.

Remember.....9-11!!!

Letters to the Editor

First off, I want to say thanks to all the people who emailed in answers for the questions last month. It was greatly appreciated! By the way, for everyone else, the answers were, the laser disc racing game was Star Rider and the old space combat game was Space Wars. Now lets get onto this month's questions!

Hi there,

When I was younger (like about 10 years old, oh 15-16 years ago) I used to hang about in arcades when my mother was out working. I used to play a game which involved controlling a large UFO which could either shoot or tractor beam the various enemies. You could then release the captured craft to fight for you. I seem to recall that the game involved time travel, with tanks, cannons and suchlike appearing as bad guys....

If you could help I'd be ecstatic, Ive been trying to find this game for YEARS!

Cheers, and thanks for a great site!

This one is new to me, but it does sound pretty cool! Anyone have any ideas?

What happened to "Overheard in the Newsgroups" and "eBay Notes"? I really enjoyed those columns. signed What's Up?

To be honest, I don't go onto eBay that much anymore. Since the categories got so fragmented and you have to use the search feature to find anything, I haven't bothered as much with eBay. Also, all their rules that they seem to make up daily is enough to turn off anyone.

As far as the newsgroup, I rarely frequent the classic video game newsgroup. If I read one more person whine about eBay, I will puke. It just isn't the same anymore. That is the reasons why I dropped those columns. But maybe someone else would like to do them.

Conclusion

Time to close out another issue. I must admit with the events of the past week, my heart wasn't into doing it. But I know how many people rely on reading a new issue each month. Luckily, I had already done the two interviews, so it made it much easier to do.

You may notice that there are less contributors this month. With the events of late, I did not press anyone for articles. If they did one, great, if not I understood. This is a time to spend with family and to reflect on what has happened, what will happen and what we can do to help. As much a part of our lives as video games may be, it is only a part. I pray for everyone involved, directly and indirectly. I pray that things will begin to improve and not get worse.

Tune in next month for the big 50th issue! I do not know what I have planned yet, but if anyone has any ideas, I am willing to listen. Until next month, stay safe and enjoy life!

[-Tom Zjaba](#)

(This issue was done to mostly silence. Couldn't think of any music I wanted to play.)