

Retrogaming Times

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Table of Contents

01.	CCAG is almost here!
02.	Devastator, Wimpy Gameplayers Need Not Apply!
03.	Top 10 signs that it may be Time to Give the Hobby a Rest by Geoff Voigt
04.	Solaris, Doug Neubauer's Masterpiece by Sarah Szefer
05.	The Atari 2600 Games of Summer by Dave Mrozek
06.	The New Zealand Story Part Two by Alan Hewston
07.	Commodore 64 - The Music by Matthew Allen
08.	The TI/994A Magazines by Jim Krych
09.	Extra Junk by Fred Wagaman
10.	The Many Faces ofAsteroids by Alan Hewston
11.	Even More Shows!
12.	Online Newsletters, Keeping the Classics Alive!
13.	Letters to the Editor
14.	Conclusion



CCAG is Almost Here!

We are down to the final days before CCAG begins and things are getting real exciting! First off, we have received quite a bit of exposure! The latest is a mention in the Cleveland Plain Dealer, the biggest and only daily newspaper in the Cleveland area. With a circulation of about 250,000, it gets a lot of exposure! We also had a wonderful ad and mention in Classic Gamer Magazine as well as having numerous websites put up banners for us. Thanks to all for the help with promoting the show!

The promotion seems to be working as we have surpassed 50 tables, up from 20 last year and have had over 100 people say they are attending, about triple last year's crowd, so it

is looking very promising! Don't fear, we will have lots of room! The armory is huge!

We also set up a message board for attendees to discuss ride sharing, set up trades, post want lists and ideas for the show. It can be found by [CLICKING HERE](#).

Remember that tables and admission are both free, so if you can make it to the show, it will be a fun time! If not, we will give you back double your admission fee!

Devastator, Wimpy Game Players Need Not Apply!

America is a land of excess. From the fast food restaurants that keep making the food and drinks bigger to the SUVs that have reached ridiculous proportions, we are a country that likes things big, really big. With that mindset, we offer you the SUV of arcade joysticks, the Devastator! This is no wimpy little joystick, no siree, it even comes with a handle to help you carry it!



(There is my diminutive V-Stick being overshadowed by the mighty Devastator! Chalk this up as my first hand modeling job!)

I have been fortunate enough to be able and borrow a Devastator for review purposes. My first reaction upon seeing this behemoth was "Oh my gosh!" I have been a proud owner of a V-Stick for three years and I thought this joystick was big, but it is nothing compared to the Devastator, which could eat the V-Stick for lunch and ask for dessert. But once you get over your initial shock, you take a look at the variety of options and the amount of thought and consideration that went into the design.



(Whether you are right or left handed, the Devastator is ready for you!)

To start off with, the design of the Devastator is quite simple. There are two joysticks, each of which has four buttons available. A very nice feature that I must commend Jim Krych, the developer for is that he put four buttons on the right and four on the left side of the joystick, so no matter if you are right or left handed, you have four buttons. These come in handy with the plethora of games from the late 80's and early 90's that used three to four buttons. Games like *Altered Beast*, *Golden Axe* and others can now be experienced in their full glory! While this is too few buttons for the fighting games that came soon after, he had to stop somewhere. I think that four buttons is plenty. While it would have been nice to be able to program all 8 buttons, they mirror each other. This does make it easier on a person when you switch from a right hand player to a left hand player.

To complement the two joysticks, you have a trackball and a spinner. Above the spinner is one and two player buttons and two coin buttons. The design is very simple and quite effective. One thing I like about the layout is when you play a two player game, there is enough room, so that you are not on top of the other person. This is if both of you are either right or left handed. Otherwise, there will be some bumping, but that happens in the arcade too.

When I first tried the joysticks, I was ready to bash the machine right there. When you first move them, they seem to have a loose, almost sloppy feel to them. This was one thing I did not like about the *Arcade 2000* stick (which unfortunately never came out) and the *Hot Rod*. While this is great for fighting games and shooters, it is not so good for games like *Crazy Climber* and *Robotron* and especially for maze games like *Pacman* and *Ladybug*. But once I got down to playing some games, I found the joystick to be amazingly accurate! I put it through the paces with games like *Robotron* and *Crazy Climber* and it succeeded! Then I switched to *Ms. Pacman* and scored better than I ever did with the V-Stick. Then I gave it the ultimate test, *Q*Bert*. Anyone who plays this game in emulation knows that it takes at least three games to get a feel for the controllers. But with the Devastator, I blew through the first four levels, without losing a single guy! Now maybe I will get somewhere on FHMC *Q*Bert* (that's Faster, Harder, More Challenging *Q*Bert*, see [Issue #12](#) for a review and an interview on the previously unreleased game).

Next, I moved onto the trackball games. I sent it through the paces with four different trackball games: *Missile Command*, *Centipede*, *Crystal Castles* and *Marble Madness*. It

worked great for Missile Command, though it took me a few games to get used to the button configuration. Crystal Castles worked like a dream! I blew through levels like a pro! Marble Madness while working great, showed how bad a player I am. I had not played the game in quite awhile and it showed. But that was my lack of skills and not the Devastator. Lastly, I tried Centipede, which for some reason was a bit jerky. Whenever I would try to zip from one side of the screen to the other, it would jerk a bit. But when I tried this same kind of action on Crystal Castles or Missile Command, there was no jerking, just smooth movement. Cannot say if it is programming problems or what as it is hard to blame the joystick when the problem only showed up in one game. Because of this problem, I decided to see if the same problem would appear in Millipede. I am happy to report that on Millipede, the jerkiness disappeared and the game worked wonderfully, so I have concluded that there is a problem in the emulation.

Next it was the spinner. For this, I decided to try Discs of Tron, Tempest and Arkanoid. Discs of Tron worked great, though it was a bit awkward with joystick, spinner and button. Here is where a button on the joystick would be very helpful. Jim says that that option is available and it would be one that I would consider. Tempest worked fine, though a touch slow. I am unsure if this is due to the fact that I am used to playing with a mouse, which is much easier to zip around. When I tried Arkanoid, I found a problem. The spinner was not able to go fast enough to keep up with the action. When I reported this problem to Jim, he was able to find a solution. By hitting the tab key and going into the Analog Controls and changing the sensitivity, I was able to make the game not only playable, but extremely responsive. I also went back and retested Tempest and saw my score double!



(Designer, Jim Krych with his baby. Hard to think of anything that big as a baby).

To conclude, the Devastator works incredibly well! It will give you a very realistic arcade feeling for a vast number of games. While it is enormous and may have you considering buying a larger monitor (my 14 inch looked out of place next to the Devastator), it is a great stick that delivers. The design is quite simple, but it is also very user friendly with a clean layout of buttons. With the ambidextrous button setup and enough room for two players to play comfortably, it offers everything you could want in a joystick (except buttons

on the side to replicate pinball, though I must say it would take quite a wingspan to reach them, think of playing the Atari pinball game, Hercules). Just to give you an idea of the size of this stick, it's measurements are Physical size is 32" x 12" x 6 (please excuse my earlier exaggerations of it being 4 feet by 2 feet, I was just estimating the size, compared to my V-Stick. Jim says these are the actual measurements, but it looks bigger than this to me). But if you are in the market for an arcade joystick, this could be the answer to your prayers. Just make sure you have a table or desk big enough to set it on as it is not a lap joystick.

The Devastator will be set up for play at the CCAG show this month. It will go on sale next month. Price is still being determined. Check back next month for more information on price, options and ordering.

Top 10 signs that it may be time to give the hobby a rest

by [Geoff Voigt](#)

- 10: Your Wife has made a trail of dots leading to an Asylum Ambulance
- 9: She's also trying to peel off the false woodgrain and black plastic finish you've just put on the baby.
- 8: MAME.EXE is in the AUTOEXEC.BAT command line for your PC.
- 7: The Mailman is suing you for work-related back injuries
- 6: You describe that new stove with a Wok station as 'giving the kitchen a Mod Chip for Foreign Applications'
- 5: You watch the movie 'Joysticks' to get aroused
- 4: ...you're not looking at the women in the film
- 3: When going to the Zoo with your family, you bring along a large supply of bricks and a net if the animals escape, and a hammer in case the gorillas get out of line
- 2: You're looking around the net for a ROM of that classic game 'Canasta' you'd been hearing about.
- 1: You win a price argument with the Flea Lady!

(Geoff "\$!@*# Viruses!" Voigt: gvoigt@ridgecrest.ca.us. Yet another Penniless Artist(TM) also interested in 80's music-Classic Video Games-Anime-Techno Music-Coffee-US History Keeper and Maintainer of the [rec.games.video.classic FAQ](#))

Solaris: Doug Neubauer's Masterpiece 10/10

by [Sarah Szefer](#)



When I was in my early teens in the late eighties, I owned a Coleco Gemini (the Atari 2600 clone) while my best friend had an Atari. We lent each other many games, but one of his games stood out among them all: Solaris, which has to be the most complex and graphically advanced title in the entire Atari 2600 catalog. Solaris was the brainchild of Doug Neubauer and is a sequel to his game Star Raiders; unfortunately, I never played Star Raiders, so I can't compare both games.

[Gameplay \(10/10\)](#) Very complex game. If you don't have a copy of the manual of the game, it is much harder to know what to do. Before finding Solaris, you have to save Federation planets from Zylon enemies, fill up on fuel on those same Federation planets before your tank is empty, shoot at the enemy in space (beware of the flying mines!) Very important detail: you can access the quadrant map at any time with the player-2 joystick button.

[Story \(10/10\)](#) You are the pilot of a StarCruiser in search of the planet Solaris. You have to rescue stranded cadets from the Zylon planets and destroy enemy Zylons who are trying to reach Solaris before you. It's much more than a simple space invaders game!

[Audio/Video \(10/10\)](#) The graphics are the best ever made for the 2600. Soundwise, there is no music, except for the warning to tell you that one of your planets have been invaded. There are sounds when you pick up colonists, shoot at the big bad aliens, when one of your planets explode, etc.

[Replayability \(10/10\)](#) The mere challenge of the game will make you want to try it again, even if you figure out the quadrant pattern that will bring you to Solaris. This is not the kind of game that can be easily beaten again and again with eyes closed. If you can survive the frustration that the challenge can bring, you will enjoy this game a lot.

[Challenge \(10/10\)](#) Solaris is not for people who give up easily. This is a truly challenging game that will leave you scratching your head over and over again. Trying to figure out how to use the quadrants is hard enough, imagine actually finding Solaris! It is possible to beat the game but you might want to use the walkthrough from the I'll beat Solaris! web site at <http://members.tripod.com/skintigh/atari/solaris.html>. Also, if you let one of your planets explode, the space travel in that quadrant will be all screwed up: no navigation window available, a reddish screen and reversed controls (!).

[Fun \(10/10\)](#) It's always fun to shoot at aliens in space, but this is only one aspect of the game. There is a true purpose to the game rather than an endless loop (for some reason,

the Atari 2600 version of Donkey Kong comes to mind). The graphics will wow you: I'm still trying to figure out how Doug Neubauer managed to make it fit on a 2600 chip.

[Overall \(10/10\)](#) It is unfortunate that Solaris is one of the lesser known gems of the Atari 2600 era because it is worth a try. This is one game that modern consoles couldn't really make better, aside from adding a save feature. Solaris is the closest thing to a bit-age game within the classic gaming age, maybe because it was released in 1986, as the NES was hitting the North American market.

(Sarah is a Montreal-based translator and a self-proclaimed scavenger. You can e-mail her at s_szefer@yahoo.com)

The Atari 2600 Games of Summer

By the David Mrozek, The Video Game Critic

There are certain unwritten rules I follow when it comes to playing video games. One is that you have to play games in "their proper season". Sure, most games tend to be "season-neutral", but you have to be careful. For example, you wouldn't want to play Haunted House in May. If you did, you'd be sick of it by the time October rolled around, wouldn't you? Let's face it; that game is most effective in October. Playing Winter Games in July is would be another bad idea. If you're going to play a snow game, it should at least be cold out, and ideally, have snow on the ground. Likewise, what's the point of playing baseball in December? I think you get the idea. My point is that we have some hot months ahead, so this is the time to pull out your tropical, water-oriented games to help you keep cool. Below are some suggestions for you Atari 2600 players. And if you enjoy these reviews, be sure to check out my site at [<www.videogamecritic.net>](http://www.videogamecritic.net) for 1300 more reviews.

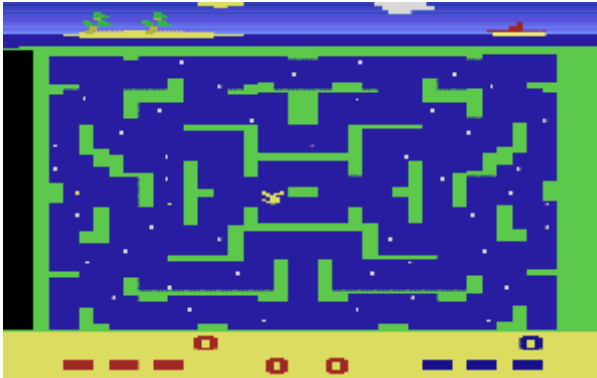
[California Games \(Epyx 1987\) A](#)

This game was made during the late 80s, and it's too bad no one was paying attention, because California Games is an impressive title. One to eight players can compete in four fun-in-the-sun events, including Foot Bag (hackysack), Half Pipe (skateboarding), BMX Racing (bikes on hills), and surfing (um...surfing). California Games begins with a wild title screen and a killer rendition of "Louie Louie". If that doesn't get you psyched up, get back in your coffin! Each player chooses a sponsor to identify his or her character. The graphics are some of the best ever for the 2600. Everything is multi-colored, finely detailed, and high resolution. Each of the events is completely unique, fun to play, and very challenging. I was most impressed by the waves in the surfing event. Who would have thought they could have pulled this off on the 2600?

[Jungle Hunt \(Atari 1982\) A](#)

Here's a game I couldn't wait to get my hands on in 1982, and I was not disappointed. Back then, any game where your guy was more than one color was something to get excited about. Jungle Hunt, known as Jungle King in the arcade, features an explorer trying to survive four stages of jungle action. First he must swing from vine to vine without falling. Next, armed with a knife, he has to swim through a crocodile-infested river. Then

he's back on shore, jumping and ducking tumbling boulders. And in the grand finale, he must leap over the native who is has captured his girlfriend. The graphics are very smooth and detailed, and only the crocs flicker slightly. Parallax scrolling backgrounds give the illusion of depth to the jungle. The action is faithful to the arcade, although in the third stage, the rocks don't bounce downhill, but instead bounce on a level plane, as if someone is rolling them towards you. The ending is nothing special, but at least there is one. There are two levels of difficulty, and the second one is a worthy challenge.



[Shark Attack \(Apollo 1982\) C-](#)

Shark Attack wouldn't be a bad little maze game if it weren't for the lousy control. You move a diver around an underwater labyrinth, collecting dots and returning them to a box in the center for points. Meanwhile, sharks swim randomly across the screen, and their frequency and speed increase as the game progresses. There are four "secret caves" in the corners of the maze that will teleport you to another corner. These caves are your only escape from the Loch Ness Monster, who looks like a pink octopus and chases you all over the place. The game is pretty challenging, but your diver is constantly getting hung up on the walls of the "reef", which is aggravating. Sometimes you even seem to run into an invisible wall! I really do like those trees on the water's surface however.

[Seaquest \(Activision 1983\) B](#)

One look at that bright blue water under the beautiful sunset, and you'll know that this has to be an Activision game. And the game plays as good as it looks. This rapid-fire submarine shooter delivers fast action with a hint of strategy. The idea is to blast sharks and enemy subs while saving divers. Check out those sharks chasing the divers! The more divers you rescue before surfacing for air, the more bonus points you get. The action begins slowly, but eventually gets pretty intense. These divers are nicely animated, and they're almost as big as your submarine! How are they supposed to fit in that thing? Beware of the small, innocent-looking ship lurking on the surface - that little bastard will try to ram you when you come up for air!



[Dolphin \(Activision 1983\) C](#)

This game looks a lot like Seaquest, but the game play is much different. Dolphin is an underwater chase game with sharp graphics and original game play. You control a dolphin swimming towards the right of the screen while being chased by a giant squid. The squid has one of those big ugly eyes, and it looks like it's wearing shoes. As the screen scrolls, lines of sea horses form walls that get in your way. Each wall has a gap in it however, and once you learn how to use the sound cues, you can position your dolphin to swim right through it. This is one of the only games I can think of in that the sound plays a critical role. Occasionally "currents", which look like arrows, cross the screen to slow you down or give you a boost. In addition, if you catch the magic seagull, your dolphin can turn the tables and chase down the squid. Catch that ugly S.O.B. and you'll rack up the BIG points. While I like the nice graphics and original concepts, the game wore thin after just a few plays.



[Congo Bongo \(Sega 1983\) C+](#)

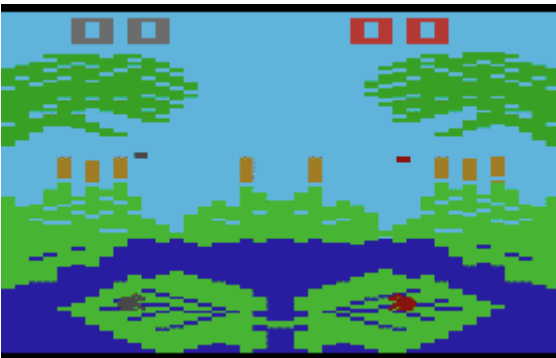
Let's face it - the Atari 2600 was not designed to handle the fancy 3D graphics of this game. This version is only barely recognizable. But guess what? It works! The game play is surprisingly faithful to the original, even if you only have two of the three screens. The first level is like a 3D Donkey Kong. It's not pretty, but it plays okay. Your man must climb a mountain while avoiding falling coconuts and affectionate monkeys. It's difficult to judge where those 2D coconuts are going to land. The second level looks a lot like Frogger. There are some nifty water effects, and the hippos are rainbow colored. The jumping here is unforgiving. But the worst aspect of the game is Congo himself. He looks like a big Curious George - not very intimidating! Check this out: after you conquer both screens, your man walks over and lights Congo on FIRE! I could barely watch as that poor monkey writhed in agony! This game is sick! Oh - what a minute! The manual says it's only "play fire". I guess that's okay then. Anyway, despite that disturbing scene, Congo Bongo is pretty fun.

[Pitfall \(Activision 1982\) A](#)

This is THE classic adventure game of ALL time. It was completely original when it came out in 1982, and it's still a lot of fun to play today. You move Pitfall Harry left or right through a 255-screen jungle avoiding snakes, scorpions, pits, crocs, logs, and quicksand while searching for treasure. You can even take some underground shortcuts. The game is timed but chances are, you'll lose your three lives long before the 20 minutes is up. There are a nice variety of challenges along the way, and the graphics are excellent. The objects and characters are well defined, and the sound effects are bound to bring back memories of the 80's. This game really raised the benchmark for Atari 2600 graphics and playability.

[Pitfall II: Lost Caverns \(Activision 1984\) A+](#)

The original Pitfall set a new standard for adventure games, but this one blows the original out the water! With huge levels, excellent graphics, catchy music, and the sheer variety of obstacles, it is difficult to believe that this is an Atari 2600 game. This game greatly expands on the original game by taking you DEEP into the ground under the jungle. There are monkeys, rats, frogs, bats, birds, scorpions, electric eels, and even waterfalls. Activision pulled out all the stops with this one. This may be the most technically superior 2600 game of all time.



[Frogs and Flies \(M-Network 1982\) B](#)

Here's a simple, fun game that even girls will like! It's a hot summer night on the pond, and two frogs are resting on a pair of lily pads, while some very blocky (but juicy) flies buzz overhead. Pressing the joystick causes you frog to jump, and the fire button sticks out his tongue to catch the flies. A unique but easy-to-learn control scheme lets you determine the direction and distance your jumps. You frog sometimes misses the pads and splashes in the water. The background graphics are quite blocky, but you can still tell it's a pond. The bright day sky gradually turns to night, and once it's pitch dark, you can even hear the crickets. Frogs and Flies is fun with one player, and even better with two people going head-to-head.



[Fathom \(Imagic 1983\) A-](#)

Wow, this is awesome! Not only is Fathom attractive looking and fun, but it's surprisingly sophisticated as well. Neptune's daughter is trapped in a cage deep under the ocean. By taking the form of a dolphin and a sea gull, you can collect the three pieces of the trident needed to release her. Fathom is an action-adventure game with originality to spare. The screen doesn't scroll, but rather you move between a series of contiguous screens. Half of the time you are a dolphin, avoiding jellyfish and catching seahorses. The other half of the time you are a flying seagull, collecting clouds while avoiding black birds. Touching an enemy drains your life. As you collect items you gradually construct Neptune's trident. Once you release the girl, you begin the next stage with a larger, more challenging set of screens. To actually complete the game, you have to save her seven times. The high-resolution screens feature sharp graphics and arrays of color. Control of the bird is similar to the control scheme in Joust. There are no serious flaws with Fathom, and it's one of the best-looking Atari 2600 games around.

"The New Zealand Story" **"A native gamer's point of view part 2 of 3"**

[Aaron Wheeler](#) (NZ), from New Zealand
As interviewed by [Alan Hewston](#) (RT) of the Retrogaming Times

Welcome back to part 2 of a 3 part interview with Aaron. Sorry, this got snipped at the early deadline last month.

RT: What are your earliest memories of video games?

NZ: I remember a friend of my Father, used to get the latest and greatest electronic equipment as soon as it came out. So in the early '80's, he got a Atari 400 with datasette (tape drive), and I remember going there and playing Star Raiders (cart) and tape versions of Lemonade Stand, Salmon Run and Getaway. These were great games at the time, and of course I tried to get my parents to fork out the money for one, but to no avail. They just couldn't afford it. So I just had to look forward to going to dad's friend's place to get my fix on those 'classic' games. A couple of years or so later ('84/'85), I was allowed to borrow the Atari 400 for whole weekends!! I was in Atari Heaven!!! :-)

RT: What home video game systems were popular, and where did they come from?

NZ: We had the usual major systems from the US, like the Atari 2600, 7800, but no Intellivision, Colecovision, or even the Atari 5200. We had various 'clone' machines turn up too. Tunix, an Emerson Arcadia clone which looks exactly the same as the US version except the re-badge. Even the carts look the same. My favorite video game system was called the Fountain Video Game System released by Fountain (who also made such things as Stereo systems), which was a clone that was compatible with the Radofin, Acetronic & Prinztronic game systems. I loved it, and Space Invaders was my favorite game. This was probably more popular than the Atari 2600 in the early 80's in NZ.

RT: Tell us a bit more about the Fountain Video Game System, was there one cart slot, or one per each system it cloned? Or were all of the systems it cloned compatible with each other?

NZ: There is one slot type for all the units I've seen, although the carts for the fountain are shorter than their Radofin counterparts. But are the same width, and work fine in either. I have some Radofin carts that look identical to my other Radofin carts but the pcb of the cartridge is further up in the cartridge, so that when plugged in, the cartridge & slot don't make contact. I will at some stage open them up, and try them without the case. Check out the site of a local collector, M. Davidson, here for info on the several NZ 'clones'.

<http://www.retrogames.co.nz>

RT: Since the Fountain and other clones were native to NZ, how early did they get released and what was its price relative to the 2600 (which probably saw heavy tariffs)?

NZ: The copyright information on the back of the manuals indicate it was 1980/81, but I have no other info to check this against. Sorry, can't but I don't have any adverts indicating the prices of these two back in the early 80's. I'm am searching though. NZ didn't have regular Computer magazines till around 1982, and I've yet to see any adverts for either in the collection I have.

RT: Did the Atari 2600 and other US systems have many third party releases in NZ, or mostly just by Atari and pirate companies?

NZ: We got most of the Parker Bros, Activision, Imagic releases. Of which H.E.S. re-released many of the Activision/Imagic products in their own packaging, including a plastic clamshell (box), and the instructions printed on the reverse side of the box sleeve.

RT: Do you see much label variations on any carts for any system, or pretty much the way you see one label is the way you've found all of them?

NZ: I find Atari carts with the usual changes from the different eras they went through, ie. text labels, silver label, red labels, plus various font size/colour changes. Also due to the HES re-releases, there is a variety of different labels for Activision/Imagic. I like to collect major label differences, but only for fun, I'd trade them away if the right trade came along.

RT: Is the packaging of S/W or game cartridges much different down there? Multi-languages?

NZ: Most games have the multi language manuals, although the game is usually all English. Usually French, German, Dutch, Japanese, English, Italian. Depends on the manufacturer, and the Game System.

RT: What classic VG systems were the most popular down there in the 1980's?

NZ: During the early 1980's, the Fountain VGS was fairly common. Atari 2600 was pretty popular when it got re-released in 1988. I don't ever remember seeing the in stores around the original release time (1980), but I do remember a friend of my parents' children had one, and I used to play Combat on it. I think they only had a few games, but I never really thought I needed one, my fountain was better (heh). After this, the SMS took off in a big way, NES is around, but isn't that common, Most 'Cash Converter' stores have 20+ boxed carts for the SMS at anyone time (although certain stores seem to be dropping it now). Mega drives seem to be more common also to the SNES. Maybe Nintendo didn't have a good enough distributor here in NZ?

RT: As we all know, cart and system rarities vary all over the world, especially for a system like the SMS, which were orphaned very early in their lives in the US, but lived much longer elsewhere. Since you collect the Master System, can you tell us about third party titles and those late releases in NZ - manufactured in Australia / Japan and not in the US?

NZ: The SMS was very popular, with many non-US titles appearing, too many to list, but games like Mortal Kombat 1, 2, 3, The Simpson's Bart vs world, Krusty Fun House, WWF Steel Cage to name but a few. With titles from Virgin, Flying Edge, US Gold, Domark, etc, we certainly have a lot of titles to go after when collecting. A lot of the games I'm seeing are made either in Japan or Australia. With Sega Ozisoft making a huge amount games available.

RT: Did NZ see many game watches, or handheld video games when they first came out? How rare are they now?

NZ: Nintendo Game & watches were my first experience, which I sold several to a friend cheap. G&W's were quite popular, but are not very common now, as most people trashed them due to overuse, and taking them to school etc. But the occasional nice mint in box G&W pops up. For instance, I picked up a mint NIB Octopus & Chef games once day for around \$8 US each. As so many collectors now collect G&W's, they aren't easy to find now. I don't collect G&W's for myself, I trade them on to other collectors. I do collect the mini G&W's that were re-released recently. Octopus, Fire, and Snoopy's Tennis being my favorite G&W's.

Other handhelds brought out by Grandstand? like Astrowars, and Scramble were really popular too. Although they are probably more like mini arcades. I got a Astrowars from a garage sale back in the 80's and I used to play it so much, that it eventually died. Thus an opportunity for me to get inside one, but my attempts to fix it failed. :-(Thus I think I trashed it.

Another fairly popular Handheld in the early 90's, was the Atari Lynx, which sold pretty well here. In fact, it was on sale in a store called DEKA up until around Jan 2000. They sold all

their old stock at great prices \$22 US for a brand new Lynx II and the games were \$5 to \$7 US each, and included the not so common titles like, Rampage, Missile Command/Asteroids, Roadblasters, Pacland, Electrocop, Toki, etc. All the accessories were \$0.50 US for the Battery packs, sun visors, Comlynx cables etc. So I stocked up, but have since traded all my spares.

I remember that the Lynx was one of the only Atari machines that actually was advertised on TV here, along with the 2600. Other Handhelds that sold well here are the Gameboy (& colour), which still sells today, and the Sega Game Gear. Although I don't remember who sold these here. Other Handhelds may have been sold here, but are not common.

RT: Were games or systems delayed in arriving in NZ?

NZ: We were always behind to some degree in getting the latest systems, but it wasn't more than 6 months, and was probably due to the slow shipping of the goods to NZ.

RT: Do your friends still have their old video game or computer systems? Have they expanded to more or moved on to just the newer ones? What are the most popular systems today?

NZ: Most of my friends oldest consoles are the Playstation, and they just laugh at my Atari/Sega stuff when they come around for a Network game of Counterstrike on our PC's. Heh, when I got my Jag, they saw it and said, hey cool looking system, what games it got, then, after seeing the games, it wasn't mentioned again... ;-) Even tempest 2000 couldn't win any fans. A underdeveloped system that is for sure. Playstation is the most popular at the moment, although Dreamcast is gaining in popularity all the time. N64 seemed to flop a bit here. Although there are heaps of systems to be had if you are into that kind of thing. (\$20US for a N64 console @ CC now). PS2 is out and is selling pretty well, but I've yet to see any games that make it a 'must' have, so I don't know how that is going to go.

RT: So do you collect/like the newer/64 bit systems, and/or play current arcade games today?

NZ: I like the Sega Saturn, and the Atari Jag, but they are the newest systems I play games on apart from the PC. I will be getting a Deamcast as soon as the price comes down a bit more, but my collecting of these systems is just a few 'good' games, unlike the desire to 'get most of the games released' like I am for some older systems. I haven't played any true arcade games for a couple of years now, mainly because the arcades are the hangouts for kids half my age, and I don't really feel like hanging out there much now. I think Street Fighter 2 Turbo was the last I played. I do play the occasional shoot 'em up on MAME though... Nothing beats mindless destruction! :-)

RT: Did early videogame magazines Atari, Sega and Nintendo catch on very well?

NZ: I don't know of any NZ mags that dealt primarily with the early Console scene. But Nintendo and Sega had many dedicated mags, mainly coming from the UK though. (I am trying hard to locate the early Sega mags as we speak, not having a lot of luck...)

RT: How about today? Sega, NES, Sony and other magazines are popular right?

NZ: Yep, Playstation mags rule the magazine racks, alongside the PC mags. And one or two Nintendo mags too. Sega is probably in the multi format mags. But I'm not a big fan of the recent games, thus rarely look at them now. I get my 3D gaming fix on my PC, and the rest of my time is on classics! :-)

RT: Thanks again Aaron, this is really good stuff, that I'm sure others are eating up. Come back next month for part 3, where we focus more on classic home computer systems in New Zealand.

(Aaron Wheeler, who has amassed 280+ Atari 2600 carts after several years of collecting, and 190 SMS boxed carts in only 6 months can be reached at: atari@paradise.net.nz and check out his home page "Holmes Atari 8bit Games" @ <http://homepages.paradise.net.nz/atari/> . Alan Hewston can be reached at hewston95@stratos.net).

Commodore 64 - The Music

by [Matthew Allen](#)

The Commodore 64. Ask people for one distinguishing feature about the machine, and a lot of the time you will get a reply back about the quality of the music. It is something that always seemed to be more important over in Europe, for most of the American composed music in games was frankly poor in comparison. It is also the one aspect of the machine that just refuses to die, and is mainly due to the quality of the SID chip (Sound Interface Device) within. Today's composers have it easier, with CD quality music you can just slap on the disc to be played. Composers some 15 years ago had to use more of their talent to create genuinely catchy music with great melodies and realistic sounding instruments.

And then there's the sampling aspect. Anyone remember the dance track "Zombie Nation" that was in the charts last year? It was based on a sample from the C64 game "Lazy Jones". Taken without permission at the time so it was later found out. Surprised by this? Don't be. SID remixes are growing in popularity and may soon enter the mainstream listening. There are a few radio stations already, mainly in Scandinavia, who play both the original SID and remix music over the airwaves. There are already a number of remix and original CDs available for purchase over the internet, produced either by music enthusiasts or in some cases, by the original composers themselves.

The most well known of the remix collections are the "Back in Time" CDs, partially composed and constructed by Chris Abbott who runs the C64 Audio website (<http://www.c64audio.com>).

The TI 99/4A "Magazines"

by [Jim Krych](#)

The TI 99/4A community has had it's share of printed publications. From the TI-released newsletters in it's early years, to Micropendium of the later years, magazines have filled a very important niche to this computer family.

There have been more than several, and we are not even mentioning the various TI User Group newsletters! With a couple that showed up for a year or so, then folded. These are Enthusiast99 and Craig Miller's Smart Programmer, and a few others that escape my mind. I am certain that Mike Wright will remind me of which ones I have missed!!!

By the way, greetings to the Tex Comp Ltd. boys out of Covina California. It was great meeting you guys for the first time. You guys are huge, reminded me of my semi-pro football days and being THE smallest defensive lineman on the team! Best to you in all things!

Two magazines, however, stand out. One started out with great promises, and ended up being a textbook case for yet another example of the Community getting screwed. And the other, started small, got bigger, then slowly exited the scene, but not until after many years of faithful service.

Let's talk about the first example mentioned. That being 99er Magazine. I remember 99er magazine, way back when I was in the 8th grade back at Chestnut School in the year I bought my TI 99/4A. I had contact with several of their programs that they had released, like Knights Tour and such. I do remember seeing the magazine in the shelves back then too.

Given the fact that not much information was available for the TI user, 99er did stand out. Especially in the assembly language field, P-code, and other 9900 based systems. And, it's neat to see how many vendors there got to be, from a small number, to a more varied amount. I didn't really get into 99er until my Coast Guard days when I bought a whole mess of them from someone, I still have those magazines, and the Best of 99er too.

However, this one magazine has left such a bad taste in the mouth of many a user that we need to go into that a little bit more.

It was the October (actually November) issue, and all seemed to be going well. Then, IT happened. TI dropped out of the personal computer market. Black Friday. December's Issue never showed up.

What did show up, in January of 1984, was the Home Computer Magazine, featuring Atari, Apple, Commodore, IBM, and TI. Obviously, no longer TI-specific. So the money that one had sent to them, for a TI specific magazine, was not on what you had wanted.

Granted, you did have programs from one system translated for the TI, but it's not the same. There is only so much space you can devote to the system, when you have 4 or so others to compete for publishing space. It wasn't too much longer when the total failure came about-Home Computer Journal. Your money sent in was wasted! Year-long subscriptions became meaningless.

In retrospect, had 99er just stayed TI specific, they could have stayed on several more years. Certain compromises would have had to been made, especially no color print and photos, but it could have been done. Unfortunately, the magazine, and it's editor, became a byword for an all too common event in the TI 99/4A community.

The other magazine is one that I much more familiar with, that being Micropendium. They started out small, but did very well for a very long time. I USED to have a large collection of them, from all they way to the beginning, to the near end. But, one of my buddies who I lent them too, the older issues, lost them in a move! I do have some left, somewhere, in my house.

Micropendium was typically known for it's technical articles, but it also was able to get Regina to write the BASIC articles for it. Bruce Harrison did an excellent job of Assembly Language work, as did others with the Forth language, and c99. Given the circumstances of the later TI market, 1990's, Micropendium did a fantastic job. I remember with excitement the review of the AMS Bruce did, and of the SuperAMS review too.

Information was pretty good, and you could always find out about the latest vaporware, I mean project, I mean soon-to-be completed, I mean just in a few weeks, stuff, that had become all too typical. Going through the back issues gives you a good insight to the mentality of the community, and what it has been through.

From the rumors of the 9964, to the Triton TI to XT, to the Myarc "console", to the Geneve wirewrap prototype, to the Geneve 9640. And, let's not forget the peripherals either! The HFDC, Cor Comps clock card, the AMS/SuperAMS, the PFM+ card! To mention just a few! And the software reviews, often the programmers being mere teens. And, you got to find out about how the TI Fairs went. Overall, it was like a "State of the Community" magazine!

Alas, every good thing must come to an end. With no vendors buying advertising, Micropendium got smaller, going from the usual size it was, to a smaller and less pages publishing. And, with a dwindling user base, and many of the users being on fixed income, increases in subscription were out of the question. Micropendium finally stopped publishing.

But it had been around a very long time, and had been a long time linchpin of the community. You can get the back issues in PDF format too, on the WHT's site. A lot of people got started with Micropendium, I still remember the first announcement by Mike Wright of the PC99 emulator project, and of the MDOS buyout.

What else is there then? Not much. But not that this is a shameless plus for Retrogaming Times, a TI magazine could be reborn in HTML format! And, an online magazine born. It can be done. There is a TI newsgroup, but obviously, not all Tiers are on the 'Net. But many libraries have Internet terminals, and an online TI magazine could be accessed by anyone then. And, you could be as long, or short, as needed!

It's almost the CCAG!!! Can't wait! So much to see and do this year, and boy have we gotten tons of exposure for our show, and so many more tables used this year! Plus, I have a new product that will be shown there too. It's not cheap, and it's for the

retrogaming/pc gaming crowd, but it's built like a tank and ready for serious gaming!

Like when Tom gets Retrogaming Times ready, this article was written while listening to a CD. However, I was listening to "Chant" The Benedictine Monks of Santo Domingo De Silos. It's more relaxing actually, since it's all in Latin, and I can't understand the lyrics. However, why can't I get out of my head a serious need to watch Monty Python's Quest for the Holy Grail????????!!!

See ya at the CCAG!

"Hi, my name is Jim W. Krych. I am a 31 year old technician, with an Electronics Diploma and a soon-to-be finished Computer Programming and Operations Diploma. I am currently employed at the finest maker of electrometers/nanovoltmeters/etc., and my particular product line that I work on is the Source Measure Unit(SMU) models 236,237, and 238. I have a 22 month old son, his name is Treyton. I enjoy retrogaming and things that go with that. :) My email address: jwkrych@n2net.net).

I have formed my own business! All other projects prior to this were carried by other companies, so this time it's all in my hands, with a lot of prayer and help from others! The company's name is Treyonics, in honor of my son!!! Our flagship product is the Treyonics Home Controller System, Model 9908, better known as the.....Devastator

"Serious Gaming!"

Extra Junk

By [Fred Wagaman](#)

If you've been collecting for any length of time, you've probably got extra stuff. The average video game packrat has more copies of Frogger, Pac Man and Combat than you can shake a joystick at.

How many times have you gone to that garage sale or flea market and have been forced to buy the entire Atari 2600 set (complete with the enclosed, woodgrain case) just to get the 1 cart you don't have ?

Once, I shelled out \$25 at a Goodwill to get one of these setups with about 20 games. The only game I needed out of it was "Boing!".

So what do you do with this stuff ?

Unless you have the ambition and time to setup and properly run an internet website (Hello Tom) or are willing to take what ebay gives you for some of the more common stuff, you end up storing it in boxes in the basement, attic or backroom.

Aside from carts, how many of you have more extra machines than you'll ever (and I mean ever) use ? Do you think 6 Atari 2600s are enough to last you until sun burns out ?

Again I ask, what do you do with this extra stuff ?

Don't throw it away !! (This fulfills my public service requirement for this month from a previous, video game related infraction)

Give it away.

That's right. Make a new collector. Reintroduce someone to a favorite memory from their youth. Who knows how this might benefit you later. (Hey, I found this crappy game called "Chase the Chuckwagon". Do you want it?)

If you don't give it to a friend or co-worker, how about a local shelter ?

Can't bring yourself to part with those bad-label Activision games for free ? OK. How about trading the stuff away ? But not for other game stuff. Everyone has extra junk that you might want in their attic or basement. "How about an Atari for that old Electronic Football game ?" I'm in the middle of an Atari 2600 and games for Transformers trade right now.

Whatever you do, stop being so selfish and hoarding all of those extra, common, never-to-be-played carts and machines you have laying around and start sharing the wealth with those around you.

(Fred has been playing games for over 25 years and actively collecting them for over 10. The 2500 + different 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 22 month old, 4th player, Lynzie. He has nothing clever to say at this time since the deadline for this issue of RT is rapidly approaching. He can be reached at fcw3@postoffice.ptd.net)

The Many Faces of . . . Asteroids

By [Alan Hewston](#)

"Asteroids all around me don't know where to run, I'm somewhere between the Moon and the Sun, I'm in command of three ships and there's more on the way, I'm a Space Cadet and I know how to play, Hyperspace! . . . I'm shooting my rockets all over then place" - from the Pac-Man Fever Album, where Buckner and Garcia got it right. "Just shoot baby" - IMHO Asteroids is the ultimate shooter - you can move about and fire towards any place on the screen; your enemies fill the screen and come at you from every direction, in various sizes, shapes and speeds; some are dumb, but others can be smart. Then throw in an escape clause too - yep, just "Hyperspace" outta that spot and try a new one. Loads of action but yet simplicity. I read that this was the first arcade game that promoted a high score listing, where you entered your initials - surely giving it even more attention and crowds back in the day.

This game was copied and home-brewed or pirated and cloned onto every system under the Sun, but only officially released on a few ports. But mostly on the 2600 where it sold millions of carts and really convinced Atari to dump lots of effort into the 2600 and keep it going. The 7800 version was possibly planned as 3-D Asteroids, but was released as Asteroids.



4 player mode on the Atari 800 is awesome - I'll set it up at CCAG2K1

Arcade Game Designed in 1979 by Atari : Lyle Rains and Ed Logg

Classic Platforms: Atari 2600 (Brad Stewart), 8 bit (Todd Frye), 7800 (?) & Apple II (?)

Categories: Gameplay, Addictiveness, Graphics, Sound & Controls

Sequels: Asteroids Deluxe 1980 by Atari: Dave Shepperd and Lyle Rains; 1987 Blasteroids

Disqualified: Apple II (N/A)

Like many of you, I do not own an Apple II or any disk-only systems - which is the only reason for this disqualification. I've seen the box for the Atarisoft in adds, and an Apple II Asteroids screen shot, but have not verified that combined there was an official release. From the screen shot, it appears to be a pretty good version and having played other vector style games on the Apple II, I know that despite being monochrome, the Graphics would still fetch a 9+. After all, the arcade version was in B&W. My guess is that a Bronze medal would have been earned by the Apple II.

Bronze Medal: Atari 2600 (37)

This port sold like wildfire and I'm sure that you've seen dozens of them. The Controls are perfect (10), and never let you down. The Gameplay is nice (8), loaded with 66 game selections, 2 children's version, and then 64 combinations of these options (1 or 2 players; choice of Hyperspace, Shields, Flip Over and nothing; bonus lives at every 5K, 10K, 20K, or none; fast or slow Asteroids). Then include the A/B difficulty switch on/off to add UFO's - making a total of about 165 different game combinations. Whew! That can keep you coming back for more, or just puke. It would be nice to have a pause or a 2 player simultaneous game, but this is the 2600. The Graphics are a bit clunky, only 3 sizes of Asteroids but decent (6) enough to not take away from the Gameplay. Well, then you only get 2 shots to fire, but the screen can still fill up with quite a lot of colored asteroid debris, more than enough to satisfy the pallet. The Sound and background effects are decent (6), but monotonous. The Addictiveness gets a cool (7), as you will enjoy this game, but not

the boring game #1.

Silver Medal: Atari 8 bit (43)

A very impressive game, but could have been programmed a bit better. The Graphics are pretty good (7) but get hit the hardest here, due to inconsistent sprite collision detection. Sometimes you get right on top of an Asteroid, and do not collide, whereas other times its not even close to you and you get wasted. The asteroids are all white, save for their blackness when overlapping - which unfortunately can lead to a temporary invisible "black" asteroid when 2 are identical and/or overlapped. The UFO's and Satellites are yellow, and each of the 1 to 4 player's ships is a different color, matching their score - adding some nice use of color and ease of play to the home computer version. The Controls are flawless (10). The Gameplay is excellent (10) and gives us all the options we really need: pause; 2 to 4 player simultaneous action, and 3 players and 4 player teams; starting skills of Novice, Intermediate, Advanced and Expert; Hyperspace options on or shields, flip over or none (the default); Patrols are: standard patrol, melee, combat, teams and co-op. Using the 4-port Atari 800 really rocks as you can play 4 players with sticks simultaneously. Yeah Baby! The Sound is crisp (8), with all the effects that are needed, but nothing special. The Addictiveness is very enjoyable (8), (a 10 for a 4 player game) but you might prefer the gold medal winner more. This 8 bit version came in both cart and disk format.

Gold Medal: Atari 7800 (46)

This port is clearly the best and earns the highest overall score I've given out for any game to date - what an entrance for the 7800 - the system that Atari committed suicide on. The Controls are perfect (10) for me, but I suggest using 2600 sticks, which is all you need. The control response to accelerating is very quick compared with the other ports, but it can be mastered. There are no glitches to the outstanding (9) Gameplay, but there are fewer options here than the 8 bit. There are no 3 or 4 player options, and Hyperspace is always active (ie no flip over, shields or none). These are really minor options though as most of us play solo or 2 players at best. The Gameplay allows an infinite number of shots to be fired, unlike being limited to 2 or 4 rounds in the other versions. The Sound is superb (9), with even more effects that are pleasing to the ear. The Graphics are fantastic (9), with 3-D rotating Asteroids, background stars and a full-screen play field, with action right over top of the scores. The debris breaking up varies a lot in direction and speed, making the game less predictable, and fresh. The Addictiveness is also earns top billing (9) as this is a game that will really entertain you for a long time. Quick find a partner and play combat Asteroids.

(Come back next month when I have more time to do a huge review of the many faces of Popeye for the Atari 2600, 5200, 8-bit, Colecovision, Commodore 64, Intellivision and Odyssey 2. I may even report on 4 player Asteroids at the CCAG if I get it working. Alan Hewston, who really needs a 5200 Masterplay Interface, can be reached at Hewston95@stratos.net).

Even More Shows!

Just when you thought you have heard of all the video game shows, we have a few more

for you! What a great time to be a classic game fan!

If you remember back in the Letters to the Editor, I asked for any information about overseas shows. Well, ask and ye shall receive! I receive two emails about a show in England called the Eurocon 2001 (thanks to both The Game Peddler and Jon Legg, the show organizer for the heads up). It is going to take place on October 26th-28th. If you are in the area or ever thought about a trip abroad (a tip - honey, if you let me go to the show, then we can go to romantic Paris). For more information on this show, go to the following URL: <http://www.geocities.com/eurocon2001/>.

The next show is a more specialized one. It is a TI 99/4A convention in Evanston, Illinois in November. The highlight of this show is Zaxxon for the TI 99/4A is being unveiled and all attendees will be given a free disk with the game on it! If you are a TI fan, then this is a wonderful opportunity to play a new game on your system. There also will be some prototypes on display. Here is the email address for Bryan Roppolo, who is putting on the show; brop99@hotmail.com. Email for more details.

Online Newsletters, Keeping the Classics Alive!

People are always asking me for more newsletters with more coverage, but I am just one man and even with the great writing staff that we have assembled, there is only so much we can write. But you are still wanting to read more classic game news and reviews on the net and wish there were more classic video game newsletters. Your wish is my command! Here is a list of some of the video game newsletters that are also available on the internet for you to read and enjoy! Please give them all a look and let them know that we appreciate their efforts!

Bally Alley-There is a big fan base for the Bally Astrocade and this is the only newsletter out there that is devoted to the Astrocade! While there is only one issue done, maybe with enough emails, we can get more issues! Bally fans unite! You can find it at the following URL: <http://www.classicgaming.com/ballyalley/>

Cyber Roach-A very nice newsletter that features a ton of pictures, I mean a ton! Each issue is fairly large and quite enjoyable, with most issues devoted to a show or meeting that they attended. It is one of the best coverage's of the Classic Gaming Expo! But there are two problems with the newsletter. First, it comes out very infrequently. It seems to average about three issues a year. Secondly, they do not keep all the back issues up on the site. But what they do offer is very good and deserve to be read. I look forward to their coverage of the upcoming CGE. Here is the URL : <http://www.cyberroach.com/cyromag/eleven/default.htm>

That is all I was able to find. There were some other sites that did newsletters, but they are either gone or under construction. If you know of any other sites, please let me know as I would like to give them the spotlight.

Letters to the Editor

You write the emails and I do my best to answer them! Keep them coming and I will keep picking some for this section.

And I just bought a 2600 game called "Meteor Defense", quite unknown I think ...? It's from ITT FAMILY GAMES, and has the number 554-33391 written on it. I am interested in know more about this game, where it came from, etc... Any help would be appreciated? Signed a French Collector

While I am unfamiliar with the game, I am sure that some of my readers will know more. If you know anything about this game, please email me and I will send the information along. Thanks!

What is the best classic system for a new collector to get? I didn't have any as a kid, so I have no personal preferences. Thanks! Signed New Classic Collector

Warning! Warning! Classic Game collecting is habit forming! You may start with one system, but soon you will collect them all! Then comes computers, handhelds and more! You have been warned.

As far as the best system to collect for a beginner, I would suggest the Atari 2600. It has the most games, the most arcade hits and with a ton of different joysticks available, you should be able to find one that fits you. Plus, it is the easiest system to find and to replace, in case of a problem. Many of the best games are dirt cheap and almost all genres are covered!

I have some broken game systems, but I do not want to just throw them out. do you know anyone who fixes broken game systems? signed Broke Down Gamer

I know you can get repair kits for most Atari systems and accessories at Best Electronics, you still have to do the repairs yourself. As far as a person who fixes them, I do not know anyone who does it for a fee. Is there a doctor in the house? If so, email us and be prepared to get deluged with business! I get dozens of letters a month about this. Anyone?

Conclusion

With all the contributors, it made my job easy! But I am hoping to get a new classic game story started next month. I have had quite a few requests for another one (have not done one in a long time). If you have any requests, let me know. Hope to see you at the CCAG and keep me informed of any upcoming shows and meetings. We are always looking to spread the word!

[-Tom Zjaba](#)

This month's issue was done while listening to a handful of 80's songs like "If I Had a Rocket Launcher" by Bruce Cockburn (who went on to write the theme to Franklin, the Nickelodeon show), "My Kind of Lover" by Billy Squier and "Wicked Game" by Chris Isaak.