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Press Fire to Start

by Adam King

Welcome back to Retrogaming Times Monthly, and have we got an issue for you this month. In this edition we have articles going from one end of the spectrum to the other (and not just the Sinclair Spectrum). We have a review of a new retrogaming compilation, we take a look at James Bond games, we go bust some ghosts, take a look at a fighting game for the Colecovision, go for a ride in an Afterburner jet, and much much more, including looking at a videogame magazine featuring some familair superheroes. So hit that F1 key on your Commodore keyboard and let's get things started.

Retro Collection Review: Capcom Classics Collection

by Adam King

Once again several companies are releasing game discs featuring the classic games of yesteryear, and this time it's not just Midway or Namco reliving the memories. Another prominent arcade game company, Capcom, has also decided to dip back in time and bring us some retrogaming goodness. For many years it seemed that Capcom fans wouldn't get to enjoy their favorites again on their new systems (unless you count the Import-only Capcom Generations series on the PlayStation and Saturn). Finally Capcom devotees in North America get a collection of the games they remember popping quarters into, and a few others as well. This review covers the PlayStation 2 version, but it's also available on the XBox.

This collection features 22 games which are a mix of arcade classics and some obscure titles. There's 1942, 1943, 1943Kai, Bionic Commando, Commando, Exed Exes, Final Fight, Forgotten Worlds, Ghosts 'N Goblins, Ghouls 'N Ghosts, Gun.Smoke, Legendary Wings, Mercs, Pirate Ship Higemaru, Section Z, Son Son, Trojan, and Vulges. You also get all three versions of the fighting classic Street Fighter II: The original World Warrior, The Champion Edition, and Turbo Hyper Fighting. To round out the package, Capcom also included the Super Nintendo hit Super Ghouls 'N Ghosts.

The overall presentation is laid out like a artist's sketchbook. You get a list of all the games featured, and each game has a small gameplay video that serves as a preview. Just select the game and you're off. Each game only takes a few second to load up. You can also set different options for each game, such as difficulty, scores to get extra lives, and whether of not you want continues. You can also choose to play a "Hardcore" version of the game, which usually means the highest difficulty on 1 life. Another cool feature is some games have the option to use a remixed version of the soundtrack instead of the original tunes.

Naturally a compilation disc has to feature a good amount of bonus material, and Capcom Classics Collection doesn't disapoint. Each title features gameplay tips, original artwork, and even a jukebox to listen to the remixed music. However you can't access these special features right out of the box. You have to unlock them by playing the games and meeting specific requirements. Most of the goals are simply to reach a certain score, though some have you accomplishing certain tasks, like using all three characters in Final Fight, or getting turned into a frog by the magician in Ghosts 'N Goblins.

Most of the games on this disc are arcade-perfect, thanks to the masters of emulation, Digital Eclipse. The graphics and sounds match up just about 100%, except is some spots, but you probably won't notice them. Some of the games like Commando and 1942 originally used a vertically-oriented monitor. Capcom Classics Collection recreates the display on the television screen, which is centered in the screen but a little small. You can also use the "enhanced" viewing option that shuffles the score information off to the side, giving you a larger view of the action.

Before I go on, I should point out that those of you expecting emulated versions of the Street Fighter games may be a little disappointed. Instead of using the actual arcade programming, Capcom decided to lift the games straight from their Streer Fighter Collection 2 disc on the PlayStation. Some of the graphics and sounds aren't quite right, and you have to put up with load times frequently as well. You even have the same options from the PSX disc; you can disable the round timer, play in versus mode, play in a standard training mode, and even play two-player games in "Street Fighter deluxe" mode, where you can choose from the characters in all three versions, letting you pit World Warrior Ken against Hyper Fighting Ken, for example.

As far as gameplay controls go, you should have no problems with the PS2 controller. The controller is pretty responsive. While the analog stick works just fine, you'll probably get better control if you use the D-pad. The only exception to this rule is Forgotten Worlds. If you remember the original arcade machine had a joystick you can twist to change your firing direction. Here you have to use two of the buttons on the gamepad to rotate your man. It takes a while to get used to. You can laso use the right analog stick to instantly whip your man from one direction to the other. Overall the controls are great.

Another important feature on all retrogaming collections is the ability save High Scores once the game is over. Once you record your initials/name, the disc immediately cues up the Auto Save to record your accomplishment; you don't have to worry about exiting the game to save. Also you get three different score tables in each title, each for the Normal, Custom and Hardcore settings, so the playing field is even. Many of the egames do offer unlimited continues, but your score resets back to 0 if you continue, so if you're going for high scores you have to end your game to record your initials.

Looking at the game selection itself, gamers should be pleased as most of the games are still just as fun and addicting as they were in the arcades. There are a few less than stellar titles, like Boinic Commando, Trojan, Vulges, and Son Son, but the rest of the lineup more than makes up the difference. Of course ther are other Capcom titles that should have been included on this bundle, such as Strider, U.N. squadron and Saturday Night Slam Masters. Also if Capcom was including console titles, then why didn't they use the NES version of Bionic Commando, which is SO MUCH better than the arcade game?

The bottom line is Capcom Classics Collection is an excellet classicgaming compilation. The games have been wonderfully preserved and the extras are good as well. The fact that you have to work to unlock the bonuses is a nice touch as well. The collection is brought down a little by the Street Fighter games not being perfect eumlations, but you can probably overlook that. Also some titles should have been included, but that's what Volume 2 is for. Finally you can't go wrong with the cheap \$20 price tag, it's like getting each game on the disc for less than \$1 each. Overall this disc is highly recommended for all old-school fans.

ColecoNation

by [Nathan Kozlowski](#)

Welcome to another edition of ColecoNation. This time around we'll be reviewing the Opcode game, Yie Ar Kung-Fu. You can check out the full version of ColecoNation #5, including the conclusion of the Eduardo Mello interview, available on 11.04.05 at <http://www.coleconation.com/>.

Yie Ar Kung-Fu or YAK-Fu, as the kids are calling it, made its debut in the arcades in 1985 by the good folks at Konami. It was translated to the MSX and Famicom in the same year and versions were also released for the Commodore 64 and Sinclair Spectrum. In March 2005, Opcode Games and Eduardo Mello brought the fighting game to the ColecoVision audience and gave its loyal fans an added gift, the two-player versus mode. The ColecoVision version is based on the MSX engine, but features Famicom graphics.

The story's set in feudal China and the Chop Suey Triad Gang is stirring up some kind of trouble. It's up to you, Lee the Kung-Fu Master, to head on over to the Bamboo Shoot Pagoda and talk some decency into the punks. The bad news is that the gang is slow to learn and doesn't like the small talk. The good news is that they just need someone to beat some sense in to them and that lucky duck is you.

If you're ever gotten tired of fighting the bad guys in a cramped and confined spaceship, and wished



you could take a more hands-on approach with your heroics, then Yie Ar Kung-Fu is the game for you. With this fine arcade translation, you get to roll up the sleeves and get a little dirty while talking on your opponents. The game consists of five stages, with a different fighter at each stage. Two bonus stages, which are located after stages two and five, enable the player to increase their total score but are probably the most difficult (and aggravating) part of the game. Each fighter has unique skills and requires the player to utilize different strategies to defeat them. Naturally, the fighters become progressively more difficult as you advance to the final stage against Wily Wu.

The level of detail that went in to the design of each character's appearance and fighting traits is what makes this a truly brilliant game for the ColecoVision. Fighting games get their popularity from the personality and uniqueness of their characters. The level of control that the player is given over his/her character is something that is hard to mimic in your average shooter or maze game. Through trial and error, the player has to learn the strengths and weaknesses of not only his/her fighter, but each and every opponent that is faced. Strategies need to be devised, because you can rarely succeed by charging ahead with arms a-swinging. This is all experienced while playing Yie Ar Kung-Fu.

However, as with sporting games, fighting games seem to lack an "open-endedness" that other genres possess. Once you've mastered your abilities and the characteristics of each of your opponents, then the game's challenge and excitement is dulled. This can be seen in Yie Ar Kung-Fu, but that crafty Eduardo Mello has found a way around this. As you become tired of beating on the hapless computer, you can turn your attention to a human opponent with the two-player mode (a feature unique to the ColecoVision version). One player controls Lee while the second player takes command of one of the five villains.

The diversity of movement and attacks possible in Yie Ar Kung-Fu is something once thought impossible with a standard controller. This flexibility adds a lot to the gameplay and makes for a very enjoyable gaming experience. One improvement with the controls, though, would have been to enable jumps through the use of a button over the movement of the joystick. A movement is assigned to all directions of the controller and this sometimes makes it difficult to accurately and quickly control your fighter. The Super Action Controller would have been perfect for this game and it may have been worth the trouble to program for its use. However, by assigning action to only one button (punch), Eduardo has enabled gamers to use a larger range of controller types to play his game.



The design of the packaging and manual continues to evolve and improve with every Opcode game. Jess Ragan's creative descriptions and text continue to entertain and pay homage to the instruction booklets of the eighties. Dale Crum's imagery has taken on a life of its own and it's nice to see original artwork for the ColecoVision version, as opposed to using graphics from previous translations or the arcade. Yie Ar Kung-Fu fills a much needed whole in the ColecoVision library. If you enjoy kicking the snot out of no-good punks, then leave your little brother alone and go pick this game up. You won't be disappointed.

Need help sticking it to the Chop Suey Triad Gang? Want to find out what's been hiding in the game's code, waiting to be found? Then check out ColecoNation #5 at <http://www.coleconation.com/> for all the Yie Ar Kung-Fu tips and tricks that you can shake a stick at.

***The Many Faces of . . . James Bond: 007***

***by Alan Hewston***

Way back when, I figured that I'd review this title when a Bond movie was coming to theatres (Casino Royale slated for 2006), but since we covered "Moon Patrol", last month, as "007" is so similar - often called a poor clone - here goes nothing James. The gameplay is similar as both are vertically scrolling dual-directional shooters with obstacles to jump or shoot, and a variety of enemies. But, there are two significant differences in these games. First, there was not an arcade game for James Bond:007 - although you will find internet sites to the contrary, but they mistook this for . . . you guessed it, Moon Patrol (Check [klov.com](http://klov.com) and you'll agree). The second difference of course is that this month's game is based upon a well known licensed property, and so the gameplay, action and characters should, and do resemble the movies. 1962 Danjaq & 1984 Eon Productions + Glidrose publications, based upon the Ian Fleming novels. Too bad there was never a Chitty Chitty Bang Bang video game - with yet another fantastic car!

So, you are 007 - James Bond, given various missions to fulfill, as documented in great detail in the Parker Brothers instruction manuals. Double Oh Seven Thumbs Up - for the standout cart labels, great advertising, well executed and detailed movie tie-ins, solid, colorful packaging, a 00 rating system at the end of the game, cool PB cart shapes, and the already mentioned detailed manuals. Every secret agent's friend Q, equips you with a multi-purpose craft that can submerge in water and travel by land sea and even jump into the air. Of course, we know that you'll crash and burn them, so



several vehicles have been manufactured for your use. But dear old boy, do try to save them as you'll be rewarded after your mission - with a greater bonus score - assuming you even complete these 4 very difficult missions James. These missions are phases in the game that cover four Bond movies in this order, "Diamonds Are Forever", "The Spy Who Loved Me", "Moonraker", and "For Your Eyes Only". The action is pretty good, not as intense as the movies, but completing even the first mission is difficult chore. Actually, I think the first mission (ending) is probably the most difficult part of the entire game. Nope . . . James never visually gets the girl in these games, but he is congratulated. Despite the difficulty of your mission, I think the licensing factor, with appropriate storyline, gameplay and enemies, compels me to play this game more than the average game. Then factor in that there is an actual ending that you can try to reach compels you all the more. Then if you're that good, you can then try it all over again with the difficulty set to expert.

**Arcade:** None **Home versions** - unless noted, all released in 1984 and packaged quite nicely by Parker Brothers:

- Atari 2600 (Joe Gaucher)
- C64
- Atari 8 bit
- Atari 5200
- Colecovision (all unknown programmers)
- Othello Multivision (rare Japanese console) [1984 Tsukuda Original - 2 difficulty levels]

Many screenshots for Parker Brothers James Bond:007 can be found at:

[http://www.mobygames.com/game/james-bond-](http://www.mobygames.com/game/james-bond-007_/screenshots)

007\_/screenshots. Missing is the Atari 8 bit cart version,

which is OK for the screenshots as they are the same as the 5200, but the manual and packaging are different.



Did I mention the manuals can be found online - way to go Parker Brothers!

**Home Version Similarities:** Except those in <> all home versions have: the choice of difficulty "Novice" or "Agent" (with more frequent or numerous enemies having more firepower); a pause <CV>; an introduction and break between lives and movie segments, that tells what movie is next <2600>; and a text message <2600> tells you "good luck Mr. Bond"; followed by an accolade if you complete a mission, "Good show, Mr. Bond", a farewell when your game ends "Goodbye Mr. Bond", regardless if you complete all missions; overall there are a large variety of background graphics, scenery, enemies, missions, obstacles, enemy missile & bomb types and final challenges; the later missions have more challenging combinations of enemies, terrain & obstacles; you have great maneuverability moving left and right on the screen from the far left to the middle of the screen, and you can move L/R even while you are engaged in diving under or jumping over enemies and obstacles; moving left is slower - actually you do not move left, but the vehicle stops relative to the scroll; the scrolling by the way is always at the same speed; when jumping or diving you can move vertically by one of two fixed amounts - if you hold the stick you get the full movement U/D, but if you just tap it once, you move about 70% of your capacity - this is critical to know as you'll need to jump up the full amount onto the platform to complete mission 1; timing is everything in making your jumps, and fortunately, since you can always move L/R while moving vertically and either jump or dive immediately after landing, you'll never be forced into some long pattern or be trapped unable to compensate as in Moon Patrol; after reaching the extreme vertical in your jump/dive, buoyancy or gravity return you to the same neutral position on the water or land surface; your vehicle physically transforms as it goes from land to sea; some missions (stages) are broken into segments with both land and sea, and if you are far enough along into the second segment when you lose a vehicle, you restart after that transition point, or even better, near to a major obstacle, such as an oil rig; but otherwise a loss of a vehicle usually restarts you back at the beginning of that long mission; be watchful of possible "double-deaths" as you may start right in front of an oil rig; unfortunately there is no practice mode, or choice to start at a given mission, nor a chance to continue the next game at the same mission most recently completed (as in Moon Patrol); the obstacles include the natural craters, craters formed by enemy bombs <2600>, mountainous terrain, oil tankers and most importantly on the final mission, the ocean floor; enemies and hazards include the laser blast from overhead indestructible satellites, frogmen and their bullets or mechanical frogmen which explode, ocean floor missiles, mushroom mines, indestructible helicopters and their bullets, space shuttles, mini subs and their mines (2600 or bullets) and even a giant jelly fish (CV), or is that an octopus that came from "Octopussy"; you can eliminate most enemies with your weapons, which alternate with each press of the fire button - a laser blast fired at a fixed angle upwards (about 45 deg) and your lobbing flare bombs; your lasers will also work underwater, but are most critical for hitting the poison satellites and exploding diamonds to light up the night sky - and earn you more points so shoot them all; your flare bomb will also light up the water in places that you'd otherwise miss seeing a frogman; you score points for enemies and diamonds but not for obstacles passed; the diamonds slowly move across the sky, moving upwards <CV & 2600> and eventually off the screen; you score bonus points for completing a mission and after completing the final mission you earn huge bonus points for every extra craft <2600>; no extra lives/crafts can be

earned; You can avoid most air born weapons by diving down into the water; You hear the James Bond theme song before every mission and life, and then at the end of the game; there are sound effects for shots fired, bombs dropped, explosions and collisions, launching missiles or space shuttles, helicopters <2600>; there's some effects <CV & 2600> when the final score is totaled to determine your OO rating. Overall, most versions are basically the same with few deviations shown above. A couple minor bad points shared by all - no sound effects are heard when the satellite is present, or when you jump, and most importantly, nothing to celebrate the end of a mission.

### Have Nots: Atari 2600 (39)

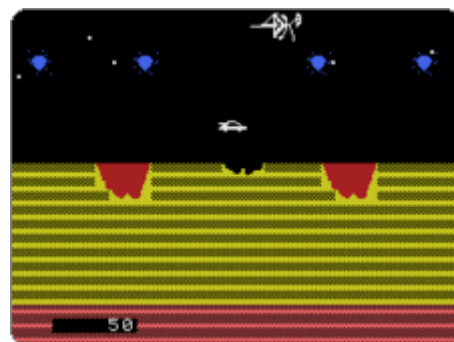
My first reaction is there are only 3 missions but they've merged the 4 movies into 3 and captured as many elements of the other versions as possible. Maybe more RAM would accommodate everything. A decent trade-off, and a really detailed 2600 game. The Gameplay is really good (7) despite only having 3 missions - in this order, Diamonds, Moonraker and then the Spy Who Loved Me. The basic gameplay is still clearly there, only watered down - for the most part by having only one of everything. There's only 1 helicopter, 1 satellite, 1 bomb at a time between them, 1 Frogman, 1 explosion (including the bombs and Frogman), 1 crater, 1 diamond. The helicopter and diamonds share the same slot in the sky so they alternate with only one displayed at a time. Despite these limitations, more gameplay ingredients have been added to make up for what the 2600 lacks in graphical ability. The helicopter flies at a slower pace most of the time, but can instantly speed up and catch you off guard then fire. The helicopter and satellite, and their combined extreme randomness (compared to the other versions) will really keep you off guard. The timing of their shot/bomb and the wide range of shot angles they can come at may startle you. Still, there are no additional craters formed, and only one obstacle at a time. Instead of some set length or duration of play, it appears that once you hit 5 or 6 diamonds and then clear the crater you move on to the sea. In the sea, despite only one explosion, that one is neigh impossible to dive under. Then, the Frogman's radioactive splash is so persistent that it may not go away until it clears the screen. The leap onto the platform is really tedious and good thing this is on the first level (on all versions) and not the 3rd or 4th. With only 1 diamond at a time, it is really critical to know when that platform is coming and hit that one diamond to light your view. There is some times a clue that the tanker has arrived - which I will not reveal here. To account for the variety and combination of attacks, there is a unique 2600 controls feature whereby the jumping and diving control is almost totally controllable. Instead of two types of jumps, a partial and full jump, you can do any amount in between by reversing the stick. A neutral position will still allow gravity or buoyancy to work. But at the instant you move the stick the other way you are moving back. To me, this adds much to the gameplay and strategy as it makes partial jumps (dives) and reversing quickly an important part of your defensive strategy. Or maybe more accurately, your offensive strategy to always be on the attack, firing away, but always being prepared to reverse gears hard and fast. On the second mission, there is still only 1 of everything, but on the third mission you will see two missiles. When set to the "Agent" difficulty, the flying enemies really make it difficult with increased frequency and speed of bombs and randomness of the helicopter and diamonds. The helicopter is there about 75% of the time and instead of playing longer, you only have to collect 3 or 4 diamonds (AFAIK). Also note that there is a different movie sequence here with "Diamonds", "Moonraker" and then "Spy Who Loved Me". The Addictiveness is enjoyable (8), as there is a pause!! The Black White/Color switch does the trick. I overlooked this in the manual, as I was not even expecting such a treat. All versions had some degree of collision detection problems, and were penalized the same. I'll only mention this here, in the first game reviewed. Note that a short time after your final score is shown, the "OO\_" score will be revealed and thus your points score will be gone forever. With only one of nearly every object, and a bit of slower action (scrolling) than other version, you must be patient here. Finally all versions have the chance of some impossible jumps occurring.



Then there are problems with starting a new life, such as the dreaded Double Deaths, meaning that you start the next life/craft and the enemy or weapon is right on you and death is either certain, or narrowly avoided - so stay alert. Not to mention that the next life comes at you right away, so if you are still tugging on the stick from the last life, you will already be in motion on that next life - careful. This version clearly has the best randomness factor, but with only 1 of everything, it really needs that. Graphics are fun to see (7). Despite only one of everything, they are all done really well - multi-colored and animated. There is a lot of color variety, decent details and variety in graphic patterns (ocean floor). The dark sky is filled with a star field that scrolls at a (unique to 2600) different pace than the terrain - which scrolls along nicely. The stars are such a nice touch as we all know James did his best work in the dark. There are no boulders on the land, but there are water jumps over ocean peaks in mission 3. The Sound is pretty good (7) with a really neat stereophonic sound playing the bond theme song. Only a couple effects are missing, and overall a bit repetitive and similar sounding. Not to mention less audio activity since there's only 1 of everything. Controls are brilliant (10) with a standard stick. The use of two weapons is performed the same on all but one version, with one fire button used - alternating shots. Coming out just before the "crash" makes this 2600 "diamond in the rough" semi difficult to find.

### Have Nots: Colecovision (41)

My first reaction is the diamonds are going the wrong way (forwards) and it takes some getting used to two fire buttons. My solution is to use the Super Action Controller, which after some practice provided me with perfect (10) Controls, whereas I'd only score them an 8, but maybe a 9 with any other controller option. The key is that you can just squeeze both fire buttons at once - since there is not penalty for accidentally shooting the wrong weapon at the wrong time. The Atari 7800 joystick controller, or other 2 button controller should work, but you'll have to start the game with another controller, then swap sticks - not a big problem as you have ~ 10 seconds before the action begins. Also note, press "0" to skip the intro and start the action sooner.



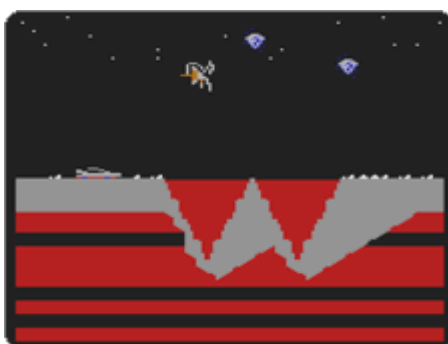
Gameplay is the best, outstanding (9), with a bit more action and elements than any other, and the programming looks to be the best as I did not get stuck with any double-deaths. One drawback is the action is a bit too fast paced for my liking, meaning less time to think and strategize, and more so just reacting - or to memorize (see below). The diamonds are too plentiful, not really making any challenge for finding the invisible oil rig. Diamonds do not move upwards and escape either. On the other hand, this version employs the most enemies and variety, and always 2 frogmen divers, who have unlimited machine gun-like bullets - as soon as you shoot one of them another one comes out - so be careful. There a visible trap door opening for the launch bay of Drax's Shuttles. There's more submarines in this version and even a series of unique jellyfish obstacles. Well done Mr. Coleco. But alas the Addictiveness, sans a pause, pulls into last place - but still very good (7). The usual increased CV difficulty is a little daunting with more enemies than other versions, but there's still some gradual increase in difficulty on later missions. The difficulty, when set to "Agent" is quite the challenge. The light colored flashing background also frustrate you as it's very difficult to see the lasers - but just keep an eye out for the Satellite. Probably because this game scrolls along at the fastest pace, it was the first version that I made it all the way through. Worst concern is that this version seems the least random, with patterns of enemies and obstacles - especially noticeable when you repeat early portions of each segment. Graphics are fairly good (7) but no better than the 2600. There's good scrolling, but not much color variety, and no multi-colored goodness. The animation is good and the details and added graphics are the best. The shots are sometimes hard to see and there's no title screen, but the mission detailed animation is well done. The diamonds don't disappear when hit, but at least display an animated explosion, and a sound effect, so that you can tell that you scored points. The best graphical feature, found only on the CV, is also the simplest - the score is always shown on the screen for one or both players. The Sound is crisp (8) with nice musical intro and all effects in place. Too many sound effects sound similar, but there are more effects overall. Like the 2600, 'tis a semi difficult cart to find.

#### **Gold Medal: Atari 5200, 8 Bit Computer and Commodore 64 (43)**

A close race and all deserve a share of the Gold. The scores all matched as well, so let me note the scores and what is the same for our medal winners. The Gameplay is impressive (8), lacking a few added elements found only on the 2600 or CV, but otherwise complete. Adding more levels and a way to practice them would bump these scores up to a 9. The Addictiveness is splendid (8), all having a pause <pause> <space bar/Esc> and <F7>. The well done and well animated intro scenes, and text congrats and change of name from movie to movie (mission to mission) are great. There are a few times that random events yield an impossible or nearly impossible jump or challenge, but not very often. The congrats and tallying of scores and OO bonus help bring you back for more. Plus knowing that you can reach the end the game, and then try it all over again on a harder skill setting are quite stimulating. The Graphics are impressive (8) - with a nice title screen, good color variety, plenty of action (most of the time), decent animation and scrolling is well done. The Sound is outstanding (9), but I may have been too generous here. The music is limited to the intro to each life or mission but is well done. The sound effects during play are fairly good with a lot of variety and appeal. The Controls are perfect (10) for all - but see below.



James Bond 007 on Atari 5200 & 8-Bit



James Bond 007 on Commodore 64

**Atari 5200:** My first reaction was you cannot play this game very well using an analog controller - including the Wico. You need a controller, like the Masterplay Interface or equivalent that defeats the analog portion. Otherwise, you'll be moving U/D and L/R when you do not want and sometimes faster (the analog) than you are wanting to move. Fortunately, both sets of fire buttons do the same thing - alternate from laser to bombs. Good thing, as there is not a Super Action 5200 controller out there to



come to the rescue. At \$20, it's a bit rarer than the 8 bit cart, but probably significantly harder to find with more 5200 collectors - than the 8 bit computer.

**Atari 8 bit:** My first reaction was once again this is the same version as the 5200. Despite the fact that there was a cart for both games, the Moby Games site does not list/show the Atari 8 bit version. Obviously their 5200 screenshots apply for the Atari 8 bit. There may have been a diskette release, or if not, a cart dumped to disk, so this port will be easier to find. There may be 1 or 2 more visible enemies/objects on this version than any other, but seems to be a max of 5 or 6 moving on screen on any version. There are no multi-colored objects here, but the missiles and bombs are the easiest to see.

**Commodore 64:** My first reaction was 20 years ago I disliked this game, because I didn't know, nor anyone I knew - how to complete the first level. So, always consider finding and reading the rules before giving up. The Sound is the best here with just a couple more neat effects thrown in. Likewise the Graphics are the best with all objects in multi-color. By far the easiest to locate on cart and probably pretty easy to find dumped to disk as well. Via diskette, unlimited lives by POKE 42207,181 or (\$A4DF,B5).

In case you are curious, yep, you guessed it, these scores matched last month for the C64 on Moon Patrol. Our other Gold medal winners (5200 & 8 bit) stepped up their game a bit here from last month. Good show Mr. Atari!

This month's review written with various James Bond theme songs ringing through my head. My favorite tune is "Live and Let Die" - of which the movie would have made a great mission in this game - with the water chase scenes. Hopping from lake to lake in the bayou country, jumping over police cars, sandbars and levees all while speedboats chase you - would have worked well. Let that car roll across the broken bridge and do a spiral jump across the river etc.

**Updates and Errata from last month.** Thanks for more feedback almost every month from our readers. Your help, suggestions, feedback and praise do help me to keep pressing on every month - as I am getting burned out. Many thanks to Jason, who has given me couple notes. First, he reminded me to check the Adam House site at [ecoleco.com](http://ecoleco.com) where they do sell the CV cart for "Matt Patrol". It is funny as they describe and call it Moon Patrol, but it is Matt Patrol in the photo of the label. Text from their write up hints that there might be two versions, or only Matt Patrol - "Versions vary - some copies have taken liberties with the title". Regardless, the gameplay is the same, and so one can still buy this cart (Matt Patrol). I'm a bit too cheap to pay \$20+ for a copy - even if it is pretty decent. Also, the MSX version of Moon Patrol was released twice, in cart format by Dempa, and on disk by Irem. They appear (to Jason) to be the same, other than title shots.

Another reader, Anthony, clarified that indeed, in the arcade version of Moon Patrol, the regular UFOs can make a kamikaze attack - and descend upon you.

Also note that since last month, actor/comedian "Don Adams" aka Maxwell Smart, the Control agent from the TV series "Get Smart" passed away. So it is great that this month's review of a super spy game can also be a small tribute to Don as well. And now I dub my cone of silence. . .

Next Month: Come back as I plan to review the Many Faces of "Mountain King" for the Atari 2600, 5200, 8 bit, C64, CV and (with help from Tonks) maybe the Vic 20. Contact Alan Hewston at:

**Hewston95@NOSPAMstratos.net** or visit the Many Faces of site:

<http://my.stratos.net/~hewston95/RT/ManyFacesHome.htm>

**Stardate 7800**

***by Adam King***

No your eyes are not deceiving you; Stardate 7800 is back. This was a column I did for Retrogaming Times about the Atari 7800 ProSystem, which I stopped doing nearly two years ago. However with some exciting happenings in the 7800 world, including some upcoming homebrews and prototype discoveries, I figured this would be a good time to resurrect this old column. What you'll find here are different articles on the 7800, such as reviews of rare games, homebrews, and other items of interest about the ProSystem. I decided to start off with a highly sought-after controller for the ProSystem: the 7800 Joypad.

As you may remember, Atari did not have a good track record with controllers for their later console systems. The 5200 stick is universally hated among classicgamers for its non-centering ability, and the controller for the Jaguar was too big with a mostly-unused keypad (it looked like a cross between a Genesis pad and an Intellivision pad).



And then there was the 7800 Proline controllers. While they look nice, and actually work better than the 5200 sticks, they were pretty akward to

The 7800 Joypad (pic taken from Atari Age)

use, especially during games like Joust that require a lot of button tapping. Not the mention your hand starts hurting after long game-athons. Most gamers were just happy using the 2600 joystick for their 7800 games. However while some 7800 carts have no problem with the single button, others still require two fire buttons. Atari did have an answer to this dilemma. Seeing that the NES and Sega systems both had gamepads for controls, Atari put out a joypad of their own for the 7800. Does the Joypad succeed where the ProLine Joystick fails? To find out I tested both controllers with some 7800 and 2600 carts in my 7800 ProSystem and the results are no surprise.

The 7800 controller is laid out just like an NES or Sega control pad, and it's about the same size. It consists of a black plastic shell with a gray directional thumbpad and two red fire buttons. The controller came with a tiny thumbstick that could be screwed into the center of the pad, similar to Sega's early controllers. So you can decide whether or not you want to use the thumbstick.

So how does using the Joypad compare to using the ProLine joystick? Straight out the Joypad fixes the controller issues on the 7800. The rounded edges make the controller comfortable to hold especially after a marathon gaming session with none of the awkwardness. The D-pad and buttons don't line up like on other controllers, but after some playing time it just feels like every other control pad out there, which is a good thing. Plus the directional pad is pretty responsive as well, with or without the thumbstick. The only negative is the lack of a pause button of the controller. Why did Atari (and while I'm on the subject, Sega) think it was a good idea to put the PAUSE on the console itself?

So overall the 7800 Joypad is hands down THE controller to use with the ProSystem. It just works tons better than the ProLine, and those of you who are completely accustomed to joypads will have no trouble jumping in here. However getting one may be quite the challenge, since Atari never officially released the joypads in the US. It was mainly released in Europe and Australia, and was even packed-in with the system in those overseas locations. Finding the Joypads in the wild can be extremely difficult, if not impossible. Luckily you can turn to some on-line retailers such as Best Electronics ([www.best-electronics-ca.com](http://www.best-electronics-ca.com)). Trust me, it's well worth it.

## *The Lost Faces of the Sinclair Spectrum - Ghostbusters*

*[by Andrew Masters](#)*

Ghostbusters on the Spectrum was released in 1985 by Activision (the UK version also credits James Software for the programming). It was programmed in Z80 assembly language by David Crane, with speech done by David Jones (who programmed Galaxian on the Spectrum - see last issue of RTM). At the time it was a big movie tie-in licence for the Spectrum, Commodore 64 and other systems. The game was very ambitious for 1985, and managed to cram a great deal of different gameplay elements into the Spectrum version (which was done in 48 kbytes of RAM!). English game magazine Your Spectrum even did a feature devoted to just how nifty the programming was, to squeeze so much game into 48K.

On loading the game up, you see the standard Spectrum loading screen. These were (occasionally) even considered works of art in their own right, for some games (Bruce Lee, for example). Often the loading art screen would be worked up to perfection, as publishers would partly use this to sell the game (while the game was loading up in shops, for example). Here for Ghostbusters however, you just have a credits screen (which looks a lot like the movie credits at the bottom of a poster).



Like the cartoon based on the movies, Activision was not allowed to use the likeness of the actors that performed in the movie -- so you just got three generic men as your Ghostbusters (no 'Dr Venkman'). Also, according to Brad Fregger, Producer of Ghostbusters: 'The game developers at Activision would often take the afternoon off to see a new movie that was exciting to us. One day we all decided to see Ghostbusters on the opening day. After the movie David Crane (Pitfall and Pitfall 2) announced that he was going to do the game. As a founder of Activision, he had the power to get the wheels in motion and within a week we were beginning development.'

### **CONTROLS**

When the game has loaded, you have to choose your controls. All major joysticks can be used with this game. The keyboard controls work well, but cannot be redefined (altered). So you have key 'Q' for up, 'A' for down, 'O' for left, and 'P' for right. You have 'Z' for fire, which takes a bit of getting used to, but is otherwise fine. The magical unknown key (not shown in the game!) is 'B' to drop ghost bait (more on this later). There is a pause (hold) key, which is 'H'. To resume, press 'Enter'. This pause is easy to use, as it is not possible to press 'fire' accidentally.

The controls are slightly sluggish throughout. However, this only really becomes a problem when you are catching a ghost at a skyscraper. You have to hold down the fire key a bit too long for it to seem like an action game. It feels more like fishing for the ghost, than shooting it with your 'laserstreams'



(which is what you are supposed to be doing). I have knocked a point off here because the keys cannot be redefined, and controls are a bit sluggish.

**CONTROLS:** 9 OUT OF 10

### GAMEPLAY

Once you have chosen your controls, you get the game title screen. You get the marvellous speech of 'Ghostbusters!' screaming out at you, followed by the speech of 'Bwah-ha-ha-ha-ha...' It is impossible to overstate how revolutionary this speech was for Spectrum owners in 1985. You then get the movie soundtrack (reduced to beep notes, like a cellphone ring tone) but hey, at least they tried. You even get the lyrics at the bottom of the screen (it's all in there somehow).



When you start, you have to enter your name. You can then enter your account number (if you already have an account with the bank). This was a brilliant way of extending the life of the game: people who finished the game with more money than they started with would get an account number. You then could enter this bank account number next time you played, and carry on making more money. It was a way of saving your progress with codes. In the computer magazines of the time, players contributed their own account numbers, so you could get a head start. These account numbers also worked on other systems (Spectrum numbers work on the Commodore Ghostbusters game). Use account number 00166605 with name CODEBUSTERS, to start with 1 million dollars. However much money you start the game with, the difficulty is not any different (I have played the game starting with as much as \$169,500 and it is still the same difficulty). There are also software cheats (press 0 when asked which car you want).

Next is the vehicle selection. You can choose any vehicle from a compact car, a 1963 hearse, a station wagon and a high performance sports car. Each one has a different price, and beginners cannot buy some cars anyway, due to having insufficient funds. However, the cars are really all the same apart from appearance (the 'high performance' one was supposed to go faster). So you're really best off with the classic 1963 hearse (the 'ectomobile') from the movie.

Next you have to equip your car. Choose all the equipment you can afford (do NOT forget the ghost bait!), and then you start the game. In the NES version, you can re-visit the shop once you have started (and there are more items available!), but you have no such luxury here.

The ghost vacuum is very useful for sucking up wandering ghosts ('roamers') as they pass your car in New York City's streets. It is important to keep doing this, since each ghost who reaches the Temple of Zuul (aka Spook Central) will increase the city's psycho-kinetic counter. Escaped ghosts you have tried to catch at a skyscraper (see below) will increase the counter by even more. When the counter reaches 9,999 you cannot earn any more money by catching ghosts, and must go straight to Zuul, to do battle with the Stay Puft marshmallow man.

The game itself involves you going as quickly as you can from building to building, hopefully catching as many ghosts ('slimers') as possible. Buildings start to flash red to warn of a haunting, and you must drive to the scene (see screenshot 4). When the action gets really frenetic, you have to prioritise which building you will do next, based on how long it has been haunted, and how far away it is. If you leave a building for too long, the ghost will escape and go to Zuul, increasing the PK counter.

At each skyscraper, you must position your trap in the middle of the screen, and position your two men (see screenshot 5). You must then coax the ghost over the trap (the ghost does not like being lasered!). Eventually you must spring the trap and catch the ghost (the problem is the ghost flits about like a moth, so it's not easy). It's also possible to take too long, and then your lasers run out of power. Miss the ghost or take too long, and you are slimed (and you get atmospheric speech of 'He slimed me!').

In the Spectrum version there is only one ghost at each building, but the Sega Master System sometimes has two or three ghosts at each scene. However, one ghost per building is definitely enough for me! The Gatekeeper and Keymaster just float around the streets, doing nothing - they are just in the game for show, like in all other versions.

**GAMEPLAY:** 9 OUT OF 10.

### ADDICTIVENESS

This is a really addictive game. You always have it in the back of your mind that you MUST make more money than you started with. You can see at all times how much money you have now, and what the PK counter is, so you know roughly how much time you have left, and how much more money you have to make.

The extra tricks of the game take some working out, such as laying bait by pressing 'B' when ghosts are quickly gathering (a Marshmallow Man alert). If you do this promptly, the Mayor awards you money. Fail and you are fined. You also need to keep vacuuming up ghosts to keep the counter low anyway. This is particularly relevant after a Marshmallow Man alert, as there are sometimes 7 or 8 ghosts left just wandering around.



Sometimes you need to return to Ghostbusters Headquarters (GHQ on the map), if your men are slimed, you have no traps or your lasers need recharging. But returning to GHQ also takes precious time. You must press the space bar to see how low on reserves you are (traps left, number of men, backpack laser energy). The Sega Master System version is better than the Spectrum, as it shows you how many empty traps you have at all times.

These funny little elements are very subtle in making a game that has real strategy. Also, the element of saving your progress via codes at the end of the game really adds replay value. When coming back to this game, to me it's always about 'I've got to make more money than I start with today!'

At the end of the game, you must try and slip past the Stay Puft Marshmallow Man, who is jumping up and down at the entrance to Zuul (see screenshot 6). On the Spectrum this is a tall order, since two of your three men must nip past and not be stamped on. It is a real game of trial and error in trying to position your man, and then run through as fast as possible. Also, you have no lasers to help you against Marshmallow Man. Once a man is stamped on, he is dead.

Get through and you can finally close the portal to the spirit world and save the city. You are awarded more money by the Mayor, and get treated to some more speech of 'Bwah-ha-ha-ha-ha...' at the end of the game. Before I had ever managed this, it was the tantalising last bit of the game, and very difficult too.

**ADDICTIVENESS: 10 OUT OF 10.**

### **GRAPHICS**

The graphics on the Spectrum version do a good job overall, but there are a few problems here and there. Due to having only 8 colours, sometimes you find yourself at a skyscraper where a black ghost appears on a very dark blue background. This makes it very difficult indeed to actually see the ghost. Also, due to the 'Spectrum attribute problem', when colours overlap it looks garish and a bit difficult to see what is going on (for the uninitiated Speccy player!).

Having looked at other versions, the graphics on the NES and especially the Sega Master System are fantastic, but for what it was, the Spectrum version is otherwise a fine production for 1985 (the Sega Master System version came out as late as 1987 anyway).

**GRAPHICS: 8 OUT OF 10.**

### **SOUND**

The sound in the Spectrum version is very sparse indeed. You just get the theme tune at the start, in very beepy style (the Commodore 64 version had much better theme music, very faithful to the movie original). The three other effects are recycled through the game at key points: 'Ghostbusters!' is what a ghost yells when killed; 'He slimed me!' is moaned out by Venkman when you let a ghost slip by; 'Bwah-ha-ha-ha-ha...' is shrieked by the ghosts at the end and start of the game.

There are no effects at all in the game (such as for shooting lasers or anything). Despite this, it's all still very atmospheric. But I have had to knock some points off here, as even basic sound effects would have improved the action screens.

**SOUND: 6 OUT OF 10**

### **OVERALL SCORE AND CONCLUSION**

This is a fantastic Spectrum game, only let down occasionally by poor graphics (a Spectrum system limitation anyway), and by not enough sound - the three speech phrases themselves take up as much as 3.5K of memory. (It seems like, in 48K of memory, something had to make way!). I have found a review for the 128K Spectrum version, which I am anxious to play, and which was released 18 months later in 1987 (this was meant to have much better 3-channel sound). However, distribution of this game has now been denied by Activision. Anyway, this is a fantastic Spectrum game of its time. I have given the Spectrum version a slightly lower score than the Commodore 64 result - this is because of slightly inferior graphics, and worse sound (the Spectrum version just has music that plays

at the start).

**OVERALL SCORE: 42 OUT OF 50.**

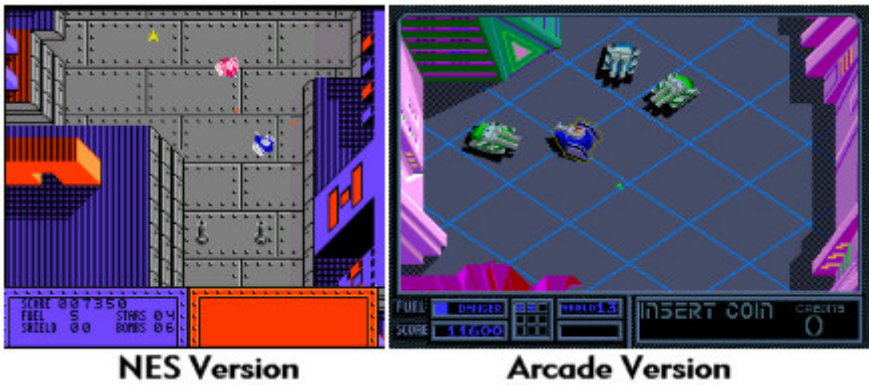
You can download Spectrum games, and the Spectrum emulator programs at the World of Spectrum site -- <http://www.worldofspectrum.org/>. You can also download POKEs for Spectrum games from the Tipshop web site -- there is a link from the WOS site. POKEs are software cheats that allow infinite lives, so you can get further than ever before! The WOS site is well worth a visit, as you can download many Spectrum games - 5,600 games alone, as well as Spectrum utilities and even Spectrum programming languages. The best PC emulator to download is 'ZX32 for Windows' (also on the WOS site).

Andrew Masters runs a web site at <http://www.geocities.com/cs0ama>. Play Java games, see pictures of the world and read movie reviews.

***The Titles of Tengen - Vindicators***

*by [David Lundin, Jr.](#)*

This time we take a look at one of the lesser celebrated Tengen NES ports and also one of the most overlooked arcade games period in my humble opinion. Destruction? Strategy? Tanks? It must be Vindicators! Rolling into arcades in 1988, Vindicators dropped players into one of the most powerful battle tanks ever created, a Vindicator. Up to two players can play at once, each in their own Vindicator, and using teamwork to your advantage in a two player game is paramount. Trample from stage to stage on a mission to destroy an evil force of alien space stations. Searching for fuel, picking up battle stars to trick out your tank and finding keys to open the doors at the end of the level - all the while battling through an army of enemy tanks, turrets, mines and more.



Vindicators mixed some basic design elements of games like Scramble, Gauntlet and Super Sprint but sped things up and offered a unique yet realistic control method. Like in Scramble you must collect fuel tanks to keep moving. Like in Gauntlet you must collect keys to open the door to the next stage. Like Super Sprint you can pick up special currency to trade in for vehicle upgrades at the end of each stage. However the control method in the arcade added a ton of realism in that as with a real tank your movements were controlled by a pair of vertically sliding grips. Slide them both forward and your tank moves forward, both back and your tank moves back. If slid in opposite directions your tank would rotate without moving forward or back. Only one grip forward or back would make your tank turn in the opposite direction. In other words the left grip controls the left tank track and the right grip controls the right tank track. This gave the game a little bit of a learning curve until one would get on top of the controls but once they were mastered there was pretty much nothing a skilled player couldn't get out of. Of course due to the NES controller limitation, movement becomes relegated to up, down, left and right. Not that it detracts from the game itself a whole lot, just the experience a little bit.

As your Vindicator progresses along you will need to pick up fuel that both powers your Vindicator and is used as a health gauge once your shields are depleted. Scattered throughout the game are battle stars which work very much along the same line as wrenches in Super Sprint. Pick them up and at the end of the stage you can trade them in for various upgrades to your tank such as additional shields or more powerful shots. It is here that the only really big limitation between the NES and arcade version becomes apparent. In the arcade each grip had a button on top in addition to a pair of triggers. Once purchased from the upgrade shop the left button would rotate the tank turret left, the right button would rotate it to the right. This would allow the Vindicators to make strafing runs at targets and to be able to shoot in a different direction than they were moving. As with the movement control differences, due to the NES controller limitations this feature was completely removed from the Tengen NES port. In the upgrade shop the option for turret rotation is replaced with an option to purchase additional fuel. Each stage has a pair of keys hidden somewhere along the way which are used to open the armored doors at the end of each stage. This is a bit like Gauntlet as if you don't keep your eyes peeled in the later stages chances are you'll fight your way to the end and then have to turn around and go hunt for the key you missed.



Graphically the NES version is quite detailed even though the sprites are far smaller than in the arcade version. Just the same each tread on each Vindicator spins when the tank moves, the enemy turrets are well animated and the levels well designed. Vindicators plays just as smooth and quick on the NES as it did in the arcade. As for audio a decent mix of sounds and music make it over onto the NES port although the voice clips that are few and far between in the arcade aren't present but with the NES hardware they're not expected to be.

If you have yet to play Vindicators I suggest picking up a copy, they seem to go pretty cheap since it's one of the lesser appreciated Tengen NES games. Two player mode lends the game a decent amount of replayability and it's a great way to spend a day retrogaming with a friend. This also opens up some strategy elements such as having one player draw turret fire while the other drives up and destroys them from behind. It's twitch gameplay with some strategy and micro management thrown in on the side and a game everyone should at least give a try. On a side note if you happen to want to try out the arcade version under the MAME emulator I recommend using a PlayStation dual shock controller through a converter box, mapping the movements to the analog sticks, and your fire and turret rotations to the shoulder buttons.

"InsaneDavid" also runs a slowly growing gaming site at <http://www.classicplastic.net/dvgi>.

**Retrogaming Commercial Vault**

*by Adam King*

The Commercial Vault is back after a three month sabbatical. After thinking about the future of this column, I decided to keep it going a while longer. I also decided to start covering commercials for the Nintendo and Sega systems as well. This month we take a look at an ad for After Burner on the Sega Master System.

Basically this commercial follows the same formula as every other jet-flying game. Some kid is about to play After Burner on his Sega System when he's suddenly zapped into a fighter jet about to take off. So he flies through the sky shooting down enemy fighters as the announcer describes how exciting the game is.

"Sega challenges you with After Burner, a game so exciting you can imagine you're in for the fight of your life! After Burner gives you the real dogfight excitement of the arcade version, like barrel rolls, nose dives, and radar lock-on! After Burner, only on the Sega system! Sega! THE CHALLENGE WILL ALWAYS BE THERE!!"



"Watch me fly through these cartoon letters."



Don't worry this guy's not getting eletrocuted.



"Cool! I;m in a mediocre Sega game."



He's controlling a fighter jet with a Sega Control Stick?



"Where's the airsick bag?"



"Let's see Top Gun do this."

This ad begs the question: is there ANY fight-sim game that doesn't use this same approach? It seems like every flying game HAS to use this same ad style.

Let me know what you think about including Nintendo and Sega ads in this column. Like it? Hate it? have any other ideas to keep this column going. Give me a buzz and let me know.

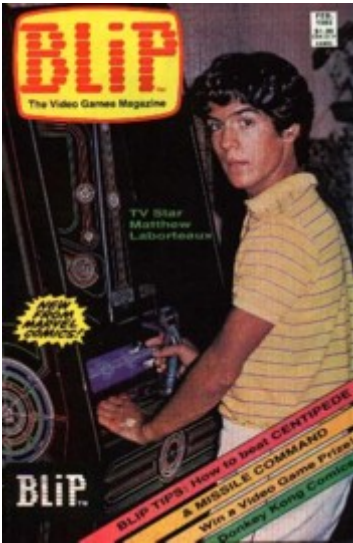
**Syntax Era: Blip! Magazine**

*by Scott Jacobi*

It's getting harder for me to find classic gaming literature that I haven't written about yet. I do have one or two remaining bits of interest left to talk about. So before I begin, I'd like to throw this question to you, the readers. If you have enjoyed my slice of RTM, and would like to see more, please drop me a line and let me know if there's anything else you'd like me to report on, literature or otherwise. You can reach me at [plotor@ix.netNOSPAMcom.com](mailto:plotor@ix.netNOSPAMcom.com) and just remove the letters NOSPAM. (I'm on enough spam mailing lists as it is...)

Moving on. I suspect the average reader of RTM is somewhere in the ballpark of 30 years old, so if you fit that description, I'm sure you might remember a comic book industry that was much different, and much healthier than the one we have today. Marvel and DC were still the giants on the block, and there really wasn't much that they wouldn't turn in to a comic book. In fact, they were even known to put out magazine format comic books if something was hot enough. And in 1983, nothing was hotter than video games (or so I like to think.)

While DC took a more traditional approach to the fad with their Atari Force series, which I reviewed some time ago, Marvel took a very different tactic and published their own monthly series around video games, called Blip. I don't know how to classify it exactly, it was comic book sized, but it had the content of a magazine. The subtitle even says "The Video Games Magazine" so let's go with that. In fact, other than the size, there wasn't too much to differentiate it from other magazines on the rack at the time. It contained news, and reviews of hit home console games, as well as newly released arcade games at the time. It had tips and tricks, as well as your usual tongue in cheek jokes on video game stereotypes, or "Games we'll never see" type humor.



The way it managed to stand apart was the build in comics that poked fun of its video game subjects as well as adding an extra dimension to the characters. The first issue was released on the stands in February of 1983. It has an amusing comic about a reporter (named "Vic Video" of all things) trying to interview Mario at the construction site where Donkey Kong has kidnapped Pauline. The issue sports a picture of a teenaged Matthew Labordeaux (of "Little House on the Prairie") on the cover, playing on a Tron arcade game.

Marvel really had something to celebrate with the second issue of Blip, which announced the release of Marvel's first video game in history, Spider-Man for the Atari 2600. It's ironic when you consider how 22 years later, Ultimate Spider-Man has just been released on the latest generation of platforms. Spider-Man has done well over the years. Within the covers, there's even a picture of Stan Lee playing the game with some children and two people in Spider-Man and Green Goblin costumes. The article is followed up by a special Spider-Man short which results in the Goblin being sent to jail where inmates can play the game in a new recreational facility, much to his chagrin.

After the second issue, the comic shorts disappeared until the final seventh issue, which featured the Hulk trying to solve a Rubik's cube before ultimately smashing it. One page shorts remained, and the humor began to take more of a MAD Magazine form. During its publication, it did manage to pull off a few notable interviews with developers like Rob Fulop, and Dona Bailey, and reported about a trip to the Imagic office in Los Gatos, California.

The publication settled in to a routine of Blip Tips I & II, News Blips, Blip Letters, and Player's Choice. Blip Tips I was always about a home game, while Blip Tips II was always about an arcade game. Surprisingly, the tips were actually quite thorough and well researched. Over time, you could see that the editors saw the same future on the horizon that other video game publications saw, and they began to shift their focus from console games to computer games. But they didn't really get to complete the transformation because the last issue was published in August of 1983.

Ultimately, Blip really was just that, a blip in the timeline of video game publications, a somewhat luke warm success. All seven issues can be found on eBay from time to time, and for very little money, since they were rather unknown. After Blip and Atari Force ended, it would be some time before video games graced the pages of comic books again. While Nintendo formed a limited arrangement with an independent publisher for a short period of time, Archie Comics entered in to an arrangement with Sega that lasts to this day with the publishing rights for Sonic the Hedgehog.

***The Argentina Video Game System - "EDU JUEGOS"***

***by Alan Hewston***

One of our readers, Gabriel, wanted to share some photos of a game system found down there in South America. Some background information, but not completely accurate - as I am no expert in South American video game systems, but our reader and I got lost in translation and so we never did clarify things.



So, here's my best shot , based upon what I recall about Brazilian video games, and I think a lot of similar things occurred in Argentina. Some laws down there in the 80's prohibited certain imports. In some cases companies could come inside the country, set up shop, have management from the overseas country, but hire locals to produce, assemble and distribute the video game systems and games right there. They still had to sell it differently that what it would have looked like here - as in the Atari 2600. There were some pirate laws to prevent people making copies, but there were loopholes and the law usually didn't press charges or shut people down, so ultimately a lot of third party pirate companies made systems and game cartridges based upon what was being made and sold in the US.



Here's the EDU JUEGOS system boxed and some carts.

The EDU JUEGOS is a system that is a copy of the Atari 2600, looking a lot like the 2600 Junior. The going rate for a boxed system like this is upwards of \$100 US. And Carts for about \$10 US each. To find out more about Argentinian games, visit this site: <http://www.atari2600argentina.8m.com/>. I had some troubles viewing all of it, so don't despair.

If any of our readers has unique computer systems, video game systems or games from their native country that we've not seen before, please feel free to send me some pictures. Also give me some background on what the games are and what system they are for and we will try to add it to our next issue. If you want to write the article yourself, that'd be even better.

Commodore Magazine Review Comments

by [Tonks](#)

Recently I bought a heap of retro items that I hoped to add to my collection and use in trades. Among the consoles and games were a couple of old computer magazines from 1983. I had a bit of a read through and had a real good laugh at many things I found. Being a Commodore fan, I was particularly drawn to the hardware reviews of three of my favourite computers. Considering the technology we have today, and gift of hindsight, check out some of the following. The italics are my own stupid comments.

**A COMMODORE 64 REVIEW.**

"The Commodore 64 provides good value for money. However, as a home computer the C64 could be described as too powerful. The C64's excellent graphics and large memory are sure to make it a useful computer for small business."

*As we all know, the Commodore 64 went on to dominate the business world like nothing before it. If it wasn't for the brilliance of the C64's power as a business machine we would all be stuck using boring PCs these days. (sarcasm mode turned off) Thank God for games programmers who realised what an awesome games machine the C64 was. Same goes for the Amiga. Commodore may have wanted their computers to be regarded as "serious" machines, but if it wasn't for the great games I doubt they would have sold more than a hand full.*

**A VIC 20 REVIEW.**

"The VIC's sound effects set a new standard, with three voices of music. The package is quite revolutionary. Commodore was getting a bit staid with the old PET series, but the VIC 20 will really breath life into the company."

*Try convincing a teenager today that 3.5k, 8 colors and 1 channel sound is revolutionary. I don't think you would be too successful. I think my toaster has more computing power than my VIC-20. In fact I think that if I tried using my VIC-20 as a toaster it would get about half way done and then I would get an "out of memory" error.*

**A COMMODORE SX-64 REVIEW.**

"Commodore really hit a winning formula with the VIC-20. When the line was extended to add more memory with the C64, that was a great success too. Now Commodore is out to continue the pattern of success with yet another line extension, the SX-64."

*Let me see now. There were almost 2 million VIC-20's sold. There were around 20 million C64's sold.*



How many SX-64's were sold? Yes, Commodore were about to continue a pattern of success - SX-64, C16, Plus 4, CDTV, Amiga 600, CD32. What a pattern to be proud of!!

## **Classic Computing and Gaming Show 2005 is back**

**by Alan Hewston**

The CCAG 2005 Committee was able to reschedule a new date, Sunday, December 4, 2005. This is NE Ohio's premiere Classic Computer and Video Game Show, with a location West of Cleveland, about 1 mile North of I-90 at the Midway Mall exit. It's FREE for attendees and vendors. Time 2:00 to 7:00 P.M.

Get the latest information on their website, <http://www.ccagshow.com/> and all vendor information is at <http://www.ccagshow.com/CurrentShow/docDealerInformation.html>, or write them at [info@ccagshow.com](mailto:info@ccagshow.com). And don't forget to spread the word!

## **The Thrill Of Defeat: Mattel Aquarius**

**by [Mark Sabbatini](#)**

"Mattel might as well name its computer mud as far as some people are concerned."

Obscure computers usually attract devotees despite, or even because of, the machines' quirks and shortcomings. But that opening line in a review of the Mattel Aquarius aptly describes perhaps the most despised bargain-bin home computer of its day. Unlike many bumlbers, Mattel actually knew something about quality gaming with its Intellivision, courted its fan base with years of promises about the powerful computer that was to come and reaction to the final product was that of a lover scorned.



Which is too bad, because it features some decent games.

Playing them means overcoming not just emotional aversions, but hardware issues like a crippling hard-to-press rubber keyboard that too often treats a single strokes as three presses or none. Also, customers shelling out \$100-\$150 for the basic machine quickly discovered the need to pay hefty amounts more for enough memory to run many titles. Game controllers were available by purchasing a pricey expansion unit. By then a person could easily have spent the same amount on a much superior machine with far more games like an Atari or Commodore 64. Mattel employees later admitted the company's strategy was selling the machine at a loss and making money off the add-ons and games - not a unique concept and one still thriving today.

It was a flop from the start, lasting on the market only a few months after its 1983 debut and selling fewer than 20,000 worldwide. One of its commercial programmers proposed "System For The 70s" as its slogan and reviews playing on phrases such as "this is not the dawning" were nearly universal. Mattel wanted to get out so bad they paid Radofin Electronics Far East in Hong Kong, who they had looked to for the Aquarius after the company did much of the programming work on the Intellivision, to get out of its contract. Radofin promised to rerelease the machine, along with upgraded versions with better hardware, but they never came to market.

Some of the base specifications weren't out-of-line for a bargain machine at the time. It had a Z80A processor running at 3.5Mhz, matching the popular ZX Spectrum. The single-voice sound chip was the same as the Intellivision; not spectacular, but passable. In theory the screen resolution was 320X192 with 16 colors, although in reality it did not have the ability to take advantage of it. Instead a set of pre-programmed graphics and player characters were built into the 40X24 text display. As a result a game might look appealing to the eye, but m

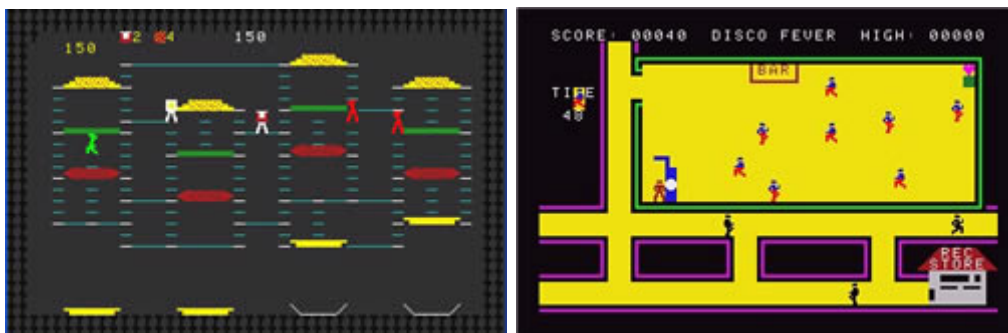
ovement was always in a series of eight-pixel "jumps" at a time. Combined with the horrible keys, this made precision a near impossibility for many arcade-type games. The machine came with 4K of RAM, but only 1.7K was accessible to the user, one of the bigger shortchanging of claimed capacity most computer makers still tend to make. Expansion was possible in theory to 52K using the expansion pack and a combination of memory packs, but it's not clear how many of those items made it to market. Storage was on cassette tapes at 600 baud, one of the slower speeds for the time - a 16K program took about four minutes to load.

As for games, one of the things that immediately seems odd is there's few if any sports titles. Since these were Mattel's bread and butter for the Intellivision and many of their Aquarius games were releases of console titles, it seems like another in a long list of oversights. Overall quality generally falls between the Intellivision and Atari 2600 in playability and graphics, although some titles better suited for computers such as Advanced Dungeons And Dragons are a notable step above both gaming consoles.

Windows users interested in playing these games on an emulator can find Virtual Aquarius at [www.geocities.com/emucompboy](http://www.geocities.com/emucompboy), with many of the titles below easily obtained through a Google search. Playing ROM cartridges is usually as simple as loading the file using the emulator's "load game ROM" option and resetting the virtual machine. Loading cassettes (identified as .CAQ files) is trickier and usually a two-step process. First the user types "CLOAD" and then <RETURN> . Press <RETURN> again at the prompt to press play on the cassette player, then chose the "play cassette" option in the emulator's "File" menu. Often a title has two files associated with it: "(TITLE)\_BAS.CAQ" and "(TITLE)\_A.CAQ. Select the "BAS" file, which should load almost instantly. Next type RUN followed by the <RETURN> key. Another prompt to press play on the cassette will appear. Press <RETURN> again and this time load the "\_A" file using the File menu. This loads the actual data for the game into memory, which can take a minute or so, even though the computer appears to be doing nothing. If all goes well, the game should start automatically.

I was unable to play all the games below, so a mix of reviews and mostly non-opinioned descriptions from various online sources are included in the capsule summaries. Grades are assigned only to those I reviewed and are on a curve mostly exclusive to the machine, although whether they're better or worse than corresponding versions for the Intellivision and other machines is a factor where applicable. I've tried to include every title I could find for reference's sake, although I've avoided diversions such as a biorhythm reader and a "Hints From Heloise" program offering "Dear Abby"-like advice since they're not really games.

The first half of the titles I found are included this month. The rest will follow next month, along with details of subsequent versions of the Aquarius that never made it to market.



*Two Aquarius games: BurgerTime (left) and Disco Fever (right)*

### **3D Battle Zone (B)**

Not a port of Battlezone, although the title and screenshots might suggest otherwise. Instead it's a 3D shooting gallery where the player moves a tank horizontally across the bottom of the screen and targets enemies on a mountainous landscape, elevating or lowering the cannon's height to adjust for distance. Boats, tanks and planes move across the landscape horizontally and return fire, with three hits ending the game. As shooters go this is probably one of the better choices, with above average graphics, good physics and depiction of 3D firing, and the ability to pause games. Movement is predictably choppy, but at least it doesn't resort to using the pre-set graphic characters that start to get tiresome after seeing them over and over in other titles.

### **Advanced Dungeons And Dragons (B+)**

Those familiar with the Intellivision version of this 3D RPG say the Aquarius version is bigger, but not necessarily better. Maybe, but it's still one of the more impressive titles out there. The player's character (only one - no fighters, mages, etc.) navigates dungeon levels using the "step-through" visuals seen in Wizardry and similar titles of the era, picking up stuff and slaying monsters in a quest to slay the Dragon King. Not much of a plot, but there's a good variety of weapons and magic items, which work with varying degrees of efficiency against different monsters. The graphics are very good, comparatively speaking, and the nature of the game makes the stutter-movement thing and other problems commonly seen in Aquarius arcade games a non-issue here. There's four levels of difficulty, the game moves at a good speed and combat happens in real time. The biggest nuisance is you can't save games, a real bummer given the length it can take to complete. On a better machine with more options, it'd probably cause me to bypass this for the competition and it keeps the grade from reaching "A" status. But under the circumstances I'm more sympathetic. I can't feel bad, for instance, about one user group member who gripes there's "only" 99 dungeon levels, since plenty of games on plenty of platforms achieved classic status with far less.

### **Alien Quest (C)**

A basic vertical shooter where the player has to shoot through a barrier that moves horizontally across the screen (like Phoenix) and take out the aliens dodging and shooting above (like Demon Attack). With only three control keys and no complex nuances there isn't much to get in the way of its simple level of enjoyment. The typically blocky movement and poor key response, however, tends to lead to a lot of deaths that feel unfair. The other hitch is you get only one life. It appears this was part of a multigame collection on cassette Radofin planned to include with the machine in their abandoned effort to sell it after Mattel bailed out.

### **Aliens (not graded)**

Going solely from descriptions, this appears to be a Demon Attack/Megamania vertical shooter with 16 different types of enemies appearing in waves. It was written by the British third-party company Add On Electronics, which is credited with numerous programs and claims this 1983 release was the first commercial cassette-based game for the Aquarius.

### **Astrosmash (B-)**

This mindless vertical shooter has the same short-term enjoyment of its Intellivision and Atari 2600 ports, although many fans of those machines considered it a rather lame title. The player shoots things descending from the top of the screen, losing points for missed enemies and/or getting rammed by them. Some just fall; others hone in. Get enough points and you advance to the next level where things fall faster. There's four skill levels, an auto-fire option and the ability to pause the game.

### **Bounder (not graded)**

A game apparently involving multiple Breakout-style paddles, a ball bouncing around the screen and apparently a target you're supposed to hit. I have very little idea of what it's about beyond that since descriptions are more hype than substance (see Break Out below for an example of this).

### **Break Out (not graded)**

An ordinary-looking version that wouldn't merit mention except for the so-called plot, a classic example of how companies tried to use words to dress up tired concepts: The pitch, according to a fan site by Martin Steenoven of the Netherlands at <http://www.vdsteenoven.com/>, is "The Earth's ionosphere has been replaced by layers of polluted atomic dust placed by the planet Ugh, which is even now bombarding the Earth with, 'Goodness, Gracious Me,' great balls of fire. You, Professor Reflector, have developed the 'Reflector Reverser,' which if placed in line with the balls of fire, reverses them and reflects them back into the layers of atomic dust. Direct hits by the 'Reverser' knock great big holes in the layers, allowing sunlight to come in and the Earth to be saved."

### **Burgertime (C)**

There's almost no computer or console conversion of this single-screen platform game I don't like, but this version is at the low end of the playable scale. The weaknesses of the Aquarius' fixed graphics set overshadow every element, from chefs and enemies that bear no resemblance to their arcade cousins to choppy movement that makes navigation and throwing peppers at useful range tough if not unachievable. The platforms your chef builds burgers on are well-designed, enemy intelligence is mostly the same as the original, speed is good and key controls, if not perfect, are logical and included in the in-game instructions. But it isn't much fun unless this really is the only gaming machine a person has, in which case it's probably enough to provide basic burger-building satisfaction for insatiable cravings.

### **Chess (not graded)**

Seems like a competent basic chess game with slightly clunky graphics, although I didn't play it long enough to give it a fair grade. It's hard to figure out what a few pieces are at first, but it's not a long-term problem. There are eight skill levels and the ability to play the computer, another opponent or have the computer play itself. Purists tend to question things like ratings and its comparative worth to best-selling titles of the era like Sargon, but on this kind of machine an adequate game ought to be enough to satisfy owners.

### **Chuckman (not graded)**

Looks like a promising puzzle/arcade game, possibly like Bomberman although that's purely a guess. The following description is from Steenoven's site: "You have to direct your hero around the yellow paths to disarm the numerous time bombs. The paths however extend outside the normal television screen so you also have to use your wits to remember the quickest route... That is not your only problem though, sometimes you won't be able to see where the bomb is, then it becomes chaotic as you chase around the paths trying to locate your time bomb, but even that isn't all... from time to time there are earthquakes which destroy part of the paths and these have to be repaired before you can continue, or will you be able to work out another route before the bomb goes off... If that isn't enough to contend with there are also boots wondering about which are out to stomp you, so avoid these if you don't want to be flattened. The pathways are generated randomly so that no two games are ever the same."

### **Cute Cubes (D+)**

A virtual version of those cheap handheld "puzzle slide" games where tiles inside a square frame are slid around (one tile space is empty) until they're in the proper order. Here the goal is to sort letters alphabetically, with the one improvement over the real thing being there are selectable levels of difficulty. As another game in the Radofin pack-in collection there's nothing really wrong with it, but its simplicity keeps the grade low since it's closer to a home programming project than commercial-quality.

### **D-Fenders (not graded)**

A Defender clone that Add On Electronics programmer Kevin Baker says is one of his best efforts, according to Steenoven. Screenshots are impressive and it appears to have the basics down such as



smart bombs, radar and the usual assortment of enemies. Steenoven's site calls it "probably one of the best machine code games ever written for a home micro," although it's not clear if that's his opinion or part of the marketing hype.

**Disco Fever (B)**

This is the kind of game cheap home computers were meant to play. The player must keep his girlfriend happy by bringing drinks to her table before she finishes the current one while keeping the jukebox playing by going down to the corner store for more records to feed it. Increasing numbers of dancers in the club and thugs on the street must be avoided (so why, tell me, the need to keep the music going?). At heart it's just a single-screen maze game, but with details that make it different and fun. It bears distant resemblance to the Apple II game "Spare Change," a modestly popular title in its day, as well as some free online Java games I've seen lately. Also programmed by Kevin Baker, so it gives merit to the above comments calling D-Fenders a quality title.

**Ed-On (not graded)**

A conversion of the racing/maze game known as Dodge 'Em for the Atari 2600, although versions with plenty of different names exist for a lot of machines. It's a bit of a precursor to Pac-Man with the driver navigating around a maze of inset boxes, capturing all the dots while avoiding collisions with other cars. Screenshots indicate fuel is an issue here and apparently bonus flags can be picked up for extra points.

**Grid Bug (not graded)**

Move a bug around a roughly 20X10 single-screen grid, eat strawberries and avoid spiders that increase in number as the game progresses. That's all I know about this supposedly "totally original" Add On electronics game.

**Lock 'N' Chase (not graded)**

In Mattel's catalog of Aquarius games, but the only mention I've seen of it anywhere is a screenshot of that catalog at the Phosphor Dot Fossils web site ([www.thelogbook.com](http://www.thelogbook.com)). It's a Pac-Man type game where the player is a thief capturing gold (dots) while avoiding the cops. Instead of energizers, the player can open and close doors to aid in the thief's escape. Mattel did a good job converting this rather obscure coin-op to the Intellivision and a rather clunky port for the Atari 2600. Its screenshot of the Aquarius version looks closer to the former, but I suspect it may have been part of the machine's long list of vaperware.



That'll do it for this issue. I hope everyone enjoyed this super-sized edition of Retrogaming Times Monthly. Tune in next month for more retrogaming goodness courtesy of the longest-running retrogaming newsletter on the Internet. Until then, see ya!

- [Adam King](#), Chief Editor

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