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Attract Mode

by [Scott Jacobi](#)

By the time you read this, a seminal moment in gaming history will have taken place. All of the actors in the latest generation of consoles will have taken the stage. Another way to look at this moment is that the classic consoles of the future have arrived. While the PS3 and Wii are still in their infancy, they will one day become the retrogaming tools of a generation of gamers who are just starting life. "Blasphemy!" I hear you say, but it's true. While we older enthusiasts claim that the only true retrogamers are those who can actually remember playing an Atari console during its prime, there is a current generation of young adults who think that SNES and Genesis are retrogaming consoles.

While I'm sure there are a number of you who perhaps prefer to retrogame exclusively, most retrogamers I know dabble in a mix of retro and modern gaming, switching from one to the other when time permits. But why do we do it? We all have our mix of reasons, such as simplicity and nostalgia, but those are justifications, not our overall motivation. And in the process of pondering this, I accidentally came to understand my father better.

All my life, my dad listened to a range of music that could be loosely placed under the early rock umbrella, such as the Beatles, Elvis, Grateful Dead, etc. And through the 80s and 90s, he played that stuff to the point where I could no longer tolerate it for more than 2 minutes. I vowed never to be like that. I was going to listen to the most modern music that life had to offer. I was never going to get stuck on a time period and listen only to the music which that period offered. And to this day, I've kept my word. I listen to Breaking Benjamin, to Hinder, to Evanescence, what have you (yes, I'm partial to rock and alternative.)

A few weekends ago I surprised my wife with tickets to the Journey/Def Leppard concert in Baltimore, and we went and had just a kick-ass time. And I thought to myself, "Yeah, I like music that modern bands produce, but there's just something about the timelessness about these bands that reminds me how I felt when I grew up..."

When I grew up...

And then it hit me like a ton of bricks. It wasn't anything that I didn't already know, but the way the point drove itself home to me was incredible. Dad's listening to the Beatles, my playing Atari, the fact that a college kid thinks the SNES is retro, and the fact that a baby born today will probably only think of the Wii as a "classic"... it's all the same. We grow up, we take on bigger responsibilities in life, and some of us even have families of our own. But the one thing that never has to change, the one escape we can count on when we need it, is the fact that these "retro" consoles (or music) can remind of us a feeling that life gives us little opportunity to be in touch with at an adult age.

I ended up getting my Wii through a very lucky eBay auction (good price, local seller, I got it one day after the launch. I refuse to stand on a line anywhere for anything) and one day I'll get a PS3 when Sony releases a Slim model just like they did for the PS1 and 2 (I don't have space for something that looks like the George Foreman grill, much less \$600 to spend on one.) And I'm going to enjoy them to be sure. But like my dad who listens to the music that reminds him of a more carefree time, I'll always come back to the 2600 and the NES to recapture those more magical moments in life. And they'll always be there waiting.

This month I needed a break and almost did nothing. Instead of a Many Faces review, here's a partial review, covering an Apple][arcade port that was lost (i.e I did not have) at the time of my original review. The Many Faces of Tapper was covered back in issue #37 of the Retrogaming Times. See www.tomheroes.com/Video%20Games%20FS/Retrotimes/retrotimes37.htm

Back then, I did not put in as much time or tell you the details. So you can read that review, but there is a lot more added here. Now that I have an Apple][, and the game, we can finally give it a proper review.

The original Bally Midway arcade game was called Tapper, with Budweiser logos as part of the game screens (this Bud's for you) and side art and then later re-released at the arcade in 1984 and on home systems with the name changed to be more family oriented - as Root Beer Tapper. Also released in Australia as Suntory Beer Tapper. All 3 arcade games and all classic home versions are very similar and hence I merged them for this review. There are slight differences in music, characters and background themes and of course, beer or no beer - but very much the same game. At the arcade, besides the 4-way joystick, one of the most unique controls ever was used, a tap handle, to pour each glass, just like the bartenders used, which at home is simply the joystick fire button. At home, the coolest menu, er uh instruction manual of the classic era has to be the Colecovision Root Beer Tapper manual. Home versions with a pause, gradual increase in difficulty and 4 screens, plus 3 skill levels to conquer make this one of the most addictive home games ever.

Screenshots for all but the Apple][: <http://www.mobygames.com/game/tapper/screenshots>

Arcade Tapper: by Bally Midway 1983 Steve Meyer

Apple][by unknown 1983

Atari 2600 by SEGA Beck-Tech 1984

Atari 8 bit computer by SEGA 1984 Ken Jordan

Colecovision by Coleco/SEGA 1984

Commodore 64 by SEGA 1983 Henry Spragens

Sinclair Spectrum by Sega/US Gold 1985 with Ian Morrison, Duncan Sinclair, Paul Holmes & David J. Anderson

Rumor Mill: Atari 5200 port unconfirmed if even started - likely a mod to the Atari 800.

Re-review everything.

So much for my month off. I had to work quite a bit on this as there was not much meat in my previous review. Every version had to be re-reviewed, and replayed until I saw every level and revealed all elements & any differences. I found several reasons to change the scores - but no medals changed places. Most noticeable was the controls, which really deserved a perfect score. This is one of the reviews, back then, that I added 1 point to Gameplay for the version having a Pause, which I have since changed to add it to the Addictiveness, where it is more appropriate.

Home Version Similarities - except those in < > all home versions have: a demo or attract mode <CV>; three or more starting difficulty settings (Beginner, Arcade, Expert); a Pause <2600>; 4 different parlor scenes (levels); multiple rounds in each level/scene where more, up to the max (16) patrons begin inside the bar in the later rounds; and more (new) patrons always arrive to replace those who left, and even faster in later rounds; some patrons drink more quickly than others <AP2, 2600,CV & 800>; some scenes the action is split with bars going opposite directions, and even multiple versions of those layouts; after each level, you get to earn more points in the bonus round with Sneaky Pete playing "Bob & Doug McKenzie's Beer Hunter" to see if you get the bonus points for opening the unshaken can, or get a wet head; patrons are animated while walking & some versions when drinking; the glasses move/flow very smoothly <CV> across the bar top; patrons who get a fast order will take their drink and leave; patrons finishing a glass will return it to you; patrons will occasionally give a nice tip if you are prompt <2600 never> & <800 (not routinely part of the game, only after forcing 3 glasses on same patron)>; if the tip is collected, the stage area will come to life with a short show, where most patrons (already inside) will stop and watch; if you stall, more patrons will keep coming, so you can earn more points per round, but eventually they will move too fast, or hurl the glasses back too fast for you to keep up <AP2 & 800 unsure>; the wave ends when all patrons have been sent away satisfied or you lose a life; you lose a life when a patron reaches the end of the bar, or if you drop a returned glass, or if you hurl an extra glass; you see the glasses break and even more animation if the patron reaches the end of the bar, they grab and throw/drag you along the bar top <800>; you'll earn an extra life at scores around 20k & 50k or every 10k etc; some text info is displayed on screen such as "watch closely" <800>.

During the game there are many sound effects, but the unique musical scores for each level and the bonus rounds are well done. These tunes play non-stop throughout the action <AP2 - in demo and

prior to action>; and there is different music for the dancing/stage show <AP2 only noises>. Sound effects include: pouring and serving a drink; switching bar lanes <C64, AP2 & 800>; walking <800 & AP2>; a patron arriving <800>, leaving a tip <AP2, 2600 & C64>; collecting a tip <2600, 800 & AP2>; drink falling; drink smashing; getting beaten up <800>; end of round <800>; and earning an extra life <AP2, 2600, C64 & CV>. In the bonus round you'll hear: shaking the cans; the pounding fist <C64, CV & 800>; shuffling cans; tick-tock while deciding <800, CV & 2600>; getting a wet head; revealing the correct can <800>; opening the right can & getting the bonus.

Scores for the previous. I'll list the new score and the old score (x, was y).
And some details and justification for the scoring changes.

Not covered here: Sinclair Spectrum (?)

I do not have this system, but a quick review of the World of Spectrum reveals that the version has all 4 screens, plus the bonus round, but with a Pepsi logo. Choice of 1 or 2 players and 3 starting difficulties, good displays including the text alerts. The usual limited color variety and details of the Speccy, but very playable and fun. Original theme music by Robin Muir can be toggled and choice of joystick or defining keyboard keys etc.

Spectrum screen shots and instruction manual are online - courtesy of WorldofSpectrum.org



Have Nots: Atari 2600 (40, was 38)

A great 2600 game - somewhat rare cartridge.

Gameplay increases to (8, was 7) as I now realize it does have 4 skill levels. But stays a point below the other versions for having fewer patrons & mugs in action, plus there's no stage show, as you can never earn a "tip".

Addictiveness (8). No pause.

Graphics (6). Smooth, colorful & clear, but fewer patrons, details & animation. No multi-color.

Sound (8) decent music throughout & nearly all the effects.

Bronze Medal: Apple 2 (41) & Atari 8 bit (41, was 41)

Atari 8 bit (41, was 41)

The game is either incomplete, or was rushed out early. Somewhat hard to find & only on disk.

Gameplay (9). I should deduct a point since "tips" are rare. Instead of semi random (for a fast delivery), you must force a patron 3+ drinks. In the heat of the battle you don't have much chance to plan to do this, so we lose this strategy/trade-off.

Addictiveness increases to (9, was 8) as I missed the Pause <Esc>.

Also select the Expert game to see level 3 first!

Graphics increased to (6, was 5). Good background, some details and enough animation, but really unfair and hard to tell who is who. Sometimes two same colored, identical patrons overlap, or one patron has a graphics glitch making it look like two. Arrg! The 4th level (Space Port) is bloody horrible and impossible to discern/enjoy.

Sound drops to (7, was 9). What was I thinking/hearing. Yes, possibly the best music, but we don't hear the stage show music (from tips) very much. Nearly half of the sound effects are actually missing (previously didn't track this well enough), most critical being a patron arriving. The lack of the arrival effect, coupled with two overlapping same-colored, identical patrons really makes it unfair and keeps the Addictiveness from being a (10). Wouldacouldashoulda scored a 46.

Apple II (41+)

My first reaction was there is only music prior to the action - and during the attract mode, where each screen and its music are nicely played out while only the patron move. The slight delays in loading each screen are acceptable.

Gameplay is nearly all there (9), nothing much missed.

Addictiveness is awesome (10) with the Pause <Esc> and moving the stick resumes play!

There may be a slight slow down in the action when a lot is going on, but not enough to lose your rhythm.

Graphics are impressive (8) with good details, decent graphical variety and probably the best animation with wiping the counters, patrons walking, filling a beverage, patrons drinking, the dance show, Sneaky Pete shaking cans, Sam scratching his head, then getting a wet head, a glass falling or shattering and finally the patrons



dragging you across the bar. The patrons are mostly distinct, but sometimes you get the same colored, identical patrons overlapping. More color variety is needed. Patrons with their back turned (watching the show) and motionless are well done - easy to tell they are different. Empty mugs look nice. Mirror reflection of Mountain Dew logo is most excellent!

Sound is very good (7) with nearly all the music, but only prior to the action. Some non-critical effects are missing.

Controls scored (7), as the analog controls ruin it again. For instance, to move "up" 2 rows, you must move "up", then re-center completely, then move "up" again, making extra work for your hands and wrist. Whereas the non-analog systems move "up" as fast as the game input allows - either holding it up constantly, or tap, tap, and you move up twice. There is a keyboard option, but no key selection and there was no key(s) for moving L or R, so the keyboard is useless.

If there is a version with a fully working keyboard control then give this at least a (9) and sole possession of the Bronze medal. Pretty hard to find & only on disk.

Apple][screen shots are not on the web

Silver Medal: Colecovision (44, was 44)

Very good, but pastel colors & identical patrons hurt. Semi-rare Cart.

Gameplay dropped to a (9, was 10) only because I had previously given an extra point for the Pause. The pattern of scenes is not the same as the others, but all 4 are there - no penalty. Also no demo or attract mode.

Addictiveness (9), increased due to Pause <*>, but penalized for the frustration of the all-the-time identical, hidden, pastel colored patrons.

Graphics (7) are choppy. The glasses do not flow at all, but skip in/out of view. The pastel colors and poor color mix & limited multi-color really hurts.

Sound (9) good music and most of the effects.

Controls (10), but awkward controllers and the closest to scoring a 9.

Gold medal: Commodore 64 diskette version (47, was 45)

Gameplay is the best (9). The only version where you can see for sure the patrons drinking and can even see that some drink faster than others - nice!

Addictiveness (10, was 9) as I missed the Pause <R/S> previously.

Graphics are the best (9) with plenty of action, clearly defined detailed, uniquely colored patrons who do not hide. Animation is as good as the AP2, plus the empty glasses even rotate!

Sound (9) is the best with beautiful scores and the fewest effects missing.

Cart version is uncommon, but missing the 3rd and 4th level, thus Gameplay would score (-2) on that version.

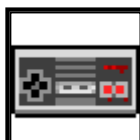
Acknowledgements, Updates and Errata since last month.

Special thanks to Sir Thomas McLaren (<http://www.digitaldinosaurs.com/>) for his help in getting me my first (& second) Apple][systems & joysticks, plus lots of great games, not to mention some user support. His generosity has enabled me to share these reviews with you. This is good because our classic gaming community has few gamers who collect, play and write reviews about the Apple 2. The Apple 2 owners of old certainly owned & played a lot of games, but they have pretty much stayed away from other (game & computer) systems, moved on to the Mac and stayed there - almost like they abandoned their old games. There are still folks selling original disks on Ebay and there are a few game sites, but nothing like the dedicated Atari & Commodore followers. Sure the Apple][is older with most of its hardware inferior to other systems, but it still deserves our attention and its place in gaming history. Hopefully my reviews will ignite some fans & we'll see more AP2 games web sites.

From last month, I did download a different ver of C64 "Stargate" with slightly different loading/title screen, but it plays the same as my other copy, with the impossible (unplayable) controls. I guess I'll need to find a C64 guru to help determine if a good copy still or ever existed somewhere on the net, or on floppy.

WANTED: To buy, trade for, or borrow: Vic 20 "Lode Runner". Can anyone help?
Or can you help review it for me?

Come back next month: Where we return to our 25th anniversary dedications to games on 1982, starting with a string of original Apple][games and the Many Faces of Bandits.
Contact Alan at: Hewston95@NOSPAMstratos.net or visit the Many Faces of site:
<http://my.stratos.net/~hewston95/RT/ManyFacesHome.htm>



NEScade -- RoadBlasters

by [David Lundin, Jr.](#)

While many Atari arcade titles ported to the NES hardware were produced and published in-house under Tengen, the company could not last forever on the NES. Worn down by lawsuits and the

massive losses from pulling their release of Tetris from the shelves before it ever really got going, Tengen stopped fighting the good fight. The mysterious black cartridges would be produced no more but that did not mean quality ports of Atari arcade games were never to be seen again. There was still a lot of money to be had and a huge library of titles ripe for porting onto Nintendo's wonder platform. The solution was to have Tengen use other publishers to release their games, ones in good standing with Nintendo, that would be licensed legally. Tengen would either do the development themselves and have the game published by a third party or license the rights for the home version of an arcade game to another developer. The third party developer would then use a publisher of their choice or publish the game themselves. One such arrangement is the case with RoadBlasters, published by Mindscape, which made its way onto the NES in early 1990.

RoadBlasters is yet another game that pairs two tried and true video game concepts: driving and shooting. In a futuristic time you must navigate your high performance armored vehicle through a series of fifty rallies. However this is more than just a speed race, along the way you'll face swarms of enemy vehicles and obstacles that will stop you dead in your tracks. More deadly than anything else though is the threat of running out of fuel, out here when you're out of gas you're out of luck. Fuel is replenished by crossing mid stage checkpoints as well as picking up fuel globes. Green fuel globes drift along the roadway, Red fuel globes (orange on the NES) are revealed by shooting enemies on the road that are carrying them. Thankfully your armored vehicle is equipped with powerful guns and can utilize even more powerful special weapons flown in by a support plane. Consider it Pole Position with shooting as that's a fairly good way to describe the basic gameplay.

With fifty stages in the original, one would assume that the NES version would truncate things somewhat but amazingly all fifty stages are present. Sure they may not follow the arcade layouts exactly but they're pretty darn close. Every few stages is bundled into a different region that you drive through. In both the arcade original and NES version you may start at one of the three first regions: Bubble City (rally 1), Forest Section (rally 4), or Desert Region (rally 11). This starting stage select was a common practice among Atari arcade games of the time and it's a pleasant surprise to see it included in the NES port. In fact nearly every screen is a carbon copy of the arcade original, albeit less detailed. The starting stage select, in-game, and post rally summary screens all look very nice and some real care has gone into bringing as much of the original over as possible. The in-game graphics aren't as colorful as they were in the arcade but there is a decent level of detail and the sensation of speed is recreated nicely. When the support plane drops special weapons they attach to your vehicle just as they did in the arcade, again showing the attention to detail present in this port. The fuel gauges, mine warnings, special weapon quantity readings - all the heads up display items are present and work exactly the same.



Audio is replicated as well as could be expected. The original had quite an assortment of sound effects and speech clips and while most of the sound effects make it onto the NES, all the speech has been cut due to technical limitations. The limited musical soundtrack is faithfully recreated for the most part although there wasn't much music in the arcade game to begin with. The controls are well adapted to the NES control pad considering that the arcade version used Atari's well know steering yoke. Acceleration and deceleration are controlled by up and down on the directional pad respectively. The only way to decelerate in the arcade was to lift off the accelerator pedal but the NES method of speed control simulates analog acceleration very nicely. Steering is controlled by left and right on the directional pad and feels tight and accurate. While there were two triggers for the guns and two buttons for the special weapons in the arcade, they were simply mirrored on either side of the control yoke. On the NES the A button fires the guns and the B button is used for special weapons, nothing is lost over the arcade original.

There are few NES arcade ports that have the amount of polish that RoadBlasters does. Instead of a lackluster port or a stripped down version of the original, a solid effort was made to cram everything possible from the arcade onto the NES. All the regions are present, all fifty rallies are here, every special weapon has been carried over and works exactly as it did in the arcade, and all the gameplay mechanics are reproduced perfectly. Simply put, this is one of the most accurate ports of an arcade game onto the NES hardware platform ever created. Sure it doesn't look as nice but no one should

expect it to, the graphics are still very well done and are more than adequate. Gamers didn't get shortchanged with the NES version of RoadBlasters, the port lives up to the fun and challenge of the original. After all, that's how things should be done when a game is being recreated on an alternate platform. Anyone that enjoyed RoadBlasters in the arcade or that thinks that the NES can't produce an accurate version of an arcade title should give this game a try. It's a very pleasant surprise among the stack of arcade to NES conversions.

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



Ask and ye shall receive. At least according to the Bible. In all seriousness, I eagerly read the November issue of Retrogaming Times Monthly (RTM) and noticed Scott's request for contributors. Ever since I had been introduced to RTM, I always thought I could contribute something. However, I had been lazy and never really got around to it. Besides Scott's request, I noticed Alan Hewston was taking a break as well. RTM has been such a good read, I figured it was time to put in my "two cents" on retrogaming and try to keep a good thing going.

First a little background on myself and my experiences with Retrogaming. I was a child of the 80's and grew up a diet of Atari 5200 and Apple IIe games. Looking back to those games, while the Atari 5200 games were quite good, most of my best memories come from the Apple II side of things. When I created my "Apple II Game Museum" (<http://www.angelfire.com/80s/apple2>), I created a "Apple II Gaming Memories" section as well. Since the Apple II hasn't been too heavily discussed in RTM, I thought it would be appropriate to take some of my gaming memories and contribute it to the RTM. These first memories are edits of what I already had on my web site. I hope you enjoy my trip down memory lane.

Apple Panic - Broderbund Software

When my parents first purchased our Apple IIe back around 1983, I remembered playing around with the "Apple Presents.....Apple IIe" disk as well as some games on disk like Brickout. However, I distinctly remember getting "Apple Panic" real early and it was my first game that I played with my IIe. I don't recall if I picked the game or if my parents picked it up. Regardless of who decided to buy this, this game kept me up for nights as I tried to whack evil apples into submission. I remember spending quite a bit time fiddling with my joystick or paddles for a long time before just playing the game on my keyboard. I don't recall if the game was meant to be strictly for the keyboard or not.



Ultima IV: Quest of the Avatar - Origin Software

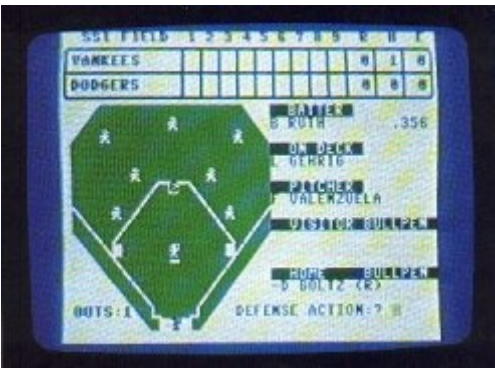
If I recall correctly, this was my first "adventure/RPG" type game I had played. It was also the first game in the Ultima series I had played. To this day, I still have yet to finish the game! There are a couple of reasons for that. One, after going through most of the game and getting to the Stygian Abyss, I battled to Level 6 where I promptly got lost in the criss-cross maze that is on that level. I eventually got a map from Origin to maneuver through the maze and got to the end of the game at Level 8 of the Abyss.



Alas, at the end of the game, I couldn't answer the questions and was sent back outside the Abyss! I think I tried several more times to get back to Level 8 but it was tough and I gave up. Perhaps one day I will try it again.

Computer Baseball - Strategic Simulations Inc.

I recall I picked this game up at a Sears store that was across the street from my high school in San Francisco. That would put the time frame around 1988 to 1992 (probably earlier than later). Interestingly, Computer Baseball came out around 1981 so the game was fairly old when I got it. However, it was still great fun. I spent hours playing the 78 Yankees, taking on everyone from the 1927 Yankees to the 1978 LA Dodgers.



Comparing Computer Baseball to other baseball games of the 80's is a little unfair. Computer Baseball harked back to the old days of a true baseball simulation rather than an arcade game. Compared to even the other baseball games of the 80's, Computer Baseball's graphics and sound were primitive. There was no real animation as we know it and minimal sound. Even the game play was fairly primitive. There were no balls and strikes. There was one only "pitch" and it was either a hit, strike out, walk, etc.

The simulation was fairly realistic. You could pinch hit, warm up relievers and do most things most real baseball managers would do. I really had a great time being the manager of the 78 Yankees. However, there was one unrealistic thing that I found. I had relievers with great stats (i.e. Dennis Eckersly from the 80's) and I put them as starting pitchers. They would pitch 7 to 8 inning and they would dominate in reality probably wouldn't happen. However, it was fun to see!

Given the limitations of the 8 bit machines, getting new teams and keeping track of real time stats was difficult. However, Computer Baseball did allow you to save stats and also create new teams on blank disks. I spent a lot of time creating new teams and that was quite fun as well. While I enjoy today's NBA games for the PS2 and other systems, I have yet to find a baseball simulation that was as fun as Computer Baseball was.



Nintendo Realm - Late December 1985

by Scott Jacobi

In the process of constructing last month's editorial, I forgot to supply one for Nintendo Realm. That's OK though, there really wasn't a lot to say about last month's batch of games. However, we have made it to the very end of 1985. And the Famicom ends 1985 with a bang, as a number of unique and interesting games hit the market. The Famicom is just about to hit it's stride in 1986, which will see the release of the Famicom Disk System, as well as the very first Legend of Zelda. By this time, the Nintendo Entertainment System has officially launched in the United States. While the inclusion of R.O.B. makes the overall package attractive, the NES really takes off when Super Mario Bros. was officially ported over in October of 1985, roughly one month after its release in Japan. Now all Nintendo has to do is sit back and watch the system sell itself. Let's dive in to this month's chronological selection, one of which spawned a series of games that is still being developed to this day!

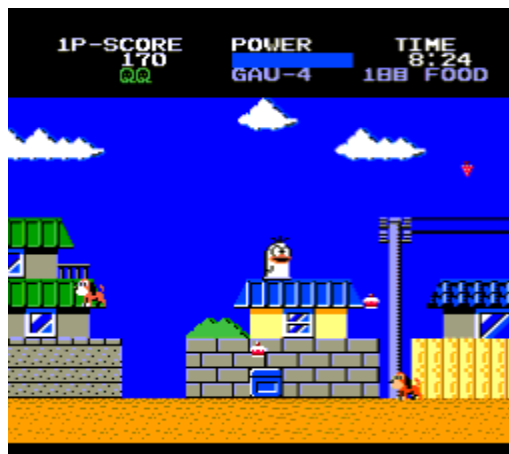
Zunou Senkan Galg released by DB Soft on December 14th, 1985. Also known simply as Galg. Galg is a shooter of the vertical scrolling variety. It features a very smoothly scrolling background that takes you through areas that contain branching pathways. It appears that in addition to your "blast everything in sight" objective, you must also collect 100 "parts" that can be found in each of the areas. The parts, which appear as red triangles against a white background, scroll by and must be touched to be collected. Enemies range from motionless obstacles to creatures which move about the screen and fire at you, all with predictable patterns. The contols for the game are smooth, and the double shot offensive capabilities of your ship work effectively to eliminate two enemies at once. The music is a little too high pitched, and nothing else remarkable stands out about Galg, but it's a decent game.

Obake no Q-Tarou: Wan Wan Panic released by Bandai on December 16th, 1985. Released in the U.S. as **Chubby Cherub** in 1986 As an American gamer, you may only be familiar with the game "Chubby Cherub," in which you play a fat naked cupid who seemingly flies over several neighborhood in search of fruit, lollipops, and rice balls, all the while avoiding dogs. The game made very little sense to me as a child, and after seeing the original Japanese counterpart, I understand why. Obake no Q-Tarou was an anime produced in Japan in 1985, based on a manga about a ghost (obake). It was designed by the same man who created Doraemon, anime's famous blue cat. Q-Tarou is a silly ghost who freeloads in the household of some children, and they have some adventures together. In the Famicom game, it seems like Q-Tarou's objective was to collect all of the food he could find and avoid the neighborhood dogs. Q-Tarou (and consequently, our American version cherub), has a power meter that constantly drains, and food refuels the bar. By pressing jump twice, or pressing and holding jump, you can make your character fly, which makes avoiding dogs and their dangerous barking much easier, but it doubles the consumption of the power bar. Regardless of which version you play, both are somewhat fun to try, although they get a little repetitive as the game advances. I suppose the Japanese version makes

slightly more sense, but only marginally so.



Galg



Obake no Q-Tarou

Thexder released by Square Co. on December 19th, 1985.

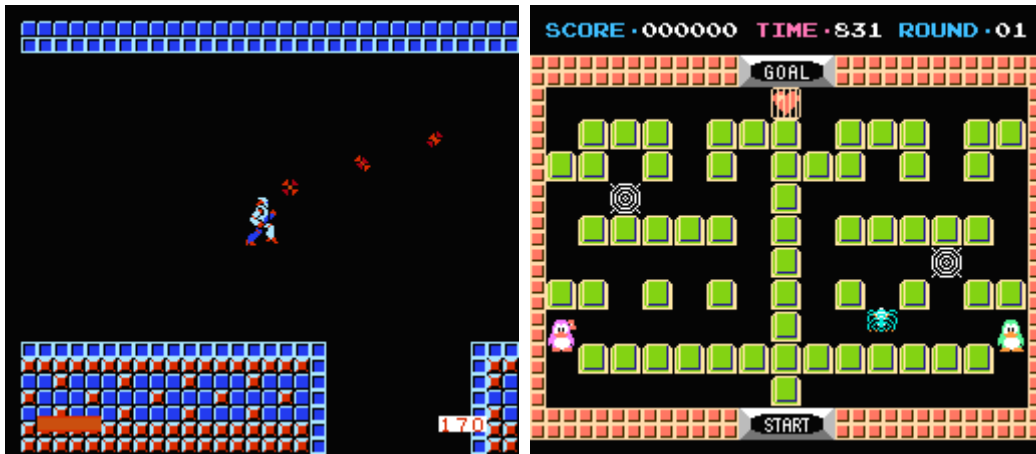
I'm going to start out by saying: Thexder is an awesome game. And no, I'm not saying that just because it happens to be the first game ever released by Square (later Squaresoft, later Square-Enix) on a Nintendo system. Square was only licensed to port the game to the Famicom by Game Arts, Thexder's original developer. If you were a child of the 80s who loved the Transformers, you couldn't help but fall in love with Thexder, which put you in command of your very own "Jetfire" or "Starscream." That is, you were in control of a robot who can transform in to a jet plane and back.

Each mode had similar, yet slightly different capabilities. As a robot, you could jump very high, and fire a target lock-on laser. As a plane you could move in eight directions non-stop, and fire your laser straight on. The goal was to make it through each area, but the levels were like mazes that were heavily patrolled by enemies. Some of these enemies were passive while others were very aggressive. As a robot, you could stand in one place and fire your laser, and it would automatically target any of the enemies within range. But it constantly cycled through those enemies, so it wouldn't necessarily fix on one enemy and destroy it before moving on. This meant that you couldn't safely stay in one area for too long. You also had an energy meter that drained the more you fired. Enemy contact wore it down substantially. You could also erect an energy shield around yourself at the cost of some energy. Destroying certain enemies released energy back in to your meter. My first experience with Thexder was on an IBM PC with an EGA card, which was very accurate to the original MSX version. Having played the Famicom version more recently, I was disappointed with some of the sacrifices that Square had to make with the game. These sacrifices had less to do with Square and more to do with the limitations of the Famicom. The most glaring change was the switch from a point-to-point laser, to a bullet system. Other changes include slightly less than smooth scrolling, and reduced sprite sizes. If this is the only version you can try, it's well worth the play, but I would recommend trying to find the MSX, PC, or even Amiga versions as well.

Binary Land released by Hudson on December 19th, 1985.

In this age of penguin popularity, this is one of two games reviewed this month that would have benefited from the media boost (the other being, of course, Penguin-Kun Wars.) Binary Land is an interesting puzzle/action game featuring an aqua penguin and a pink penguin-ette who begin each stage at the bottom of opposite halves of the screen. Before you start the game, you are asked to choose one of the penguins. The penguin of your choice is the one that you will be in direct control over. The other penguin will still appear, but your control over this penguin is mirrored in the left and right directions. Your goal is to direct both penguins from their starting location to the caged heart beneath the goal. Most of the time, you will be in control of both penguins at the same time. The only time this changes is if you get one penguin trapped in a spider web, in which case you must direct the remaining penguin to free the other before a monster gets to it first. The penguins are not helpless.

They are armed with some kind of conic wave that takes down spider webs and enemies easily. Destroying an enemy sometimes has the added benefit of a bonus item or power up being deposited in the maze. Hudson recently made this game available again as part of a Famicom compilation on the Game Boy Advance (it was not part of the Famicom Mini series.) It's a cute game, and it's definitely original.

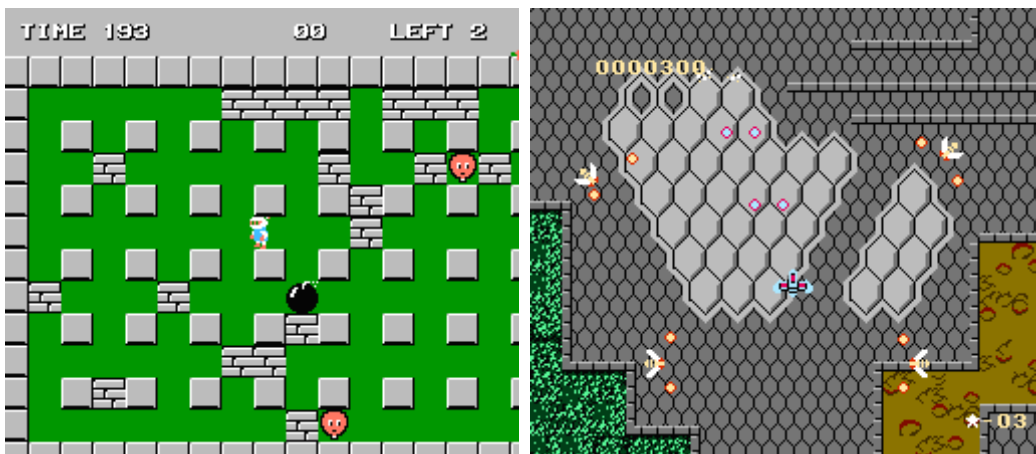


Thexdar

Binary Land

Bomberman released by Hudson on December 19th, 1985. Released in the U.S. on January 1987. Bomberman probably needs no introduction to modern gamers and retro gamers alike. Still very much a viable franchise in this day and age, Bomberman's early fame can be attributed to his Famicom and NES release. But this was not his very first appearance. Bomberman first arrived on the MSX computer systems with a very different look. In Europe, the MSX version, as well as a port to the ZX Spectrum was known as Eric and the Floaters. But it was the Famicom version that served as the origin for his now famous look as an anime inspired white robot, complete with antenna. Whether it was intentional or not is unknown, but the sprite used for the Famicom version of Bomberman was the same as the enemy sprite found in Hudson's version of Lode Runner. The gameplay in this version is a lot more formulaic than the subsequent Bomberman releases, which tended to vary up the playfield from one stage to the next. In this version, it's the same horizontally scrolling stage in every level with bricks laid out at random. The only thing that changes from one level to the next is the assortment of enemies that must be defeated before locating and leaving through the exit, and the single power up that can be found in each level. A player had to complete 50 stages before being treated to a very short ending, with a bonus stage occurring every five stages. This version is obviously eclipsed by the over 20 different releases that have occurred since, but it's very interesting to see the roots of the series.

Exed Exes released by Tokuma Shoten on December 21th, 1985. Based on one of Capcom's earliest arcade games, Exed Exes was also known as Savage Bees outside of Japan. Exed Exes can best be described by starting with 1942, replacing the World War theme with a Sci-Fi theme, and replacing the enemy planes with bee-like insects. But Exed Exes has more of an organized feel than 1942. Enemies come out in packs in difficult but predictable patterns. Larger enemies appear periodically, and power-ups are provided for extra fire power. The usual shooting sections are broken up with bonus areas, where POW symbols can convert difficult to destroy skulls in to easily captured bonus fruit. At the end of each level, a floating platform containing multiple cannon targets appears as the stage boss. The game is fun, but otherwise unremarkable except for one bit of history. When the game was released, a contest was held, and players who reached a score of over 1 million points were provided with a special password. Players who photographed this password and mailed it in to Tokuma, which was also a magazine publisher, you were given a special silver label to apply over the original. The label, and cartridges that still contain one, are extremely rare.



Bomberman

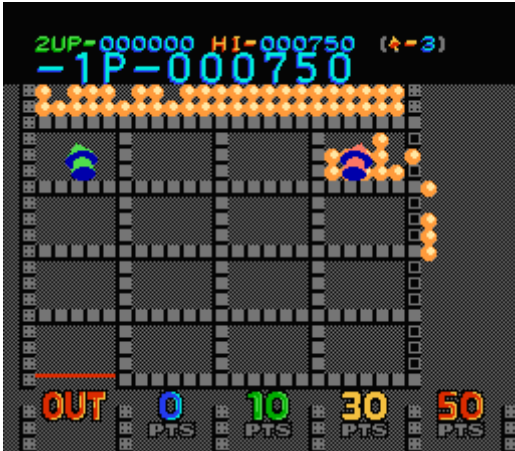
Exed Exes

Lot Lot released by Tokuma Shoten on December 21th, 1985. Lot Lot is an incredibly original puzzle game. The game is played on what can best be described as a four by four grid. Above the grid are a number of balls (think pachinko), and occasionally the barriers between the grids desolve, making it possible for the balls to drop down or move laterally from one box to another. You control an arrow, or rather, two arrows. You are in direct control of one arrow, while the other arrow trails behind, moving in step with the first arrow, but delayed by three seconds. When you push the button, the contents of the grid that each arrow is point to are swapped. The goal

is to safely deliver the balls in to one of the point locations, either on the right side of the screen, or in all of the bottom locations but the left. If any balls fall in to the bottom left most grid, a crap begins to rise, eager to cut the cord that keeps the balls from falling in to the "OUT" deposit. If any ball falls through "OUT" you lose one chance. To complete each stage, you must cleanly release a set number of balls, regardless of points. This game won't be for everyone, but it's definitely worth checking out to see if it's for you. I'm not positive, but I believe this is one case where the Famicom game preceded the arcade game, and not the other way around.

Penguin-Kun Wars released by ASCII on December 25th, 1985.


We end 1985 with a very unique and fun game. Penguin-Kun Wars is an unlikely title for a game involving healthy competition between cute animals with... balls. This war is all about who can get the most balls on their opponent's side of the table before 60 seconds runs out. Each player starts with 5 balls on their side. They can throw one ball at a time and if a rolling ball makes contact with a player, that player is knocked out briefly, giving the other player precious moments to send balls over uncontested. The game is played in best two-out-of-three rounds, in an elimination style tournament. If either player manages to get all 10 balls on their opponent's side, they automatically win the round. After 30 seconds, each player is given small control over the lateral movement of the balls, and when only 20 seconds remain, a partial barrier appears to reflect the balls back when they hit it. Upon winning two rounds, you (the penguin) are transported to a bonus round with various objectives, including bombing a whack-a-mole like arena. Your ultimate goal is to get the penguin to the top of the elimination chart against the evil empire of koala's, mice, beavers, and pandas.



Lot Lot



Penguin-Kun Wars



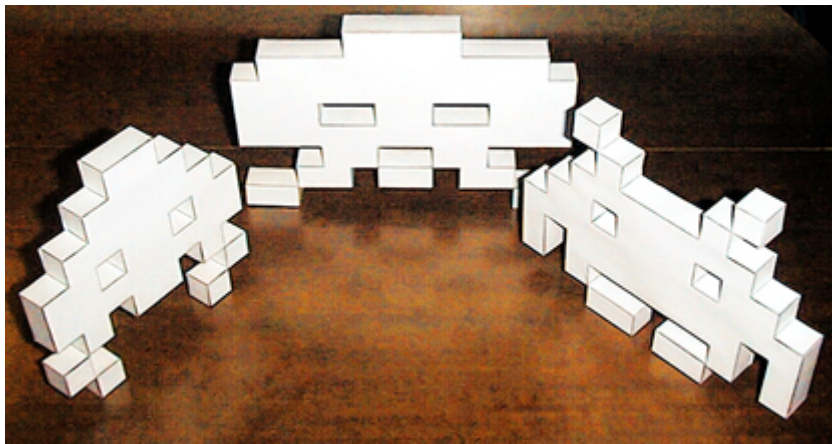
Space Invaders Papercraft

by James Catalano

Greeting RTM readers! Besides gaming, and classic gaming at that, one of my other hobbies is building papercraft models. Mainly of sci-fi stuff such as robots, spaceships, and the like. As for gaming, I've seen some video game related papercraft models such as arcade machines, popular Nintendo characters like Mario, and even paper versions of game systems like the Game Cube and the original model Game Boy Advance. While these were cool, I noticed there weren't any papercraft models done on the really classic stuff before the Nintendo age.

So with that in mind, I thought I'd try my hand at creating my own papercraft models based on a classic game before the Nintendo era. Being my first try at designing a papercraft model, I wanted something that was both simple to build, yet would make for a cool 3-D model.

Then I thought of the perfect classic game that had characters that would be easy to turn into neat paper models. And that game is Space Invaders! So for classic gaming fans, and anyone interested in trying their hand at papercraft model making, I present to you my 3-D papercraft renderings of the aliens from Space Invaders.



Just click on the link below to be taken to the download page of my site where you will find the papercraft file. The file contains part sheets and assembly instruction diagrams to print out and build all 3 Space Invaders aliens shown in the image. These are good sized models. The smallest being 6 x 6 inches, to the largest being 9 x 6 inches.

All you'll need to build these models are white glue, a X-ACTO knife, and a metal ruler (to use as a cutting guide when cutting out parts). For a building tip, be sure to lightly score any folds with a X-ACTO knife to get a nice clean sharp fold. Enjoy!

After Space Invaders, the next classic game I plan to make papercraft models from will be Galaga. Look for those to be posted on the download page of my site soon.
http://jims_digital_domain.tripod.com/downloads.htm

For those interested in getting into papercraft modeling, you can find a wide variety of FREE models available for downloading at <http://www.ss42.com/toys.html>

NEWSBYTES


I wanted to bring this section back to RTM because I'd like to encourage people who may have retro gaming related news to submit that news to us. You don't have to have an entire article to contribute to RTM. If you'd simply like to submit a newsbyte, feel free to send them in before the 20th of each month. Since we don't actually have any contributions this month, I'll take this opportunity to be a little self-promotional.

•I'm wearing multiple hats these days. In addition to being the new editor of RTM, I am also a staff member at a fledgling gaming site known as <http://www.abxy.org/> where you can find my postings under the nickname "Procyon." The site is still heavily under development, but it promises to be a rising star among popular gaming news sites like IGN and Gamespot. It primarily focuses on modern day gaming news, but some articles occassionally pertain to classic or retro gaming that would delight many of you. Give it try.

•The site that lead me their in the first place happens to be another wonderful site known as StrategyWiki.org, which is a sister site to abxy.org. If you've discovered wikipedia and the joys of editing wiki sites, and you happen to like writing about video games, this is the site for you. I have been editing there for about half a year, and have contributed pages for classic games like Pac-Man, Donkey Kong, and Galaga, among many others. While the site is receiving a healthy dose of modern day game contributions, there are still plenty of wonderful classic games that need some wiki loving. So head on over there, and see if your favorite game is covered or not. If it is, see if there is some special bit of information that you feel is missing and that you can contribute. If it's not there, why not start a guide for it? You must register to edit, but it's a quick a painless process. Just try not to get addicted! (To check out the work that I've done, plus a picture of me, see [my user page](#).)

•An interesting article has appeared documenting as much factual evidence as is available concerning Atari's dumping of cartridges and hardware in Alamogordo, New Mexico. You can read everything that the author has managed to dig up, and the interviews he conducted at <http://atari.digital-madman.com/>. (He also happens to have an interesting account of his bad experience waiting on a line at Wal-Mart for the Nintendo Wii.)

SEND US YOUR NEWSBYTES!



Behind the Pixels: Pac-Man

by Erik Lampi

Before going into what I'll be talking about in this column, let me tell you a bit about who I am-my name is Erik, I've been playing video games since my father brought home a home Pong system in

1974 (I don't remember if it was a Coleco or Radio Shack Pong system, but it was definitely one of the two), and my obsession has gotten to the point where I've worked in the video game industry for almost ten years now. In other words, when I used the word "obsession" in the last sentence, it really wasn't much of an exaggeration. Much of my interest in games centers on the early 80's emergence of home systems (specifically the Atari 2600/5200, Intellivision & Colecovision systems, with a bit of Odyssey2 & 7800 stuff here). This time, though, I just want to have some goofy fun with the evolution of Pac Man.

Back in the early days of the video game industry, 5 B.C. (Before Crash), Namco released a little game called Puck Man on the Japanese public. Before coming to America, the name was changed to Pac Man due to concerns over people defacing the machines so that the "P" in Puck Man was an "F". I'm sure you can figure the rest out from there... Anyway, this is all information that anyone could find on Wikipedia or any number of gaming sites. What they DON'T tell you is what happened after the arcades closed & the home consoles turned off...

Behind the Pixels: Pac-Man

The 1970's were the beginning of the consumer video game industry, and the birth of the character based video game can be traced to a pizza parlor in 1978 Japan. Puck Man was conceived here, and one year later Namco witnessed the birth of the world's most popular video game, naming it Puck Man. Puck Man grew up like many child stars, in the public eye, and unfortunately, like many child stars, trouble was on the horizon. Namco, the precocious little game's parent company, decided to bring their young progeny to America in 1980, changing his name like so many Ellis Island immigrants from the early 20th century. To better fit in with American culture, Puck Man was forever after to be known as Pac Man, and that's when his famed rebelliousness truly came to light.

Fame came easily to Pac Man, and seemingly overnight, he had gone from being a "neat" video game to a world phenomenon. The young sprite was featured on everything from t-shirts and lunchboxes to having his own cereal and a permanent penthouse suite at Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas. It was almost impossible to walk down the street and not see something with Pac Man's face staring back at you. This was his time to shine, but a tarnish was already beginning to dull it... Pac Man had developed a drug problem.

Mario: "Yeah, those were the good old days. I remember one particular night; P.M, Double D, Doodoo (Pac Man, Dig Dug, and Mr. Do. -ed.), and myself were in Atlantic City snorting power pellets off of a new cocktail version of his game, when he just lost it. You know all of those stories that you hear about rock stars trashing hotel rooms? P.M. outdid them. Couches, one of the end tables, and every towel in the room were thrown out the window, and just about everything else was broken somehow. The only thing left untouched was that damn cocktail version of his game that we'd been snorting off of. He didn't care though-he was the biggest game star in the world, rolling in money, and he knew it. The damage was pretty bad, but P.M. just shrugged it off & said that it didn't matter to him-- he had plenty of quarters to pay for it all."

In 1981, Pac Man met the woman that he'd spend the rest of his life with, but not until years later. Ms. Pac Man came to America from Japan that year, and although many people thought that she was MRS. Pac Man, that has never been the case, even to this day. By summer of that year, Ms. Pac Man was becoming a star in her own right, and Pac Man's good fortune began to head south. People were flocking to Ms. Pac Man's machines, and Pac Man himself was being slowly left out in the cold, causing him to become more & more reclusive as the year went on. By March of 1982, Pac Man refused to leave his Caesar's Palace penthouse. There is a blank time here that not even Pac Man himself will talk about, fueling speculation that he suffered a nervous breakdown and was considering suicide.

Ms. Pac Man: "I couldn't stand him. The first time that we went out was a double date with a couple of the robots from Berzerk-- I think it was Steve & Shelley. Anyway, we went to a pretty nice place, but Pac obviously didn't want to be there. He kept looking at the timer on the wall & telling Steve that he had to get going by 11 because he had some 'thing' to do with Donkey Kong. Finally around quarter of 11, Pac just disappears. Later we found out that he had ducked out of one of the emergency exits on the side of the building to keep his appointment with Donkey Kong. We didn't see each other again for years after that."

The Caesar's Palace meltdown started a new, darker chapter in Pac Man's life, although it didn't seem that way to him. In May of 1982, he decided that his entire life needed to change, and he left the video game industry. Joining Billy Idol on tour for the rest of the year, Pac Man's every craving was satisfied, no matter how deviant. His addictive personality led him to eventually collecting first aid kits and flags, but he refused to tell anyone why, and he very rarely shared them with the groupies that were so plentiful on the "White Wedding" tour.

Namco, on the other hand, wanted Pac Man to star in another sequel to his original hit, but he refused, and the first of Pac Man's many legal battles began. Having no other choice, Namco hired a new Pac Man for the upcoming Super Pac Man game. To generate interest in the upcoming sequel,

Namco courted Richard Pryor for a supporting role in the game, but he had already signed on for a similar role in the upcoming Superman III. Super Pac Man was eventually released in 1982 with a recast Pac Man, but the gaming public would have none of it, and the game was a relative failure.

Dirk The Daring: "I found Pac Man at the Long Beach Arena Billy Idol concert, and I almost didn't recognize him-scraggly beard, half-lidded, bloodshot eyes, nursing a bottle of Jack Daniels that he'd stolen from one of the opening band's roadies. The poor guy was a mess. I stayed backstage with everyone until he passed out, then carried him out to my car & straight to rehab."

In 1983, six months after leaving rehab, Pac Man was still clean & sober, and was once again dating Ms. Pac Man. By the end of 1983, Jr. Pac Man came into the world. Although Ms. Pac Man had another child from a previous relationship (Baby Pac Man, born in 1982, is the son of Duane Murphy, Pac Man's replacement in Super Pac Man), the four formed a strong family bond that translated well to their Saturday morning reality TV series "Pac Man." The lone hold-out for the show was Jr. Pac Man, whom Pac Man didn't want becoming a child star like he had been. Baby Pac, on the other hand, wasn't Pac Man's natural child, and Mr. Murphy, the baby's father, encouraged the family to make his son a star.

Pac Man has led a clean life since his tumultuous 4th year, and the future looks bright. Namco now releases Pac Man games directly to home video game consoles instead of the arcade, but Pac Man, older & wiser, prefers it that way now.

Pac Man: "Would I do it all over again? Yeah, probably. I mean, those years of partying in the 80's made me who I am today... well, that and extensive plastic surgery. I'm not ashamed to admit it: I've had some work done. With all that I've done in the past 27 years, I think I'm doing OK."

Stay tuned for next month, when Behind The Pixels looks at Donkey Kong's bi-polar disorder.

Game Over

This is another issue that came together nicely. As you can see, in addition to some of our regulars, we received contributions from new authors. They weren't all game reviews either, some of our contributors showed their creative side as well. If you would like to submit an article for the next issue, just contact Scott before December 20th. Anything is welcome as long as you have a passion for what you're writing about. Don't wait for my next plea for contributions, go ahead and submit something anytime you are inspired. See you next month!

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