RETROGAMING TIMES monthly

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COVERING 3 DECADES OF GAMING

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Press Fire To Begin

by Bryan Roppolo

This issue contains a little bit of everything this month. With the passing of Michael Jackson there is a special "Moonwalking Into Heaven" column included, since I know he helped change the face of the '80s just as much as Atari did. I figured it was the least we could do to show our appreciation. In addition, I also decided to dedicate this month's Videological Dig to the Michael Jackson's Moonwalker video game, since he is probably one of the few people to have a home and arcade game based on him and his dance moves. In other news, I hope everyone is having as good of a summer as I am. It's been great fun to not have to wear pants out everyday and enjoy the warm sunshine!

This month we have a few new columnists, so I'd like to give them a proper introduction. The first new writer is James Sorge who will be doing a monthly movie review column. Now you might be asking why would a retrogaming publication want to do movie reviews? Well simply put, the movies will be video game related. When I heard his idea I had to let him on board since it will only add to the variety of gaming coverage provided here. Since I don't want RTM to become a collection of just game reviews, this will only help set this magazine apart from other classic gaming publications. Jeff Fulton is another person who came on board to help provide some needed coverage for the Atari ST system. One of my goals in being the editor of Retrogaming Times Monthly is to provide a mix of computer and video game system articles, since I feel that many magazines seem to cover just one or the other almost exclusively. Not here. This is a place for gaming regardless of what platform or type of system it is. If it's video games you want to read about, it's video games you will get. Rounding out the new faces are Patrick McClellan and Eric Cummings. Patrick will be writing about retro remakes/compilations while Eric stepped in to do this month's Funspot review and is sure to bring some more interesting columns to the magazine in the near future. All in all, I am happy to have these

new faces on board and am hoping it will only make Retrogaming Times Monthly the best retrogaming magazine out there.

Now let's get on to this month's issue!

Retrogaming News

Upcoming Retrogaming Events

California Extreme
This west coast classic arcade and pinball show is right around the corner! This year it will be taking place at a new location, the fantastic Hyatt Regency Santa Clara. Check out my show report of CAX 2008 back in RTM issue #51 for more information on what to expect, and of course take a look at the official site for up to the minute details concerning CAX 2009! The official site can be found at http:www.caextreme.org. Come celebrate your arcade heritage and join me at California Extreme's 13th show July 11-12 in Santa Clara! Pre-register today and support this excellent event!

-Submitted by David Lundin, Jr

Video Game Summit 2009
This show is being held in Lombard, IL July 18th, 2009 at the Heron Point Convention Center. This is the one that has been featured in Retrogaming Times Monthly many times via competitions and interviews and is sure to be a blast! There will be an Atari Jagfest Challenge and Atari 2600 competition in addition to RTM columnist Paul Zimmerman's live Phoenix world record attempt. Check out the VGS website at http://avc.atari-users.net/VGS.html for more info.

-Submitted by Bryan Roppolo

Commodore Vegas Expo v5.0
The Fresno Commodore User Group and the Clark County Commodore Computer Club of Las Vegas are putting on the 5th Commodore Vegas Expo from July 25-26, 2009 at the Plaza Hotel, #1 Main Street, Las Vegas, NV. There will be demos and presentations on and about the Commodore 128, Commodore 64, DTV, Plus/4, VIC-20 and Amiga. People will also be able to see the C-One and the Amiga One Computers, as well as being able to shop around at all the vendor tables for those hard to find items. The main show page can be found at http://www.portcommodore.com/dokuwiki/doku.php?id=commvex:start. Be sure to stop on by!

-Submitted by James Diffendaffer

Moonwalking Into Heaven

A Michael Jackson Tribute

As we all know by now, Michael Jackson the king of pop has died. I decided that there should be a proper goodbye given out to the man that redefined pop music in the '70s, '80s, and even into the '90s. Considering Michael Jackson is undeniably the most influential and important musician during the time of retrogaming, I want everyone to think when they are reading these articles that somewhere out there, there was probably a kid taking a break from playing Pong so he/she could perform the robot as "Dancing Machine" blared from the speakers of an 8-track player, or master the moonwalk after a hard night's work of blasting aliens on his/her Atari 2600, or even sitting down to watch with his/her family the national primetime broadcast of "Black or White" while the Genesis lay idle next to the TV set. Regardless of what you were doing when Michael Jackson was out there conquering the world of pop music, it is undeniable he helped set the course for all 3 of the decades mentioned above. Without him, imagine what the '80s would have been like. It would be like imagining an '80s without video games, something which I'm sure every gamer both past and present would dread to even think about. He and Atari go hand in hand in my opinion when it comes to those special 10 years called the 1980's. In the end everyone was touched by Michael Jackson whether they knew it or not, just like how many modern gamers have been touched by the Odyssey, Pong and Atari without even knowing what those 3 words mean. Therefore, I want to salute you Michael Jackson for changing not just the U.S., but the world with your music. You will surely be missed.

-Bryan Roppolo

Having spent most of the 80's living in a jungle on the other side of the planet, I sadly spent most of my life completely ignorant of the man known as Michael Jackson. I never saw the "Thriller" video until today, if any of you can believe that. I never danced around to "Smooth Criminal". My mother would occasionally tell me to listen to a song on the radio, and explain that it was Michael Jackson and he

could sing and dance especially well, but I didn't care, it was just the radio. It wasn't until I was fifteen years old and living in Khabarovsk, Russia that I took notice. It was the middle of the summer, which meant it was at least 100 degrees outside, and 90 inside. Most people hear "Russia" and they think of giant fur hats, snow and men standing around a trash can fire drinking vodka to stay warm. They did, in fact, stand around drinking vodka, but it had nothing to do with the cold. I lived in a "nice" apartment, in which the plaster was peeling off of the walls, the electrical sockets would occasionally fall out for no reason, and centipedes the size of house cats could be heard (yes, heard) running along the walls and floor at night. There was no air conditioning, so my days were spent sitting in front of open windows attempting to read the local newspaper or yelling across the house in horribly broken, bad Russian just for practice. Everything we did, we did the Russian way. Russian movies, Russian books, Russian food, even the American and British movies that occasionally played on television were dubbed and redubbed so many times they were barely recognizable. The only bit of normal American life I had with me was my old Game Boy. I played it for hours daily, Metroid II, Jurassic Park, Super Mario Land, I didn't care what game it was, as long as it was from home. Then it happened. I had left the television on, but turned down just loud enough so I could hear it in hope that I would magically learn some more Russian that way. My Metroid II speed run was going nicely. The Ice Beam was just ahead, and...I heard ENGLISH! I dropped the Game Boy and ran to turn up the television. Michael Jackson was there, a beacon of American culture in the middle of what was once the Soviet Union, dancing and singing "They Don't Care About Us", undubbed, unsubtitled, and unaltered. I sat on the floor, barely a foot from the television, taking in all of the color and the sounds and suddenly feeling very homesick. The local television station had apparently gotten a shipment of music videos from the USA and England, because they played them for another hour, everything from Michael Jackson to John Michael Montgomery, but that Michael Jackson video made the last several months of solitude evaporate. It also made the previous 45 minutes of my Metroid II game evaporate, because I unwittingly bumped the power button when I dropped the Game Boy in my haste to get to the television. It didn't matter, because I had seen and heard things that people at home were seeing and hearing. So, wherever you may roam, thank you, Michael Jackson, for bringing a little bit of light into a dark, run-down apartment in Russia. May history remember you for your brilliance as an entertainer, rather than your eccentricities as a man.

-*Paul Inglehart*

Movie's With A Byte: The Wizard

by James Sorge

Hello, and welcome to my first-ever movie review column. The first movie I will be reviewing is “The Wizard”, starring Luke Edwards, Jenny Lewis, Fred Savage of the Wonder Years, and Beau Bridges. This was maybe not a 10-star movie like Titanic, but as far as impacting the video game world and shaping video game competitions for the next few years, it was very successful and its impact cannot be argued. It also remains sentimental among a lot of NES/SNES players, people with disabilities, and those who value family and closeness.

As for the movie plot, it basically starts off with Jimmy Woods (Luke Edwards) being put in the mental hospital for some type of post-traumatic stress disorder from his sister Jennifer dying. With Jimmy’s mother and father divorced, family problems among his brother Corey (Fred Savage), his Dad (Beau Bridges), and others have been an issue. In essence, Jimmy wants to put the memories of his sister where they were happy the most: California. When Jimmy is institutionalized, his brother Corey breaks him out of the institution and they start a journey from Utah to California.

They end up at a Utah bus depot, which is when Jimmy scores 50,000 points in Double Dragon and in turn gets the attention of a girl named Haley (played by Jenny Lewis) who decides to accompany them on their journey to California. So as they travel the country, they play many money matches and use the riches to travel across the country, with the ultimate goal being Video Armageddon, a national video game tournament. Along the way, they encounter Putnam who was hired to bring Jimmy back by the boy’s mother. They also meet Lucas (“The Power Glove, it’s SO BAD!”) and a truck driver named Spanky who ultimately finishes the trip taking them to Video Armageddon. Along the way are the various thwarts of Putnam (Haley screaming “He touched my Breasts”), Jimmy’s and Corey’s Dad and brother (Christian Slater) following, the constant battles between Putnam and Jimmy’s Dad, a lesson on why you shouldn’t gamble, and eventually, the finals on the stage that would eventually become the stage for Nintendo PowerFest/Nintendo World Championships 1990. Jimmy ends up winning the tournament on secret game Super Mario Bros. 3, and then afterwards the family gets together at Jimmy and Jennifer’s last happy moment before his sister died.

While this might not be the best movie to date, it has its moments where it impacts video gaming. Most importantly was the display of all the major NES games up to the time (wish there were a little more games shown, but it was still good to see this pop culture phenomenon which doesn’t get much mainstream press). Blatantly rolled into this package was the infomercial for Super Mario Bros. 3,

which would become one of the best selling and most anticipated games of all time. Video game competitions weren't in any way mainstream before this movie, so a lot of Twin Galaxies, Evo, and others have this movie to thank as well for getting people into competitive gaming. As far as this movie having a commercial impact, it still does.

A lot of old NES players hold this movie to heart, and honestly without it I don't think Nintendo PowerFest and Nintendo World Championships 1990 would have been able to fill arenas and sell out slots. Isaiah "Triforce" Johnson, the Leader of Empire Arcadia, a New York area VG team, walks around with the Power Glove made so famous by Lucas. There were others too, though I can't remember them offhand.

An underrated theme of the movie, but more important in today's world, is the fact it shows that people with mental disabilities such as post-traumatic stress disorder can overcome their problems and succeed. I personally have one and know people with it and this movie is inspiring to them and gives them confidence to break out. I don't see many movies documenting this kind of stuff (think I can only mention this and A Beautiful Mind off the top of my head) and I think it shows things can be overcome.

In closing, this movie might be a bit cheesy, but its impact on the video game world has been huge. If anything, it's a view into the late 1980's/early 1990's way of life and video gaming. It also brings to light some things about disabilities and things of the like. In the end I think this overcomes the movie's cheesy lines and somewhat childish plot. If you have a family and can take some of the dated culture, I'd suggest giving it a play on your home TV.

Movie Rating: **(3.5 out of 5 stars)** **Industry Impact:** **(5 out of 5 mushrooms)**

Lunch With Tim McVey

by Paul Zimmerman

Tim McVey was the very first player in the world to score over a billion points on Nibbler (1,000,042,270 on January 15, 1984 to be exact), the very first video game that allowed players to get a billion points. Tim played the game for 44 hrs and 45 min. all at the age of 16.

He was also the very first player in the world to have a "Civic Day" proclaimed in his honor. On January 28, 1984 the mayor of Ottumwa, Iowa declared that day to be "Tim McVey Day."

"Nibbler is Tim McVey's game!"

June 1, 2009

Hi Tim. How are you doing? This is my very first interview. Thanks for doing it. I hope it will be fun. So, where do I begin? I know, how the heck did you play one game for 44 hrs. and 45 min. straight?! I mean, how did you prepare, physically and mentally before your game? Drink a bunch of Mountain Dew? During your game, how were you able to just keep playing for almost 2 days straight? What pushed you to keep playing and not fall asleep? Were you in "the zone"? I for sure think enjoyment from playing a game should come first before attempting any marathon or world record. How did you feel after your game? Tired? Happy…proud…excited?! In general, can you give any tips to the readers who are new to marathons, about how to prepare before the game, during the game and after the game?

TIM: Well for me, preparation was simply playing the game. It's sort of like lifting weights…at first you can't lift as much weight, or as many reps…but the more you do it, the more weight you can lift, the more times…it just gets easier the more you do it. So for me it was simply a matter of playing, longer each time, and building my endurance. That was it, just going to Twin Galaxies and doing it…

I don't recall drinking much of anything really, a few Coke's was it.

As for staying awake. Desire. They were offering a free Nibbler to the first person to score a Billion, and I wanted it! Being the first to do something, knowing that no matter what, if the record got broken, nobody would EVER be able to take away the fact that I did it FIRST. That's motivation…

Can't really say it's an "in the zone" type of thing. Once you get good at Nibbler, and can cope with the pure speed, it just seems to slow down. You're always in the zone after that basically.

Obviously I really liked that game, I couldn't play anything that long if I didn't like it. I wouldn't play

it now if I didn't still like it.

I was soooooooooooo TIRED after my game, all I can remember thinking was bed…

Not sure I am the best for tips. I mean we covered my preparation! LOL But seriously, if you are good enough to play something you enjoy for a long period of time, common sense will go a long ways.

Make sure you are comfortable. In every manner possible. Temperature. Control the room temperature, cooler is always better than warm, warm makes you tired…Make sure you have several choices of seating. Padded, non padded, back, no back, variety is very nice over a long game. Have the most comfortable shoes you own on, nice thick soft socks. Do NOT play barefooted! Especially if you stand for any length of time. And if you play for 2+ days, you'll almost certainly stand for extended periods…

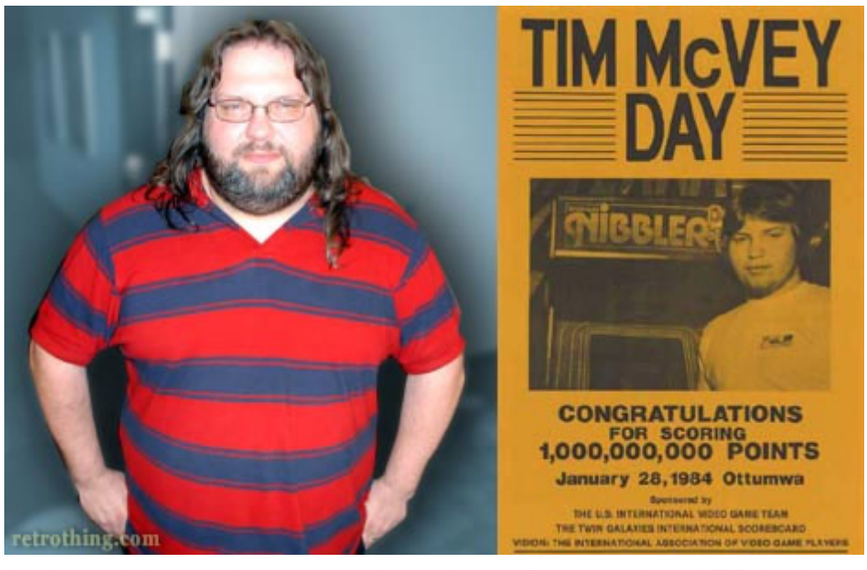
Plan ahead. Try to cut yourself off from caffeine a few weeks before your game. So that if you need a boost during the game, it actually has an effect. Eat sensibly. Nothing during the 48 hours prior to your game that could "interrupt" your game…Spicy Mexican, Chili etc…you get my drift.

Above all else get plenty of rest leading up to the game. Stick to as normal of a sleep schedule as you are used to as possible. I could go on and on, but I think you get it. Just plan ahead, and get plenty of rest. Make sure you have a close supply of whatever food or beverages you will need. Any meds you need, etc…The better rested, more prepared, more comfortable you are, the longer your game will last before you get tired…after that, you are on your own. I think that's what separates Marathoner's from other gamers…You really have to WANT to prepare and endure the pain of a marathon to be successful. If not, it's just not going to happen…

June 2, 2009

You are exactly right about playing the game for preparation. After playing Phoenix many more times since Midwest Gaming Classic, I can now easily get to the world record (and sometimes without even losing a life). There shouldn't be much pressure on me to make the world record at Video Game Summit. Now it is all about how far I can take the game. I think that is where the pressure will come from, plus of course the live setting. I will do a couple more marathon sessions before VGS. That is interesting about Marathoner vs. Gamer. I do think they are totally different.

So, how often did you go to Twin Galaxies to practice your game leading up to the event? Have any clue about how much money you spent? You were 16 at the time. Did you have a job to help pay for the games? If yes, what did you do? Did you have your driver's license then? Did you drive to the arcade? If yes, what kind of a car did you have? I know during that time I was too young to drive, so sadly I couldn't drive to the arcade. Was there any sort of press about your attempt before the event? Did your high school friends know all about it? Do you think you got more attention in high school before and/or after the event?



TIM: I went to Twin Galaxies whenever I had any money to waste…I didn't spend a lot, remember I could play as long as I wanted for $.25 ;) No job, and I wasn't actually in school at the time. I had gotten bored in school, it wasn't a challenge…I ended up dropping out and getting my GED. It was just too boring, I didn't feel like I was learning anything. I didn't have any teachers who challenged me anymore…My biggest challenge was not falling asleep in class out of shear boredom. In retrospect I wish I had stuck it out, just to get that piece of paper, the GED isn't the same, but I do have it…14 years later I went to local community college, had a 4.0 until my girlfriend and I broke up…that's another long story altogether…

I didn't get a car or driver's license until I was in my 20's. It's a good thing, I likely would of killed myself or somebody. Thanks to some older brothers getting me started young, I was quite an alcoholic by the time I was 20. It's all I thought or cared about 24 hours a day, 7 days a week… Glad I lived long enough to outgrow that…My BMX bike was my wheels, or riding around with somewhat sober friends…It's amazing I lived thru that period. I almost didn't, broke my back in 3 places in a car wreck 2-22-90. That was actually my wake up call. Our new year's resolution that

year…to be as drunk as possible, every day possible for the entire year. And I was, right up until that car wreck…Pretty stupid huh?

All of my "friends" knew about my attempt, quite a few stopped by and spent some time with me on Sunday, and Monday evening during my game, they were in school at the time, so their time was limited…I was never "popular" in high school etc…I went out of my way to NOT be. The "popular" kids, weren't the "cool" kids I wanted to hang out with. I was totally into heavy metal music at the time, and that wasn't exactly popular…So the "popular" people looking down at me for my music, made me say SCREW YOU! So I went out of my way to NOT be anything like them…

I bet this isn't going quite like you anticipated at this point huh? :p

June 3, 2009
Interesting that you dropped out of high school because you were bored and it wasn't a challenge for you. So, you never got your Associate's degree? That is a bummer, especially with that excellent GPA.

So, what heavy metal bands did you listen to at that time? Any favorites? What do you listen to now? I sure hope it is still metal. I noticed on your blog that you talk about BMX bikes. Do you still ride them? Do you collect them?

I also noticed you play Xbox games. Any other next gen systems you have? Do you have any "retro" game systems that you play now? Did you have any when you were 16? Maybe an Atari 2600, even though it was late in the system's life? In 1984, besides Nibbler, any other arcade game(s) you enjoyed playing? As of the time of this interview, sadly you do not have the world record for Nibbler anymore, but are there any other world records that you have? Did you have any other world records in 1984?

TIM: Never got my associate's degree, dropped out again after my girlfriend and I broke up after two years…I was never there for myself, just her and her kids…Once they were gone, so was my desire for college. I was really getting burned out anyway. I was taking Computer Programming/Analyst 2 year course, had a 3.647 GPA after one year…And was fried. I would go home some days and go to bed at 3 or 4 in the afternoon, and sleep all night…I was mentally wore out. It was mind numbing boring crap. Business programming…My idea of programming was creating games etc…Not going thru huge databases and creating programs for reports at insurance companies…I see why people go postal, not for me…Who knows, I may take some classes again some time, if I do, it would likely be job related now, machinist/QA oriented…

Heavy Metal was a HUGE part of my life, and still is, although Heavy Metal today, isn't what it was in the 80's…I still listen to the old stuff, although now it's "Classic Rock" DAMN I am OLD!!! I was listening to Iron Maiden, Metallica, Queensryche, Motorhead, Slayer, Anthrax, Whitesnake, etc… before anybody really even knew who they were. I was a total headbanger! I listen to all the stuff still, and enjoy newer music as well, Slipknot, System of a Down, Bullet for my Valentine, Hinder, Seether, etc…I could sit and name bands all day…

As for BMX, yes and yes. I still ride them, and I collect them. I only have one rider at the moment, a 1991 SE Assassin. I was riding a 1998 Torker the past few years, but traded the bulk of that bike for a 1979 Schwinn Sting frame and fork that is currently sitting on my fireplace mantle. Of course riding today, isn't like riding in 1983…Today, I ride…In 1983, I raced and RODE THE SHIT out of my bikes! I was always a die hard SE Racing fan, and always will be. Currently I own the 1991 SE Assassin, a 1980 Cycle Pro Macho, which is a replica of my 1979 Cycle Pro Macho that I first started racing in 1979…I own the Sting frameset, a 1998 SE Quadangle frame set, that is NOS, that was the first piece I bought in 2003 when I caught the BMX bug again. I also own a 2007 30th Anniversary SE Quadangle frameset…That all I currently own, but I am always looking, I owned dozens of bikes in the 70's/80's…And have had at least a dozen more since 2003…A GT, Redline, Specialized, PK Ripper, Patterson, GJS, Torker, a few others that I'm forgetting right now, and the stuff I currently own…

http://bmx.home.mchsi.com/bmx_bikes.html <--- that page is EXTREMELY out of date, but you can see some of the more recent ones I had, and still have there…

http://bmx.home.mchsi.com/old_school.html <--- check out the old school page, see what I looked like as a kid on my old BMX bikes…The one pic I mention "the brat pack" the guy in the middle Pat Harville, is the infamous character that intentionally pulled the plug on one of my Nibbler record runs at Twin Galaxies…

As for games…I've owned a TON of 'em over the years. I wanted an Atari 2600 for Christmas, my parents weren't the most tech savvy, I asked for a 2600, and opened up a Magnavox Odyssey 2 on Christmas morning…I was devastated, but I knew they meant well, and did my best to hide my disappointment. They thought "hey it's a computer too, it has a keyboard!!!" Over the years I've

owned, in close to this order I think…Odyssey 2, Atari 5200, Colecovision, NES, Sega Master System, SNES, Genesis, Genesis CD, Genesis 32X, NEC Turbographix-16, Panasonic 3DO, Sega Saturn, N64, PS1, Xbox, PS2, Xbox 360, Wii, and Gamecube…I've owned PC's since my first girlfriend and I moved in together in 1994, she had a POS Tandy ??-1000 forget the first two letters…No hard drive, 2 big 5-1/4" floppy drives, 384K ram…We bought a 486 not long after that, and a Pentium 75, shortly before we split up…Owned too many PC's and Macs since to even start to try and count…THOUSANDS of games for all those consoles/PC's over the years…

Currently I have 2 consoles connected to my 65" Mitsubishi DLP set. My 360 and Wii. I bought a 360 for Xbox Live, and high def gaming, and access to most of the Xbox library, as well as XBL Arcade titles…I wanted a Wii primarily for the Virtual Console. I've been picking up a few here and there…as well as buying some Wii and GameCube titles as well…If it's multi platform, I buy it on the 360. I wanted the Wii for the VC, and Nintendo exclusives, like Mario for myself, and Zelda for the wife…Those were our favorites when we were younger…I had my Odyssey 2 in 1984. Pick Axe Pete, K.C.'s Krazy Chase, were my favorites. I set a perfect score on K.C.'s Krazy Chase, and still hold it. As for the rest, you can search my name on TG, Most of my records submitted were on obscure titles, or inaugural records that never lasted long.

I mastered 3 games in the arcade. I could play Nibbler and Robotron as long as I cared to on a single quarter, actually considered marathoning Robotron for a while…but thought better of it. The 3rd title had an end. Space Ace. I could finish every difficulty level, going in every possible direction. I had a notebook, and had wrote down, step by step, move by move directions for Space Ace. I used to sell copies to friends, so they could beat the game! $5 a copy! I wish I could find that notebook, pretty sure it's still around somewhere, I know I saw it when we moved into our last house, or this one…I saw they were talking about it on TG, and went "Oh Yeah" I had that game's ass kicked! Had totally forgotten that.

I met Don Bluth in Chicago. We went to some video game convention shortly after getting the record on Nibbler. I remember going up to the Rock-Ola suite and meeting a lot of the head honchos. But I couldn't wait to go play games on the show floor. Larry Holmes was there promoting Punch-Out, got his autograph…Then I met Don Bluth, he did Dragon's Lair and Space Ace…He gave us so little flip books, that if you flipped the pages at the right speed, you could watch the animation of certain scenes in the game. Those 3 little books he gave me helped me master the game later…

It would be killer to someday park a Robotron and a Space Ace on each side of my Nibbler…

June 4, 2009

Yeah, I hear computer programming is very boring. Especially if it is not for video games. I thought you wanted to be a computer programmer for video games? Maybe I am wrong? What do you do now for a job? Where do you work?

That sucks about the Atari 2600. Well, at least your parents got you another system. Very cool! I never had an Odyssey 2, but I always wanted to have one. So, you never ever got a 2600? No interest? 7800 is also really good. Plus, it is backwards compatible. ;)

I got my Wii on day 1 and the VC was the only reason why I wanted it. Ever since day 1 I have been very, very happy with the service! I love it so much! Plus some of those WiiWare games are also really good. I also have a bunch of Wii disc games. I never had a Gamecube, so for me the Wii is like 50 systems in one!! I love the Wii!

You mastered Robotron? That is incredible! I think it is a very hard game. So fast moving. I love that game. Same with Space Ace! I love Space Ace, but when I was a kid I had a very hard time with it. My game would always end soon after the beginning. I remember I had fun playing it though. Same with Dragon's Lair, but I was better at that. Dragon's Lair 2 was very hard.

Wow! I can't believe you met Don Bluth!! That is so awesome! Especially meeting him back then! Incredible! I love his games and his movies. You are so lucky! Was that at the Consumer Electronics Show? Do you still have Don Bluth's flip books? That for sure would be a collector's item. I don't know Larry Holmes. What did he do with Punch-Out?

So, are you done marathoning? If not, do you want to marathon any other games besides Nibbler? Of course you for sure will need to stream your marathon game on the internet. My Phoenix world record was streamed live from Midwest Gaming Classic 09 on vgevo.com, but it was a last minute thing since my world record was not planned. A bunch of people watched it live on the internet, but not nearly as many who watched your game. So many players are now streaming their games live on the internet and I think that you and I were the pioneers for that.

I know that "Hollywood" is making a documentary about you and Nibbler. How is that

going? Is it "in the can" yet? Do you know if it will have an official run at theaters or will it go directly to DVD/cable? I wish Chasing Ghosts was in theaters. The public needs to see that movie.

TIM: Yeah I thought the computer programming I was getting into at our local college was making games type of stuff, I guess I should of asked more questions…It pretty much sucked, was extremely boring.

I currently work at Oskaloosa Engineering and Manufacturing. Right now, I am doing the QA quality control, while the regular guy is on vacation for two weeks. I've had the job a few times in the past, and wasn't thrilled about it. I like running the machines. But I like them, because I like going in, knowing what I have to do for the day, and only being responsible for MY work. I did Quality for a year again recently January 08 to January 09, when they needed two people, and it wasn't too bad as a two man team. Then we got slow and laid off a lot of people, and I ended up running machines again, I was fine with that…We aren't looking real good right now…There was an article in the Ottumwa Courier yesterday, John Deere Ottumwa is laying off 700 of it's 1000 workforce. 494 indefinitely, the rest on revolving layoffs…90% of our parts for John Deere Ottumwa…There layoffs and/or seasonal shutdown is going to screw with us. The layoffs are June 29th, and are expected to last until mid November…

I think it's sad that Heaven and Hell can't use the Black Sabbath name…Ozzy is a douche. Never had a 2600, thought about getting a 7800, but the reality is, I'd likely never touch it, and it would be more clutter. I forgot to mention I currently have an actual NES hooked up to a 24" TV in our bedroom, only have SMB, Duck Hunt, and Goonies II for it. I was playing SMB until I got it on the VC, now the NES just sits…I'd rather just stick to games on the 360/Wii on the big screen. Between all the retro collections, XBL, and Wiiware/VC, I've got plenty to choose from for old games, and then I have Xbox/360 and Wii/GC discs to choose from as well…I've already got several hundred games between those two consoles…And I LIKE wireless controllers…LOL

I'm no longer capable of marathoning Robotron, but I suspect I could get back to that point if I had regular access to a good working machine. Nibbler didn't take long to return to form on, and I was just as good at Robotron as Nibbler back in the day…Not sure where those flip books are, but I'm pretty sure they are still around…Amazing the amount of "junk" you can accumulate over 40 years…and moving between states and several houses…lots of stuff ends up in boxes, in closets, and isn't seen for decades…LOL

Definitely NOT done marathoning…but unless I get laid off, it's hard to marathon without vacation time. My job is more important than playing games. Twin Galaxies wants me to marathon Nibbler in July, they want me to time it so I break the record on a Thursday while RAGBRAI is in Ottumwa…if I am working, I can't afford to do it. I used all my vacation time for the year over MAGFest and Easter for my last marathon…Nibbler is currently the only title I am capable of marathoning right now, arcade or otherwise…

Haven't really talked to Andrew Seklir or Tim Kinzy for a while. I know they went up to Canada to film footage [for the documentary] with Dwayne a few weeks back. Not sure where it's at right now. It's been in progress for 1-1/2 years now. Last I heard they were hoping to have a rough edit done by memorial day weekend, and hoped to finish it to start showing at the film festivals later this year…Last I knew there was no distribution deal of any sort in place, not even for DVD release…So I have no idea where the project is, or goes from here quite honestly.

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Show Report: Funspot XI

by Eric Cummings

This year I attended the 11th Annual Funspot International Classic Video Game Tournament in Weirs Beach, New Hampshire over 180 miles away from my house in Connecticut. Before leaving for Funspot: I got an oil change, cleaned my car, packed a bunch of snacks, water, soda, Tums, grabbed my camera/camcorder and directions, then boxed up some rare NES games so people there could play them (which they never got to, sorry guys). After gearing up and making sure I had everything, I drove over to my folks' house to pick up my Dad. A few weeks earlier, my Father and I watched The King of Kong: A Fistful of Quarters because I wanted to show him what Funspot was since it's featured in the film. After watching the movie, it was pretty easy to convince the 71 year old gamer to go with me.

We left Connecticut a little before 2PM, fully gassed up the car, then set out for the Manchester Airport to pick up the Legendary Walter Day. For any who don't know, Walter is the Creator and Founder of Twin Galaxies. Twin Galaxies is recognized by Guinness as the Official Video Game World Record

Tracking Organization. Simply put, if you want to have a World Record in Video Games, you do it by the rules so there's no confusion. They're the best at what they do and they've been tracking and verifying scores for quite some time now.

Twin Galaxies started as an arcade in Ottumwa, Iowa back in 1981. On November 10th at around 6:30 PM, they opened their doors to the public as an arcade and then on February 9, 1982 grew into Twin Galaxies National Scoreboard thanks to Walter Day supplying high score statistics he personally collected by traveling the country and making phone calls. These scores were made public so all could see who was the best at each game (See their website at http://www.twingalaxies.com for more info and the full story).

We arrived at the airport a little ahead of schedule to see if Walter's flight was on time, which it was, and located the gate he'd be coming through. While waiting, I took some photos and recorded some video to kind of document everything. I got some blurry pictures of my Dad when we were making each other laugh. My old man is a real joker and can be really sarcastic at times. I recorded some video of Walter coming through the gate and us making proper introductions but I stopped recording because I wanted to show him respect. After helping Walter with his luggage and getting it into my car, we departed, heading to our main destination, Funspot!

On the road, my Father and I got to know Walter and vice versa. We talked about the movie The King of Kong and how it portrayed the people, places and Twin Galaxies. The movie sort of makes Billy Mitchell and Twin Galaxies look like the bad guys. Well…without a clear good guy and bad guy, a movie wouldn't do as well or be as interesting/entertaining now would it? Regardless of the story, The King of Kong: A Fistful of Quarters has boosted awareness of Twin Galaxies and competitive gaming. It's honestly been an eye opener for people that never knew these things existed. Walter has even dedicated a forum thread called The King of Kong - Official Statement so those that have watched the movie and visit the site can read about what the movie doesn't show its viewers. I don't think it would have done as well or been as dramatic if the film-makers decided to include all the facts, not to mention it would have made the movie a bit too long.

We found our way to Funspot without any problems, although I missed the place Walter needed to visit so he could get his room key on the way there (sorry about that Walter, I was zoned out from 4 hours of driving). We knew we were there when we saw the giant electronic sign blinking different messages like "Bingo!" and "11th Annual International Classic Video Game Tournament!" When I saw that, my heart started racing and scenes from The King of Kong started flooding my mind. I was home. After parking, we headed inside where Walter took my Father and I on a tour of the facility. Not exactly sure, but I don't think Walter Day personally gives many people a guided tour of Funspot! That was really awesome! We met a bunch of nice, cool people along the way like Scott Patterson (PSP, one of the Twin Galaxies Refs I send World Records to and holder of almost 400 himself), Graham Ogilvie (fellow World Record holder), Adam Wood (gamer from the King of Kong) and a bunch of others including many of the staff. It really is an amazing place and I was overwhelmed at what I saw the first time around. There's just so much! It truly is the largest arcade in the world and much more (Click here to see a full list of games). There's also Mini Golf, a Bowling Alley, Virtual Driving Range, skee ball, air hockey, a Bingo hall, the Braggin Dragon restaurant, D.A. Long Tavern, token spewing slot machines and The American Classic Arcade Museum. Funspot has been family owned and operated for over 55 years. I need to thank Gary Vincent, the Lawton Family and everyone who helps keep Funspot running because I truly had one of the best experiences of my life there. I recorded some video of Funspot plus lots of footage outside and posted it on my YouTube account along with some other clips.

After registering for the tournament, meeting tons of cool people, walking around and checking everything out, we went back towards the tournament area when my Fathers phone rang. It was Billy Mitchell from Time/Life magazine, King of Kong fame, the Arcade Donkey Kong World Record holder and Perfect Pac-man Gamer of the Century himself. Walter had called him after we left the airport then left a message for him and he was calling back to chat with us. Walter talked to Bill for a bit then asked if we'd like to talk to him. I said sure, took the phone then didn't know what to say? Oh yeah! I said "Hey Billy," told him my name then talked for a bit. After a little while I gave the phone back to Walter, who gave the phone to my Dad. I was kind of star struck by both Walter and Bill. One celebrity, I'm good. I can keep my composure. Two stars, well I guess I'll need to work on that!

I talked to Walter shortly after the phone call and we decided to grab his room key so he could go unpack then relax. I helped him bring some luggage to his room where he invited us in for a little bit. We talked a bunch more as he kindly posed for pictures, gave us some souvenirs, autographs and even gifted us a bunch of chocolates. I asked him if it would be alright to do an interview and he said yes! I never ended up doing it though because I only spent two days at Funspot. I wanted to let Walter relax so I told my Dad we should probably get out of his hair and let him do his thing. I practically had to pull my Dad out of the room when it was time to leave since he loves to talk. I've honestly never met anyone as kind as Walter Day. He's a great guy and I can't thank him enough for making my trip something I'll never forget.

My Father and I headed back to Funspot where I went to check out the games we'd be playing in the tournament. The 15 games were: Bump'n Jump, Cheeky Mouse, Commando, Congo Bongo, Crazy Climber, Deluxe Space Invaders, Grand Champion, Lock'n Chase, Lunar Rescue, Moon Shuttle, Pengo, Radical Radial, Rally-X, Red Alert, and Video Pinball. The 6 games in the Manufacturers Challenge were: Astro Invader, Bagman, Frenzy, Pooyan, Super Cobra and The End. There were also 4 arcade games being raffled off. Those games were Ataxx, Klax, Midway Skins and Primal Rage. I didn't play anything the first day except Mortal Kombat, which was oddly missing from the tourney games, harhar! There simply wasn't enough time to do much because we had to pick up my Mother at the Providence Airport at 12:00 midnight. At least I got to hang out with Graham Ogilvie (NES Contra, Mario Kart) for a little while before leaving though. He's a great guy and gamer. Graham watched me beat Mortal Kombat without continuing as we talked, then I pulled out my camcorder at the end to capture the moment. After that, it was off to get my Mom then a quick stop at Dunkin Donuts before dropping off my parents and returning home.

The second day of the Funspot XI tournament, my Father and I arrived midday. It was hot and humid. I could only play a few games at a time before I needed to wipe the sweat out of my face. I did manage to play 7 of the tournament cabnets but I'm really not sure how many I actually submitted scores for. It really wasn't about that for me though. I went there to experience Funspot and that's what I did. We went downstairs to the Braggin Dragon and had a large extra cheese, pepperoni pizza with large soft drinks. We looked at the pictures that document some of Funspot's history hanging on the walls as we ate. They have some of the best pizza I've ever had and I'm not just saying that because I was hungry. After ingesting some gamer fuel (pizza and soda) my Dad and I played some classic arcade games in a few of the rooms that are filled with them. We tried some Missile Command and quickly found we're out of practice then wandered off in different directions to find games we liked. He played 1943, Duck Hunt and some other classics while I jammed on Ghost'n Goblins for a bit. I saw a Tapper machine but a cute girl was playing it rather well so I went to a lonely Mr. Do! in the corner and ended up with a top 5 score! Do! rules! After that I placed in the top 5 on Tapper! We played a few more games here and there then headed back over to the Tournament area.

I really wanted to meet everybody I could before we left so I started looking for nametags with familiar names. I found and met two of the TG refs that I send World Records to and I wanted to meet, Tom Votava and Mr. Kelly R. Flewin while I stood in line for a game of "Name That Tune: The Gamers Edition" (which Adam Wood won). My Dad saw Walter at a table and we started walking over to say goodbye when I spotted a microphone on the table. I told my Dad we should wait and started walking past, waving as we went with Walter pointing to the microphone. I nodded acknowledgement. A little while later we told Walter we were leaving and he gave us some more goodies like some of Billy Mitchell's Rickey's Hot Sauce, Make Traxx and Rivalries limited edition bottles made special for Funspot. Walter also gave us posters which were signed by five attendees and a few others including Walter and Billy. Later, Walter was being interviewed by someone from 2old2play.com before we came over and he told the interviewer about my 71 year old gamer Dad. He actually recorded a quick conversation with him but I don't think it ever saw the light of day. Oh well. It was getting late and my Dad's back was starting to hurt really bad so we decided it was time to head home.

We said our goodbyes to everyone and I let Walter know we might not be back for the rest of the Tournament then thanked him repeatedly for everything. He in turn thanked us for the ride and our friendship and said we'll keep in touch. I'm grateful to call him a friend.

This year at least 160 people from 24 different states as well as Canada, Holland and the United Kingdom registered for the Funspot XI Tournament. After some tedious score checking, 1st Place plus $500 went to Tom Votava of Scottsdale, Arizona, a Twin Galaxies referee that specializes in verifying Super Nintendo and Genesis/Mega Drive submissions. 2nd Place and $200 went to Jason Cram of West Lebanon, Maine. 3rd Place and $100 went to David Nelson of Derry, New Hampshire, who is also (I believe) a Twin Galaxies referee. Congratulations to all three of this years Funspot XI tournament winners, you deserved it.

Now that I know what a Funspot tournament is like, I'll have to practice my arcade skills and get into better shape for next year because just like Arnold, I'll be back!

On Parallel Universe Theory And The Art Of Cornering

by Paul Inglehart

Sea Breeze. Sunset Valley. Sky Ramp. King's Forest. These all sound like lovely places, so why am I pulling my hair out every time I visit them? The answer is that all of these seeming innocent-sounding locations are all names of racetracks in Nintendo's 1994 follow-up to the legendary Star Fox, Stunt Race FX. As I sit here and try to play this game that I once spent months and months mastering in my youth, I can't help but wonder, "Did my mother put something in my food that made me enjoy this? Was it an act of vengeance for not doing my math?"

On the surface, it's just another cutesy game from Nintendo. The cars have eyes that look around as they drive, and the track is littered with billboards featuring Mario, Kirby (in his original Game Boy color scheme no less, rather than that pink nightmare that came later), Fox McCloud, and even one for the Super Famicom. Once you get past the silly art style and the strange music that doesn't quite fit (seriously, does every game have to have banjo music? I'm looking at you, Mr. Miyamoto), this game has a lot going for it. The four cars, the FWD, Coupe, F-Type and 2WD each have different strengths and weaknesses that have a major effect on the gameplay. The FWD, a blue truck, is slow but will plow through just about anything, while the F-Type is a finicky little red race car that will outrun anything else in the game as long as you can keep it in one piece. The Coupe is very much a middle-of-the-pack car, with moderate strength, acceleration, and top speed, but the ultimate ride in Stunt Race FX is the 2WD, a strange motorcycle-like beast with an insane top speed and acceleration. The only problem with the 2WD is it is nearly impossible to control, and unless you absolutely know what you're doing, you'll find yourself making good friends with a wall, which I will discuss in a moment.

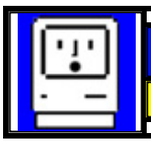
The racetracks are the real reason to play this game. They look like they were designed by a team of children, skateboarders and eccentric billionaires. Underwater tunnels, extensive half-pipe sections, a plesiosaur, and operational drawbridges all make an appearance in the Speed Trax section, and each track has enough variety to keep things interesting. The Stunt Trax are a bit different in that there are no other cars to race against, but they have the same crazy obstacles like ramps and quarter-pipes to play with, and the quest for more stars and better times more than make up for the short length of the tracks.

So, you're probably wondering why I'm pulling my hair out about Stunt Race FX. It's not that this is a bad game. The months I spent playing it when it was new are a testament to that fact, and it generally received glowing reviews upon its release. It's still a ton of fun to play.

It just hasn't aged particularly well. The graphics, while boasting a major improvement over Star Fox's grey polygons, still look like geometry class gone horribly wrong. The game does well with what it has, though, and the tracks have some clever elements, like the Aqua Tunnel (my personal favorite), where a large section of the track dives into an underwater glass tunnel. Little details like schools of fish scattering as you drive by, or a sunset on the final lap, or even a fly-by performed by the Star Fox team in their Arwings make this game fun to watch, but it's still incredibly blocky, and there's no real sense of speed or distance. 140 miles per hour looks about the same as 40 miles per hour, and corners show up out of nowhere, due to the short draw distance allowed by the Super Nintendo's processor.

The main reason I'm going bald right now, though, are the controls, which are miserably unforgiving, especially when you fire up the 2WD. Your car either doesn't turn at all, or it decides it wants to turn on a dime. Granted, there are walls in most sections of the track if things get bad, but the walls themselves can work against you, because each one has its own private little gravity well built right in. Once you hit a wall, you're stuck on it until you mash the steering in the opposite direction, which usually ends up putting your car into the opposite wall, where the joy begins again. It's a bit like bowling with those silly little inflatable bumpers. You can eventually learn to control the cars, but it's a very steep learning curve, and by the time you get everything sorted out, you've most likely finished the game.

I suppose the true beauty of Stunt Race FX is in the fact that, even with its blocky graphics, horrific play control and physics pulled from some alternate universe, I still find myself playing it regularly. Maybe it's just nostalgia, attempting to relive the joy I once felt driving around bumping into everything. Maybe it's the fact that the tracks, even after fifteen years, are still a fantastic exercise in design, and just a ton of fun to play with when they work. Most likely, though, it's just that old Nintendo brilliance, taking something simple and silly and making it last forever.



RTM Idiocy: Blissful Ignorance And Dangerous Knowledge (Act 2)

by Mark Sabbatini

A Play in Three Parts

ACT TWO

(The story so far: Two computer users, CHEMDE and CAROLYNA, are asking fellow hackers advice about buying a new PC in an online forum in 1990. CHEMDE is getting flayed by COCOWIKI for considering replacing his TRS-80 with an MS-DOS machine and by MARTYGOODMAN for considering a basic plug-and-play model instead of assembling one using cheaper components from Asian companies - even though CHEMDE has indicated repeatedly he lacks the knowledge to do so. Meanwhile, CAROLYNA is about to take the plug-and-play plunge and deal with the community's reaction...)

From: CAROLYNA To: MARTYGOODMAN

Hi, Marty. I haven't been on for quite a while because I did what you advised against -- I bought a 1000HX. I just couldn't pass it up for $259. And...I love it! I've jumped right in to MS-DOS and have learned a lot. At work, we've switched to IBM's and everyone is bewildered, so I'm really ahead of things there.

From: MARTYGOODMAN To: CAROLYNA

I'm just curious... at $270, how much memory did you get? If you do not have 640K, you will have to buy a special Tandy card to upgrade the memory. Did you get the HX with DMA for disk drive acess? If not, that too must be added. Without it, you have a crippled machine... a PC Jr, in fact. Sheesh... oh well... I tried. It's an expensive way to get an introduction to MS DOS, but no doubt sooner or later you will switch to a more reasonable and capable machine.

From: LMCCLURE To: MARTYGOODMAN

You and I should not overlook that while the 1000HX might be a poor deal for someone like us, for a total computer novice, it might not be so bad! Sure, it is limited, more expensive, etc. But, it is ready to plug and go, and no sorting thru mailorder ads is required, and no assembly is needed.

From: CAROLYNA To: MARTYGOODMAN

Okay, I'm embarassed, but...I've spent a total of $590 and I have 640K, 2 720K internal drives and an external 360K. Oh, another 12.50 for an internal modem. Is this REALLY that bad? I may move on one day, as you say, but I have learned so much on this machine (and reading, reading, reading) that I've been asked to give demo lessons to patrons who use our fancy Dell 210 at work. Also, and probably most important, I'm having a ball with it!

From: MARTYGOODMAN To: LMCCLURE

We-eeel... I may have been just a TAD hard on poor Carolyn. Still, my intent was sincerely to steer her toward what seemed tome CLEARLY a superior choice. I grant that, especially given her "fait

accompli" of the purchase of the 1000HX, my notes to her could have been a bit unpleasant. On the other hand... IF I and others here can PERSUADE her to return the thing... and IF she still has that option... I suspect in the end she will be glad of the "intervention."

From: MARTYGOODMAN To: CAROLYNA

$600 for an XT machine without a full 640K of memory and without even a 20 meg hard drive IS a very very poor buy. For you can get an XT with 20 meg hard drive and full 640K (not to mention compatibility with all of the world of add on XT cards, as is NOT the case for the HX) quite easily, new, from any of hundreds of local (if you live near a big city) or mail order clone venders. I did what I could to impress you with this before... gee... I wish you had listened to me!

From: CAROLYNA To: MARTYGOODMAN

Oh well, at least I'm having fun ... and I can look forward to buying a new one a couple of years from now!!! I do appreciate all your advice, even if I don't always follow it.

From: CHEMDE To: MARTYGOODMAN

DAK Industries has an XT with amber CGA monitor/card, 640K 9.54 MHz, 20 Meg hard drive, and lots of included software (WordStar 5.0, Grammatik III, Keychart Graphics program Key Formdesigner, KeyMailer, PC USA, Mouse and painter program, all of this for $799!! Would this system be ok to purchase based upon what I told you??

From: MARTYGOODMAN To: CHEMDE

$800 for an XT clone with a 20 meg hard drive and CGA video is NOT that great a price. I can do better retail around here from local
Taiwan Clone venders. Frankly, I see such systems available used in SF Chronical Classified ads for $400 to $500. If you are buying NEW, a 12 meg AT clone with fast 40 meg drive will cost only about $150 to $250 more than a new XT clone with sluggish 20 meg drive. I hope this persuades you to buy an AT clone if your purse will allow between $800 and $1100.

From: CHEMDE To: MARTYGOODMAN

Remember how I started out this thread saying that when I picked up and looked at the computerr shopper magazine that my head was "spinning". Well, after briefly reading your message while online, I have that same "spinning" feeling again!! What I really need to know right now is what is the difference between XT and AT in <1st grade> terms!! I figure that since I get over $1000 of software included with this XT, it is WELL worth it, even if the XT is outdated and even if the 20 meg drive is SLOW. Remember, I am an avid Coco User and even a SLOW hard drivve will seem 1000 times faster than my trusty 5.25 floppy drive!! From what you say, ANY computer I buy now will be obsolete later, so this makes me think I could buy this XT.

From: MARTYGOODMAN To: CHEMDE

A typical (12 MHz) AT compatible is roughly SIX times faster than a typical 10 MHz XT compatible, because of the double width data bus and of the fact that XT's use two wait states in addressing memory, where today's AT's all use NO wait states. Because AT compatible boards are SO much more powerful than XT compatible boards, AND because AT mother boards cost today as little as only $30 more than an XT mother board, if you are buying a new system, you would be VERY foolish, in most cases, NOT to buy an AT compatible.

From: CHEMDE To: MARTYGOODMAN

Thanks for the more simplistic description; that type of description is EXACTLY what I was looking for!!! I am very serious about the included software being the clincher on me getting this system. Seriously, how can consumers afford such ridicously HIGH priced software?

From: LINLEE To: CHEMDE

It is in large part a myth. While there are many programs which run $400 or $500 or more, there are also thousands of
terrific bargains. For example I have a word processor from Spinnaker Software called Easy Working Writer which retails for $10.

From: COCOKIWI To: CHEMDE

Now I can say!Told you so!Now you know why I will not have anything to do with clones!Stick to the MM/1.The software will be cheaper<I hope>. Your trip through the software stores was much like a trip

to the CAR DEALER. Sticker shock!!!!!!!!

From: LINLEE To: COCOKIWI

If you wish to perpetuate the myth that MSDOS software is overpriced you can always find examples of software with an outrageous retail price. However if you bother to do even a little research, you will find that most software can be purchased for hundreds less than retail. Also for every example of overpriced software you will find dozens of equivalent packages which are cheaper than you will find under any other system.

From: COCOKIWI To: LINLEE

Yeh! and how many of these so called cheap programs trash your hard drive because of WORMS etc in the program!! Same can be said of the os9 programs<cheap> but! you won't find ANY WORMS Etc,in them!

From: CHEMDE To: COCOKIWI

At this stage in time, IF I buy a computer it WILL be a PC (hope you haven't fallen off your chair!) ONLY because the world today (at least the world at work which is what is important right now) is using the PC! Yes, I could read mags and ask lots of questions, but there is no substitute for experience and this is what I think I need right now!

From: LINLEE To: COCOKIWI

I'm not talking about some off brand product. A lot of this bargain software is sold by reputable companies. JUST BECAUSE YOU HAVE NO ANSWER TO THE FACT THERE ARE SUCH GREAT MSDOS BARGAINS AND JUST BECAUSE YOU PERSONALLY DON'T LIKE MSDOS IS NO REASON TO START THIS WORM SHIT. IT SIMPLY IS NOT TRUE. TO BRING UP THE SUBJECT OF WORMS AS AN ATTEMPT TO DISCREDIT THE TENS OF THOUSANDS OF FINE MSDOS PROGRAMS AVAILABLE IS THE LOWEST STUNT I HAVE EVER SEEN PULLED ON THIS SIG.

From: CBJ To: COCOKIWI

If you were off base before you are in left field now!!! You keep trying to foist the MM/1 off on somebody who is just barely computer literate and not at all sure what they want or need. To start with Dan stated he was interested in SOFTWARE that ran on a PC. You proceeded to muddy the waters by singing the praises of the MM/1 which will not run the program he wants to run. Thank heavens YOU were not the only input he had as far as what he should do.

You mention CHEAP SOFTWARE! (you hope!). Don't go and quote plans. WHAT IS THERE FOR US NOW? RIGHT NOW!!! We all have Pauls press releases available in the databases. If you have followed them and the development of the MM/1 closely then you know that they (and F. HOGG) have been constantly changing what they say you will get. "Plans are" "we hope" are the keys here. Nothing is set in stone yet.

From: COCOKIWI To: LINLEE

I did NOT discredit anything! I STATED A FACT! If you are so much a MSDOS fAn ,WHAT THE hELL are you doing here!????

From: LINLEE To: COCOKIWI

You didn't state a fact. If you had said that it was possible to get a virus with a MSDOS machine, that would have been a fact. But when you
insinuate that every time you purchase a MSDOS program there is a major chance that program contains a virus, well that's enough of a distortion of the truth that there's no way it could still be called a fact.

Actually my reaction was more a slow burn to your jumping down anyones throat when they dared to show the slightest desire to own a MSDOS system. If you don't like MSDOS fine. Just don't say anything and everything you can think of ... accurate or not ... to try talking someone else out of purchasing a MSDOS system. Especially when they demonstrate a real need for a MSDOS system, needs which couldn't be met with any other system. What I find curious is this idea that just because someone likes a particular computer system, it is necessary to hate all other systems.

END OF ACT TWO

NES'cade - Gun.Smoke

by David Lundin, Jr

Over the past two dozen or so entries in the NES'cade column I've attempted to stick to the same basic format. That is to take an arcade game that was later ported to the Nintendo Entertainment System, compare the NES version against the arcade original, and give my opinion on whether nor not the conversion lives up to the game of origin. The key being to look at the NES release as the second release, the version that was crafted to emulate the original. Up until this point that has been no problem as all the games I've covered had arcade cabinets that I played a few times, either before or during the release time of the NES conversion. Even if I didn't spend excessive time with the arcade version of a game, at the very least I knew of its existence and how it played. Gun.Smoke is different. Back when Gun.Smoke was released on the NES I had no concept of an arcade version, I simply never came across it in any arcade. As far as I knew it was simply an NES game created specifically for the hardware and based off nothing other than a western motif. It wouldn't be until many years later, long after the death of arcades in the United States, that I would finally come across the arcade version. Due to that factor, this NES'cade entry will be a little different. Both versions will be covered as usual but since there was no early familiarity with the arcade original, I'll be focusing primarily on the NES version and how the arcade original compares to it - instead of the other way around. While the core idea is the same, both are very different games, with the NES version being one of my favorites on the platform.

An old print advertisement for Gun.Smoke got my attention long before the actual game arrived in my NES. It read: "It's high noon. You're alone. You're quick or you're dead." While the old west was never a massive point of interest to me, around this time a particular cartoon was drifting around the airwaves. Saber Rider and the Star Sheriffs (the localization of the anime series Star Musketeer Bismarck) was essentially a space western, complete with a giant cowboy robot, laser firing six-shooters and space exploration being regarded as the New Frontier. I suppose if it wasn't for the exploits of the Star Sheriffs, Gun.Smoke would have been just another NES title lost to me in the shuffle. Never mind that the magazine advertisement notes that the NES version is "just like the original arcade game".

The game takes place in the American west of 1849, in the town of Hicksville. Hicksville is being terrorized by a group of outlaws known as the Wingates. The Wingates have killed the sheriff and now raid the town every day, leaving the pioneers to live in fear. That's until a bounty hunter by the name of Billy Bob arrives. As Billy Bob, it is your role to hunt down and kill the Wingates and restore peace to Hicksville and the surrounding areas. The game begins in the town and progresses across the frontier, all the while in pursuit of various outlaws. A good way to describe how the game mechanic works is to think of 1943 except walking on the ground rather than flying in a plane. Each stage is viewed from an overhead perspective and automatically scrolls upward. Billy can be moved all around the screen but caution must be made not to get pinned in between objects and the bottom of the screen. Movement is controlled with the directional pad on the NES and a standard joystick in the arcade.

Billy's primary weapons are his pair of trusty revolvers which have unlimited ammunition. The arcade set up consisted of three buttons for firing: one for left, one for forward and one for right. Buttons could be pressed in combination for additional firing coverage over wider areas. The two button control setup on the NES is actually far more intuitive to me. The B button fires left, the A button fires right and pressing both buttons together fires forward. This may seem like a poor choice for control setup but it works incredibly well and I greatly prefer it over the arcade method. In fact I've always felt that the three button firing setup of the arcade original is one of the reasons it is so difficult to play. Each stage has a number of destructible barrels which once shot apart may reveal a powerup. The powerups and their effects are the same between both versions of the game with the exception of bullets. A pair of boots increases Billy's movement speed. A rifle increases the distance your normal shots will travel. In the arcade version picking up bullets will increase the speed of your shots while on the NES they will replenish your special weapons ammunition. The only barrel contents you have to watch out for is a cattle skull, picking it up will reduce Billy's power.

Arcade Original

NES Version

The NES version also adds some dynamics in how firepower works. Each stage has a weapons dealer that will sell you additional firepower in exchange for cash, which translates into points. Different guns can be purchased which can be selected from an inventory menu accessed by pressing the Select button. Any weapon other than your revolvers will require different ammunition which is either dropped by defeated enemies or purchased from a dealer. Each stage also has a pioneer that will sell goods - anything from ammunition to a horse. However the most important thing the goods dealers have are wanted posters. Unless a wanted poster is purchased the stage will loop endlessly. After purchasing a wanted poster the level will eventually conclude with a boss fight against the outlaw in the area. This is a total departure from the arcade version which simply progressed to the outlaw, no shops, no wanted posters, no strategy. Since the stage loops until you purchase a wanted poster, a skilled player can build up their cash and firepower before attempting to take down the outlaw of the stage. As in the old west, one of the most useful powerups you can get is a horse. While most of the time a horse can be found as a regular powerup in special barrels, they can also be purchased from pioneers selling them. The horse more or less acts as a shield power up. Once mounted atop, any damage you may take from a shot is instead absorbed by the animal. After three shots it dies and you're back to walking, but getting and then protecting your horse becomes a critical tactic during some hectic parts of the game. A lot more confidence can be had riding up to an outlaw confrontation atop a perfectly intact horse rather than being on foot and a single shot away from death.

Although the screen orientation between the two versions is different, it doesn't change the basic gameplay one bit. Graphics are faithfully recreated on the NES version and each stage uses a different environment over the previous. I enjoy the NES graphics more than the arcade original, if only that they are more varied and colorful. If resolution was being compared the victory would expectedly go to the arcade version with its super detailed environments. Enemies, and more importantly their bullets, are colored properly so that nothing frustratingly blends in with the background. Yet nothing stands out or looks out of place. Audio is different between the two versions as well, although the NES version attempts to recreate the majority of the arcade's sound effects. Music is a totally different package and in my opinion the developers took ideas from the original and ran with them. Gun.Smoke on the NES has a soundtrack every bit as good as Capcom's other NES games from the peak era of the platform. The music from the first stage will instantly come to mind if you've ever spent any time with this title. All the music really is well done, from the title screen to the item dealers to the victory music at the end of each stage.

The last really big difference between the two versions is that that NES release only contains six of the arcade's original ten stages. Regardless, the game never seems short or that it's missing something. If you never played the arcade or tried to compare the two you'd never realize the difference. Besides, the looping stages of the NES version more than make up for this as much more gameplay can be had. For the collectors, there are two different artwork variations for both the box and cartridge label. One shows Billy Bob with his guns drawn (usually known as the blue cowboy variation) and the other shows a collection of western scenes with a silhouette of a red cowboy in the background (usually known as the red cowboy variation). It's up for debate on which is harder to come by, but personally the red cowboy version was always far more common in my travels. Either way, this is an awesome game on the NES that shouldn't be missed!

Earlier I mentioned that this was one of my favorite games. In case anyone is wondering what my other favorite NES titles are, here are my top five...

5. Gun.Smoke
4. Ninja Gaiden II: The Dark Sword of Chaos
3. Palamedes
2. Barker Bill's Trick Shooting
1. StarTropics

...of course, the other four aren't arcade games. Keep an eye out for the next issue however, as I'm planning something different for them.

"InsaneDavid" also covers all types of video gaming at http://www.classicplastic.net/dvgi

Apple II Incider - California Games

by Donald Lee

Happy Summer everyone! It is June 24th at 4:30 PM PST as I begin writing this month's article. Before I get to this month's game let me update you all on my job situation. I had several phone screens and interviews lined up about three weeks ago. Some of them looked promising, but unfortunately none of the jobs panned out. After one particularly strenuous interview I decided to take some time away from my job hunting.

In the meantime, I didn't want to have to rely on my unemployment check and my basketball officiating for income. I decided to explore a freelance writing opportunity at Examiner.com. I had seen this opportunity sometime ago, but decided not to pursue it then. However, with no job on the horizon, I decided to apply. Fortunately, I was accepted and now I write for Examiner.com covering San Francisco High School Sports:

http://www.examiner.com/x-13349-San-Francisco-High-School-Sports-Examiner

I am considered an independent contractor so I am not an employee for Examiner.com. Instead, I get paid by page views and other factors. While I am focusing on San Francisco High School Sports, some articles may be more of national interest. If there are any sports fans in our audience, I would appreciate it if you stop by. Also, if you have any comments, please feel free to email or post comments on the site.

With that out of the way, let's go back to talking about games. Several months ago, Bryan had thrown out the idea of dedicating an issue of Retrogaming Times Monthly (RTM) to a summertime theme. While the idea never took off, I had thought of the perfect game to talk about for the occasion: California Games by Epyx

California Games was patterned after some of Epyx's previous hits like Summer Games with multiple events. Where as the events in Summer Games was patterned after the Olympics, California Games was set to events that were supposedly popular in California.

The events included in the Apple II version are: Half Pipe, Roller Skating, Surfing, BMX, Footbag and Flying Disk. The Half Pipe event involved performing extreme stunts on a skateboard. Roller Skating was a timed event where you attempted to maneuver around various objects in your way while on skates. Surfing was the one sport that was judged based on what you could do with your surfboard while on the waves. BMX was a timed bicycle racing event. The Flying Disk involving seeing how far you could toss a Frisbee.

I didn't play this game much at all when I was young. I don't recall having the game in my collection, but played it at stores occasionally and read reviews about it. As I do with games I'm not familiar with, I jump right in and try to play them without finding instructions on the Internet.

Overall, I found California Games to be playable, though I favored certain events over others. I liked the Surfing, BMX, Footbag and Flying Disk events. While I was hardly an expert in trying to perform the various moves, I thought they were very easy to get into and play. Footbag was especially interesting since I remembered the days of kids having footbag's on the street when it was the hot item like the Rubik's Cube was back in the 1980's.

While Half Pipe and the Roller Skating were my least favorite events, they were not horrible. The

issue I had with half Pipe was trying to figure out what I could do with the skateboard besides turn. To be fair, my lack of familiarity with the controls may be the cause of this. As far as the Roller Skating event, the main issue I had was there seemed to be a bug. At one point, I got stuck and could not move. I could not figure out how to maneuver around the obstacle and ended up rebooting my emulator as the last resort. The Roller Skating event was pretty easy to play but I didn't find it terribly exciting.

All in all, despite a few things, California Games is pretty entertaining and worth a second look if you haven't played it in a while. The graphics are very good as it used the Apple II's double high resolution mode. That meant there were more colors and better looking graphics, though that may have caused the animation to be a little slower than usual. Unfortunately, there was minimal sound and music used throughout the game. While it didn't detract much, it's with games like this where you wished the Apple II had better built in sound. Who wouldn't want to hear the sound of waves while surfing or biking? Well, that's all this time around! In the meantime, excuse me while I go and pick up my surfboard and attempt the real thing right here on the West Coast...Splash! See you dudes next month!

Squaring Off: Demon Attack

by Eric Schuetz

I really enjoyed this game. Considered a knock off of Atari's Phoenix, it is a worthy competitor to the shoot-'em up genre. It's simple, easy to play, and addictive. Granted, it is very repetitious, but what do you expect from the early 80's arcade style games? Demon Attack was released for the Intellivision, Atari 2600, and Atari 800 computer among many others. However, I can only review the Intellivision and Atari 2600 versions, as those are the only two I can get to work.

Atari 2600

Graphically this game doesn't appear to be "much" with a simple black background and slightly color blended "ground". When you begin playing it though, you will notice a few things. First, smooth animation. Next, lots of colors. Lastly, good speed. Those are three things that really help out in an arcade style shooter. When done well, with the right formula, you can't go wrong. Alien formations are simple with three "rows" and one demon per row. The "rows" also alternate in height from the ground. In addition, I liked how the demons materialize above your cannon.

Sounds are decent. There is a whirring effect to simulate the demon's screeching and flapping, and then there are blaster effects for you and them. Explosions and such are effective and loud. The demon materialization effect is also impressive.

Controls are precise! I was very impressed here. Imagic really did a great job in getting this game just right. The controls are quick, responsive and accurate. I had no complaints at all here.

Playability will keep you coming back. Even though Phoenix has a bit more variety, this game still scores high marks. With fluid animation, crisp graphics, and tight controls you just can't put it down.

Overall, this is a great classic you should not avoid. Add it to your collection today, even if you have the slightly superior Phoenix already. This game is good enough to stand on its own, without the comparisons.

- Graphics - 4
- Sounds - 4
- Controls - 5
- Playability - 5
- Overall - 4.5

Intellivision

Graphically, this game looks pretty. You are obviously fighting from a lunar surface with the Earth in the background. Demons are larger in comparison to the Atari 2600 release, but aren't as detailed. Demons also do not materialize as they do in the 2600 version, but simply fly down from the top of the screen. Your cannon also looks more like an "Enterprise" knock off stuck to the lunar surface.

Sounds in the Intellivision version are similar to the Atari release, but personally do not sound as impressive. I dare say that it sounds a tad bit cut back. This is one of those titles that was released that seemed to have had more emphasis on the 2600 version, than the competing console.

Controls are not too bad here. I have only played Intellivision games via emulation on the PC or PS2 (Intellivision Lives!), so I can not comment on the controllers. However, regardless of the game, Intellivision controls seem a tad sluggish in my opinion. The cannon just doesn't seem to move across the surface as quickly as I would like it to. Firing the cannon also seems to be slow. Not as in slow to respond, just a slow shot.

Playability isn't too bad really. With a good looking environment and decent game play, you will enjoy this adaptation. However, since I played the Atari version, I really do prefer that one more. It just feels better...that is just me though.

Overall, I prefer the Atari version more, but this game is good. You can find yourself immersed just as much as I am with the Atari version. For the Intellivision being a much more powerful system, I fail to see it.

- Graphics - 4
- Sounds - 3
- Controls - 4
- Playability - 4
- Overall - 4

All in all, I am a tried and true Atari fan. I have to admit that when it comes down to the Atari 2600, Intellivision, and ColecoVision, the Intellivision just seems to be the weaker system. Sure, there are games out there that showcase the systems' power, but when it comes to cross platform titles, the Atari seems to do better. Demon Attack is a prime example. Sure it has more detailed environments, but the game play just isn't there for the Intellivision. Either way, it is a fine addition to your collection for BOTH systems.

Atari Playfield - Michtron

by Jeff Fulton

This series of articles will specialize in chronicling the history of games for both the Atari 8-bit and ST (as well as STE, TT, and Falcon) line of computers. In this edition we will cover the very early ST game developer, Michtron. The goal is to eventually cover all of the major and many of the smaller (some forgotten) releases along the way. Where I can find interviews with the developers and original magazine converge I will make sure to at least quote them to give some context to the games. Finally, if possible, I will re-play each game via emulation and discuss how they stack up with my memories, other games on the system, and games of the era in general.

I was and have always been an Atari guy. My twin brother, Steve, and I grew up with Atari machines and progressed from the 2600 to the 800 (and 800xl), then the 7800, 520 ST (and 1040), Lynx, and Jaguar. Along the way, we were especially taken with the computers and had huge collections of games (most of them purchased, but a few by nefarious means) for both machine families. We purchased the Atari 520 ST in early 1987 and after the shops in the USA stopped carrying an array of decent games (late 1988), we switched to the import stores and found 16-bit gaming Nirvana from the shores of Europe.

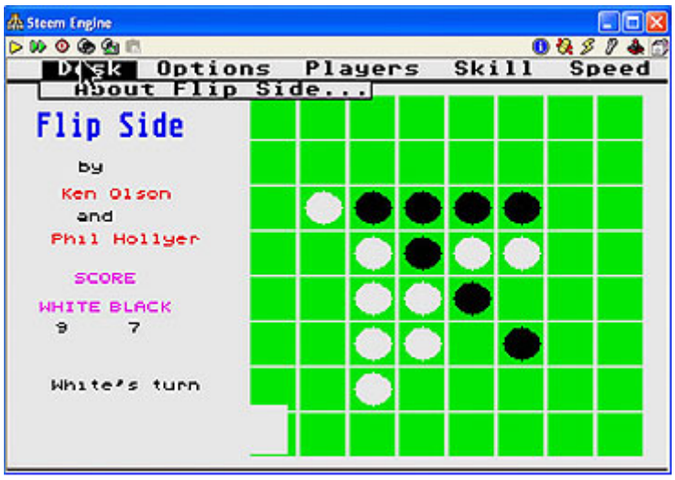
Although the ST line of computers would see its peak popularity in Europe between 1988 and 1992, they were actually quite popular in the USA upon their launch in late 1985. Many early games were produced for the 520 and 1040 machines from 1985 - 1988. For the first few months of the ST's life, the games of Michtron (based in Michigan) were some of the only titles available. These games took full advantage of the ST machine's powerful 16-bit capabilities, and some were nothing more than 8-bit games with a new coat of colorful paint. In 1986, Time Bandit, Major Motion, and Mud Pies were first titles I remember seeing discussed in magazines such as Antic, Analog, and Atari Explorer. Enticed by the look of these games, and by the need to move on to a next generation computer system, we sold all of our Atari 800 computer gear in late 1986. Even with the fire sale, we did not scrape together all of the cash needed for the system right away. With the hope of some birthday money in January 1987, we planned to purchase a system and make our 16 bit gaming dream a reality (a 520 ST with Mono monitor that hooked up to the TV for color games). With a month or two lag in between computers (and games obviously) we had ample time to read over every magazine article and advertisement for available ST games. The name Michton was everywhere then from the start, so we will start there too...

Michtron published and distributed many games over the course of its short history. The company was initially named Computer Shack, but rumor has it that they changed the name after pressure from Radio Shack in 1984. Founded in 1982 by high school friends Gordon Monnier and Bill Dunlevy, mainly to market Bills TRS-80 and Sanyo targeted game titles, they would expand to other platforms soon after. The most notable game in the early years was a very well respected TRS-80 classic called

Time Bandit (more below) which would be translated to the Atari ST and Amiga a few years later. Bill was very taken with the capabilities of the new 16-bit computers and in 1985 decided to translate some of his games to the Atari ST and then solicit and market games from other like-minded developers. Michtron became affiliated with UK based Microdeal in 1987 to co-market and distribute each others games (especially as the State-side market for ST games started to dry up). Microdeal produced a number of good ST games (and will be featured in a later article). Michtron moved on to create some very well respected Atari ST development tools, but declining sales in the USA and eventually the UK led to its demise and was sold to Creative Computer Corp in 1991.

Now, on to the Atari ST games from Michtron!

Flipside (1985)
By Ken Olson and Phil Hollyer Flipside



This was one of the first ST games of any kind. It was a very simple Othello / Reversi variant and was one of the first commercial ST games to make use of the GEM interface (or a color mouse-based interface of any kind).

Re-play in Steem: Flipside is exactly as I remember it - a low-res version of the classic Othello game. There is no sound, but it plays a very good game and is a challenge to beat at the higher skill levels. There is nothing fancy here, but for one of the first games ever created on the system, it holds its place in time very nicely.

Grade: C+
Many better games would follow in later years, but this classic is still one that I would play today.

What the media said back then:
From Antic Magazine (Feb 1986) Review: "Flipside plays a formidable game. It beat me most of the time, at the lowest skill levels. And I've been playing Othello for several years."

From Computer Gaming World (Jan/Feb 1986): "Flip Side, also from Michtron, which is a competent implementation of Othello for one or two players. It's also the only game that works with both the color and monochrome monitors"

Major Motion (1985)
By Jeffrey Sorensen and Phillip MacKenzie

Major Motion was a very well done version of the arcade classic Spy Hunter. It was controlled using the mouse (a mistake that would not be duplicated in many future ST action games). Basically, you race your car up the screen (with the mouse?), collect bonus weapons (by docking with an equipment van - ala Spy Hunter and Knight Rider) and blow other cars away.

Back in the day: We had a copy of this game. I'm pretty sure it was one of the first titles we purchased for the machine. This game was lacking in the visual department, but played very well. I remember being very happy to have a Spy Hunter clone for our shiny new 520 ST.

Re-play in Steem: Like almost all Michtron games, Major Motion used the mouse. That version was virtually unplayable via emulation because acceleration was very difficult to emulate properly. I found a Joystick (a later re-released version) on an Automation compilation. There is something funny about this version also. Many early ST games used the mouse port for joystick control. That means the player had to unplug the mouse and plug in a stick to play. It took me a few minutes to realize this because I had forgotten all about it. When the ST had its "hay day", in the late 80's, very few games made this mistake. 99% of ST games used port 1, not port 0. Anyway, this is a nice little game with competent visuals (more colorful than Spy Hunter on the Atari 8-bits) and very fun to play.

Grade: B-
It looks dated now, but plays a mean game. The racing, shooting, and docking action is all there and I had a nice few minutes playing this once again. The sound fx are only passable, but the (mutable) music score is very well done. It has better visuals than Mudpies and actually looks like it could be a

16-bit game rather than an 8-bit re-tread.

What the media said back then:
From Computer Gaming World (Jan/Feb 1987): "However, this leads me to an ethical dilemma. I like the game, but it is, strictly speaking, about 80% a thinly-disguised copy of Spy Hunter and 20% unique material."

Mudpies (1985)
By Jeffrey Sorensen and Phillip MacKenzie

I remember this as being the first commercial game for the ST of any kind advertised in Antic and Analog magazines. It was a pretty simple 8-bit game that seemed to have been re-skinned and placed on the ST. The action is pretty good - run around the screens throwing pies (Food Fight style) at clowns. The game also seems like a slow moving Robotron, and didn't really show off the audio/visual capabilities of the machine.

Back in the day: We had this title, but I don't think we purchased it. Either it was a legit release that we borrowed or a copy (sorry Jeff and Phil). I don't remember playing it very often, but I do remember being frustrated with the controls and not really being blown away by the visuals. I think even back then I thought it looked like an ugly C64 game.

Re-play in Steem: It was actually pretty difficult to get this game to work properly in Steem. No matter what I did I couldn't figure out how to get the Joystick to work. Then I pushed the mouse by accident and my player ran in the direction pushed...OH YEAH! This was one of several early games that relied on the ST mouse for input. The game plays pretty well actually with this control configuration. Now that I play Mudpies once again, I actually find it fun and quite good. The graphics are not very pretty, but there are some fun animations and the music tune (which can be turned off) didn't detract from the game. It actually reminded me of a colorful Apple IIe game and is a combination of Berzerk / Robotron and Food Fight.

Grade: C+
While it doesn't look very pretty, it's action packed and combines elements from two of my favorite games: Food Fight and Berzerk.

What the media said back then:
From Antic Magazine (Feb 1986) Review: "Mudpies essentially takes no advantage of the power of the ST. In fact, were it released for the 8-bit Atari, I'd be disappointed. It looks very much like a game designed for an 8-bit that was quickly transferred to the 68000 machine to reach a software-starved market."

From Computer Gaming World Magazine (Jan/Feb 1986): "It's competently programmed but as forgettable as dozens of microcomputer arcade games; buy it only if you have the money to burn."

Time Bandit (1986)
By Harry Lafnear and Bill Dunlevy

Time Bandit is an action adventure maze-based scrolling shooter that too often has been mistaken as a Gauntlet clone (it was actually based on an arcade machine called Tutankham) . In fact, it even pre-dates Gauntlet, having been a TRS-80 (and Sanyo) game in 1982. Even though the graphics are relatively simple (but well done), the game play and action in this title was some of the first to show off the capabilities of the new Atari machines.

The goal in each of the 16 beautifully crafted lands is to collect artifacts and BLOW STUFF UP! The lands vary in theme through various recognizable time periods, such as Ghost Towns and Egyptian ruins. You start with 14 lives and receive an extra after you collect 1000 Cubits. You can earn the Cubits by solving puzzles, collecting artifacts, and shooting stuff - like snakes and hilarious rolling eye balls. There is even a level that contains an entire text adventure to play through.

Back in the day: After reading about this game for months, it was one of the first titles we purchased from the old Software Etc in a mall (remember those?). I must have played this game for days on end. The colorful graphics and humorous sprites made the game very enjoyable.

Re-play in Steem: When you first boot up Time Bandit you realize that a lot of time was spent creating this quality title. It's for one or two players (each can use a joystick) and player one uses the port 1 stick (or joystick 2). No fiddling with the mouse for a single player game - the way the games were meant to be played on the ST! Everything here still has a slight 8-bit feel to it (compared to later 16-bit games), but the sheer quantity of animations and sprites, as well as the colorful presentation could not have been done on any machine before the 16-bits were introduced. You will have a blast running around, Gauntlet-style, blowing up all of the enemies, but the game has more to it also. I still love blowing up those rolling eye-balls, and the adventure elements make it a must play for anyone who missed it the first time around.

Grade: B+
It has very pretty early 16-bit visuals (actually, more like colorful 8-bit). The scrolling is masterful for this early in the ST life. There were later games (Great Giana Sisters, etc) that couldn't figure out how to do what the Michtron guys did with barely a decent dev kit. The quality of American Atari ST games was high at the beginning, and it is a shame that no more than a few handfuls of good games were created and released for the system in the USA. More importantly, the game is FUN, and should be played by anyone who enjoys this genre of games.

What the interviews and magazines said:
From an Atarilegend Interview with Harry Lafnear, "Actually, the game was originally called "Pharaoh" and was heavily based on the arcade game, Tutankham.."

From Antic Magazine (Oct 1986) review: " it will be the ST arcade game by which all others are measured for some time to come."

The Original Time Bandit Artwork, Courtsey of Richard Davey, www.atari.st Notice that this version is from Microdeal and is the UL version of the game.

8 Ball (1985)
By Stanley Crane

This was one of the first physics based sports titles for the machine. I remember playing it quite a bit and have the Entertainer song from the title screen firmly implanted in my brain. This title is well done, but limits the player to just one game of pool (8-Ball).

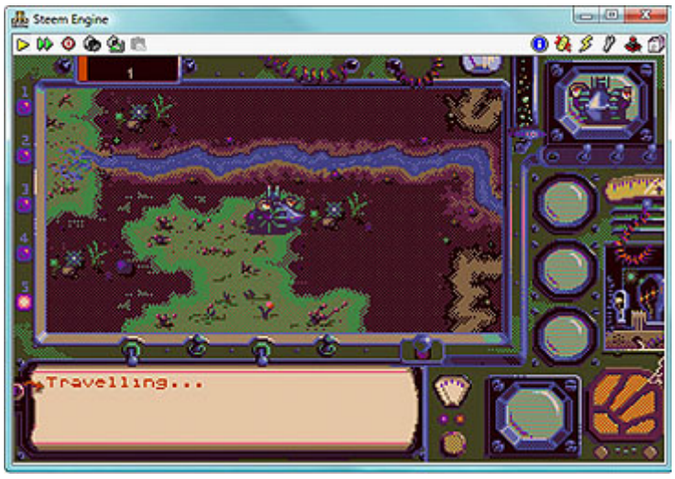
Re-play in Steem: The "Entertainer" chip tune is very well done and the physics of the pool action are modeled nicely (especially for the early date of this title). Everything is pretty small graphics-wise but colorful, and since I am not much of a pool player (darts and Foosball are my bar games), I may not be the best judge of the accuracy of the action.

Grade: B
It looks nice, it plays nice, but there certainly were much better looking pool sims that came after. It is a very well done early ST game that used the 16-bit processor and might have been a stretch to re-produce on even the best 8-bit machines.

What the media said:

From Antic Magazine (Mar 1987): (In comparison to another pool game called ST Pool) "Overall, 8-Ball has the most realistic action, although even it falters a bit when the cue ball goes crashing into a pack of closely-clustered balls. "

Tanglewood (1988)
By Ian Murray-Watson and Pete Lyon



I don't remember playing this one much (if at all). It involves you taking control of 5 robots on an alien planet by remote control to solve problems and puzzles. The game screen is made up of controls, switches, and other devices to monitor and program the robots. The story involves you helping your uncle reclaim mining rights (for Dog Crystals and Ice Emeralds) on a strange planet (Tanglewood). The game is long and complex and very little of it is explained in the thin manual. This was one of the last games we ever purchased from a normal USA software store for the ST. (The actual last one was a copy of Phansasie III that we had to order from Software Etc because they no longer had an ST section). I remember being both enchanted and pissed off at the game. The graphics were outstanding, but the control and the puzzles (especially right from the outset) were frustrating to say the least.

Re-play in Steem: FAIL! I failed to get this game working in Steem the first time around and had to consult Richard Davey, who runs The Little Green Desktop, for some assistance. He provided me with a working version of Tanglewood, the docs, and the beautiful screen shot above (in Vista?). The game is complicated, but I had a fun 30 minutes trying it out. More time will be needed to really delve into this one.

Grade: B+
The game is very well done and warrants a lot of time spent replaying. The graphics and animation are very well done and anyone interested in GOD style games or strategic puzzlers should take a look.

What the magazines said:
From ST-Log Magazine (Feb 1989): " Tanglewood is a great, sprawling, complex complex? that utilizes 700K of graphics. It's all mouse, not one keyboard poke. The animation is faultless, smooth as this page; but it's the detail that'll knock your socks askew. If the colorful graphics don't get you, the multiple sound effects will. They're superb, from the underwater gurgles to the mobile motors." From Antic Magazine (June 1988): "Ultimately, the game becomes a search in which you try to locate objects and use them properly. Tanglewood can confuse, and possibly challenge, you for days to come.

Lands Of Havoc (1985)

Contrary to popular belief (well somewhat popular), Lands of Havoc is not a Michtron game, but the first ever UK Atari ST game by Microdeal. It was produced by Microdeal's in-house wizard, Steve Bak (Gold Runner, Leather Neck, James Pond, etc). It is unclear exactly when this game was distributed by Michtron in the USA, if at all. I never had a legitimate copy, but did have a pirate version. It was an ambitious, maze-based, 2000 screen shooter (a C64 conversion). It didn't take advantage of any of the ST machine's 16-bit power, but holds its place in time as certainly one of the first, if not the first commercial game for the system in the UK. We will cover it in more detail in the next ST edition as we explore various other ST games from 1985 - 1987.

Other Michtron Games
(Some distributed by Michtron but developed by other companies)

A number of these will be covered in detail in later articles:

- **Cards (1986)** by J. Weaver Jr. - A selection of solitaire card games
- **Perfect Match (1986)** by Mark Nelson - An educational game.
- **Techmate Chess (1986)** by Szabo Software
- **Gold Runner II (1988)** by Microdeal (Alex Herbert, David Whittaker, John Dower, Martin Kenwright)
- A sequel to Microdeal's Gold Runner, but a very different game.

That's all for this month. Next time we will switch over to the Atari 800 and look at the early launch titles as well as a couple Atari Program Exchange games. We'll be back to the ST the following month, still sifting through the early years.

Jeff Fulton runs www.8bitrocket.com with his twin brother, Steve. The site specializes in tutorials and articles on programming optimized retro style games for the Flash platform. It also features retro game reviews, stories, and features. The "Atari Playfield" name is a tribute to the long running series of articles with the same name in the wonderful, but sadly now defunct USA based magazine, Computer Gaming World. They covered Atari computer games from 1981 - 1986, but sadly stopped all but spot coverage (if any) in the following years. Still, they held out with Atari computers coverage longer than most multi-format magazines before finally moving on.

A Special Thanks To Richard Davey. He provided invaluable help with this first part of the series and I am sure will help out a lot in the future. If this has piqued your interest in Atari ST games, please visit his wonderful site, The Little Green Desktop (www.atari.st).

The Thrill Of Defeat: Hurting The Ones We Love & Making Up For It

by Mark Sabbatini

I love – really love – crappy computers.

It seems I need to reiterate that message, which I feel I've already mentioned a few too many times during the column's existence. Apparently some readers (I didn't realize I had any) think my column is all about hating the Sinclair ZX81, whose games I've been reviewing for several months now.

First, I adore that cheap plastic miniature heap of electronic manure. I owned one, along with about 50 game cassettes, as a teen. I now own three, including a Timex Sinclair 1500 purchased off eBay for more than it cost when new. It's frequently my virtual machine of choice when I need to take a 10-minute break and do a little browser-based gaming.

Second, go through the back issues of RTM and you'll find quite the graveyard of computing's cow chips including the Mattel Aquarius, RCA Studio II, Commodore 16, Video Technology VZ-200, several of my "first love" TRS-80 models and many more. As I've said, I've owned a large percentage of these machines while never owning anything truly "mainstream" – even these days I own six modern computers, all but one of which are Mac's (the PC has spent a year collecting dust). And no, I don't have an iPod or iPhone, the only Apple products actually in the mainstream.

(By the way, you'll notice tributes to Michael Jackson and Farrah Fawcett elsewhere in this issue. I didn't write one because, like everything else, I was the freak that paid little attention to such cultural sensations. Miles Davis and Kenny Garrett did turn "Human Nature" into an absolutely killer jam tune, and I suppose I owe a debt of gratitude to Fawcett and similar women for increasing my odds with the non-cheerleader types - at least in theory. But I can't come up with a single gaming memory where they were the slightest factor.)

Unlike some "mine is best, all others suck" fanatics, I recognize my deviant tastes and am not a blind propagandist to them. While there's a certain amusement value in listening to people rant about their TRS-80 Color Computers being better/faster/etc. than Mac's, PC's, Amiga's and other machines so obviously a few generations evolved beyond them, mostly it just bothers me the way reality deniers on any number of hot topics do today.

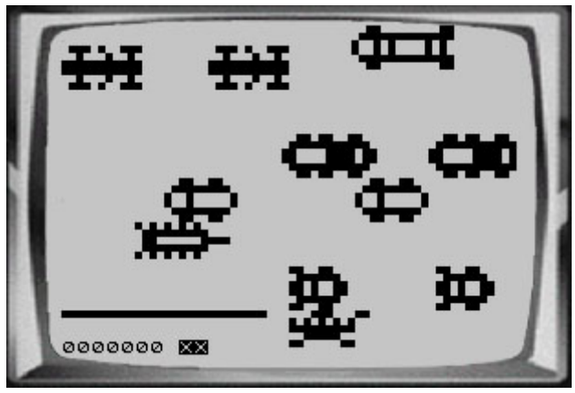
That's not the main reason I'm doing this column, however. I'm trying to pick machines and games that seem to have few existing reviews, hoping eventually to establish a decent database of them. But, as some have noticed in my lengthy ZX81 diatribe, some of these machines have massive game libraries, it takes a while to get through them and a lot of them are crap.

This month, however, the reviews are all about the love. Below are browser-playable versions of a few favorite ZX81 titles (found at www.zx81stuff.org.uk). While they've been reviewed elsewhere by others, hopefully there will be something new to casual retro fans. Also, these are just the games I played when I first bought the machine; next month will feature some even more impressive titles I've discovered since the age of emulation.

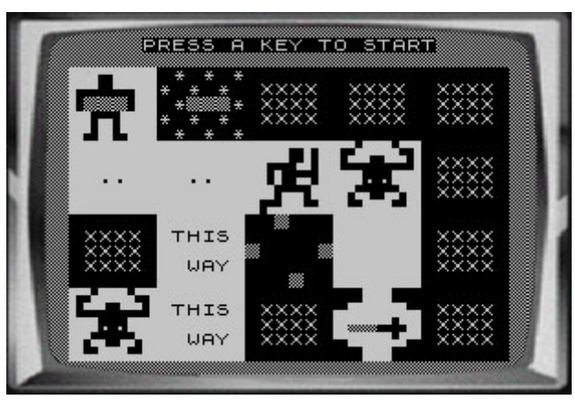
Finally, for those who consider my rants idiotic, I'm writing this in a village 800 miles from the North Pole where the forecast for today (June 25) includes light snow flurries. Why, oh why, do you care about the opinion of someone so deranged he relishes such days?

Frogger (B) The only licensed coin-op conversion of any game for the ZX81, to the best of my knowledge. It's also

horrifically ugly, full of flicker, has none of the charming extras such as that background music and - to the naked eye - looks like it only includes half the game. So why on Earth is it among my favorites? Because it plays incredibly well for a ZX81 game - try playing any other Frogger-type game on this machine and you'll see what I mean. It starts with the last of the "problems." Cornsoft basically took its conversion for the TRS-80 Model I/III (another back-and-white machine short in the sound department) and ported it to the Sinclair, the most notable feature being splitting the highway and river scenes onto separate screens. There's actually some logic in this since the coin-op screen is vertically oriented, like most arcade games, while computer screens are horizontal. Since the ZX81 and TRS-80 don't have the graphics resolution to cram everything on one screen, unless you want the frog and enemies to be blobs or ASCII characters, the two-screen format allows for large sprites with at least vague (maybe Impressionist is more accurate) resemblance to the original. As for the gameplay, it offers one- and two-player options, plus five starting skill levels (you're basically skipping early waves by picking higher levels). The controls are, thank goodness, an A-Z-N-M combination and not the nefarious "cursor" keys. The speed and challenge are roughly equal to the original and every element - lady frogs, snakes, flies, alligators - is there except the otters, which virtually none of the eight-bit platform versions include. The flicker is ugly to be sure, but never affect gameplay or feel distracting when the action gets intense. The one area where Cornsoft choked is there's only four home ports per wave instead of five - apparently they couldn't cram them all in given the size of all the other elements. Not a huge deal, but that along with the other minor nuisances keep it out of "A" territory.

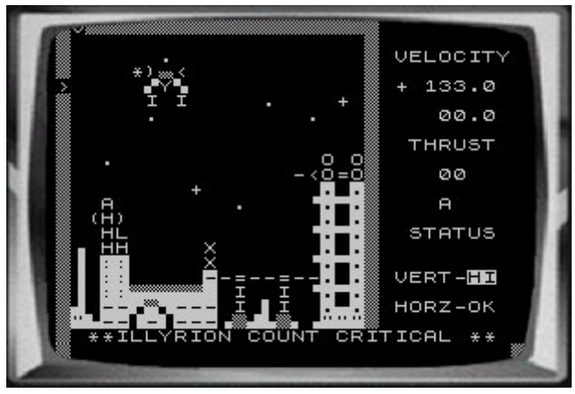


Mazogs (A-) An arcade dungeon-crawler with long-term playability eventually converted to a bunch of other platforms, including modern-day Windows and mobile devices. It's simple enough to play from game one with barely a glance at the instructions, but has enough strategy and twists to provide real depth. The player is tasked with navigating a large randomly generated maze to find a treasure and return to the entrance within a predefined number of moves. The 2D overhead view is a 5-by-4 portion of a 64-by-48-cell maze, and it takes 240 to more than 800 moves to complete the process, depending on the complexity of the maze generated and location of the treasure. You start with twice the minimum number of moves needed for a successful round-trip. Eager to foil your quest are the deadly mazogs, which look a lot like severely pixilated spiders. Luckily there are swords scattered around and if you're carrying one you'll prevail in a scuffle. Engage without one, however, and you've got a 50/50 chance of survival. You can only carry one item at a time, so you may find yourself hunting at length for more swords when you least want to. There's also other forms of help: 1) an overhead view that shows a quarter of the maze for five seconds, at a cost of 10 moves; 2) a status report showing your distance from the treasure/home and moves remaining, at a cost of 10 moves; 3) prisoners trapped in the walls who will provide guidance (messages reading "this way" to the treasure or home that last for 10 seconds); 4) footprints that show your route (although if you've been wandering in aimless confusion this is less helpful), and 5) if you're truly desperate you can exchange half your remaining moves for a sword. One other boost is killing a mazogs rewards you with additional moves, roughly half the minimum needed for a one-way trip. There's three skill levels. The



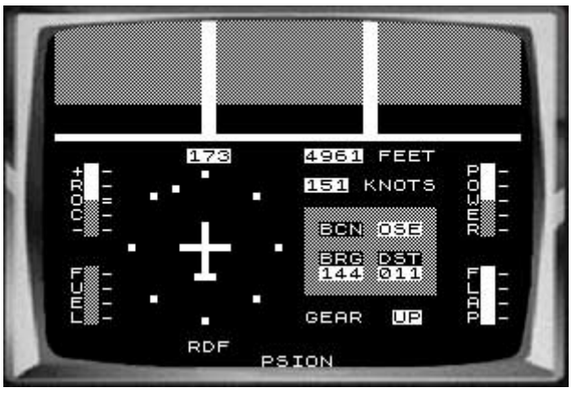
easiest features stationary mazogs and unlimited questioning of prisoners, among other things, while on the hardest the monsters move around (a real problem since you have to drop the treasure whenever you locate and pick up a sword) and prisoners die after giving advice. The graphics, while blocky, are easily understood and everything moves at a good pace. Even the controls are logically thought out - how much more can a gamer ask?

Merchant Of Venus (B+) This combination of a lunar lander and space trader game could have been an A+ all-time favorite if not for a couple of head-banging agonies. Your job in a post-apocalyptic world where we've all decided to take refuge on Venus (apparently not bothered by its 860-degree heat, zero-visibility sulphuric atmosphere and gravitational pull 92 times that of Earth) is to fly around to different bases trading luxuries and necessities for profit. You start by buying a ship from your initial supply of currency - obviously the more you spend the more you can carry, but the less you'll have to buy your first goods, fuel up and make repairs. Then, unless you have a really stupid business plan, you buy an initial cargo load of stuff and get ready to zip off. The trading part is pretty mundane, with just a screen listing items and prices, and frankly it'd be nice (essential?) to have a better idea of what's cheap and what's not at each post. But there's plenty of mediocre trading games that feature this and no more. It's the piloting thing that makes this game fly, so to speak. It's easily the best lunar lander I've played on the Sinclair and, graphics aside, can actually hold its own again some competition on meatier machines. The ship and dock are basically large clusters of block graphics and ASCII characters, but somehow attractive and convincing anyhow. Gauges and meters give precise details of your movement and speed at takeoff and landing, and are critical to pay attention to if you want to avoid crashing or incurring massive amounts of damage. In fact, this is my main complaint with the game - it's far too difficult to avoid receiving so much damage you can't afford the repairs. That and just flying base to base consumes too much fuel for any margin of error. Add that to the misery of trying to determine what's profitable to trade at various bases and beginners will probably try this a few times and give up in frustration. Stick with it for a while, though, and the game gets considerably more enjoyable. Still, a slip of the finger or an absent-minded moment can undo a lot of carefully planned work, which is why this isn't the true classic is might have been.



The Flight Simulator (A-) This is one of the games I bought when I first got my ZX81 and I kept playing it until I threw the whole setup into the closet. Considering I haven't had much taste for flight simulators on other machines, that says a lot about what's either the greatest strength or weakness of this program - its relative simplicity. The mission is to land a small two-engine plane at a not-too-distant airport, relying on instruments most of the time and a visual/instrumental combination when you reach the runway. Game length ranges from a few minutes if you opt for "final approach" to maybe 15 minutes for a regular flight. Obviously, this is the part that will put off a fair number of purists, since there's no takeoffs, minimal geography to navigate and, aside from a wind option, no elements to deal with. But less-demanding pilots like myself will find it reasonably challenging to learn the various controls (yoke, flaps, gear, etc.) without having to endure the hours of tedium a real-world simulator involves (it's great modern-world simulators can include photo-realistic maps of the entire

planet, but how many people really want to sit in front of their screens for even a flight from, say, New York to Chicago? Give me Google Earth's simpleton version and let me navigate my North Pole back yard instead any day). Anyhow, instrument simulators were something eight-bit computers could do remarkably well and the ZX81 delivers on this version. The only hazard to worry about is a single mountain ridge 1,500 feet high that may be in the way on some approaches. Otherwise, it's all about making sure the wind isn't blowing you off course if you've activated that option and watching the artificial horizon out the window as you make whatever adjustments are needed. Once you approach the runway, however, the real fun begins. The low-resolution graphics are perfectly suitable for depicting runway lights at night and, while things can get a bit jumpy at high velocity, the frame rate is generally acceptable. You'll get anything from "smooth landing" to "a bit off-center" to "off the runway" at the end (unless you crash in a spectacular display of pixilation). Doing it right with a strong wind always feels rewarding, no matter how many times you've played this. And, for some extra fun, I used to extend the game by doing takeoffs just before coming to a full stop and then trying a new approach. My biggest annoyance with this game was the cassette was horribly unreliable. I often had to load it several times, a process taking about six minute each, before it did so without error. Years later, I smacked myself on the forehead wondering why I didn't just save the game to a different tape once I was successful (very few ZX81 games were "protected"). So when I focus on the stupidity of others from the era, it's not like I was faultless.



A Next-Gen Blast From The Past: Sonic's Ultimate Genesis Collection

by Patrick McClellan

Gamers nowadays might turn a blind eye to a game in any way related to the word ‘retro’, instead favoring a next-gen HD experience (no matter how bland!). While undeniably terrific games, masterpieces even, have been created over the last 3-4 years on the latest consoles from Sony, Microsoft and Nintendo respectively, it is still important to look back at the games that inspired many future generations of developers. Sonic, Golden Axe, and Streets of Rage are just 3 series’ included within Sonic’s Ultimate Genesis Collection (Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection in PAL regions), a collection of games previously on the Genesis/Mega Drive, available on the Xbox 360 and Playstation 3. The package is available at a bargain price, with the MSRP standing at $29.99, with many outlets offering it at an even lower price.

Upon loading up the game for the first time, you are greeted with 40 instantly playable Genesis titles. Having heard great things about the Phantasy Star franchise without ever getting the chance actually play it, I was eager to start off my gaming session with the first game in the series, hopefully enjoying it, leading to me wanting to play the inevitable sequels. However, I was left dumbfounded after the gap between Kid Chameleon and Phantasy Star II became apparent. “WHERE THE HELL’S THE FIRST GAME?!” I roared. I then Google’d in anger, only to find out that the first game in the series was an unlockable title, one of 9 available in the Collection. A rather strange move on the part of the designers, but seeing as the first one was on the Sega Master System (all titles on that system are unlockable), I suppose it was a fair move. Not wanting to play 2/3/4 without playing the first in the series, I decided to game elsewhere.

After playing through titles such as Sonic the Hedgehog 1, 2 & 3, and the Streets of Rage trilogy, it is good to see just how well a lot of the games on the disk hold up to today’s standards. Sure, they’re not as flashy in terms of graphics, and the storylines might not be as compelling as recent games, such as the Metal Gear Solid series, but the ‘Fun factor’ is definitely still there. I had an absolute

blast with these games, and you still enjoy the sense of speed in Sonic, and the level of….badassery in the Streets of Rage series.

The games definitely stay true to their original releases, with many still being notoriously difficult. On many there is an 'easy' level on which to play, or the ability to give yourself extra lives. Despite this, a lot of the titles are still very challenging – a stark contrast to the majority of next-gen games. It's good to see.

Music within the titles is a mixed bag, with some ringing in your head for hours after playing, but others forcing you to mute the TV almost immediately. A soundtrack of all the titles within the game was made available to Australia and New Zealand, with only 3500 copies being manufactured. For me personally, the music from Comix Zone and Streets of Rage were memorable for the right reasons, Flicky was…quite the opposite.

Some have had complains about the game, claiming that every Mega Drive title could fit on a Bluray (PS3) disk with room to spare, and that having just 49 titles available was a rip-off. I can see where these people are coming from, but the amount of time you can get out of the titles is pretty incredible. There are hundreds, yes, hundreds of hours of fun to be had with the games, and I still consider the price to be more than reasonable. There are many interviews and box arts to be unlocked, as well as the hidden games, and the game supports Trophies and Achievements for the PS3/360.

There are so many games within this package that everyone is bound to find something they enjoy. It's more than just nostalgia, it's a genuinely terrific bundle, with some of the most memorable, and important games of our lifetimes included. If you've missed out on any of the titles on this CD, then that's a reason to buy it. If you've played the games before, but not in the last 15 years, then it's a great opportunity to reminisce about the games from your past. I say buy this collection, you won't be sorry!

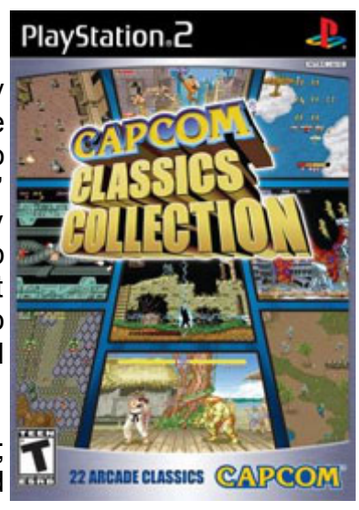
Old Wine In New Bottles: Capcom Classic Collection Volume 1

by Jonathan H. Davidson

Like several of my fellow RTM contributors, I have recently changed jobs – and moved to a new city. As the Bard said, however, "All's Well that Ends Well". I absolutely love my new job, and I am steadily exploring the video game shops in my new city.

The retrogaming collection of the month, then, is the *Capcom Classic Collection: Volume 1* for the PlayStation 2. It was released in 2005; volume 2 was released the following year.

Game Selection



This collection includes about 19 Capcom arcade games, all originally released between 1984 and 1992. (The packaging indicates that there are 22 games, but this total includes three versions of Street Fighter II, and two versions of 1943.) Some of the games, such as Commando, Ghosts n' Goblins, Street Fighter II, and (a personal favorite) Trojan are definitely classics, while others are more obscure. 1943 Kai and Pirate Ship Higemaru, for example, were only released in Japan. I think it is great that these games are finally being released in North America, but I hesitate to call them "classics" as they will hold little nostalgia value for most RTM readers.

There are lots of sequels and series, such as: 1942, 1943, and 1943 Kai; Commando, Bionic Commando; Ghosts n' Goblins, Ghouls n' Ghosts, and Super Ghouls n' Ghosts.

Bonus Content

There is a fair bit of bonus content relating to the games, such as original artwork, sell sheets, tips, etc. Virtually all of this content is locked at the beginning. Some unlocks are easy to accomplish while others are much harder to obtain. Happily, all of the games themselves are unlocked from the very beginning.

For each title, there is also a brief page of information including a capsule history, original hardware specs, etc.

General Comments

The user interface is simple and intuitive to use. For most games, the difficulty level can be adjusted, but there are fewer options than with some other arcade compilations. There is a noticeable (and annoying) loading delay when leaving or returning to the main menu.

Most of the games have adapted very well to the PS 2 controller. There are two notable exceptions: Gun Smoke and the Street Fighter II series. Both make use of all of the four main buttons, as well as the shoulder buttons. This makes both titles almost unplayable. I never played Gun Smoke in the arcade (so I don't know how the original worked), but I put many quarters into Street Fighter II, and it is much more difficult. The default controls can be re-mapped, but a big part of the problem lies in the overall design of the controller hardware.

In the end, I am not especially impressed with this compilation. It is certainly a buy if you are a fan of a specific title (or series), but overall there are no real standouts for me.

Next time out, we plan to review the Capcom Classics Collection: Volume II, also for the PlayStation 2. Feedback on this column is always welcome; please send any comments and/or questions to jhd@interbaun.com.

Videological Dig

by Bryan Roppolo

It was easy to decide what to do for this month's Videological Dig. With Michael Jackson leaving us, I decided to dig around for some clips about a game called Michael Jackson's Moonwalker, which was an arcade game by Sega that was also ported to their Master System, Game Gear and Genesis systems. The reason I came up so quickly with this idea was because I remember being with a group of friends on a high school trip and playing this very arcade game at some rest stop on our way to either Toronto, Washington, D.C., or Boston. Can't remember exactly which of those trips Moonwalker was played on, but I know it was one of them! All I remember is thinking how could someone have a whole video game based on himself and his dance moves? Not many people can say that they have, although Journey the music group comes to mind (but that was a group and not a single person and definitely was not based on their dance moves!).

As easy though as it was to think of what to do this month, it was hard to find something relating to Moonwalker, harder than I thought. Therefore, I had to settle for this piece below which, while interesting, only talks briefly about Moonwalker but does have a lot of interesting information on the battle between Nintendo and Sega and their respective commercial campaigns. This is when the infamous "Genesis Does What Nintendon't" was first deployed by Sega and apparently they used the Moonwalker game as a way to show superiority over Nintendo in commercials. It's pretty interesting, even though it doesn't talk about Moonwalker as much as I would like.

ADWEEK

September 3, 1990

War Games: Sega Squares Off Against Nintendo

By Dan Cray

Forget about kids, fun and games. This week it's war, video game style, as Sega of America squares off against Nintendo of America with rival ad campaigns aimed at capturing the $ 3-billion video game industry.

Nintendo, the four-year-old home video game leader and the world's largest manufacturer and marketer of video games, kicks off the war of dueling ad campaigns Sept. 3 with three 30-second spots that the firm will spend some $ 15 million to broadcast on syndicated and cable television.

Nintendo markets games for its NES and Game Boy systems.

Sega, which markets the Genesis video game system, is countering with an aggressive, $ 10-million campaign featuring two spots that directly attack its competition with the slogan, "Genesis Does What Nintendon't," along with a 69-second Screenvision spot plugging the company's new "Michael Jackson's Moonwalker" video game. The Sega spots break in New York Sept. 4 and hit the air nationally by Oct. 8, with the "Moonwalker" ad set to run in the nation's movie theaters Sept. 21.
"When you have a known quantity such as Nintendo, you have to demonstrate you can do better, so we decided the best way to do that was to name the competition in a hard-hitting campaign," says Patrick Henry, management supervisor for Bozell/L.A., which produced the Sega campaign. "Teenagers and older people are the least receptive to television, so we wanted to make it clear that 'Genesis Does What Nintendon't.'"

Of the two Sega television spots, the first intersperses live shots of celebrities and kids with shots of the games available for the Genesis system. The voiceover praises Genesis' 16-bit processor, which is double that of Nintendo's and, according to Sega, allows for better graphics and sound effects.

The second spot uses the same format but serves solely as a promo for a new game, "Joe Montana Football," featuring the San Francisco 49ers star scrimmaging in a Sega uniform.

"Whether people understand the technology behind it or not, I think the fact Nintendo only has an 8-bit system suggests more power, more capability," says Michael Katz, president of Sega of America's consumer products division. "This campaign will let people know Genesis is more state-of-the-art."

The "Michael Jackson Moonwalker" Screenvision ads combine Jackson's "Smooth Criminal" video with scenes from the new Genesis game, which was in part designed by Jackson himself.

To counter the Sega onslaught, Nintendo has three new spots of its own, two aimed at the teenage market and one targeted to adults. "Never Get Old," the adult spot, depicts white-collar executives taking a breather during the day to play their Nintendo Game Boy, while a voiceover advises, "You don't stop playing because you get old, but you could get old if you stop playing."

The other two spots, "Let the Games Begin" and "Qix is for Kids," take the unusual approach of featuring kids talking spontaneously to kids. Filmed at California school yards, a crew from Nintendo agency Foote, Cone & Belding/S.F. handed Game Boys out to some kids and filmed their reactions as they played the game. Those scenes were interspersed with scenes from the games themselves.

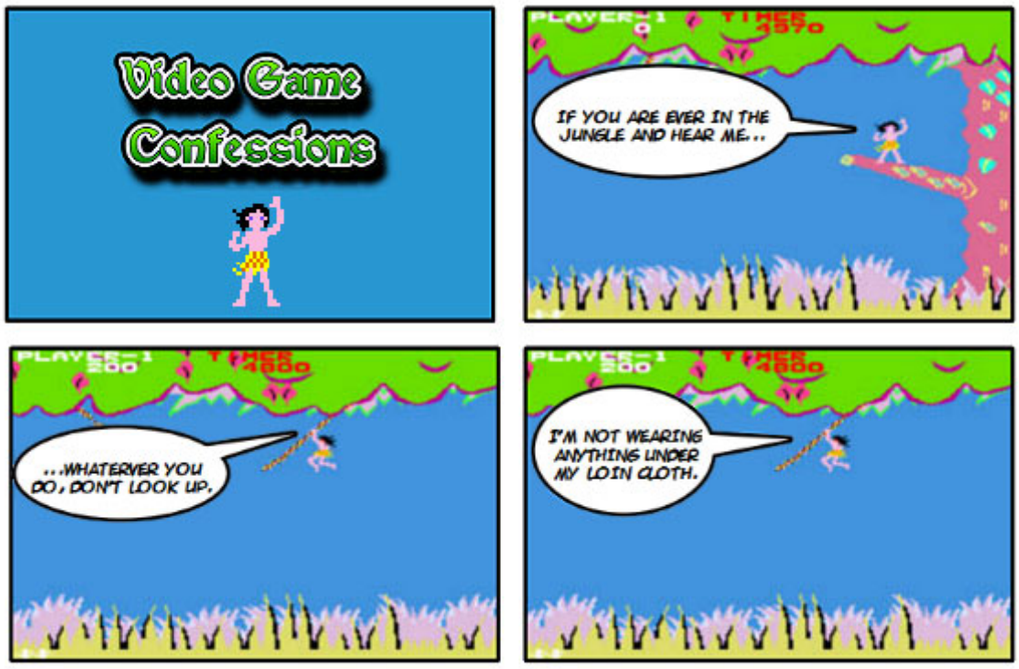
"This was so easy to do because the Nintendo games are so cool already," says FCB group creative director Tim Price. "We were doing one playground shoot where we filmed a kid playing Nintendo, and at the time all of the kids around him were Chinese and only speaking in Chinese, but one by one as they passed by the only word we could hear in English was, 'Game Boy, Game Boy!'"

For its part, Nintendo is attempting to downplay its role as an industry leader and instead maintain an underdog role going into the Christmas season. "We're trying to elevate our games to a new level of coolness," says Donald Coyner, Nintendo's advertising manager. "Right now we're second or third on everybody's list, and we're trying to move to the top of the wish list."

Both companies are taking serious aim at the adult market this year, and claim adult sales already account for about 40% of their sales. Nintendo, which will have about 50 games on the market by Christmas, says it hopes to sell 5 million Game Boys and 20 million games this holiday season. Sega will have around 40 games in the stores by Christmas and is looking to sell a million Genesis systems.

Laughing Pixels

by Tom Zjaba



Tom Zjaba is the founder of Retrogaming Times and is both a video game and comic book enthusiast. Be sure to stop by his Arcade After Dark site to see a plethora of video game related comics which are not published in Retrogaming Times Monthly.

Gaming Advertisements

Games That Can Be Played On-Line

Game Over

Look at that, another great issue of Retrogaming Times Monthly! I am hoping to keep the "Lunch With...." column going every month since I find it so fascinating hearing about other people's lives and their experiences playing video games when they were younger. If anyone out there knows of someone that would be good to interview let either me or Paul Zimmerman know. Additionally, I am hoping the trend of having 15+ columns each issue continues and maybe if lucky we can hit the 20 plateau next month. That's a far cry from the 9 columns we were producing back in the beginning of the year. However, as we all know quantity means nothing without quality, so I will not be lowering standards just to get to 20. However, having 20 well written articles versus 10 can only be a good thing right? Anyway, that's it for this month! I'll see you all again in August when we should all be treated to another helping of retrogaming goodness.

- Bryan Roppolo, Retrogaming Times Monthly Editor

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RETROGAMING TIMES monthly