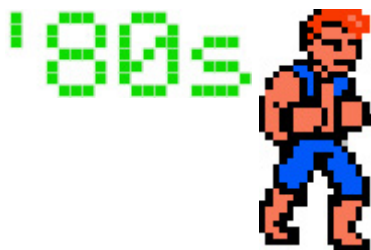


RETROGAMING TIMES

monthly

Issue #63 - August 2009



COVERING 3 DECADES OF GAMING

This [edition](#) of Retrogaming Time Monthly has everything from solving technical difficulties to Capcom arcade games. These compilations go hand in hand with the best of many [blog hosting](#) sites for classic gamers. Those who love Adventure, Double Dragon, and many other memorable games are sure to enjoy the plethora of retro gaming [knowledge](#) by fellow enthusiasts.

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Press Fire To Begin

by [Bryan Roppolo](#)

I guess with all the summer vacations this month it should come as no surprise that the August issue would see a decrease in terms of the number of articles written. Last month we had 19, this month not as many. As a matter of fact, I was kind of surprised to see as many articles this month as I did since many of our regular staff members took a pass to concentrate on other things, one of them was even going on a month-long "Sex Excursion" in Brazil...whatever that means! We might have to have him write an article about this adventure even though it is not retrogaming related. It probably would bring in more readers, that's for sure!

One thing I do apologize for is not getting the article index and archives fully completed yet. It seems like after I finish editing and uploading the latest issue of RTM that I feel I need a break and the next thing I know it's been 3 weeks, articles are due again, and I have to start proof reading what people are sending in. However, this month I plan on actually getting to those things, since they need to be done. In the meantime, I hope everyone enjoys this latest issue. I'll check back in next month with the progress on the index and archive. Until then...



Retrogaming News

Upcoming Retrogaming Events

Classic Gaming Expo 2009

It is still unknown if this is happening or not, but according to the official [Classic Gaming Expo Myspace Page](#), CGE will be occurring in this month. My guess is since there has not been any official announcements on other sites, that this event is not going to occur. However, since their Myspace page says it is, I figured it was worth making note of here just in case. If anyone knows anything more about the show's status please let me know.

-Submitted by [Bryan Roppolo](#)



High Score Monthly Profile

The High Score Monthly! winner for June was Christian "MightySquirrel" Keilback with a score of 17,015 in 7 minutes for the Atari 2600 classic Demon Attack! Congratulations to Christian!

Now, let's get to know Christian "MightySquirrel" Keilback:



I'm Christian Keilback and am 25 years old and live in a small town called Wyano, PA. My name on AtariAge is keilbaca, and my name on Scorehero is Squirrel. I'm a huge gamer with a collection that has a count of over 600 games, about half of which are boxed. I also own a few Twin Galaxies records.

My favorite things to do are my projects. Anything that comes to mind, I just buckle down, figure it out and do it. I have modded an Atari 2600 into my computer, fixed RROD 360's and have modded them to not heat up past 30-40°C, made custom Atari 2600 controls, made a custom Xbox 360 joystick for Street Fighter 4...the list goes on and on. My favorite mods to do are on old consoles, from restoring them to adding things like internal speakers to an Atari 2600 (like they were originally intended to have), power LED's, and overclocking NES consoles.

I absolutely love classic gaming, and that's what attracted me to this contest. On my Wii I play more Atari and NES games than anything else. I look forward to more competitions with Retrogaming Times Monthly!



Show Report: California Extreme 2009

by *David Lundin, Jr*

Without a doubt the single most looked forward to event for me this year was California Extreme. California Extreme is the premier classic pinball and arcade show in my opinion. A show where collectors and owners bring their games together in a giant room and allow them to be enjoyed by anyone that pays a nominal entry fee. Last year's show was covered in [RTM issue #51](#) so I won't repeat the standard information about what to expect. The official site, www.caextreme.org, is the definitive resource to get the lowdown on what the show is all about. The arcade nostalgia time machine set down this year on July 11th and 12th. This year California Extreme changed locations and headed up the bay just a bit to Santa Clara. The show was held at the Hyatt Regency which proved to be an excellent match for the show. The hall was the perfect size for the event as there was plenty of space for the games and patrons but no area was left bare. The machine layout allowed better traffic flow than last year with more than ample room for crowds to gather around games during exceptionally skilled play.

Pre-registration is the way to go with CAX. Not only does pre-registration allow you to get your wristband and show badge in order before the massive standard admission line begins to form, it also gets you in half an hour early! As with last year, in attendance with me was my girlfriend, but I convinced my teenaged cousin to come along for Saturday as well. With the new location came expanded hours on Saturday, allowing the show to stretch from 10:30am Saturday morning until 2:00am early Sunday. All three of us were there from opening right until closing and the same went for myself and my girlfriend on Sunday. I really got a kick out of seeing my cousin enjoy the show so much. Video games have always been a big thing with us but it's always nice to see younger players take to the classics so well. Honestly, he must have played everything in the show at least once.



As with last year, there were a few vendor tables located immediately beyond the entrance door. While I really didn't browse much last time around, it was a totally different story this time. The dealing at a few of the vendor tables was hot and heavy with great stuff going for low prices. One vendor had boxes of manuals and schematics, miscellaneous pinball parts, and control boards - the type of organized clutter you look for. He was selling MVS carts \$5.00 each or three for \$10.00 - some good titles too, but I don't have an MVS cabinet and I didn't spot any of my favorite titles. I thumbed through the manuals, there was some really nice stuff in the boxes and crates - people were leaving with good sized stacks under their arms. I

asked how much the manuals were, "cheap" was the reply, so I grabbed a few. I could have taken a lot more (heck, there were a few old docs that were in beautiful shape) but then I'd run into the same problem of having a bunch of stuff I don't use. So I ended up just buying 5 books, either stuff I can use currently or things that I'd like to use in the future. \$10.00 was the price, all are complete and in good shape. I came away with complete manuals for Breakout, Circus Charlie, Tetris, Galaxian (upright) Parts and Operating Manual, and Galaxian Trouble Shooting Logic Board Part II. They also had old pinball bumpers made into night lights but by the time I returned to buy one they were sold out. "This Old Game" was also there with some very impressive reproduction artwork. I was especially taken back by their Pole Position control panel underlay - beautiful work! Once I get my Pole Position conversion moved out here I'll be ordering one of those.

Of course the games are what truly make people move through the door, and this year's assortment didn't disappoint. My all time favorite pinball table, Back to the Future, was there and got more than a few plays from our group. Varkon, an extremely rare pinball-in-an-arcade-upright hybrid was a super nice surprise. While the illusion of a vertical pinball machine is actually a small playfield reflected in an angled mirror, the feel of the game was unlike anything else I have ever experienced. It almost felt like playing pinball in lunar gravity. My mind would see the ball falling straight down and want to react quickly but in actuality the ball would roll down at a much slower rate. Once getting the hang of it the game became massively addicting and seeing the ball seemingly roll up backward off a ramp was always just a touch surreal. A favorite from last year, Zeke's Peak returned. Zeke's Peak involves vertically lifting a ball with a steel rod controlled by a pair of joysticks. The ball must be deposited in a specific hole on a vertical playfield that is full of holes of various sizes. After an illuminated goal is reached the control bar returns to the bottom to pick up the ball again and a more difficult goal is illuminated. The machine was in a lower traffic area this year and late on Sunday night my girlfriend and I were able to play, switching off between the two of us, for about an hour. However, if there was one machine that stands out at California Extreme 2009 it is the massive Tank 8. Everyone knows Tank either from the arcade or the VCS version we've all played as the early game variations in Combat. Tank 8 is exactly what it sounds like, Tank with eight players. The cabinet is housed in what could be described as a giant cocktail table that you stand at rather than sit. Two players are on each of the four sides and each tank has an individual color. The machine was incredibly popular throughout the show and pretty much always had at least a couple people at it - most of the time six or more. It took me nearly all weekend to get a clear unattended picture of it.



The speaker series was held just down the hall from the show in the Magnolia Ballroom. I attended a few keynotes this year but would have liked to have attended more - there's just so much going on that you have to pick your battles a bit. I caught the end of the Atari panel and all of the Aaron Giles MAME panel this year. It was more technical in discussion but did show off some interesting things about the internals of MAME. I'll have to admit, the emulated screen burn he showed was pretty impressive. As someone who myself has come across prototype console games at flea markets, Alex Handy's presentation about just that subject was entertaining. This stuff is out there but ultimately the deciding factor in finding it usually comes down to luck. Sadly the arcade monitor seminar that Chris Kuntz gave totally slipped my mind and I missed all but the last five minutes of it. I would have really liked to attend that one as any additional technical and repair knowledge is always most appreciated. I also caught the Rock-afire Explosion movie which was very interesting and an enjoyable documentary.

A pretty memorable event from the show was when power was lost for about a quarter of the show floor early on Saturday. I was having one of those amazing Daytona USA runs - perfect through every complex, smooth on the power and gear changes and then poof. As the screens and marquees all shut off a group moan was heard from the general area as we all looked at one another, smiles still upon our faces from the games and more than likely remembering a game losing power at an earlier point in our lives. Then came the mass migration toward the rest of the show as others headed over to the dead area to wait for their favorite machines. Power was restored in less than an hour from what I remember. As with last year wait times for machines were minimal and everyone was generally very polite and pleasant.



I did feel a tiny bit guilty not bringing any of my machines to the show, especially considering that my Galaxian cocktail came from last year's event. Yet I counted at least three Klax machines so I didn't feel as bad about not bringing that one. Congratulations to whomever bought that Klax cabaret for \$175, you've got yourself a fine machine! There was also a gentleman going for the Klax world record who was enjoyable to watch work his magic. If stairs are no longer a part of my living arrangement come next year, I think my Klax / Tetris cabaret will make an appearance.

Yet another big thanks to those who put on this show every year, especially those who bring games. The venue was outstanding. The hall with the games in it was nice and cool allowing for a relaxing time all weekend. Plenty of tables and chairs were outside the doors in the lobby area for relaxing and the bar and grill was right down the hall from the lobby. Lunch was also served both days for an additional fee just outside of the lobby but there were also plenty of other choices a short drive from the show. The best part however? Plenty of free parking right next to where the show was being held. That alone made the location much more convenient than last year. Attendance seemed to be up from last year by my estimate as well. Another awesome event and just as with last year I can't wait to do it all again. Next year - I will finally beat Super Don Quixote...so close this time.

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



RTM Idiocy: Blissful Ignorance And Dangerous Knowledge (Act 3)

by [Mark Sabbatini](#)

A Play in Three Parts

ACT THREE

(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. CAROLYNA bought a cheap plug-and-play machine and loves it, despite the group's determination to convince her she should hate it and buy something more expensive and complex. CHEMDE, meanwhile is spinning dizzily in circles trying to absorb all the technical data people are throwing at him, not to mention getting hassled by the punctuation-challenged COCOWIKI for wanting to replace an obsolete TRS-80 with an MS-DOS machine. He's spent months nearly buying and then abandoning various models....will he be happy if he finally takes the plunge?)

From: CHEMDE To: MARTYGOODMAN

Just a few more quick PC questions:

I am currently considering a 286 with 1 Meg expandable to 4, 30 Meg hard drive, 12.5/6.25 MHz switchable, 5.25 1.22 MB floppy, 14" 640x480 VGA color monitor with 16 bit VGA card 800x600 resolution, socket for 80287 math coprocessor, 3 expansions slots (2 16 and 1 8 bit), 1 serial, 1 parallel port, 6 pin mouse, real time clock/calendar, 101 keyboard, 286 Phoenix ROM Bios, 4.01 DOS with Shell utilities and GW Basic, plus some free software. This is all for \$1000. Goldstar makes the computer.

Would 3 slots (as mentioned above) be enough for most PC applications (the only other card I would positively need that I know of right now is for a Midi Board)? But what if I decide to get an internal modem? If one needs more slots in the future, how does one add more slots; replace motherboard or what? This looks like a really nice system and I would like to purchase it soon, but I need the answer to the "slot" question before I procede!

From: LINLEE To: CHEMDE

There are no special slots for video cards. Since you describe the system as having a 16 bit VGA card, it will take up a slot. Worse yet it will take up one of the 16 bit slots. If you add a MIDI card and an internal modem you wouldn't have any more room for expansion. I personally would look around for something a little more expandable

From: CHEMDE To: LINLE

I recently talked to my supervisor at work. He agrees that 3 free slots is a limitation, but the inclusion of the VGA color monitor / monitor card makes the deal well worth the limitation. Anyhow, I have FINALLY decided to order this PC, so I am FINALLY going to move into the PC world!! Of course, as mentioned before, I will NEVER leave my trusty Cocol!! I'm just expanding my horizons!!

From: LINLEE To: CHEMDE

Actually I disagree with your supervisor. If the ad says 3 slots, you can bet there are only 3 slots total. Still there are a lot of

systems out there with only 3 slots so you can probably get by. I'm from the old school where almost nothing was included on the motherboard so I'm naturally wary of a system without a lot of slots. Congratulations on taking the MSDOS plunge.

From: CHEMDE To: LINLEE

Just curious about what you were saying about this PC ONLY having 3 expansion slots total. One is needed for the monitor card, one is needed for the serial/parallel ports (they also have a PS/2 compatible 6 pin mouse port which I would assume is on the same board as the serial/parallel ports), and I would think one would be needed for the disk I/O (hard drive and 5.25 1.22 MB disk drive). If this is the case, then I have practically ZERO expandability! I am going to call DAMARK (where I ordered the computer from just yesterday) and ask for some technical assistance on this to find out EXACTLY how many slots there are. If there are ONLY three total I am going to be <<VERY DISSAPPOINTED>> for I will have to cancel the order and spend MORE money and go over my planned budget to get a decent PC!

From: CBJ To: CHEMDE

You should definately look into that computer a LOT closer. I have seen DAMARK advertising before and you have to be careful because they are usually selling closed out merchandise at cut rate prices.

From: COCOKIWI To: CHEMDE

Dan! Since you insist on going IBM! Please do this goto JDR Microdevices right here in my turf! you can tallor your computer to your BUDGET. Build it your self! getting WHAT YOU WANT .No strings attached. All you need to do is get hold of a catalog and see what you can put together

lets see! case how about a mini upright .nice 16"Lx8"W x 12"H

Case \$199.95
mother board \$199.95 286 12.5 meg Mini
memory \$111.15
vga \$499.95 8bit vga 16 bit is \$100 more.
keyboard 89.95 101 keys.
drive board \$169.00 286/386 com/drive hard and floppy!
drives \$ 89.95 ea <as above>
i/o card \$ 59.95 multi port <2nd serial opt>
opt \$ 24.95 opt.<this board has 2 serial,par and game port
lets see! Total \$1265.60

You would now have a 286 4 16 bit/ 3 8 bit slots 12.6 meg system only thing I missed was a hard drive. i think the above would be what you want! or if you were willing to go for a ega the Western Digital all in one board might appeal to you.

From: CHEMDE To: CBJ

The computer in question right now has a VGA color monitor and 30 Meg hard drive , 5.25 1.22Meg disk drive, 1 Meg of memory, etc. with some inexpensive software included for \$1000 (this is NOT the same computer system I had originally thought about purchasing about 2 weeks ago. In talking to an "expert" PC er at work (my supervisor) who has 6 years of PC experience and really knows his stuff said tthat this computer system (286) was a good deal, but that the "3 expansion slots" may or may not be the problem. Now I may be in a dilemma because I want at least some expansion slots available and may have to cancel my order

Gosh, the Coco world is so SIMPLE!! You have 1 slot; if you want more than buy a multipak interface or make a y-cable... SIMPLE!! But with PC's????

From: CHEMDE To: COCOKIWI

The problem with the PC world (unlike the Coco world) is that there is so much to choose from!! Since I know little about PC's, I was thinking it might be best to go with an "already put together" PC so that I wouldn't "miss" buying any necessary parts!!

From: CHEMDE To: LINLEE

You were 100% correct about that AT PC only having 3 slots TOTAL. And, even worse, I only have <<ONE>> free slot (fortunately its a 16-bit)! Gosh, if only I had known this before I ordered it! Now I have an interesting (actually depressing) situation: Damark told me that they will TRY to cancel my order, but can't gaurantee that it will be cancelled because of the way they process the orders. If it IS cancelled, then I must go back to the drawing board. If it IS NOT cancelled, and I DON'T want to keep it, then I lose \$100 in shipping charges. If I DO keep it, and want to expand beyond <<ONE>> expansion slot (which I am sure I will), then I would have to TRASH THE MOTHER BOARD and buy a new one for about \$300 PLUS a new case (since the included case is SMALL).

I SURE hope that my experiences with PC's gets better!

From: CHEMDE To: LINLEE

Just looked at a PS/1 by IBM at a local Sears store... very impressive graphics! Are you familiar with the PS/1?

From: LINLEE To: CHEMDE

Well there are a lot of ways to bash the PS/1. To start with there aren't any expansion slots in the base unit. To expand the PS/1 requires a seperate expansion box which only includes 3 slots. Also that "photographic monitor" is nothing more than plain jane VGA. Also although almost every 80286 machine currently in production comes with a 12 MHz chip, the PS/1 uses a 10 MHz chip. The worst thing about the PS/1 is it's price. For that \$2000 you get a 10 MHz 3 slot 80286 machine with regular old color VGA and a 32 meg hard drive. For \$1900 from Tussey Computer products you could buy a 16 MHz 80386SX 7 slot machine with Super VGA and a 42 meg hard drive.

From: CHEMDE To: LINLEE

Thanks for steering me away from theat PS/1!

From: COCOKIWI To: LINLEE

NOT! Unusual! Why do you think I bought a CoCo-1 Instead of a IBM. I mean a PC 64k back then was \$2000 bucks and the CoCo-1 was \$699.00 for an extended BASIC, And NOW a IBM Still costs \$2000 and a CoCo-3 is \$99.00. For a 128k. There is nothing out there now that comes close to the CoCo-3's. POWER FOR THE PRICE.....AH! Well!.....

From: LINLEE To: COCOKIWI

Ah but there is no comparision between the CoCo and a 25 MHz 80386 machine.

From: COCOKIWI To: CHEMDE

After all this! Yuo are still asking questions? Well!cannot say I told you so! <grin> Thats why I will stick to a MM/1.....No questions! <GRIN>. The Tom Cat is great for tose who do not have a coco-3 but would like one.and the MM/1 is for those who already HAVE one.....MS-DOS machines have so many questions to be answered,So many differnt ones. its easy to make a wrong chose in that case,I'm glad you are getting this input. But as you have noticed its fun trying to sort all the Crap from the good. Do! What I told you before , Goto JDR Micro and put to geather a system that will do what YOU want....Cheeper that way ! Like buying a new stereo!

<GRIN>

From: CHEMDE To: COCOKIWI

I have the feeling of Deja-Vu... your STILL trying to sell the MM/1 to me! And, yes, I am <<STILL>> trying to understand the confusing world of PC's!! I have the JDR catalog on order, but am currently looking thru EVERY ad in the Dec. Computer Shopper looking to see what is available and at what prices , and , of course, coming up with more questions... it is a VERY confusing world. BUT, I am getting to know PC's a little better now. Needless to say, I WILL be getting a PC instead of an MM/1, the only question is when?!!

From: CHEMDE To: MARTYGOODMAN

I just ordered today a 386SX with 2 floppies , etc. I mainly just looked at all the ads in the computer shopper and narrowed it down from there. I am quite glad that the "shopping for a computer" part of my journey is over since it seems I have dragged it out for an eternity! (I can just hear COCOKIWI (Dennis) saying "Oh no!!!"

From: MARTYGOODMAN To: CHEMDE

Now, prepare to see priced TUMBLE on 386sx systems after your system arrives. Indeed, that almost Certainly will happen. I expect that, over the next year or two, the price of a OK 386sx board will drop from \$350 to \$100 or so. <grin>

From: CHEMDE To: MARTYGOODMAN

Very interesting that you exect the price to fall on a 386SX; I heard the OPPOSITE from a very nice and knowledgeable salesperson at one of the mail order houses (one of the MANY) that I called! This guy seemed very VERY knowledgeable about the computer industry, so I take his word as truth ; that is not to say yours is wrong, but his information is up to the minute!!

From: MARTYGOODMAN To: CHEMDE

How much would you and this "knowledgeable" person like to bet me that the price on 386sx boards will be dramatically dropping in the near (6 months to one year)future? I'll give 2 to 1 odds. Minimum bet \$100. Care to put your money where your mouth is?

If your friend wants to make up convoluted stories to explain the current high prices, so be it. But it is nonsense to suggest that Intel is "dropping support for" the 386sx. Sheer idiocy. And anyone who believes such nonsense is a fool.

From: CHEMDE To: MARTYGOODMAN

Interesting! It seems that there are two sides to this story ... your side and this salespersons side! Now, is he right , or are you right?? I don't know! You are, of course , quite knowledgeable about PC's, and the salesperson was also. I trust that since the salesperson told me this info. that he was being honest.

From: MARTYGOODMAN To: CHEMDE

There were about a dozen Taiwan clone vendors at the last SF Computer Show I went to, and ALL of them were well stocked with 386sx boards. You are simply WRONG if you think there is any TROUBLE getting 386sx boards.

By the way... you never DID tell us the price you settled for. \$335 to \$350 was the price range for 386sx 16 Mhz OK mother boards at the last show I attended.

From: CHEMDE To: MARTYGOODMAN

Well Marty, if that is the case, then the vendor I was talking to was downright LIEING (LYING? LYEING?; urgh, not sure of the speeling of that one!) to me!!! He said he COULD NOT get the chips, and , if he WERE able to he would probably have to charge the customer extra for a 386SX. Although I see no reason why he would lie since I was INDEED looking to purchase a 386SX from him and he could not (apparently) supply it.

I purchased a 16MHz 386SX with 1 Meg, 40 Meg 28 ms hard drive , 2 high density drives (3.5 and 5.25), 2 Serial, 2 parallel (yes 2), Dual game port (extra \$15) , 8 expansion slots, Super Vga color monitor 0.28 dp and card with 512k, MSDos 4.01 (\$55 extra) and Baby Tower case (\$50 extra)... Total cost with shipping, etc. was \$1702. This seems to be a reasonable price (although I am sure YOU could get it cheaper from near where you live since you are in the "silicon valley" area of the USA). I do request, however, that if this seems to be a high price to you, please don't tell me since the "damage is already done"!

From: CHEMDE To: MARTYGOODMAN

I just got the specially designed cable to connect my DMP-130 with my PC. My problem, however, is HOW THE HECK TO

YOU GET THE PC TO RECOGNIZE THAT YOU HAVE A PRINTER??!!???? I am practically pulling my hair out to get this PC just to recognize the LPT1 port!!! PLEASE, PLEASE HELP!!!

From: CHEMDE To: MARTYGOODMAN

Thanks for setting me straight Marty. Bottom line--- I HAD THE CABLE PLUGGED IN THE WRONG PORT!!!!!!

From: CHEMDE To: MARTYGOODMAN

I have ANOTHER problem now. I ****THOUGHT**** I had a Boca Research S-VGA board which can be upgraded to 1 Meg. However, I ALSO found another installation kit/manual. THIS manual says I can only get a MAXIMUM of 512k! Now, the question is, which card do I have? I certainly TRUST that I have the 1 Meg board, because if I don't I am going to do much, MUCH complaining to Warehouse 54!!!

From: DSRTFOX To: CHEMDE

You got what you ordered, so no need to complain. You ordered a standard, low cost VGA card, not an SVGA. Most can only go to 512K. Keeps costs down. You need to ask those typw questions before you order by mail!

From: CHEMDE To: DSRTFOX

AH, but I ****DID**** order a S-VGA (note the "S") monitor! I would EXPECT that I would also get a S-VGA card. Also, what do you mean by "low cost SVGA"? I would certainly not call it "low cost". I did write down a LOT of questions when I ordered it, but I was (and still am) a "green horn" about PC's.

From: MARTYGOODMAN To: CHEMDE

If there are no sockets for extra chips, and no provisions referred to in the documentation for 1 meg upgrading, then YOU CAN'T upgrade the card to 1 meg. I am a bit perplexed about why you are so indignant. It SOUNDS like you got EXACTLY what you ordered.

From: CHEMDE To: MARTYGOODMAN

I am indignant about this issue of not having (and apparantly not being able to upgrade to) 1 Meg, becuase I ordered a S-VGA monitor which can go up to 1024 mode and I EXPECTED to be able to use the S-VGA "color" monitor to its fullest capabilities.

P.S.: I will be exchanging my 512k board for a populated 1 Meg from Warehouse 54; the difference in cost is \$60.

(Finally, nine months after CHEMDE's first request for buying advice, comes this message:)


From: CHEMDE To: COCOKIWI

I just wanted to let you (and others who have helped me so much in the past) know how things are going. At first, I found the PC world very confusing (not knowing what the "jargon" meant , etc.). Even though I am still a novice, I gain more PC skills each day. What do I think of my PC compared to my Coco? I LOVE IT!! Actually, I love both the PC and the Coco, but the PC is just SOOOOOOOO much more powerful! The best thing is (and the most important thing) is that I am becoming PC literate, which as already helped me "on the job" at my place of employment. This was the real reason I wanted to get a PC vs. an MM/1.

I greatly appreciate your help and guidance in the past, Dennis (as well as Martygoodman, Linlee, and others) and , even though I spend a good deal of my time now in the PC Sig, I will be popping over here to my Coco friends to see what's going on as often as possible.

--catch you later!

CURTAIN



Apple II Incider - Marble Madness

by [Donald Lee](#)

TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES

Due to various "technical difficulties" (some self inflicted, some not!), this review is showing up late in Bryan's INBOX. Firstly, Bryan decided it would be easier if he created a Yahoo Group to communicate with the various writers for Retrogaming Times Monthly. That's all fine and dandy but I decided to just receive a digest of the emails rather than all the individual messages. The email address I use is used for my personal communication with friends as well as personal business and I wanted to avoid receiving even MORE email. Of course, Friday rolls around (it's 11 PM PST right now as I write this part) and I'm thinking "How come I haven't seen Bryan's reminder email?". Oops. I check the digest that came in a day ago and of course the articles are due tomorrow!

So I'd better get writing on the article right? I thought it was going to be easy. I had played (briefly) three Apple IIGS games about a week ago in preparation for this column. I figured I would choose between one of three games to discuss. Alas, no such luck. The Virtual Apple II site which I have come to rely on lately had been doing some upgrades. While it was working fine a week or so ago, it wasn't working tonight with Firefox and according to folks on the Usenet group comp.sys.apple2, it may be a little while before everything gets straightened out. Hopefully, I will be able to get to these games later on.

So, I had to scramble yet again to find another game to talk about in the mean time. What did I decide on? Read on!

MARBLE MADNESS

Thanks to the Apple II's vast library of games, there are many that are simple to play and thus simple to review. Marble Madness by Electronic Arts falls into this category. It was an arcade game created by Atari Games around 1984 and was fairly popular with it's clever graphics and stereo sound (one of the first games to do so according to Wiki). As with many popular arcade games back in the 1980's, it was soon ported to various home systems including the 8-bit Apple II's.

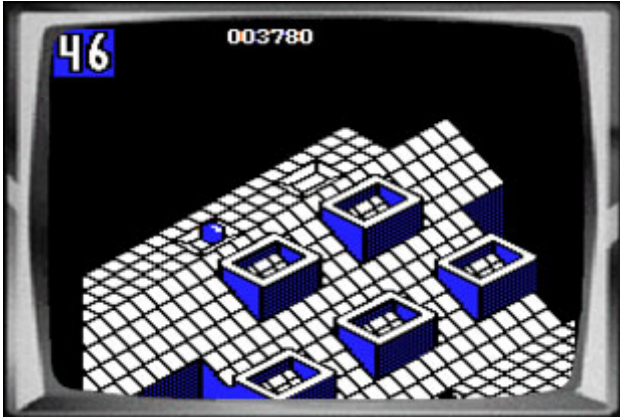
The game play is relatively simple. The player's goal is to maneuver a marble to a destination in a certain time limit. If the time limit expires the game is over. However, besides the time limit, players will have to contend with various enemies and obstructions that try to prevent the marble from reaching it's destination in the given time limit. In the early stages, the enemies and obstructions are few in number. However, as the game progresses, more enemies and obstructions are introduced. In the arcade version, a trackball was used to control the marble.

Not having played both the Apple II and the original arcade version of Marble Madness in years, I ran through both versions in emulators. Based on what I saw, Electronic Arts created a fairly faithful version of the game for the Apple II users. Note that I only played about three levels of the Apple II version and the first two levels of the arcade.

The controls for the game are ok as most Apple II users would probably be using a joystick or the keyboard. Obviously, without a trackball some challenges are to be expected. In terms of graphics, like many Apple II games, the developers did the best they could given the limitations. This home version is less colorful and the animation is slow and choppy compared to the arcade original. However, the design of the mazes are faithful to the arcade version and that should make players happy.

There are minimal sound effects during the game and it involves action with your marble (collisions, marble going off the cliff, etc). While the arcade version had theme music playing throughout, the Apple II version plays only before you start on a maze but not during game play. Again, it was a limitation but the developers worked around it.

Overall, I enjoyed revisiting Marble Madness. The arcade original is still fun after all these years, and even though the Apple II version might not look as pretty or run as fast, it's still a good translation.





All Eyes On Blaster Master 2

by [Daryl "Zeo" Kiddev](#)

Blaster Master 2 as a stand alone game is pretty innovative and extremely creative. However, it is NOT a worthy successor to Blaster Master, and I will NOT review it as such. That is a "Sequel review", not a game review.

I'm doing this Game pro traditional style.

Graphics: 8.5 / 10

The games' settings are extremely impressive. However, they had obviously intended this to be on the NES looking at the under utilized backgrounds, and then ported it over. Also, the Sega specific designed sprites were disproportionately BIG compared to the NES specific designed backgrounds.

Sound: 10 / 10

NO complaints on the sound. This game takes full advantage of the Genesis' superior sound hardware versus the NES. The music is actually better than anything the NES could ever hope to produce, and the sound effects are appropriate, timed properly, and useful.

Controls: 4 / 10

These are plain out FAIL. The side scrolling controls are acceptable, but the menu system is painful to use. The more upgrades you get, the more time consuming and clumsy the menus are. People complained about he changing boots and tunics in Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time, but that is nothing compared to trying to change weapons or tank parts in this game.



The overhead controls are horrendous, and unresponsive. It is excessively ridiculous in the early 90's to have a control scheme that REQUIRES an X-Box/PS2 remote to even play properly! Trying to use the A button to shoot and the B/C to aim AND move the tank at the same time is beyond any child I know of. It's actually extremely hard even for someone that's held over 50 Twin Galaxies world records at one point or another.

Gameplay: 7 / 10

Game play, outside of the controls, isn't bad and the side scrolling levels are actually fun. HOWEVER, the unnecessary overhead levels are terribly difficult, with the controls being confusing and unresponsive. The upgrades offered for the overhead sections do not last long enough to make it worth the effort of getting them and pretty much kill the game's enjoyment value..

Replay value, longevity: 1 / 10

Unless you have a need to speed run this game you have no reason to ever pick it up again, except for the musical tracks.

Overall rating: 7 / 10

This game fails to deliver a lasting impression. It's a standard Sega Genesis game that gets played once, then shelved except when you run out of other things to play or feel like a challenge. If possible I would borrow or (if you can find a place that still rents cartridge based games) rent this game and learn how old school players learned to play. I would not recommend Virtual Console download or trying to hunt this game down to buy.



The Thrill Of Defeat: The Ugly Duckling

by [Mark Sabbatini](#)

I've always assumed one reason the Atari 2600 remains one of the most popular retrogaming machines, aside from the nostalgic thrill of playing E.T., is seeing how much programmers squeeze out of it.

It's amazing how "two player sprites and a ball" somehow gave us Jr. Pac-Man, Defender II, Pitfall II, Solaris and various other favorites. Homebrewers are still pushing the envelope - a port of Megaman was posted online right before this issue's deadline - keeping the "wow" factor alive due to their graphics, depth or whatever, even when the projects as a whole aren't stellar games.

This is an argument I'll use when trying to come up with a rational reason for my love of inferior computers and video game consoles, whose programmers were constantly trying to keep up in a race while dragging anchors of various size. It was a source of pride when something for my TRS-80 Color Computer, for instance, was comparable to the Atari and Commodore 64 versions - or at least not so awful I'd be embarrassed to have owners of other machines play it. One of the biggest moments in that machine's history came when programmers figured out how to generate four colors on what was technically a black-and-white high-resolution screen.

So after someone figured out how to get music out of a Sinclair ZX81, a machine with no sound-generating capability, maybe I should have had more faith people would overcome its other limitation as well.

The big hang-up from a gamer's perspective, other than the miniscule flat membrane keyboard, was the black-and-white 64X48 pixel screen. Most games use letters, numbers and other ASCII characters because they're more distinguishable than the block graphics (a period makes a nice cannon shot; an inverse quote looks reasonably like a Pac-Man ghost). Such characters, on a 32X24 screen, were defined in an eight-by-eight grid of pixels - divide that and you've got a resolution of 256X192, the same as the Sinclair ZX Spectrum and above-mentioned CoCo. Since the display information was burned into ROM, with no user-defining capability, addressing those pixels was a seeming impossibility.

But some persistent folks pulled it off by, as best I can tell, getting the computer to bypass all of the built-in display code and somehow putting one of their own up. Keeping in mind they apparently managed to refresh that screen 60 times a second, and have the time and memory to run a program on one of the slowest machines ever, it easily ranks among the best tweaking of the 2600's display.

Technical blabber aside, it means I missed out on some really great games when I owned a ZX81 back as a teenager.

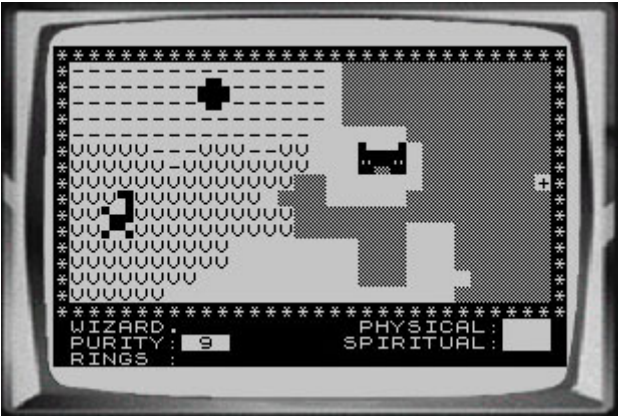
This month I'm reviewing a few favorite modern-day "finds" among the collection of titles in the browser-based emulator I've been using recently to rate ZX81 games (online at www.zx81stuff.org.uk). Not every favorite is here since that would deprive future columns of gems worth digging out, but all pack a wallop of some sort even when they may not be among those I consider most fun to play.

As always, grades are relative to the ZX81, so the one title getting a top grade here wouldn't be the envy of a C64 owner. But they'd probably have enough fun playing it they'd stop making fun of the size of my silicon for a few minutes.

Black Crystal (B)

The instructions for this Ultima-like RPG kept me entertained longer than a lot of titles I've plodded through over the years. As for the game itself, the grade is strictly based on potential because I can't seem to last long before getting killed. But it looks, oh, so promising I keep firing it up trying to figure out how the hell I actually become a competent adventurer. The player is either a warrior, elf or wizard, and

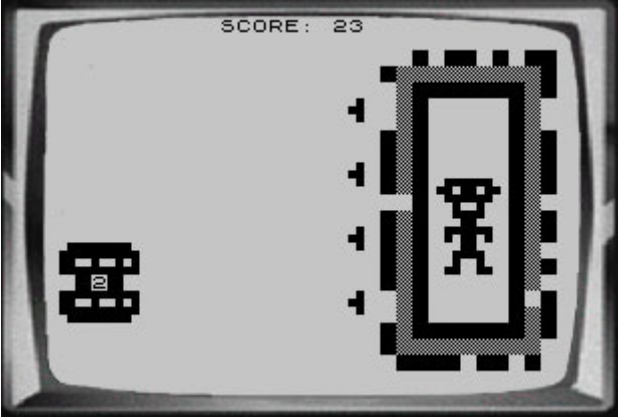
has to get through six quests that load sequentially on cassette. Graphics and sound were never a big thing on those old "tile map" games, so not a lot is lost by having a soundless landscape populated largely by ASCII characters. One thing that totally sucks about online emulation and keeps me from getting further into the game: the save option doesn't work. Best option for that is an emulator with a "snapshot" feature.



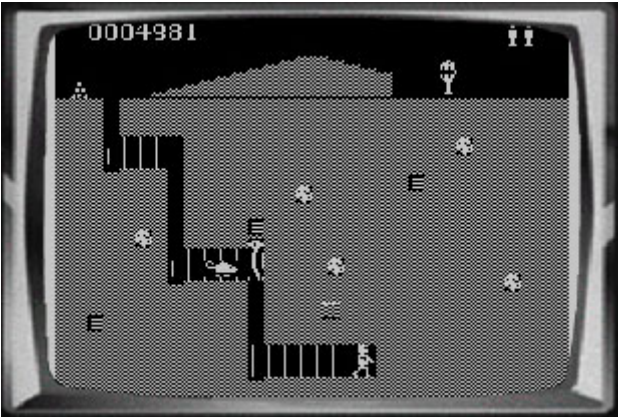
City Of Xon (C)
From the grade it's obvious I'm not all that high on this Zaxxon derivative, but boot it up once and take a look at it anyhow just to see what some people did with the ZX81's block graphics. This has all the elements of an "A-plus" game: speedy, challenging, surprisingly effective 3D scrolling and a host of extras that require you to do more than move and shoot. You have two different types of weapons, plus grappling hooks for capturing fuel or the mighty Xon enemy. Shields can be toggled on and off, points swapped for fuel, and your crew repairs various types of damage. The instructions also provide various technical programming details, including various ways to customize the game. With all that, there's two massive problems that make you pull your hair and scream (OK, mutter) "what were they thinking?" First, you only get one ship and, while not every hit is fatal (some damage shields, fuel tanks, etc.), some are and the result is a lot of games lasting mere seconds - not to mention the agony of a single mistake during an otherwise well-played game. Second and far worse, the controls are as bad as anything I've ever seen. You're supposed to use the nightmarish 5-8 arrow keys with you right hand and a row of six more adjacent keys that do various other functions with your left. I can't manage it on a regular keyboard, so I'm guessing the miniscule flat keys of a real ZX81 may literally be impossible. That makes problem number one all the more infuriating, because a lot of miscues aren't going to be the player's fault. Oh, well...makes for a pretty screenshot and statement of the machine's potential.



Fortress Of Zorlac (B)
There's actually nothing remarkable about this game, but my personal fondness of Phoenix/Star Castle games puts this higher among my preferred titles than indicated by what I hope is an objective grade. The player controls a tank on the left side of the screen responsible for wiping out the alien inside a ship on the right. The ship has a triple-wall hull that rotates in alternate directions, plus four cannons returning fire. It also slowly moves toward you, making things more and more hazardous (elements of the cone stage in Tron). You can move in four directions, getting more points the closer you are to the ship. It's the little touches that keep me playing it: five user-defined skill levels, flexible keyboard controls and an appropriate learning curve. It's a little monotonous, but then so is Yars' Revenge (another game this reminds me a little of) and it's always been one of the better 2600 titles despite its simplicity.



Forty Niner (A)
A few jaws probably dropped when this cousin of Dig Dug came out in 1982, the first of four landmark efforts by Software Farm, with people probably so mesmerized by the hi-res graphics the gameplay was a minor consideration. Luckily, there's a remarkably clever and complex theme at work, along with user-friendly touches including user-definable keys and five skill levels. The player burrows through the dirt to reach gold nuggets while avoiding rats that pass through the earth until they get to the tunnels you dig and start chasing you. You can stall them by knocking out supports that leave a trail of dirt behind, or kill them by touching a nest that releases a snake and destroys everything in its path (including you if you're careless) as it wiggles to the surface. Collect all the nuggets and you exit to the next level through a mine shaft that appears at the bottom of the screen. That's a lot to keep track of, but we're not done yet. There's also a gremlin roaming back and forth across the top of the screen, eating away at a pile of dirt on the surface (picture a twisted Breakout monster come to life). If it eats everything and manages to get to the mine entrance at the top left of the screen, it's buh-bye unless you exit awfully quick. To slow him down you'll need to surface after digging enough dirt to fill the gaps (a "pile" icon indicates how much dirt you've collected). Nice as everything looks, the graphics are a little confusing at first, which keeps this from getting a top grade. But the only game that beats it in this emulator is Software Farm's follow-up title, Rocket Man, detailed below. A third game in the emulator, Z-Xtricator, crashes when I try to play it on my Mac; Windows users may have better luck. It's a



Defender-like game, but reviews back then weren't as high as the company's first titles. The company's final game, *Booster*, came too late in the ZX81's lifespan (1985) to get anything resembling a real release. Those wanting more information about the games, plus files to play on offline emulators, can visit the Software Farm Tribute Page at www.picturereviewerpro.com/hosting/zx81/softwarefarm.htm.

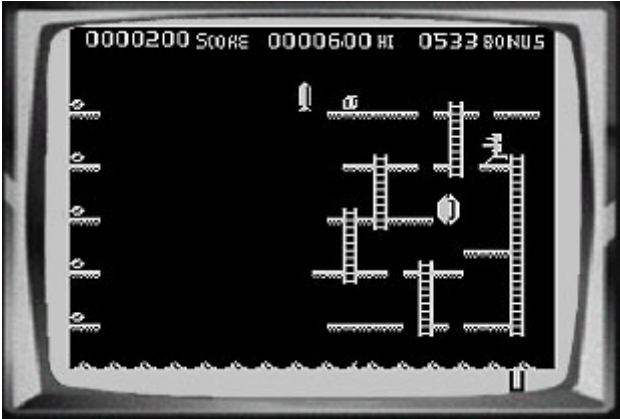
Protector (B)

This side-scroller seems like one of many stripped-down *Scramble* clones, but play it for a bit and some surprising things (i.e. a mushroom cloud) start popping up. Yeah, you gotta shoot the waves of attacking aliens, but it turns out they're running up a separately kept score taking out stuff on the ground. You don't have quite the maneuverability of *Scramble* (up, down, and an accelerate option that speeds the scrolling while keeping you at the left of the screen), nor do you get bombs for ground targets. You can go wild rapid firing your laser at enemies and targets, but it's a good way to get into trouble fast because you have limited ammo. Restocking requires landing on a launch pad momentarily, meaning you're a sitting duck for the rainstorm of enemies. There's also something called a "Damacles missile" which, as the previously mentioned mushroom cloud might indicate, is bad news - think of it as essentially a smart bomb that's in the possession of the enemy instead of you. About all you have going for you is a decent set of simple controls and six selectable speeds. OK, maybe it's not a trophy game, but back when I was wasting money in a futile search for a playable *Scramble* game this would have halted the spending spree.



Rocket Man (A)

Booting up a hi-res game is an awesome rush, but after the initial few minutes some of them are just a teeth-gnashing bout of slow and unresponsive flickery futility. Not this platformer, which presents a formidable and ever-increasing challenge where all of your screw-up's are definitely your fault. Your goal is to guide a man (who actually looks like a man) around a five-level ladder-and-platform thing on the right side of the screen collecting fuel boxes (one appears at a time, popping up in a new location each time you touch the current one) until a meter at the bottom of the screen indicates you have enough to power the jetpack on the top level. You then need to maneuver the jet pack to one of five diamonds on narrow platforms at the far left of the screen. The fuel doesn't last long, so you need to be quick. You also need to beat the bonus timer. Oh, yeah. There's an enemy out there. A bubble chases you around the screen, not too brightly at first, and touching it is fatal. So is falling into the water at the bottom of the screen. But one of the really great things about this game is the level of control you have over your miner. He has a Super Mario-like ability to change direction in mid-jump, he can jump on and off ladders while airborne, and he can survive a fall of any length as long as he doesn't touch bottom. Flying, of course, is a whole new challenge. Finally, once you get through three levels of this, with the bubble getting hyper aggressive, a key aspect of the game changes. Now you're picking up legs of lamb until your guy has enough energy to basically flap across the diamonds in a Joust-like manner. The action is quick and animation smooth thanks to the minimum of moving elements, but the game hardly feels sparse. The icing on the cake: it's one of the rare games where the default keys are easy to use and you can change them if you don't like them. The only drawback, in fact, is you have to redefine the keys at the start of every game since it doesn't remember them. There's a very high chance this is the game I'd have used to impress friends, if I had any, back in those nerdy teenage years.



Modern Retro - Bionic Commando: Rearmed

by [Patrick McClellan](#)



1987 saw the *Street Fighter* arcade game released for the first time, as well as another Capcom project which would go on to be extremely successful, *Mega Man*. Namco also released *Wonder Momo*, their last 8-bit game, as the new 16-bit era beckoned. Amongst a year of many big gaming releases and announcements, a project known as *Bionic Commando* (Top Secret in Japan) was also put out by Capcom. Whilst the likes of *Mega Man* and *Street Fighter* would become instant classics, *Bionic Commando* also found a large following, with the innovative bionic arm and grappling gun combination and a notoriety for its lack of a 'jump' button.

In the arcade version of the game the protagonist was Super Joe, however he was only a supporting character in the NES release. Nathan “Rad” Spencer would take the reigns and become the lead character in the series from there on, with his physical appearance changing dramatically from game to game.

A Gameboy adaptation of the NES version was released in 1992, and a sequel to this followed on the Gameboy Colour several years after in 1999. For almost a decade, there were no new releases in the Bionic Commando franchise. That is until August 2008, when a game by Swedish video-game developers GRIN (published by Capcom) was released. It was called ‘Bionic Commando: Rearmed’, and was available as a download only title on the Xbox 360, Playstation 3, and PC. The console versions of the game retailed at \$9.99, whereas the PC version initially retailed at \$15.

As you load up the game, you will be greeted with a cut-scene detailing some of the story elements. You will immediately take notice of the music in the background. Composed by Simon Viklund, it features remixes of the music found in the original NES version of the game. This has been a highly praised feature and has since been made available for download through services like iTunes. The main menu offers you a range of options, such as starting the main campaign, testing your skills in the challenge rooms, multiplayer (local only), and a scoreboard which allows you to compare times with friends and others worldwide.



The main campaign mode features text-based conversations with friends and foes, through which you discover what your objectives during the game are – to save Super Joe (the protagonist of the arcade game) and also to slow down the impending Imperial advances. You travel through the different areas in the game on an overhead map, where a pilot will take you from place to place. Spencer’s physical appearance is soon revealed, with short ginger hair and black sunglasses proving a stark contrast to the shaggy haired hero in the NES game.

Animations are remarkably fluid once you take control of Spencer for the first time, as enemies collapse over ledges once killed by your weapon. The vibrant visuals are also clear to see, as the sun beams down on each and every platform, and the dazzling blue sky provides a contrast to Spencer’s green getup...and ginger hair. The game isn’t afraid to go in the opposite direction, however, as dark green caves will be a place you visit regularly. As you approach a computer, you are given the option to ‘Hack enemy network’. Upon doing this, you are presented with a simple puzzle game. It felt somewhat out of place at the start, but it provides relief from the action-based gameplay that makes up the majority of the title. The swinging mechanic still feels satisfying, and the lack of a jump button (which sadly has turned some away from the game) provides you with yet another obstacle to overcome. Your bionic arm also allows you to pick up man-sized barrels to throw at man-sized err, men. Awesome.

As well as the music, there are other tip-offs to the previous games, as the icon displaying the number of lives remaining resembles an 8 bit version of Spencer. As the game goes on, you will meet a variety of different bosses in all shapes and sizes. The first is labeled by Spencer as a ‘little chatterbox’. There is a definite strategy to beating all of them, something that may put off certain people, but it goes without saying that the game was always going to be challenging, in similar fashion to the games in the series that preceded Rearmed. Dialogue is genuinely funny, with small references to mistakes within the NES version of the game that wouldn’t be understandable if you hadn’t played that version.

Whilst in the overhead menu which allows you to travel to different areas, you will encounter purple trucks, and if you should collide with them they will trigger a very different style of gameplay. The game switches to an overhead view, as opposed to side on, and you fight forces on various terrain, such as snow. Also, the game has received trophy support on the Playstation 3 recently and supports Achievements on the Xbox 360.



Bionic Commando: Rearmed remains very faithful to earlier titles in the series, and has been critically acclaimed, currently rating between 85 to 87/100 on Metacritic. Many fans regard it as the best game in the series, and even as the best title available on the Playstation Network or the Xbox Live Marketplace. It has recently dropped to a ludicrous price of \$5 on the PSN, and anyone who considers themselves a gamer would be mad to turn it down at that price. It has more content than many next-gen games that retail for \$60, and is a recommended purchase for all who want a challenge, and a look (possibly a first) into a game series that has stayed close to the hearts of many since its initial release way-back-when.



Old Wine In New Bottles: Capcom Classic Collection Volume 2

by [Jonathan H. Davidson](#)

As promised, the retrogaming collection of the month is the Capcom Classic Collection: Volume 2 for the PlayStation 2. It was released in 2006 and seems to be a bit easier to find than Volume 1.

Game Selection

This collection includes 20 Capcom arcade games, all originally released between 1986 and 1994 (though most are from 1990 or later). Some of the games such as Strider, Black Tiger, and Magic Sword and are definitely classics, while others are more obscure. Quiz and Dragons, in particular, has not aged very well since it was released in 1992 and it really should have continued to languish in obscurity. Likewise, Speed Rumbler may have been innovative and fun in 1986 but it does not hold its own any longer.

There is a far greater variety of games than with Volume 1; there are virtually no collections of sequels. The only exception is the original Street Fighter and Super Street Fighter II Turbo. With these two representative games, it is interesting to see how the genre has evolved in the seven years between the two releases (1987 to 1994).

Several of the games include RPG-inspired elements (such as upgradeable weapons, health potions, experience levels, etc.). Some of these titles include Magic Sword, King of the Dragons, and the abysmal Quiz and Dragons.

I have commented on this point several times before, but these retrogaming compilations are a great way to discover games that were not previously released in North America. While I don't know if I would call it a Classic, Eco Fighters, for example, is a really fun shooter (with an environmental theme as a bonus!). Some other titles, such as Three Wonders and Block Block received only very limited release, but they are very much fun.

Bonus Content

There is a fair bit of bonus content relating to the games, such as the original artwork (sometimes including arcade sell sheets), music, and tips. Virtually all of this content is locked at the beginning. Most unlocks are easy to accomplish while a few are much harder to obtain. As with Volume 1, 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, trivia, and the back-story (if applicable). There is also a series of tutorial videos for Super Street Fighter II Turbo. These videos are not locked, so they are accessible from the beginning.

For the truly obsessive, there is even a reworked version of Quiz and Dragons based on Capcom game-related trivia questions. Amazingly, it is even less fun than the original!

General Comments

The user interface is simple and intuitive to use. For all of the games, the difficulty level and other options (e.g. bonus lives) can be adjusted.

Most of the games have adapted very well to the PS 2 controller. The only exception is Street Fighter II Turbo. The same complaints I had with volume 1 also apply here. While the buttons can easily be remapped, the physical layout of the PS 2 controller makes this game nearly unplayable for me. Several of the games support 3 (or even 4) players but as I don't have a multitap, I have been unable to test this option.

Block Block, a Breakout-clone, was originally designed to use a paddle controller, but it is very playable with the analog joystick.

As with many of the recent retrogaming compilations, any of the games can be paused or saved at any point. This certainly makes some of them much easier. I could not imagine completely finishing all 50 levels of Magic Sword, for example, in one sitting.

Overall, I like this compilation far more than Volume 1. There is a better breadth of genres represented. Some of the obscure games are really a lot of fun and they deserve to reach a wider audience.

Next time out, I plan to review another classic arcade compilation 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 Evan Roppolo	

At first I was going to reprint an article from 1983 about the summer CES show, as it's the summer and the CES was the first thing that came to mind. However, while I was searching for a CES recap, I stumbled upon an article about an 11 year old boy that was making a name for himself in the publishing industry by writing articles for Universal Press Syndicate. To consider all that he accomplished back then, before the days of YouTube and other internet sites that have made many youngsters famous, drove me to use this article for the August Videological Dig. It's a very fun read to say the least! I wonder what he's doing now? You know what...I'm going to try and track him down and see if he might be interested in writing articles for Retrogaming Times Monthly. It would be fun to hear about his adventures back then. Therefore, I hope this Videological Dig turns into an introduction for someone that we will be hearing more personal stories from in this magazine in the near future! Wish me luck on my quest to find him and enjoy the below article, as it's my favorite "dig" to date!

The New York Times

June 8, 1983, Wednesday, Late City Final Edition

Youth's Column Makes Him Popular with Top Minds in Video Games

From the neck up, Rawson Stovall looks like Dennis the Menace, his favorite cartoon character, blond with bright eyes and an impish smile. From the neck down, however, he looks every bit the professional that he is, dressed in a navy blazer, gray slacks, a tie and tassel loafers, with note pad and pen in hand.

Rawson, a columnist with Universal Press Syndicate, is 11 years old. His weekly column, "The Vid Kid," appears in 11 newspapers, and he is aiming for 100 by the end of the year.

The subject of the column is primarily home video games, and Rawson has developed quite a reputation in the video industry in his first year as a columnist, as evidenced by the respect and attention he garnered at the sprawling Consumer Electronics Show here this week.

Prominent game company presidents and designers, including Nolan Bushnell, the founder of Atari, and David Crane, a designer with ActiVision, solicited Mr. Stovall's opinions on the quality of their products and granted him long and thoughtful interviews. Although Rawson sometimes groped grammatically, his questions showed him to be better versed on the subject than many of his 2,000 colleagues in the news media who converged on the convention.

Getting Some Respect

Some adults unfamiliar with the young columnist's work smirked patronizingly at the child striding purposefully through one of the nation's largest trade shows, until he shook their hands firmly, produced a business card and asked to sample their latest wares.

Universal Press Syndicate began distributing "The Vid Kid" in April. "They approached me," Rawson said in an interview. "Before that, I got 10 newspapers on my own."

The first was his hometown paper, The Abilene (Tex.) Reporter-News. Last July he approached the executive editor, Dick Tarply, with four sample columns and an outline for a year's worth of pieces. "He really liked them, and called me back the next day to meet the other editors," Rawson said.

A few weeks later, Rawson was driving through Odessa, Tex., with his family, and ventured into the offices of The Odessa American. "I went in dead cold, without an appointment, and presented the editor with some articles," he said. "He loved it, and snatched it right up. But he made me promise I wouldn't go to the Midland paper."

Barred by a Guard

The young writer has had his share of rejections, as well. The Houston Post turned down the column, he said, and "the guard wouldn't let me in at The San Francisco Chronicle."

"They were evil there!" he added. "So we went to the Examiner, but they wouldn't take it either." The San Jose (Calif.) Mercury picked up the column and coined the name.

"I write for all ages" Rawson said. "My best feedback has been mostly from boys in junior high. But I've gotten a lot of response from grandmothers, too. They don't always know what I'm talking about, but they like to read it. So I included a recipe for Pac-Man cookies in the column."

A straight-A student who usually finishes his homework at school, Rawson has received and reviewed more than 200 sample video cartridges to date. He writes his columns longhand a few weeks ahead of time, and his mother and personal secretary, Kay Law Stovall, types them up on a leased typewriter.

Rawson first became interested in arcade video games in 1978. However, when he asked his father, a program manager for the Texas State Health Department, for a home video game setup, he was rebuffed.

Worked to Get Video Game

Rawson, then in fourth grade, turned instead to the pecan trees in his backyard, harvesting, shelling, halving and selling \$175 worth of nuts, enough to pay for an Atari video computer system.

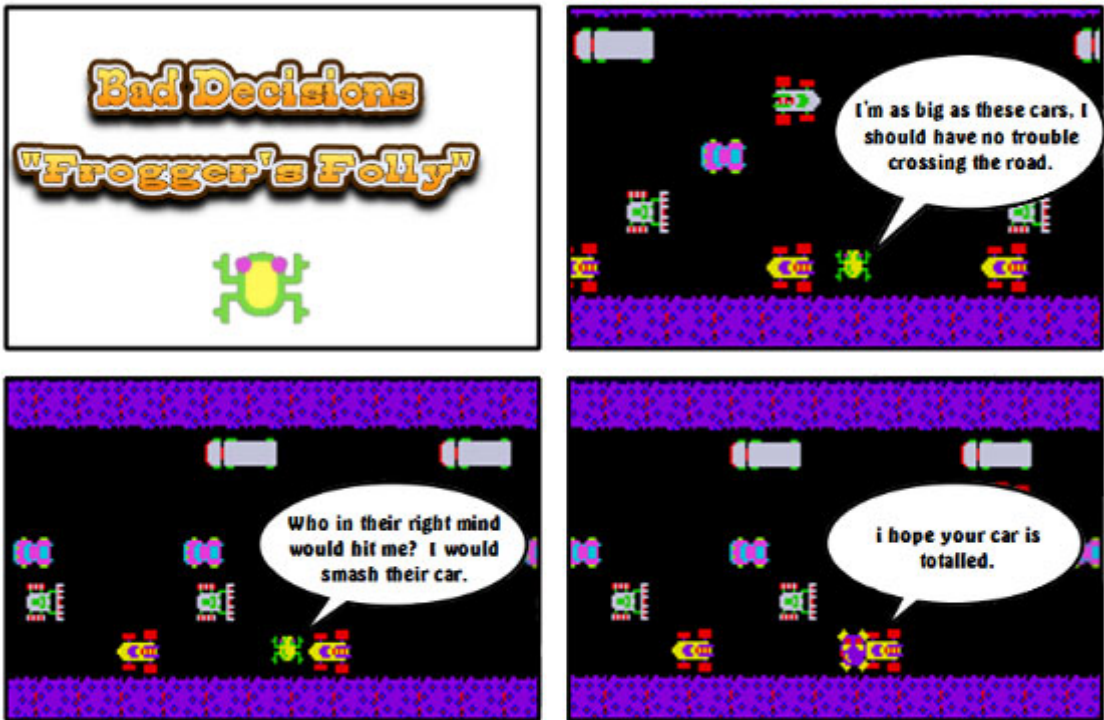
The same year Mrs. Stovall suggested to her son that he write an article on video games. "The way I thought, an article couldn't hold it all," Rawson said. "Mom came up with the idea for a column. Movies have reviews; why not games?"

Rawson's resume is already two and a half pages long. Asked what he expects to be doing in 10 years, when he is all of 21, he replied, "I'd like to be designing games, be president of a game company, in P.R. or advertising, a columnist, and that's it."



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.

Game Over

Considering this is the last issue before the summer comes to an end, I would like to wish everyone a happy end of summer. However, those of you that live in Florida I guess have until November, but to those that live in most of the rest of the U.S. (especially the northern U.S.) I encourage you to enjoy the final true month of summer, since I know I'll be doing so. Looks like I'll need to fire up California Games, which Donald Lee reviewed last month, as I could use a virtual vacation right about now. See you guys next time!

- [Bryan Roppolo](#), Retrogaming Times Monthly Editor