

RETROGAMING TIMES

monthly

Issue #66 - November 2009

'70s



'80s



'90s



COVERING 3 DECADES OF GAMING

Classic gaming has made a come back and you can see this by the selling of old gaming systems to the fun prints from a variety of [vintage clothing](#) stores. There's nothing like seeing an RPG, pixelated graphic on a vintage t-shirt or other article of clothing. It's like a blast from the past with the restoration of these retro games coming to the surface. This issue of Retrogaming is like the signing of an old yearbook, filled with awesome memories and [recollections](#) of gaming in the 70's, 80's and 90's.

Table Of Contents

01. [Press Fire To Begin](#)
02. [Retrogaming News](#)
03. [High Resolution - NES](#)
04. [My Life Of Cyber Crime](#)
06. [All Eyes On Wolverine: Adamantium Rage](#)
07. [Apple II Incider - Lode Runner](#)
08. [Vectrexenstein - Mine Storm](#)
09. [Dual Perspective - The Legend Of Zelda](#)
08. [Modern Retro - Speed Freaks](#)
10. [Video Game Tattler](#)
11. [Game Over](#)



Press Fire To Begin

by [Bryan Roppolo](#)

Gobble Gobble! Welcome to the Thanksgiving edition of Retrogaming Times Monthly. What could be better for a classic gamer than to sit down at the dinner table on Thanksgiving Day and read the latest issue of RTM? Nothing in my opinion! Anyway, this latest issue continues with the ever popular new mascot of RTM, that being Vectrexenstein, who made his appearance last month in the Halloween edition. What? Did you think we would let Vectrexenstein die after just one issue? No way. We'll keep reviving him every month regardless if it's Halloween or not. After all, there were many requests for Retrogaming Times Monthly to include more '80s coverage, and this is only the tip of the iceberg.

As you will notice, this is another light issue. I am hoping that we can bust out with a BIG Christmas edition next month. Hopefully all the past writers will get on board in trying to make next month the biggest issue yet, which will be the goal every Christmas (to have a massive year end issue). One thing I plan on doing in the future is going through my gargantuan e-mail archives dating from 1998 which contains many conversations with classic video game programmers. If I could get some of them to do some write-ups of their memories of the video game industry back in the '80s it would be a blast. It definitely would be something different. Anyway, I'll get to work on going through my e-mails so we can have a great Christmas issue next month. See you then! Gobble Gobble!



Retrogaming News

[Upcoming Retrogaming Events](#)

Houston Area Arcade Expo

The Houston Area Arcade Group (HAAG) is holding their 8th Annual Arcade Expo on November 6th & 7th (6pm-2am on 11/6 and 10am-2am on 11/7) at the Crowne Plaza Reliant Center Hotel on Kirby right across the street from Reliant Center. There will be over 150 classic and current coin-op pinball machines, video arcade games, penny arcades, and console video games ready for attendees to play on free play or buy them for their home. There will be Tournaments, events, music and

workshops to keep the young and young at heart entertained. Admission is \$25 for a weekend pass or \$15 for a single day, which gets you access to over 150 arcade games and pinball machines all set to free play! Check out more at their website at <http://www.arcadecenter.com>.

-Submitted by [Bryan Roppolo](#)



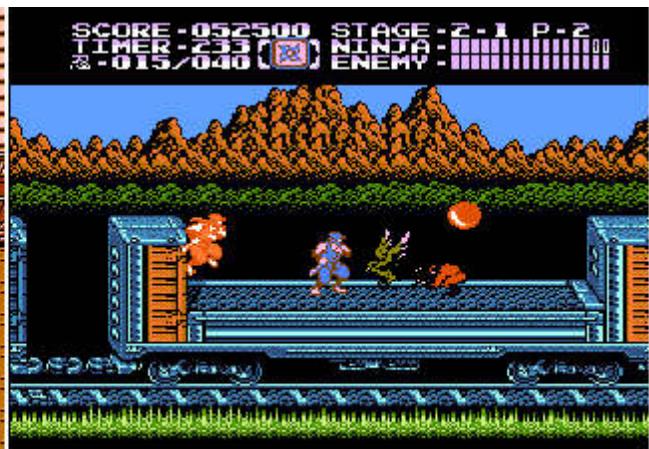
A few issues ago I wrapped up my NES'cade column by listing my top five Nintendo Entertainment System games. I really didn't have anything special in mind for how I would follow that up but I did want to do something a little different. I remember a few comments from both RTM readers and staff over the years expressing that they enjoy our stories, perspectives and memories more than just reading vanilla reviews of old games. If anything I think that personal touch is what makes RTM (and Retrogaming Times before it) really stand out from other similar newsletters that have come and gone. While I always try to put my own personal spin on everything I submit to RTM, I also try to stay in line with correct information and details pertaining to the games - especially with NES'cade. The last thing I want to do is spread false information, claiming it as fact. However for some time now I've wanted to come up with a feature that would allow me to express more of my unrestrained personal feelings toward games. More along the lines of if you ran into me on the street and we started casually talking about games, the things I would talk about. The question "what are your favorite games?" tends to be one that comes up fairly early in such conversations and since my choices are generally a little different from the norm, I thought it might make for an interesting addition to the regular columns.

That brings us back to those favorite five NES games of mine, that top five list from a few issues ago. A key part of the film High Fidelity has to do with music snobs working out top five lists for any imaginable encounter or event in life. Being a bit of a classic video game snob myself, I thought I'd try out yet another column along side NES'cade and Gaming Studies. I'd love to hear some feedback about this one and if reception is favorable then I'd like to go on to other platforms as well. So begins High Resolution, a retro gamer's mix tape ...er, classic compilation value re-release.

What better way to kick things off than with the video game console I have the most history with, the NES. While it came after the Atari VCS in my timeline of video game ownership and many forms of hardware have come after, the Nintendo Entertainment System is still where most of the best memories were made. And why not - it had a huge library of popular titles, created a majority of the game genres that continue to this day and breathed life back into the entire video game industry. Thanks to the genius of Gunpei Yokoi the NES was also the first home console that really got the non joystick controller right with the introduction of the directional pad. So let's dive right in with my favorite five NES games...



Gun.Smoke



Ninja Gaiden II: The Dark Sword of Chaos

5. Gun.Smoke

A superb rework of the arcade game of the same name, Gun.Smoke has been one of my top NES titles since I first played it back when it was released. A classic western shooter with a unique three way firing scheme, it threads the perfect balance between action and strategy. With controls that are silky smooth this is one of those games that you can settle down into "the zone" with, corralling enemies into your line of fire. Each boss provided a solid and increasing challenge and each stage was a nice change over the previous one. Weapon upgrades can be purchased from friendly pioneers along your journey, paid for with cash picked up on the frontier. In fact the stages will loop indefinitely until a wanted poster is purchased for the end of stage boss. Experienced players can take advantage of this by building up their cash inventory, thereby allowing them to build up their firearm arsenal before the final confrontation. In fact in some of the later stages it's a flat out requirement for success. An excellent soundtrack rounds out the already polished package. Load your six-shooters, saddle up your horse, and ride off into the sunset. It's easy to see why Gun.Smoke took the NES'cade column honors in [RTM issue 62](#), as about good as it gets for an NES arcade port.

4. Ninja Gaiden II: The Dark Sword of Chaos

Without a doubt Tecmo's gritty action epic Ninja Gaiden pushed gaming forward. Perfect control, unforgiving difficulty, amazing graphics, detailed cinematic cutscenes, interesting story - it blew us all away. The sequel kicked everything up a notch, continuing the exploits of Ryu Hayabusa, last ninja of the Dragon Clan. Not only were the graphics and play control enhanced but the game picked up right where the previous one left off. In my opinion the difficulty was turned down just a little from the previous title. However, this was a welcome change as it allowed the player a little more leeway in planning out each move on the fly. Tighter controls also contributed to an overall easier difficulty level, but don't get me wrong, the game is still right up there with some of the most demanding platform action games ever created. Everything simply comes together perfectly for a platformer that holds up amazingly well to this day. It's a lot more accessible than the original Ninja

Gaiden and is a game that everyone should take a crack at. Quite an experience and one I can pull out almost any time and instantly kill the better part of a day with. Heck, the rendition of Irene Lew from the introduction screen before each act has been part of my website's letterhead for years now.



3. Palamedes

When I was conceiving this column back around the time of RTM #62 I stated that Palamedes was an original NES game. I've since realized that was incorrect, it originally was an arcade title but was Japan only and I've never seen the game in an arcade stateside. With that cleared up it may come as a shock to many that the puzzle game in my favorite five NES list isn't Klax, Adventures of Lolo or the Tengen version of Tetris. No, the unconventional and largely forgotten Palamedes takes that honor. The concept is fairly simple. The player character stands at the bottom of the screen holding a die. One button cycles through the different sides of the die, repeating one through six. Lines of dice slowly creep down from the top of the screen. The first objective is to make your die match that of the die above it and then throw yours upward. If the dice match then the die that was hit will appear at the bottom of the screen. The second objective is to collect dice to make straights, pairs and the like. The more difficult the combination made, the higher value it has. Pressing down on the directional pad awards the line elimination value, causing the bottom rows of the descending dice to disappear. This is the final and ultimate objective of the game, eliminating the advancing dice to meet the line objective for the stage. Once you get the basics down this game becomes a fast and rewarding puzzler. Palamedes was a game I discovered during my NES renaissance in the late 1990's, remembering it from the Nintendo Power classified information section many years earlier. It's easy to start playing, becomes frantically challenging, yet remains a strangely relaxing experience.

2. Barker Bill's Trick Shooting

Light gun games have always been one of my favorite genres and many of the best light gun games were on the NES. Games such as Duck Hunt and Hogan's Alley are undisputed classics of the NES era and the NES Zapper has gone on to obtain a level of legendary status among gaming peripherals. Yet the NES light gun game I'd rather play more than any other is a title that many don't remember or have never played. Barker Bill's Trick Shooting could be considered the spiritual sequel to Duck Hunt, it even has the hunting dog from that famous game. Instead of shooting ducks and clay pigeons, you'll shoot various objects carnival style across three main stages and bonus rounds. Balloons, plates, falling objects, gold coins, a variety of targets and shooting situations keep the variety rolling. The game has a very cartoony feel with vivid colors and detailed graphics throughout. The hunting dog, Barker Bill and his bunny-suited assistant are all well animated and react to missed shots or perfect shooting performances. The presentation is top notch and always brings a smile to my face with each and every play. After all these years this game still hasn't gotten old and that's saying quite a bit when it comes to a light gun cartridge. This is a criminally overlooked title that more people should at least try. It is the perfect 8 bit arcade shooting game and is accessible for all skill levels. All it'll take is a couple plays and you'll be hooked. Oh, and yes, you can finally shoot the hunting dog in this game - no need to worry, he's fine afterward.



1. StarTropics

It was in Volume 21 of Nintendo Power (February 1991 for those keeping track) that I and many others first learned of the game StarTropics. Looking back, Nintendo was pushing the tittle pretty hard with a huge feature that would spill over into the next issue as well. A test of island courage, StarTropics tells the story of Mike Jones, a high school student from Seattle on his summer vacation. Mike is going to visit his uncle, an archeologist named Steve Jones, on C-Island in the tropics. Upon his arrival Mike learns that his uncle has been abducted and the tunnels under the island have become overrun by monsters. Knowing that Mike is an ace pitcher, the chief of C-Island's village Coralcola gives Mike a powerful Island Yo-yo to use as

his primary weapon. After climbing aboard Dr. J's personal submersible craft, the Sub-C, Mike sets off to find his missing uncle and return peace under the Southern Cross.

If it all sounds very different from most other games, it is. StarTropics is a bit of a rarity, a game developed in the United States by Japanese developers, specifically for American players. StarTropics never originally had a release outside of the USA, so it has a different feel than almost every other NES adventure game. Instead of getting a reworked and rewritten translation we got the prime product first run, specifically for the "home audience." The game plays like a mix of an RPG and an action title. Villages and towns are drawn in the traditional overhead RPG style, as are the areas of travel between action stages. Here conversation and exploration are the main objectives and the same viewpoint is used when operating the Sub-C. The dialogue is well written and humorous with nothing seeming out of place. Once an action area is entered the game first saves the data and then changes perspective to show Mike at full size. The action scenes play a little like the overhead Zelda games but from a more three dimensional perspective. Movement mechanics are a little different than anything else however, since Mike can turn and face four different directions without walking. It's almost as if everything is attached to a grid and this confuses and frustrates some players. However this unique control method is critical for how the game's puzzles work, such as turning around mid-jump to quickly clear submergible tiles. It also allows you to attack enemies without having to get directly in front of their line of fire or path of movement.

The game isn't as open ended as most RPG's or the Zelda series but it tells a solid story, which is why everything progresses as it does. Of course the most well known part of StarTropics takes place at the end of Chapter 4 where Mike is told to put Dr. J's letter in water. What many people didn't understand was that the game was telling the player to physically do something. Along with the instruction booklet, a letter from Mike's Uncle Steve was included with the game. Upon immersing it in water a secret message would appear along with the search frequency code, 747 MHz. Since not everyone has the original documentation, this was a hang up point for many people. I myself fell victim to this as my copy of StarTropics was purchased used, with a photocopied manual (which I did soak in water until it nearly dissolved), from a video game booth at the Santa Clara County Fair about a year after it had been released. Nintendo Power would finally publish the code in their Counselor's Corner due to the heavy amount of calls that they were receiving asking about it. A couple years ago I was able to purchase a large assortment of boxed and sealed NES games from a local flea market dealer that I had good history with. Sadly most of the games had been subject to moisture and humidity, ruining them from the inside out. Among the games that I purchased were two sealed copies of StarTropics. One of them had mold growing under the plastic so I opened it up, finally seeing in person Uncle Steve's letter to Mike. The years of humidity had made the secret message visible without immersing it in water. Nothing was salvageable from that copy and it all was discarded. Out of caution, I opened the other copy and was happy to see that everything was in perfect shape inside except for a little oxidization on the instruction booklet staples. After replacing those it was boxed back up and remains one of my favorite collectibles.

It still amazes me how few people have played StarTropics. Within the past few years I've introduced a few people to the game and they now too consider it an unsung classic of the NES era. The game was popular enough to warrant a direct sequel, the second to last officially licensed NES game to ever be released, Zoda's Revenge: StarTropics II. While I don't enjoy the sequel as much as the original, it's still a great game and really rounds out the overall story very nicely. There really is nothing like StarTropics on the NES or any other system for that matter. Marooned on C-Island, trapped in the belly of a giant whale or a stowaway on an alien spacecraft - StarTropics is the only NES game I'd need with me.

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



My Life Of Cyber Crime

by [Mark Sabbatini](#)

Oh, sure...tales of stupidity are fine if I'm impaling myself.

I thought my stupidity column ran its course last month when it tried committing suicide with a personal "worst-of" roundup to balance out snark directed at others for many months. But mentioning how my passion for Colecovision led to many hours of picking up tree branches as a convict piqued some interest.

I'm sure it's all about the schadenfreude. But for a month I'll expand my confessional beyond the cretinous to the criminal since I'm pretty sure I've paid my debt to society and/or the statute of limitations has expired.

My entry into a life of crime surely is familiar to many: copying floppy disks of games from classmates, most of which were "pelts" I never actually played more than once or twice. There were exceptions to be sure, made easier by my attending an alternative high school where marathon game sessions on the Apple II computers was plausible (especially since only about a half-dozen geeks had any interest in them at that point).

During interludes between Questron and Planetfall I did my school work on a pirated copy of Appleworks and hacked the passwords of teachers' disks (it was the kind of school where you could do this in front of an instructor and they'd be more impressed about the intellectual effort involved than mortified).

I didn't pilfer as much stuff as you might think for the various machines I collected over the years at home, largely because I was living in a small mountain town where opportunities were scant. But one of the prouder moments of my digital life was when I figured out how to transfer the code from game cartridges on my TRS-80 CoCo to disk (and suffered the clichéd fall when I learned many others discovered the technique before me). Predictably, I did a lot of buy-one-day-return-the-next for a year or two, at which point corporate gurus finally realized what was happening and shut us down by altering their return policy.

So by the time store security stopped me outside a Sears store during my junior year, I wasn't exactly an innocent first-timer.

It was supposed to be one of those days of childhood jubilee. My foster parents had agreed to pay for half a Colecovision for the family if I put up the other half. It'd taken a while to scrape up the money from my \$5 allowance and babysitting gigs, but since I was the only hardcore gamer among six kids I was fine making it a "communal" purchase.

Only problem was I didn't have much money for extras.

I'd saved for a Venture cartridge, being a diehard fan of the arcade version, and found a bargain-bin copy of Pepper II for \$10 (which ironically ended up being one of my favorites). But I wasn't much of a fan of the pack-in Donkey Kong game and some of the titles I really wanted, like that \$50 copy of Zaxxon, weren't going to happen.

So I dragged the console and the couple of games I could afford to the register (they were on a shelf, not behind a locked case, which obviously seems inconceivable now). I paid my cash and...to get out of the store to the bus stop I had to pass those shelves of games again.

To this day I can't figure out what part of my brain found logic in the argument that "if I just tuck a couple of these between the Colecovision box and my body, nobody will notice." The fact nobody was in the area didn't hurt, but geeze, even I knew stores used security cameras...although my brain apparently chose to selectively ignore that for a couple of fateful moments.

So I do my thing and head out the sliding glass doors trying to look nonchalant. They close behind me and I barely have time to start exhaling a sigh of relief when a female voice behind me says "just a moment, please."

I froze, all right - so much so my hands lost their grip and the Colecovision and other stuff crashed to the sidewalk. I had a spit-second impulse to flee, but as a scrawny geek already knew I couldn't outrun anybody in my class with short legs, much less an adult towering over me.

The guard said she watched me as soon as she saw me on camera stopping at the shelves a second time, before I even picked up my illicit games. I guess the good part about that is if you know you totally suck as a thief, you're not likely to continue trying.

That wasn't exactly on my mind when the cop came and gave me a summons to go to court, nor when the judge gave me 60 hours of community service. I spent most of my winter school break getting up at 4:30 a.m. so I could catch the early commuter bus to the city, where I worked from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. in frigid weather picking up dead tree branches being pruned by the parks guys. By the time I got back home to the mountains it was usually around 8 p.m.

If there's happy ending, the Colecovision survived the fall. We got a couple more decent games for Christmas. And while I never did get the play the Zaxxon cart as a youth, I tried it on an emulator awhile back and found out I didn't miss much since I owned a TRS-80 CoCo version that was superior (seriously - I've got the Creative Computing magazine review to prove it).

Alas, it wasn't the end of my life of crime. In fact, I ended up in a "don't-mess-with-me" fight in juvie hall just a few months later. But that's a story for another time...or not.



All Eyes On Wolverine: Adamantium Rage

by [Daryl "Zeo" Kiddey](#)

Wolverine: Adamantium Rage for the Super Nintendo is based off the Avengers/X-men tough Guy, Logan. Logan is also the only known man in the universe to make yellow spandex with animal ears look masculine.

Graphics: 9.5 / 10

The only thing about this game worth the cartridge its printed on. The graphics rock, and hard. It's almost as good as the cartoon, only obviously out of proportion as are all 16-bit and lower games.

Sound: 7 / 10

Nothing special, but nothing bad. Just kind of there and as expected.

Controls: 6 / 10

These are plain out EVIL. There are as many controls as a fighting game, and this is an action side scroller! You basically have the following buttons: low slash, high slash, and slash on C; kick, low kick, and high kick on B; jump on A. Also, combinations of B and C perform specials, and even WORSE, real combos like forward down jump will result, if done right, in a flying slash.....

However, the controls are responsive...no lag or stiffness like Zelda, or worse yet Bomberman 2's abysmal attempt at over world controls.

Gameplay: 0 / 10

Game play is horrendous! The enemies almost never get hit by any attacks that should clearly hit them, and the puzzles are almost impossible. This is a shame, because the game seems easy as the controls are responsive, but then nothing connects.

For instance, pressing "AA" produces a spin jump, kind of like the jumping slash in Ninja Gaiden. Now one would think anything that is close to, but not on top of wolverine, would die a horrible sliced up death and quickly.

NO..... Wolverine instead takes a 20% health hit.

Now let's take 2 puzzles into consideration:

1. There is a nuclear reactor. You slash open the glass, step inside, and move on. However, what isn't obvious is that the floor inside the reactor stops the flow of electricity though a spark plug-like apparatus that harvests the electricity if you beat the crap out of it. It's also hard to accidentally hit, so you have to KNOW and be AIMING for the floor, and unless you know exactly where to stand it's not even obvious you CAN attack the floor.



2. After this there is a jump that I still have not been able to make. Evidently the idea is to take the flying leap slash followed by the Ninja Gaiden type jump slash, then catch the edge of the platform and get the handle. First of all, to require a special combo ability just to get out of the FIRST section of the FIRST level is ridiculous, and to require a combination jump is beyond reason. This is a bad design! I mean the gap only needs be about 4 tiles shorter to be able to make a normal Ninja Gaiden style jump from the other side of the spark plug thing, and 2 tiles shorter to use the flying jump slash.

Replay value, longevity: 0 / 10

If I can't get past the first level why would I even think of replaying?

Overall rating: 3/ 10 TURD ALERT!!!

This game fails to provide much enjoyment, as it requires complete fighting game skill sets at near mastery level just to get through the first level. Unless you are going to try and compete in the game, I would not recommend even downloading a ROM of this. Any video game that requires an insane special to get past level 1 is not good for playing.



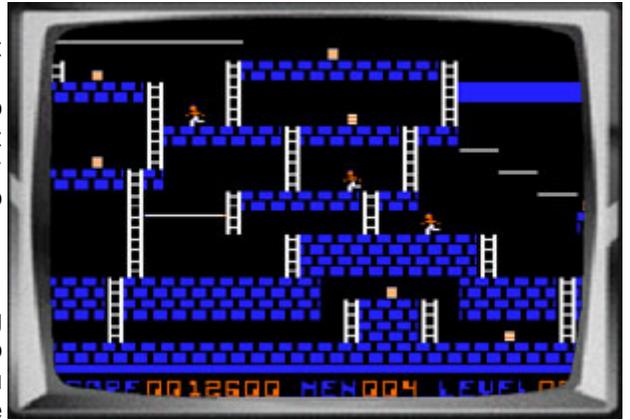
If things seem different this month, it's because I don't have a long introduction. We're going to jump right into the game this month! For November, we're going to focus on a classic from the 1980's called Lode Runner. Lode Runner was published by Br0derbund Software (best known for The Print Shop and Choplifter! during the '80s) for the Apple II and later ported to other platforms. According to the Lode Runner wiki page, it was even converted to an arcade game in 1984.



As a youth I seem to recall that this game received a lot of acclaim when it was released by Br0derbund. Many gamers were happy with the simple game play, the 150 available levels and the level editor that was included. While I don't remember much about specific reviews or accolades that Lode Runner received, I am fairly certain that it received some "Game of the Year" awards.

Despite all the acclaim during its release back in the 1980's, I actually had very limited exposure to it. I don't think I ever had a copy with my Apple IIe. However, I definitely remember playing it occasionally at stores on the Apple II and other computers.

After gaming on Lode Runner to write this column, I realized why I didn't play it much in my youth. While the game play was simple, it does require some quick thinking and strategy. As a teenager when Lode Runner was originally released, I don't think I had the patience to learn the tactics needed to play it well. It's interesting that I say that because I managed to play other games like Ultima and I definitely remember that Ultima had a learning curve as well, but I managed to advance through Ultima III, IV and V without problems.



After giving Lode Runner a spin on the emulator, I've actually found some love for it. The game play is indeed simple but can be frustrating when you first play it. I remembered you could dig holes, but I also thought you could jump them. Alas, I found out the hard way that you couldn't jump over them so you had to wait until they filled before moving. Of course, if enemies are chasing you, you better hope that the hole fills quick.

All in all, this is a fast action game that requires quick thinking. In many ways, Lode Runner is one of the best examples of an '80s action or arcade game. The game play is simple but the strategy involved is complex. Once you think you've got the game figured out, it will throw you a new curve or two.

For those who have never tried Lode Runner, I recommend giving it a spin. In fact, according to the Lode Runner wiki page, there have been modern versions of the game released for the Xbox Live Arcade and Apple iPod recently.



Back by popular demand (well, more like editor's request) is more Vectrex coverage. This month I give you a game that anyone who had any type of exposure to the Vectrex played. That would be Mine Storm, the game that was built into the system. I played Mine Storm quite a bit at the stores when it was first introduced.

Revisiting this game was quite a treat! I enjoyed it more than Armor Attack from last month, since that game had some obstacles that the player had to maneuver around and I felt the game play was restricted and a little slow. With Mine Storm, the playfield is completely open to the player and you can go anywhere you want, including wrapping around from one side of the screen to the other.

For anyone who has never played Mine Storm, it's basically an Asteroids clone. You shoot at your enemies big and small (mines I assume?) as well as an occasional enemy ship that pops up on screen. Certain enemies shoot things out as you shoot them so you need quick reflexes to get out of the way. The action is definitely much faster than Armor Attack.

In the time that I played this title, I was only able to get to level 2 so I don't know how the game changes as you progress to higher levels. Also, I ran into another problem in which Mine Storm became unplayable for a stretch of time until I got killed. I don't know if this had to do with the game (not likely) or the particular Vectrex emulator I was using (more likely). The emulator's author says he made this emulator for fun but indicated there were aspects of it that could use improvement.



On another note, I did manage figure out how to incorporate overlays into this particular emulator I was using and I included an image of the Armor Attack one. Alas, while I found overlay graphics files on the Internet, the one for Mine Storm did not work properly. I may have to use another emulator I found online, however, the developer is actively working on this one and perhaps in the future it will operate better.

All in all, while I was never a big fan of the original Asteroids arcade game, I did enjoy revisiting Mine Storm. In looking over the games that were made for the Vectrex, there are a few I would like to definitely get to in the next few months. I'm sure Bryan will like this. See you next month when we bring Vectrexenstein back to life once again!

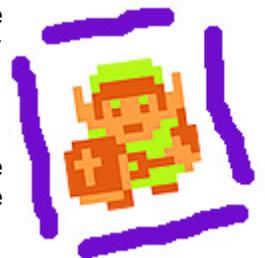
Dual Perspective - The Legend Of Zelda

by [James Sorge](#)

Hello, this is James Sorge back with Dual Perspective, the column that reviews games from both the playing and the World Record Perspectives. This month the victim is "The Legend of Zelda", by Nintendo.

Graphics: **B**

Simple, but they've held up through the years. Link still looks good, and the classic graphics are commonplace and still on shirts and other memorabilia. A graphical remake of the game would be appreciated though.



Sound: **D**

While the sound is classic, the quality is nowhere near current games. I like it, but people coming into the game for the first time will find the music kind of hard to hear and probably will want to cover their ears.

Difficulty: First Quest **F** / Second Quest **C**

The First Quest is absolutely no challenge. You need to play the Second Quest or romhacks in order to make this game challenging.

Replay Factor: **B**

You will probably generally play this until you 0-game it. Very able to replay in various bases.



The World Record Perspective:

The records are solid on this game, but not earth shattering. The Twin Galaxies record is 31 minutes and 37 Seconds held by Rodrigo Lopes. The Speed Demos Archive record is 33 minutes and 34 Seconds currently held by Michael Damaini. Neither record is near maximum potential and could be broken. If you're looking for a game to try, the First Quest records are pretty good bets to be taken down. The Second Quest time of a bit over 39 minutes is also probably bait to be taken down too.

The Penguin Says:



"This is one of the classic NES games that has probably been reviewed to death, but not in a way that looks at the world records. It's very surprising that The Legend Zelda has such beatable records. Anyway, if you want a challenge, the First Quest is not too bad for the average gamer, but it's the Second Quest that really makes the game shine."

"Overall, I give the game itself an **9/10**. Since the World Record is **NOT THAT HARD** hard to obtain, I'll give that a **3/5**."



Since the release of the revolutionary Super Mario Kart on the Super Nintendo Entertainment System in 1992, the kart-racer has grown into an incredibly popular genre. Even today, while other games provide deep meaningful storylines and futuristic gameplay, many would much rather dive into the easy to play, hard to master experience found in a kart racer, and with new kart racer IPs like ModNation Racers for the PS3 being created, it is still clear to see that the genre is thriving.

After the resounding success of the Mario Kart series, many other companies were keen to get a piece of the action and make games in the same vein. With the Mario games being exclusive to Nintendo's consoles, the genre was open for challengers on the Playstation 1. Crash Team Racing proved to be a standout after its 1999 release, with solid gameplay and clean visuals. However, a game developed by Funcom Dublin was to steal the limelight in the eyes of many. Funcom was behind titles such as the critically acclaimed PC adventure game 'The Longest Journey', as well as the online MMO 'Anarchy Online'. The Dublin branch of Funcom released Speed Freaks in September 1999 in the United Kingdom, with the American version, renamed Speed Demons, arriving early in 2000.

Allowing for up to 4 players with the Playstation multi-tap, the game encourages frantic split-screen local multiplayer sessions, and with its addictive gameplay, such sessions wouldn't feel out of place. Upon loading, you will be treated to a stylish opening movie introducing the games' unique and charismatic characters. The characters, all of whom (initially at least) are children with very different personalities. These range from Montgomery 'Monty' Carlo – a boy with "top of the range racing leathers and a super-cool crash helmet", to Monica, a girl who all the guys think is "so sophisticated and totally cool". Choosing a character isn't all down to their aesthetics and personality however, as you will need to take into consideration their weight, top speed, acceleration and duration of collision recovery. Finding the perfect Kart racer is no mean feat.

You will immediately find options to enter a tournament, have a single race, go into time attack, play vs. mode or multiplayer, as well as an options mode and a 'bonus' tab. Standard setting-changing options are available in the options section, as well as the ability to see your fastest lap times on any given course. After choosing to play in a single race, you're given the ability to choose a character. Even the character selection screen is stylish and interesting, as you scroll from character to character (6 to choose from initially, with more unlockable) as they all go about their own business in a surprisingly large treehouse – with Monty playing a racing video game (how ironic), and Brains – the big headed (literally) science genius, frantically writing equations. After selecting your character of choice, you will be given the option to select a track from either an easy, medium or hard category, with "easy" being the only one initially unlocked. You are given the ability to unlock new tracks, as well as new characters as you make progress in the tournament mode.



After progressing past a quick load screen, the race begins. The games' visuals were top notch for its time, with colorful and well defined characters and surroundings being on show immediately, such as the hot-air balloons filling the sky in Shipwreck Shore. Each level is as unique as the characters, as they vary from day (as demonstrated in Shipwreck Shore and Millennium Park) to night (Neon City and Thunder Trail). The gameplay is fast and furious, as you either dominate or are dominated in a race. The karts handle uniquely, with the lighter competitors turning in hard and sharp on every corner, while the heavier ones tend to drift around the tighter bends. Arguably the handling is better with the lighter drivers, such as the young and grumpy Tabitha and aforementioned 'Brains', but for experts, the heavier drivers are the way to get around the track ahead of your opposition. The AI of your computer counterparts is pretty ruthless, and is more-or-less the definition of rubber-banding AI, as you find yourself being regularly overtaken despite practically flawless races. If you do make an error, however, it is far from impossible to make it back to the front of the pack, with the other racers seemingly waiting up for you.



A factor that distinguishes Speed Freaks from the Mario Kart games is the ability to use as little or as much boost as you so choose. Rather than one quick tap of a button giving you an instant, momentary boost, this game allows you to hold the R2 button (default controls) to gain momentum gradually. It is rare to find a special item in the game that will grant you a full boost meter, there is instead a line of tokens that grant you a small amount of boost each. A small boost token could be the difference between first and second place, so keep your eyes peeled! Another distinguishing feature in this game when compared to Mario Kart is the weaponry provided. Whilst the latter offers the infamous red Koopa shells, Speed Freaks opts for a more...downright violent approach. If your lucky enough to crash into an item box, you may find yourself gifted with a bomb, or a round of machine gun bullets to take down your foes, or if you're really lucky a...red piranha?

While the music isn't at all groundbreaking, it still provides a cool and catchy backdrop to the intense gameplay. The tricky AI and vast quantities of unlockables will definitely keep you coming back for more, and multiple routes on the majority of tracks just further increases the replay value of Speed Freaks.

Whilst the game without-doubt takes a lot of inspiration from the Mario Kart series, it is an excellent title in its own right, with unique characters and tracks, combined with top-notch gameplay making for an incredibly enjoyable Kart-racing experience. While there are currently no plans to bring the title to the Playstation Network, the disk-version can easily be purchased online for a minimal price. Not necessarily a underrated game, but certainly an underappreciated one, Speed Freaks is definitely a recommended buy for all!





Video Game Tattler

by [Tom Ziaba](#)

Video Game Tattler
Issue #2
by Anita Beak

Here is the second issue of the rag that looks at the other side of the video game world. Instead of all rainbows and butterflies, we look at the seedy gutter and the characters that fell into it. So enjoy another helping of the stories you will find nowhere else.



The Fifth Ghost

Pete Best is often called the fifth Beatle. Well, in the game Pac-Man, there is also video game's version of Pete Best. Unknown to the general public, there was a fifth ghost who did not make the final cut and was later replaced by Sue. In an attempt to add some star power to the unknown game, Namco hired Casper the Friendly Ghost to be one of the original Pac-man ghosts. Along with Inky, Blinky and Clyde, Casper would chase down Pac-Man and try to keep him from completing his goal. But there was one small problem. He wouldn't do it. When asked what happened, Casper said the following "I just wanted to be friends with Pac-Man. I couldn't harm anybody." It became apparent that he was not cut out for the role and he was quietly let go and replaced by Sue. The rest is history.



Haunting Voice Has Heavy Consequences

Anyone who has ever played the arcade classic, Gauntlet, will no doubt remember the immortal words "Wizard need food badly." It was a cue that your hero was running out of health points and better find some food to replenish his health. Unfortunately for the wizard, that saying has led to a large problem. The once quick and nimble wizard now weighs over seven hundred pounds. Gone are his days of exploring dungeons. He would not fit in most of them anymore. Instead, he is stuck in a bed as he rarely leaves the safety of his house. When asked how he became so obese, the poor wizard responded "It was that infernal voice. Wizard needs food badly. Over and over. And it will not go away. Day and night, I hear the voice. I cannot help myself, I need food, badly." It is reported that he is finally seeking counseling for both his eating disorder and for the voices. We wish him the best.



Perseverance Pays Off

After more than thirty years of digging for gold, Pick Axe Pete has finally hit the mother lode! Long after others have given up on striking it rich in the danger filled mine, Pete showed them that there was treasure to be found! While he did not find gold or diamonds as he originally wanted, he did strike oil! In fact, he hit a deposit that is estimated to be worth in the billions, making Pick Axe Pete the richest of all video game characters. Well, it would have made him the richest, if he did not strike the oil while being at the bottom of a mine. Instead of swimming in money, he is instead drowning in oil. The oil came gushing out and quickly filled the mine, drowning poor Pete in what had to be a horrific death. With no immediate relatives to claim the oil, it was instead claimed by Exxon. May you rest in peace, Pete.

Tom Ziaba 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

Well, I guess I want to wish everybody a great Thanksgiving. When I was thinking of good games that would fit this issue well, the first thought that came to mind was Custer's Revenge since it dealt with Indian's. However, that game really doesn't fit in with the "Giving" part of Thanksgiving, well at least not in the way the Holiday means it. I'll be back next month and I hope everyone has a great stuffed Thanksgiving!

- [Bryan Roppolo](#)

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