

COVERING 3 DECADES OF CLASSIC GAMING

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Press Fire To Begin

by [Bryan Roppolo](#)

Happy New Years everyone! As we enter into yet another new decade we leave behind the '00s which at some point will become "retro" themselves. It sure will be interesting to see if Retrogaming Times Monthly is still around at the end of this decade, and if so what systems it will be covering. I can only imagine that many of the games that we play today will be looked back at as being "the good ol' days" of classic gaming. It's scary, yet fun to think about! Anyway, as expected this issue is shorter than normal, especially the Retroworks section. I expected this considering both Christmas and New Years were fast approaching when the article deadline for this issue came around. No matter, there is still a ton of fun to be had this month and I do believe that compared to other January RTM issues that this is one of the bigger ones, so that's something to be proud of right there.

This month you will notice that we have a guest columnist by the name of Doug Dingus who hails from Classic Video Gamer Magazine. Back in November Doug posted a message on AtariAge reminiscing about his days on rec.games.video.classic and I wrote to him asking if he would be interested in writing a column about rec.games.video.classic for us. Little did I know that it was Doug Dingus from ClassicVGM, as we all use handles on AtariAge that conceal our real identities. Needless to say, Mike (the editor of ClassicVGM) got word that I was trying to coax one of his best writers to our magazine and a bidding battle ensued for Doug's services. In the end Doug decided to defect to RTM and write for us for a mere \$20 an hour. Actually, I'm just kidding about that bidding war part! Mike was actually very cooperative and in the end urged Doug to have his column appear both here and ClassicVGM for the January issues. In the end it might help get word out about both of our magazines, since the retro gaming community is small and could use all the sharing of resources it can get.

The final bits of information I want to mention in this introduction is that Retrogaming Times Monthly will soon be getting a new looking main page. That should appear in January or February, so keep an eye out for that. Also, we now have our very own [Facebook Page](#), so come and join the fun there. It's a place where columnists and fans can comment or make suggestions for the magazine, as well as discuss retro gaming in general or keep up to date when each new issue comes out (which is always the 1st of the month, but it's nice to have a place to go to remind you of that fact!). I encourage all retrogamer's to join us there and hang out and talk about anything retro! Now on to this month's issue...



Retrogaming News

Upcoming Retrogaming Events

Carolina Games Summit
The annual Carolina Games Summit is being held on 2/6/2010 from 10am-9pm at the Wayne Community College in Goldsboro, NC. It looks like it is going to be quite an awesome event with an appearance by the Entertainment System Band, a costume bash, gaming tournaments, as well as countless speakers. It is mainly a modern gaming show, however there are things for the retrogamer to like, such as the Freeplay Arcade Lounge that will include arcade cabinets from the '70s, '80s, and '90s. If you are a retrogamer that also enjoys playing modern games then this is one to check out. The 2009 show set an attendance record, so there should be a good turnout this year as well! Visit their [official site](#) to see and read more.

If you know about an upcoming classic gaming event, let us know by e-mailing Bryan at bryan@retrogamingtimes.com and we'll post it here for you!



THE RETROWORKS

The "Anything Goes" Retrogaming Times Monthly Section



What's On Tap? Rec.Games.Video.Classic Is!

by [Doug Dingus](#)

Doug Dingus is a columnist for [ClassicVGM](#) magazine and agreed to do a write-up that would appear in both ClassicVGM and Retrogaming Times Monthly for January. I figured that it couldn't hurt for the two magazines to connect since we are all part of the classic gaming community. I hope you enjoy this article that Doug wrote for both

publications!

The year was 1992 and I had been on the Internet since late in 1991. Many people were still dialing BBS systems. One of the CAD software products I used regularly back then had a big BBS: 16 lines, lots of activity. Here in Portland, Oregon Computer Bits magazine would regularly publish lists of BBS numbers, an increasing number of them offering Internet gateway services, for a fee...

I was one of the more lucky ones. My ISP, Techbooks.com, was still sorting out the move to teleport.com, and some of that exists today at spiretech.com, where it's still possible to telnet in, get a shell, and do Internet the old school way.

Alternative music was on a huge roll. Sire records, among others, produced some great sounds many of which are still heard regularly today. Our local AM Stereo station, KBBT AM 970 "THE BEAT" was a work commute drive time staple. I was a lot younger then, unencumbered with the usual family things that we all must do, free to scour flea markets, junk yards, thrift stores, and anywhere else I thought I might find some throw away tech goodness. My first, and until very recently last, AM Stereo radio was found in a thrift right along side a Color Computer 3 and some Amiga goodness. It's not hard to see I was absolutely born to love retro tech.

I'm writing this for the two fine editors of "Retrogaming Times", the longest running retro web-zine and something I read religiously and am pleased as heck to have something appear there, and ClassicVGM, our small, but passionate and growing print effort, maybe looking to be the next Retro Gamer here in the United States. One can wish right? Of course we can!

A lark on an AtariAge forum thread saw two requests hit my inbox. Both were requests to write something about one of the best times in retro gaming...rec.games.video.classic...

I've told you something about the year, but not the place. That place was USENET, and the hub of activity that hinted at the rage that would become of our on line lives.

USENET was the killer application before we had the World Wide Web. Yes, there was a time before browsers, point and click, banner ads, flash games, animation, and all the other stuff we take for granted today. USENET was the place for sharing files, having great discussions, holding auctions, yelling, flaming, learning, and everything else. USENET lives on today in some shadow of its former self, mostly used to shuffle large binary files around the globe, while still hosting some discussion amidst so much noise that I am reminded of late nights on my AM radio, tuning between the noise, trying to hear that signal from far away...

When I first got Internet access, it was kind of a lark really. A company I worked for ended up with some high-tech paperless manufacturing gig. Really, the whole thing was way ahead of its time, given we are here many years later still trying to figure paperless out. Today, we are close, with many airplane and automotive parts actually being done in 3D with little to no paper, and it all just works! Back then, it was a pioneering effort when the net was young and barely able to sustain the activity.

My ISP provided a nice shell interface to the Internet. Looking back, I have to say that was the first "portal" I had ever used, and it was sweet. Menus took users to faraway places, using GOPHER, ARCHIE, FTP, and the daddy of them all...USENET.

There were other places too. IRC, Internet Relay Chat, was and still is where people to this day do all kinds of things while connected over a simple text interface. Gopher was a text only WWW pre-cursor, where you could visit a site and navigate information offerings. One of the best of all was MUD dungeon games, a variation of the often ignored text adventure game genre, but for multiple users at one time. I won't divulge how much time I spent in a few of those.

Moving on then, another event occurred at one of those thrift stores. I was late to the party PC computing wise. My Atari 800XL, recently replaced, was in use as a word processor and game machine. I had an Apple II, well equipped for writing and programming, and a Color Computer 3. The Color Computer had the most potential for me programming wise because I loved the 6809, and because I discovered it would do a nice 256, well almost 256, color screen at 160x200 through the artifacting technique. All I ever did then was program fractals, wait days for them to render, modify the program, and generate another one. I was happy in my little retro bubble, but I didn't have that many people to share it with.

That was about to change big. I had no idea how big. At this thrift store I ran into an Amstrad DOS PC with the full complement of RAM, an impressive 640K, co-processor, and CGA graphics capability. The whole thing was \$20 with Hard Card and was a lot of money for me then, but it was definitely a must have. Though I did want to play some TREK or ROBOTRON on it, the real attraction was that \$20 plus a modem got me on the Internet proper!

I had been sneaking some 9600 baud access to USENET at work, when nobody was looking, and was absolutely fascinated with what I saw going on at rec.games.video.classic and other places! What I saw were people talking about old game consoles, ACTUALLY PROGRAMMING on them, and doing it worldwide where I could see it all go down! I wanted to know more. A lot more!

For an 80's kid, this was nirvana! Everybody wanted to program the VCS, or 2600 as it is better known today. We all grew up programming goofy games on our VIC, C64, Atari, TI, Color Computer, Spectrum, and every other old-school home computer, but none of that ever came close to being able to make a game for a console. Consoles were special things then, closed, but fascinatingly close to the computers we had.

Consoles were also very highly differentiated! A trip to a flea market in 1992 was a complete blast, with all manner of games, old computers, and everything else, cheap and easy to find and play, but once a console was done, it was done. The spark was gone, nothing new was ever going to happen, or would it?

The answer to that question was the spark I found on USENET that drove me to get on the Internet as quickly as I could! Not only was new stuff going to happen, but it was happening, and there were lots of people around the world that felt the same way I did! Retro was in, if a bit early, and the ticket to the show was an Internet account, which I had! The show was not over for our favorite machines, but just beginning!

So I took that old Amstrad home, set it up, and then began to save for the best modem I could get. This was a careful balance between savings and missing out on the goings on USENET...I settled on 9600 baud which made it quick to read on-line text, and a download might only take an evening, or I could do a few and pick up my files at the ISP the next day.

Yes, the better ISPs used to do this! You got a home directory, quota, and the whole deal. A few nice words to the admin saw that quota lifted, and that opened the door to FTP archives around the world. Most people would fill up, and then carry diskettes to the building to copy files down and talk a little shop, or they waited for days.

Frankly, either was fine! The idea of downloading from an archive in Finland, for example, was so exotic to me at the time, I simply didn't care how I got the stuff, I just wanted it! Once in a while I could take a day off and go fill up at the University, archiving a ton of text to read and games to play.

USENET carried about 2GB of conversation and files per day back then. If you think about the transfer speeds of the time (a few kilobytes per second max), this was an absolutely huge number! There was a hierarchy of discussion broken down into groups. *alt.* was the freak show, with anything and everything not easily classified, or low brow, or profane, etc., *rec.* was the branch of the tree where hobby people gathered and did things. There were other top level branches too, and if you want to know more, Google is your friend.

Rec. was where I first heard about home brew retro gaming and where I put some of my first words on the Internet! Bob Colbert was working on Stell-a-Sketch and was using paddle controllers. The discussion was about the driving controllers and I chimed in with what I knew about them and how they would be perfect for the program. Had that moment not occurred, there is a chance that Stell-a-Sketch would have been released paddle only! Bob didn't know they were just like one axis of a trac-ball, and I did having tinkered with them on my Atari at home. We exchanged info, and Stell-a-Sketch was released to great effect a short time after that.

There is a little life lesson there. What you write on the Internet can continue to exist for a really long time. I was able to find a conversation or two from those times. Isn't that a little spooky, if you think about it some? I think so. Be nice... You just never know!

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Hello, and welcome to my new column for Retrogaming Times Monthly, where I will delve into those boxes of musty old C-20 cassette tapes to find software off the beaten path. You won't find most of these games on rarity lists or collector's guides, and many of them are all but forgotten in the modern age – but back in the proverbial day, the one-man "kitchen table" programmers who made and distributed these old programs helped kick-start the modern computer and video game era.

Before we start, I'll introduce myself briefly. I'm a 37-year-old father of two, and like many of you I cut my teeth during the heady days of Atari, Intellivision, Apple IIe, and Nintendo. My dad never liked computers or video games – I asked for a Colecovision one Christmas and got a marked-down Bally Astrocade instead, and I had to buy my first TI-99/4A with my own paper route money (they'd already been discontinued for three years). But I did a lot of programming at school, first on TRS-80's and then on Apple IIe's, and I was always at friends' houses playing on their Commodore 64's and dreaming of the day I could have ALL the systems I wanted, all at once.

Somewhere along the way I got distracted by rock and roll and soon I was saving for drum kits instead of video games. I became a pretty casual gamer as an adult - I liked Doom, didn't have time for Warcraft, and hated Mortal Kombat and NBA Jam. I worked, rocked, got old, went into debt, and only occasionally did I spare a thought to the computers and video games I so enjoyed as a kid.

I don't remember exactly when I got back into it – eBay and Usenet helped though. I was selling music online through a record store I owned and found myself browsing the classic game listings when I was supposed to be grading rare LP's. Eventually, I wound up with another TI-99/4A system, then a Commodore 64, and then an Atari and a Colecovision... you get the idea. Fast forward to 2010, and not only am I fully in the throes of retro game addiction, but I'm also – gasp – a grown-up, with my own

house and my own rules. I now have a dozen systems up and running in my basement, I'm re-learning how to program, and I've begun accumulating all kinds of the esoteric old stuff that you, if you're reading this, understand completely. The rest of the parents at the PTA may not get it, but I think they're just jealous.

There are actually a lot of similarities between the early days of computer gaming and the underground rock and roll scene where I spent my reckless youth. Both fostered a DIY (do it yourself) aesthetic documented in photocopied, stapled fan-zines and newsletters. Bands released their basement demos on cassettes with Xeroxed or handwritten inserts, just as plucky programmers issued their BASIC creations on tapes in Ziploc baggies. More than anything, there was the gleam of endless possibility, a bold and egalitarian notion that you – yes, you, the dweeb in the Starsky and Hutch t-shirt in your mom's basement – had as much business realizing a creative dream, and releasing it to your fellow dreamers, as did a big record label or software firm. We weren't just consumers of the pre-packaged – we could be part of a vibrant and shared community.

Of course, this high-minded concept led to a lot of crappy punk rock demos and grade-Z Frogger clones getting dumped into the public commons. And the frontier spirit in computers and music both quickly gave way to the larger marketplace. But it was nice while it lasted – and we retro enthusiasts still hold onto a little of that spirit even today. You see it in the people who release homebrew carts, or the guys making new hardware carts. In every new project for these "dead" platforms, you get a little bit of that DIY enthusiasm, the creativity for its own sake and for the benefit of a community of like-minded freaks.

Normally, this column will document software from "back in the day," but I'd like to start it out by spotlighting one of our modern-day DIY heroes and the amazing new collection he's just released. Chances are, if you've dabbled at all in the world of the Commodore VIC-20, you're familiar with Jeffrey Daniels. This Chicago-area educator runs the [Denial Forum](#), the most active gathering place for Vic enthusiasts online that I've yet found. And while the Vic has had a banner year, with megacarts and dazzling new large-scale games being released by the community, Daniels has a passion for the bare bones of the system – he creates programs for the unexpanded, 3.5K VIC-20 in BASIC.

He recently released the "Denial Collection 3," an elaborately-packaged, cassette-based offering featuring six of his creations. The packaging alone is amazing – the tape has a half-black, half-white shell and it comes in a small metal box with a clear window on top. Printed instructions are included, which leave tantalizing hints about the strategy one must deduce for each game, and there's even a small board game - with tokens and dice - to play during your cassette load times!

Daniels is the master of games that, on first glance, look stupidly simple, but then perplex and infuriate you within a few minutes of play time. Take "Go Left" – as the instructions say, "the object of the game is to go left. A player may fail by not going left. Points are scored by correctly going left. Go left. Follow the on-screen directions. Look at the cute bunnies. Go left." But not only is everything on the screen (including your score, the text, and the title screen) backwards, but the object - moving your rabbit through an on-screen series of directional commands - quickly becomes a white-knuckle exercise.

"The Improbable War" is an intriguing mix of rock-paper-scissors and Stratego and its interface is so smooth and well-designed, it takes a while to realize just how slick this little game is. "Night of the Ninja" looks the most like a game from the old days, with its blocky maze and small, scurrying guards, but even it has layers of clever gameplay and strategy that reward the patient player. "You Count" is a clever and fast-paced observation game that has you racing the clock to answer simple questions. "Pillow Fight" has you bouncing off the walls, literally, as you alternately pick up red and blue "elements" while avoiding obstacles and collecting various power-ups. It's possibly the most addictive of the batch.

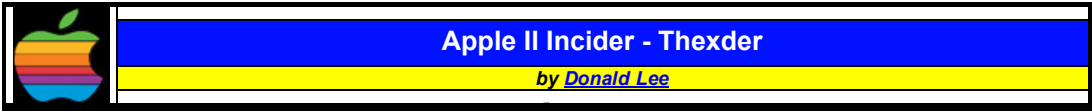
"Ten Ten" is the masterpiece of this collection, though. Two different mazes appear on the screen, and in both you have a dot (or a "ten") in one corner which must reach a goal at the other end of the maze. The catch? Every move of the joystick moves BOTH of your little guys. Simply moving the "ten" on the left to his goal will leave the other "ten" somewhere completely wrong. The trick is to use walls and boundaries so that each "ten" arrives at the same goal through different paths. It's one of those "a minute to learn, a lifetime to master" concepts that will have you cursing at your VIC well into the night!

Daniels is some kind of Zen master of game coding. Any of these deceptively simple exercises would make a great "Brain Age" style game for a modern-day handheld, and if he'd released them in 1981, these would be considered retro classics. They look as good as they play, and their design is uncluttered, intuitive, and sharp. Daniels proves here that in gaming, concept rules all – the most basic building blocks can be used to create a timeless experience if the actual guts of the game are fun. Isn't that what retro gaming is all about?

"Denial Collection 3," in its limited edition, was sent out by request (for a user-determined donation to the website), but Daniels has suggested he may put several of the remaining copies up for sale on eBay to lure in a few VIC users who may not be aware of the modern community's existence. The games are well worth checking out even if you download them for your favorite emulator, but I believe the Collection is best appreciated on original hardware, in its physical form, lovingly created and hand-made by Daniels himself as a Christmas greeting to the VIC scene.

That's it for this inaugural edition - I'd love to hear your comments, suggestions, and constructive criticism of the column. Next month, we'll be discussing several TI 99/4A games that, due to their unique memory-conserving design, have never been available on disk and could conceivably be lost forever in the emulator age. Until then, keep your heads clean and your volume and tone control within system parameters...

Denial Collection 3



Happy Holidays everyone! As I write this, it is a couple of days after Christmas. I spent my Christmas weekend with friends and family doing all sorts of activities. I saw Avatar (in 3D) and had a wonderful dinner with several of my friends on Christmas Eve. I hung out with my family on Christmas Day, and even did a little shopping and played basketball with one group of friends the day after Christmas. All in all, I stayed busy and interacted with many different groups of people.

Switching gears, the game I am focusing on this month will be very popular among fans of the Transformers cartoons (1980's) or movies (recently). The game is called Thexder, and like the Transformers, it was initially conceived in Japan and released in 1985 for the NEC PC-8801 computer. Sierra Entertainment, more known for adventure games such as King's Quest and Space Quest, acquired the rights to the game and released it for multiple computers including the Apple IIGS and the Apple II 8-bit machines in 1987.

The reason that Thexder might be popular among Transformers fans is its main character. By default, the main character is a standing robot, but in order to navigate certain locations while playing, he can transform into a jet. Both modes can fire lasers at enemies.

Unlike most action games, there is a goal players have to accomplish in Thexder. According to a strategy guide I found online (<http://strategywiki.org/wiki/Thexder>), this was what the player had to accomplish: "Your goal is to pilot exder through 15 stages, until you reach the central computer that you have been assigned to locate and destroy, in order to save the planet." Note that I read elsewhere that there are actually 16 levels in the game.

I can't claim a lot of personal experience playing Thexder. I remember that the game was fairly hyped in Apple II magazines before its introduction for the Apple IIGS. I saw it in stores every now and then but the chances to play it was minimal. I do remember the game getting great reviews from Apple II magazines though. Interestingly, I never realized that a version for the Apple II 8-bit computers was released. I only discovered it in recent years while playing with Apple II emulators. However, I am not complaining. I was originally intending to look some Apple IIGS games but ran into some technical problems. Fortunately, Thexder is a good fallback, though I couldn't specifically look at the Apple IIGS version due to the technical problems with emulators.

I played the version for the Apple II 8-bit and came away with mixed feelings. Without the manual, it took me a little while to figure how to play and transform from a robot to the jet. Once I figured that aspect of the game out, the rest fell into place. The game play is very well done and I enjoyed maneuvering around trying to shoot all the enemies. I managed to get past the first level but got killed on the second.

On the flip side, I felt the Apple II 8-bit version was a little lacking in the graphics and sound department. While the animation for the game was solid and the action very fast, I felt the graphics weren't very colorful and looked very blocky. As for sound, there were minimal sound effects and music. The lack of music is not a surprise, though some better sound effects would have been nice. Thexder seems to be one game where the developer didn't spent a lot of time trying to refine it to the best of the Apple II's capabilities.

Weaknesses aside, it is playable and worth many replays. If you really want to get your money's worth in the graphics and sound department, you may be better off




Thexder: The Robot on the run!



Thexder: The Jet in the sky!

playing the Apple IIGS (or other) versions. From a long time Apple II user's perspective, I play the 8-bit version since that's all I had for many years!

See you next month!



Obscure Output: The Rainbow Goes Digital

by [Mark Sabbatini](#)

Author's note: My New Year's resolution is to take this monthly look at retrocomputing's more obscure offerings into a mostly more positive territory than the merciless pummeling I've given in the past. Accordingly, this month's column pays tribute to a massive project putting a long-running magazine on-line and reviews of some of its best type-in games ever.

Years of bidding, begging and scandalous amounts of money are invested in the library of an old computer magazine cherished in my youth. So it's hard to know if I should be infinitely grateful or eternally resentful toward some folks who are digitizing every issue and thus making my collection largely worthless.

The Rainbow covered the TRS-80 Color Computer from 1981 to 1993, the longest-lasting magazine dedicated to a single computer during the retro era. Its coverage was frequently excessively rosy and riddled with inaccuracies (a curse of many platform-specific magazines in the day), but there's also no question it was an invaluable contributor to a rabid fan base that kept a machine alive for a decade past its projected three-year product cycle.

Editor Lonnie Falk started the thing by photocopying a four-page issue (two sheets of paper, front and back) at a local drug store. Within a few years it ballooned into a nearly 300-page monthly before doing a Flowers For Algernon thing, shrinking in size and quality back into near nothingness before giving up the ghost.

As a youth I had little interest in the various hardware projects (especially since corrections often ran a couple months later, which probably didn't help those who'd already wrecked their machines). More interesting were a few dozen product reviews that ran monthly during The Rainbow's heyday, but it was hard to trust the vast majority of writers who were reluctant to criticize advertisers and unable with frightening regularity to recognize conversions of common arcade games ranging from Robotron to Arkanoid.

The big thing were the type-in program listings even though, as many a retrogeek can attest, those hours at the keyboard produced far more disappointments than triumphs. The Rainbow offered its programs on cassette and disk at extra cost, but the \$80 or so for an annual subscription was too rich for a kid on an allowance.

Those tape and disk files found their way onto the internet years ago, but the magazines containing instructions often needed to run them remained elusive as Falk kept a tight chokehold on his copyrights until his death in 2006. Those copyrights still exist, but during the past year The Rainbow has joined the vast library of other old computer publications that can now be read and downloaded online – if you're willing to accept the legal questionableness of doing so.

Since I've bought nearly complete collections of The Rainbow twice, I have no qualms.

Digital PDFs of every issue scanned at a resolution of 100 DPI are available in the welcome area of the forums at [CoCo3.com](#) (the person with them has requested direct links not be posted to keep them from showing up in search engines. For the same reason I'll give him a massive, but anonymous, tip of the hat for coordinating a Herculean effort). Another project is creating a text-searchable archive in an ingenious way (maybe it's common, but I haven't seen it before). Anyone can visit the site (<http://cocomag.dyndns.org/TheRainbow.shtml>) and complete tasks that take about a minute each. This might involve a small amount of typing, proofreading, or just drawing a box around some text. Seventeen issues have been completed as of this writing, so it will probably take at least a couple more years until the full archive is available.

Also available in the coco3.com forums are links to the Rainbow disk and tape files, but like most other type-in magazines, the games tend to be slow, clumsy and generally uninteresting. There were some, however, easily comparable to the better commercial offerings of the day. Below are some favorites, plus a few titles that got a lot of praise for reasons I never understood since others may enjoy them more than me.

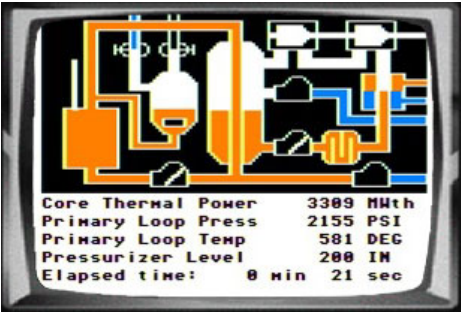
They can be played with MESS or other emulators, but my preferred method is using the browser-based emulator [Mocha](#). By clicking the "setup" button, you can load tape or disk files from your desktop (see the help and FAQ links at the site for details). For those unfamiliar with Mocha, it also has a wealth of commercial software you can click and play.

A final round of games, including the best to ever appear in The Rainbow and some for the harder-to-emulate CoCo 3, will be featured next month. Beyond that – probably for all of 2010 – will be a look at games from other CoCo print and disk magazines seen by only a lucky few.

Grades are on a relative scale for all CoCo software, commercial and otherwise (excluding the beefed-up CoCo 3).

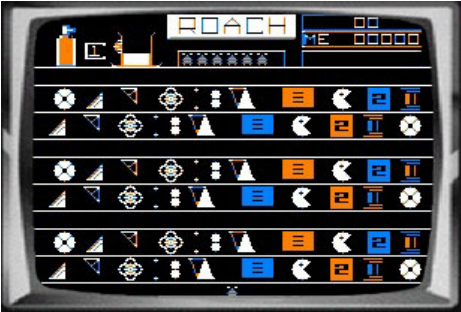
Nuclear Reactor Simulator (C+)

April 1983
Co-author Chris Latham also wrote Donkey King, a clone of the similarly named coin-op many consider the best CoCo game ever. That alone merits a recommendation even if the programmers concede it's "not a state of the art masterpiece." The Rainbow hired Latham and John Erickson to write this as an example and promotion for the magazine's first simulation contest, and the result is a simple but pleasing diversion. The player uses simple keyboard commands to manipulate pumps, valves and other functions that control temperatures and other operations. Instructions are provided in the program, but the article does a far more thorough job explaining how a nuclear plant functions, and what had to be left out due to time and CoCo hardware limits. One important note, which should be kept in mind when searching for other files on virtual disks and cassettes: I found the program on the March 1983 Rainbow On Tape file, rather than the April issue. Presumably it's an archiving error and should be kept in mind if other files aren't where you expect them.



Rainbow Roach (C+)

June 1983
This Frogger derivative is what I consider the first quality arcade game in The Rainbow's history, although I know others vigorously disagree (see Advanced Star Trench Warfare, below). The player is a roach who must cross six conveyor belts of pastries before the baker finishes drinking his coffee and sprays the whole factory for bugs. Much as you might like to eat the pastries, jumping on one is fatal since they trigger an alarm that immediately gets the baker's attention. If this is unclear, just think of it as similar to the river stage of Frogger. Getting seven roaches to safety advances the game to a more difficult level. John Fraysee, who later co-authored the original CoCo's best flight simulator, presents this as an exhaustively detailed study of how to write a decent game in BASIC. Making it speed along (too fast, if you select the hardest of four starting skill levels) is 72 bytes of machine code that scrolls the playfield 25 times a second. Either you understand the impressiveness of that feat or you don't. Even though The Rainbow lasted another decade, there aren't many arcade games with that much BASIC comparable in quality.



Trailin' Tail (C-)

August 1983
Oh, good grief – I'm really including a snake game here? Yeah, in large part because this may be the only all-BASIC version I saw that's blazingly fast and a constantly evolving challenge. The "snake" in this case is a nuclear-powered land cruiser trying to collect power chips in a post-apocalyptic world. Your cruiser leaves behind a trail of nuclear waste, which of course is fatal. One novel touch is the trail doesn't entirely vanish – a few dots remain permanently scattered about. Collect enough power chips and you go to the next wave, getting a bonus based on time and the point value of the last chip collected. The program's speed-up is simple, but clever. Instead of moving one pixel at a time, you make increasingly large multi-pixel jumps. While this creates something of a grid-paper appearance in later waves, I never lost track of my vehicle or considered it a distraction. Also, radioactive barriers start appearing and increasing in number after wave nine. Programmer Mike Hall throws in all kinds of other welcome touches, including keyboard or joystick control (the latter offering eight-direction movement instead of four), and a Tempest-like option for starting at higher levels and receiving a corresponding point bonus.



Instrument Flight Simulator (C-)

August 1984

This probably gets bumped up or down a full grade depending on how you feel about the navigation portion of flight simulators. The display is just what the name says – an instrument panel with no window view – so the visual takeoffs and landings that make this genre so popular are absent. But William Franklin crams an impressive amount of realistic aviation into this 32K all-BASIC program, including the ability to create up to 26 stations with varying altitudes, runway headings and so on. Radio Shack punished CoCo gamers with fragile non-centering joysticks that rank among the worst controllers ever made, but they're a great fit for the yoke controls of a simulator like this.



Junkfood (D+)

November 1984

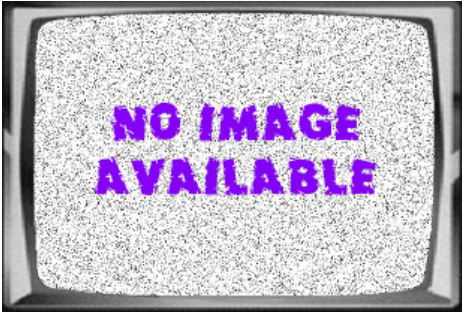
This port of Fast Food for the Atari 2600 (itself a relative of Kaboom) isn't great, but worth playing just to see one of the oddest graphics modes ever offered on any machine. The screen resolution is 64 horizontal by 192 vertical pixels, meaning each "dot" is an absurdly long and skinny horizontal line. The tradeoff was it offered eight colors instead of the two at the machine's highest resolution of 256X192. The goal is to eat fast foods as they zip across the screen, avoiding purple pickles. The player – a set of teeth – can also take refuge between the rows of food, but staying still for long will result in a fatal squirt from a mustard bottle. Programmer David Taylor does better than most with these quirky pixels visually, but in terms of gameplay it's a scaled-down effort with little long-term value.



Surface (C+)

April 1985

Maybe it was just my destiny to live in the North Pole (or at least in the town closest to it), since this simulation of a submarine expedition to the top of the world ate up far more hours than it probably should have. Part of the journey passes Spitsbergen, the island in the Norwegian Arctic I now call home, so of course its found its way onto my current-day playlist. A lot of the game, to be fair, is mundane in the way any flight or other navigation simulation is. You cruise north under the ice, using a few different screens to make sure you're going in the right direction and deep enough to avoid the underside of the bergs. The controls for ballast, steering, etc. are simple, but impressively realistic and responsive (aided by a few machine language routines to speed up the mostly BASIC program). If there's no ice above you can surface and take a look through the periscope, but until you're at the Pole all this does is give you a look at some severely pixilated icebergs. You have to be at exactly 90 degrees north and find an area clear of ice (you may have to circle around for a while and wait for it to shift) to surface and win the game. The whole thing takes maybe 30 minutes to an hour, which seems reasonable since presumably you're not playing this for a quick arcade fix. Charles Springer, the author and a frequent Rainbow contributor, won the magazine's second annual simulation contest for this entry.



Zonx (C-)

October 1985

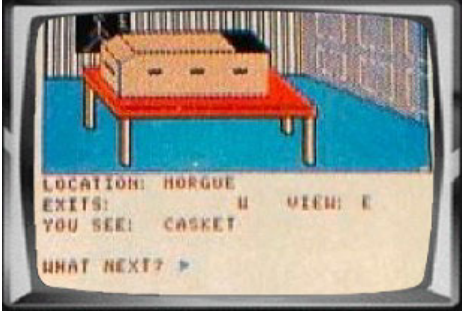
Not particularly original or enduring, but a huge hit among CoCo fans for an unusual reason: the gotta-play-this-on-LSD soundtrack. The CoCo had some of the worst sound capabilities of any computer of the '80s, making anything beyond a few beeps and blips an accomplishment. The idea of continuous music was absurd and practically impossible since generating sound eats up the computer's entire processing cycle. But David Billen rises to the task, and not just with any music. The psychedelic rock crashes into the title screen like an anvil and builds itself up to some incredible (and incredibly high-pitched) tension during gameplay. Most people will find it interesting – or at least worthy of study – once. After that it's serious "love it or hate it" territory. The game? Oh, yes. The game. It's a simple three-stage vertical space scroller. You move a ship along the bottom of the screen during which you 1) try to catch Zonx's coming down rapidly at you for points, 2) avoid Zug's raining down that will destroy your ship and 3) face both at the same time. Strictly on those merits it's good for a couple of games. But if you play more than once then audio obviously hasn't driven you insane, so maybe it's worth a few more tries.



The CoCo Zone (B)

April 1986

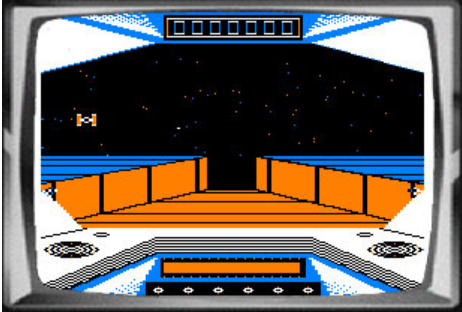
I played dozens, if not hundreds, of adventures and this prison escape thriller is among maybe ten I finished without resorting to hints or cheating. You find yourself in a prison cell, framed for a murder you didn't commit, only to find yourself receiving a mysterious note from a guard one day. This fairly mundane setup develops into a compelling story, especially given the memory limits of early computers, and the graphics are first-rate commercial quality. The plot twists thrown at you feel like part of the narrative rather than pointless punishment to make things harder. Unlike a lot of adventures where you hope to avoid the grave, successful completion here means literally burying yourself alive. I don't remember typing in endless commands trying to guess the "right" word for a situation or feeling like I was unfairly killed merely for entering a room for the first time. Actually, there is one such situation - an arcade-like challenge in a room you must cross with lasers firing at random locations and intervals. The only way out is moving fast and hoping randomness doesn't coincide with where you are. One other flaw occurs toward the end, when the program takes a good 30 seconds or so to draw certain locations from scratch, presumably because there wasn't room for any more pre-rendered scenes. The first time it builds up tension, but if you have to leave and come back a few times it really gets irritating. But having come as far as I did, there was no way I was going to give up my final quest.



Advanced Star Trench Warfare (D-)

July 1986

Ugh. This 3D space shooter is not only highly acclaimed, but also sold for \$18.95 as a commercial product during the early CoCo days. In some ways it's similar to Star Strike for the Intellivision – a crap game that gets a lot of love because it looks like the Death Star trench scene from Star Wars (note: the Intellivision game is vastly superior). Here's the ASTW gameplay: Spaceships appear at random on a 3X3 grid and the player must shoot them by aiming a laser with similarly limited movement. The alien "blips" to 10 different locations before killing the player. Thing is, it does so so fast the game is just a random crapshoot where you have to hope the alien pops up wherever your crosshairs happen to be. A minor bit of strategy is you can't just fire continuously hoping for a random hit, since you have a limited energy supply during each three-minute wave. I have played a large number of space shooters on a colorless, soundless 1K ZX81 more entertaining and complex than this. But hey, it's got that scrolling space trench. In fairness, this is actually an exceptionally impressive demonstration of how programmers could use the CoCo's quirky graphics capabilities to write decent hi-res programs in BASIC. The CoCo could store up to eight "quarter-slices" of the screen, four of which are displayed at any given time (the concept is similar to drawing pictures in a notebook and flipping the pages). Any of the "slices" ("pages" is the technical term) can be swapped with a simple command, so programmer Fred Scerbo drew two trench scenes and flips them continuously on the third section of the screen. I eventually found a great use for this technique, writing a very crude MacPaint-like program where page flipping allowed for scrolling and undo options (cursed be the like-minded programmer who beat me to The Rainbow with his submission). A simpler version of this was published in the November 1982 issue of The Rainbow.





Dual Perspective - Sonic The Hedgehog

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 "Sonic the Hedgehog", the famous Sega Genesis cartridge.

Graphics: [D](#)

I don't think Sonic has the greatest graphics in the world, as I believe they were designed to fit the super speeds the games could run on. So some graphics quality was sacrificed to ensure this. This was rectified later in the series in Sonic Advance when the systems got stronger.

Sound: [B](#)

Some very classic and catchy tunes here. The sound effects weren't bad, and while not SNES quality, they did their job and were enjoyable. No complaints here.

Difficulty: [Basic Run: C](#) [Emeralds Run: A](#)

This game has enough death traps and glitches to make it a pain in the neck. It is not the hardest game in the world on a basic run but it's not the easiest either. If you are determined to get all the Chaos Emeralds, good luck. It's hard to do in a single-segment and get away from it.

Replay Factor: [A+](#)

DO YOU FEEL THE NEED FOR SPEED? This game has proven its replay value, even on a guy who favors Nintendo more than anything. The game's speed will get you going and make you come back over and over again. You will definitely play this one a 2nd time (or more!).



The World Record Perspective: While there is a points record for this game, I am going to cover the track everyone expects and nothing else: SPEED! Sonic the Hedgehog was one of the first games to emphasize speed runs and make them viable. The glitchless Twin Galaxies World Records are 38 minutes, 12 Seconds by Jared Oswald and 1 hour, 3 minutes, 7 seconds with all the Emeralds. The Speed Demos Archive glitch-allowed run speed record is 15 minutes, 5 seconds by Charles Griffin. These are all based on the original game on the Genesis. Neither one of these records look overwhelmingly intimidating, so if you want to take a solid crack at it or set one of the re-release records, go ahead. I think this game's up for taking.



The Penguin Says:

"Obviously this is one of the all time classic games out there that pretty much everyone has played. I mean, it's Sonic the Hedgehog! That cool video game character that other sprites such as myself have come to loathe due to his popularity. Even though its taken me 19 years since he first burst on the scene to admit this, but Sonic and his fast paced world really does rock. Just too bad I wasn't chosen by Sega for their new creation back then. I mean, I am one of the best Penguin runners out there!"

"Overall I give the game a [9/10](#). Considering the world record numbers are so low and easily beatable, I'll give that a [5/5](#) (go for it!)"



Modern Retro - Vagrant Story

by [Patrick McClellan](#)

It is a great achievement for any title on the Playstation 1 to stand out of the vast library on the console, particularly if it's a Role Playing Game. Sony's debut console featured an incredible line-up of RPG's, with well established franchises like the Final Fantasy series. Final Fantasy VII & VIII each gained a cult following and are still labeled by many as two of the best RPG's of all time. Other popular titles within the genre on the PS1 include Xenogears and Front Mission 3. All of these titles have something in common – they were all developed, and often published, by Square (which would later be absorbed by Enix to form Square Enix). They were also all released either before or within the first two months of the new millennium. After a string of very successful titles, often sequels - surely Square was due for a dud with the reveal of a new IP?

Vagrant Story was first released in North America in May 2000, with the European release following in June. Despite initial skepticism, Vagrant Story would go on to sell more than 100,000 units in the first 20 days of release and received near perfect scores from various video game publications. The game was, however, overshadowed by later titles released by Square, like Final Fantasy IX and Chrono Cross. Despite this, Vagrant Story remains a fan-favorite and has recently been released on the Playstation Network for PS3 and PSP gamers alike to enjoy.



This game was developed by the team responsible for Final Fantasy Tactics, the generally well received RPG with a strong emphasis on tactics...hence the name. Yasumi Matsuno, the director of Tactics, would serve as producer and director for Vagrant Story, with director being a role he would later fulfill in Final Fantasy XII on the Playstation 2 (Final Fantasy XII actually features many references to Vagrant Story, with terms such as the Riskbreaker being mentioned). Whilst many projects released by Square can be placed in the RPG genre exclusively, Vagrant Story is a game with many different gameplay elements and styles, which allow it to be put in various other genres. It would be fair to classify it as an action/adventure RPG with heavy emphasis on the modification and creation of weapons, as well as a focus on puzzle-solving and strategy. Another distinctive factor is that the game features no shops and no player interaction with other characters. It is a solo dungeon crawl experience, where you will scarcely chance upon another soul who isn't trying to attack you.

The game is set in the city of Leá Monde – an old town steeped in history, while the kingdom of Valendia is swamped in civil war. Whilst these locations are purely fictional, it is thought that they are inspired by real-life landscapes in the southwest of France. The protagonist is a member of the Valendia Knights of the Peace (VKP) named Ashley Riot (pictured on the left on the box art above). He is part of a militant division of the VKP responsible for upholding state security and law. Ashley's aim within the game is to locate and capture Sydney Losstartot, leader of the religious cult Müllenkamp. He is wanted after he laid siege to a Duke's manor in search of a key and kidnapped the Duke's son, Joshua. The story develops well and is paced expertly so key plot points are revealed in good time. It is generally quite immersive and enjoyable, if not as spectacular, when compared to the gameplay.

Interestingly, considering the genre, the player is allowed to switch into first-person perspective to allow for a 360° view using the L1 and R1 buttons. Though it was a minor touch, it allowed the player to view the claustrophobic battlefield in a different perspective – letting tactics to be formulated in a more unconventional fashion. The character can move in a three-dimensional space and isn't limited to just up/down or left/right. The ability to jump gives the player a sense of freedom and control not often seen in RPG's. When Ashley encounters an enemy and the player presses the attack button, a wire-frame style mesh encompasses the screen, giving the user the option to specify which part of the body is attacked. The player can chain different attacks known as Chain Abilities to achieve large combos. This can be achieved by pressing buttons in timely succession, which adds another element to the game – Rhythm. The better the rhythm achieved while attacking, the more damage is done to the enemy. Magic and Spell Casting abilities are learned as the game develops. Specific skills learned include different means to attack the enemy, heal Ashley and create new status effects. Vagrant Story's innovative crafting system allows the player to alter strengths and weaknesses of weapons. The efficiency of a weapon on an enemy depends on what material it is crafted from, adding a new layer of strategy to gameplay.



Another heavily praised factor in Vagrant Story is the soundtrack. Composed by Hitoshi Sakimoto, who would go on to work on soundtracks for titles like Odin Sphere and GrimGrimoire, it contains music that is "deep and heavy". It is also said to be heavily influenced by the soundtrack to the popular sci-fi TV show The X-Files, along with famous composers such as Hans Zimmer. The soundtrack subsequently saw a full CD release in Japan, featuring 2 disks

and 57 tracks.

The game is held in very high regard, and with good reason. The excellent and fresh gameplay combined with an interesting storyline and characters makes for a very enjoyable experience that shouldn't be missed by any true RPG fan. The game went on to become a Greatest Hits title on the PS1, leading to it being sold at a lower price, and rumors of a PSP or PS3 specific remake remain faint, but the title still holds up well even to this day – something that cannot be said for other RPG's released in the same era. Priced at a very reasonable £4.79 in the UK (around \$7.60 U.S.), the game has yet to see a release on the U.S. Playstation network, but is sure to arrive soon enough.





Old Wine in New Bottles: Retrogaming on Modern Hardware

by [Jonathan H. Davidson](#)

Rather than review classic video game collections for the Playstation 2, this month's column will cover something different – classic pinball game compilations for the Playstation 2! I am very far from being a Pinball Wizard, so there will undoubtedly be some subtle details of the game-play that I have overlooked.

Developer Crave Entertainment released two collections of classic pinball games. "Pinball Hall of Fame: The Gottlieb Collection" was released in 2004; this was followed by "Pinball Hall of Fame: The Williams Collection" a few years later in 2007. Both were originally budget titles.

Game Selection

The Gottlieb Collection includes eight tables, originally produced between 1932 and 1993: Play-Boy, Ace High, Central Park, Big Shot, Genie, Black Hole, Victory, and Tee'd Off. Most of these are older, electromechanical tables. Play-Boy is a very primitive, flipperless game that is much closer to a casino game than modern pinball.

The Williams Collection also includes eight tables, originally produced between 1979 and 1990: Gogar, Firepower, Black Knight, Space Shuttle, Pinbot, Whirlwind, and Funhouse.

Note that the Playstation 2 version of the Williams Collection lacks two tables, Jive Time and Sorcerer, which are included in the Wii version of this game.

Bonus Content

For every game in both collections, there is a scan of the original sales flyer and a useful tutorial that explains the details of it (e.g. special features, how to get multiball, etc.). The Gottlieb collection also includes a capsule history of each game.

There is significantly more bonus content with the Gottlieb Collection, though most of it needs to be unlocked. This includes the Play-Boy table, Xolten: The Fortune Teller, a "Love Meter" machine, and a photo tour of the Gottlieb factory from the late-1960s. It is also possible to unlock a custom ball option (while amusing, this has no impact on the actual game-play) and a tournament mode.

Unlike the Gottlieb collection, all of the games in the Williams Collection are unlocked and playable from the very beginning. Half of them require "credits" to play, just like in the actual arcade. One starts the game with 20 credits and it is very easy to earn more by playing the "free" games. Tournament mode is available from the start and so it does not need to be unlocked. Eventually all of the tables can be unlocked either by achieving specific goals or by expending 100 tokens (per machine).

The manual alludes to "other hidden features" that can be unlocked. I have managed to accomplish the table goals for many of the games, but I have yet to unlock anything obvious. I should note that even for an amateur pinball player, the Williams Collection goals are much easier to accomplish than those of the Gottlieb Collection.

General Comments

The user interface on both games is simple and intuitive to use. It is modeled after an arcade, with a selection of video and pinball games (and even a change machine). Of course only the eight pinball games in each collection – as well as the extras unlocked in the Gottlieb Collection – can actually be played. The remainder is just scenery. There is background music and even ambient noise. Happily this "feature" can easily be turned off.

The games have adapted easily to the Playstation 2 controller. The flipper buttons are intuitively mapped to the controller's shoulder buttons and the left analog stick can be used to "nudge" the game. There are several options for the camera, ranging from a fixed position at the foot of the machine to one that intelligently follows the ball and zooms-in as necessary. This is very helpful, especially with some of the more complex tables.

Being as I am unfamiliar with the originals, I have no idea how accurate the emulation is or how the game-play compares to the actual machine. One minor annoyance is that the "head" of the game is not emulated in any of these; though all of them display the score (and other useful information) on the edge of the screen. In some games, there are additional displays and/or features incorporated into the head that are only imperfectly reproduced (e.g. the monkey ringing the bell in Central Park).

Of the two compilations, I like the Williams Collection much better; especially the tables Funhouse, Pinbot, and Taxi – these games are all newer and more complex than any of the ones in the Gottlieb collection.

One thing to note is that while there are many free on-line versions of pinball out there, usually found in places that offer [internet bingo](#) and on-line card games, the packages discussed here offer games made to represent original hardware.

Fans of virtual pinball may also be interested in the Microsoft Pinball Arcade (Gottlieb Collection). This was released back in 1998 and it includes seven other titles released between 1931 and 1992. While that collection is now long out-of-print, a demo version (with just one playable table, Haunted House) still remains available as a free download from the Microsoft website: <http://www.microsoft.com/games/pinball/downloads.htm>.

Alas, all good things must come to an end. As of January 2010, I am retiring my column "Old Wine in New Bottles". There are only so many classic game collections to write about and I have now covered most of them. I plan to return, however, in a few months with a completely new section on an interesting and previously unexplored aspect of retrogaming.



The Gottlieb and Williams Pinball Collections



GOTTLIEB PINBALL



WILLIAMS PINBALL

Feedback on this column is always welcome; please send any comments and/or questions to jhd@interbaun.com. I am very interested in hearing about any classic arcade game compilations for the Playstation 2 (or even for the original Playstation) that were never released in North America; please let me know what else is out there.



A Pixilated 21st Century!

by [Paul "Zimmzamm" Zimmerman](#)

Happy New Year! I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday and got tons of retro gaming goodies. I got some, including a couple of classic gaming books, a bunch of Nintendo Points Cards (so I can download those retro games), new games from retro series (including Metroid and Legend of Zelda), the complete Transformers DVD set, and Voltron volumes 4 and 5 on DVD.

I was going to try to cover all "Retroware" (my new word for modern games with retro graphics available for Nintendo's Wii and DS/DSi) games, but I decided to only focus on WiiWare and DSiWare. I don't have a DSi, so any info about those titles will be from information that I gathered on the Internet and/or from magazines. I will still talk about Wii games or DS games that I enjoy that are Retroware, but my main focus will be on WiiWare and DSiWare.

December was actually a slow month for Retroware. The highlight was updated classic titles for DSiWare, which included a couple ports from 1995 and 1983, one of which was originally a disc game for the Playstation and the other a laser-disc arcade game. The names of these titles you may ask? Why they would be none other than [Rayman](#) and Dragon's Lair! I hear both are pretty good.

Here are some other Retroware games that came out in December:

DSiWare: Army Defender, Pop Island, Ball Figher, Bejeweled, Twist, Miami Nights

WiiWare: Flowerworks, Magnetis, Rubik's Puzzle Galaxy: Rush

I was gifted [Rubik's Puzzle Galaxy: Rush](#) on Christmas Day (someone loves me) and I enjoy it. The graphics remind me of Tetrisphere for the Nintendo 64. Actually, any 3D puzzle game reminds me of Tetrisphere, but in this one, puzzle pieces do not fall from the sky. Instead, you need to direct cubes to an exit on floating platforms and it doesn't take long for this to get hard quickly. The gameplay is similar to Chu Chu Rocket for Dreamcast and includes a 3D Rubik's Cube. You can even upload your completion times (if you can complete it) to an on-line leader board. Any puzzle fan should enjoy it. Rubik's Puzzle Galaxy: Rush is brought to you by Two Tribes, the makers of the wonderful update Toki Tori for WiiWare.

UPDATE!!

[Castlevania: The Adventure Rebirth](#) just came out today (12/28) for WiiWare and it is a Retroware classic! The game is based on Castlevania Adventure for the Gameboy which came out in 1989. It has 16-bit graphics and looks/sounds great! I only wished there wasn't a time limit so that I could marvel at all of the beautiful visuals. Do you enjoy the classic 2D Castlevania games? If so, buy this now!

Just as a side note, the music played in the Castlevania video linked above is not the music from the game.



Castlevania: The Adventure Rebirth





Video Game Tattler

by [Tom Zjaba](#)

Video Game Tattler
Issue #4
by Anita Beak

 **Concussions Curb Caveman**

Thousands of head butts have finally taken their toll on Bonk the Caveman. When he was admitted to the hospital for a concussion for the umpteenth time, the doctors had finally seen enough. When asked about the long term prognosis for Bonk, Doctor Mario had the following to say, "No head was meant to take this much abuse, not even a thicker skull of a caveman. We need to put a stop to this before he is reduced to a vegetable." When asked if this had anything to do with his new game coming out, Dr. Mario only said, "No comment." We caught up with Bonk, who was showing definite brain damage. When we asked his agent what his plans were now that his video game career is done, he said "We are weighing our options carefully. Many endorsements have come including doing insurance commercials. We have to do what we feel is best for Bonk." Bonk just smiled and ate the applesauce that was spoon-fed to him.

 **From the Brink of Extinction**

Anyone who has ever played the arcade game Phoenix, will no doubt remember the flying birds. Players needed a body shot to kill the attacking birds because their wings could be shot off and they would still keep coming. Most people thought they were the Phoenix bird, but in actuality they are related to earth raptors. Their common name is Giant Space Hawk, and at one time they were found all over the galaxy. But after years of hunting and killing the majestic birds, they were headed towards extinction. Luckily a group of caring individuals stepped in to save the birds. These caring gamers have helped save numerous species from the brink of extinction, including dragons, giant centipedes and Koopas. With laws passed to stop the killing of giant space hawks and rerouting some space travel to not disturb their nesting sites, the great birds were able to reproduce and build their numbers back up. They have done so well that they were finally removed from the endangered species list altogether. The gamers celebrated by visiting one of the Giant Space Hawk's nesting sites. They were never seen again.

 **Mappy and the Duplicators**

It all started as a routine bust. Officer Mappy was called in to catch some thieves that were stashing stolen merchandise. At first, he found a warehouse full of items like televisions, computers and the more stolen merchandise. But then he came to a painting and froze solid. Not just any painting, it was the Mona Lisa. Obviously these guys were not your run of the mill crooks. But as he dug further in the warehouse, he made an even more astonishing find, a second Mona Lisa. In fact, there were two of each stolen good. At first, he figured these crooks were also making copies of famous artwork. But when he had an expert examine both paintings, they found out that both Mona Lisa's were authentic. How could this be? Carbon dating on both showed they were both indeed from the same time period. This prompted a call to the Louvre in France to check the authenticity of their Mona Lisa. It turned out theirs was the fake. Unknown to everyone, someone broke in and stole the real Mona Lisa and replaced it with an exact duplicate. News of this sent shockwaves through the art community. Every museum was now questioning whether they had a real or a fake.

When Mappy and the authorities further questioned the suspects, they found out that this gang has a device appropriately called the Duplicator. In a nutshell, it takes any object and makes an exact duplicate of it. The two items are completely indistinguishable from each other. This was all the information they could get as the cats would say nothing else. But the thought that such a device is out there, scared every collector to their core. The thought that any rare collectible from the upside down plane stamp to the Honus Wagner baseball card to a Faberge Egg could be duplicated was enough to scare collectors world wide. While Mappy is still on the case, the criminals remain at large, making copies of anything they choose.

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



Gaming Advertisements

Places For Gaming Fans To Check Out



Game Over

The first issue of 2010 is now on-line! Hope everyone has a great year and a great decade. It should be interesting to see exactly what we consider retro at the end of this 10 year span. Right now consoles like the home Pong systems, Atari 2600, Colecovision, NES, Genesis, and Nintendo 64 are part of our community. Hopefully at the end of the decade we can take a look back and see what systems have since been added to the classic gaming cannon. I know that I'll try and be here then and hope you out there (the readers) will be as well! I wish the retrogaming community good luck in 2010!

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