



COVERING 3 DECADES OF CLASSIC GAMING

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Press Fire To Begin

by [Bryan Roppolo](#)

Boy, the bunnies are hopping, the sun is out, temperatures are getting into the upper 70's, and I'm trying to get outside at every opportunity to take advantage of the fact that winter is officially over. It was a long winter, but things are finally getting better not just outside but also here at Retrogaming Times Monthly. Even though there are no Easter related articles for this month's issue, there is still a ton of sweet savory retrogaming goodness that more than makes up for the lack of bunnies. Hopefully this issue will please everyone just as much as the warmer and sunnier weather does.

One thing to note is that Sal Esquivel was not able to get his The Many Faces Of... review in for this issue due to him being in the hospital. That's okay though, he's recovered and is going to be ready for May. In the meantime, check out last month's issue if you missed the return of The Many Faces Of.... Other than that, there's not much to mention this month since everything else has pretty much been mentioned before. Oh yeah, I did get a few e-mails asking when all the back issues of RTM will be made available, and I've been putting off getting those last issues uploaded. Call me lazy. However, now that the winter is over I can see myself being much more motivated to do things and expect to have many more uploaded when we all check back in May. On that note, I'll let everyone go off and color their Easter Eggs and consume their chocolate bunnies. By the way, if anyone has any classic gaming themed Easter items, send us a picture here at RTM and we'll feature it in next month's issue (maybe an egg with a classic game design painted on it?). It would be neat to see some of the things classic gamers do when Easter time comes around!



Retrogaming News

The 2010 Oklahoma Electronic Game Expo and Multimedia Conference
This year will mark the 3rd year of the event, and will be the biggest yet with more speakers, workshops, exhibitors, and game tournaments. This year also features an Animation Festival and various design challenges in areas such as Photoshop and computer programming. Legendary game designer Ralph Baer is set to speak via Skype at OEGE this year. Baer is widely known as "The Father of Video Games" who is noted for his many contributions including the "Brown Box" console video game system, which later became known as the "Magnavox Odyssey", which was released to the public in 1972. Baer would later invent the popular interactive "Simon" by Milton Bradley (based on Atari's Touch Me game), which was popular in the late 70's and early 80's, as well as many other electronic toys, games and consumer electronic products. The event will take place on April 10th from 9:00am to 4:45pm at the Oklahoma City Community College campus in OKC. This event is free and open to the public, so bring your friends and come check it out! Come see us at <http://oege.gamesok.org/> to find out more.

Pinball at the Zoo 2010
Rediscover Pinball at The 11th annual "Pinball at the Zoo". It will be held at the Kalamazoo County Fairgrounds located at 2900 Lake St, Kalamazoo, Michigan on Friday, April 16 & Saturday, April 17, 2010. It will feature multiple Pinball Tournaments and Vending Booths with parts and machines for sale. All games will be set on free play. An auction will be held on Saturday the 17th at 10:00am. NEW This year will be our Arcade and Gameroom show. The main site to find out more info on this years show can be found at <http://www.pinballatthetoo.com/>.

TooManyGames Convention
TooManyGames is Pennsylvania's longest continually running gaming event. Our first show was in September of 2004 at the Inn at Reading, and now for our 7th anniversary show we're talking it back home! The Inn at Reading will once again play host to TooManyGames! There will be well over 50 vendor tables, a game room (sponsored by The GXL) packed with dozens of classic and modern consoles, a TMG Theater which will have panels, live podcasts, demonstrations, and live music all throughout the day, and the Reading's own anime group (the Network of Reading Otaku) will have their own room at the convention to show anime, hold tournaments, and host our costume contest. In addition, Reading's one-stop comic shop, Golden Eagle, will be holding Magic: The Gathering tournaments throughout the day! Come join the party Sunday, April 18th, 2010, from 10am-6pm at The Inn at Reading - Reading, PA. It costs \$5 for online pre-registration or \$8 at the door. Visit <http://www.toomanygames.com> for more fun.

Southern California Classic Collectors Arcade Party
The date for the next SC3 arcade party has been announced! It will take place on Saturday, April 24, 2010, at the usual Claremont location (Steve's house). Once again, it will last from 6:00pm until the traditional "sometime after midnight." Expect all your SC3 favorites: MANY arcade games, console games galore, Rock Band, and all the rest. Visit the main site at <http://www.sc3videogames.com/> for more info!



It was December 1994, everyone had gone home from the office but I was still there, hovering over an unstable FTP session and trying to download the new shareware version of a game that was just released by a company named ID Software. It took several attempts as the host server was being overwhelmed but I finally managed to connect long enough to download it. The new game was 'Doom'. My mind was blown. I was first taken by the unbelievable 3D graphics and then something unexpected... I discovered that this game was playable by up to four players using an IPX based network! The universal forces as they were had just aligned! Fortunately, for me, IPX was something I knew. I was just certified as a Novell CNE/CNA and was one of the three administrators over all of the systems in our divisional datacenter and Test Lab. If it had a plug, it was ours to setup and administrate, including a couple of recently retired Novel 3.11 servers. We just switched our departmental file servers over to Windows NT a month earlier. I had both the knowledge and the access, so within a few hours, I had it up and running on a special game volume. Then I created several 3.5" disk copies of a custom network configuration/driver boot disk that, once inserted in any workstation in our complex, it would launch Doom directly for network play. After talking a few coworkers into testing it out later in the week ...ahem...over lunch of course...we quickly discovered that the entire network had become overwhelmed with IPX broadcast message traffic and we hastily shut down our experiment. Obviously, I did not know as much as I thought. Actually, ID Software needed to fine-tune their in-game network code and a patch was soon released. It seems that office networks were going down all over the country for this very same reason!

We smartly decided to restrict this activity until after normal business hours and our secret 'Cybernet Society' was formally born. Actually, it was not so secret, and after a few short days, our membership started to grow. Among them were several members of our department's management team so our guilty pleasure quickly became 'guiltless management condoned pleasure!' Everything was cool with them as long as we did it after hours and did our best to leave everything as we found it when using the phones and workstations. Not long after Doom's release, another lesser known game developed from ID's old business partner 'Apogee Software' (using ID's older Wolfenstein3D engine) released a game under a new company brand called '3DRealms' who had licensed ID's old engine and practically rebuilt it from the ground up. This game was called 'Rise of the Triad' and it took the network play up another notch by allowing 11 players at one time (actually one player was reserved for the multiplayer server process) allowing 10 players to be online in a single game! They also introduced a ton of crazy fun weapons and creative power-ups, as well as a mode called 'Capture the Triad' (Basically Capture the Flag)!



CyberNET Society Boot Disk

Within a few days, I also discovered another great network playable game called 'Descent'. This was a zero-G sci-fi flying game, which gave you full 360-degree movement in any direction. Great fun, but it took some getting used to, since you could enter and exit rooms in any orientation. This made memorizing the level layouts and knowing your relative position within them a lot more challenging. This was when I changed the workstation boot disks to have a cool graphical splash screen and a multi-boot game selection menu. We also purchased licensed copies of all of these games. Rise of the Triad (ROTT) actually sold us a site license, which came with extra bonus multiplayer levels! Life was good!

Over the course of the next few years we expanded our game library with every network playable game we could find, adding titles like Quake, Heretic, Hexen, Terminal Velocity, Duke Nukem 3D, Witchhaven, Command & Conquer (C&C), C&C RED Alert, Total Annihilation and Warcraft 2.

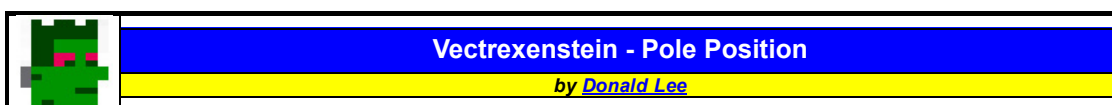
We soon developed a pattern, which started with playing a few quick rounds on our current favorite first person shooter (FPS). Note that my favorite was ROTT; for some reason I did better than most, a skill I have most definitely lost in playing today's FPS games. Then we would spend the remaining bulk of our evenings playing one of our newer real time strategy (RTS) games, most commonly C&C or Warcraft 2. Around this time, some team members started bringing their kids into work to join us. We quickly learned that those kids were absolute masters at RTS games. We found ourselves humbled by their ability to out build and overrun us within minutes. We even introduced the concept of a 'build phase truce' for the first 20 minutes of each round so we could at least try to be creative and come up with the ultimate defense against their tactics, but it did not seem to stop them. In RTS games it seems that a good defense *is* a good offense. Unfortunately, for us, we could not compete.

We had a blast; we played every Thursday night promptly at 6PM. We called it our 'Thursday Night Fights'. We had our pick from over 100 workstations, all recently upgraded and each one came complete with a brand new 20" monitor, 640x480 pixels never looked so good! We used the facilities phone switch network to conference us all in and we usually played until 9PM.

In late 1996, my daughter was born and as with all new first time parents my life any my priorities changed. Within a few months, I took a job closer to home for various reasons and my participation in the Cybernet Society started to wane. Now I was an after hours 'guest' in my former employers complex (which was a strange feeling; I even provided some free help patching up some of the software and automated solutions I developed just before I resigned, it's always a good idea not to burn bridges...). It was not much longer before the company closed that office and my former Cybernet brothers were all scattered to the wind. I still keep in touch with some of them, but I sincerely miss them all. That era will live on in my mind as one of my best gaming experiences right along side of getting my first video game console (Magnavox Odyssey2), playing Dungeons and Dragons with my high school circle of friends, getting my first real computer (Commodore 64), and more recently, turning a friends garage into a small arcade machine construction factory! (That's another story - <http://tacticalneuronics.com/content/ArcadeProject.asp>)

I have included some links at the end of this article to more recent versions of some of our old Cybernet Society favorites (New wine, Old Bottles?). I highly recommend looking into the new updated 'Rise of the Triad' WinROTT. This game has some of the most hilarious/creative weapons and power-ups I have ever seen in a game. My all-time favorite was the 'Drunk Missile'; this thing fired five heat seeking missiles at once and I found that when playing in open outside maps (read: no ceiling) you could simply point the thing at the sky, fire your weapon, and watch the missiles go up, acquire five unsuspecting ground targets and then quickly rain down as an unseen 'death from above!' Winning a death-match with 21 points using this technique only took me about 20-40 seconds... my personal version of shock-and-awe... hehe... I'll never forget the first time I saw another player blow up from one of these and an eyeball flew at my screen... those were the days. Ahh, the innocence of my youth.

Rise of the Triad (WinROTT): <http://www.riseofthetriad.dk/index.php>
Doom, Heretic, Hexen (jDoom, jHeretic, jHexen): <http://doom.wikia.com/wiki/Doomsday>
Descent, Descent II (DXX-Rebirth): <http://www.dxx-rebirth.com>
Command and Conquer (Official Site): <http://www.commandandconquer.com/classic>
Terminal Velocity (3DRealms): <http://www.3drealms.com/tv/>
Duke Nukem 3D (3DRealms): <http://www.3drealms.com/duke3d/index.html>
WarCraft II (Wikipedia): http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warcraft_II
Total Annihilation (Wikipedia): http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Total_Annihilation
Quake (Wikipedia): [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quake_\(video_game\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quake_(video_game))



Life is great having a new toy in my new iMAC computer. It's even better that the Vectrex emulator (ParaJVE) I use also runs on the iMAC. With all the new power and speed, the emulator runs great and I'm able to get the full experience of playing various Vectrex games.

For this month, I decided to play an old arcade favorite in Pole Position on the Vectrex. When I first ran ParaJVE, I was surprised to see Pole Position listed as an available game. After all, the Pole Position arcade game had high resolution color graphics and the Vectrex used a vector display that was only black and white.

Given the limitations of the Vectrex, Pole Position's graphics are decent but not spectacular. The cars are a little blocky and the tires don't spin, but they at least look like cars. The signature billboards from the arcade game are present but they are very generic. Obviously with the black and white Vectrex graphics, the backdrop while driving is just a black/white mountain with no detail.

One of the charms of the arcade game is the speech, music and sound. Alas, this is one place where the Vectrex falls short. There is no speech, and only minimal music and sound. What music and sound that is present is nowhere close to sounding like the original arcade game.

Obviously, the last remaining item is the game play. The original had a steering wheel, a stick shift and an accelerator to step on. On the Vectrex, you drive your car with the arrow keys (or joystick if you have one) and accelerate and shift gears using other keys on the keyboard.

Using the keyboard wasn't a problem, but I found the game much harder than the original arcade version. There seemed to be many more cars on the track than I remembered from the arcade. I was unable to finish the first laps in any of my seven attempts.

Overall, while Pole Position for the Vectrex is not hard to get into, the difficulty may turn off players. If anyone is having the urge to play Pole Position, I would recommend passing on the Vectrex version and play the arcade or other home versions that are easily available these days.

Originally, I wanted to talk about the Atari 5200 version of Pole Position as well. Unfortunately, due to a bug with either the emulator (Jum52) or the game itself, I couldn't play it appropriately. I did include a screen shot and may return to the game one day.





Apple II Incider - Mario Bros.

by [Donald Lee](#)

After a month off, the Apple II Incider is back. As I mentioned last month in the Vectrex column, I got a new toy in the form of a shiny Apple iMAC. The machine is fast and runs smoothly! As a long time Windows user, its taken a little time to adapt to certain things.

One definite problem has been getting the Apple IIGS emulator running on Safari 4.0. I'll probably download Firefox eventually but I like Safari more on the MAC than I did on the PC.

Despite the problem with the IIGS emulator, I managed to squeeze something in for this month. I was able to play the 8-bit Apple II games in Java form instead. The only issue was that I had trouble getting my USB joystick to work.

With time being limited this month, I chose a fairly basic game that I played heavily in my youth. The game of choice this month is Mario Bros. by Atarisoft.

When I stop to think about it, I played a ton of games featuring Mario. I played Donkey Kong and Donkey Kong 3 in the arcade, as well as Donkey Kong, Donkey Kong 3 and Mario Bros. Game & Watch handhelds.



Mario Bros. on the Apple II

However, my favorite one featuring Mario was the arcade version of Mario Bros. (which is not the same as the handheld version). The gameplay is very simple, Mario and his brother Luigi battle various enemies in the form of turtles, crabs and flies. They have to flip the enemies on their backs and then kick them into the water. There are also flames that bounce around that Mario and Luigi have to avoid.

One difference between Mario Bros. and Donkey Kong was there were bonus points that could be earned. Coins bounced around during the regular levels and there were also bonus rounds where the players tried to grab all the coins that were hanging. If the player could grab all the coins under the specified time limit, there would be bonus points awarded.

I played Mario Bros. a little bit in the arcades but really played it on my Atari 5200. In the arcades I played solo, but at home I played regularly with my mom. My mom is hardly a gamer but could do well with simple games such as Pac Man. Fortunately, Mario Bros. was another one. Being able to have two players play at the same time was terrific. The graphics were a little different than the arcade version, but were quite playable. In fact, while I was writing this, I downloaded a Atari 5200 emulator for the iMAC and gave Mario Bros. a quick spin to remind myself how good it was.



Mario Bros. on the Atari 5200

I have to admit, I had no exposure to Mario Bros. on my Apple II. During my youth, I tended to play arcade games on my Atari 5200 while my Apple II played other games. It is only though emulators that I've gotten exposure to the old arcade hits.

While the Apple II version is obviously inferior to the arcade and the Atari 5200 versions, the game itself is faithful and very playable. The sound is decent, though the music is lacking. The graphics and animation are solid and all the elements of the game are present. The one issue I had is that I had was trouble playing with the keyboard. Mario wouldn't stop at all so that was a bit of a minus.

Overall though, Mario Bros. is a good trip down memory lane. It's one of my favorites from back the 1980's and worth a look regardless of what platform you play it on.



NES'Cade - 720 Degrees

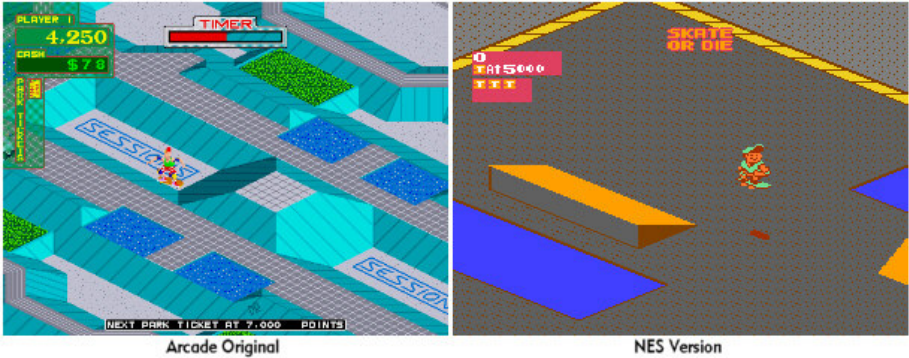
by [David Lundin, Jr.](#)

After an extended hiatus NES'cade is back, and while many of the previous entries have covered some truly excellent NES conversions, gamers of the era know that was not always the case. The grandfather of all extreme sports games, 720 Degrees, drops the player into the sneakers of a typical skateboarder in the late 1980's. The core objective is to gain admission into skate parks to compete in events, winning medals and cash. Skate parks require tickets for entry which are earned through meeting point thresholds which increase as the game proceeds. While points are earned for competing in the skate park events, a big part of racking up your score takes place out in Skate City. Skate City acts as a hub between the four skate parks serving as an open area where the player can pull off tricks for points, scoring higher for more complex maneuvers over hazardous obstacles. In addition to the four skate parks there are also four shops at the edges of Skate City. Cash collected or earned through events can be spent in the skate shops on better gear and boards that increase your skater's stats. While all this is going on, a timer is constantly tickling down. Once the timer runs out, a swarm of killer bees are dispatched to hunt down the player. The only way to survive the attack is to hurry to a skate park with a ticket and begin an event. After the event is completed, regardless of the player's performance, the timer is reset once again.

In addition to the unique extreme sports concept, the arcade machine itself was one of those grand original designs that made it really stand out. The cabinet itself had an unusual shape that allowed a large unobstructed area for the control panel, with plenty of space on each side for the player to stand. The machine also housed a large monitor with the marquee above it styled after a boom box which contained the speakers. To add even more uniqueness to the game it used a very nonstandard control system - a circular rotating joystick. Imagine a joystick mounted atop a spinner at an angle; rotating the

position of the stick rotates the direction your skater faces. The special joystick setup worked out great for rapidly cranking the stick around to perform tricks and land insane jumps. Aside from that there are a pair of jump buttons and a pair of kick buttons (used to gain momentum on your board), one set of each on each side of the joystick.

Sporting unique controls, beautiful high resolution visuals and outstanding sound, it would be a tall order to bring 720 Degrees into the home. There were a few different versions released on home computers of the day but Mindscape ended up handling the NES version. From the moment the game is turned on one may assume they have a bootleg copy with how barren the splash and title screens are. It honestly looks like there's something missing, like text or graphics have been hacked out, it doesn't set a pleasant tone for the game that follows. Once the game begins you're dropped right into Skate City. There isn't a starting area with giant speakers and a beginning difficulty selection like in the arcade, the game just starts. So you attempt to maneuver your skater with the directional pad and he bounces around, seemingly out of control. It takes a little while to come to grips with the controls but after a couple moments basic movement isn't too much of a problem. You have to think of the directional pad being used as that circular rotating joystick, rotating your thumb around the directions in a circular motion. Using a joystick such as the NES Advantage can make things a little easier for some but the control just never feels tight or quite responsive enough.



The NES version of Skate City might as well be an empty wasteland of concrete with a little water here and there. It's a pretty sharp contrast to the beautiful and lush skating environments that were seen in the arcade. There really isn't even much in the variety of terrain on the NES, the whole city looks like a work in progress more than a finished game. Everywhere you turn the city is dark and dim rather than colorful and vibrant, something the original is remembered for. I suppose at least the skater is a nice big sprite but he too looks muddy and poorly colored. Yet the biggest problem with the game makes itself blatantly apparent the moment you attempt to pull off a simple jump on the way to your first event. Gone is the fluid motion of rotating the joystick, instead spins are a messy combination of pressing jump, then a control pad direction different than the current one, then pressing the original direction again before landing. You're going to fall - a lot. Each time your skater wipes out, a crash sound is played that sounds more like a car accident. The removal of the kick button means your speed is always constant, so it's hard to control your skater's momentum. All these factors stack against a control system that is far from perfect to begin with, making it a chore to get from one place to the other and even more difficult to earn much needed points. Even with fully upgraded gear things don't become much smoother.

The four skate park events are the same as they were in the arcade for the most part. Jump, Slalom and Downhill function as slightly reworked versions of the arcade events. The Ramp event is displayed from the side rather than the isometric perspective the rest of the game, as well as the arcade version of the event, is displayed from. This part actually looks pretty decent and features more color and detail than the rest of Skate City or any of the other events. As with the half-pipe events in other NES games such as California Games and Skate or Die, reading the instruction manual will be critical to pulling off tricks on the ramp. I can't fault the game for being overcomplicated in this mode, it's simply part of skateboarding games. I will say however that the animation is much more fluid and the controls are more responsive in the Ramp event, although both are still nothing to write home about. There's a decent attempt at bringing the music of the arcade onto the NES, and while it's a little different, I find it close enough and in the same style given the hardware restrictions. The sound effects on the other hand are flat out horrible. There are barely any to begin with, but what is there is either barely audible or extremely overpowering and out of place, the skate crash sound being the biggest example.

After awhile the muddy sound blends with the muddy controls and the muddy graphics and the whole game simply quits resembling anything remotely entertaining. That being said there is absolutely no reason anyone should suffer through playing the NES version of 720 Degrees. Some arcade games should stay in the arcade and this is one of them. 720 Degrees is really only fun when you're standing at the cabinet, putting your body into spinning the joystick and pulling off tricks on the proper hardware. When all those things come together at the machine, 720 Degrees is an awesome experience unlike anything else, one of the coolest arcade games ever conceived. None of that transfers to the NES hardware. It's really no surprise that Skate or Die was the runaway skateboarding success on the NES, and while that game isn't perfect either, it's a far better choice for your NES skateboarding fix than 720 Degrees. As it stands, the only way to play this game right is to play it on the arcade hardware.

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



All Eyes On...Super Hang-On

by Daryl "Zeo" Kiddev

This month's All Eyes On... takes a look at that acclaimed arcade game called Super Hang-On, which was a sequel to Hang-On. The version we will be focusing on will be for the Genesis.

Graphics: 5 / 10

Now the graphics really aren't THAT bad (since its an arcade port), but comparatively speaking to what the Sega Genesis is capable of, this is crap. This was also during the time arcade games were being dumbed down due to system limits, so SEGA had plenty of leeway with gamers to improve it.

Sound: 5 / 10

same as above. Extras would have been nice.

Controls: N/A

You accelerate, brake, turn left and right. No real rating, it just works.

Gameplay: 5 / 10

Major problems here, especially for casuals. This game is a near perfect clone of Rad Racer. The bike in "Arcade Mode" is set up pretty close to the same as the car in Rad Racer. However, a bike is supposed to slide INTO turns better, this bike slides THROUGH turns very well, exactly like said car. Now mind you, you would expect that out of a poor bike with an unskilled driver. However, this bike is by game editor's standards, a mid high range, and your rider is supposed to be a circuit racer. You should be able to make the right angle turns without slowing to about 5 mph like a car.

That leads us to the "Bike Editor". You can customize your bike as long as you have money, and it can be made even better than in the arcade version, but not by much. Now, what's the one thing you can do with a better bike? Lean the bike at a right angle like I said you needed to be able to do before. Problem: Do so and if you manage to hit anything, your frame is dead.

Replay Value, Longevity: 3 / 10

If nothing else the game does tease you into thinking you can do better.

Overall Rating: 4 / 10

This game is for arcade nuts, it's not a general audience game, that's what Excite Bike is for. I highly recommend it though if you're one of those people that zones into old arcade games and can go for long periods of time.



This desert sure is hot!

Dual Perspective - Final Fight

Hello, and 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 “Final Fight” for the Super Nintendo, Capcom’s original 2-D brawler.

Graphics: A+

I still say this is one of the most realistic, best looking games I have come across in my 20 year video game career and even holds up to today. It looks like you’re actually on the street and is not at all cartoonish. I hope they do an HD remix of this one day and keep it looking the same. The game still impresses me with the attention to detail.

Sound: C

Good for the SNES, keeps you busy but nothing notable. I never really heard the arcade music until I got it for the PSP collection and I don’t remember that being notable or noticeable. Good for people who don’t like video game sound.

Difficulty: D

This is one of the most brainless and low-level difficulty games to beat. You have tons of continues and extra lives every 200,000 points, among other things. The arcade has more people to fight than the SNES, but the difficulty doesn’t change and you can put this game on autopilot. Just take out the cheap-shooters, keep everything ahead of you, and mash (you might break a controller or two from wear). It’s a really good game to pass time or if you need to let out some aggression.

Replay Factor: B

One of the best non-shooter games to take aggression from life out on. As long as you don’t get cheap-shotted, the game really doesn’t get to you, and you have three choices of characters for more variety. Guy’s tricky, Cody’s a masher, and Haggar gives you the big piledriver. Each plays differently, so enjoy.



The World Record Perspective:

A bit on the long side. This game on the World Record end is clearly one of paying attention to what’s on the screen. Plow ahead carelessly and you will get nailed pretty hard, so this is not one to speed run. However, there are point runs aplenty and it is probably one of the best games to do a points run or try to do one. Just mind you while its been done, the game is difficult to beat on one credit. Anyway, now for the high score record holders:

Arcade/MAME: 3,022,570 by Graziano Dipace
SNES: 2,103,650 by James Sorge
Virtual Console: 2,072,770 by James Sorge

Also, as an added note, this game is one of the cleanest translations from SNES to Virtual Console (VC) to the point I’d tack the two together if there wasn’t Twin Galaxies’ rules against it. So if your SNES controllers are totally shot like mine, this one is well worth picking up on the VC to attempt a World Record. You won’t be disappointed.



The Penguin Says:

"Overall I give this game a 9.5 out of 10. For the World Record Potential: 3 out of 5 (tough to beat, but a fun game to attempt it on. Beating it in one credit is definitely an achievement)."

The Color Computer 3 could beat the competition with one arm behind its back. However, third-party programmers were treated scornfully and many Radio Shack salespeople were openly hostile toward the low-commission machine, sometimes blocking it from view with boxes or all but screaming for corporate to get the thing out of their computer centers.

Then there were the unplanned handicaps, including a range of hardware and operating system bugs I've mentioned in previous columns. Not to mention the shell games the company played with customers, the topic of a future rant in this series of game reviews for the system.

This 8-bit machine survived many years, even at a time when 16-bit machines were the rage, largely because there was the belief – correctly – a lot of power was hidden within, just waiting to be wrung out. The perfect emulation of Donkey Kong, a project in 2007 mentioned a couple columns ago, is a feat unmatched by the CoCo 3's 8-bit siblings. And if someone had figured out how to write something called Gate Crasher a decade before its 2000 release, it might occupy the place in history now occupied by Wolfenstein 3D.

But those corporate cowboys in Fort Worth didn't make it easy.

The original CoCo 3 design called for 512-color graphics (with up to 256 visible at a time), with a maximum resolution of 640X225 pixels, but was downgraded to 64 colors (16 visible in low- and medium-resolution modes, four in the highest). Similarly, an upgraded sound chip was scraped and users were stuck with the first CoCo's single-channel tone that halted all other activity. The skinflint suits at Tandy didn't want anything drawing customers away from the best-selling 1000 series of MS-DOS machines, similar to IBM's approach with its infamous PC Jr.

Furthermore, anyone writing licensed software for Tandy was required to use OS-9, a much-hyped "multitasking" system roughly the modern-day equal of Linux – fanatically loved by a handful of techheads and a useless mess for everyone else. From a game programmer's standpoint it mostly ate up valuable memory and processor time, forcing them to use low-resolution graphics (the 160X192 mode of choice is actually inferior to the Atari 2600, which offers 128 colors at the same resolution) and discouraging many from attempting fast action titles. Customers sometimes got further stung when they found out they couldn't save games to disk without buying the \$70 operating system separately, an infuriating requirement since a DOS perfectly suited for casual use was built in to their disk interface.

Not surprisingly, there are plenty of tales of ugly politics and little people struggling to throw off their chains in the CoCo 3's history. This month's reviews, in addition to grading titles on the machine's curve, looks at some of those stories.

Bash (C)

An Arkanoid clone by Steve Bjork, one of the CoCo's programming legends, that's reasonably well done, but also underscores some of what went so wrong with the machine. It's got 20 playfields with bricks of varying durability and falling power-up pellets (minus the laser fire). It's also missing those aliens that emerge from the top of the screen, but being able to start on any level up to 15 is a nice compensation. It plays fine, but like a whole bunch of titles doesn't look or feel like something taking advantage of the CoCo 3's abilities. Perhaps in this case it's because it's one of the few games that also runs on the original CoCo (with cruder graphics). Bjork released this through his own third-party company, but Tandy convinced him to do an authorized port of Arkanoid after seeing Bash, adding the missing features and certainly reaching more gamers. Some strange undercurrents, however, leave a bad taste. One, it's the second Bjork game that's "recycled," as he also used essentially the same code for his self-released Mine Rescue and Activision's Super Pitfall. Second, Bjork says Arkanoid was his final Tandy game after a long association with them, since the company decided to make developers carry a liability insurance policy (payable to Tandy) that cost more than a game could earn. Third, it was somewhat amusing when Bjork insisted at one point that Bash wasn't an Arkanoid clone – despite his own company's ads to the contrary – which even the mildly cynical might see as an attempt to get people to buy both. Finally, Bjork frequently mentions various compression and other technical accomplishments on his CoCo 3 programs, but I can't shake the feeling he was mailing it in on some of his titles toward the end. On the other hand, it's hard to blame him. He cranked out a huge amount of often first-rate stuff (including the standard-setting Zaxxon port) during the original CoCo's early days that arguably kept Radio Shack in the game against superior competitors. He was a shameless promoter of the CoCo 3 and Tandy's OS-9 scheme during the machine's first few years of existence, ripping into



skeptics upset with the flaws, corporate lunacy and lack of software. But frustration both at the company's treatment of him and poor support for the computer caused Bjork to eventually turn his critical guns on the corporation with a vengeance.

Crystal City (B+)

This horizontal scrolling shooter, a blend of Scramble and River Raid turned on its side, is acclaimed as one of the CoCo 3's most ambitious games, especially within 128K of memory. It's a notch below the machine's best, but still an unquestionable triumph of third-party devotion and persistence. You fly a plane through six long and elaborately designed levels, blasting everything except falling parachutes carrying fuel you need to recharge your shield. Things start on a nondescript hilly landscape, but progress through rapid and constant shifts of color and terrain. There's caverns and buildings to navigate, and sometimes the need to shoot through blocked passages. Bosses await at the end of each level, although on some emulators they're only partially visible (which isn't something any game gets downgraded for). The screen is constantly packed with activity from all directions and the temptation is to rapid-fire your way through. But all that does is guarantee you'll take out almost every parachute because things explode when hit and anything in the blast zone is wiped out as well. This is programmer Jeremy Spiller's follow-up to Zenix, a Galaga-type shooter, and plenty of fans would string me up for grading it anything less than an A. At the same time, everybody acknowledges the game's biggest flaw – it is very, very fast. That's refreshing on a machine with too many plodding games and certainly a primary attraction for many fans, but it straddles the line of playability from the start. One thing that saves it is your ship can take unlimited hits (although each costs a bit of fuel), but don't collide with the terrain – that immediately ends the game. Another benefit, for those who do have lightening reflexes, is you can start on levels two or three if desired. One touch I found humorous is the straight-from-the-Atari-2600 sound, which takes some conscious effort on a CoCo. The game was sold by Sundog Systems, which deserves a spot at the top of any discussion about the heros of CoCo 3 gaming, as they stuck around offering some amazingly complex and playable titles long after others abandoned serious efforts (a lot of "commercial" titles in the final days were things like Yahtzee and other massively embarrassing regressions to the beginning of the home computer era). Spiller offers free downloads of Crystal City and Zenix, along with some nice insights about CoCo programming, at <http://qosub.com>.



Gantelet II (B)

A decent clone of its near-namesake by Diecom Products, one of the true good/bad tales of CoCo lore. The company burst onto the scene in 1985 – late in the original CoCo's lifecycle – with a handful of visually stunning (and unauthorized) ports of games the machine seemed incapable of running, such as Marble Madness and Paperboy. Screenshots in magazine ads grabbed buyers' attention, but what the pages couldn't show is the games were horrifically slow. Its first Gantelet game for the original CoCo featured 15 well-designed levels for up to three simultaneous players, but a frame rate of maybe two or three per second when things were crowded. Even with a relatively empty screen, movement was so slow it was a strategy game, not an arcade one. Yet I played it all the way through because, in the CoCo scale of things, it was above-average. Gantelet II, while redeeming some of its predecessor's flaws, went through some ugliness before it even hit the market. Players ordering the game when the initial ads were published found themselves waiting for many months as the original programmer apparently couldn't get his stuff together and company founder Dave Dies eventually had to complete the unfinished code. Considering the internal strife, the game turned out pretty well. Most or all of the features of the coin-op sequel are implemented and all four characters can be played if two people are willing to share the keyboard (when fewer play each can select their preferred controls – a nice touch). The graphics are good, although some of the color choices could be better, and sounds are a reasonably good imitation of the original's (minus the voice observations and music). Action is still slower than the coin-op's, but manages to cross over to the playable side of the arcade line. Not Diecom's best game, but one fans were generally satisfied with once they finally got it. For more on Diecom's good cop/bad cop history, see the review of Xenion below.



Pac-Dude (C+)

An OK combination of Pac-Man and Ms. Pac-Man, but also a reminder the CoCo couldn't seem to get a Pac game that felt reasonably authentic to save its life. Lots of programmers tried and it should be a point of shame for all of them the best Pac-Man game – aside from a 1997 "retro" project – was written for the CoCo's horribly weak little brother, the MC-10. That programmer did a spot-on replication of the ghost AI and other gameplay elements by referring to coin-op's source code, more than compensating for MC-10's severely limited graphics and sound. Getting back to Pac-Dude, programmer Brian O'Neill released it as shareware in 1990 and it probably would win the bronze by default in a comparison of CoCo titles (unless you count his follow-up, Pac-Dude 3D: Monster Maze, which I'm not in a competition of two-dimensional versions). It looks a lot like Atari's 5200 Pac-Man, with a horizontally stretched playfield. There's minor tweaks that irritate a purist like me right away, such as your Pac-Dude starting the maze where the fruits appear instead of the arcade's lower-down position. The sound isn't great, but I can live with that. Ghosts turn pink instead of blue when eaten, their eyes remain open, there's no squiggly mouths and they don't flash before returning to normal, all of which results in some hesitant moments. A bigger problem that drives me nuts with lots of home versions on lots of platforms is the ghost vulnerable times stay way too long in later mazes. Since this is the chief factor controlling difficulty, it's as close to a non-bug fatal flaw as it gets. O'Neill does one thing that saves his bacon – taking the Ms. Pac-Man approach of offering multiple mazes. They're all well designed – something other programmers frequently whiff on – and beyond the Pac-Man layout of the first maze remind me of certain configurations for both Ms. Pac-Man and Jr. Pac-Man. Even with my mixed feelings for the game, it's hard not to like O'Neill, who released a few other shareware games with no prospect of earning anything more than some pizza money or winning acclaim beyond a tiny and dwindling user base.



Pyramix (C)

Sigh... this Q*bert port is like too many CoCo 3 games that are glitchy and don't squeeze much out of the machine's capabilities. Then again, programmer Jordan Tsvetkoff presumably banged the code out in a hurry since it's one of the machine's earliest games. Also, it's something of the odd man out in the catalogue of Dr. Preble's Programs, known primarily for utility software. I harbored a bit of a grudge just from the ads, thanks to the smug smile added to our main character's face. But Q*bert is one of my all-time favorites and versions for most home machines have been pretty good, so no point getting into a snit about something so trivial. What I will whine about is a bunch of problems ranging from lousy collision detection to poor implementation of gameplay elements. First, the placement of those floating discs is the same on every level – and there's only two of them throughout. Second, Slick and Sam, the creatures that change your colors back, are there from the beginning instead of waiting a few levels. Third, the gremlins creeping up the sides aren't there; instead some block surfaces chosen seemingly at random flash and jumping on them is fatal. Coily occasionally leaves behind some stray pixels after jumping to his death. There's more, but you get the idea. As for the collisions, I managed to jump through balls in midair and die while jumping away from characters who didn't touch me in any world with three real dimensions. Finally, and maybe worst of all, the speed of your (unofficial) Q*bert is determined solely by how fast you press the joystick or arrow keys – act quickly enough and you might finish the early levels before Coily can hatch. Sorry, but this is the rare instance where something ought to be slower. So how does it get a C grade with all those flaws? It gets some slack for being an early release in a starved-for-software market. The option of controls is a plus and a bigger one is being allowed to start on any level up to five. The game, while somewhat pixelated, doesn't look terrible and enough fundamentals are intact to preserve the idea you're playing something associated with the original. There were several Q*bert clones for the original CoCo (at least one of which I'd prefer to this) and it'd be nice if someone had come up with a better CoCo3 version eventually.



Roller Controller (C)

The first noteworthy thing about this arcade/puzzle game is the 1986 release date, making it truly one of the first CoCo3 programs since most of machine's first buyers barely received them by the

end of the year. It's fairly simple and a bit primitive, but that probably makes it a better game trying to fancy it up (which with too many other early games merely looked like makeup badly applied). The goal is to steer marbles as they roll down a series of platforms into whichever of three bins matches its color. You guide them by toggling two sets of colored panels that appear and disappear, allowing marbles to drop through or pass over. If a marble is going astray, you can try to guide it over one of the fans on the screen, which will blow it back to the top. Get the designated number of marbles in the right bins and it's off to a new level with a new design. Miss too many and the game's over. Like a good puzzler, it takes a bit to absorb levels and how platform toggling affects things, but not to the point of frustration. You can also start at one of three skill levels once you get acclimated. Not even close to a classic, but something for early CoCo 3 adapters to do without feeling the letdown of titles like Pyramix that come with higher expectation (both get the same grade, by the way, since in fairness Pyramix has higher highs to offset the lower lows).



Space Intruders (C)


Last month I griped that Space Invaders, like Pac-Man, is a game CoCo programmers can't seem to get their heads around. This graphically updated version comes this close to fulfilling my wishes, but contains – literally – a killer flaw: it ends after nine waves. Gameplay isn't an exact clone of the coin-op (all of the point values are different, for starters), but it implements a lot of elements most home versions overlook. UFOs are worth their top value of 800 points every 25th shot (in the arcade it's 300 points for the 23rd shot and every 15 subsequent shots). Invaders won't shoot you when they're on the level next to the bottom. Hitting an invader from the lowest two rows to end the wave scores a 1,000-point bonus (a feature from Space Invaders II). Overall it feels more arcade authentic by far than any other CoCo version, but there's some problems beyond the graphics that make it feel a little "off." Invaders closest to your laser base sometimes get stuck in a non-stop firing pattern that's impossible to escape unless you can pass under the safety of a bunker – an obvious bug. Another is when your base is hit a glitch appears near the right edge of the screen where a few shots are launched from, assuming your finger is still on the fire button. Also, the size of all the elements seems a bit out of whack – mostly they feel too large. In the game's favor are some fun extras, including the ability to configure the starting wave, number of bases you start with and the speed at which they move. And a potentially great surprise is on wave nine, where a mothership straight from the final stage of Phoenix appears. You have to blast through the hull and rotating belt, and destroy the boss in the cockpit before the craft hits the bottom of the screen. Sure, it's a wild deviation from the coin-op, but I'd be fine with it EXCEPT that's the end of the game. Furthermore, it's not very difficult – I defeated the mothership on my first try. Geeze. Send things back to wave one, ramp up the enemy's speed and shot frequency, and let the game continue. A lifespan this short is unforgivable in a commercial game (it was sold by Game Point Software, one of the better third-party CoCo 3 publishers until it suddenly vanished without a trace). What's hard to understand is programmer Nickolas Marentes has a fairly impressive CoCo resume (and an entertaining narration of his work at www.nickm.launch.net.au). He authored the successful Donut Dilemma and Rupert Rhythm (along with some misses) during the CoCo's retail days, then followed it up in the retro era with Pacman Tribute (the closest anyone has come to an accurate translation) and the jaw-dropping Gate Crasher. The latter is a 3D shooter released in 2000 that, while cruder in play and appearance than pioneers such as Wolfenstein 3D, legitimately achieves something many consider near-impossible on an 8-bit machine. Stay tuned for the review of that one in a future column.



Xenion (C)

This adaptation of Xevious disappoints in a number of ways, but has enough content to be an OK game on the CoCo 3 grading curve. It's the first professional game by Michael Duncan, then 17, and was sold by Diecom as one of its first CoCo 3 products. As with many other early titles, it feels rushed, sloppy and a poor indicator of future potential. It's another of those hybrid titles that also runs on the original CoCo, which is probably why it feels compromised in so many ways. Immediately noticeable is gameplay takes place in a window maybe a third of the screen's size, with the rest devoted to score/ammo/shield status, a top-10 scoreboard and some useless wallpaper graphics. Noticeable almost immediately is the game suffers from the speed drag common to Diecom's offerings, ambling along at maybe one-half to one-third of what it ought to be. Get past that – which is a lot to ask for – and it's a decent game. There's a variety of terrain for your ship to fly over and bomb, and lots of different enemies that attack, including huge boss ships at the end of each level. The company went on to do a number of superior titles and took the dare of designing a couple games requiring a light gun, but at some point I lost faith in their glitzy ads and wouldn't discover them until years later. Also, the turmoil mentioned in the review of Gantelet II may have been a precursor to a rather inglorious end for the company. Their full-page ads suddenly disappeared from the CoCo magazines of the time, with the editor noting the company wasn't paying its bills. Some users said Diecom officially remained in business, but there were also a lot of complaints about unreturned phone calls and unshipped products. They weren't the only or worst offenders, however, as the hope of making any money off a fledgling computer caused a number of entrepreneurs to vanish with customers' cash out of hardship or outright deceit.





The Homebrew Sleuth: Atari 2600 Cave In

by *Colin Pierce*



SYSTEM: ATARI 2600

AUTHOR: STEVE ENGELHARDT

YEAR OF RELEASE: 2009

Everyone who loves Atari loves its classic Action/Adventure game, Adventure. It was truly a milestone in the genre, paving the way for games like Legend of Zelda. But you know good ol' Adventure inside and out, you know how to find the secret screen with the designer's name, you've memorized the mazes, slayed the ducks-I mean dragons, and retrieved the Golden Chalice time and again. Where do you go from here?

The answer, without a doubt in my mind, is Cave In, by Steve Engelhardt. Cave In is a game that you hear about and think, "Oh cool, it's like Adventure." You go to the AtariAge store to buy it, and see the cover art, which subtly impresses you with its promise of Indiana Jones-style excitement. You then read the description, which also sounds promising, so you buy the game, wait a week for it to arrive, put the cartridge into your trusted Atari, flip the power switch...

...and say, "Oh my God, what an incredible title screen!"

And that's just the beginning...

Graphics: A+

This game has so much awesome stuff in it that it gives me a headache when I wonder how Mr. Engelhardt fit it all in a 32K cart. AtariAge boasts that Cave In is the first Homebrew for the 2600 to require a special chip in the cart with extra RAM for it to run on the system. Atari did this with a few of their games, but Cave In is apparently the first homebrew to use this trick, but boy does it show!

At the start of the game, you are asked to choose a difficulty setting which will decide many factors including whether you start with the gun, where the keys to locked doors are, and more, all of which is explained in a beautiful manual that also doubles as your character's journal (read the entries carefully! They may provide clues!).

Your mission is to find three keys, each of which unlock a single door somewhere in the maze. The doors lead to one of three pieces of an ancient crown that you must collect. Upon collecting all three pieces, a fourth door can be opened, which will lead to the place where you can repair the crown, then you must escape the cave.

The problem is, this cave is HUGE. There must be at least a hundred rooms. It's so big that I think it actually is to the game's disadvantage. There are so many places to go with so few landmarks that it's extremely easy to get lost, but that's probably the idea.

To find the keys, you must search each room very carefully. To have your character search an area, simply move against a wall to have him search it.

Of course, there are creatures in the caves who would want nothing more than to kill you. Luckily, you have a gun to shoot them with; however, on the higher difficulties, you don't start with the gun! You can even lose it by taking damage!

Also, there are other hidden things besides the keys and doors. The monsters sometimes will drop a small health restoration, and somewhere in the cave is a pool of water that will heal you completely. There are also warp zones, switches, a mine cart that you have to ride to access parts of the cave, lava rooms where the walls hurt you and other things to watch out for.

So, if this is such an epic, wonderful game, why give it an A- and not an A+? Well, the cave is actually TOO big. It's so huge that at times it feels to be a little bit of a hassle to explore. And because many of the rooms look the same except for a different color, it's really easy to get lost and frustrated, especially on the higher difficulty levels where your character will lose health gradually for every room you enter. Also, the scorpions are particularly hard to hit because of a glitch where your shot goes through its tail without killing it. But these are minor gripes. The gameplay overall is excellent.

Controls: A

It's an Atari 2600 game, so move with the joystick, fire your gun with the button, and there you go! Still, your character moves fluently, and I had no trouble with making my guy do what I wanted.

Sound: B-

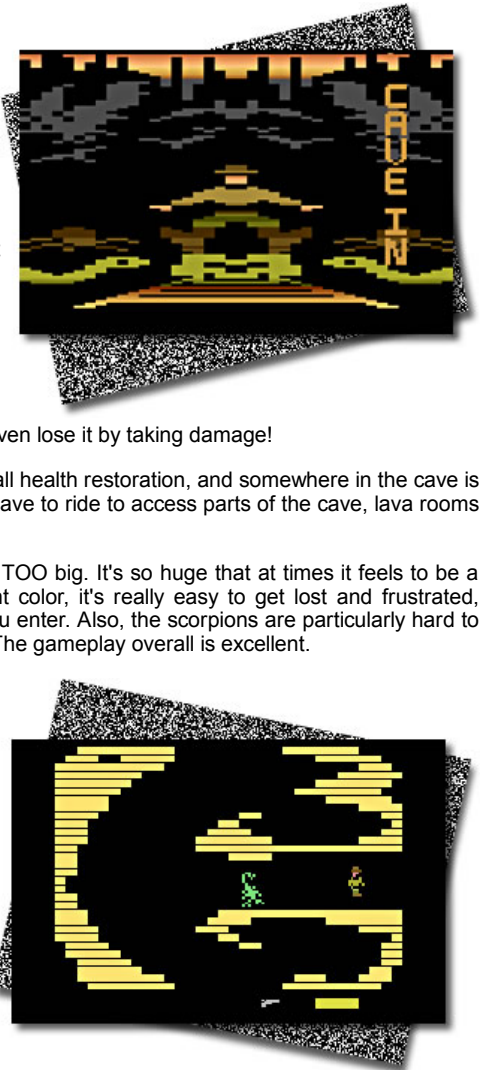
There's not much here in the auditory department, and some of the sounds are very similar. Still, it all works, and being an Atari game it's not wise to expect symphonic music and realistic sound.


Replay Value/Fun Factor: A+

This game is one of the most unique and fascinating adventure games for the Atari. There is so much to see and do (perhaps too much so), the gameplay is stimulating, and I can imagine that fans of Adventure will instantly fall in love with this and be playing it for many years to come.

Overall: A-

This is one of the most intriguing titles I've played for the Atari 2600. With a massive world to explore, lots of secrets, and tons of features all packed into a wonderfully fun game, this one comes highly recommended. Definitely a purchase to consider.





Modern Retro - Spyro The Dragon

by [Patrick McClellan](#)



Perhaps by today's standards, Insomniac Games are best known for the beloved Ratchet & Clank series, and more recently the Playstation 3 first-person-shooter franchise, Resistance. However, many label themselves as fans of the California-based developer not because of these titles, but rather for their excellent Playstation 1 franchise, Spyro the Dragon. I say Playstation 1 franchise, not because there weren't sequels on other consoles, but because the three PS1 titles were the only games in the series to have been created by Insomniac, with the company eventually losing the license to Universal Interactive Studios, which became known as Vivendi Games, and more recently Activision Blizzard. A general consensus among fans seems to be that the PS1 titles were easily the superior games in the series, and the titles that followed lacked the same charm and enjoyment levels as the earlier games. Spyro the Dragon, released in 1998, was the game that kicked the series off and established the eponymous purple dragon as a jewel in Sony's crown, as well as a world-renowned videogame icon. More recently, the three PS1 titles have been made available as justifiable *PS1 Classics* on the Playstation 3, re-introducing the series to a different generation of gamers.

The game begins with five dragon families – The Artisans, Peace Keepers, Magic Crafters, Beast Makers and Dream Weavers, living happily in their individual worlds respectively. Surprisingly enough, this level of calm and contentment doesn't last for long, as the alliterative dragon-trapper Gnasty Gnorm wreaks havoc, capturing the dragons. It is up to the fast and agile Spyro, voiced by Carlos Alazraqui, with his best friend Sparx the Dragonfly

by his side to set them free. Spyro will be rewarded with a clue as to the whereabouts of Gnorm after freeing each dragon, ending in an inevitable confrontation between the young dragon and the villain. The game is split into several different realms, and Spyro can travel from one to the next as the player makes progress in the game by collecting a certain amount of items, be it gems, dragon eggs or rescuing the dragons themselves. These realms become increasingly difficult as the player begins to master the simple control scheme, and perhaps more importantly, the jumpy camera, one of few flaws with the title.

The large, expansive 3-D environments stop this formula from ever becoming tiring, and the game is certainly one of the most graphically pleasing and technically solid titles on the Playstation 1, with the colorful vistas and unique characters making for an incredibly enjoyable experience, still to this day. Large parts of the game are spent with Spyro sprinting head first into smaller, easier enemies. This will change, as Spyro later adopts the glide technique, allowing him to fly from one ledge to another, allowing access to previously inaccessible points. The game does ramp up in difficulty as this technique becomes more relied upon and enemies begin to pose more of a genuine threat to the youngster, but the title still remains immensely enjoyable.

Each of the games' realms are interlinked by a home-world, each of which featuring a boss to defeat, as well as flying level known as Speedway, where Spyro is no longer limited to just gliding and now has the ability to fly upwards. These levels feature several different challenges to complete within a set time limit, such as flying through rings or blowing up barrels. These sections in particular prove to be very challenging, and definitely require multiple playthroughs allowing the player to memorize the best routes to take. If you don't complete the task within the time, you will have to start from the very beginning. Whilst this section is rife with frustrating "oh, so close!" moments, its addictive nature will keep the player coming back to cut fragments off their record times. Whilst the game features no multiplayer component, this section is certainly a fun one to play with friends to see who can get the fastest time possible.

Many think that the limited nature of Spyro's character is the reason behind the franchise's lack of success on next-gen consoles like the Xbox 360 and Playstation 3, alongside uninspired game design and a menagerie of glitches. President and CEO of Insomniac games, Ted Price was quoted saying that "(Insomniac) gave up the series after releasing Spyro: Year of the Dragon because his actions were limited". His inability to develop new moves was partly down to his lack of dexterity skill, rendering him unable to use weapons with his hands, emphasizing the need for Spyro *himself* to be the weapon. This is perhaps the reasoning behind the character design of the more recent Ratchet. Also, unlike other titles where characters appear to be the same age throughout their ordeals expanding over numerous titles, the Spyro series has more recently attempted to redesign his character by making him physically




Spyro the Dragon burning someone's pants off!

grow up. This was immediately criticized by thousands of fans worldwide, who thought the *new* Spyro lacked the same charisma and outright likeability his PS1-self attained.



Despite a lack of recent success for the Spyro franchise, the earlier games in the series remain favorites for thousands worldwide, who still cling to the hope that one day Insomniac will reclaim the Spyro label and create a new game. After the poor 'Dawn of the Dragon', the most recent game in the series, it is possible that the next Spyro game could be a long, *long* way away, but the potential for next-gen success for the little (or not so little, as of late...) purple dragon remains clear. The game is without a doubt one of the most enjoyable action titles on the Playstation 1, and holds up very well by today's standards, with its rock solid mechanics still working wonders on consumers. With the game now available through the Playstation Network, and therefore playable on a Playstation Portable console, Spyro the Dragon is definitely a recommended purchase for all.



A Pixelated 21st Century!

by [Paul "Zimmzamm" Zimmerman](#) / [Bryan Roppolo](#)

Paul was not able to write up a complete Pixelated report for this month's issue due him being busy with the Midwest Gaming Classic. However, he did provide the legwork in finding out what Pixelated games came out last month and are worth giving a try if you are a retrogaming fan. Here are some of the retroware highlights for the month:




- Globulos Party ([Click here to see a trailer for the game](#))
- Elemental Masters ([Click here to see a video of the game](#))
- Zoo Frenzy ([Click here to see a trailer for the game](#))
- Game & Watch: Mario's Cement Factory (See Game & Watch video to the right)
- Game & Watch: Chef (See Game & Watch video to the right)
- Game & Watch: Judge (See Game & Watch video to the right)



- Mega Man 10 (Video to the right)
- Happy Hammerin' ([Click here to see a trailer for the game](#))
- Max and the Magic Marker ([Click here to see a trailer for the game](#))
- Cave Story ([Click here to see a video of the game](#))

Paul will be back next month after he recovers from the Midwest Gaming Classic. I look forward to seeing what else he finds out in the way of the ever popular Pixelated games genre! Until then, enjoy the above latest releases!





Arcade Memories

by [Tom Zjaba](#)

This section will feature a different game each month. I will talk about when I first experienced the game at an arcade and how I felt about it. It could be an arcade game or a pinball machine. It is not a review, there are more than enough of those out there. Rather it is my personal observation of the first time I played a game and the impact it had on me, positive or negative. I would love to hear from others about their first experience with an arcade machine or pinball machine.

Donkey Kong
With the first installment, I decided to start with a very familiar game. I still remember going into an arcade at a mall and seeing this for the first time. My father and uncle used to do a lot of comic book and sports card shows as I was growing up and they were often at malls. Once we got bored of looking at all the dealer tables, we would look at the stores. If we were lucky, there would be an arcade and we would end up spending the rest of our money there. It beat spending it on candy or potato chips!

I remember hearing about Donkey Kong from a friend. He said it was a King Kong game, which intrigued me as I loved the original movie. All I knew is that you had to save a woman from a giant gorilla. I envisioned traveling across Skull Island, battling dinosaurs and other monsters as I searched for the damsel in distress. Little did I know how different the game would be.

When I saw the game called "Donkey Kong", I was puzzled. Was this the game he was talking about? I went over and watched someone playing it. He was controlling some strange little man as he tried to get to the top. There was a giant gorilla there and there was the damsel in distress. This must be the

game. I placed my quarter down and waited to play. Luck was on my side as the person was not very good. He did not even get past the first level. I studied the game while he played. Climb ladders and jump over barrels. There also was a hammer that would smash the barrels. Interesting. I did note that the barrels would come down the ladders, so I had to be on guard for that. That finished the person before me.

As he finished up, I quickly dropped a quarter in the machine and watched the opening animation. As was always the rule, I placed a second quarter on the machine. Experience taught me that the first game often ended quickly. It was a good idea to have the next game ready. Once it started, I moved back and forth and hit the jump button. Nice simple controls, just the way I like it. It only took one death to finish the first level. And that death was because I forgot the barrels could go down the ladders, a well earned lesson.

Once I finished the first level and saw Donkey Kong run off with my beloved, I waited in anticipation to what came next. Images of going up a building like in King Kong raced through my head as I waited. I was greeted by the girder level. It took me the rest of my Mario's to learn how to defeat the level. It was not long before I reached for my backup quarter. Before I could put another quarter on the machine, someone else claimed the next game. So I had to make the game count as it could be a bit before I could play again. I mustered up all my skills and by the end of the game, I had reached the third level with the pulleys. But I did not pass that level on my first day with the game.

Soon after my first encounter with Mario and Donkey Kong, I heard the rumors about it. The rumors about the unusual name were the first to circulate around the arcade and schoolyards. The most common was how the name was mixed up in translation. Instead of Monkey Kong, it became Donkey Kong. Others were it was originally called King Kong, but lawsuits forced them to change the name. Still others were that the main character was a donkey in Japan and they changed him to a Mario over here. Without the aid of the internet and Google, people could say just about anything and we would believe it. We had no way to disprove it.

Then the rumor of the fourth level of the game spread like wildfire. Everyone knew someone who saw someone else make it to the secret level. About the only consistence to the story was the level was called the Pie Factory. This only made us want to play the game more to be the first among our friends to make it to this super hard level. Over the next few weeks, Pie Factory sightings were as common as UFO sightings in Roswell. More people admitted to seeing the level. The day finally came when I first witnessed someone make it there. I was waiting to play as some older kid was tearing through the levels. With each step nearer, more and more kids crowded around the machine. When the level finally appeared, we all held our breath as we first witnessed the level for ourselves. It was that day that we believed anything was possible. Maybe other games had levels that we did not know about. It was a grand day to be a gamer.

It was long after that day that I was able to reach the Pie Factory myself. This was an accomplishment that I was very proud of. Not something I could put on my resume, but it felt that important to me. To this day, I will stop and play a Donkey Kong machine when I come across one. It is quite rare for me to get to the Pie Factory anymore, but I still try. And I will keep trying as long as there are working Donkey Kong machines out there.

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 his plethora of his homemade video game related comics.

Game Over

Well, this was a refreshing issue of Retrogaming Times Monthly. One thing that just occurred to me is that the date of publication for this issue is April 1st, which of course is April Fools Day. Darn it! I missed the opportunity to create a good prank for this issue. Maybe next year I'll be more on top of my game, or maybe I'll just do my prank in May...Hmmm. Or, maybe I'm only fooling myself when I say I'll get to those long awaited back issues...Anyway, here's to Spring, Easter, and all the good times to come!

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

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