

Retrogaming Times Monthly

Issue #4 - September 2004

"Stupid text adventure! Why can't I pick up that chalice!"

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Press Fire to Start

by Adam King

Fire up those joysticks 'cause it's time for another edition of RTM. This issue has a little something for everyone. We got football, we got boxing, we got the Olympics, we got kids causing mayhem and destruction in a quiet suburban street. We even have several TV ads that you probably never seen before. All this and much much more, plus a look at the return of Atari paddle games. So let's get this issue started.

Before we get started I should mention that this issue features the return of our former fearless leader, Tom Zjaba, who's decided to contribute an article this month by bringing back an old favorite. Let's hope Tom will continue to drop by in the coming months.

Football Fever 8-Bit Style

by Adam King

It's time once again for the annual fall tradition known as the pro football season. And what better way to mark the first kick off than to bust out a video football game. Lately football games such as *Madden NFL* have gotten very complex to the point where you can create your own teams, play through like 30 seasons, and set a whole bunch of options, even the cost of pretzels at your stadium. While that's all well and good for many of today's players, I bet there are times when you long for the simpler days of football, where you simply selected your teams and hit the field. That's why I decided that in honor of the new season, I decided to take a look at some pigskin paks for the NES and Sega Master System. Here's some of the titles that score touchdowns, and some which definitely deserve penalty flags.

NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

10 Yard Fight (1985 Nintendo)

This is the first football game for the NES, and it shows. Based on the arcade game "10 Yard Fight" by Irem, you play the quarterback of a team, and the object is to outscore the other team. There's not many options other than 1 or 2 players. In the 1p mode against the computer, you start at the high school level, then you move up through college and into the pro level. For the most part this game follows the standard American football rules. You run along toward the other team's end zone to score a touchdown while avoiding the other team. Each time the ball is snapped, you can either pass it to a receiver, or run with it. You have four downs to run at least 10 yards. On the fourth down, you can either go for a field goal or a punt. The defense tries to tackle you or block you offense. That's about it. This game is extremely limited; you can't even call plays or change players. Bland graphics, sounds, and challenge for a game this old make this a game to leave on the sidelines.

Tecmo Bowl (1988 Tecmo)

This arcade port was hailed as the top NES football game when it was released, and it's easy to see why. In this game you can either play a 1 player season, a quick game with 2 players, or you can Coach your team from the sidelines. You get to choose from 12 teams, each with different strengths and weaknesses. This game received a NFL Players Association license, so you don't get the actual team names, just the cities, but you still get real NFL players on each team. Once you get started you view the action from the side. Each game last four 5-minute quarters, and most of the professional rules are found here. You have a selection of four plays to use, one running play or four passing plays. If you go for a pass make sure your receiver is open, or your pass could be intercepted. On defense you can do diving tackles to take down the runner. If you can win the game you can move on in the season. After so many weeks you'll go through the playoffs on your way to the big game: the Tecmo Bowl, where the final two teams battle for the World Championship.

Tecmo Bowl is a good game but it's hard to recommend it over its superior sequel, *Tecmo Super Bowl*. The graphics are above average, but each player is in their correct colors. You do get some good pictures during the half-time show and some close-ups of players doing high-fives after touchdowns. The sounds are good, with great voices and catchy gameplay music, as well as excellent bone-crunching sound effects. The controls are easy to use, and the gameplay isn't that complicated, letting anyone dive in. The biggest weaknesses is the game's options. You only have four plays to choose from, and you can't set any gameplay rules. Many of the features of real football, such as touchbacks and time-outs, also didn't make it in. The gameplay just feels more arcade-like and less realistic. The game still manages to have some appeal, so beginners and those looking for fast gridiron action will find it here. Tecmo Bowl makes the NES playoffs but doesn't quite get to the Super Bowl.

NES Play Action Football (1990 Nintendo)

Up to four players can play this game, using either an NES Satellite or Four Score adapter. There are eight teams from eight NFL cities, each with different strengths and weaknesses. This game has a license from the NFL Player's Association, which means real players, but not real teams. You don't even get the real symbols. What you do get is real life squads of NFL players. Each game has four 15-minute quarters, and the standard NFL rules apply. You view the action from a diagonal overhead view, using close-ups for running plays and wide view for pass attempts. Each team has a different playbook of 24 offensive and 16 defensive plays to choose from, plus you can flip plays. You can also punt, kick, pass, and much more. If you want, you can enter the playoff mode, where you play against the other seven teams for the Power Bowl championship.

This game is decent, but limited, especially when compared to *Tecmo Super Bowl*. The graphics are decent, with nice animations on the scoreboard after a touchdown or sack. The sounds have okay background music and decent sound and voice effects. On offense the controls are realistic, but on defense, you can hardly switch to the player closest to the ball. You also have to run in a diagonal

direction to go straight, which can be tricky at times. The computer puts up a decent game, but it often does stupid things, such as having receivers run out of bounds. Play Action Football deserves credit for being the first 4-player console football title, and does provide some enjoyment, but in the face of the competition, it's basically a bench warmer. Still, a decent game to play with friends.

Tecmo Super Bowl (1991 Tecmo)

This title was released three years after the original *Tecmo Bowl*, and is revered in many gaming circles. Does it deserve that honor? You bet your goalpost it does! This game has much more options than the original. First, the game has both the NFL Players Association and Team NFL licenses. That means you get both real NFL Teams and Players. All 28 NFL Teams(at the time) in both conferences are represented, with most of the rosters. There are some omissions because of licensing issues. You and another player can play either a preseason game or a full 17 week season, based on the 1991 NFL schedule. Games consist of four 15-minute quarters and follow the standard football rules and scoring. The game has improved in many other ways, and some parts are more realistic. The number of plays has increased from 4 to 8, four running and four passing. You'll also have to deal with injuries, incomplete passes, onside kicks, and fumbles. You can dive tackle, and you can jump to block a pass or kick. In season mode, you play through a normal NFL schedule, and you can skip games where you're not controlling any team. At the end of the season, if you have a good enough record, you can enter the playoffs for a chance to reach the Super Bowl. But to do that, you must defeat the best teams in your conference for the championship, then you can go for the ring.

If you're looking for the ultimate NES football game, look no further. The graphics are a mixed bag. The players are smaller than the last cart and flicker quite a bit, but this allows you to see more of the action on the field, and you get a nice view of the sidelines. The in-game intermissions during halftime and close plays are very good. The sounds are great. There's some decent background music, bone-crunching sound effects, and good voice clips. The game controls very well, allowing you to perform some quick moves, plus the game is simply easy and fun to play. Not only that, the game keeps track of all the teams during the season, not just yours. The game pak has a battery backup to save your progress during the season. *Tecmo Super Bowl* is just that: the Super Bowl of NES football games, and a true champion in the sports games arena.

SEGA MASTER SYSTEM

Sports Pad Football/Great Football (1987 Sega)

These are two names for the same game. The only difference is that *Sports Pad Football* requires the use of Sega's Sport Pad trackball. In either case, you get a football game that's different, for the wrong reasons. Options are very light here, not to mention there's no NFL license. You get 12 teams, six in two conferences, but there's really no difference between them. One or two players can take to the field, but both modes are different. While the two player mode is a straight football game with four quarters of action, the 1P mode is a different type of football game. You play the offense *only*, you play in the 4th quarter *only*, and CPU team already has some points. Basically to try to catch up and beat them before the time runs out. The cart offers several formations for running, passing, and kicking plays.

Who came up with this cart, because it's TERRIBLE! The graphics are subpar, with small players on a big field. The sounds are worse; the background music is unmemorable and the crowd noise is just awful. It's too confusing and frustrating to play this cart. Moving your player is one thing, but passing and kicking is near impossible. I can't even figure out how to select a play. It just rotates through the formations, and you can't do a thing about it. The two player mode doesn't fare any better. This is the worst football game I ever played. Forget the field; *Not-So-Great Football* doesn't even belong in the stadium.

Walter Payton Football (1989 Sega)

This game, endorsed by the late great Chicago Running Back, is better than *Great Football* because it's a straight football game. One or two players can play in two modes, the Monday Night Game (a

quick exhibition) or the Road to Superbowl (the playoffs), and select from three difficulty levels. This game has you playing in the FL (not the NFL), but you do get two conferences and 28 teams set in NFL cities. The gameplay action is seen from an vertical overhead perspective. After the coin toss it's four quarters of pigskin action, with the usual football rules. Tackles, dives, passes, touchdowns, and so on. When you go to the playbook, you can choose from 14 offensive plays and seven defensive plays. If you need to kick, you get a side view of the kicker, and have to use two meters to control the power and spin of the ball. After every game you get a password to keep track of your progress during the season. When you're ready you can go for the Superbowl in the Playoff mode. It's done just like the NFL; the top six teams in each conference do battle in a single elimination tournament. If you can beat the other teams and win the conference championship, you'll get the chance to meet the other conference champion in the Big Game. Can you reach the top of the mountain and become world champions?

Just because this game is better than *Great Football* doesn't mean it's a great game itself. The graphics aren't much to talk about, but you do get nice close-ups of kickers, and the referee making rulings. The background music is unmemorable, and the crowd noise is still wrong. The controls are decent. The gameplay has many problems. When you're controlling the quarterback, DO NOT HIT BUTTON 2. He'll dive and be unable to get back up, even though none of the defenders are nowhere near you. Plus you can't see much of the field, so passing downfield is nearly impossible. On defense it's tough to cover receivers, and you can't even change players, so if he gets away from you, all you can do is hope one of your teammates tackles him. Walter Payton may have been a Superbowl champion, but this game is anything but. NOTE: Outside the US this game is known as *American Pro Football*.

[Joe Montana Football \(1990 Sega\)](#)

The legendary San Francisco quarterback takes center stage here in the first game of the long-running series (and you guys thought it started on the Genesis), which is actually a decent effort. One or two players can take the field in three different skill levels. Once again you're presented with 28 teams representing NFL cities (you don't get real teams or players here). Be aware that no matter what teams you pick, they'll always be shown in red and blue uniforms. After the coin toss and the kickoff, it's time for standard football action. The gridiron gameplay is presented with a horizontal overhead perspective. After every play you can choose for a wide selection of plays on both offense and defense. Often times Joe Montana will suggest a play, but you can choose a different one if you wish. If you go for a pass, you can switch receivers before you chuck the ball.

This game has several advantages over the other two football games but still has some problems. The graphics are a mixed bag. The players look small, their movements are choppy and there's quite a bit of flicker. However the players are easy to follow, and if you get into the end zone for a touchdown, you get a cute end zone celebration. The sounds are good, though there's no background music. Decent sound effects include a nice crunching sound during a tackle. The gameplay is okay, though there's not much to it. It's easy to throw a pass, and as I mentioned it's easy to switch receivers. However the majority of each team's playbook consists of passing plays, and running plays are hard to get out. It can also be tough to play defense, but at least you can quickly switch between defenders. The computer provides a good challenge. *Joe Montana Football's* biggest negative is that it's too light on options. No season play, no playoffs, no championship. It's just you versus the computer or another player. While Montana Football doesn't have much going for it, if you're not into options, it does provide a decent football experience. And let's face it; football on the Master System is not going to get better than this.

The Many Faces of . . . The Activision Decathlon

by Alan Hewston

We continue our tribute to the Summer Olympic Games, with David Crane's 1983 classic, the

"Activision Decathlon". Living up to the billing, this includes all 10 events from the Olympic Decathlon. Similar to our previous 2 reviews, this game has a competitive sequence of several events for multiple players who try to be the best at each event and also compete for the overall title via cumulative event points. Once again there is a practice mode for every event, but, unlike the others, there are no medal ceremonies and no world records to be broken. David Crane had to focus on 10 events and make them all playable and fun. 2600 Decathlon was probably the first "home" version of this multiple sports event genre, but it paved a pretty good path and is still a proven winner today. Most every event is easy to learn, but in order to score really well you'll need to practice it a lot.

Arcade: None

Home systems: all released by Activision - first version, David Crane on the Atari 2600.

- *Atari 2600* '83 David Crane
- *Atari 8 bit & 5200* '84 Paul Willson
- *Commodore 64* '84 by "Action Graphics" with music by Russell Lieblich
- *Colecovision* '84 by "Action Graphics"

False Alarm: Upon further review, all Apple II games referred to as the Activision Decathlon turned out to be the Microsoft Decathlon.



Here are nearly all of the Many Faces of Decathlon.

Home Version Similarities: Except those in <> all home versions have: introduction with the Olympic Anthem; a practice mode for all 10 events (scores & times/distances shown); a choice of 1 to 4 players; simultaneous gameplay for 2 players in all running events <2600>; displays "first", "second" and "third attempt" at each field event; official Olympic Decathlon points scoring system is used for each event - faster, farther or higher, means more points scored; the decathlete with the most cumulative points is the overall Decathlon Gold medal winner; after each attempt/event, there is a delay of ~15 seconds to see your current results, points and then cumulative points; you are then prompted for the next attempt/event, but given an unlimited pause/wait <Atari 8 bit, 5200, CV> until you are ready (move joystick when ready); a speed/power gauge is used for all events, and for running events there is one for both runners, plus a real-time clock; distance readouts for each field event attempt; a musical tribute when you reach or exceed 1,000 points; scrolling action of the background (stadium, fans, light towers) on every event; and finally, back in the day, you could send Activision a photograph of your high score which could earn you an Activision Decathlon patch of an Olympic medal. Scoring 8,600 to 8,999 would earn a Bronze, 9,000 to 9,999 a Silver, and over 10,000 a Gold medal patch. All Addictiveness scores were increased +1 for these patches. To me, the patches are still as effective a means to pursue higher scores as saving world records on disk - even today you can still strive to reach those goals, knowing what they represent.

What is not included in the Activision Decathlon is a lot of fanfare, sound effects or music. The background scrolls while the torchbearer runs through the stadium, but that is all. There is no pressure or urgency to be ready for the next event - but after all this is a home game . . . so there's no line behind you and no quarter eating machine at hand. None of the action continues until you are ready. There are no false starts, and thus you miss out on the anticipation of that starting gun.

Decathlon Events

Here are descriptions of the original Atari 2600 version, with other versions to follow. The events are simple in appearance, but have great playability. Each event has the exact same stadium (side) view where the running track is the consistent ingredient throughout. The running events have hash marks or hurdles, and a finish line. The field events use the track as the runway or approach but or a high bar, pole vault bar or the fault line marks the transition to the pit or the throw field. The background scrolls with the runner, or follows the projectile until it lands. There are no 3-D effects other than the

shadow of each competitor. The high bars and pits are 2-D.

- 100 Meter Dash** - There's no hash marks, just the start and finish line. The footfalls are heard for each running event, but there are no other sound effects.
- Long Jump** - A 30 m approach track is way longer than needed, and there are no hash marks to help. The foul line begins off-screen and there is no sand pit shown.
- Shot Put** - A very short approach with no visible pit, just the foul line. There are no hash marks in this or any other pits, but there is a fast digital readout as the distance increases.
- High Jump** - The manual says "30 m approach", but it is clearly shorter than the Long Jump. The bar & pit begin just off screen, making it about a perfect distance to reach top speed.
- 400 Meter Race** - Same as the 100 m, but there are hash marks and distances to help at every 100 m.
- 110 Meter Hurdles** - 10 hurdles, one every 10 m. No sound effects other than footfalls, but if you miss and stumble (quietly) over a hurdle, it'll still slow you down.
- Discus Throw** - Same as the Shot Put.
- Pole Vault** - The approach is also too long here. After you plant the pole (fire button), keep on wiggling that joystick the entire time to keep your power up so that you can press up (fire button) and release over the bar.
- Javelin Throw** - Like the Shot Put & Discus, but faster, further.
- 1500 Meter Race** - A grueling final event. The first 1300 m are somewhat boring other than the 100 m hash/distance marks. Keep that speed up the entire time - but it'll be challenging to do so for that final 200 m sprint. At ~ 4 minutes long (Real Time) this event will make you sweat and maybe pull a muscle too.

Have Nots: Atari 5200 (37)

My first reaction is that this is identical to the Atari 8 bit computer version - in theory. All the preliminary menu activity, the looks, and sound are all the same. One version was first, the other was simply a port with the usual mods to the user interface/controls. All the same comments & scores apply to Gameplay (10), Addictiveness (8), Graphics (9) and Sound (6), but not Controls. First, the pause button has been purposefully disabled. Next the Masterplay Interface does not appear to work correctly. The Wico controllers are pitiful. This leaves you with standard 5200 analog sticks to somehow get an incredibly fast rhythm going at will. Needless to say Controls are weak (4) as you are never really able to get anything consistently going. You may get lucky at times and find that rhythm for a few seconds, but what is the point. Just give it up and play the computer version with a real stick.

Have Nots: Atari 2600 (41)

My first reaction was disappointment that this is another of those Activision carts that doesn't fit well in the slot - no penalty, just a caution to players. Using a different controller for different players/events may in practice yield better performance (it does for me), but be careful - as one slight bump will wipe out your game. Gameplay is awesome (10), with all 10 events, none are too easy, none are too hard, all are well-done. In running, there is no "ready, set, go" or gun. Instead, once you move the stick, the Real Time clocks begins. The power/speed bar is very important feedback to the player and the practice mode lets you learn, practice & enjoy every aspect of the gameplay. Addictiveness is enjoyable (8) with the built in pause between all events/attempts. Missing here is a chance to race (run) simultaneously - added to later versions. Graphics are pretty good (7), with just enough color, animation and event details to enjoy. The shadowing effects and scrolling are well done. Sound is good enough (6) to give you some audio feedback. The best parts are the opening score (the Olympic Anthem) and the short jingle - "Charge!" when you exceed 1,000 points. The only other sound effects are your footfalls. Controls are perfect (10), and the special "Track & Field" or most any other controllers will work on all systems.

Bronze Medal: Atari 8 bit (43)

My first reaction was excited to see a step up from the 2600 by adding simultaneous running, improved graphics (more realism, animation & detail added to all field events), but not much else

improved over the original. Gameplay is awesome (10) with everything in place, plus a unique scrolling menu to select the # of players and events. Selecting each player's three digit initials are unique here, but do not add much in the long run. There's a scrolling message about the games, quoting Pierre De Coubertin " . . . not to win, but to take part". In running events, instead of the usual "ready, set go", there's just a gun. But then there is no way to false start, which makes the starting gun almost useless. Addictiveness is very fun (8), enhanced by adding simultaneous running by two players - and when playing solo, a computer opponent is supplied. But then David Crane's clever built-in pause/wait from the 2600 was dropped here - meaning once the game begins, you must be ready to continue all the way through. To make matters worse, there is no pause button if you need it. Fortunately, this only applies to running events, as the field events still wait for you to begin moving the stick. If playing via disk (Atari or Commodore), the entire game is placed into memory in one load - so there are no subsequent delays on any version - and no penalty to the score. Graphics are remarkable, the best (9) on this version. The stands are farther away, but more effective with a very small but colorful crowd. Neither the color nor the animation is the best, but the detail is good and the realism of each event is by far what makes the difference to me. The approach areas, foul lines, 3-D pits and infields are well done. For example, the Shot Put has a circular start zone with a cone shaped infield, complete with hash marks along and across it. Everything is displayed with some 3-D perspective. The only place this backfires is the High Jump, as you cannot tell exactly where you are relative to the bar - but practice will help. The Pole Vault has the same 3-D look, but a planting box was added, so you can more easily tell when to lower the pole. Note that the Pole Vault mechanics are different from all other versions - and there's no manual online. Quickly move L/R as usual for speed, then stop L/R motion as you press the fire button to plant the pole. Keep the fire button pressed until you want to release from the pole. Finally, the biggest difference is that all scores, times and information are displayed above the crowd, making it look like a gigantic scoreboard. Sound is OK (6) but essentially the same as the 2600. A starting gun sound and footfalls are the extent of the effects. There is the 1,000 point chime, but no crowd cheer. No "dinks", "bumps" or "thuds" were added. Controls are excellent (10), and swapping in/out different controllers is no problem. This game is found on both floppy disk and cart.

Gold Medal: Commodore 64 & Colecovision (44)

These are more similar to each other than the Atari, but after all, they were coded by the same team. Like the Atari, for all running events there are 2 simultaneous runners. There's a countdown "on your marks, get set, go" or "ready, set, go" then a gun fires - but once again there is no way to false start - you can move L/R as early and often as you want. After the chime for scoring 1,000 points, the crowd will now applaud, but remains motionless. There's no need to continuously wiggle the stick on the Pole Vault. Once planted, you maintain power and just press again to release. The 3-D of the PV is bad on both versions, in fact the pole will hit the bar when it is not even close - bad sprite collision detection, so plan your push-off earlier than it appears visually. If you hit a bar you'll hear "dink", hit a hurdle "bump", throw an object or when you jump "woomp", followed by the landing "thud". The 100 m dash, Long Jump etc have hash marks every 10 m. Once you begin an event, the action continues at a minimal power level, even if you do nothing.

Commodore 64

My first reaction is this version is the hardest to score points on, but it is pretty balanced and fair. The Gameplay is all there and nearly flawless (10). Addictiveness is fantastic (9). Just like the 2600, there is a built in delay between all actions (press fire button to move on). Plus once you start running, you can pause using the <R/S> key, and resume play by <R/S> or moving the stick again - excellent! Graphics are beautiful (8) with the most detail and animation, but also have the same simple "everything looks the same" look of the 2600. Sound is effective (7) with the crowd cheer and several effects. Controls are perfect (10). Available on cart and disk.

Colecovision

My first reaction was this version plays a bit too easy. You can approach or clear 1100 points on several events - atypical of the usually hardest to play systems, the CV. Gameplay is magnificent (10)

and complete with all options. Only a minor loss in allowing only 1 or 2 players, not 3 or 4. The keypad is well-done here and regardless if there are 1 or 2 players, both keypads function all the time - <*> moves the selection to the next event; <#> begins the event or Decathlon; and <0> will toggle the pause. Like the C64, you also return to action by simply moving the joystick. Thus you can let one player use a non-CV controller and still be able to pause. This is important, because like the Atari 8 bit version, once the Decathlon starts, it keeps on going - with no breaks in the running events. Addictiveness is outstanding (9) - having a pause, and at the same time getting perfect (10) Controls. Graphics are very nice (8) with a variety of color, but are still simplified and unrealistic. The athletes are larger in size, helping to improve the animation, but the Atari has loads more realism and the C64 much finer detail. Still close enough to match the C64 score. The 400 m & 1500 m, have hash marks every 10m which is a bit of an overkill. The Pole Vault is missing the planting box. Sound is very good (7).

Yet another tie, and neither Gold Medal winner is significantly better than the Atari in any area. The CV only allows 2 players, but is easier to play and has the most controller choices. So I'm sure fans of either system can argue victory for their favorite. Regardless, all 5 versions could have been improved a bit, but let's face it, the race was on to get these out the door to capture that 1984 Olympic Fever.



A cool Activision advert. Did you know there was a "Decathlon" glove?

Notes & Thanks:

This is the first review since RT #70 where all games are found on cartridges. No disk-only games this month. Thanks for long ago help when Steve Knox got me the Atari 8 bit disk version & Tom Zjaba saved and traded me the CV cart. Recently (Philly Classic 2004), thanks to Jarett Waite of www.packratvg.com for holding the Atari 8 bit Decathlon cart. Finally, thanks to reader, Cameron Christison who tells me that the original Apple II "Track & Field" package included the standard T&F controller plus an adapter cable that hooks in between. But alas, no pictures yet, and this baby was not Apple II C compatible.

Come back next month, where we make our very first 25th anniversary tribute - reviewing the Many Faces of "Galaxian" (1979 arcade hit) on the Apple II, Colecovision, C64, Atari 2600, Atari 5200 & 8 bit computers, Vic 20 - and if time permits - a quick look at the unofficial Bally Astrocade version.

Samantha (7) & Timmy (4) helped their daddy to play test Decathlon during the Olympic TV ads.

Contact: Hewston95@NOSPAMstratos.net Also visit the "Many Faces of" site:

<http://my.stratos.net/~hewston95/RT/ManyFacesHome.htm>.



Collecting in Australia - AUSTRALIA'S UNIQUE VIDEO GAME SYSTEMS



Being tucked away down under and reasonably isolated has made Australia a very unique country. We have some of the most unique and weird wildlife you are ever likely to find, such as Kangaroos, Koalas, Echidnas, Platypus and Steve Erwin. When it comes to classic video game consoles Australia's uniqueness continues. I don't believe that there has ever been a console actually invented or manufactured here, but a few companies have taken the initiative to "re-badge" consoles and sell them and the games as their "own". The following are just a few of these consoles.

DICK SMITH WIZZARD



Dick Smith is an Australian millionaire entrepreneur. Back in the 80's he owned a large chain of electronic stores. As a part of this electronic business Dick Smith started importing and putting his own name on a number of components, including the Dick Smith Wizzard. In other countries the Wizzard is known as the Creativision, the Funvision or the Rameses.

The Wizzard looks a lot like a Colecovision. Released in Australia in 1982, it was met with only moderate success. Not many games were released and those that were available seemed to be average rip-offs of popular games such as Space Invaders, Frogger and Pacman. Graphically I would say the

Wizzard is on par with the Intellivision.

What makes the Wizzard stand out from the crowd is the amount of add-ons that were available. Dick Smith released a keyboard, a cassette unit and a 16k memory expansion. Other planned accessories included a printer, a disk drive and even a modem. All these put together upgraded your basic game console to a fully programmable computer.

VZ 200 / 300



Here we have another machine from Dick Smith. This time however it is a home computer rather than a video game console. The VZ 200 was released in 1983. It was a very basic machine with 8k RAM, 9 colours and a very blocky resolution of only 128 x 64. The VZ 300 came out in 1985. This was a much improved upgrade of the VZ 200 and featured a proper keyboard, 16k RAM and increased resolution.

The initial attraction of the VZ 200 was its low price. It retailed for only \$199. I can remember it later being offered at only \$99 for a limited time. This was much cheaper than anything else on the market. At the time the Vic 20 was priced at \$299 and an Atari 2600 was about \$250.

At the risk of offending any fans of the VZ 200 or 300, this would have to be the worst of any classic system I have ever seen. A number of games were released on cassette. Unfortunately I wouldn't say any of them are very playable at all. Collectors of classic computers would find the VZ 200 / 300 desirable due to their rarity, but gamers would find very little of interest.

The VZ200 / 300 was released in Europe as the Laser 210 / 310 and in the US as the Texet TX8000 .

JOHN SANDS SC3000



Basically what you have here is a renamed SEGA SC3000 released in Australia by the greeting card company John Sands. The SC3000 had some success early on, but like many other computer systems, it was soundly beaten into submission by the mighty Commodore 64.

The SC3000 had 16k RAM, 16 colour graphics and a screen resolution of 256 x 192. Each of the 16 colours also had 16 intensities, giving a possible 256 colour palette. This all meant the SC3000 could produce some impressive graphics, almost

on par with the C64.

Being a SEGA machine, some very good games were released for the SC3000. Games were released on either cassette or cartridge. Many very good arcade conversions, particularly of SEGA games, were released. Some of these include Hang On, Zaxxon, Wonderboy, Galaga, Monaco GP, Elevator Action, Bomb Jack and HERO.

As far as I can tell, the SC3000 was only released in Japan, Australia and New Zealand, meaning this is a very rare machine. SEGA collectors may have to pay good money to add this one to their collections, so check out ebay.com.au and keep your fingers crossed.

PHILLIPS G7000 VIDEOPAC

American gamers would know this machine as the Odyssey2. Phillips was the parent company of Magnavox. When the Odyssey 2 was starting to sell well in the US, Phillips started to look at where else the console would sell. So Australia and Europe were introduced to the G7000 Videopac.

This is one console I do not own, therefore my knowledge is very limited. I haven't even been able to find out a lot from the internet, particularly information how the G7000 Videopac may differ to the Odyssey 2. So if there are any collectors out there with more information about the Phillips G7000 Videopac, then please email me.

NEWSBYTES

•Midway has announced some updated info on their upcoming Arcade Treasures 2 compilation. Most surprising is that they've changed the lineup of the titles to be featured. Two titles, Steel Talons and the first Mortal Kombat, have been dropped from the lineup, and in their places they're offering two obscure titles: Kozmik Kroozer and Wacko. Not exactly a fair trade, but at least they kept the other two MK titles. The disc will also feature a new interface that replaces the clunky Egyptian menu from the first compilation.

Here's the updated lineup:

A.P.B., Arch Rivals, Championship Sprint, Cyberball 2072, Gauntlet 2, Hard Drivin', Kozmik Kroozr', Mortal Kombat 3, Mortal Kombat II, NARC, Pit Fighter, Primal Rage, Rampage World Tour, Spy Hunter 2, STUN Runner, Timber, Total Carnage, Wizard of Wor, Xenophobe, Xybots, and Wacko.

Don't forget that along with the games you also get bonuses like interview videos with the designers, or machine artwork, or a biography of the game itself. The game is currently scheduled to be released October 12 for the XBox, PlayStation 2 and GameCube, and will go for \$20. Be warned, though, it has been rated M for Mature.

Credit: Gamespot (<http://www.gamespot.com/>)

•There is some buzz going around of an Atari Anthology being released in November. Not much is

known about it so far, so stay tuned.

- More classic NES action is coming to the Game Boy Advance. Nintendo has announced four new titles to the NES Classics Series: *Dr. Mario*, *Metroid*, *Zelda II: The Adventure of Link* and *Castlevania*. The games are scheduled to be released on October 25th for \$19.99 each.

Credit: Game Informer Online (<http://www.gameinformer.com/>)

- There's another classgaming show on the horizon: the North Carolina Atari and Classic Game Convention. It is scheduled to take place at the Glitter Gallery and Father & Son Antiques in Raleigh, NC, and will run from the first Friday through Sunday of October. It looks like there's a lot to do there, including a variety of classic video game systems setup for unlimited play, live music, special guests, door prizes, tournaments, and trading. Of course there will be vendors selling their wares. For more information, visit their website at <http://www.redlinelabs.com/ncacgc/>.

Credit: Atari Age (<http://www.atariage.com/>)

- All you Space Invaders fans get ready to blast those aliens again. Radica is producing a special plug-and-play controller called Arcade Legends: Space Invaders. Just like the Jakks TV Games series, this self-contained game system has five games on the arcade-style controller, one of them being *Space Invaders*. You simply plug it into the TV to play, and the joystick can be used by left or right-handed people. Four other Taito classics are included: *Lunar Rescue*, *Qix*, *Phoenix*, and *Colony 7*. The unit is scheduled to be released this fall for \$24.99.

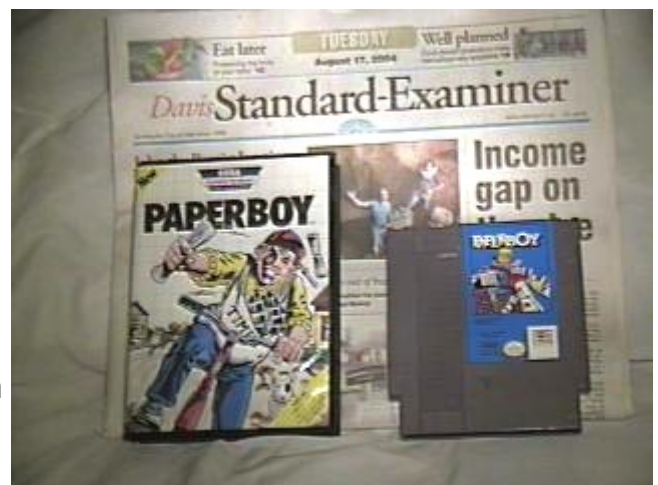
For more information, visit the Radica Games website at (<http://www.radicagames.com/>)

8-bit Face-Off

by Adam King

We once again visit the ongoing debate between the Nintendo and Sega systems. School is just about starting for all the young'uns out there, so I'd thought I'd revisit an old tradition: the paperboy. Not too long ago kids made their income by delivering newspapers to their neighbors. In late 1984 Atari Games decided to make an arcade title based on that very profession. It was a slightly unusual cabinet because you controlled the action with a set of handlebars, since you're riding a bike in the game. The title was a moderate success and spawned several different ports on several game systems, and even had an updated edition released on the Nintendo 64. Of course this column is talking about the Nintendo and Sega versions, both of which were released in the US.

In *Paperboy*, you assume the role of...well, a paperboy. Your job is to deliver papers to the subscribers along your route each day from Monday to Sunday. Before you begin each level you get a map showing you the customers and non-customers. You have to throw papers at the subscriber's houses (usually blue, white and yellow), either at their door or in their mailboxes. You get points for every successful delivery, and a little more if you chuck the paper into their mailboxes. Sounds simple, right? Thing is this isn't your ordinary neighborhood. There are obstacles out to keep you from completing your rounds. These range from skateboarders, cars, dogs, angry old women brandishing rolling pins, all the way up to tornados and even the Grim Reaper! Also look out for non-subscriber houses, which are either red (NES) or black (Sega). You can do some destruction to the houses by breaking windows and knocking over items with your papers for points. However you have a limited supply of papers, so be sure to pick up extra bundles you find along the way, or you'll run out. You lose a life every time you collide with an



obstacle. If you make it to the end of the street, you get to go through an obstacle course for bonus points. After each day, you revisit the map to see your daily result. If a customer does not receive a paper, or if you vandalized their house by accident, they may cancel their subscription. On the other hand, if you do a perfect job, you just might get a new subscriber. The game continues until you make it to Sunday, you lose all your lives, or if all your subscribers become non-subscribers.

Paperboy NES (1988 Mindscape)

The old gray box gets a good translation here. The graphics aren't the best. Many of the sprites and houses are lacking detail, but they do their job. The sounds fare somewhat better. This game has a slightly-muted but still good rendition of the arcade theme, and the sound effects are great as well, with plenty of crashing sounds. The controls work really well so you shouldn't have too much trouble, though it often takes practice to avoid some of the obstacles and snag extra papers. This game pak is the easier of the two version. The game moves along slowly, and you can easily throw a paper at whatever target you're aiming for. That's not to say this game is a pushover; you'll still get a good challenge. It may not have the best graphics, but the gameplay is there, and that's what counts.

Paperboy SMS (1990 Sega/US Gold)

Sega's version has some advantages over the NES port, but also has some major minuses as well. The graphics are excellent; this game almost looks exactly like the arcade port, with lots of detail and is tons more colorful. You even get the word balloons that appear when you run into something. However this game takes a bit hit in the audio and gameplay departments. A bad rendition of the theme plays almost non-stop, and the bonus stage theme isn't any better. The gameplay is the weakest point. The controls work okay but they seemed squirrely at times (please note I used a Genesis control pad to play this). This pak is also inconsistent when it comes to what you can hit. You can hit mailboxes and doormats easy, but you have to lead the paper when trying to nail windows and certain moving obstacles. Other items such as trash cans and break-dancers, which can be nailed in the arcade and NES versions, can't be hit at all, but they can hit you back. This version is overall more difficult, and can be a frustrating ride down the neighborhood.

Analysis

Suffice it to say I just enjoyed the NES version more. Sega had the arcade graphics down pat, but it's gameplay that counts, and the NES reigns supreme once again.

Winner: NES

Video Game Therapy - The Pauline Sessions

by Tom Zjaba

Today we will sit in on a session between Dr. I.M. Sane and Pauline, former girlfriend of Mario. Let us listen in.

Dr. Sane - Tell me about your past relationship with Mario.

Pauline - We were dating and everything was going great. Then I got kidnapped by a giant ape named Donkey Kong. Mario saved me and then he was thrust into the spotlight and suddenly I never heard from him anymore. He did not return my calls or anything. Then before I knew it, I see he him dating some chick named Princess Peach. Can you believe that I got dumped for some woman named Princess Peach? Why kind of stupid name is that?

Dr. Sane - Why do you think that Mario broke up with you? Was there an incident that happened? Maybe an argument or something?

Pauline - Nothing that I can think of. He was all lovey dovey when he saved me from that stinking ape, but soon after that he became famous and in came Donkey Kong Junior and out with Pauline. I

tried and tried to contact Mario, but his people never gave him my messages. Then that Princess Peach came around and I was yesterday's news. I doubt she really is a princess, has anyone checked her credentials. I think she is a big fraud, that is what I think.

Dr. Sane - You are very hostile, have you considered anger management?

Pauline - Have you ever been kidnapped by a giant, smelly gorilla? Were you ever dumped by one of the most popular people in the world? I don't think so. I have a right to be angry, got it?

Dr. Sane- I see that this is going to take longer than I first thought. We will need to up the sessions from once a week to twice a week.

Pauline - Yeah and just send my bill to that no good plumber and let him pay it. If I ever get my hands on that.....

Tom Zjaba (Who hopes to contribute an article a month for RTM. Glad to see that Adam and Alan are doing a great job of keeping the legacy alive as well as create their own vision.)

Retrogaming Commercial Vault

by Adam King

Once again we revisit the magical place known as Commercial Land. This month we actually have a pair of ads from a company that's not named Atari, Activision, or Mattel. I know I rarely spotlight other companies, but that's due to a) not having the ads from other companies, and b) the "Big 3" just advertised more. Recently the fine folks at Digital Press unearthed a quartet of very rarely-seen ads from CBS Electronics and posted them at their website. I'm going to talk about two of them here.

Anyway if you remember CBS Electronics was one of the larger third-party companies during the 2600's run. They published several coin-op translations, including good versions of Wizard of Wor and Solar Fox, as well as other original titles. They also published games for the Atari 5200 and the 8-bit line. Here we find two ads that showed off Solar Fox and Tunnel Runner. This isn't exactly Osacr-winning material here, but let's face it: we've seen worse.

Don't forget you can download both these ads at the Digital Press website at <http://www.digitpress.com/>.

Solar Fox

Our first ad is definetly an 80s spot. Here we have our hero, Solar Fox, driving a spaceship into a field of colored squares, and he's accompanied by a blonde stereotype who does nothing but panic and cheer on her man. We also get some boppy music and animated graphics demonstrating the game. Yep, it's an 80s ad alright.

PICTURES:



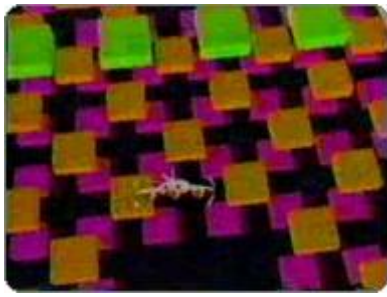
"The trouble must be in that multicolored tower"



Does she do anything besides freak out and use Valley slang?



"You really need to lay off the caffeine, miss."



Further into the field of squares.



"Whatever I did to deserve this,
I'M SORRY!"

You have to feel sorry for that guy, who's only friend is a Madonna-wannabe.

Tunnel Runner

In this spot we find a game player who somehow became trapped in the Tunnel Runner game on his TV. He basically tries to find his way out, dodging the monsters while searching for the exit. Just when he thinks he finds it, he goes through only to appear in the next level.

PLAYER: "They think I'm trapped, but I'll escape."

NARRATOR: "Tunner Runner. The new vide game where you don't look down on the maze, you're in it."

PLAYER: "Monster! He's smart, I gotta outsmart him! Ooh! He's fast, I gotta be faster!"

NARRATOR: "Tunner Runner with RAM-PLUS to megacharge your VCS for three times the excitement!"

PLAYER: "Right? Left? Better check the map. It's the EXIT...to another maze!"

NARRATOR: "Tunner Runner, from CBS Electronics, where the excitement never ends."

PLAYER: "I'm not trapped. I'm not trapped!"

PICTURES:



"I know I should be on the other
side of the screen."



"EEEEK! An evil Pac-Man!"



"Must run blindly through the
maze."



"I can't navigate without the YOU
ARE HERE arrow."



"Surely this is the exit from this
crazy game."



"I may still be stuck here, but I'm
not trapped!"

Dude, face it: you're trapped. Just be a man and accept it.

Don't forget you can find a collection of Nintendo ads at my website, NES Times (come.to/nestimes)

Also I'm still selling copies of the Retrogaming Commercial Vault CD-ROM, but for a limited time. If you are still interested in obtaining a copy, e-mail me at Hal_3000@rocketmail.com for all the details. Hurry because soon I am going to stop selling them.

UPCOMING CLASSIC GAMING SHOWS

This is a listing of upcoming shows and their web address where you can find more information, including times, locations, and admission.

•East Coast Gaming Expo September 11, 2004 - Wyomissing, PA Website: http://www.ecgx.com/	•Oklahoma Gaming Exhibition September 18, 2004 - Tulsa, OK Website: http://www.okge.com/
•MAGFest M3 October 1-3, 2004 - Williamsburg, VA Website: http://www.magfest.org/	•North Carolina Atari and Classic Game Convention October 1-3, 2004 - Raleigh, NC Website: http://www.redlinelabs.com/ncacgc/
•Classic Computing and Gaming Show October 23, 2004 - Mentor, OH Website: http://www.ccagshow.com/	•Vintage Computer Festival November 6-7, 2004 - Mountain View, CA Website: http://www.vintage.org/

Atari Paddle TV Games

by Adam King

One of the fun things about the old Atari VCS were the paddle games. I bet most of you have fond memories of playing Warlords and Circus Atari. When Jakks Pacific released their Atari 10-in-1 joystick earlier this year, many were disappointed that Pong, Circus Atari, and Breakout were included, despite using the paddle originally. Now Jakks has more than made up for it. They recently released the Atari Paddle TV Games system, and it is definlety a must-buy.

Like the others in the series, the Paddle TV games is a self-contained game system. You simply pop in two AA batteries and plug into the A/V ports of your TV to use. The first thing you'll notice is the system looks almost exactly like an Atari paddle, except that it's larger to accomodate the system. It'll feel different but you'll get used to it. Jakks releases a 1 player and 2 player version, which has a second paddle connected to it. Thirteen games are included on this paddle, 11 of which are form the 2600: Breakout, Canyon Bomber, Casino, Circus Atari, Demons to Diamonds, Night Driver, Steeplechase, Street Racer, Super Breakout, Video Olympics, and Warlords. You get the arcade version of Warlords and Pong to round out the package. During each game the MENU button allows you the choose the options found in the 2600 versions. You have to choose which options you want with the paddle, but it's no trouble, and you can change games when you feel like it. Be aware that in the 1-klayer paddle, the 2-player options have been removed.

The emulation of each of the titles is almost flawless; every game plays just like the original, with much of the fun intact. The graphics are simply spot on. Some of the sound effects seem a little off, but not too much. The interface is easy to use and you can set your options without much hassle. The only real negative to this package is one game they could have included: Activision's Kaboom, which gets included in all the emulation packages yet they can't get the paddle controls right. Keep in mind that Jakks also released an Activision 10-in-1, so they probably could have worked out a deal where they can included Kaboom in this package. That way we can finally play that game with a paddle again. Oh well. That minor quibble aside, the Atari Paddle Games system is an excellent package for all classic gaming enthusiasts. Each game still holds that additive gameplay from many moons ago,

and this will wash away the bad taste of the Atari 10-in-1. If you want to play Breakout and Warlords without hunting down a 2600, this is a fine choice you can't pass up.

The 1-player version retails for \$19.99-\$24.99, with the 2-player version going for \$25-\$30. The 2-player version is more recommended, so you can enjoy the head-to-head gameplay of Warlords and Demons to Diamonds with a friend, like you should.

The Vic 20 - Jeff Minter

by [Tonks](#)

To most gamers today, Jeff Minter is known as the guy who programmed Tempest 2000 or who is working on that rather weird sounding Unity. But to those whose earliest gaming memories go back to the early 1980's, Jeff Minter is regarded as the most respected and most well known Vic 20 programmer. His games are among the most playable and they certainly pushed the humble Vic 20 further than many thought possible.

The Vic 20 was the first proper computer Jeff Minter owned. He would set up his Vic on his parent's TV and literally program his first games laying on his parent's lounge room floor. Jeff quickly learned to program simple games, but found the built in basic too restrictive. So Jeff taught himself machine code, and the rest so they say is history.

Jeff's first commercial game was "Andes Attack". In Jeff's own words, "Andes Attack was a pretty poor and buggy game, but it was written in machine code and not BASIC like 99 percent of the crap on the market at that time." Andes Attack caught the eye of HES, and thus started a partnership that carried on successfully for a number of years. Jeff's games were sold in two ways. Llamasoft distributed games on tape or disk while HES distributed games on cartridge.

Jeff's big break came with "Gridrunner". At one point it was in the top 10 best seller list for both the Vic 20 and the Commodore 64 at the very same time. Gridrunner, is about alien Droids in the year 2190 who are stealing electricity from Earth's orbiting power station, the "Grid. " To stop them, a combat ship patrols the Grid. In the game, the Grid is a large lattice on the screen, and Earth's combat ship moves along the lower portion, firing on segmented Droids, dodging the X/Y Zappers, and eliminating mutating yellow pods which sometimes lodge in the lattice. Gridrunner has been described as Centipede on steroids.

And that has always been Jeff Minter's strong point, to take an established game and "super-charge" it with some of the most frantic and demanding gameplay you will ever find. Jeff's main influences and favourite games probably come as no surprise. Eugene Jarvis, the creator of the classics Defender and Robotron, is one of Jeff's biggest heroes. Star Wars Arcade and Tempest are two of his other favourite games.

The Vic 20 has a real special place in Jeff Minter's heart. He's sees it as the machine that helped launch Llamasoft, and effectively his career as a programmer. He still owns his first Vic 20 and claims he will never throw it out.

Jeff says that the biggest challenge he had to face with the Vic 20 was "NO MEMORY! The only way around that was just to come up with clever designs and code 'em tight." But that discipline learnt long ago on the Vic 20 has helped Jeff remain a tight and efficient programmer. In some recent interviews Jeff admitted to writing a version of Gridrunner on the PC in less than 5k, just to see if he could still do it.

Jeff Minter is simply a legend when it comes to the Vic 20, and his legend certainly continued with the Commodore 64, the Atari ST and even later on the Jaguar. Thanks to his generosity we can continue to enjoy Jeff's classic games on emulation. He has often said in interviews that he is happy for people

to have and distribute copies of his old games. "So as far as I am concerned, as long as they are freely distributed and not sold for profit, all old Llamasoft game images for use on emulators can be freely uploaded on any site anywhere, with my full permission. I hate it when you go to download an emu and there are no games because everyone is so scared of getting busted by some selfish old dinosaur."

The following are the games written by Jeff Minter for the Vic 20.

Andes Attack

Aggressor

Metagalactic Llamas Battle at the Edge of Time

Gridrunner

Abductor

Traxx

Matrix

Laser Zone

Hell Gate

Deflex

The Many Faces Of The CoCo (Part III - Cheating the Competition)

by [Mark Sabbatini](#)

Now that the TRS-80 Color Computer has exhausted itself running a very limited "Many Faces Of" race pitting its licensed titles against the competition, it's time for the equivalent of a steroid-enhancing boost.

Limited sales, licensing issues and other factors are responsible for the scarcity of official titles, but plenty of programmers wrote unofficial versions that generally rank among the best CoCo programs available. The same happened for many other machines, of course, so treat this like you would a Casino Night fund raiser at the local elementary school: a strictly for fun substitute for the real thing. None of the results officially count.

To keep things relatively fair, a CoCo title isn't considered unless it tries to imitate virtually every aspect of the arcade original. There are dozens of Pac-Man variations, for example, but all wander too far from the real thing in terms of maze design, game rules and other factors. Minor differences, such as being able to kill the Hulk 'bots in the unofficial CoCo version of Robotron, are allowed as part of the limitations and quirks that inevitably make it into all home conversions.

The "official" games are listed first, followed in parenthesis by the actual CoCo title. Descriptions and grades are largely from my CoCo Game Reviews site (cocoreviews.net), along with a rough guess about how they would fare in the "Many Faces Of" competition (in general I've played most of these titles on at least a few other platforms).

For those who find limited appeal in playing yet another Asteroids or Centipede clone, especially if it's less than gold medal quality, take heart: Next I'll be taking a look at the best of the unique titles for the CoCo, most of which are well worth any retro gamer's time (after that maybe I'll do some of the worst, as a warning for those browsing through all the titles available, plus a fun way to come up with new ways to say "awful" as many times as possible).

Qbert (Cubix)

This is one of better conversions for the CoCo, but still falls well short of feeling like the real thing. But a number of small touches help it score well related to other titles on the machine.

The graphics (7), while obviously not as good as the real thing, are still cute. Sound (6) is sparse, but still a plus for a change. Gameplay (8) moves along nicely. And there's other little things like needing

to press the fire button after losing a life (allowing for pauses if desired) to resume the game. Overall control (8) is fine, nothing exceptional. Same for addictiveness (8).

There are a few quibbles: The color scheme is random rather than constant, leading to some playfields downright uglier and hard to figure out. The snake seems to need to be only one square away from Qbert when he jumps on a disc (in the arcade it's two), and I died a number of times because of this. The graphics are a bit jumpy, but nothing like some primitive versions like the Atari 2600. At the same time I used to play this on the Colecovision and that's a far superior version, as are the conversions for a lot of other consoles and computers.

CoCo grade - **B**; "Many Faces Of" rating: **Bronze Medal (37)**. I find it incredible the Atari 2600 version beat out the Atari 8-bit and Vic 20 versions, but that being the case the CoCo unquestionably trounces it. It probably ranks halfway between the 2600 and Colecovision overall (and in my opinion the gap should be much wider than six points), so I've split the difference in the rating.

Joust (Buzzard Bait)

There are two very good "Joust" games for the Color Computer ("Lancer" is the other), but this one looks better, plays faster and the riders are easier to control.

All of the gameplay (8) elements from the arcade game are there and the graphics (7) looks as close to the arcade version as a CoCo is going to get. Theme waves appear and platforms disappear in the same order they do in the arcade, and the behavior of the enemies is pretty close to spot-on (although you can't "hunt" the pterodactyl for hours like you can at the arcade). The main drawback is having things slow down once a bunch of enemies are on the screen.

The sound (5) is the usual minimalist Color Computer stuff, but at least it isn't annoying. Controls are fine (9), but the various small quirks knock the addictiveness (7) down just a bit.

CoCo grade - **A-**; "Many Faces Of" rating: **Have Not (36)**. It pains me to keep the CoCo out of medal contention, but it's a case where a good title here is a mediocre effort on the competition. The lousy sound and slowdowns in gameplay when things get busy offset a number of other advantages the CoCo has on the competition.

Tapper (Brewmaster)

I always considered the arcade game Tapper to be the world's greatest cousin of Kaboom, with serving all those beers a lot more fun than defeating the Mad Bombers of the world. This unofficial conversion is a great one, capturing the feel and flavor of the arcade game - probably not overwhelmingly tough, since it really is a very simple concept.

You're keeping four rows of customers in suds, who gradually progress toward your end of the bar unless you toss them glasses to keep them satiated. A lot of them will then slide the mugs back to you, which you need to catch. If you waste a beer, miss a glass or allow customers to reach the end of the bar, well, it's later days, mate.

As noted, it's the simplicity of the original that allows this to shine. Nothing ever moves so fast that the CoCo can't duplicate it from a gameplay perspective - yet the gamepace gets awfully frenetic as the customers increase and more glasses start flying in both directions. All the original game's features are here, including the bonus rounds (on second thought I take that back - I don't remember seeing the Budweiser dancing girls do their dance in the background on this one. There's a real loss). Animation is pretty minimal in the real thing, so nothing has to be pushed in the home version. And the graphics really are impressive in sort of an abstract/impressionist sort of way; rather than seeking pixel-perfect perfection, the characters are captured in ways where all are distinctively interesting and fun, as long as you don't scrutinize them up close.

CoCo grade - **B+**; "Many Faces Of" rating: **Bronze Medal (38 - tie with Atari 8-bit)**. Shares a lot of

the Atari qualities - good strengths, but serious weaknesses. The fact the Atari version's graphics are so lackluster is what allows the CoCo to contend here, as what passes for good on a "Trash-80" is about equal to mediocre on an Atari. The CoCo's gameplay is better, but Atari gets the edge on sound.

Burgertime (Lunchtime)

An OK conversion of the arcade hit Burgertime, that is just a few missing touches away from being a first-rate conversion. Whoever programmed this for Tom Mix did such a nice job with the elements that are included that it's a shame they didn't finish the job, probably because they couldn't figure out how to squeeze everything into the CoCo's limited memory.

You guide your chef through various screens, assembling the burgers on the platforms by running over them and avoiding hot dogs or dousing them with pepper to disable them. Experienced players will note I mention only hot dogs - this is not an oversight, as all the other enemies from the game (eggs, pickles) are missing. This is one of the game's big oversights, as is the fact that there's only three hot dogs throughout the game. It means the game feels rather faithful to the original at first, but less so as you progress. A shame, because the first impression is really rather good. The graphics are as good as the CoCo will allow for this sort of title, the mazes are diverse and progress in difficulty nicely and all the gameplay elements included - enemy movement, control, etc. - feel spot-on. I'd have been cool paying this as a teen and played it enough to get my money's worth, but would always feel just slightly cheated since I could play better versions on other machines I had access to at the time (at school, but don't tell the gurus in charge there that).

CoCo grade - **B-**; "Many Faces Of" rating: **Have Not (37)**. Better than the Atari 2600 (34), but nowhere near where the contenders rank.

Robotron 2084 (Robotack)

First off, Robotron 2084 is among my top three favorite coin-op games of all time, and easily might be dubbed my absolute favorite if you catch me on the right day. When I saw the ads for this unlicensed conversion I thought to myself "there is absolutely no frickin' WAY this game could be as cool as it looks." The graphics looked as close to the real thing as I could have imagined possible, two joysticks were required for control (a necessity for anyone wanting to capture the flavor of the original, something overlooked by a lot of official versions) and it even got a great review in Rainbow. So the question, years later, is why in the hell I never got around to spending some of my hard-earned allowance on it? The \$30 price and thought of having to wait for it be mailed to me always put me off, even though I'd end up spending that much for some inferior bit of junk when it showed up at Radio Shack. Instead, I got my first chance to try to out when I first discovered the illegal magic of emulation. And what would I have thought had I taken the plunge? Probably that this is a damned impressive CoCo game - yet, it doesn't quite succeed in capturing some of the essential details. Still, Intracolor deserves a lot of credit for getting this much game into 16K of memory.

First off, the graphics are indeed as close to the arcade as anyone has a right to expect from a CoCo. Second, things move along at their proper high rate of speed, an absolutely astonishing accomplishment on a CoCo, especially considering a plenty of official versions on other platforms really dragged down when the action got fierce. Third, the sound, while not the incredibly addictive stuff of Williams' coin-op version, works just fine. If it weren't trying to imitate Robotron, there isn't much I'd be able to nitpick about it.

However, the concessions it was forced to make knock the grade down a few notches because they really do affect rather key elements of the game. First, everything on the screen is fair game, meaning those Indestructible Hulks aren't - they're as easy to kill with one shot as the grunts. The waves don't appear like they do in the arcade - the brains are there, but not every fifth wave and there's no mass of humanity on the waves they do appear. The spheres that spew out tons of nasty little guys (who in turn spew out tons of guided "x" missiles at you) on every wave after the first one don't exist here. A few other similar omissions - but I also have no doubt I'd have gotten my money's worth had I

splurged as a youth. But nothing is every going to replace the real thing - at least until I get one of those monstrously expensive arcade-type controllers for my MAME version.

CoCo grade - **B+**; "Many Faces Of" rating: **Have Not (37)**. Sure it's a good CoCo title, but it gets stomped by a strong field as Atari did a great job with pretty much all of its versions.

Popeye (Sailor Man)

After coming out with the first 32K CoCo game, Tom Mix Software decided it might as well be the first with a 64K-only title. In a way this should have been a no-brainer: One of the worst-kept secrets in CoCo history was most of their 32K machines actually had 64K of memory because one set of those was cheaper than two sets of 16K chips. Go figure the geniuses who decided to only tell consumers they were getting half of what was really inside the box.

Anyhow, this is the CoCo version of Popeye, the three-level platformer starring the hero of the spinach-touting cartoon series. Overall, it's pretty simple to evaluate: If you like the arcade version (and not everyone did), you'll like this - it's essentially as close to a carbon clone as you'll see on a CoCo, plus you can customize the difficulty level and other settings, so decent players aren't wasting their time on the easier levels.

This game isn't the radical leap forward Donkey King was when it made its 32K debut (the Donkey Kong clone is considered one of the best CoCo games ever), but Sailor Man gets nearly the same score because it's a high-quality game with no flaws worth noting.

CoCo grade - **A-**; "Many Faces Of" rating: **Gold Medal (40 - tie with Coleco, C64 and TI 99/4A)**. I never thought the CoCo could place this high on any title, but it seems Parker Brothers allowed flaws to sneak into just about every version it did. The CoCo might lack just a bit in sound and graphics here, but the overall gameplay and large number of customizable options make up the difference.

Omega Race (Space Race)

This conversion of Omega Race was one of my favorite early games. The concept is simple enough the CoCo can handle it decently and it's an original enough game to sustain your interest when you're tired of top-down shooters or Pac-Man feasts.

You guide a spaceship using Asteroids-style controls around a track in outer space (don't know why it's there), seeking out and destroying a fleet of enemy pods making their way slowly around it. Ships out to get you emerge one at a time from the pods as you kill them, with the dogfights getting pretty interesting since everything bounces off the walls, borders, etc. Take too long and some berserker-type craft comes after you. And you pretty much have to keep moving at a good clip, making collisions with all the bad guys a pretty consistent threat.

Difficulty progresses nicely, with more needed for kills in later waves and - this is where it gets really wild - the track disappearing if you really get far along. My games always ended shortly thereafter, so I don't know what surprises may exist beyond.

CoCo grade - **B**; "Many Faces Of " rating: **Silver Medal (37)**. I feel bad bumping the rather good Vic 20 into third place, but I'm also surprised at the lack of quality competition. The CoCo version is horrible at sound, but beats the Vic in every other aspect.

Pengo (Pengon)

OK, but certainly not great, conversion of Pengo, one of my favorite coin-op games of all time (maybe it's because of my interest in the Antarctic and all other things cold and polar). This title is a lot more faithful to the original than some other versions (Tom Mix's early title Warehouse Mutants was particularly awful), but there's a long way to go before this will capture the feel and charm of the real thing.

You get five selectable skill levels, which is great, but everything else really doesn't work all that well. The enemies appear all at once, often nearly on top of you, causing that inexcusable situation where the player dies through no fault of their own. The playfield resets itself randomly after you die, robbing you of the key strategic element of knowing where your blocks are and setting things up for the kill (or the diamond blocks for the "freeze everything" bonus). The playfield is far too crowded with blocks of ice, and the graphics and animation are rather choppy and something below top-notch. It's playable, but I'd be disappointed had I paid money for it as a youth.

CoCo grade - **B-** (I may need to lower this). "Many Faces Of" rating: **Have not**. The Atari 2600 version is crude and ugly, but it keeps a solid hold on its bronze medal because it's actually fun to play and feels a lot more like the real thing.

Berserk (Berserk)

Despite keeping the same name, this isn't a licensed title. Mark Data Products had one huge advantage when programming and releasing this 1981 conversion - it's got to be one of the simplest and easiest-to-duplicate games out there. On sheer excitement and gameplay value I might drop it a bit, but truth is I always liked the original and whoever programmed this deserves credit for keeping it virtually identical to the original while some other companies were churning out awful versions by trying to be too clever (horrible voice synthesis) and sacrificing playability (poor mazes, objects being the wrong size, etc.).

Concept: Shoot robots in a maze or lure them to collide with each other (surprisingly easy because they're incredibly stupid, part of the coin-op game's charm) and get out before Evil Otto shows up and fries you to a crisp. The first maze is largely a gimmie since the 'bots don't shoot, but afterward they shoot increasingly often and quick. It seems Evil Otto shows up kind of quick here, but he's also just a bit slower in pursuit, so this evens out. All in all I'd have had plenty of fun with this if I'd bought it as a kid, but I'm hoping it went more in the \$20 range instead of carrying a \$30 premium price tag - it wouldn't be worth that much.

CoCo grade - **B**; "Many Faces Of" rating: **Have Not (39)**. They're very similar, but I'm scoring this one point below the third place Atari 2600 version. The CoCo is somewhat superior in graphics, but the Atari just feels more like the real thing - and it deserves credit for being such a great version on a limited platform.

Pitfall (Trapfall)

A competent unofficial conversion of Pitfall, David Crane's landmark jungle exploration game for the Atari 2600 that essentially gave birth to modern platform games like the Super Mario World and Sonic Adventure series. This CoCo version doesn't look or play as well as the Atari version, which is both a bad reflection on the conversion as well as a tribute to the Atari version. As it turns out, nobody every really came out with a version on any platform that topped the original cart, although most home versions on more advanced machines at least managed to equal it. Even the so-called "modern conversions" on the Playstation and other high-tech platforms, featuring 3-D environments and all the latest flashy gimmicks, are generally regarded as lousy games that aren't anywhere near as fun as the original.

Does anyone not know about Pitfall Harry and his mission by now? Run, jump, climb and swing on vines to go from screen to screen, avoiding wildlife and swamps, and collecting treasure along the way. Each screen is split horizontally between a jungle level with the vines, swamps, treasures and most creatures on top, and an underground level with hard-to-jump scorpions getting in your way. You get 20 minutes or three lives, whichever comes first. Fun all by itself, but knowledgeable gamers soon discovered the more subtle, yet simple things that made for an oh-so-great game: It had an astounding 255 screens and the only way to get a perfect score (or least find all the treasures) was to figure out a number of shortcuts that existed by taking the underground route instead of the high road, so to speak.

I can't say if the CoCo version is a screen-for-screen port, but all the basic elements of the game appear to be there. The problem is it all feels like a second-rate version - the graphics aren't as nice, the gameplay isn't as smooth, the sounds aren't as good, etc. It's not a bad game - that's tough to do when the original is so cool - but I can't see Pitfall fans spending much time with this unless they utterly have to play a few rounds and this is the only version available anywhere nearby.

CoCo grade: **C+**. "Many Faces Of" rating: **Have Not**. Doesn't even come close to the ranked competition and, frankly, this is one time when the Atari 2600 should hold the gold for all time anyhow.

You can find more CoCo reviews at <http://www.icepeople.net/coco/index.html>.

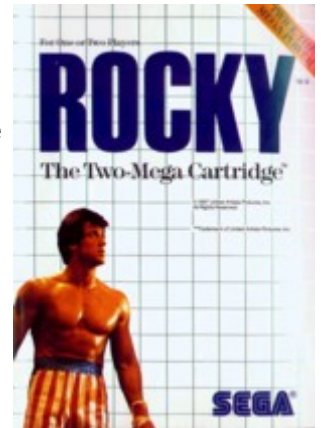
The Challenge Will Always Be There

by [Youltar](#)

First I must apologize for missing last month. Real Life has once again prevailed in determining that we don't always get to do the things we want to. J On to this month's review. I have chosen to review **Rocky**, now after reading the review you may ask yourself why I would review a game and give it such poor ratings, well the answer is simple. I randomly select a game from my collection and play it till I can't see straight, then write a review for it. Unfortunately not all SMS games are good.

Graphics:

The graphics showed a lot of promise here. The opening training round with the punching bag was cool. The rendering of Rocky looked, well like Rocky. After the training round it got ugly. The first fight with Apollo Creed was horrible. Aside from the boxing gloves on there hands you'd never know they were suppose to box by looking at them. The crowds are the standard multi-colored specs in the background.



Sound:

The sound in this game is not very good at all. As matter of fact the only sound I recognized was ringing of the bell at end of round.

Game play:

Well as one could expect after the atrocious display of graphics and use of sound in this game. The game play is none better. The training rounds are real nice and a great break from the ugly fights that go on. But that's it. There are only 3 fighters to fight; Apollo Creed, Clubber Lang, and Draco. They each get a little tougher as you move on to the next one. In order to defeat Draco you need to qualify very high in your training match's. Once you have qualified high enough, every 3rd punch you throw is a big one. It is VERY hard to qualify this high. The only way I could do it, was with a Rapid Fire Unit. Then after you have achieved the unachievable you get to see the ending to the game. Which as you can imagine is almost as good as the opening title screen. For posterity sake I will not show you the ending and let you see it for yourself.

Overall:

This game is terrible and is also a prime reason to send us SMS fans back in to the Nintendo loving closet we came from. If Sega would have allowed more games like this to exist, the SMS would have died much quicker than it already did.

1 out of 5 Stars

Game Over

It's time to close out another issue of the Times. Thanks everyone for your continuing support of this

newsletter, and for helping up keep the gaming goodness going. Next month is October, which means it's Halloween time, and you can bet we'll have some spooky features in the next ish. Until next time. always aim for the goalposts.

- [Adam King](#), Chief Editor

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