

# Retrogaming Times Monthly

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### *Press Fire to Start*

*by Adam King*

It's once again time for another helping of Retrogaming goodness, courtesy of Retrogaming Times Monthly. This month we have everything from gorillas to baseball to jumpmen and so much more.

However once again I had to preempt my columns due to having very little time this past month. But now my life is starting to get back to normal, so hopefully the Commercial Vault and others will be back next month. Okay guys, you can take it from here.

### *The Many Faces of . . . Donkey Kong Jr.*

*by Alan Hewston*

In following up from last month, here's the sequel, the many faces of Donkey Kong Jr. Shigeru follows up his blockbuster hit with a pretty decent sequel, probably aimed towards a younger audience as Junior gives the young gamer a chance to show that they can be a hero too. Had this game been a flop at the arcade, who knows if Mario and DK would be household names today, or even if Nintendo of America would have ever come to be. Here in chapter 2, Mario is now given his name, we add the character of DK's son, Junior, but gone (forever) is the fair damsel, Pauline. In the game intro there appear to be two Mario's pulling up Donkey Kong's cage (My son like's the theory that one of them is actually Luigi). Unfortunately, none of the classic era home ports has the arcade intro. This is the only time that Mario is considered the antagonist, or dare I say the villain. So, Junior has to rescue his dad, Donkey Kong, from a locked cage. Just as in Donkey Kong, there are 4 screens to conquer, and once again they get harder and more difficult as the levels increase. Just like before, you get no partial credit and if you fail to complete a screen, you start over fresh each time. The arcade sequence of screens is the same every level, "Vines", "Jumpboard", "Hideout" & then "Chains". At the arcade, after completing the Jungle screens ("Vines" & "Jumpboard"), there is a brief intermission where Junior gets left behind while Mario flies away in a helicopter - with Kong & his cage in tow. The screen text tells us to "Keep going to Mario's Hideout". We then reach "Mario's Hideout" and in the next screen get our chance to free Papa in "Chains". After unlocking all the locks and freeing all the "Chains", Kong is released and he and Mario fall down. Junior catches Dad and then they kick Mario off the

screen. Thus the level ends and the next one repeats in the same sequence, only a bit harder, with smarter, faster, more plentiful enemies - up to a point. Inquiring minds want to know . . . Why is this game taking place in the Jungle? Did Kong go back home, Mario followed him, captured him and now Junior is trying to stop papa from a return to captivity?

**Arcade:** 1982 Nintendo (by Shigeru Miyamoto)

Home versions mostly by Coleco.

- Adam Computer - 1983? Coleco
- Atari 2600 -1983 Coleco
- Atari 7800 -1988 by ITDC for Atari
- Atari 8 bit computer - 1983 Atari
- Colecovision - 1983 Coleco
- Colecovision - Super Donkey Kong Jr. - unofficial ADAM conversion avail @ AtariAge.
- Intellivision - 1983 Coleco

**Rumor Mill:** Atari 5200 version planned (probably a port of the Atari 800)

And, worth mentioning, but not covered here.

NES - 1982/1986 by Nintendo with all 4 screens.



Great programming here, but no credits found anywhere.

Many screenshots for Donkey Kong Jr can be found at: <http://www.mobygames.com/game/donkey-kong-jr/screenshots>

Again we're using this shorthand notation: SCV = Super Coleco Vision, XE = Atari 8 but computer

**Home Version Similarities:** Except those in <> all home versions have: a title screen; a choice of 1 or 2 players; a choice of either a starting level (3 on the 7800 & 5 on the XE) or a skill level (8 on the 2600, 4 on the CV, 4 on the INTV, and 4 on the SCV); a pause <2600, CV & SCV>; all 4 arcade screens <2600, CV & INTV>; each new level has even more <2600>, faster and smarter enemies; music (sounding a lot like Frogger and Popeye) or constant sound effects plays throughout each screen <2600> and changes tempo or to a different tune when the timer is nearly expired; the on-screen display of your level or screen number <2600>; your score; the bonus timer counting down; # of lives remaining; and instant bonus points are displayed <2600, CV, INTV & SCV> (these are when you grab fruit, or jump or eliminated enemies); a bonus life is earned at 10K or thereabouts; Junior can walk along the platforms, climb along the vines, shift sides of the vines he is on, and reach out and move laterally from vine to vine (within his reach) but must jump across any gaps and land on a platform or reach a vine but not too far below the height that he jumped from or he will fall and die; when he falls you'll know it when you hear it <CV, SCV & XE>; Junior is multi-colored <2600> and well animated; Kong is shown in his cage; and he too is animated on the XE only; Mario is also multi-colored and moves <2600 & INTV> when he releases each enemy; the enemies, the Snapjaws and Birds are all multi-colored <2600, CV, INTV & SCV> and nicely animated; the Snapjaws come in two colors <2600>; the red Snapjaws never leave the screen and can travel anywhere that Junior can go, but cannot jump or move from vine to vine; the blue Snapjaws, once moving downward on a vine always continue to the end, then fall down and exit the bottom of the screen; contact with any of the enemies means death. On all screens, Junior begins on the bottom left and must take the keys to the top or reach the one key at the top of the screen; these keys each make a sound when secured, and when the screen is complete, a short jingle <2600> will let you know; when the final key has been secured, Kong is then freed along with more animation <2600 & INTV> and then the next level

begins. If all your lives are gone, you'll see that the game is over <2600>, and hear that it is all over as well <2600, CV, SCV & XE>. Now - each screen in detail.

## VINES

Use the vines and platforms while avoiding two different <2600> colored (red and blue) Snapjaws. Climb up and down and move across vines from one to another. On all 4 screens, climbing up or sliding down can be done using one or two vines, but often only one vine can be reached or used. Climbing up is faster using two vines and sliding down is faster on one vine. There are different sounds for climbing or sliding down <2600, 7800, CV & SCV> which depends upon the number of vines used or which method you are using. Walking and jumping each have distinct sounds as well. All screens have multi-colored fruit <2600 & INTV>, which when collected makes a sound as you earn bonus points. The fruit then falls, and if it strikes any enemies it eliminates them in an explosion - yet the fruit always continues downward. If the fruit eliminates an enemy you hear the sweet sound of scoring more bonus points and continue to score an ever increasing number of points for subsequent enemies. [I got 4 enemies once, and maybe 6 is possible]. You can also jump over the enemies, and hear the familiar DK sound effect when doing so, but this is not very easy to do on any screen.

## JUMPCARD <not on the 2600>

Much like the previous screen, Junior must work his way across vines and platforms but must "jump" off a "board" (hence the screen name "Jumpboard"). He may be able to get an extra springy bounce to a higher height. This makes a distinct sound <XE, INTV?>.

If not, he must use all the vines and platforms in motion on the lower half of the screen and then avoid the Birds that fly interference along the vines on the upper half of the screen. The birds are released by Mario and move to the right across the top platform until they reach the opening and then move down through it. As they descend this opening they make a squawk <2600 & INTV> and may release an egg <2600, CV?, & INTV?> downward to hit you, or at least on later levels they will. After this descent, they reach one of 3 or 4 different lanes (heights) in the vines and fly to the left until they disappear off screen - then show up with Mario and repeat. This becomes very difficult when passing 3 birds and then even harder timing jump on the top platform. The free floating or mechanically moving platforms & vines are very much out of place here in the jungle. Why don't we see swinging vines ala "Jungle Hunt" or instead of platforms, moving turtles ala "Frogger". Oh yeah, obviously copyright infringements. We also see the return of the springy I-Beam <XE not the same> from Donkey Kong which has become the Jumpboard. But then this too is out of place in the Jungle - maybe Mario dropped it.

## HIDEOUT <not on the INTV>

There is no classic home version that has the arcade intermission prior to this screen. On the Hideout level, Junior must avoid or drop fruit <2600> onto deadly Electrodes or Sparks (I'll call them all Sparks from here on) which move around or downward and across the four <SCV> platforms. One type of Spark <2600> moves around the perimeter of each platform, which, if eliminated does not come back. The other types are smaller, which Mario releases one at a time from the top. These Sparks move in only one direction <2600> on a given platform. Once they reach one of the junctions (4 on the top platform, 1 each on the remaining 3), they can either immediately go down, skip over it (on the top platform only), or wait (baiting you on), and then go down. It is possible that Mario controls their pause and selection of junction they use, but they must come down by the final junction. Perhaps they can only pause on the top platform, and once they exit the bottom are free to arrive back with Mario. The four platforms are flanked by a set of double vines, but the vines are blocked vertically so that you must traverse all 4 platforms and all vines to reach the key.

## CHAINS

On the Chains level, Junior must push Keys upward along the 8 Chains to place them into keyholes to help Donkey Kong break free. Junior must avoid all enemies, but can drop one of the 2 fruits upon them. The Red & Blue Snapjaws move up and down the chains and platforms as before. The birds behave as before, moving across the top <2600> - they cut to the chase and only move along the

bottom, below the chains> come down into 2 or 3 different lanes, move across the screen to the other side, then instead of exiting, continue to drop down, reverse directions, move across the screen the other way, repeating this a couple more times, but never reach the bottom (below the chains). After Junior has freed Donkey Kong from the cage by placing the last key in its keyhole, the screen changes whereby the platform and chains disappear and we see Mario and Donkey Kong both fall down. Junior catches his father safely and then they kick/punch Mario a good one to teach him a lesson.

**Enemies.** Something that is important, but I did not study. Do some enemies return after you eliminate them using fruit? Certainly the blue Snapjaws will keep coming, and some of the reds do too, but the main Sparks do not come back and possibly the birds are limited as well. This is an exercise for the reader. (Don't you hate reading "exercise for student" in text books?).

Screen sequences - as best as I can tell:

```

Level#:screen,screen,screen:Level#:screen . . .
Atari 2600: 1:V,K,H:2:V,H,K . . .
Atari 7800: 1:V,J,H,K:2:V,J,H,K:3:V,J,H,K:4:V,J,H,K . . .
Atari 8 Bit/XE: 0:V:1:V,K:2:V,J,K:3:V,H,K:4:V,J,H,K . . .
Colecovision: 1:V,K:2:V,J,K:3:V,H,K:4:V,K:5:V,J,K:6:V,H,K . . .
Intellivision: 1:V,K:2:V,J,K:3:V,J,K . . .
Super DK Jr (ADAM): 1:V,K:2:V,J,K:3:V,H,K:4:V,K:5:V,J,K:6:V,H,K . . .

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### [Not covered Here: Adam Computer \(43?\)](#)

My first reaction is that I do not have this one to review, but here are some notes and assumptions. We assume that the Super DK Junior is the same game, as best as can be ported to the CV (see below for the Colecovision). It is only fully playable on the ADAM, and there may be a few added surprises, but not likely resulting in a higher score than received by CV Super DK Junior. ADAM feedback from readers several months ago suggests that there may be the full demo, game intro, screen completion animation, intermissions and end of level celebrations. Adding any of these to the Super version may have exceeded the memory limit, but not on the ADAM. There are possibly more variety in enemy actions, more enemies in later levels and a couple more added or unique sound effects - such as the birds dropping the eggs is here, but not sure if the CV port has it.

### [Have Nots: Atari 2600 \(31\)](#)



My first reaction was there is almost no strategy because of such limited path choices you have and the lack of variety or randomness to the enemy movements. You mostly react based upon what the enemies are doing and execute - not really a choice to be greedy or not, be safe or not - just react. The action on each screen from level to level is very repetitive and simply gets harder as the enemies get faster and are less likely to randomly move in the way that you can get by them. Most of the time you will be advancing and then retreating - over and over again, maybe 10 times before you either succeed because the enemies finally changed their pattern or you

failed trying. This is tedious and just plain boring. OK, that was a lot, but pretty much tells you that the Gameplay is average (5). There are only 3 or 4 enemies on the first 2 screens, no fruit, almost no path choices, only 3 sets of vines and keys to collect. The Snapjaws are all Blue, so they never retrace their steps, but a slight variation was added to give you something more to "react" to as the Snapjaws may drop off the vine and then pause below the vines for a few seconds, hoping to catch you in a hurry to slide off. This is great, but still doesn't make up for so much that is lacking, not to mention only 3 screens, and the wrong sequence as the Chains should complete each level. I generously scored Addictiveness as good enough (6) since you'll play this boring version several times more out of curiosity as to why it is so different or seeking anything interesting, but there is not much. You might even try out all 8 difficulty levels hoping to see more, but no - it's just faster, no more or variations. Despite no formal pause, I did give partial credit for the built-in pause in the action for every screen -



until you move your controls - then it begins. But be prepared for quick deaths (and did I mention you are not visible before you start) on the Chains screen until you learn that you must jump onto a chain or else die as you are right in the path of the ONLY bird. This bird flies only along the bottom of the chains from L to R and then reappears immediately to continue this endless non-stop loop. Collision detection problems are the worst here & poor programming abounds as you must execute jumps from the extreme edges only or fail. But hey! At least they included a sound for falling! Which you get to hear quite often. The play testers probably insisted @\$%^&\* on it. Contrary to all other versions, on the hideout, there is no safe spot to watch the action - you can and will be hit by something at every location, which is just wrong. Graphics are mediocre (5) with a minimal amount of animation and some color variety, but not much there at all. Almost no music, but Sound is decent (6) with several sound effects in place. Controls are scored a (9), as you cannot get off the darn vines on the Hideout to avoid the 2 Snapjaws (replacing the Sparks). The Atari release is the same code as originally released by Coleco, and even says Coleco on the screen. Not my cup of tea sitting around waiting forever for the enemy to go the other way so that you can continue playing.

### **Have Nots: Intellivision (38)**



My first reaction was to agree that this was clearly an improvement over DK! Gameplay is an improvement (7) over the 2600, but still watered down. All the vines, obstacles, platforms, moving vines and moving platforms are in place, which is great. But there is no Hideout screen and the biggest problem is that there are no more than 4 enemies at a time. Addictiveness is very fun (8), with the usual diagonal buttons allowing a pause. Collision detection problems are really bad here. Fall or jump through platforms, miss vines. Fall off a vine, where all you can do is just fall off and yet you still go right through the platform - what else can you do, just try it again and hope

you succeed. And then sliding down off the top, bonus vine is sometimes deadly, so why bother going on it. If you over-jump the final key vine, instead of ending up higher on the vine as on other systems, you almost overshoot it and are on the far side, with you body going left and positioned so low that if a Snapjaw comes out you immediately die. Graphics are effective (7) with very nice combinations of colors and some details and backgrounds. But there is little multi-color action here and the animation is limited. Not to mention very few things are in motion and the action is somewhat slow (probably to compensate for the poor controls). The bonus timer does change colors and even flashes. Another nice change from the arcade is that you do not have the level number displayed, but the screen number. So "S 04" means the fourth screen. Sound is enjoyable (8) with most of the effects and nice music. Controls scored an (8). Unlike DK where you had to jump and move precisely at the same time, and exactly at the time the enemies dictate. In Junior, there are few times when you need such precision. Sure, you'll constantly be foiled as try but fail and either jump and don't move, or move and don't jump. Fortunately, most of the time this only delays your progress (thus reducing your bonus score) but not as often resulting in your demise. And if you are still poor at moving and jumping simultaneously on demand, then you can avoid some of these occurrences as well, by being patient, or not being as greedy. Regardless, after each jump, you must release the controls completely for a split second before attempting the next jump.

### **Bronze Medal: Colecovision (41)**



My first reaction was - even though I knew it could happen, I didn't expect to fly right through a vine and land on Mario - poor or maybe cruel programming? Gameplay is quality (8) with pretty much everything one would expect, save all 4 screens. There are not quite as many enemies as the other medal winners. The Addictiveness is fun to play (7) but again Coleco programmers had not yet learned to include a pause using their new system. Collision detection problems are very minor here compared to other versions and the choice of harder skill levels is not as fun as offering a look at the higher

gameplay levels. Graphics are sharp (8) and colorful but limited to single colors for all the enemies. The graphics details and variety, and backgrounds are good, but color variety could be better. The animations are OK and the flashing bonus timer is nice - when time is almost up. Sound is crisp (8) with good music and most of the effects, but a few are missing or repeated. Since there is no pause, Controls are perfect (10) as you can use the second controller to start game and use your favorite (Atari) controller to control Junior. No problems (penalty) as DK had in getting on/off ladders here.

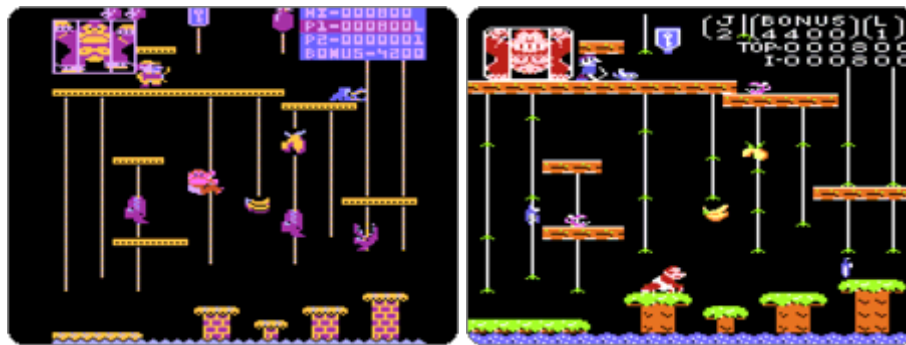
### **Disqualified: Super Colecovision (43)**

My first reaction was this is not an officially released version, but the ROM is available and a cart can be purchased from AtariAge.com. Once again this is a modified/hacked version of the ADAM release, and not a straight copy from the ADAM. The ADAM version is not compatible on the CV. Unlike Super DK, all 4 levels are playable here, but there are no introductions, no intermissions or end of level celebration. On the Hideout screen, there are still two types of enemies, but one is unique here. You still have the main Spark that rotates around the 3 platforms, but now there are two Sparks on the middle 2 platforms. The upper platform is replaced by vines to cross, but it is not a cakewalk as now there are cracks in rock/pipe(?) above where deadly green ooze secretes and falls downward. It also comes out from any of the pipe openings (ala Mario Bros.) but there is only one drop at a time per screen (maybe more or drips faster on higher levels). You will see it build up and then must avoid it as it falls downward to the bottom of the screen. Once again the "0" key works the same as in Super DK, instantly ending the round with all the bonus points earned and you move on to the next screen. So it was easy to reveal the complete screen sequence here. There is no pause added, and besides the Hideout screen, some intro music on the title screen and the birds releasing eggs, I could not find any other changes from the standard CV cart. Thus all scores and notes are the same other than - the Gameplay and Addictiveness are both +1 for the added screen. Sean Kelly noted that the birds do arrive on the Hideout screen, but I did not find them. Once again here is a Sean Kelly's review of the Super game:

<http://www.digitpress.com/reviews/superdonkeykongjr.htm>

### **Gold Medal : Atari 8 bit computer & Atari 7800 (46)**

Fortunately I had enough time to catch a mistake would have cost the XE 1 point.



Atari 8-Bit Version

Atari 7800 Version

### **Atari 8 bit computer (46):**

My first reaction was I like it better than DK as it has a little better graphics and does not get so hard, so fast. It is still plenty hard by level 4. Gameplay is superb (9) the best, with everything in place. The number of enemies, their speed and AI gradually increase very nicely all the way up to level 4, in the Hideout where we see the addition of a second Spark per platform (just like the Super CV).

Addictiveness is wonderful (9) with a pause and a choice of 5 starting levels (0 through 4). Level zero is a nice touch for children to learn the game without any enemies or Mario. Too bad they did not include all 4 screens this way instead of just "Vines", before advancing to level 1. There are some collision detection problems - falling through platforms and the Jumpboard - but this maybe as good as the CV (which seemed to have the fewest problems). The Atari is the only version where there is animation after the key has been reached, where Mario pushes Kong off the screen. Junior shows a sign of frustration, as a "?" appears next to his disappointed face. The Graphics are fantastic (9), with

the best animations and extras - this is the only version where we see Kong animated during gameplay and the chains are released after each key is inserted on "Chains", plus Kong falling. The backgrounds and most everything is in multi-color, and there are plenty of enemies and things in motion. There details and color choices and variety are not as good as the 7800, but this is a step up from the CV, and a little better than the prequel DK. Sound is well done (9) with a nice variety of music, and included all the effects save for end of game & falling. Effects are more plentiful and interesting than on DK. Controls are perfect (10).

### **Atari 7800 (46)**

My first reaction was the 7800 comes through to its potential and delivers here. Although scoring the same as the Atari 8 bit, it is better in most categories - so the edge goes to the 7800. Gameplay is the best, (9) first class with nothing missing. Addictiveness is wonderful (9) and includes the standard 7800 <pause>. I played it long enough that I discovered there were some collision detection problems. Worst offense - the egg just has to be in your neighborhood and you die - don't know why. A choice of 3 starting levels is just right to practice those higher levels, and the action gradually gets harder, probably better than the XE. This is the only port with a demo mode, showing all 4 screens, complete with full audio and several seconds of action - the same every time. Graphics are fantastic (9), easily the best, with the most animation, plenty of detail, background graphics, variety, everything in multi-color and eventually - loads of on screen action. There is no end of screen animation, but the end of level animation is good. Sound is great (9) with all the music and effects. Controls are perfect (10), but feel free to use a standard 2600 controller.

### **C64 Missing in Action:**

Despite no official C64 version release, DK Junior was rumored to exist for many years and Commodore fans were constantly searching for this possible Holy Grail. Who knows, maybe someone will finally find something that Atarisoft was working on or an unauthorized version that Atarisoft was planning to buy. OK, probably not.

### **Acknowledgements, Updates and Errata from last month.**

Missed this last month - Vic 20 DK by Atarisoft - I found 2 more possible programmers Lloyd Ollmann Jr. & C.D. Stinnett.

**Last month** - thanks also to readers Tyson Lamoureux & Stephen Knox who caught an omission for the Atari 8 bit. The Kong climbing and stomping intro does not occur at the start of the game, but it is in the cart and plays from the title screen after about 2 minutes of inactivity. I knew this, but forgot to note this in my already long review.

Also thanks to RTM reader, Andy Frueh, a TI-9/4A fan who spotted a minor typo. Donkey Kong does allow 1 or 2 players on ALL versions. I forgot my ";" to split up my notes so it was misleading how I had it worded. Thanks for all your feedback.

### **Help Needed with the Many Faces:**

No monetary donations needed, but here's your chance to help me out. There's still plenty more games to go, albeit most of them don't have nearly as many "Faces" as what has been covered already. If you are a long time reader, then you know I prefer to play on the actual hardware over emulation and thus I need the actual carts, or disks or multi-carts. Below is my short list of holes if you have any of these to trade or sell. I'd love to buy or trade for any original boxes, disks, carts and instruction manuals for these titles. For disk games, or games that can be put onto floppies, a copy of the game is fine. Of course a multi-cart for any of these systems (hint, hint) would also help solve these problems as well. Some of these titles may be protos, or ultra rare, so I may never get them. If you have such a rare title - perhaps you can help me by reviewing it for me. Again, these are the official releases for these titles or a prototype by the company who had the rights to release them (and already released them on other systems).

Apple ][: Berserk, Gauntlet, Jawbreaker, Miner 2049er, Mr. Cool, Qix, Shamus, Xevius, Wizard of Wor

Atari 8 bit computers & XE: Archon 2, Beach Head, Blueprint, Bruce Lee, Choplifter, Commando, Crystal Castles, David's Midnight Magic, Jawbreaker II, Karateka, Shamus, Stargate, SW:ESB, Wavy Navy

Commodore 64: Joust (proto), Stargate, Super Pac-Man, Super Zaxxon (Sega / US Gold), Qix

Intellivision: Moonsweeper

TI-99: Joust, Moonsweeper, Wing War

Vic 20: Chuck Norris, Jawbreaker, Jawbreaker II, Lode Runner, Miner 2049er, Serpentine, Sir Lancelot, Stargate, Tutankham

**Come back next month:** OK, so I couldn't stop myself and I did DK Jr this month, so next month look for the Lost Faces of Mario Bros. for the Atari XE cart, the Apple II (proto), and hopefully the 1987 C64 version by Ocean. Contact Alan Hewston at: [Hewston95@NOSPAMstratos.net](mailto:Hewston95@NOSPAMstratos.net) or visit the Many Faces of site: <http://my.stratos.net/~hewston95/RT/ManyFacesHome.htm>.

## WHY BUY A VIC 20?

by [Tonks](#)

Within the retro gaming community the Vic 20 has a fairly low profile. While interest is growing, mainly thanks to the huge price tag of Ultima Mount Drash, the Vic 20 continues to be over looked. For many collectors it barely rates a mention except to acknowledge it as the slightly older brother of the Commodore 64. And so many people end up missing out on one of the great retro platforms.

So here are a few reasons why every retro-gamer should take a closer look at the Commodore Vic 20. A very special thanks goes to all my fellow Vic 20 enthusiasts on "Denial" for sharing their reasons for collecting the Vic 20 and giving me great ideas for this article.



### LOW INITIAL OUTLAY

Because the Vic 20 continues to be quite overlooked it safely flies under the radar of most collectors. Therefore it rarely commands a hefty price tag. An unboxed Vic 20 with a few common carts can be regularly picked up for less than \$20 on ebay. Even boxed systems only adds an extra \$10 or so. Common cartridges can often be picked up for a couple of bucks each. So for a very good price you can very quickly compile a nice collection of Vic 20 goodies.

### A FANTASTIC RANGE OF GAME CARTRIDGES

Many people may be surprised to learn that there were almost 200 games released on cartridge for the Vic 20. This is certainly far more than many other classic computers and consoles. Some collectors have claimed that of the classic machines only the Atari 2600 and the Commodore 64 has more cartridges.



The Vic 20 is home to some excellent arcade conversions. Many of these are superior to other computers or consoles of the same era. Donkey Kong, Pacman, Centipede, Omega Race, Defender, Robotron, Clowns and Digdug just to name a few.

While there are many gaps in official conversions, these are more than made up for in the selection of excellent arcade clones. Some of the better clones include Radar Rat Race (Rally X), Super Amok (Bezerk), Avenger (Space Invaders), Jupiter Lander (Lunar Lander), & Road Race (Night Driver). One clone that I really must make mention of is Jelly Monsters. This is one of the best Pacman clones you will play, particularly on a classic computer or console. The graphics and gameplay are about as perfect as you could hope. It is said that Atari threatened to sue Commodore because Jelly Monsters was such an obvious breach of copyright. Therefore Jelly Monsters was withdrawn and only very few were sold. This makes it one of the harder games to find and a real jewel in any anyone's Vic 20 collection.



Like all video game platforms, there are a number of excellent games that were only released on the Vic 20. In other words, if you want to play any of these games then you simply must own a Vic 20. Some of the better games that fall into this category include Raid on Fort Knox, Spiders of Mars, Predator, Mosquito Infestation, Cosmic Jailbreak and Star Battle.

### **DON'T FORGET THE TAPES**

While Cartridge games are generally seen as being the cream of the crop, there are absolutely stacks of games available for the Vic 20 on cassette tape. Ward Shrake (author of the brilliant Cartzilla) had at one time catalogued over 450 individual games that were released on tape. Some have estimated the number of tape games to be closer to 1000.

Tape games are generally very cheap. The vast majority sell on ebay for as little as \$1 or \$2 each.

By adding tapes into the equation a collector can have a target of at least 600 games to collect. Arguably only the Commodore 64 and Sinclair ZX Spectrum have more games.

### **WIDE RANGE OF ACCESSORIES**

Because the Vic 20 and the Commodore 64 share many similarities, many accessories can be shared between the two. This includes disk drives, power supply (on the later Vics), data cassette player, printers and even modems. This automatically gives access to easy to find and low cost accessories.

The Vic 20 uses the standard "Atari" joysticks and paddles. These joysticks are as common as mud and the majority are also quite reliable. The huge range of joysticks also means you will have no trouble finding the type that really suits you.

### **MORE THAN JUST A GAME CONSOLE**

The Vic 20 is certainly more than just a game console. It is in fact a quite versatile and expandable home computer. Sure it may seem extremely primitive by today's standards, but the Vic can still be used for programming, writing letters, keeping accounts, compiling a database of your classic gaming collection and much, much more. Try doing any of that on your Atari 2600 or Colecovision.

Having a full keyboard enables the Vic 20 to play text adventures. These are unheard of for regular game consoles. Amazing adventure games where you are only limited by your imagination. The full keyboard also enables you to play educational, RPGs, and strategy games the way they are meant to be played.

## **BUILDING A UNIQUE COLLECTION**

Every collector of classic video games that I know has an Atari 2600 and a huge pile of games. Every collector of classic video games that I know has a Commodore 64 and hundreds of disks. But I know very few who even have a Vic 20 let alone a decent size collection.

Adding a Vic 20 and games to your collection gives you something a little more unique than what most collectors have. It may not become your particular favourite, but it will quickly become and remain a part of your collection you will be quite proud of.

### ***Colecovision 128-in-1 Flash Multi-Cart***

***by Alan Hewston***

In the past month a new Colecovision product has arrived on the market and orders have already been shipped. This is for the Colecovision Flash Multi-Cart, an on-screen menu driven cartridge that, once populated with your favorite games and/or demos (both ROM or COL files) can plug into your Colecovision and work just like any other cartridge. Just plug in, select and play any of 127 selections in just seconds.

Let me first refer you to a very thorough review of this product by one of the beta testers, David Harley, who writes for ColecoNation. ([www.coleconation.com/060208.html](http://www.coleconation.com/060208.html))

By the time you are reading this issue, the current sales offer will have expired (\$129.99 until the first 100 cartridges are sold, or 04/01/2006, whichever comes first. After the sale ends the price will increase to \$149.99). But tell Steve that you read about his product in the Retrogaming Times Monthly and he will extend the offer just for you.

I got my own CV 128-in-1 Flash Multi-Cart as soon as they were available and I can tell you that everything that David says in his review is right on the money. Steve Tucker, the designer of the cartridge has delivered yet another quality product from his line of classic computer and gaming goodies found at Atarimax (<http://www.atarimax.com/>)

Just think of all those games you'll never get to play on the actual system as they were either prototypes, alternate versions, or were just too darn rare (expensive today). If you want any 5 of those rarer titles you'll easily cough up \$130 (includes shipping). For about the same price you can now have and play them ALL on your own CV, and no longer just via emulation. Not to mention the space you can save and ease of finding the games (nearly all) on one cart. There are also many demos available and new homebrew games being released which can easily be added to your Flash Cart.

A typical multi-cart is great, but this cart is better as it provides the flexibility and ease of changing what you have stored on it at any time. Assuming you keep everything organized on your PC or a CD, it only takes a few minutes to make a change. Just like emulation, you will, however, need to spend time seeking out and organizing all the files you wish to use. It is significantly easier to use and make updates to the CV Flash Cart than the highly acclaimed Cuttle Cart 2 (for the Atari 2600 & 7800).

Yes, there is a limit of only 127 selections, but you do not need to have everything on your Flash Cart, only those carts or demos not already in your collection. OK, maybe you've just bought your first Colecovision and have little or no carts, but you want them all. Since there are only about 200 files available now, then simply buy 2 Flash carts and you'll never run out of slots. Steve may still have a special where you save a bit when ordering 2 or more at the same time.

Unfortunately Steve didn't give me one for free so as to plug his product here, but I can easily say that for me this product is the ultimate Colecovision add-on or peripheral ever. Now go read Dave's excellent review and check out all of the products on Steve's site.

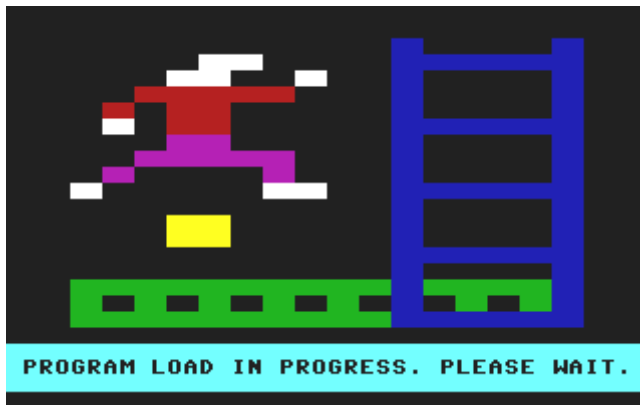
Alan Hewston can be reach at hewston95@SPAM@stratos.net

## Commodore Corner

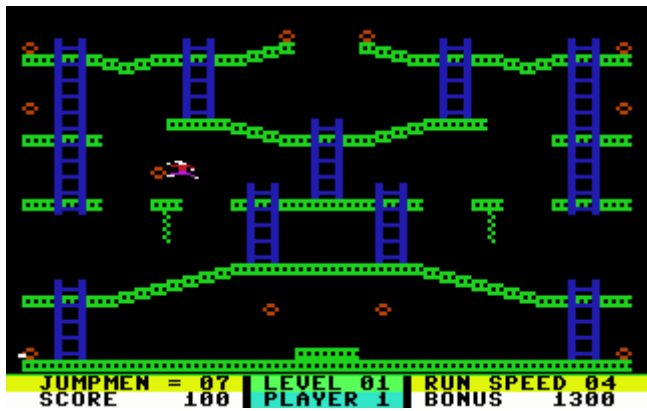
by [Brett Brunell](#)

Well, I'm back and I'm moving from MAME reviews to my favorite computer system of all time, the Commodore 64! This month, I will start it off with what is probably my favorite (and most played) game on the good ol' 64, Jumpman by Epyx. Next month, I will review the "sequel," Jumpman Junior.

### Jumpman (copyright © 1983 Epyx)



And boy do you wait!



Level 1

### \*\*\* DESCRIPTION \*\*\*

Jumpman involves you running around the screen filled with girders, ladders, and ropes attempting to defuse various bombs. Enemies range from bullets, clones, dragons, robots, vampire bats, falling bombs, and UFOs. Scattered throughout various levels are secret traps that are triggered by grabbing various bombs. The good news is that they are always triggered by the same bombs so patterns can be mastered quite easily. When all of the bombs have been successfully "defused," you advance to the next level. The game consisted of 30 levels that were well thought out. This game will forever be the game that made Randy Glover a household name.

### \*\*\* SCORING \*\*\*

**Misc: 3/10** - First off, let's get one thing out of the way that I forgot about, the load times. Argh! Now I remember why playing on the C64 was so frustrating at times. If you can, play this game on an emulator (such as CCS64) and enable "fast load" or you'll think the computer locked up on you waiting for it to load! Fortunately, the payoff is worth the wait!

**Graphics: 8/10** - The graphics are first rate for the time. Epyx back in 1983 was similar to what Electronic Arts is today. They were what all the other game companies hoped to be someday.

**Sound: 7/10** - The sound was again, ample for its time. Nothing new or "over the edge" here, just simple tunes. Each level ends with a different tune so there's little monotony. Sound effects are all simple, good, and entertaining.

**Playability: 9/10** - Playability is where this game shines. You can really develop your own "skills" and playing style with this game. Some of the levels (like Robots I and Robots II) require a pattern. Too bad there was no way to practice particular levels or even a level editor. I would definitely recommend playing this game with an old Atari 2600 joystick for best results.

**Originality: 10/10** - Future games like Super Mario Bros., Donkey Kong Country, etc. owe their basic

gameplay to this game. It's truly an original. The menu is very basic allowing you to play the game five different ways: Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced, Grand Loop, and Randomizer. The game can also be played up to four players with player speed ranging from 1-8. Be prepared if you choose speed 1, you'll go really fast (and so will your enemies).

**Overall: 37/50** - The load time really kills the score for this game, but it truly is one of the best on the old 64 box. Boot it up and give it a whirl!

### \*\*\* MISCELLANEOUS \*\*\*

- The "sequel" to this game was Jumpman Junior and was about half the size of the original Jumpman. It was on cartridge (where size was an issue), not on disk. It was also programmed by Randy Glover.
- Randy Glover started programming a true sequel, Jumpman 2 in 1991, but never finished it.
- Other games inspired by Jumpman were...Jumpman Zero PC (PC), Jumpman Zero (PalmOS), Jumpman - Under Construction (PC), Classic Jumpman (Port of the original to the PC), Jumpman: 2049 (PC), Jumpman Lives! (PC), Junkman Junior (TI-99/4A), and Jumpman Deluxe (Amiga).
- Former NBA and Chicago Bull's star Michael Jordan currently goes by the nickname "Jumpman23" for Nike shoes.
- The Jumpman Lounge (<http://www.classicgaming.com/jlounge>) is the place to go for all things Jumpman!

Brett Burnell is a computer programmer for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. In his free time he can be seen programming video games, being a referee for Twin Galaxies, going to Retrogaming shows, or just playing with his kids. He can be reached at **[b2ksolutions@verizon.net](mailto:b2ksolutions@verizon.net)**.

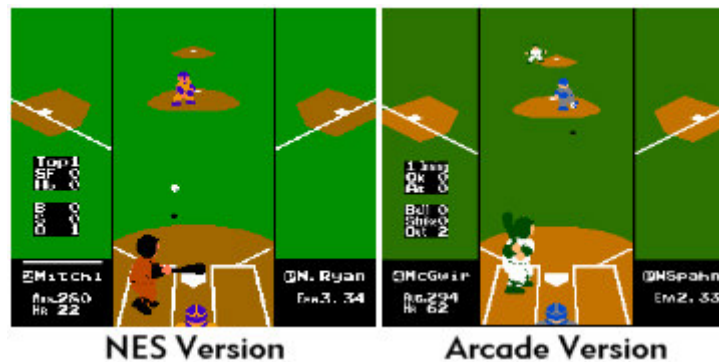
## *The Titles of Tengen - RBI Baseball*

*by [David Lundin, Jr.](#)*

There are few Tengen ports on the NES that have stood the test of time as well as RBI Baseball. Even to this day there are legions of loyal fans, sites dedicated to this game, endless forums online and hundreds of people still actively playing. With that in mind I'll keep information on this game general as I'm sure there are many that could go into great detail about this title and have already done so. The beginnings of this game aren't in the arcade but on the Famicom itself which was the Japanese counterpart of the NES. In 1986 Namco released a baseball game on the Nintendo Famicom called Family Stadium. The game sold well as baseball is widely popular across Japan and spawned Atari Games to port Family Stadium to the Nintendo Vs. System arcade hardware. So in 1987 Vs. Atari RBI Baseball was born and the game did just as well in American arcades as it did across home systems in Japan. A year later the arcade Vs. Atari RBI Baseball was ported to the NES by Atari Games under their Tengen label and became the first console video game to ever be officially licensed by the Major League Baseball Players Association. The MLBPA license meant that real player names and rosters were used in the game, however team names and logos were not included in the game as it was not licensed by Major League Baseball. Famicom to arcade and back to Famicom again, albeit on another continent and under a different name with slight changes. This game made quite a journey until arriving in the hands of eager NES owners.

Since the origins of the arcade version were rooted on the Famicom hardware and the Nintendo Vs. System was built upon similar hardware, RBI Baseball is a near perfect conversion. Graphically things aren't better or worse just slightly different. For instance the stadium background is more detailed on the NES however the pitcher animations are a little cleaner and more detailed in the arcade. Some of the team colors are a little different as well but the transfer is excellent, right down to the attract screen. Controls transfer over perfectly with the joystick functions now controlled with the directional pad and the arcade B and A buttons properly mapped to the NES B and A. The little tunes that play throughout the game are perfectly recreated and sound great as do the in game sound effects, again, arcade perfect.





Some of the teams have been changed around from the arcade (Oakland removed) and while the official team names and logos aren't used, eight real baseball team head quartering cities are represented along with their team's proper uniform colors. The game's over all color is slightly different to work with the NES palette but still quite correct and close enough. Additionally the "Atari League" of the arcade has been renamed the "Tengen League" but all these differences are merely technical little tweaks here and there and don't change the game what so ever. I've always felt that the NES version played smoother and faster than the arcade original but I wasn't able to definitively confirm or deny this so I guess that's something up to each player's discretion.

RBI Baseball would go on to have a pair of sequels on the NES and become a bankable franchise for Atari Games and their Tengen label on other platforms. There is a reason why this game was so popular in both the US and Japan, it's an excellent baseball game, elegant in its simplicity. Although the original release was licensed by Nintendo, Tengen soon broke off their licensing agreement and an unlicensed version was later released. However the only change was the copyright and licensing information on the title screen. Also of interesting note, Tengen doesn't appear on the title screen in either version, Atari Games is used instead. Each subsequent release of RBI Baseball on the NES continued to advance the technology and update the rosters however kept the same simple to learn gameplay of the original. This kept the popularity of the series directly on par, if not even more popular, than the NES's other big baseball franchise, Jaleco's Bases Loaded. If you ever want to take a trip back to a time when baseball games didn't stink and weren't overcomplicated, RBI Baseball is a worthy purchase for any NES owner.

"InsaneDavid" also runs a slowly growing gaming site at <http://www.classicplastic.net/dvgi>.

### ***Pinball Wizards Convention***

Here's a news item passed to me by Alan Hewston and Brett Burnell. If you're a pinball enthusiast living in Pennsylvania, then here's an event for you. The Pinball Wizards Convention will be held May 5, 6, and 7 at the Allentown Fairgrounds Agriplex in Allentown, PA. This convention will feature a slew of pinball machines from the 1950s to the 2000s set on free play, as well as tournaments with prizes, flea markets and other fun stuff.

For more information visit the official website at: <http://www.pinballwizardsconv.com/index.html>

### ***Nintendo Realm - Mid February to Mid April 1985***

***by Scott Jacobi***

As of last month's Nintendo Realm, we have covered the core of Nintendo's familiar initial line up. Prepare to start moving in to some unfamiliar territory each month. By this time in Japan, Nintendo has garnered the attention of the rest of the industry. Meanwhile in America, the video game market is still in shambles, unable to recover from the crash that occurred earlier. Hiroshi Yamauchi, then president of Nintendo after inheriting the company from his father in law, is positive that the Famicom



would be a success in the US if they could just get a foot hold in the market, and charged his son-in-law with the task of getting the Nintendo Entertainment System launched. Many of the games that have already been reviewed were analyzed and either accepted or rejected (as was the case with Devil World and Nuts 'n Milk) to bring over to the US market by the likes of people like Howard Phillips who would go on to become the president of the Nintendo Fun Club.

There's your who's who in early Nintendo history (minus Howard Lincoln who was just Nintendo's legal representation at the time), but let's get back to the what's what in the land of the rising sun. Jaleco and Taito enter the fray with some mediocre entries that round out this month's selection of chronologically selected games. From now on, I will be including any applicable United States release dates. Let's take a look.

#### Exerion, released by Jaleco on February 11, 1985

Exerion was an obscure arcade game released by Jaleco in 1983 and licensed for distribution in the US to Taito. It is a vertical shooter that features a parallax scrolling terrain that rolls along underneath the player's ship. Your ship is fairly maneuverable around the screen and features two weapons. The primary weapon is an unlimited slow moving double shot, and the secondary weapon is a fast single shot that has a limited supply of ammo. The ammo is replenished simply by killing enemies, and bonus ammo is provided for eliminating entire groups of enemies. Enemies swarm on the screen in loose squadrons that home in on your ship's position in an attempt to collide with you. All in all, not a very complicated game, so how does the port to the Famicom fair? Not well. Obviously this is one of the games that was considered for exclusion from the American market, simply because the smoothness of the parallax scrolling takes a big hit in this version. It's a neat gimmick at best and does little to enhance the simple concept of the game. Only those of you who are very curious about games that weren't released in the US should give this game a try, if only once to see why it wasn't released here.

#### Galaga, released in Japan by Namco on February 15, 1985, and in the US by Bandai on September 1988

Galaga was another king of the arcades during the height of arcade popularity in the early 80s. Galaga expands on Galaxian the way Galaxian expands on Space Invaders. And Namco's quality ports to the Famicom serve this game well with another near perfect translation. For any RTGM reader who's not familiar with Galaga (yes, you in the back there...), you pilot a ship that moves horizontally across the bottom of the screen, shooting up at three types of galactic terrors, the blue bees, red butterflies, and Galaga flagships. The flagships need to be shot twice in order to destroy them, and occasionally, they swoop down in position and release a tractor beam which can capture your ship. As long as you have another ship in reserve, you can extract your revenge on the flagship that captured you by destroying it and rescuing your former ship, which causes it to line up next to your current ship for the extreme pleasure of double bullets. But beware, you can destroy the captured ship with a careless shot, and you're twice as vulnerable to getting hit when you have double bullets. Bonus stages challenge your accuracy every couple of rounds. Any fan of this game would do well to pick up this version, despite Bandai's use of questionable artwork that graces the US box.



Exerion



Galaga

### Family BASIC version 3, released by Nintendo on February 21, 1985

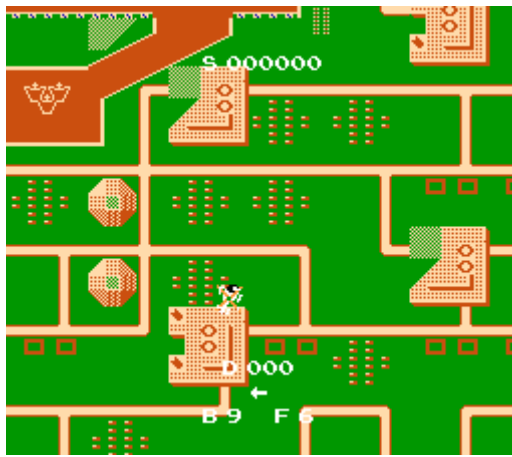
Initially I was planning on omitting this game from Nintendo Realm as I had done in the past with the original BASIC. But I decided to include it here as an illustration of how differently the Famicom was marketed in Japan than the NES was marketed in the US. As many of you know, Famicom was short for Family Computer. And though we classify it as a console, Hiroshi Yamauchi really did intend to market it as a computer. A full fledged keyboard was available for the system, as well as a modem that allowed Japanese users to view, among other things, winning lottery numbers and stock quotes. The keyboard was put to use by the Famicom with software such as Family BASIC which allowed users to write and execute their own programs on the system in, obviously, BASIC. BASIC, for those of you who don't know, is a fairly simple and easy to learn programming language that was much more popular for kids to learn in the 80s than today. The NES, by contrast, was always intended to be sold as a console, but the hurdle that Nintendo had to overcome, was the fact that retailers wanted nothing to do with consoles after the crash. So the Famicom was a computer in console clothing, while the NES was a console that had to be disguised as an "Electronic Entertainment" device.

### Raid on Bungling Bay, released by Hudson on February 22, 1985, and in the US by Broderbund on September 1987

Like Hudson's second release for the Famicom, their third game was a port of a popular 8-bit computer game that Broderbund owned the rights to, and one of the earliest games of famous Sim City and the Sims designer, Will Wright. Bungling Bay isn't a very complicated shooter, but it is rather enjoyable. You pilot a helicopter from a bird's eye view. You are outfitted with guns and up to nine bombs which can be replenished by landing on the carrier. Your mission is to take off from your home base air craft carrier and fly around the "world," which scrolls in eight directions, bombing enemy factories. The factories are the only buildings with flashing lights in the windows. Each factory takes several bombs to completely demolish. Defending the buildings are tanks, boats, and other air craft. It is necessary to clear the defense units that surround the factory before proceeding to bomb the building. Occasionally, the enemy can flip the tables on you and attack your air craft carrier, requiring you to hurry back and ward off the enemy. The game translates very well on to the Famicom and the NES. The scrolling isn't silky smooth, but it's very tolerable.



Family BASIC ver. 3



Raid on Bungling Bay

### Formation Z, released by Jaleco on April 4, 1985

Jaleco's second release fared much better in the porting process than Exerion. Once again, they ported an arcade game that was rather unknown in the US, released in 1984. (It was released in the US under the name Aeroboto by Williams.) I only saw the arcade once as a child, and I was in love with the concept, particularly because I was in love with the Transformers. As the player, you control a robot that can transform into an fighter plane. As a robot you run relatively slow, and can fire in three directions. As a fighter plane, you move very quickly and fire straight ahead. You can transform at will, but you have a limited supply of power to remain in fighter plane mode. The game scrolls right to left as you advance across the terrain, and occasionally you are forced to switch to a plane in order to fly over a long stretch of water. Enemies usually consist of smaller enemy air craft, tanks, ground-to-air missiles, and UFOs and are usually plucked off with ease. To the best of my knowledge, there are no actually rounds, the game just seems to continue, varying the terrain once in a while. Worth trying out, but probably not a keeper.

### Soccer, released by Nintendo on April 9, 1985, and in the US on March 1987

Let's face it. None of Nintendo's early sports releases are really anything to brag about, but I personally feel that Soccer is the poorest performer out of the bunch. The speed of the game is appallingly slow. The soccer ball has a very heavy plodding feel, like a rock. And control over your players is equally slow in response time. Since the players continuously kick the ball in the direction they travel, if you approach the ball from behind, you will inevitably kick the ball closer to your own goal unless you are extremely careful. It seems to capture the various elements of soccer, minus penalty kicks or red and yellow cards. Despite the flaws, it should be noted that Soccer is one of the first games to employ a style of side scrolling presentation that would become popular for many future Soccer and Hockey games, including Nintendo's own Ice Hockey which is a far more enjoyable game. All in all, not recommended.



Formation Z



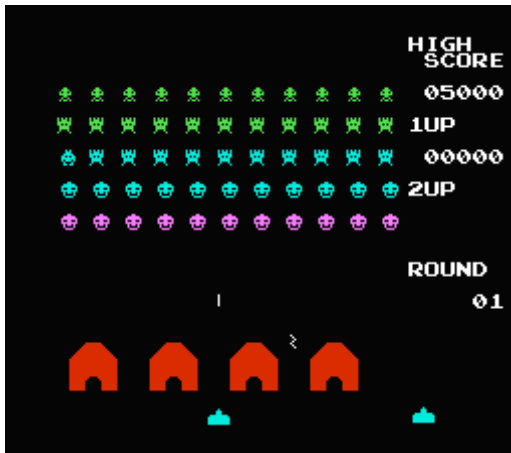
Soccer

### Space Invaders, released by Taito on April 17, 1985

This release of Space Invaders is more of a symbolic release for Taito than anything else. As their first release for the Famicom, they chose their first arcade smash hit. However, despite the accuracy that this conversion could have had (and for all intent purposes, should have had), Space Invaders sacrifices pixel perfect accuracy to adopt Namco's score-on-the-side presentation. The shields do not have the same pixel pecking feel, and it's very easy to notice how they are constructed out of three columns. The result is an outdated game with a close, but imperfect port, and I'm left wondering what the appeal of this release would be in 1985, especially considering how accurate and smooth Namco's shooters were by comparison. Never the less, in comparison to the many Space Invader ports that have come before it, it is much more faithful, and it adopts the same coloration scheme used by Taito when they added color to the arcade game. For Space Invader aficionados only.

### Champion Lode Runner, released by Hudson on April 17, 1985

Banking on the success they had with the original Lode Runner (which sold quite well in Japan,) Hudson continued the series with the release of Champion Lode Runner which, like the first, is based on the game of the same name made popular on 8-bit computers. However, unlike original Lode Runner, the Champion edition is not for casual fans of the series. This version is nightmarishly difficult in comparison to the original, and it is further hampered by the use of scrolling. Part of what made Champion Lode Runner so difficult on computers were the expanse of the levels, and the variety of directions that the enemies came after you. With Hudson's more zoomed in approach to drawing the screen, it is far easier to lose track of the enemies' positions and get stuck in a no win situation. Like the original, you can skip around to any level you like, but I found my patience wearing thin more quickly while playing this version of Lode Runner than any other. This game is recommended for hardcore Lode Runner fans only, I know that there are still some out there.



Space Invaders



Champion Lode Runner

## ***The Thrill Of Defeat: Commodore Plus/4 & Commodore 16 - D-E***

***by [Mark Sabbatini](#)***

One of retrogaming's greatest pleasures is reading the various magazines, newsletters and other printed material for a particular machine. Some is informative, some a reminder of how far technology has come. But the best material, in my opinion, shines a bright light on some of the dimmest thinkers ever to cross a microchip.

Reading a series of newsletters devoted to the Commodore 16 and Plus/4 computers (appearing this month as part two in a series, as part of the larger look at computing history's failures) uncovers cluelessness on all sides. A company unable to figure out how to market its machine. Programmers with some truly idiotic ideas of what might be amusing. Reviewers (usually parent types) praising "unique" games that were actually clones of well-known arcade titles. Writers with amazing amounts of electronic knowledge who unfortunately lacked basic familiarity with written English.

Some of it is a lot more amusing in retrospect, since customers at the time were victims of lousy or fraudulent products, or misinformation that caused misery. Somehow I don't think those apologetic notes from hobbyists about typos in a hardware project that led to the destruction of machines were of much condolence.

So before jumping into reviews of titles in the D-E category that are playable online in a Web browser (A-C appeared last month), it's worth a quick side trip to one of those stories. The site <http://www.commodore16.com/>, which has most of the titles reviewed below, also has a number of Commodore Plus/4 Handbook newsletters in PDF format, including one with a story about how a top-selling title (World Cup) bore striking resemblance to a rival company's soccer title (also, appropriately, called World Cup). If nothing else, at least it proved you can't fool all the people all the time:

"U.S. Gold initially tried to cover their rears by stating that both Distributors and Retailers were informed about the games origins," the newsletter states. "This was not true and is it not strange that within the World Cup package there is no mention of the Arctic connection. U.S. Gold had boasted a Pre-Order figure of 100,000 cassettes and this more than anything resulted in the game going straight to Number 1 in the Software charts. Within 2 or 3 weeks the anger had spread and the game dropped like a stone out of the charts. It has now been admitted that U.S. Gold had been let down badly by their original programmers for the game only weeks before its timed release and in desperation U.S. Gold turned to Arctic to bail them out. more problems beset U.S. Gold as World Cup football was copyright of a distributor, Geoff's Records, who threatened legal action." The matter was settled for about £20,000 - roughly what U.S. Gold earned in sales.

This probably isn't the most amusing stumble, just one I ran across while looking up what they had to say about the games below. Other tidbits will be provided as this series continues during the next several months.

Some titles listed at Commodore16.com are not reviewed here because the Java emulator failed to load them properly. There's also a few titles, such as the Dizzy games, found at the Commodore Plus/4 World site at <http://plus4.emucamp.com/playonline.htm>. All ratings by me take into account both the quality of the original game and its playability in the emulator. Feedback is encouraged at [marksabbatini@yahoo.com](mailto:marksabbatini@yahoo.com) - I'll include anything of interest in future articles.

### **Danger Willy (C-/Incomplete)**

A split grade based on limited play, since even a brief glimpse reveals obvious flaws in a game with potential. The player controls a forklift on a series of screens, with the apparent goal of collecting radioactive waste from conveyer belts before they can fall off or wreak other havoc. The graphics are cartoonish cute and much of the game has plenty of polish, but there are at least three major problems: 1) movement over bridges and other obstacles has to be pixel-perfect; 2) you get only one life, so even a well-played game ends abruptly with a single mistake; 3) I tried every key combination possible and still couldn't get the forklift to do basic things like picking up the barrels. The incomplete part of the grade is based on the hope that printed instructions might solve the latter problem. But the German Web site [commodore.de](http://commodore.de) gives it a rating of 60 percent, so maybe it's not worth going to effort of hunting some instructions down.



### **Dark Side (B-)**

A pseudo 3D tank shooter combining elements of Battlezone and arcade-like puzzles (find items, use them properly). Movement is in "steps" rather than smooth scrolling, the action is sluggish and the graphics are rather chunky (but passable). The whole package was reasonably impressive for its day, but it isn't close to even the most primitive Doom-like titles appearing a few years later. The Web site [pirates.emucamp.com/a/d/darkside/c64/main\\_.html](http://pirates.emucamp.com/a/d/darkside/c64/main_.html) rates the game highly despite its slow speed and offers some playing tips.



### **Demolition (C)**

Horizontally oriented Araknoid-type game that falls short of Arthur Noid (reviewed last month) in most ways. The playfields are simpler, power-ups are scarce and presented as fixed targets rather than hidden in bricks, and control isn't as good. The latter is made more problematic by the game's speed - there's six selectable levels and even the slowest (six) is too quick. It's professionally programmed, but with better competition there's little reason to play it. The Commodore Plus/4 Handbook gives it a rating of 67 percent.

### **Denise (Hollywood Poker) (C)**

An unremarkable five-card video poker game where the primary gimmick is a digitalized (and highly pixelated) picture of a model at the top of the screen. No, she isn't provocatively dressed or playing strip poker. The game itself is the basic take five cards, bet, take more cards and make final bets, with the expected ability to check and raise. There are no game options like wild cards or additional players. Betting is a choice of preselected amounts. The computer doesn't seem to employ any extra strategies such as bluffing. But the interface is easy to figure out, making it playable in a basically competent way.

### **Ding Bat (Jet Man) (C+)**

Simple, high-speed single-screen shooter that's enjoyable for short stretches of time. You control a guy with a jet-pack that shoots ships and clouds while collecting power-ups. Collisions with the ships or their fire is deadly, as is hitting the ground at any speed. Hitting a cloud merely depletes your shields. Shooting the ships is a real challenge since they're at the bottom of the screen and our hero seems to be working in a hyper-gravity environment - he falls and accelerates really fast, making precision movement without touching the ground a real trick. Commodore.de gave this a 50 percent rating, although I'm inclined to bump it up a bit - but only a little since it gets monotonous pretty quick.

### **Dizzy Prince Of Yolkfolk (A-)**

One of a huge number of Dizzy games first written for the Sinclair Spectrum and other U.K. computers, then ported to machines in the U.S. (you can buy a number of them for mobile phones these days as well). Mostly consisting of platform/adventure quests, the games are the gaming equal of an airport novel - cheap thrills banged out in a hurry by a couple of incredibly prolific programmers mostly looking to make a buck. The main character (Dizzy - duh) is a simple but cute-looking egg who does flips when he jumps. The adventures were popular in a Mario World/Zelda kind of way. Like the Final Fantasy and Megaman games, it's a lineup of mostly solid games with a few gems and dogs (the latter being things like arcade rip-offs with Dizzy featured for marketing purposes). This one got roughly a B-minus ranking from the gaming crowd, in part because the 30-room adventure is somewhat smaller than other titles. But its relative quality to other Plus/4 titles boosts its grade and it's as good a title as any for newcomers to get familiar with (tip: you're trapped behind a wood door in room one, but there's also matches, a pile of leaves and some water to pick up and use even though the graphics for them may not be obvious to newbies. Once you have the items, the solution is pretty obvious). Sadly, perhaps the best of the series, Fantasy Land Dizzy, is part of the online emulated collection, but it appears to be a hacked version that didn't work on my browser.

### **Dork's Dilemma (B+)**

Maybe I'm overrating this Bomberman-type game a bit, but of the many titles I've been playing all these weeks this is among the few that has kept me engaged for an extended length of time. Two things help boost the basic concept of dropping bombs in mazes to wipe out pursuing enemies. First, it's fast paced, making it more of an arcade than strategy game. Second, there's a large number of well-designed and interconnected screens, with the overall goal of getting jigsaw pieces from each to complete an overall puzzle. The learning curve is a little steep - you'll spend a number of games dying quickly while learning how to get out of the range of bombs quickly enough (and believe me, you need to move instantly). But it never gets to the frustration point and when you die you believe it's your fault, not the program's. By the way, Commodore.de gave this only a 40 percent rating, so obviously the

appeal isn't universal.

### **Driller (B+)**

Feels very similar to Dark Side, above, complete with the slow, jerky 3D movement, but with more depth. Here you have set goals such as building up a supply of amethyst and a time limit for achieving them. Screen details for your vehicle are also somewhat more complex. The only thing I can't vouch for is depth, since I haven't come close to completing either game. But at first glance this looks like the better bet for those wanting to see what first-person action was like during the mid '80s.



### **Elite (A)**

This space trading simulation is an all-time classic, with versions for just about every computer that mattered back then and new variations being ported to modern-day computers, PDAs and phones. In what's now a familiar scenario, you start with a basic ship and work your way up in the space food chain. The secret of its success is a deep and clever universe - maybe par for the course today, but a revelation back then and very much the forerunner to any number of hit titles. The Plus/4 version gets the basic stuff right, although versions for the Commodore 64 and some British computers seem more polished. It'll take a while to learn the basics of trading, equipping ships, navigating, fighting and missions, so it's worth hitting the official Elite page at <http://www.iancgbell.clara.net/elite> to get the full experience.

### **Elite Squad (B)**

A puzzler with a mild arcade touch that is more entertaining than it first appears. The goal is to change the pattern of squares that fill up part of a grid on the screen to a certain color. Moving over a square changes its color - from blue to green, back to blue, etc. It reminds me in an abstract way of the latter stages of Q\*Bert where jumping on squares can return them to "unjumped" colors. Here there's no 3D pyramids and movement is simple up-down-left-right using the arrow keys. There's also a time limit and a very tough one at that. But you get three lives, so making a mistake that you know will leave you short of time isn't the end. Graphics are sharp. Control is pretty good, but gets a little imprecise when holding the keys down. One hiccup that I suspect is a bug is when I press <RETURN> the game congratulates me on completing the level and returns to the title screen, thus ending the game. Hmmmm...not sure that's the sweet sight of success at work.

### **Eliza (D+)**

The simple BASIC version of the famous virtual psychologist, which in theory asks questions about your problems and responds to your answers. This version has a stripped down analysis function and number of responses (some mainframe and full-scale versions will ask questions based on responses throughout the "interview" - this one simply prints something that is supposedly related to your last response, although even then it's often just a neutral comment like "I see."). Worth booting up once if you've never tried it just to have a point of reference, but that's it.

### **End Zone 2 (C+)**

I'd have played this text-based football game plenty as a kid simply because of my love of the game, despite some glaring flaws in the program. It's a management rather than a coaching simulation, with the focus on putting together the best lineup of players for each "match" (a sure sign this is a British game). The only options are buying and selling players, and shifting your lineup of reserves and starters. Official team and player names are featured, but bear no resemblance to anything in real life. John Elway, for example, has a player value of \$31,000 while Denver's third-string running back at the time has a value of \$85,000, with respective skill levels of two and six. Your team has overall ratings for skill and morale, which seem to be the primary means of determining outcomes versus opponents. The games, nothing more than a minute or so of watching scores appear on a scoreboard, can be as absurd as the player ratings. My first game, matching Denver's level-two skills against level-six San

Francisco, ended with a 91-0 defeat, yet somehow I still made \$10,000 from the game and got a vote of confidence from the team's directors. Commodore.de gives the game a 50 percent rating.

### **Escape From Pulsar 7 (C-)**

This text adventure would get a lower grade if it weren't well-regarded by players of its era, since it has a number of flaws made worse by difficulty playing it in emulated form. The goal, as the title indicates, is to to escape from a base by typing one- or two-word commands. But there's all kinds of problems with the Plus/4 conversion. First, the program draws the graphics for the room slowly, making each move time-consuming. Worse, the graphics are a hinderance rather than a help, since they're rather primitive and do little to help you figure out where you are and what you need to to do. Pressing without typing a command will give you a text description of your situation and I'd advice players to use this screen and skip the graphics. But even this won't help overcome solutions that are hard to figure out because of flawed logic or limited vocabulary. The first puzzle, for instance, must be overcome by typing "SHIFT COUCH" to get a rod underneath. Nothing else I tried with the couch worked. Solutions are easily found online, so those wanting a taste of adventuring "back then" can avoid overwhelming frustration. One problem with the emulation is the difficulty I had getting the program to recognize the spacebar - you usually have to hit it several times.

### **European Games (Incomplete)**

There's a sharp difference of opinions in a couple of magazines about this one - and unfortunately I couldn't get it to boot to figure out who's right. This track-and-field action game has five events involving a lot of joystick and button mashing. The bad review from the Plus/4 handbook (59 percent rating) says "the hammer is boring, swimming is a real joystick breaker, the long jump (a) breaker and a quick response to choose your degree of jump, rowing is quite simply a matter of rotating your joystick as fast as possible, weight lifting is another grueling joystick basher." But it also is near the top of some reader polls, although the numbers say nothing about what qualities make it popular.

### **Exorcist (B)**

A Pac-Man-type game where enough elements from other derivatives are mixed to create something fairly unique and interesting. Overall gameplay may be most similar to the somewhat obscure arcade and Colecovision title Pepper II, as the player guides a small frizzy ball around mazes, painting the walls while doing so. Completing all the walls opens doors to portions of a larger overall maze (bigger than the four-screen Pepper II layout). There are the usual chasing monsters, which the player can dispatch of by collecting lightening bolts and other bonuses that pop up in the center of the screen and shooting them. The game isn't top-end polished, but it's fun and easy to learn. One key is not to relax after completing the walls of a maze, since the monsters return to their pen before the doors are open, so players can't engage in close calls and hope to emerge alive. Commodore.de gives this a 70 percent rating.



### **Extra Airwolf (B+)**

Solid helicopter-in-a-maze arcade game, sort of combining elements of Scramble and Choplifter. You have to rescue people from the maze-like caverns, using your guns to either destroy obstacles or hit switches that open doors. You also have to shoot fuel boxes to fill up. Navigating the mazes is a bit tough at times, especially since you sometimes have to be pixel perfect and the animation is jumpy rather than smooth. But the graphics are reasonably attractive for the machine, the mazes are decent, controls are with the keyboard or joystick, and overall it has the intangibles that make for an addictive game. One thing I didn't like is you get no grace moment or relocation of your chopper if you sustain a hit that decreases your shield, and since you only get one chopper it's possible to have a game wiped out in seconds due to one major misstep.

### **Eye Of Kadath (C)**

Know nothing about those text adventures of yesteryear and want to get a taste of them without any real effort? This might be a good choice, since all decisions are preselected - instead of typing commands like "move" or "attack" the player is given a description of the location and situation and asked to pick from several options, usually two to five in number. If anyone remembers the "Choose Your Own Adventure" children's books, this get-stuff-from-the-cavern-and-save-mankind story is similar. If you're going to play a multiple-choice adventure this is better than many, with lengthy descriptions, a decent amount of depth and more selectable options than usual. It even makes sense to make a map as with "real" adventures. But the disadvantages are numerous, beginning with the linear storyline. Essentially all you're doing is guessing what move to make next, since there's rarely much indication what the most logical move in a situation is. Picking the wrong option can result in the undeserved death, one of the most heinous sins of adventure games. And there's no save feature, so basically you're going along until you die, then retracing your steps and trying to get a bit further before dying again. OK for the really lazy who aren't easily frustrated and don't mind constantly retracing their steps on that map, but it's a shame the author didn't make this a conventional adventure.

### **1984 - The Crash**

*A song parody by Alan Hewston*

I thought for sure "1985" was a Weird Al Yankovic song and when I was convinced it was not, I decided to do a Video Game parody of it. Why not.

Here are my lyrics, followed by those of the real tune.  
I'm sure US readers will be familiar with this chart topping hit.

#### **"1984 - The Crash"**

*Lyrics by Alan Hewston*

*As sung to "1985"*

Video Games hit the wall  
the prices had to fall  
Coleco had gone away  
TI saw black Friday  
our dreams went out the door  
when Atari was no more  
'84 brought the Crash  
Would Video Games even last?

I was gonna be a software star  
My games would take me far  
See my games in all the stores  
Or at least set many high scores  
Is our wood-grained Inty, now the enemy  
Look at the average game  
and nothing has been the same, since

Commodore & Sega  
way before Amiga  
there was Apple ][ and Vectrex  
polygons weren't mainstay yet  
my two kids in grade school  
they tell me that I'm a fool  
cuz I'm still wanting more  
from 19, 19, 1984

I've played all the classics  
I know every game  
Centipede, Donkey Kong  
even dedicated Pong,  
we peaked with Robotron  
don't need those polygons  
still want to meet  
the Activision elite.

Where's the mini-game, 2k competition  
must be several hundred now coding for Nintendo  
when did game quality, become quantity  
what ever happen to videogame TV shows  
(or at the arcade)

Commodore & Sega  
way before Amiga  
there was Apple ][ and Vectrex  
polygons weren't mainstay yet  
my two kids in grade school  
they tell me that I'm a fool  
cuz I'm still wanting more  
from 19, 19, 1984

We hate time make it stop  
when did N E S become classic stock?  
And when did Mario become an actor?  
Please make this stop  
Stop!  
And bring back

Commodore & Sega  
way before Amiga  
there was Apple ][ and Vectrex  
polygons weren't mainstay yet  
my two kids in grade school  
they tell me that I'm a fool  
cuz I'm still wanting more  
from 1984

=====

**"1985"**

*As sung by Bowling for Soup*

Debbie just hit the wall  
she never had it all  
one Prozac a day  
husbands a CPA  
her dreams went out the door  
when she turned twenty four  
only been with one man  
what happen to her plan?

She was gonna be an actress



she was gonna be a star  
she was gonna shake her \*\*\*  
on the hood of white snake's car  
her yellow SUV is now the enemy  
looks at her average life  
and nothing has been alright since

Bruce Springsteen, Madonna  
way before Nirvana  
there was U2 and Blondie  
and music still on MTV  
her two kids in high school  
they tell her that she's uncool  
cuz she's still preoccupied  
with 19, 19, 1985

She's seen all the classics  
she knows every line  
Breakfast Club, Pretty in Pink  
even Saint Elmo's Fire  
she rocked out to wham  
not a big Limp Bizkit fan  
thought she'd get a hand  
on a member of Duran Duran

Where's the mini-skirt made of snake skin  
and who's the other guy that's singing in Van Halen  
when did reality become T.V.  
what ever happen to sitcoms, game shows  
(on the radio was)

Bruce Springsteen, Madonna  
way before Nirvana  
there was U2 and Blondie  
and music still on MTV  
her two kids in high school  
they tell her that she's uncool  
cuz she's still preoccupied  
with 19, 19, 1985

She hates time make it stop  
when did Motley Crue become classic rock?  
And when did Ozzy become an actor?  
Please make this stop  
Stop!  
And bring back

Bruce Springsteen, Madonna  
way before Nirvana  
there was U2 and Blondie  
and music still on MTV  
her two kids in high school  
they tell her that she's uncool  
cuz she's still preoccupied  
with 1985

## Game Over

Before we wrap up this month's issue, I'd like to thank everyone who contributed to this issue. I know it hasn't be easy with me not really being here, but thank you for picking up the slack these past two months. I also want to thank all of you who continue to check us out and support us all this time.

Next month will mark our second anniversary. I should be back to my normal schedule, and hopefully the other writers have a lot more stuff for you. Be sure to check us out next month, same RTM time, same RTM website.

- [Adam King](#), Chief Editor

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