

Retrogaming Times Monthly

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Press Fire to Start

by Adam King

Greetings, gamers, and welcome to a "better late than never" edition of RTM. Sorry about the lateness for this issue but my life's been hectic the past few weeks and I've barely had any time to get this sucker done. But here it is so away we go.

The Many Faces of . . . Up 'n Down

by Alan Hewston

This month we're back with a full review covering the many, (but mostly hard-to-find) faces of Up 'N Down. In honor of the Indianapolis 500, I try to review a racing/driving game this time of year - in this case there is not that much high speed action, but hey! - It's still a driving game. At the arcades, this Bally/Midway game in a Sega cabinet did pretty well back in 1983. The game is a single player (at one time), vertical scrolling driving game with a three-quarters view of a VW Bug (Baja Bugger) which must drive over top of (collect) a complete set of colored flags along various motocross courses. Once all 10 flags are collected, the round is completed and you will move on to a different and more complex/difficult course. Each course has traffic (other motocross racers), turns, intersections and obstacles, but all paths are a single lane wide as they zig-zag up and across the screen. You lose your vehicle if you touch or are touched by any other vehicle, make contact with the obstacles (bridge-out & dead ends), or if you jump and do not land on the roadway. Early on, the game is somewhat forgiving if you are partially off the road as you land. You earn points by moving forward or backwards along the road and for collecting the flags and other bonus items. The faster you complete each round the more bonus points (if any) you can earn.

You tap the stick forward/back and adjust the speed of your buggy in increments (about 4 speed settings on home versions) going forward or reverse. Tap the direction you want to go to speed up or slow down and on some versions you can even come to a complete stop. You're able to jump only when moving forward, but once airborne, you can tap the stick quickly and speed up (forward) or down (reverse) but always moving in a straight line. That is, you cannot make turns when airborne, but you can defy laws of physics by speeding up or slowing down (thrusters perhaps). Fortunately when on the roadway, your car steers itself following any curvature of the course, but always continues straight through intersections. You can turn/steer when at any intersection both if moving forwards or in reverse. Likewise the other cars can change directions at intersections and in some home versions the other cars may change directions as well. When driving on level ground, your buggy will maintain its present speed (no need to move joystick) and as appropriate, it will speed up or slow down due to any hills. In order to maintain your speed when going uphill, you must hold the stick (that direction you are moving) the entire time going up the hill or you will quickly lose your speed and then start rolling downhill (making you helpless - ie defenseless as you cannot jump if moving in reverse). Holding the stick to maintain speed on hills is necessary regardless if you are going uphill in forward or reverse.



So . . . you can change your speed and course (turn at intersections), and even move in reverse to change paths and collect all the flags and also seek out bonus items. You must avoid the other cars but the most fun is in jumping and smashing the other cars (ala Bump 'N Jump) - which does not harm your buggy and you get points for doing so. When you smash another vehicle, it is gone from your view and you continue on driving as if you simply landed on the roadway and they were never there. There is no limit to the number of enemy cars on each course, but the number on screen and their speeds and AI will increase with the rounds. You also must jump and be moving fast enough to clear all hazards when there is a break in the road or bridge out, or jumping from one lane to another. The other cars cannot jump and do not collect the flags, but in later rounds 1 vehicle will drive around with a flag (possibly a color you want or if not a blank flag). The less time you take to complete each course, the more bonus points you can earn, but if you take too long, you get nothing. At the arcade, Sega's "Pengo" makes a guest appearance in Up 'N Down if you complete each of the first 4 rounds in under a minute each. Pengo then appears in the water of round five riding a surf-board - something worth trying to see (on MAME).

Arcade: 1983 Bally Midway.

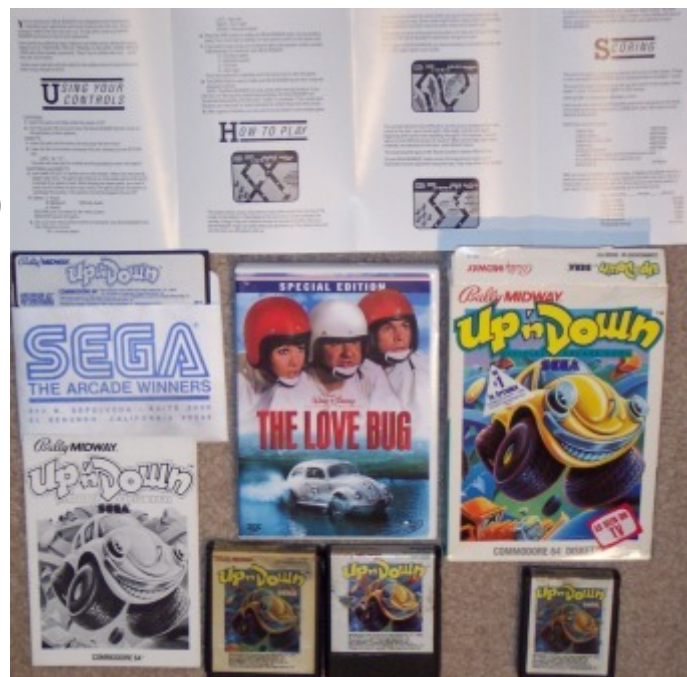
Home versions all released in 1984 - mostly by Sega

- Apple II - Sega
- Atari 2600 - Sega
- Atari 8 bit computer - Sega
- C64 - Sega/USGold (by Jack L. Thornton Jr. & music by Tony Vece)
- CV - Coleco

Rumor Mill: Atari 5200 (likely to have been a port/copy of the Atari 800) & Sinclair Spectrum (never came out, but was planned/announced).

Home Version Similarities. Except those in <> all home versions have: a demo mode <AP2 & 2600>; a pause <2600>; a restart <AP2>; a

choice of 2 players (not simultaneous) <AP2>; a choice of up to 3 starting rounds <2600, AP2 & CV>; there are several different motocross courses or maps in the sequence, which will then repeat; as you progress, they get more challenging and varying; there are up to 3 <2600 only 2> simultaneous paths seen on-screen at a time; 10 <2600> different flags to collect to complete each round; flags collected change color to become blank once you drive over them <2600>; the flags remaining display area shows all the flags <CV> and colors them in or blanks them once you collect that color; at some point (round 5 or higher) blank flags that are driven over will toggle back on <AP2? & 2600> (to their color - just like Q*bert), meaning you have to drive back over them to complete the round [This sounds so simple - a toggle - but it adds greatly to the difficulty strategy and overall gameplay of this driving/collect-em-up]; there can be more than one flag of each color type on each course, and if so all flags of the same color toggle on/off together; there are 4+ enemy vehicle types; the number of enemy cars is sparse in the first round <AP2, 2600, Atari 8 Bit & CV>; there is a gradual increase in their numbers and speed for the next few rounds <AP2>; enemy cars will drive at different speeds and they can drive both forward (up), or in reverse (down); some enemies can carry a flag <Atari 8 bit? & Ap2?>; the scrolling action up or down is smooth, but the continuity of where vehicles (& some bonus items) are on the course is lost once it is completely off-screen; in general the flags are fixed on each course, but in some versions the flags disappear and/or move about on the course (I did not try to keep track of this or penalize); if you lose a life, your next Buggy always starts at the same starting point on the course, and the flags remain collected (or not) as they were when you crashed; so the final flag or 2 may be located behind you (go backwards) from the starting point; the score, round number and # of lives remaining are displayed on screen; after completing each round, you get a short break in the action <2600> and see a screen displaying you how long you took to complete the course, and the bonus points you can earn with a fast enough race. Nearly all of these faces come with a steep price tag for the cart, so I did not disqualify any of them.



Herby says "Not many of these faces are easy to find in the wild".

Have Nots: Apple II (34)



My first reaction was that the frustration comes early, often and is multifaceted. It hits you on all cylinders - being too difficult, having way too many enemy cars, clumsy controls and then to top it off a terribly slow pace in the action. And then, you cannot start over, but must wait until the next game begins, which it does automatically, which is also pretty lame. The Gameplay is of good quality (8) but could be better if the speed were faster . . . and I could not make it far enough to determine if the flags toggle or if the other cars can carry flags - if yes for both of these, then add another point. As is the case with all home versions, there is quite a lot of depth to this game with

the various cars and speeds, intersections, bridges out and dead end traps, a lot of variety in the courses, changing speeds, changing directions, collecting items and bonuses, smashing other cars and having an unseen (no pressure) timer along the way. Quite a lot going on and the AP2 gets most of it done well. Addictiveness is decent (6) but as mentioned is so frustrating. The difficulty and lack of a quick reset really hurts. The usual pause <Esc> is here but there's no choice to play a higher skill level or start at a higher round. Graphics are good enough (6) to play but the details are lacking - making it a little hard to know where you are, or if you have landed. There is some color variety,

graphic variety, multi-colors, backgrounds and animation, but they are all poor. The scrolling action is good. The track variety, hills, demo, number of enemy cars, flags and numeric and flag displays are all good. The Sound is OK (6) but the music is only present during the title screen and not during gameplay. The effects are mostly there, but sound a bit tinny (internal speakers). Most notably missing is the effect for jumping. Controls I scored an (8) as they suffer partly from the analog controls, and partly from very slow response to changing speeds. You cannot tap the stick here, but must push all the way up, then re-center, then push all the way up . . .all very quickly and it really wears on you . . . over and over. The terrain makes your buggy change speeds faster than you can control, which is not fair. Also it seems that you cannot jump again as quickly as you can on the other versions.

Only found on diskette. As is often the case for original disks, they are semi to very hard to find as an original. Thank goodness for pirating to keep this platform alive. Ranting time: Maybe AP][owners never parted with their collections, or stuff went right to the trash. Ebay dealers want way too much money for original disks. Granted they do not show up in auctions that much, and no surprise that they often get no bids - ie you're asking too much for them - and they may no longer work. Maybe 99% of all remaining Apple][originals are owned by like 100 people total - I dunno, but I'm glad that I'm not looking for Originals any more.

Have Nots: Atari 2600 (36)



My first reaction was to agree with most reviewers and hate the looks of it, but applaud the effort and effectiveness of what was achieved. The Gameplay is the worst here, but still very good (7). Most elements are in place, but a little lacking in depth - fewer flags, only 2 lanes, not as many dead ends or intersections, and fewer enemies on-screen. The flags do not blank out when collected, which means there is probably no toggling of flags in later rounds, but at least in place of these missing flags, there are added bonus items. A surprising, unique feature is that the cars will change directions on you. Addictiveness is decent (6) with a couple choices for difficulty

option (easy jump) but not a starting round. There is no pause and the difficulty is a bit too hard. There's not quite a demo mode, but the screen continues to change to show a different portion of the courses. A nice way to display something unique on the screen, while keeping the TV from burning in. Graphics are not surprisingly the worst here, (5) mediocre, with everything blocky and blurry. It's hard to tell where you are when trying to turn and gauge the speed increase for each hill. Some cars disappear right in front of your eyes. There is no animation and all other graphics categories are poor, save for color variety which is pretty good. Sound is surprisingly crisp (8) with a terrific musical score that has possibly more duration and variety than all the other versions. Most of the effects are in place, but most notably missing is one for jumping. Controls are perfect (10). Obviously this cart is not worth \$65 on the merits of the game alone, but it is collectible.

Silver Medal: Colecovision & Atari 8 bit computer (42)

Another close race and they both did well enough to medal. If one could clean up the problems for both silver medalists, they'd both gain on the C64. I'd probably go with the CV and its screen clarity.

Colecovision (42)



My first reaction was this one could win the gold until I discovered a big setback to the addictiveness - you can cheat and stand still and score points and jump while standing still and score more points by crashing enemy cars all day. Yawn. But hey, you can probably hit 7 figures, and roll it over in an hour. Gameplay is outstanding (9) with nearly everything in place, save for a minor deduction for not having the complete set of flags on display. I really want to see them all at a glance, but a clever (but was it really necessary) work around to save space on the display is to show 1 flag and have the number of flags

remaining next to it and each of the remaining colors alternates on the display of this one flag. A bonus life is earned at 25 K and around 60K and maybe more later. Addictiveness is very fun (7) with a pause <0> and the above mentioned cheat hurting the replay value here. While there is no start round option, I gave some credit the choice of 3 difficulty settings. But as is typical of the CV, the "Easy" setting is plenty hard - so not much help in the replay value here. Graphics are (7) pretty good with the best clarity and good scrolling action, good choice of colors, color variety, graphics variety, and your multi-colored buggy. But the other cars could use more variety, multi-color and animation. The numeric and flags remaining displays are poor. Sound is fantastic (9) with a nice in-game musical score and an end of round jingle. The effects are all in place, plus two unique effects for when the buggy lands and when going downhill. Nice! Controls just barely scored a (10). The controls interface could be improved as only the player active can use their "0" to pause the game. Thus you are forced to use CV controllers - cannot use both a third party controller and pause. Those hating the CV controls may readily lower the score to 9. A \$40 price tag for the cart means you'll have a hard time finding this one, so look for the C64 instead.

Atari 8 bit (42)



My first reaction was they made great efforts to make the Buggy look good, and 3-D but then forgot to add in color and graphics variety. The Graphics are exciting (7), but as is often the case, too busy and not so clear. There is room to improve the animation, multi-color and details. The Gameplay is impressive (8) but has fewer cars and variety at higher levels than the other medal winners and no sign of bonus items or a car carrying a flag. There is no bonus life through 25K, but it may occur higher. Addictiveness is enjoyable with no setbacks and is the best (8). The difficulty actually starts you at rounds 1,2 or 3 and your pause is the . Sound is outstanding (9) right

up there with the other medal winners and a nice musical score. There's title music, end of round, bonus screen music and a congratulatory jingle if you earn a bonus. Only thing missing (unknown) is an effect if/when you collect a bonus item. But this is the only version with a "Game Over" jingle. Controls are perfect (10). The \$40 price tag for the cart will have you looking for emulation or a floppy disk copy really fast.

Gold Medal: Commodore 64 (44)



My first reaction was how frustrating this game is, but then after playing the others, this one has a bit more staying power being among the best in Graphics, Gameplay and Sound. Gameplay is all there and (9) well-done. Extra life earned around 30 K. Addictiveness is very fun (8) with an easy first round and gradually increases in difficulty. The pause is and you can begin on rounds 1,2 or 3. Two drawbacks, (maybe because I played it too much) is the collision detection seems to be less consistent here and the change in speeds on those hills seems too fast to control and requires more time learning where this occurs. Graphics are (8) pretty nice but not much

high speed action on any version, so 9 is the limit on slower action games like this one. The details, multi-color, color and graphics variety, backgrounds, and scrolling are all good. The animation is OK and the numeric displays are the best. Sound is first class (9) with everything matching the Atari except for a "Game Over" jingle. There is an effect for collecting bonus items. Controls are perfect (10), but as mentioned earlier, you need to learn / beware the effects of the hills. \$10 for this cart makes it the least rare, and a bargain compared to the others.

Final Notes:

After trying in vane, forcing myself to play game after game and failing to see if all game elements are

in place, I think I am burned out and like this game less than when I started. I did come to some closure and have a new outlook. Despite the "race and collect the flags" theme I saw no reason to do so. In fact due to programming, here's my top 10 reasons why NOT to follow that premise.

- 1) Smashing other cars earns you points. So Crash cars.
- 2) Smashing cars earns you even more points than collecting flags!
- 3) Smashing cars will help keep you alive by not colliding with them.
- 4) A slow diet of Smashing cars is safer than driving too fast to beat the clock.
- 5) Smashing cars requires moving forwards, which earns you points safer than when moving in reverse. So move forward and smash cars.
- 6) Smashing cars is even worth more than bonus items.
- 7) Smashing cars will always earn you points, whereas the flags will disappear.
- 8) A bonus life can be earned if you score enough points so keep on smashing cars.
- 9) The round doesn't get harder if you keep on smashing cars and avoid flags.
- 10) Finally, if you complete a round the courses get harder but you do not earn any more points, so keep crashing cars on round 1 forever.

OK, so now I may have ruined the game for you, but hold on. Since it is not necessary to ever complete a course, yet keep playing, you can probably get your best score, or play forever all on round one. This pretty much makes the score in this game meaningless and hopefully my fellow judges at Twin Galaxies (correct me if I am wrong) will agree that the points scored are not the best indicator of your skill at this game. So forget the high scores and my Top 10 reasons to smash cars. What you really need to do (easier said than done) is to ignore collecting points and just focus on completing as many rounds as possible. The highest round completed means a lot more than a score. Hopefully I will have saved you a lot of trouble and you can now just go out and collect those flags, and conquer each course in a safe and responsible manner. Drive safely! Buckle up. And don't drink and drive.

Acknowledgements, Updates and Errata from last month.

Thanks again for help a few years back from Stephen and Sir Thomas for their floppy disk copies. I'm sure that I owe someone else thanks for saving one of these rare carts just for me to buy or trade for.

Come back next month: I'm falling behind and late on my submissions, so I will keep trying every month, but if you don't see one, then I'll be back the next month. Look for the many faces of Vanguard for the Atari 2600, 5200 & Atari 8 bit computers. Rumor Mill for the TI-99. Contact Alan at:

Hewston95@NOSPAMstratos.net or visit the Many Faces of site:

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

ColecoNation

by [Nathan Kozlowski](#)

Magical Tree review

With an official release only occurring in Japan in 1985, one would assume that Magical Tree must be one of the rarer games in the MSX library. However, it quickly spread through Europe via imported copies and has since become one of the most popular games for the system. After much anticipation, Opcode's Magical Tree made its ColecoVision debut at this year's NorthWest Classic Gaming Enthusiasts Expo and now everyone has the chance to see what all the hub-bub's been about.

In Magical Tree, you are Apache Kid, the youngest, smallest member of the tribe. However, what you lack in stature, you make up in insane jumping skills (we're talking NBA talent here). Apparently there's a very big tree in the middle of the forest and rumor has it that a mysterious castle sits at its top. Seeing how everyone else in the tribe was acting like a pansy and refusing to check the tree out, you decide to show them how its done and set off to reach the tree's top.

The journey up the tree is divided in to stages and once you reach a new stage's starting point, you'll never fall past it if you were to miss a branch or jump. Falling is the least of your problems though, since this will not kill you but only set you back. The real issues are the inhabitants of the tree. Apparently, numerous animals live in the tree and they don't take kindly to visitors. Avoiding the touch of the owls, caterpillars, and cocoons are critical, because they (along with the occasional lightning bolt) will kill you and take you to the beginning of your current stage.



Considering the long trek required to reach the top, you'll be disappointed to learn that you only get three lives. Not to worry, more can be earned by reaching specific point totals. Also, when you eventually use up all your lives, the game allows you to continue at whichever stage you left off. Both are nice features of Magical Tree, because very few will be able to complete the mission without some extra help.

Magical Tree progresses at a nice pace, which adds to the overall enjoyment of the game. While you instinctively want to race up the tree's branches, no time limit is forcing you to do this and you tend to be rewarded more for climbing the tree at a slow and cautious speed. The more points you earn the more lives you will be rewarded with, so take your time and get the treasures and gems that are found in every stage. Also, make a point to knock the owl out with an acorn. It's not a required action, but it'll give you some points and, more importantly, it's fun to do.

It's the game's humorous side that really makes it fun to play. Most of these touches are subtle and inconsequential to gameplay, but all make this game truly unique. The owl-hunting with the acorns is one example, but essentially everything Apache Kid does adds amusement to the challenge. Everything from his little dance after every stage to his facial expressions when he's hanging from a branch are all nice touches that give the kid a personality that the player is able to relate to. It's also difficult to get frustrated when you die or take a big fall, since the kid's humorous expressions during these events lessen the gravity of the situation.

Magical Tree has many strong points, but monotony is its one weakness. The detail and vibrancy of the game's graphics are some of the console's best, however the music gets old fairly quick. The sound effects are solid; it's just that the short-looped melody adds more distraction than enjoyment. No complaints can be found with the gameplay, the flexibility of control and movements (jump, climb, and hang) enable you to effectively take on the game's challenges. Unfortunately, the diversity of obstacles is limited and the length of your journey is quite long. Climbing is great, but after a while you wish that both the course and the enemies would change up a bit.



Magical Tree is another solid game from Eduardo Mello, with gameplay and graphics that make it a standout in the ColecoVision library. Not only is the game fun to play, but it has qualities that appeal to a larger audience. It offers a challenge that is difficult enough for the classic gamer, but approachable to those who normally shy away from the intensity found in your average arcade game. Make your hippy neighbor proud and do some tree-hugging of your own with Magical Tree.

Be sure to check out www.ColecoNation.com for the latest issue and more great ColecoVision articles.

Commodore Corner

by [Brett Brunell](#)

This month is another review of another Commodore 64 classic! I will be reviewing a great sequel, Pitstop II!

Pitstop II (copyright © 1984 Epyx)



The title screen



The options screen

*** DESCRIPTION ***

Pitstop II is basically one of the best Formula 1 racing games ever made. What sets this game apart from other Commodore 64 titles is its two player component. Two players can play the game simultaneously! When you consider that this game was made in 1984, you have to wonder how they did it. It was definitely a game ahead of its time!



The Racing Action!!

*** SCORING ***

Misc: 7/10 - Unfortunately, this game takes forever to load. Multiple levels of difficulty, numerous tracks, and great AI give this game overall thumbs up!

Graphics: 9/10 - The graphics are amazing for 1984. Epyx mixed the 16 color palette quite nicely on this one. Six tracks are also available. This game makes you say "What's Pole Position?"

Sound: 7/10 - As always, the sound in this Epyx game is on or above par. Semi-realistic tire squeals and engine revs.

Playability: 10/10 - Playability is where this game shines. The various difficulty levels make this game fun in one player mode, but for a real treat, grab a friend and play head to head.

Originality: 6/10 - This game is basically a rip off of Turbo, Pole Position, and Enduro but with some nice extras like pit stops, tire changes, and running out of fuel.

Overall: 39/50 - Just an awesome game all around. If you don't have this in your C=64 collection, get it! I just wish they would have made a Pitstop III!

***** MISCELLANEOUS *****

- Pitstop II was created by Stephen H. Landrum & Dennis Caswell.
- The original Pitstop was released in 1983 by Epyx. It was only a one player game.
- Pitstop II was available in cassette, cartridge, and disk formats.
- Pitstop II was released on Apple II, Atari 8-bit, Commodore 64, PC Booter, and TRS-80 CoCo.

Brett Burnell is a programmer/analyst for Donegal Insurance in Marietta, 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 - Gauntlet

by [David Lundin, Jr.](#)

We've reached the end of the line, only one NES Tengen game that saw the light of day is left to be looked at - that game is Gauntlet. In one of the most obvious home conversions Tengen could have decided upon, and one of the first unlicensed NES games ever, this arcade masterpiece was headed to living rooms across the nation. In the arcades of the mid 1980's Gauntlet was a smash hit. Featuring an overhead view of vast and complex dungeons filled with enemies and puzzles, there were few other games that received the same 'round the clock play. Up to four players could adventure together, leaving and joining the quest at any time. Take the role of Thor the Warrior, Thydra the Valkyrie, Merlin the Wizard, or Questor the Elf on an endless adventure through the Gauntlet. Even though the levels would become increasingly more complex and enemy infested, the goal remained the same: to survive and find the exit to the next stage.

Some compromises had to be made when converting the game over to the NES hardware. Of course the first being the limitation of only having two controller ports which cut the number of simultaneous players in half. However Tengen got clever and worked the limitation into the backstory, explaining that the portal into the Gauntlet would only allow the passage of two mortals, forcing two of the warriors to remain behind. Even though only two can play at the same time, all four characters are selectable. The basic abilities of each character carry over nicely onto the NES - Thor is strong but slow, Thydra is well balanced, Merlin has weak defense but strong magic, and Questor is very fast but is also very weak. The next change is how health is given to your character. In the arcade each credit gave its respective character 700 additional units of health, this meant as long as you kept plunking coinage into the machine, you would live forever. The NES version starts each character out with a specific base amount of health. As treasures are collected the maximum amount of health increases, starting at the first 50 treasures, then 100, then 200, and so forth doubling each time. While this makes searching out every last bit of treasure far more important than in the arcade version it also makes the game much more difficult since every little hit and wasted step adds up.



Instead of simply replicating the stages of the arcade and having no central goal to the game, the NES version paints a fantasy backstory of the warriors setting off on a quest to retrieve the Sacred Orb. Morak the Evil One has imprisoned the Sacred Orb in the lowest level of his Gauntlet, guarded by the fearsome Guardian. There are one hundred individual rooms in five worlds which must be conquered in order to reach the Guardian and gain the Sacred Orb. However it's not that easy, many rooms have multiple exits that will turn you around and send you back and forth between already completed areas. Additionally to gain the Sacred Orb you must find your way into the eight clue rooms and uncover the special combination that will release the Sacred Orb to you at the end of the game. If this sounds like a lot of bother - it is. This huge fetch quest makes the overly complex ending stages of the Tengen port of Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom look like a cake walk. There is a password feature but it will only return you to the last treasure room you completed. Yet with these changes the core of the game is still in tact.

The enemies are faithfully recreated, keys still have to be found to open doors, enemy generators still need to be destroyed to keep from being overwhelmed, the health meter constantly ticks down and survival is paramount. It just doesn't look anywhere as good as it did in the arcade but the graphics are more than passable. Nearly all the audio effects from the arcade are missing however that's to be expected as arcade Gauntlet had hundreds of digital sound effects and voice clips. Instead a few nice dungeon crawling tunes play in the background however they don't seem to be stage specific. It may all be there but it goes sour quick for one reason and one reason alone. Gauntlet in the arcade was a game of frenzied action and quick strategy. The NES version is riddled with slowdown that causes horrible control lag which leads to missed shots and death. Half of the time you will constantly be killing enemies to keep their numbers down just so the game will get back to a somewhat stable frame rate. It is because of this glaring problem that the game goes from being a vast challenge to an exercise in frustration. Additionally player characters move slower diagonally than they do vertically or horizontally which is blatantly unfaithful to the arcade version. Once the limited health is tacked on top of that and not being able to add extra credits for health at any time, the game simply quits being fun. It's a shame since if the frame rate was more stable this would be an awesome adventure game for the NES.

What you're left with is a game that's a lot of fun through the first dozen stages but after that the technical limitations begin to appear which causes the entertainment factor to disappear. Tengen gave gamers more with the NES version of Gauntlet but maybe they offered up a little too much. Simply put, it's far too ambitious a task for someone that enjoyed Gauntlet in the arcade. Much in the same way as with Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom later on, Tengen simply drifted too far away from the arcade formula and ended up giving the player overwhelming choices in what should have been an action arcade game. Just the same both a licensed and unlicensed version were released with only the usual copyright screen changes. In the end Gauntlet on the NES is a strange enigma. A game I want so desperately to just sit down with for hours and fight my way to the end, yet after

getting half way through world three things have gotten so frustrating that I simply give up. There's so much potential there but it never comes to fruition.

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

Nintendo Realm - Late June to Mid July 1985

by [Scott Jacobi](#)

Another month, another 8 Famicom games, only three of which made it to the United States in some form. This selection of games starts out with a bunch of great arcade ports, but ends with two luke warm titles. Never the less, I will cover them to give you an idea of what sort of titles came out in Japan that should have made it to America, and which titles were rightfully excluded from localization. No Famicom editorial this month, let's go straight to the games.

Hyper Olympics, released by Konami on June 21, 1985. Released as the first half of Track & Field in the US on April 1987

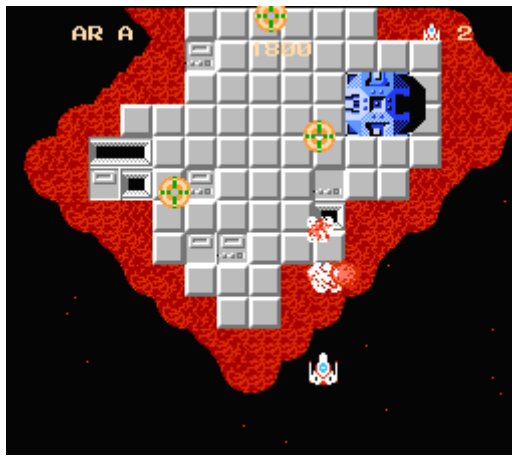
If you were ever in an arcade from 1983 to roughly 1985, you are probably familiar with this game. Track & Field was a very unusual title from the sports genre of games. For controls, it employed just three buttons; left foot, right foot, and jump/throw. Novice players and experts alike could be seen mashing on the left and right buttons as rapidly as they could in order to break the "Olympic records" stored by the game. The arcade version contained 6 events. When the game was translated to the Famicom, two of them, the hammer throw and the high jump, were removed to leave room for the 100m dash, long jump, 110m hurdles, and javelin throw events. Konami even released a special controller called the Hyper Shot to use with this game, and it's sequel, Hyper Sports, that merged the left and right run buttons to a single button. Konami had developed the practice of dividing the events across several releases with multiple iterations of Hyper Olympics and Hyper Sports on the MSX computer (which also received the Hyper Shot controller.) When Konami brought this game over to the United States (and Europe,) they merge the two Famicom games together and released it with the American name of Track & Field, which is actually a combination of events from the original Track & Field and the arcade sequel Hyper Sports. Track & Field had a profound effect on the home gaming market, influencing game play styles of several multiple event games such as Activision's Decathlon and Epyx's Summer Games.

Star Force, released by Hudson on June 25, 1985. Released by Tecmo in the US on November 1987

Star Force was originally an arcade game developed in 1984 by Tehkan, which later changed it's name to Tecmo. By today's standards, it would be labeled as a run of the mill vertical shooter. For it's time, it was rather well made, and the port to the Famicom was handled very well by Hudson. (Hudson originally ported the game to the MSX, whose scrolling capabilities were less than stellar, see Gradius.) The game is not remarkable, but it is fun to try. Your ship scrolls upward through space, occasionally flying over isolated islands of land where you can shoot buildings and uncover bonus items. Flying opponents appear fairly constantly in predictable patterns, some harder to avoid than others. Occasionally a powerup appears in the form of a tiny version of your ship. Upon collecting it, you are rewarded with rapid fire until death. Mid-bosses appear in the form of a ship that comes together from four directions partway through the level, and the boss appears as an object on it's own deck surrounded by cannons, which scroll off and disappear shortly after the boss appears. The US conversion of the game reportedly has some improvements over the original Famicom code, but I personally didn't notice a big difference.



Hyper Olympics (Track 'n Field)



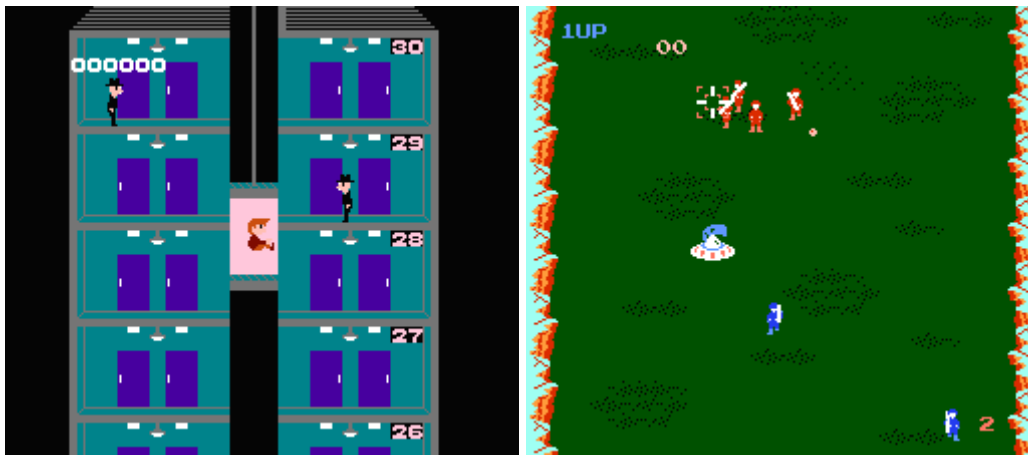
Star Force

Elevator Action, released by Taito on June 28, 1985. Released in the US on August 1987

Like Track & Field, Elevator Action was another rather novel game to hit the arcades. It just didn't attract nearly as much attention. Elevator Action probably offered you more ways to kill your opponents than most other games at the time. You could shoot them, drop kick them, shoot a light so it landed on their heads, or crush them with an elevator. The premise of the game is simple. You start at the very top of a building, and you must descend to the ground, picking up secret plans along the way, and dodging enemy fire. Your primary method of descent is to use the elevators, although you will occasionally be forced to rely on escalators positioned along the sides. Your enemies can make use of these transports as well, and will come out of any door available. They will shoot you on sight, but you can duck under, or jump over the offending bullets. Secret plans can be found behind the red doors and can be picked up for bonus points by standing in front of the door and pressing up. On your way down the elevators, you can fire your gun so that you hit one of the ceiling lamps, causing the light to fall to the ground, (possibly killing an enemy,) and darken the building for a brief period of time, lowering your enemies' inclination to fire at you. By the time you reach the lower half of the building, the elevator shafts form more of a maze for you to navigate until you reach the basement parking lot where your get-away car is waiting. All in all, it's a fun game, a great port, and a recommended play.

Field Combat, released by Jaleco on July 9, 1985

Field Combat is a game you probably have never heard of. You probably didn't know it was an arcade game first either. That's OK, because in my opinion, you haven't missed anything. Field Combat plays like a wanna-be strategy game. You control what looks like a UFO with a giant rotating radar dish on top. You can fire missiles at your enemies, or use an Galaga-like tractor beam on them which absorbs them in to your UFO. Once you absorb an enemy, they join your ranks and can be summoned to fight along with you by pressing both buttons simultaneously. Your goal is to advance to the end of each stage and break through the enemies' defenses. The game grows in difficulty by throwing tougher and greater numbers of enemies at your UFO, some of which can steal your troops back to their side. Your missile range isn't great, and typically puts you within enemy fire range in order for you to hit them. At best, I would call it a neat idea with a flawed execution.



Elevator Action

Field Combat

Road Fighter, released by Konami on July 11, 1985

While Road Fighter will never be considered an A-class racing game, it is quite a fun simple racer that includes some interesting twists on the game play. The game is played from a bird's eye view. You will always occupy the bottom space of the screen, giving you a good amount of advanced warning of oncoming cars. You weave in and out of the traffic as the road twists left and right, but always forward. You have two speeds, running in low gear when holding B, and then switching to high gear with A when your speed is high enough. As you progress, you must avoid all the traffic with the exception of the four color cars that provide you with extra fuel. The yellow cars and trailer trucks drive straight while the red and blue cars will occasionally change lanes as they get closer to you, making them a bit harder to predict and avoid. If you hit another car from the side, or run across an oil slick, your car will begin to swerve. At that moment, you have a brief chance to correct the problem by pushing the control pad IN TO the swerve, not away which is what your instincts will tell you to do the first few times. If you don't correct your steering in time, watch your car spin out of control in to the side of the road. Each level must be finished and a little map on the left lets you know how close you are to the goal. Road Fighter was originally an arcade game, and while the port sacrifices some detail and resolution, it's a great simple racing game that didn't make it to the shelves stateside.

Warpman, released by Namco on July 12, 1985

For Namco's 7th Famicom release, they decided to do something a little different. Rather than release a pixel accurate port of one of their more successful arcade games, they developed an update to a lesser known game called Warp Warp. Warpman is the spiritual successor to Warp Warp, in that it updates the graphics quite a bit, but changes virtually none of the game play. In Warpman, you control a character (who ironically looks quite a bit like Dig Dug,) who must zap all the enemies that appear in the space around him. Enemies of different speeds spiral around the outside of the stage, eventually working inward, and all you have to do is avoid them and shoot them. Occasionally, a bonus character will come along, trailing one of the letters E, X, T, R, or A behind them. If you kill them and collect each of the letters, you earn an extra life. Sounds simple, but it gets difficult the longer you play. Additionally, the "galaxy" in the center of the stage lights up from time to time, allowing you to "warp" to an alternate dimension where instead of shooting the enemies, you must bomb them Bomberman style, and you are susceptible to your own blasts. Why would you wish to enter this alternate realm? It is in this realm that you can obtain a power up for you gun that allows you to fire explosive blasts from your gun in the original dimension once you find the hatch that allows you to return. Warpman is a game that looks overly simple at first, but slowly reveals a lot more depth than you could originally perceive.



Road Fighter



Warpman

Zippy Race, released by Irem on July 18, 1985

Now we're down to a lower caliber of game. When comparing Zippy Race to Road Fighter (reviewed above,) Zippy Race looks like it has everything going for it. Clearer larger graphics, and you ride a bike instead of a car like everyone else. Only when you start playing it does it quickly lose all of its charm. It's slow and clunky, and the splits in the road leave very little margin for error. The enemy cars appear to try to cut you off, but will freeze in to position once they get too close to you, so you can dodge them easily unless you get pinned in by the curb. If you get stuck in one lane and you're not in high gear, a car will have no problem simply running you over, but if you stay in high gear when the lane merges, you will most likely crash. Even at top speed, it doesn't really feel like you're moving very quickly. This game didn't get released outside of Japan, and it's easy to see why.

Door Door, released by Enix on July 18, 1985

From the company that would eventually release the legendary Dragon Quest/Warrior series and ActRaiser comes... this. Door Door was another MSX transplant to the Famicom, and it plays like a straight port with no improvements. You are some sort of white blob that wears an oversized baseball cap, and you are stuck in each stage with a set of odd looking monsters. Your goal is to open some of the many doors scattered throughout the stage, lure the monsters in without touching them, and shut the door, locking them out of the stage. Once you manage to get every monster behind a shut door, you advance to the next stage. You can jump over enemies or doors, but if you ever fall more than the height of one ledge, you will die. The graphics are large and simple, and the game play is plodding and slow. It might serve as an interesting distraction for a good period of time, but the pace of the game will be a grind to most players, and few will find they have the patience to sit all the way through the first couple of stages. Only the curious need examine this title.



Zippy Race



Door Door

Of all the machines in his collection, Mike Lee is devoting his new Web site to the humblest.

He acknowledges his Commodore 16 can't match his Commodore 128 (a beefed up Commodore 64) or Amiga 1200 in horsepower and overall gaming quality. He's even got the 16's big brother - a Commodore Plus/4 - but still finds himself gravitating toward the first machine he bought in a shop.

"I thought the games on the C64 was better mostly, simply because of the sprites and sound, but having said that there is something about the C16 games that I can't simply explain," he wrote in an e-mail. "I have seen a few C64 games that were terrible and on the C16 (conversion) was not bad at all."

The Commodore 16 is less crash-prone, has a better case and a more suitable keyboard layout for gaming than the Plus/4, added Lee, whose site is at <http://commodore16.bravehost.com/>. He bought his Plus/4 from eBay, but also is buying a 64K upgrade for his C16 and says he's likely to spend most of his time with latter machine when the memory arrives. At one time he owned pretty much every Sinclair Spectrum model in that long-evolving line, plus a truly meek ZX81 and something called the Oric Atmo, but "I just didn't have the room so something had to go."

Lee's opinion is shared by at least one other member of the user group at the <http://www.commodore16.com/> Web site, which hosts a browser-based emulator and hundreds of games being reviewed here as part of this ongoing series about games on forgotten machines. A U.K. resident calling himself Sixteen Plus says, aside from a fail-prone power supply, a C16 with extra memory beats a Plus/4 any day. The Plus/4 comes with extras like built-in software for applications like word processing, but they are generally considered so lame they don't overcome the machine's deficiencies.

Preferences for "weaker" machines in a computer line are hardly uncommon, especially when the beefier version is partially or wholly incompatible. Nobody had much use for the Apple III. Atari's 5200 console and 1200 series computer contributed to the company's death. Tandy's Color Computer 3 might have been the most powerful eight-bit micro ever, but - and I say this as loyal CoCo fan - so what?

Some of the most famous games in history such as Manic Miner and its sequel Jet Set Willy are part of this month's capsule reviews, and the fact they are mostly as entertaining on "weaker" CPUs speaks volumes about the appeal of the basic concepts and devotion of the programmers doing the conversions (compared to, say, anything by Coleco on an Atari). Most of the games in this list are conversions from well-known Commodore and Sinclair hits, as is the case most of the time, but one original winner for the C16-Plus/4 series is near the end of the list.

Lee's favorite C16 games, by the way, are TimeSlip, Fireant and Commando. I was less enthusiastic, but I also like text adventures, which he says are his least favorite. This is why reviews like these should be taken with the proverbial grain of salt.

Indoor Soccer (B)

The indoor soccer I saw as a kid (the Colorado Avalanche, a name later hijacked by Denver's hockey team) was something like today's arena football: small field, high scoring, and rules generally aimed at fan-pleasing speed and excitement. This game is a decent all-around soccer game, but as someone who doesn't play them often I confess the "indoor" element is lost on me (there are no doubt hoards of European gamers able to dissect the finer points better). One or two players, three skill levels and the option of keyboard or joystick controls make this a user-friendly game. Passing, fouls, penalty kicks and goalkeeping on the scrolling playfield are all implemented well (even fights are possible depending on the foul). Halfs are five minutes each, making for reasonable length matches. Graphics and speed are average, meaning unremarkable and a bit pokey.



Into The Eagle's Nest (C+ on machine/D on emulator)

A Gauntlet-type game with some deficiencies even overlooking a near-fatal emulation problem. It's a popular game ported from the Commodore 64 and some other computers, with the player shooting Nazis instead of monsters. There's four missions to complete instead of dungeons. The ability to select one of them at the beginning of the game is a nice plus. The game looks decent, but movement is screen-by-screen instead of scrolling, a minus. Many of Gauntlet's better features are missing such as multiple characters and players, and the game is considerably slower overall. There's a lot of flicker and for some reason you can't see your shots when they're fired. The biggest problem in the emulated version is the spacebar is both the fire and pause key, so the game does a start-stop thing the entire time. For those who scoff at emulators it's hard to find a better supporting argument than this title.

The Invincible (C-)

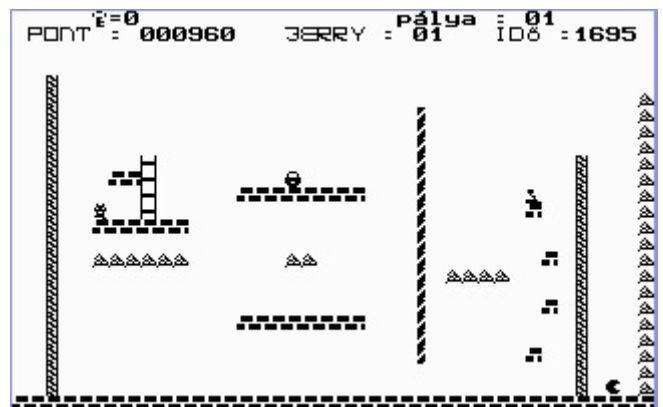
Combinations of popular games are common, but Contra meets Breakout? Sometimes you're a macho dude in a scrolling maze shooting things and sometimes you're a paddle knocking out bricks. It's strange blend, but that'd be OK if the game itself were more playable. Screen flicker in particular is awful and the controls, while passable, could be a lot better.

Jailbreak (F)

An unplayable Breakout game. Has options for joystick or user-defined keys, in-game instructions and decent graphics. But balls are launched quickly from places the player cannot reach, even with blind luck, almost every time. A victory after several games would be hitting the ball once, but even this minor miracle proved impossible.

Jerry 1 and 2 (D/B-)

Skip the first and go directly to the sequel if you want to try these rather weird black-and-white platformers from Hungary. The player's character moves around screens of ladders and platforms, picking up items and avoiding deadly obstacles. It's more puzzle than real-time arcade action, but quick reflexes are needed to cope with certain quirks. If you reach the top of a ladder, for instance, it collapses under you and unless there's some secondary solution to the screen you'll need to commit suicide and start over. Jerry 1 was unplayable on the emulator because some of the controls don't seem to work, but Jerry 2 is a better choice anyhow because of its slightly flashier presentation and larger range of puzzle elements.



Jet Man (Ding Bat) (C+)

This was reviewed as Ding Bat in part two of this series. The summary: "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...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."

Jet Set Willy (A)

If you don't know what this game is you need to play it immediately. For those familiar with it, nothing I write is likely to change your opinion. This 60-platform explorer is among the top sellers in computer game history and may be the most hacked game of the pre-Doom era. Remakes and variations continue to be made for modern computers and handhelds, not to mention endless emulation and tribute pages. All this for a sequel, albeit another mega hit known as Manic Miner. The Plus/4 version seems faithful to the Spectrum original, but I haven't checked out every last detail (something diehards obviously will). Nothing noble about the plot: Miner Willy has to tidy up his house after a party before his housekeeper allows him access to his bedroom. Not only are there objects requiring cleaning up, but much of the house is unexplored and full of nasty creatures. He can only move left, right and jump (easy controls), but there's also ladders and ropes he can use with minimal effort. One major quirk - if you die by falling too far, but that fall causes you to drop onto a lower screen, you begin your next life at the spot of the fall, resulting in an endless chain of unavoidable deaths. Be careful with this, however, and there's lots of fun to keep most people busy for some time.

Karate King (C)

This one-on-one Mortal Kombat beat-em-up is competent, but unremarkable. One or two players fight using eight-way joysticks and fire buttons to move, jump, kick and punch. The backgrounds change, but the pixilated red and blue fighters don't. Matches end with three knockdowns of a player or when the timer runs out. Beyond the monotony of the matches and opponents, collision detection is a little suspect and the controls are sluggish to respond.

King Of Kings (F)

A potentially OK platformer, but the controls make it unplayable as far as I can tell. You're supposed to navigate through screens using left-right movement and a jump key, except there seems to be no way to jump any way except straight up. So getting over the various obstacles can't be done. Unfortunate, but this also looks like it's far from the best of these titles, so no great sense of loss.

Labirinth 4 (B)

Easy to play maze/puzzle arcade game, where you collect money, bombs and keys, avoiding nasties moving in repetitive patterns. Bombs blow away some bricks that are in the way, while keys open doors. Every screen is a real-time puzzle that never changes, but the difficulty level is appropriate and it doesn't take long to get from one screen to the next. But with no save or continue option, the appeal wanes the further you get into the game before having to start over. The other problem is the game moves very quickly and it's not easy to control your man precisely, so you'll die a lot because he couldn't dodge into the door or corridor you were aiming for.

Lazer 900 (D+)

Lukewarm vertical space shooter that progresses through a Centipede-like stage, Space Invaders-like stage and then some meteor dodging before repeating itself. Your ship does only the left-right-fire thing. Graphics are functional and speed is OK. But there's a huge problem here - there seems to be no way to die on the first two stages. The centipede-like chain of balls never reaches the bottom, merely restarting at the top of the screen, and the invaders don't descend from their top position. Furthermore, neither shoot. I understand not wanting to make a game too challenging, but this is a bit absurd unless you've got tots you want to break in gently.

Liberator (B)

Good overhead-view scrolling space shooter, sort of like Xevious turned sideways. You navigate

across enemy bases in space, dodging turret guns that fire a lot of shots and taking out fuel tanks to keep your ship going. Groups of enemy ships also attack in patterns, although they're not a major nuisance once you figure their movements out. At the end of the wave you must blast holes through moving reactor waves and take out the reactor. A lot of good touches throughout, including requiring the player to only complete the reactor stage instead of the entire wave if they die at that point. I wasn't a huge fan of the only up-and-down movement and there's games like this with more variety, but none of the faults are all that serious.

Lloyd Game (C)

The high-tech version of those sliding number puzzles with numbers between 1 and 15, also known as the Puzzle game early Mac owners couldn't wait to delete from their desktops. This version isn't terribly flashy and the control scheme takes a bit of getting used to, but it's passable. The feature I like most, which others may hate, is having a time limit to complete the puzzle by.

Locomotion (A-)

I'm no model train fan and it's possible I'm overrating this puzzle/arcade hybrid, but there's a depth and challenge here that's addictive as long as you're willing to read the instructions and take sufficient time to figure things out. You control a locomotive on about 50 screens of tracks, collecting gold from various locations and delivering it to the bank. Parts of the track are damaged and require materials to be delivered by truck for repairs. There's also bandits that steal gold, other engines to avoid collisions with and switch points to be manipulated so the train doesn't derail. There's a lot of nice gameplay touches like requiring time for the train to speed up and slow down. There's eight levels of play, with the first four being more puzzle-oriented and the final four presenting more of an arcade-pace challenge. It's not nearly as in-depth as the Railroad Tycoon games and their ilk, but Locomotion is a predecessor worth spending time with.



Logomaze (B)

A maze puzzler that's a little like those marble-in-the-wood-maze toys. The player is a circle that supposed to get from start to finish on screens with blocks in various places, sort of like a Pengo playfield. Moving in any direction doesn't stop until the character reaches a block or wall, so the trick is figuring out how to use the barriers to stop you in the right places. By the way, there are time and movement limits for each screen. It starts easy and gets challenging after a few screens. It's fun in the way other quick-thinking strategy games like Balderdash are, especially since a password system lets you skip previously played screens. But it's also not top-end excitement.

Manic Miner (B+)

Way too much has been written about this all-time classic platformer, which was basically part of the Mario world of its day (it was the prequel to Jet Set Willy, reviewed earlier). Versions have been written for dozens of platforms, including modern translations for cell phones and PC/Mac computers. Originally written for the Sinclair Spectrum, it features 20 levels (more or fewer on some other platforms) of gathering keys, avoiding various patrolling creatures and navigating platform tricks like conveyor belts and melting blocks. The move and jump controls are exceptionally simple - it's figuring out the proper series of moves that allow you to get all the keys on a level and exit through a portal before your air runs out that are the challenge. The Plus/4 version is a mostly average port across the board - no immediate enhancements or omissions come to mind, but that's without playing all of the levels and comparing them to the original. It seems just a bit pokey in the emulator, but it's unfair to assume the real thing is as well. Since nearly every reviewer/user fell over themselves to praise this, I thought I'd include one of the harsher assessments - which includes one of my irritations - from the

rather colorful gaming site Way Of The Rodent, which slams every aspect of the original down to its flatulent sound effects: "The difficulty in Manic Miner is implemented in the cheapest and crappiest way possible: by putting obstacles in the player's way that you have to be at EXACTLY the correct pixel position to jump over."

Mansion Adventure 1 (F/Incomplete)

This text adventure is one of those clunkers that gets shelved and never played again five minutes after booting it up for the first time, with my intolerance for playing it at any length the only reason it doesn't get a failing grade outright. You begin the adventure in a locked room with an iron bar and a sheet of paper. The problem is the text interpreter doesn't recognize either object - "read paper," "take bar," etc. result in "I don't understand the noun" messages.

Mine Field (C)

Yup, this is a port of the avoid-the-bombs puzzler Microsoft has been including as part of Windows since the beginning of time. You move around a grid of squares (15X10 in this version), trying to locate those that contain bombs without actually touching them. Empty squares indicate how many bombs are adjacent, so a little logic usually goes a long way. This differs from the classic version in that squares are automatically exposed as you move, instead of allowing the player to select which ones are uncovered. This means you must be much more careful moving, lest you hit a wrong key accidentally and end the game. Also, this version only gives the bomb count for the square you're in instead of keeping numbers in squares as they're uncovered. Both changes deter the enjoyment factor slightly, but it may be a better choice for most than Minesweeper (see below), which has a playfield so large it's hard to complete a game in one sitting. Of note: The simplicity is self-evident from the title screen, where the programmer notes it's his first game.

Minesweeper (C)

This version is perhaps a tad flashier due to a huge scrolling minefield, but less enjoyable because you can't finish a game in a few minutes and get back to work. This version is closer to the Windows game that addicts/bore millions: move a marker around with the arrow keys, press <SPACE> to uncover tiles and a number showing how many bombs are in adjacent tiles appears. Uncover a bomb and the game is over. Pressing the slash key places a flag on a tile where you suspect a bomb is. Mark all the bombs correctly and you win. It gets the same grade as Mine Field (above) for being closer to the original's gameplay and, if you've never played any version, this isn't a bad way to sample the experience.

Moon Buggy (B-)

This Moon Patrol clone is just that in many ways, with graphics and gameplay as close to the arcade version of this scrolling space shooter as one is likely to find on this machine. But three problems hamper the enjoyment of piloting a vehicle across the surface of the moon, jumping and shooting the rocks and spaceships that get in way. First, the game is slow - maybe half that of the coin-op. Second, it's far too difficult from the start (no indicator, by the way, of beginner and expert courses). Finally, the controls are a bit off - the left and right joystick movements control the rate of scrolling, not where your buggy is, so you can't move to avoid shots descending from above. Also, the fire button causes you to jump and shoot at the same time, not always what you want to do. It's possible to do each separately using the keyboard to fire and up control on the joystick to jump, but that option also seems less responsive. A real shame, since a few minor tweaks would make this a long-term keeper.

Motor Mania (C+)

This Pole Position/Hang On replica gets an "A" for first impressions, with slick presentation, great graphics, dead-on controls, nice 3D visual effects and a seemingly well-designed set of tracks. You have a tight time limit to complete tracks, but a supply of three motorcycles, so if you fail you don't have to start the game from scratch. But the longer I played the lower its grade dropped, until at the end I was ready to give it near-failing grades for playability. The reason? It's far too easy, even for racing-game stiffs like myself. There are no other cars on the tracks, which get more difficult for a few waves, but stop doing so way too quickly. The controls are so precise your motorcycle never slides out of control even at full speed in tight turns, making crashes all but nonexistent unless you fall asleep at the wheel. I was ready for a nap after reaching wave 25 on my first game with little effort and bikes to spare. Instead I quit and am not likely to make a return trip anytime soon. The grade is strictly for the first-rate polish.



Mr. Puniverse (A-)

It's another room-by-room platformer, where you jump around collecting and avoiding things - yet I kept playing longer than most. As with many good titles there's nothing revolutionary - just excellent implementation of lots of familiar elements. Enemies and fixed hazards do their best to shoot or squash you as you try to get from one linked screen to the next. There's no time element, but an energy meter limits aimless exploring. It normally decreases while moving and recharges when the player stops, but the tiles on some surfaces suck it dry rapidly, leaving virtually no time for wasted movements. Even when you die because you're caught off-guard by the challenge of a new room there's a feeling it can be conquered on the next try. And since the program gives you plenty of men to start, a few sacrificial deaths aren't overly stressful. Got a mention as one of the top games for the C16 and Plus/4 from a users' group recently, with the mention it's apparently a title unique to the machines.

Music Maze (C-)

A bit of short-term fun that loses points for lack of depth and a conceptual flaw that leaves too much to chance. You move around a scrolling maze, only a small portion of which is visible at any given time, looking for items and returning to the starting point before time runs out. The graphics are nothing special, but adequate, and the controls and game speed are fine. Problem is the time limit is short and finding items is more or less dependent on random luck. Playing it once or twice is enjoyable, but there's no motivation to get better.

Game Over

Once again it's time to sign off for another month. Again I apologize that this issue was so late. Hopefully this won't become a habit in the future. Join us again next month for another great issue of Retrogaming Times Monthly!

- [Adam King](#), Chief Editor

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