

Retrogaming Times

Monthly

Issue #30 - November 2006

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Attract Mode

by [Scott Jacobi](#)

As the new editor, I wanted to come up with a catchy title for my column. So many of the great cliché arcade terms have been taken... Insert Coin. Press Start. It was actually tough to find a good one that hasn't been used until I really thought about what this editorial is supposed to be about. And then it occurred to me. This editorial is about attracting readers and with any luck, new writers. Sure, the regulars are probably going to gloss right over this and jump right to the meat, but if you're new to RTM, this is my chance to welcome you, hook you, and keep you coming back for more. Just like the demonstration mode that runs on an arcade game between quarters. So I decided upon Attract Mode for the name of this column, and I hope it does the job.

I'll be honest with you. As you can see over the past couple of months, RTM has been a little on the light side lately. We've had fewer contributions, and we've recently lost Adam as the editor, who's shoes I can only hope to fill as well. So I'd like to get the message out there once again that we are always looking for new contributors. Each of us who currently contribute to RTM do so because we love sharing our retrogaming discoveries with others. RTM isn't just about waxing nostalgic over the standards (Space Invaders, Pac-Man, Tetris...) And it's not relegated to covering only those games that were available before "the crash." The fact is, there's a HUGE wealth of undiscovered gems and unearthed classics that have been lost for decades that beg to be written about. As a contributor to RTM, you can liken yourself to an archeologist (dare I say, Indiana Jones), and carve out your little niche of history. Your contributions don't have to be long, they just have to be about a particular period of gaming history that you're passionate about, whether it's about the games themselves, or the effect they've had on you or others.

So glance through this month's issue, as well as the others in our archive, and see if there's a particular era of gaming that you feel has been neglected. And feel free to contact me about any interest you might have in becoming an author for this site. Even if you can't contribute each and every month, that's perfectly alright. Periodic content is just as welcome. Thanks and enjoy the issue.

The Many Faces of . . . Stargate

by [Alan Hewston](#)

We continue our string of honoring titles that are now 25 years old - in the Many Faces of Stargate, from 1981. For legal reasons, the title was eventually renamed as Defender II, so some home versions go by one or both names. Stargate takes the Williams Electronics arcade game "Defender"

and expands upon it a little more. Besides adding a few more enemies, and special waves, the most obvious addition is that of the Stargate, a small square seen on-screen which allows you to quickly & safely warp to the part of the planet where at least one human is being abducted. When no humans are being abducted, using the Stargate safely moves you to a spot half-way around the planet. Carrying 4+ humans through the Stargate in waves 1-9 will warp you ahead 3 waves at the arcade (or 4 waves at home). Catching and carrying multiple humans now earns you additional bonuses not found in Defender. There's a new defense/weapon called "Inviso" which provides a 2+ second increments of combined invisibility, invulnerability plus destruction to anything that contacts you while this "cloak" is engaged. At the arcade, adding another button, right next to the Smart Bomb button was simple to do and easy to learn and use. My first thought of adding another button (for Inviso) would be too taxing on the home system controllers. You begin with 3 Smart Bombs, 3 Lives and 3 Inviso and earn 1 more of each for every 10k in points scored. If you like Defender, then you'll like Stargate as it plays the same, with a little more complexity, depth and difficulty. You can read about the Many Faces of Defender in Retrogaming Times Monthly Issue #9 from February 2005.

<http://www.retrogamingtimes.com/rtm9/>

There were only a few "officially released" home versions of Stargate in the classic joystick era.

Arcade 1981 Williams Electronics by Eugene Jarvis & Larry Demar

All classic era home versions by Atari or Atarisoft

Apple II 1983 by unknown but probably Steve Baker who also coded Defender
Atari 5200 & 8 bit computer 1984 unreleased prototypes by Steve Baker who also coded Defender.

Atari 2600 1984 Midway Games West - for Atari by Bill Aspromonte, with audio by Andrew Fuchs

Commodore 64 1985 by Steve Evans

PC Booter (1983 unknown - not covered in this review)



Rumor Mill: Vic 20 port was planned by HES with credit to Erich Horn. No one has reported/shared a ROM as yet.

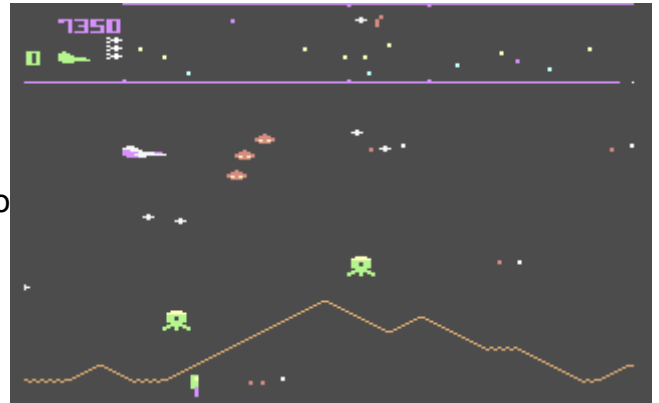
For more screenshots see: <http://www.mobygames.com/game/stargate/screenshots>

Home Version Similarities - except those in < > all home versions have: demo mode <2600>; a pause <2600 partial>; plays just like Defender, with added Inviso, and the Stargate to warp into; face up to 10 enemies (or bombs) <2600> onscreen at the same time; 20+ <2600> enemies will be present or warp-in to the planet each wave; all human and enemy locations can be seen on the scanner; on-screen is displayed your score, and numbers of Smart Bombs, Inviso & lives; when a wave is completed, that number is shown along with the bonus points scored for each of the humans remaining; if all humans are lost the planet immediately blows up and you face only mutants; a new planet, complete with 10 humans is provided at the beginning of waves ending in "1" or "6"; when no humans are left in waves ending in "2", "3", "4", "7", "8" & "9" you face only Mutants that entire wave; you face Yllabian Dogfight waves on waves ending in "5", and there's a Firebomber showdown in waves ending in "0"; earn a bonus for catching humans; you may carry them, but if you die, they die; bonuses for carrying multiple humans; carry 4+ humans into the Stargate and "warp ahead" 4 waves; bonus for landing a human; there's only 1 Stargate, but it is always on the map and works as described in the opening paragraph; use hyperspace any time, but risk a 25% chance of death; earn 1

Smart Bomb, Inviso & life every 10k; there are 14 <2600> different enemies; Pods release Swarms; Baiters and Phreds arrive if you take too long; Bombers release Mines which last just long enough to be annoying (I think they go away once off-screen); Phreds hatch Big Reds which hatch little Munchies; Landers pick up humans, upon reaching the top of the screen become Mutants; Dynamos make Space Hums that ram you; There is no musical score at all, but you'll hear plenty of sound effects, including; the thrust of your engines <5200, 800, AP2>; Baiters and Swarms <AP2>; enemies warp-in <AP2>; your death; enemy death; the cry of the human; human becoming a mutant; extra life; catching a human <AP2>; splat a human; land a human; warp with humans; fire your weapon; fire the smart bomb; enemy fires; Smart Bomb or Inviso empty; end of wave bonuses <AP2>; and more.

Disqualified: Commodore 64 (N/A)

My first reaction was frustration as I did not realize my only floppy disk version was either bad or hacked to be unplayable (the controls are all messed up see below). My fault for not planning ahead and checking it last month. Too late now as my deadline is on me. I don't do emulation & not sure if downloading and converting to floppy will yield different results than what I already have. I did not confirm if the port was officially released but it is on Moby Games list along with screen shots, which usually means it was officially released. There was no point in evaluating it at all as I cannot last longer than a minute. A few of these bizarre controls and keys are listed on the loading screen:



<Right Shift> = thrust
<Run/Stop> = Smart Bomb
<F7> = Hyperspace
<Space Bar> = switch directions
<A> = move up
<Return> = Fire
Joystick down = Fire
Joystick left = move up
Joystick right = Hyperspace
Joystick up = nothing happens
Joystick fire = reverse & down & thrust

If there is a good version out there, I promise to some day come back and review this as a Lost Face - it looks and sounds great.

Bronze Medal: Atari 2600 & Apple II (39)

Tie. These 2 are significantly different so there is plenty of room for you to score their strengths and weaknesses more severely than I did and break the tie. In a couple categories, the 2600 was close to scoring a little higher, but I didn't do it.

Atari 2600 (39)

My first reaction was eager to see how they'd use 2 joysticks for control. Gameplay is impressive (8) an improvement from Defender with nearly all game elements present and accounted for here. Missing are mobile humans and hilly terrain (which combined make the vulnerable to your own firepower). I also deducted for the limited number of enemies both on screen and overall on the planet for each wave. There's never more than a handful (plus a bullet or bomb) on-screen at any time - watering down the action a tad. A few of the arcade's 14 enemies are absent but otherwise not missed. Addictiveness is enjoyable (8), and is the only

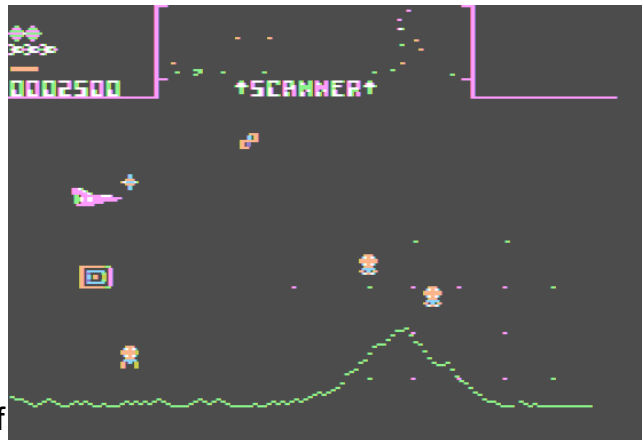


version that does not set you up for an occasional cruel double death. This is likely due to the built-in pause in the action after each death, where the action waits until you move or fire. Kudos to the programmers for earning half credit here for a pause. The 2600 also delivers the best gradual progression of difficulty, the best clarity of on-screen action (no frustration/learning curve here) and there are no collision detection problems. So despite lesser game play and action, you may enjoy this one just as long/often as the others. Graphics are pretty good (7) albeit with the fewest enemies, but the best clarity, some multi-colored enemies, a decent scanner and displays, good scrolling action and some color variety. There is not as much detail, no animation (walking humans), your ship is mono-colored, the explosions are smaller and other effects simpler, like the warp and the planet blowing up. The warp-in of enemies is very well done here. Sound is effective (7) with the elements that are needed most sounding the best. You can hear your ship's thrust, each laser blast fired, the enemy's fire, enemies being hit, enemies warping in, crying humans, mutants forming, catching falling humans, splatting humans, humans landed, end of level bonus points added, planet blowing up, Smart Bomb, Inviso & Smart Bombs when empty, Swarms, bonus life & your death.

Wow! I'm wondering if I should score sound on Stargate and Defender as an 8. Controls on the primary stick are perfect, with an overall score of (9). The use of the second joystick was programmed well, its fire button is comparable to hitting a space bar on the home computers. Even more clever was to merge all the special controls so that the second stick's fire button first uses Smart Bombs, until they are all used up, then Inviso, until that is used up, and then finally as Hyperspace. Moving the second joystick "Up" any time provides Inviso and "Down" sends you into Hyperspace when desired. Given the optimum setup, such as anchoring the second stick, or using suction cups, or maybe using a stick with a BIG fire button would be enough that some gamers would score this a 10. 1987 re-released by Atari with a dark red label and new box and manual art as "Defender II". There is a new title screen but the remainder of the ROM has been verified as identical.

Apple II (39)

My first reaction was they changed the scanner - probably to simplify the code so that the game was not slowed down by updating all the enemies displayed. Instead of the action shown on the scanner scrolling as you move, it stays fixed and your position inside the scanner moves - you are the white dot. This clever approach means that the enemy positions only have to be updated when they move, as opposed to all of them moving when you move - which is almost non-stop. It would have helped if they had a scrolling white bar that tracked the position of the current screen within the scanner - then you could more easily use the scanner. If you are looking at the scanner all the time, then you'd be

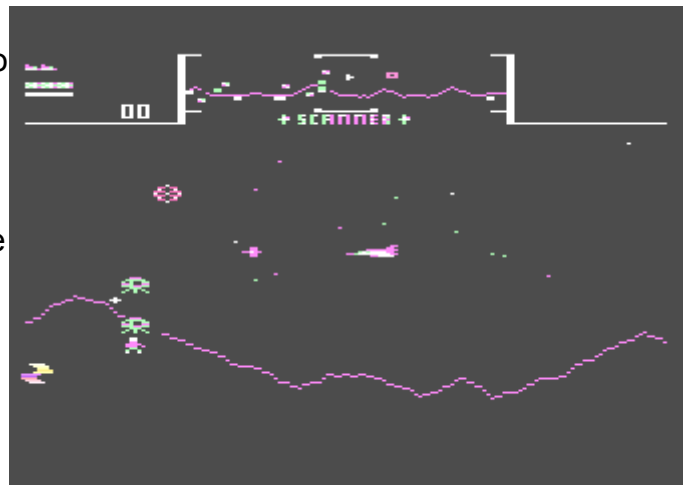


hard pressed to say any other version does a better job. Gameplay is superb (9), with all elements of this complex game fully in place. All 14 enemies are here and are shown on-screen with their names prior to the action. About the only setback is the planet is the smallest of any home version, as it

takes only about 9 seconds to circumnavigate at full speed, whereas the 2600 is roughly 12 seconds wide and the 5200/8bit about 20 seconds across. Addictiveness is very fun (8), with the <Esc> key as the pause. Overall the difficulty is set a bit hard and does not ramp up much. The action is slowed when too much is on the screen and the collision detection is a little sloppy compared with the other ports. A really nice Apple II unique feature is a text display under the scanner - displaying "x Humanoids remaining", or "all Landers destroyed" and then finally, "the powers of darkness have won - mankind is doomed". Graphics are fantastic (9) with easily the best scanner, good clarity and details, hilly terrain and even an erupting volcano. There are good displays, some multi-color, a full demo, smooth scrolling, a lot of enemies on the planet and several enemies and their shots fired can be seen on-screen. The spiraling enemies and walking humans are animated well. There's good explosions, warping effect, planet blowing up, and on-screen bonus points displayed. Only thing more we could ask for is better color variety (really lacking here) and a little more animation and details. Sound is fine (6) with nearly all the effects in place but some are repeated and most are a bit tinny sounding and not quite as good (the human cry and becoming a mutant) as other ports. Most noticeably missing are the lack of engine thrust, no Baiters or Swarms, no warp-in effect, and no end of wave bonus for humans tallying points. Kudos for the SB and Inviso buttons ring out a buzzer sound when they are empty. I reduced the Controls score to a (7), as the analog joystick is not desirable for a game where you need to constantly switch directions L/R, but without thrusting or moving L/R. Even worse is when your L/R direction all-too easily changes direction when you don't want it too. Arrrghh. The Inviso is hard to use as it is one small key, the <;> key (not the <+> key as noted in the instruction manual). Actually Inviso works as a toggle switch, so if you do not turn it off, it will completely drain. This may not be such a bad idea, since it will not be easy to turn it off without risking losing control and dieing. Important to note that <Control> <R> resets the game. As usual, 'tis only available on disk and is somewhat rare.

Silver medal Atari 8 bit computer (42)

My first reaction was nice to see the options screen, but there's probably more than folks will ever use. I do not have a working copy of the 800 version so my detailed notes here are based upon the 5200, but thanks to Stephen Knox for some brief play testing to confirm the keyboard controls etc. Despite both versions being prototypes, they appear to be complete and maybe just needed some fine tuning and additions. I thought about disqualifying them since Atari cancelled them before they were officially released. But 5200 fans and now 8 bit computer fans can play almost any title by emulation, as well as via multi-cart or other similar cartridges - so let them earn the medals they deserved.



Overall, the Gameplay is great (9) with all those starting options and all the arcade elements in place. You can select, Number of players 1 or 2; number of ships from 1 to 9; Inviso time 4 to 20; extra ship (& Smart Bomb & Inviso) every 1k to 50k; men needed to warp 2 to 9; last wave warp allowed 10 to 99; and of course starting difficulty 1 to 5. This version's planet is the largest, takes nearly 20 seconds to circumnavigate at full speed. The only setback is the slower speed of maneuvering, which may not have been finalized (or play tested) making your ship sluggish as compared with Defender on the 5200/800. Addictiveness is splendid (8) with a full pause <P> (a bit hard to use) and all those great starting options - but there are a few minor concerns as well. Collision detection is just a little off and some enemy ships are a little bigger than those in Defender - making it more difficult to avoid collisions. Granted, this is also helped by the large, oversize of your ship, but it remains the same size as it was in Defender. Finally, there are the countless deaths (same as Defender) due to hitting one small enemy bullet (dot) of one color that was not easily distinguishable from the dozens of other colored dots spewed forth on the screen from each explosion. And just like the Apple 2 and C64 ports, you'll be frustrated by double-deaths, starting the next life nearly right on top of an enemy or

one about to warp-in. Graphics are remarkable (9) with an enormous amount of on-screen and planet-wide activity. But then there is so much that it really detracts from the clarity of knowing what you are seeing. The explosions are well done, but too large, too much debris and too long lasting. There is nice animation (spiraling enemies, walking humans, your exhaust), plenty of enemies on screen, and a colorful scanner showing all of the same. The scrolling action, scores, displays, details, color variety and graphics variety are all good. There's nice use of multi-color for you, the humans and the enemies. The planet blowing up, the Stargate, warping through the Stargate, and the enemies warping-in are nice as well. Sound is pleasant (8) with every effect sounding good and present save for the engine's thrust. Controls I scored an (8), just a little harder to use than the 5200. The joystick is perfect, but using the keyboard for 4 different functions used in the heat of battle is just too much to handle. The Smart Bomb is <Space Bar>, Inviso is <I>, Hyperspace is <H> and the Pause <P>. Disk version never released.

Gold Medal: Atari 5200 (43)

My first reaction was disappointment that this and the 8 bit computer port were so close to being finished, yet never released. The 5200 uses the same code as the 8 bit computer, so all of the above notes and scores apply, other than the obvious differences in controls.

Controls using a Wico controller were very responsive and overall scored a (9). You really play better having 2 good fire buttons directly on the joystick. Just like in Defender, the 5200 keypad is used and is easier to control than the 800 keyboard. The upper half, buttons "1-6" are Inviso, and the lower half, buttons "7-#" are hyperspace. On games with this much complication in controls, this format is about as good as one can get on classic era systems, other than if a Coleco Super Action Controller were used . . . but alas there was no CV port of Stargate. 5200 cart never released.

Acknowledgements, Updates and Errata since last month.

Special thanks to Stephen Knox verifying the Atari 800 port and its keyboard commands. And thanks to Andrew "Tonks" Tonkin for confirming that the rumored Vic 20 version of Stargate has still not yet showed up anywhere. Screenshots borrowed from MobyGames.com & Atariprotocols.com.

Come back next month: But I'm finally taking a slight break. I'm not burned out, but so far behind and short on time, so we'll capture one of the "Lost Faces" of the Apple][next month, or maybe C64 Stargate. Contact Alan at: Hewston95@NOSPAMstratos.net or visit the Many Faces of site: <http://my.stratos.net/~hewston95/RT/ManyFacesHome.htm>

Commodore Corner

by Brett Burnell

Well, I'm back after a long hiatus for some more reviews for my favorite computer system of all time, the Commodore 64! This month, I will review what is probably one of my top 10 favorite games on the good old 64, "Bruce Lee" by Datasoft. Next month, I plan to review the often-overlooked original "Test Drive."

"Bruce Lee" (copyright © 1984 Datasoft)



"The man" himself!



"The Beginning"

*** DESCRIPTION ***

"Bruce Lee" allows you to do what most 13-year-old boys dream of, to become the martial arts master himself, Bruce Lee and have all of his moves! Now you can master the Martial Arts that took the legendary teacher years to develop and master right at the palm of your sweaty little hands.

You can run left or right, lie on the floor, jump, climb, kick, or punch. You can punch by pressing the fire button while standing still or do a flying kick by pressing the fire button while moving left or right. The object of the game (to open the next level) is to simply collect lamps in a "Kung Fu Theater," Shaolin Monk temple. However, the ultimate goal of the game is to reach a wizard in an underground lair. Once you defeat this wizard, rumors of untold wealth are to be had.

At the beginning of the game, you only have access to three screens. Collect all of the lamps on the three screens without dying and a "secret passage" will appear right below where you started. This passage will take you to the "Chinese Underground." At this point in the game, the difficulty increases slightly and the game becomes very enjoyable.

*** SCORING ***

Misc: 9/10 - Warning! This game is highly addictive. It is, by far, one of the best platform games ever made. My only complaint is that it was too short. The AI for the ninja and Yamos is great. They will follow you like an ant at a picnic.

Graphics: 7/10 - The graphics are comparable for the time. The designers used the full color palette of the 64 and there are a lot screens and levels to look at. Bruce Lee is yellow and the Yamo looks like the Incredible Hulk. The one complaint I have is that the game seems to have a somber mood to it. The underground uses too many dark colors.

Sound: 7/10 - The sound was again, ample for its time. Nothing new or "over the edge" here, just simple tunes. Sound effects are all simple, good, and entertaining.

Playability: 10/10 - Playability is where this game is really worth it's weight in gold. You can tell that the designers took a good bit of time thinking through and designing the levels to be first rate. They're not too hard, but not too easy either. The level of difficulty also nicely rises to the occasion the further you make it into the game.

Originality: 6/10 - Borrowing a lot from games like [Jumpman!](#) From Epyx, this game does platforming like it should be done. Future games like Super Mario Bros., Donkey Kong Country, and others owe their basic gameplay to games like these. It's truly an original.

Overall: 39/50 - This game has everything going for it so pick up a copy and boot it up! Even after you have mastered the game and beat it several times, call up a friend and play against each other. Your

friend can even play as Yamo and chase you around!

*** MISCELLANEOUS ***

- Other versions of "Bruce Lee" were made for: Amstrad CPC, Apple II, Atari 8-bit computers, DOS/x386, MSX, and the ZX Spectrum.
- In the game, "Yie-Ar Kung Fu," the character Nuncha's nunchucks and yellow costume are taken from Bruce Lee's movie, "Game of Death."
- Bruce Lee's father was a famous Chinese opera actor.
- Lee went to the University of Washington as a Philosophy major.
- Some of Lee's students include Chuck Norris, Joe Lewis, James Coburn, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, and Jackie Chan.
- Lee's "wooden dummy" had to be reinforced with automobile parts so he could train on it without breaking it.
- One of the first (and possibly only?) games where the NPCs can accidentally kill each other!

Brett Burnell is an independent contractor in 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 bburnell@programmer.net.

NEScade -- Paperboy

by [David Lundin, Jr.](#)

Of the all time arcade classics that stayed with me from my early youth all the way up through high school, Paperboy truly is a game that has stood the test of time. The premise is simple enough, you are a paperboy delivering newspapers on some of the most dangerous streets to ever been seen in suburbia. For a successful delivery, papers must be thrown either in paperboxes or on a subscriber's doorstep. Non-subscribers get no mercy as breakage bonus points are awarded for smashing up their windows and yards with papers. However things aren't that easy, Paperboy's neighborhood is filled with dangers that range from traffic and stray animals to tornados and runaway lawnmowers. After completing the day's rounds, head out to the training course to score some bonus points by performing stunts and paper throwing target practice. Even into the late 1990's a Paperboy arcade upright in close proximity to my high school continued to earn high revenue and the game remains a unique classic. Four years after appearing in the arcade, Paperboy pedaled his way to the NES but results would be mixed.

Paperboy in the arcade was unlike anything else of its time. Not only was the game objective a fresh spin on a classic piece of American youth, the control device went even further to bring players into the experience. Instead of a joystick or a standard control yoke, Paperboy used a replica of bicycle handlebars for bicycle speed and movement. Pressing the handlebars forward caused your bicycle to accelerate and pulling them back slammed on the brakes. Buttons mounted beneath the handlebars triggered paper throwing and of course turning the handlebars steered your bicycle. Thankfully this transfers over well to the NES control pad. Steering doesn't feel as tight and responsive as it did with handlebars in the arcade but it's still quite passable. Acceleration and braking work out to up and down on the control pad respectively and the B and A buttons are used for throwing papers.



Paperboy Arcade Control Device

The first difference outside of the expected control changes with the NES version is the omission of difficulty selection. The arcade original begins with the selection of three possible routes, difficulty varying between them: Easy Street, Middle Road, or Hard Way. On the NES the game simply begins although as the week progresses the difficulty ramps up as it did in the arcade. The basics of the game remain exactly the same. Each day begins with an overview of subscribers and non-subscribers on a route map and then the day's work begins. Missing a delivery or damaging a subscriber's home causes them to become a non-subscriber on the next day. All of the spoken audio clips that added a great deal of charm and humor to the arcade original are missing on the NES but that is to be expected. A good job was done with the background music and the in-game and training course music is recreated well. You can tell a genuine effort was put forward to get as much of the audio package replicated as possible. However the graphics are a completely different story.



Arcade Original

NES Version

Originally the world of Paperboy was bright, vibrant, colorful and beautiful. Everything had very detailed animation, smooth graphics, and a very cartoony appearance. The Paperboy alone had impressive fluid animation, his coat flailed in the wind, he pedaled smoothly, steering and bicycle movement was realistic, and there was a real throwing motion to tossing papers. Over on the NES things look drab and dull. There is very little color and animation is lackluster to say the least. Although the basics are still there, many times it's hard to even know what some of the obstacles and dangers in the game are, due to their undetailed sprites. Even though the gameplay mechanic remains true, the poor graphics detract far too much from the visual appeal of the original. This has to be among the worst looking NES games to ever be released.

Anyone that enjoyed the original Paperboy will find little redeeming value in the NES version. For the most part the entire game is there but it looks horrible and plays a lot slower than the original. It's another example of one aspect of an arcade port bringing the entire game down around itself, in this case the graphics. If you hunger for a retrogaming port of Paperboy, pick up the Atari Lynx version, which is a beautiful almost arcade perfect recreation. Outside of needing it to fill holes in your collection, this port of the exploits of a young boy delivering The Daily Sun should be kicked to the curb. No matter how bad it is I still played the NES version quite a bit during the time of its release - I was young, I was stupid, I was out of quarters.

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

An Ebayer's Lament

by Andrew Tonkin

For almost 6 years I have been regularly selling items on ebay. I mainly focus on selling video games. I started selling off some of my unwanted items to help fund my collecting and hopefully save up enough money to buy those elusive and expensive items. I decided to sell video games because that is what I knew and have a passion for. I could try and sell rare pottery but I know bugger all about that stuff.

I am glad to say that I have made a very nice profit over the years. However I have also found there are quite a number of interesting problems that can be faced when trying to sell video game items all over the world, particularly when some of them are getting on 25 years old or more.

1. HOW DO I TUNE IT IN TO MY TV?

Modern consoles use wonderful plugs called "AV Leads". You simply plug them into the side of your TV and select AV INPUT and everything appears with a crisp picture and clear sound. But early consoles used the dreaded and much feared RF lead to connect to your TV. This meant plugging everything together and then spending the rest of the afternoon trying to tune your console into your TV. Once you had a lovely clear picture and sound, even the slightest bump could muck it all up. And God save you if your mum decided to do the vacuuming. And then there was the problem of each different console requiring a different channel.

So anyway, after selling a beautiful Atari "Woody", I then brace myself for the emails to come flooding in. "I can't get it to work on my TV. How do I tune this thing in? Are you sure it is working? You said it was working perfectly, how come I'm getting diagonal lines running down the screen?"

Aaaarrggghhhhh!!!!!!

2. WHERE DID I PUT THE CONTROLLER/POWER ADAPTOR/GAME/OTHER VITAL COMPONENT?

Sometimes I buy a nice console lot from a garage sale, thinking to myself, "I should get a nice little profit for this on ebay." I take it home, test it out and then put it aside to sell sometime in the future. But then at that later time when I am ready to list it on ebay there is always something missing. It might be the power adaptor, the joystick or the RF lead. I know it was there when I first tested it out.

There have been times when I have searched my whole house looking for some vital component but I just can't find it. So I replace it with a similar item, list it, sell it, package it up and send it off the buyer. After all that, guess what I find sitting on top of a shelf? That's right, the missing component!

3. IT WAS WORKING FINE WHEN I SENT IT.

A problem with classic consoles and games is that they become more and more fragile with age. A problem with the Post Office is that they do not seem to understand the term, "Fragile".

I thoroughly test everything I sell so I know that when it is packed up, it has left my home in perfect working order. But after a 3000km trip across the country and being dropped and banged and squashed by Postal workers, it can be a bit too much for some of the little electronic components. So then come the angry emails. "This Commodore 64 doesn't work. I want my money back."

I am happy to make a refund or replace broken items, as long as the buyer sends the items back to

me. Well can you imagine my surprise when I check the "broken" console and I find that the return trip must have knocked everything back into place? It must have been a miracle! Or is it just a rather dumb buyer?!?

4. MY OWN STUPID FAULT.

I like to give the things I sell a good clean before I photograph and list them on ebay. While I do try and be careful, sometimes I have done some really stupid things.

One time I was cleaning a very nice Commodore Vic 20. Somehow I managed to snap one of the keys off as I was cleaning the keyboard. Thinking I could easily glue the key back on, I then dropped the bottle of super-glue, causing it to splash over the keyboard, totally ruining a potentially profitable sale.

But my worst blunder was to do with a mint condition Vectrex console. I had already sold the Vectrex for a very handsome sum of money. I had some suitable boxes in my office, so I thought I would take the Vectrex to my office, pack it up there and then take it to the Post Office. But as I walked out my front door of my home to put the Vectrex in my car, I tripped on one of my kid's shoes. The Vectrex slipped from my hands and landed on my brick path with a loud smashing sound. I nearly cried. The screen was completely shattered, and I had no choice but to send off a refund to the buyer.

So that is my story of some of the challenges I have faced as a seller of classic video games and consoles. What about you? If you have sold stuff on ebay I would love to hear your funny stories.

Nintendo Realm - Early December 1985

by [Scott Jacobi](#)

Lunar Ball released by Pony Canyon on December 5th, 1985. Released in the U.S. as Lunar Pool by FCI on October 1987

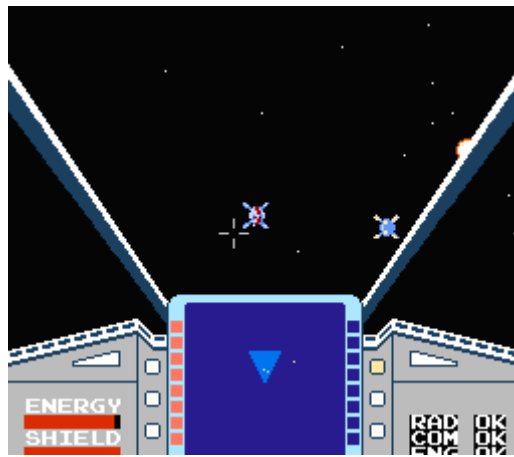
Throughout video game history, there have been many takes on billiards, but very few of them have ever been as imaginative as Lunar Ball. With 60 different tables to complete, Lunar Ball offers an unquestionable variety of challenges. The accuracy of the controls are surprisingly sophisticated for a Famicom game. Lunar Ball comes very close to offering a full 360 degree shot choice for the player, and utilizes the now ubiquitous power meter to determine the strength of your shot. Each table has a different shape and set of pockets, and typically has 6 or 7 balls to pocket. Bonus points are awarded for consecutive balls sunk, and even more points if those balls were sunk in numerical order. No matter how many other games I move on to, I always enjoy coming back to this one from time to time. It's a perfect example of a game that doesn't try to do anything well other than what it's supposed to and succeeds at doing it.

Star Luster released by Namco on December 6th, 1985.

Star Luster is an unusual departure for Namco who, prior to this release, mostly ported their arcade games to the Famicom. Star Luster marks a more original offering from Namco, and yet it is clearly inspired by a much earlier game: Star Raiders. Star Raiders was released on the Atari 8-bit family of computers in 1980, and was an unprecedented success as a computer video game. Providing players with a "cockpit view" of the action, it almost felt 3D in an age long before 3D gaming was commonplace. Star Luster borrows heavily from the formula that Star Raiders established, including warping from one location to another via a galactic map, and monitoring the relative position of your enemies with a two dimension radar. It even includes docking with a star base for refueling purposes. Where it departs is the use of the second button as your ship's accelerator (which promptly slows down if the button is released.) While Namco's presentation of the formula is much prettier to look at, it doesn't pull it off as magically as the older Atari version does. Therefore, I only recommend that you try out this game if you were a fan of Star Raiders and want to see how Star Luster compares.



Lunar Ball



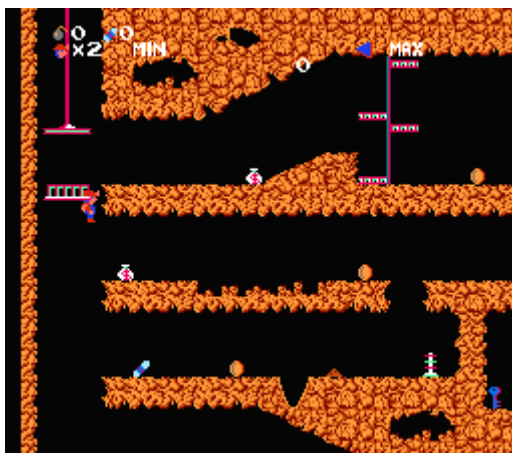
Star Luster

Spelunker released by Irem on December 7th, 1985. Released in the U.S. by Broderbund on September, 1987.

Welcome to one of history's leading contenders for worst video game controls ever. If you've ever heard of Spelunker before, it's probably due to the constant (and well deserved) bashing it gets for non-responsive control issues. If you've ever played the game, well, then you know what I'm talking about. If the player did not have to jump at all, the game wouldn't be quite so bad, as he runs left and right just fine, and control over the elevator is nice as well. But this game is a platformer, and jumping is quite necessary, and this becomes the games downfall. In order to get off of chains and certain ladders to other ledges, the player is expected to jump. The problem is, half of the time the jump button doesn't respond and the player falls to his death. Now when I say fall, I'm not talking about several stories, I'm talking about a couple of inches. It seems that if the player falls any more than half of his own height, he dies. The poor jumping leads to several of these short-fall deaths, and renders the game a frustrating exercise in patience and discipline over proper Spelunker jump timing. Not recommended.

Volguard II released by DB-Soft on December 7th, 1985.

This game screams "no effort" when it comes to design. A horizontal scrolling shooter in the vein of Defender, if the game's repetitiveness was it's only fault, there would be nothing more to say about the game. The music gets beyond annoying when you realize that it is only 2 measures long and repeats indefinitely. There are two forms of firing, but only one button is used for both instead of mapping each attack to either button independently. This appears to be a sequel to a shooter that DB-Soft made for the MSX computer, and it retains the same level of quality, despite the Famicom's technical superiority.



Spelunker



Volguard II

Choujikkuu Yousai Macross released by Namco on December 10th, 1985. Known in the U.S. as **Robotech**.

Unless you happen to know a lot about Robotech, this entry will generally be of little interest to you. Another automatically side scrolling shooter, this one is obviously based around the Macross series as it aired in Japan. You pilot a Valkyrie (presumably Rick Hunter's) through an ongoing Zentradi battle. Naturally, you can transform your spacecraft between three available modes. Fighter mode is the one that looks like a plane. It scrolls the fastest, but has the slowest offensive capability. Guardian mode is the "plane with feet" mode. It slows the scrolling down, but significantly increases the offense by providing rapid fire. And robot or Battloid mode is the full robot mode, which scrolls forward at the slowest rate, but can rapid fire in either direction. Your ship has a power meter that can be refilled by power ups, and you die when it's depleted. Each stage is broken up into three portions; an outer-space battle complete with ambient explosions, an "in-door" portion through what I can only imagine is a Zentradi mothership, and a core battle where you must destroy the core of the ship, before you escape and start the sequence over again. And throughout it all, I believe you get to listen to a low-tech remix of a genuine Lynn Minmei song.

1942 released by Capcom on December 11th, 1985. Released in the U.S. on November, 1986.

Capcom's 1942 may not be remembered nearly as fondly as its younger brother 1943, but compared to other games released around the same time, it's quite admirable. The fact is, 1942 was one of the first games ever produced by Capcom in the arcades OR for a home system. If you're not familiar with it, it's a vertically scrolling shooter, very much in the same vein as Xevious, only without the air-to-land bomb component. Rather than mixing air and ground attacks, Capcom chose to focus on the air attacks with a dazzling array of complex flight plans mixed with independent rouge enemies that strike out of formation. Add to that the concept of larger planes which take a great deal more damage before going down, and you have an experience that could probably still challenge all but the most hardened shooter fans. 1942 also introduces the notion of a limited supply "uber" weapon that can annihilate everything on the screen, a concept which is still at the core of popular shooters today. Power ups for your plane are limited to increasing your shots from two to four and adding smaller wingmen to your arsenal, as well as a resupply for your special weapon. If you could choose between 1942 and 1943, then you would probably choose 1943, if only for the ability to enter a password and start in the middle, but 1942 is an interesting look at not only Capcom's roots, but the roots of modern day shooters in general.



Choujikkuu Yousai Macross



1942

Dough Boy released by Kemco on December 11th, 1985.

I'm just going to start out by saying that this game is worth avoiding. The goal of the game is unclear and even I couldn't be bothered to play the game long enough to find out. At first it reminds me of a scrolling version of an old Atari game "Food Fight", but then you realize it's less than that. You are a soldier who can crawl in and out of trenches. While in the trenches you avoid enemy fire (which is easy enough to avoid when you're out of the trenches), and when you climb out, you can fire back at

the enemy and collect what appear to be ingrediants for a bomb. Well, I've run all over the first stage, collecting what appeared to be every available ingrediand, and nothing happened. From the looks of the sub-screen, it seems that I should be able to mix the ingrediants together, but I couldn't figure out how to select the items, and eventually I got sick of hearing the little rendition of "Your in the Army Now" so I gave up.

Bokosuka Wars released by ASCII on December 14th, 1985.

This appears to be an early form of a strategy game that originally appeared on the MSX computer. Essentially, you start out as a lone king who must battle his way back to his kingdom. Along the way, you can transform trees and other various obstacles in to allies or two different classes, Soldiers and Knights. Each character (including the king) has a special ability and role. Of course, it's not a simple cake walk back to your castle, and you will be launched upon by hoards of enemies. If you or any of your soldiers collide with an enemy, you automatically enter in to a battle. The outcome of the battle is automatically determined by the computer, and the game progresses as long as the king stays alive. You can switch the controls so that you only move the king, all of the Soldiers, all of the Knights, or everyone together. Of course, it gets difficult to move everyone together as there are too many enemies and objects in the way to move down the screen uniformly. Wrapping up, this game requires a lot of patience to fully understand and enjoy, but there are some FAQs on gamefaqs.com that might help speed up the process for you.



Dough Boy

Bokosuka Wars

Game Over

Phew I made it. That wasn't too bad. All in all, a nice solid issue. My goal this issue was to get everything done just the way it should be. Over the next few weeks, I will try a little experimentation with the look and spruce it up wherever possible. All of your feedback is greatly appreciated.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Adam King on behalf of the RTM staff for all of his years of service and hard work.

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