

# Retrogaming Times Monthly

Issue #34 - March 2007

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### Attract Mode

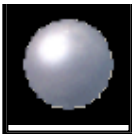
by [Scott Jacobi](#)

I've thought for a while about how to start off this issue. I'm not always the best when it comes to conjuring up pearls of wisdom. But lately I've been thinking about how my experience with RTM has changed so much in so little time. I started out very much like all of you: simply a reader and a fan of what the various authors produced each month. Sometimes I would whip through an issue in a matter of minutes, gazing at the pictures and moving on. And sometimes an article would really grab me and suck me in. I enjoyed the experience either way. It's always fun to reminisce

Then a couple of years ago, I decided to become a contributing author to RTM. At the time, I was really into collecting vintage game magazines, and I saw a topic that didn't get much coverage so I decided to volunteer a little bit of what I knew each month about different magazine series. Shortly after that, my interest in magazines faded, and I switched over to chronogaming on the NES and sharing those experiences instead. When Adam King decided to step down as chief editor, I decided that I enjoyed working on RTM so much, that I would step up and assume his role.

By now, you're probably thinking that all I chose to write all about was me. But the truth is, that's not really my intention. My intention was to point out that any of you, whether you're a casual reader, or an avid fan, can become a part of this great experience, and it's so easy to do. Not everyone is confident about their writing skills, and I'm very aware that mine still needs a lot of polish every now and then. But once you get into it, it gets a lot easier as you go along.

I've done a lot of asking for new talent and articles, but I haven't really done a great job spotlighting those who have answered that call. Donald Lee has been with us for a number of months now, and he's been doing a wonderful job shedding light on retrogaming from an Apple II fan's point of view. And this month, we welcome brand new author Jonathan H. Davidson who will be providing us with retrogaming coverage with a twist: reviews of all those compilation disks that you see on sale for modern day systems. Also, we have an extra special last minute surprise entry by the one and only Tom Zjaba, founder of the original Retrogaming Times. And David Lunden Jr. spotlights an absolute classic game in this month's NEScade. So there's a lot to dig into, and I hope you enjoy it. Please let us know if you do.



## **The Many Faces of David's Midnight Magic**

**by Alan Hewston**

As promised, we continue our string of honoring titles that are now 25 years old - in the Many Faces of David's Midnight Magic. aka "Midnight Magic" or for short "DMM". This 1982 home computer game is yet another Broderbund title by David Snider, and one of the first "good" pinball games, and AFAIK the first and only one to be ported to a console in that era. This is yet another excellent Broderbund title, which helped to establish them as solid 3<sup>rd</sup> party company.

There's not much of a storyline to DMM. Keep that pinball moving around and scoring points, hitting specific targets for different goals, storing multi-balls, increasing the bonuses & multipliers and if U R really lucky or skillful, earning an extra ball. There is considerably more depth and strategy to this game . . . as compared to say Atari 2600 Video Pinball. There are more controls on DMM than the typical Many Faces game reviewed. You can vary the strength of the plunger, there are 2 pair of flippers, the ability to nudge the table at any time, a pause and use of magnetic ball savers. There are ball loops, ball release targets, and sets of targets that work together for special bonuses or activating the magnets. This table is based upon, but not a licensed copy of the 1980 pinball game "Black Night" by Williams.



"DMM" is based upon the table  
from "Black Night"  
(from [www/ipdb.org](http://www.ipdb.org))

Apple ][ 1982 by David Snider - Broderbund  
Atari 8 bit computers 1982 presumably by David Snider - Broderbund  
Commodore 64 1983 by Martin Kahn - Broderbund  
Atari 2600 1984 by Glenn Axworthy - Atari released in 1988  
Atari XE re-release 1987 (modified?) by Atari

Rumor Mill - Atari 7800 part number CX7812 was in the works  
Sequel: Gamebase64.com shows a C64 sequel, but probably a hacked home brew.

Several screenshots and their captions can be found at.

<http://www.mobygames.com/game/davids-midnight-magic/screenshots>

Home Version Similarities - except those in < >  
all home versions have: a pause <2600>;  
multiple players (one simultaneous); you start  
with 5 balls in each game; variable strength  
plunger; the plunger remains fixed <2600> until  
changed again; upper and lower flippers;  
bumpers and kickers that send the ball flying off  
them; scoring or other bonuses for hitting or  
reaching specific locations or targets, or striking  
an entire set of targets; there are rollover targets;  
there is a ball collection location <2600> so that  
up to 3 balls <2600> can be involved in multi-ball

action; fill the collector or hit the ball release target to activate the multi-ball frenzy; magic save magnets <2600 (side kickers)> can be earned on each lower side; the magic save magnets must be activated (via keyboard) at just the right time to save your ball; end of game ball release toggle sets any collected balls free; there are three <2600> paths (ways) to get the ball back to the upper section; multiple target sets <2600 only 1>; upper & lower <2600> target sets; targets do not reset when ball is lost <2600>; sets of targets are reset and bonuses are earned when all targets in that set have been hit; your score and bonuses can be multiplied ("multiplier" increases to 2, 3, 4 and then 5 times the score) when the ball enters the ball loop <2600 when all targets are hit>; after reaching 5X, the subsequent time will earn an extra ball or "Shoot Again"; any time the ball is lost (or final ball when playing multi-balls) the bonus points are then subtracted from the screen bonus display and directly added to your current score; if you have multipliers, then after the bonuses are tallied, then the multiplier reduces by one and then the bonuses are tallied again, etc. until the multiplier and bonuses both reach zero, at which point you are finished scoring points with that ball; the multiplier then remains at zero (none) to start the next ball; finally, the most interesting addition is the ability to "nudge" the table; but if you nudge three times in a row you will have the table "Tilt"; if you "Tilt" all actions stops and you lose the ball, plus any bonuses and multipliers are all lost (not tallied up).

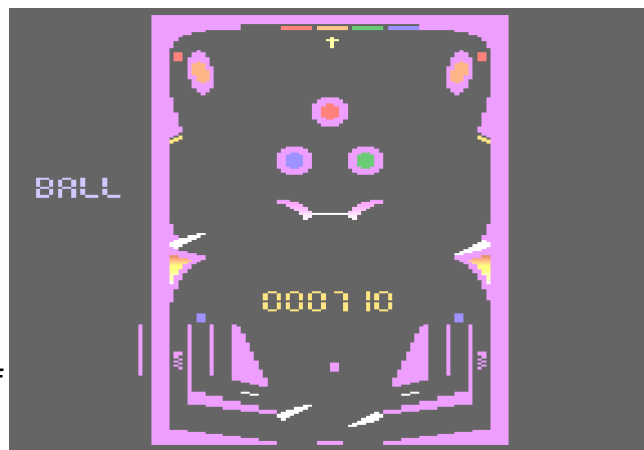


Darn! No metallic Broderbund cartridges this time

Note that this "nudge" is not quite as simple as you could physically do on a standard table, but it is more like putting some "whammy" or "English" or spin to the ball. Although this augmentation is random, it does tend to add some influence to the outcome - which sorta gives you more control - but also can be dangerous. An experienced player will trade off the risk and learn to "nudge" early and often to get the ball to do what is harder to do on your own.

### Have Nots: Atari 2600 (39)

My first reaction was how cool to find out that this was ported from the 8 bit computer line. The actual title is "Midnight Magic", but since it is based upon the computer game David's Midnight Magic - we have included it here in our review. Atari sat on this one from 1984 when it was completed, finally releasing it in 1988. The Gameplay is very good (7) with most of the elements of a decent pinball game, but still coming up short in variety, complexity, and especially in the quantity of targets. Matching the detailed table layout of the computer versions was not possible here, instead some added variety and more randomness has been included. A nice addition is 2 skill levels, where the "B" difficulty provides the center post (below the lower flippers) and kickers (one each along the lower wings) always. The "A" difficulty makes you earn the center post and kickers - which are not present until you hit the target pointed at by the arrow. This makes for quite a challenge, and usually a much shorter game. Not found on the computer versions are 2 vertical kickers, found along the wings that are essentially mini plungers that prevent the ball from going out of play. The great part is that they apply a random amount of power to kick the ball upwards, with every kick being a bit different, really



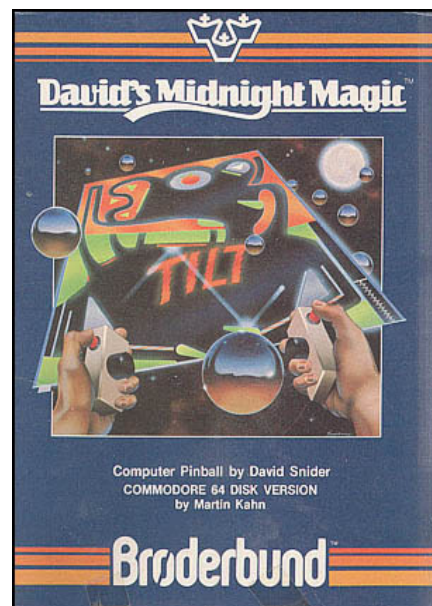
2600 screenshot from AtariAge.com



livening up the action. Another fine addition to give you more control or influence - are 2 upper magnets, one each along the side walls. These magnets automatically grab the ball when it gets nearby and then release it straight down - right onto the upper flipper along that wall. The most notable element missing is no ball collection area, nor any multi-ball action. There is also no chance to nudge the ball, taking away more of the strategy. There are no loops or targets that earn you bonuses, just the upper set of targets. Since all of the upper targets must be hit to increase the multiplier, all targets and the multiplier are reset every time you lose a ball. The exception being when you earn a "shoot again" (done by hitting the top rollover when the multiplier is on) in which case the multiplier and any targets remain as they were when the original ball is lost. This port has the most on-screen activity, but overall, the game tends to play by itself - since you have less influence (no nudge) and a lot less flipper control. To compensate, there's a lot more randomness and variety to where the ball can go, and how much faster it can go to keep you alert and more focused to save the ball when necessary. Addictiveness is enjoyable (8), with enough action, rewards and playability as the original, but lacking a pause and the tallying up of bonus points. Graphics are exciting (7) for the 2600, with a lot of flare with kickers, bumpers and targets flashing when you hit them. The ball is lively and moves around smoothly. The spinner is exceptionally well done and really grabs your attention. There is wide variety of colors used, including the entire screen changing shades when the multiplier is earned. There's a rainbow effect when a "Shoot Again" is earned. There is some added text outside of the table saying: "Midnight Magic" & "Player One" & "Ball One" etc. Midnight Magic flashes in the demo mode and the other text changes colors as well. A LED-like score is uniquely placed in the lower center of the table, right there in your face. Sure, the flippers are not that well animated and there is a square ball and lots of blocky graphics, fewer targets and items to hit, and hardly any details, but all of that is easy to ignore. The Sound is the best here, much more effective (7) and having things not heard on the other versions. Added are an effect when you lose a ball, and nice musical jingles are played to start each game and when the game is over. All the basic effects are there, plus the really cool, long lasting, dominating unique sound of the spinner. The spinner effect works so well because it is in sync with the actual spinning rate of the spinner. The kicker's sound is also very unique and varies in proportion to the power imparted by each hit - awesome! Controls are perfect (10) as it is great to work the flippers and plunger via the stick. Other versions were penalized for having too much to control, or at least for not having it all on the joystick. See below, how, in my opinion, one could add all the control functions (even nudge, magnets and maybe pause too) found on the computer versions to one Atari joystick. Perhaps the 2600 was capable of adding those elements to the gameplay as well. This 2600 cart is not too hard to find.

### **Gold Medal: Apple II, Atari 8 bit & Commodore 64 (41)**

These 3 are so very similar, with exactly the same scores that I'll combine most of the details. There is a lot to the outstanding Gameplay (9), with all the same elements for scoring & strategy, and although the game does not get harder, you'll gradually learn aspects of the game and improve your skills at various locations (or situations) on the table. The playfield for all three is the same (other than proportion or scaling differences) so the graphical layout of the targets, plunger, kickers, bumper, flippers and anything else is comparable. The game plays at a good, realistic, speed and does a good job of imitating gravity for a ball rolling on an inclined plane. The laws of physics are done well, especially ball collisions and the interactions with the flippers bumpers & kickers. Bad news is that there is no demo, no options for skill or difficulty, only a choice of 1 to 4 players. The Graphics are of superb quality (9), with a great amount of detail, smooth ball motion and flipper action, hi-resolution backgrounds, cursive text, nice displays, flashing arrows and detailed bumpers, targets and sets of targets. There is a lot of color variety and some multi-color. Portions are a bit simpler, like the plunger, rollover targets, ball release and magnets. The action is limited to one (to three) small ball(s) and 4



Here's a C64 box scan courtesy of  
Lemon 64

flippers. There is an attract mode with the lights and displays & multipliers all lighting in sequence. The Sound is good (6), but is clearly the area that could easily have been enhanced - see the 2600. The "bells and whistles" (i.e. audio effects) are not heard as frequently, or in chorus, or anywhere near as entertaining as is found on a real pinball machine, but there's enough to make you happy. It does get a bit quiet at times and several of the effects are repeats. The basic effects are: the plunger, kickers, bumpers, targets and the rollovers. The more interesting effects occur when you cause a "Tilt", activate the magnets, complete a set of targets, or the ball enters the ball collector, the multiplier loop or the multi-ball release. There are no background effects or music, and no sounds when the flippers swing, or even when the ball is hit by them. Finally, there's no effect when the ball is lost or even when the game is over. Add in a few of these and the score quickly goes up a point. Addictiveness in fantastic (9) as this pinball game can be played for hours. They are loaded with lots of gameplay elements and well conceived to provide you the ability to influence or control the ball (or at least to prevent from losing it). All versions have an unlimited break in the action between balls, but the computer versions also have a pause button <Esc>, <Run/Stop> & <Select> whenever you need a break. Controls all scored a (9). The complexity of having gameplay features such as 2 flippers, a nudge, a pause and two magnets is great, but too bad they did not group most or all of them into a single joystick. Having only the pause on the keyboard would have been my preference.

For all three computer versions, the use of the magnets is as follows:

Left Magnet - <Z> or <X> or <C> or <V>

Right Magnet - <M> or <, > or <., > or </ >

These are the best possible choices (especially to give us multiple keys to smack at) as they are the keys just above those used for the left and right flippers respectfully. This keeps the added challenge of the magnets there, without the burden of finding the keys.

Gamers who prefer keyboards over joysticks may score the Apple ][ or C64 controls a "10", but I could not come to do it. Another good reason is that this would penalize the Atari version (see below) as I am not sure if the Broderbund version had an "all keyboard" option or not.

#### Apple ][ details:

My first reaction was excitement to see 2 joystick fire buttons in use, but then confused since they did not add more or all the controls to the joystick. Fortunately, the use of all (save the plunger strength) controls can still be done via the keyboard, which to me is much better than mixing the controls. Here's the Apple ][ controls layout:

Number of players <cursor U/D>

Plunger strength - <joystick U/D> I found no key to do this.

Launch Ball - <Right Apple>

Pause <Esc>

Left Flipper - <Left Apple> or fire button 1

Right flipper - <Right Apple> or fire button 2

Nudge - <Space Bar>

High Scores - <cursor left>



[Apple \]\[ screenshot from Wikipedia](#)

One can play using both the joystick and the keyboard at the same time, but I suggest you do not even bother. An original floppy disk, its only format, is hard to come by.

#### Commodore 64 details:

My first reaction was disappointment that there was no joystick option. But then it is probably for the best to keep everything on the keyboard, if it is not all on the joystick.

The C64 controls layout is as follows:

Number of players <Space Bar>  
 Plunger strength - <F5> & <F7>  
 Launch Ball <Shift>  
 Pause <Run/Stop>  
 Left Flipper - <Control>  
 Right flipper - <Shift> either shift key  
 Nudge - <Space Bar>  
 High Scores <H>

Graphics - this is the only version where the kickers change color every time one is hit. An original disk is somewhat hard to find and it's available only on disk.



[C64 screenshot from Gamebase64.com](#)

#### Atari 8 bit computer details:

I must apologize as during my final editing of this article, I realized that there indeed an original Broderbund 1982 release and then the later Atari XE cart release. It was too late to ask my support staff for help and I only had the XE cart to review (no disk). Based upon the XE version, not knowing the original, I'd say that this is most likely version to get voted "off the island" if we had to eliminate one. My first reaction was excited to play the XE cart hoping that all the controls were on one joystick . . . but the answer was "almost". No matter what, you still need to use the keyboard for the magnets and pause, which draws a penalty flag from me. Maybe I was not harsh enough and should have scored this an 8 as I suspect most players, even joystick fans would get use to and prefer an "all keyboard" version over this. And of course, dooh! They did not provide an "all keyboard option" - just this mixed bag. Hopefully they did include an "all keyboard" option on the original - let me know if you can verify this for us.



[The Broderbund 1982 original screenshot from MobyGames.com](#)



[Atari XE 1987 remake screenshot from MobyGames.com](#)

Addictiveness - There is no "high score" display, only a minor deduction.

Graphics - The re-released Atari XE now has some Olive Green colors - which look worse to me. The Broderbund releases have an Apple as the graphic of the main bumper, which gets replaced by the Fuji symbol for the XE release. Cool!

Format: The early release is probably pretty hard to find, only on diskette (or cassette). The 1987 XE cart is not too hard to find.

Controls for the 1987 XE release are a mixed bag (must use both the joystick and keyboard) as follows:

Number of players <Option>  
 Plunger strength - stick <U/D> to adjust  
 Launch Ball <Fire button>  
 Pause <Select>  
 Left Flipper - move joystick left  
 Right flipper - move joystick right  
 Both flippers - move stick down  
 Nudge - move stick up (also activates both flippers)

Note that the choice <Select> as the pause is a bit risky, if you miss by a bit, you could hit the <Reset> and kill your game - argh!

- Joystick fans would easily give the Atari and Commodore controls a 10 if the controls were all on the

joystick as follows: Use the above Atari XE setup for the joystick, plus add in the magnets. Simultaneously press the fire button and move the stick left (right) for the left (right) magnet. Plus the left (right) flipper would also move as well. And then of course using the keyboard only for the pause <Space Bar> would not be a deduction. You could make the fire button alone a pause - making it foolproof.

OK and likewise keyboard fans would score this a 10 if all controls were on the keyboard like the other medals winners. So the XE version is least likely to be a gold medal winner, but given the benefit of the doubt to Broderbund, I'm happy to score all three computer versions as a tie.

#### Acknowledgements, Updates and Errata since last month.

From last month's Apple ][ lesson on using an un-enhanced ROM system to play Serpentine, I went through my entire remaining library of arcade-like games (for my reviews here) and did not find any more games that will now work. Oh well.

Also from Serpentine I found a reference to a Serpentine 2 for the Apple ][. Not sure if there was one or not. Let me know if you can confirm its existence.

Help: I'm still looking for Vic 20 "Lode Runner" so that I can review its Many Faces this year. If you have one to lend, sell or trade, or one that you can play and review and assist me in an upcoming review, let me know. Please, please.

Thanks to Sir Thomas McLaren for helping me to find the Apple ][ version of David's Midnight Magic.

While the RTM has not covered pinball machines much, we certainly welcome any articles that you may wish to contribute. If I keep writing these reviews long enough, we'll eventually review two other classic era pinball simulations, both from 1982, "Night Mission Pinball" and "Pinball Construction Set". But alas, (help needed again) I am still in need of both of those disks on the Atari 8 bit.

Come back next month: for another 1982 release, currently planning the Many Faces of "Millipede" on the Atari 2600, 5200 & 8 bit computer. Contact Alan at: [Hewston95@NOSPAMstratos.net](mailto:Hewston95@NOSPAMstratos.net) or visit the Many Faces of site: <http://my.stratos.net/~hewston95/RT/ManyFacesHome.htm>

Alan Hewston

Staff writer and web editor for the Retrogaming Times Monthly  
The longest running FREE online classic video game magazine ever.



### ***There's Something About Mary***

***by [Tom Zjaba](#)***

You can find love in some of the strangest places. For me it was at a video game show. The original Cincicon was where I first fell in love with Mary. The show was small and there were maybe thirty people there showing off different games and systems. But of all the games and systems, one game stood out. A prototype for the Atari 2600 called "Save Mary." It was owned by a collector named Dan Mowscan who was nice enough to let everyone play this and quite a few other protos that he had at the show. Little did I know that this chance meeting would turn into a lifelong love affair with a little game for the Atari.

For anyone who never heard of the game, Save Mary was a game that was developed by Atari but never released. It was developed by Todd Frye (who also developed Pac-Man) and was in development for over two years. And until the last few years, it was only available for play on emulators. The game is simple and very addictive. Your job is to save Mary (hence the title) from drowning by dropping blocks for her to move on. The water is rising and you need to keep building up



the platforms to keep her head above water. You control a crane and use it to drop different blocks into the canyon where Mary is trapped. Each level has different kinds of blocks and it is up to you to figure the best way to use them. Drop enough and Mary will make it to safety. What makes it even more challenging is that Mary runs back and forth and tends to get in your way. Dropping a block on Mary is fatal, so you need to watch out for the hysterical girl.

While this is enough for a good game, Mary is a deeper game. There are also power-ups that help you out and even an airplane on later levels that will run into your crane and knock the block free (who gave this guy a pilot's license?). The power-ups can be very helpful and must be picked up and dropped at the top of the canyon to activate them. There is one that gives you an extra life (shaped like Mary), there is a plug to halt the water, a stop sign that keeps Mary in place (very handy as she is like a kid on a major sugar buzz), an oil can to make your crane faster, a gold brick that makes Mary invincible (then you can take out your aggression and drop all the blocks on her head you want) and one that gives you points. These really add to the game and sometimes are enough to keep you from just letting Mary drown.

It is too bad this game was never released. For years, I played it on emulators, which was fine but I really wanted to experience it with a real Atari joystick. There is just something about playing an Atari game with an original Atari joystick. I had that chance at Cincicon and that looked to be the last time. It was still fun to play on the computer with my Devestator controller or on the Dreamcast with my arcade stick, but I wanted the honest to goodness experience.

Fate was on my side as I would be able to renew my love affair with Mary! A product called Atari Flashback 2 featured 40 Atari games including my beloved, Save Mary! It also features a real Atari design and actual Atari joysticks! So for \$29.95, I can play my game to my hearts content. And it won't cost me a arm and a leg like a prototype would. Mary, we are finally together again! Nothing will keep us apart!

Tom Zjaba

(When he is not professing his love for Mary is busy working on his three websites - Tomorrow's Heroes (<http://tomheroes.com/>), Arcade After Dark (<http://arcadeafterdark.com/>) and KZ Comics (<http://kzcomics.com/>).)

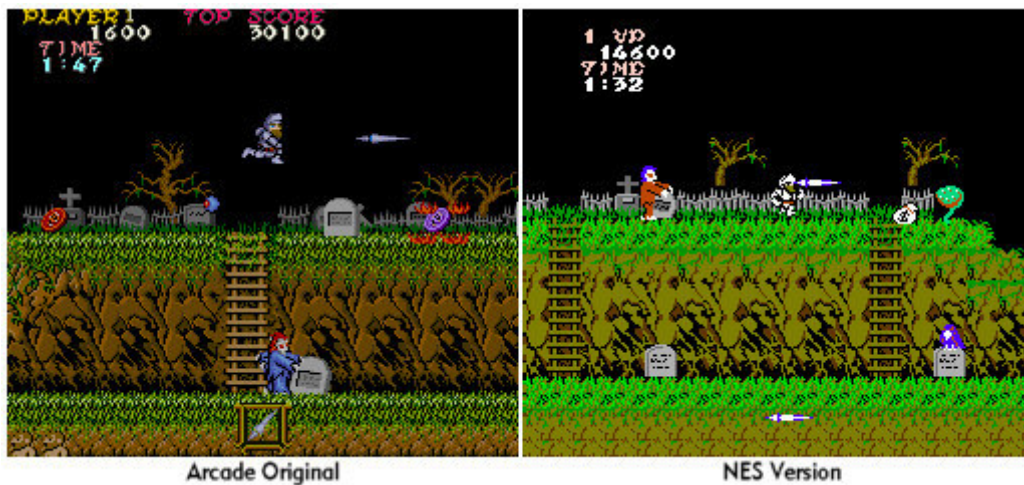


By the mid 1980's Capcom was establishing itself as a powerhouse developer of popular arcade titles with detailed graphics and innovative game play. Two games were spawned from this era that would later become top franchise titles, leading to even more popular games in the years ahead. These two games were 1942 and Ghosts 'n Goblins, released in 1984 and 1985 respectively. While 1942 would be remembered for installing the building blocks for the five sequels that would follow it, Ghosts 'n Goblins would be remembered for another reason - its difficulty. While initially looking like nothing more than a simple action platformer, the fast pace and hordes of enemies encountered make Ghosts 'n Goblins a workout for even the most experienced player. Throw in the super strong bosses and precision timing required to defeat them and you have a game that is brutally unforgiving. With Ghosts 'n Goblins appearing on the NES a few years later, the game everyone loves to complain about but still loves to play, had come home.

The beautiful Princess Prin-Prin has been kidnapped by the demon king Astaroth and it's up to Sir Arthur to rescue her. Six treacherous levels stand between their reunion, with a powerful guardian at the end of each. Donning his armor and armed with his trusty lance, Sir Arthur sets off on his long journey through the kingdom to Astaroth's castle. Arthur's lance can be traded out for one of four



other weapons that appear when an enemy carrying one is destroyed. Only one weapon can be carried at any time and some are better suited for specific areas than others. Two hits from an enemy attack will kill Arthur, the first stripping him of his armor and the second leading to his demise. The series would come to be known by this damage mechanic and Arthur running around in his underpants after losing his armor.



For its time Ghosts 'n Goblins was beautifully detailed game, it still looks very nice to this day. Of course this is the first compromise on the NES hardware. I will say that a valiant attempt was made to keep the visual style and level design as close as possible to the original. Visually the entire game is recreated pretty much verbatim, far less detailed, but nearly everything is there or at least close to how it was. There is a nominal amount of flicker which makes the graphic presentation not as solid as I would have liked it to be, yet the game was released early in the life of the NES so it's excusable. Control is spot on to the arcade, a little drifty but accurate. All the music and the majority of the sound effects have been brought over but they fight each other for supremacy. While this is common with many early NES games it's very disappointing here as Ghosts 'n Goblins had a memorable arcade soundtrack.

The real question here is if the NES version will make someone a better player at the arcade version and vice versa. Honestly, no - while the games are very similar they are still very different. The NES version is almost like a miniature rework of the arcade original however it is just as full featured. Timing is different, distances are different, but most of the enemy locations are the same. It's the same game just modified to work on the NES hardware. This raises the question if the NES was ready to handle a game like this at the time it was ported onto the system. At the end of the day I don't feel it was, which is why we end up with a game of compromises. It's the same game but in its limited form on the NES it simply doesn't have the charm and drawing power the original had. Still, anyone that liked the original should try the NES version, it is worth a look at. Those who grew up with the NES version owe it to themselves to play the arcade original to experience this great game as was intended. Ghosts 'n Goblins stands as one of the most brutally difficult NES games to ever be released as the challenge from the arcade remains completely intact.

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



***Apple II Incider: The Atari 5200 vs. The Apple II***

***by Donald Lee***

Welcome to the March 2007 edition of the Apple II Incider. It's been a tough past few weeks due to work and other things so this article may be a little shorter than usual. In any case, after writing my last few articles for RTM, I started to wonder why most of my best memories were of the Apple II but not of the Atari 5200. I had the Atari close to the same time as the Apple II. I recall having a fun time playing the Atari 5200 games during the 80's.



I had to stop myself to think about the subject and come up with an answer. The Atari 5200 library of games were as fun as any other games I have played over the years. Between Break Out, Defender, Pac man and others, I spent many hours playing them. However, the majority (if not all) of the games were arcade translations. The 5200 games were fun at the time because they were the closest thing we could get to the actual arcade games without actually going to the arcade.

However, these days, the best arcade games of the 80's are available via emulator, online or the various compilations for the newer generation of game systems. The motivation to play the 5200 versions is much less because the originals are so readily available.

The other half of the answer belongs to the Apple II itself. The Apple II had inferior hardware to the 5200 but like most computers, had a more diverse game library than the 5200. As I've been writing in RTM, I have very good memories of my days playing various Apple II games. The software library is only part of the answer though. I think the real answer of why my best memories were of the Apple II was due to the Apple II's inferior hardware (especially the 8 bit Apple II's). The Apple II graphics and sound were weaker compared to it's contemporaries such as the Atari 800 and the Commodore 64. These limitations were highlighted on a daily basis in many magazines when they compared games between systems.



However, despite this, I remained proud of the Apple II. In fact, I found myself enjoying Apple II versions of arcade games like Robotron or Pac Man on the Apple II more than anything else. Yes, they might have been a little inferior to most versions of games on other systems. However, I have to give credit to the programmers over the years. Despite the many limitations with the Apple II, some were able to work miracles and create many good looking and sounding games.

Not to slight the Atari 5200, I have been playing with some games via some 5200 emulators. It was good to relive some old memories. In the future, I may do a comparison of Apple II and Atari 5200 games that exist on both systems. I think that would be fun.

See you next month!



## *Nintendo Realm - Early April 1986*

*by Scott Jacobi*

We're moving on to April of 86 now. Six is a comfortable number for me to continue with since I'm a little more busy than usual, so we'll keep going with it. This month's collection of games are more interesting for the tidbits of trivia that I could find about the games, than the actual games themselves. So read on to find out what arcane knowledge I was able to dig up for you.

**Tag Team Pro Wrestling** released by Namco on April 2nd, 1986. Released in the US by Data East

### on September 1986 as Tag Team Wrestling

As far as wrestling games go, this one is pretty basic. It's based on a 1983 arcade game made by Technos Japan, the minds behind Double Dragon. There are only two teams of two wrestlers, and you can't even really choose which team you want to be. Player 1 is always "The Ricky Fighters" and Player 2 is always "The Strong Bads." If that last name sounds a little familiar to you, it is indeed the inspiration for the name of the popular Strong Bad at homestarrunner.com. The controls for the game is quite odd as well. Attacks are initiated with the A button. Once the move connects with the opponent, you have about three seconds to press the B button to cycle through a collection of moves that your fighter has, and press A to initiate the attack. Wrestlers can toss each other against the ropes or even out of the ring. Once out of the ring, the perspective changes a little bit, and objects around the ring can be used to bash your opponent (or get bashed by). If you are in trouble, you can call your tag partner to rescue you, but you will still incur damage by getting dropped. Overall, not highly recommended.

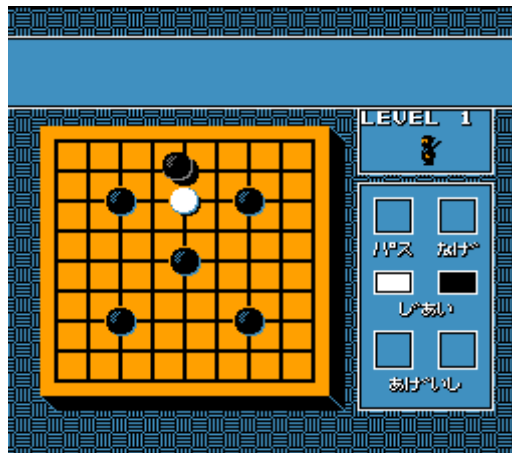
### Igo: Kyuu Roban Taikyoku released by Bullet Proof Software on April 14th, 1986.

This is a Famicom Disk System version of the Japanese board game Go. Ordinarily, that would be the end of my description, since I hardly consider myself an expert of the game of Go, but this game has slightly special significance. This game was the first Famicom game produced by Bullet Proof Software and developed by Henk Rogers (who is considered the father of early RPGs in Japan), a player of such Go expertise that he occasionally played against Hiroshi Yamauchi, the legendary president of Nintendo himself. It was over one such game that the inspiration to write a Famicom version of Go came from. But Henk Roger's importance to Nintendo doesn't end there. He is also the man responsible for fostering a relationship between Nintendo and Alexey Pajitnov, the man who created Tetris. Thanks to Henk, Nintendo was able to secure the real rights to develop Tetris away from Atari who had not acquired them properly, and Tetris would go on to spur the sales of Nintendo's Game Boy all around the world.

I'd also like to point out that Igo has Ninjas



Tag Team Pro Wrestling



Igo Kyuu Roban Taikyoku

### Nazo no Murasame Shiro released by Nintendo on April 14th, 1986.

This was a game that Nintendo developed for the Famicom Disk System about a warrior in feudal Japan. At first glance, you can make many comparisons between this game and the Legend of Zelda, as both game were first released on disk, both games employ an overhead view of the action, both games cause the screen to scroll when an edge is reached, both games have an outside world and an inside world, and both games have bosses at the end of the inside stages. But Nazo is much more linear in that you go through the outside world in one stage until you reach the inside stage. Then you must complete the inside in order to progress to the next outside world, which you can not return from. There are no items to collect, as in Zelda, but there are powerups that are dropped by enemies from time to time. As for the enemies, unlike Zelda where you can see every enemy that you will have

to fight on that screen, Ninjas pour on to the screen and continue for quite some time before they stop appearing. They will frequently retreat and avoid defeat as well. There is a timer in the game, and you must complete a stage before time runs out, so you are not really free to wander and explore without concern. This game is definitely worth a try, especially if you are an old school Zelda fan.

**Argus released by Jaleco on April 17th, 1986.**

I just can't get in to Argus, no matter how hard I try. It is based on a 1986 arcade game by Jaleco that was clearly inspired by Xevious. It also features horizontal scrolling so if you continue to move to the left or to the right, you will eventually wrap back around to where you started. Power ups can be bombed out of icons located on the ground or uncovered from blocks that can be destroyed by your main guns. And enemies swarm in in the usual predictable patterns and fire rounds of slow moving shots at you. All together, it's a standard vertical shooter, but the biggest problem is that it's so sluggish. You feel like your straining to move, or as though your ship is actually moving through water. It's worth a shot if you're a casual shooter fan, but otherwise, I'd recommend staying away.



Nazo no Murasame Shiro

Argus

**Atlantis no Nazo released by Sunsoft on April 17th, 1986.**

Here is another interesting Famicom game, not due to the content of the game, but due to the interesting details that surround it. The game itself is rather standard side scrolling fair. The screen will contain at least one enemy a majority of the time, and that number can grow quickly. Your only means of defense are bombs that you toss out in an arc, which is influenced by your momentum. Actually using these things to actually an enemy is incredibly difficult, and more often than not, you'll find yourself resorting to jumping or dodging instead of firing. And sure enough, it takes only one hit to kill our explorer hero. There are 100 different zones, and treasure chests in many of them. Not every zone needs to be traversed in order to beat the game, but many of the zones that do need to be visited can become difficult to find. Simply put, this game is considered rather challenging, and not for casual gamers. Here's the interesting bit: Activision was eyeing this game as a possible sequel to the unfortunate Super Pitfall game. Presumably all they needed to do was change the child-like archeologist into Pitfall Harry, but we'll never truly know.

**Gegege no Kitaro: Youkai Daimakyou released by Bandai on April 17th, 1986. Released in the U.S. as Ninja Kid on October, 1986.**

You may be more familiar with it's US equivalent Ninja Kid. This is an interesting game that takes a little more patience to play than the usual side scroller. Your character can really get moving fast. And you can throw your weapons even faster. But the problem is that most of the enemies that you need to hit are half your size, and your weapon will fly right over them. You need to squat in order to hit those guys. So if you get moving really fast and a low enemy appears, it's not an uncommon way to die when you're first learning to play the game. The objective is to get to the castle and defeat the demon inside. But to enter the castle, you must clear three random stages first. The stages have different scenes and objectives such as picking up a certain number of spirit clouds, or lighting all of



the candles in the stage. Power ups appear from time to time, and key items such as the flute drop from the sky when objectives are met. Boss fights consist of shooting at small vulnerable points on large demons that occupy much of the screen. You'll have to jump and maneuver around the shots that they fire at you. The more that you play the game, the easier it will become. And surprisingly, it's quite addictive. There's something about the feel of the motion that makes you feel as though if you keep trying, you'll get it eventually. Definitely give this game a try. (You might notice through the picture that the Japanese graphics were a little different than those found in Ninja Kid.)



Atlantis no Nazo



Gegege no Kitaro: Youkai Daimakyō



## Old Wine in New Bottles: Retrogaming on Modern Hardware

by Jonathan H. Davidson

After years of being relegated to the fringes of mainstream gaming, retro gaming has become cool. Major corporations have discovered that there is still value in their "old games" and have begun re-releasing these titles on modern platforms: old wine in new bottles.

Welcome to my new column at *Retrogaming Times Monthly*. Each month we will look at a different commercially released emulator package of classic games. The primary focus will be on Playstation and PC games, as those are the platforms that I have. Some of these packages are no longer in print, but they are still readily available second-hand.

This month, we will review the Playstation compilation **Activision Classic Games**. This was published by Activision in 1998 and was subsequently re-issued as a Greatest Hits edition. The Digital Press guide gives it a rarity of R2.

This collection includes 29 original Activision games and one Inmagic game (Atlantis). The selection ranges from the very common and well known games (e.g. Grand Prix, Pitfall, River Raid) to the more rare and/or obscure titles (e.g. Cosmic Commuter, H.E.R.O., River Raid II.).

Obviously none of the third-party licensed titles (e.g. Ghostbusters) and arcade ports (e.g. Double Dragon, Rampage) are included. Many of the larger and more complex games (e.g. Robot Tank, Private Eye, Pitfall II, Space Shuttle) have also been dropped. I assume that this must have been because of technical issues with the emulator. This is an unfortunate omission.

Some of the less fun games (e.g. Bridge, Checkers, and Oink) are also excluded, but I doubt anyone will miss their absence. The truly bizarre game Pressure Cooker has also been wisely dropped from this collection.

Disappointingly, the Activision collection does not include any extras beyond the games, not even pictures of the high-score patches that were once available! Considering that most other compilation

CDs include everything from video clips of interviews with the programmers to samples of original advertising, this is a serious deficiency.

All of these games were originally developed for the original Atari 2600 controllers, and not all of them have adapted well to the Playstation controller. This is especially the case with Kaboom (which used the paddle controller).

While Activision games have been widely released on various platforms since the halcyon golden age of the 2600, this compilation is solid. I recommend it to any Playstation owning retrogame enthusiasts.

Next month, we will look at the Intellivision collection for the Playstation.

Feedback on this column is most welcome. Please send e-mail to [jhd@interbaun.com](mailto:jhd@interbaun.com).

### ***Game Over***

I could not be more pleased with how this months issue came out. As always, we look forward to your feedback. This is as much your magazine as it is ours, so share your thoughts with us!

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