

Retrogaming Times Monthly

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Attract Mode

by [Scott Jacobi](#)

Hello everyone and welcome back to another issue of Retrogaming Times Monthly. We did not get a guest editorial submission from anyone this month, but our own Alan Hewston has found a wonderful discovery that he'd like to share with you all.

I'm swamped again and so I have no review this month. But here is a great interview on the TV show "Collect This" of fellow collector and player Joe "Digital Press" Santulli. He's a great guy and I'm glad that he is representing us gamers and collectors in this TV special.

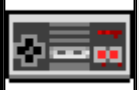
Check it out:

<http://tech.msn.com/guides/collectthis.aspx?GT1=40000>

Staff writer Alan Hewston used to be a major contributor here. He's not burned out on classic games, just spending lots more time with family playing strategy board/tabletop games. His family now has a Wii, so his children, Timmy and Samantha love it, but his wife Kathy probably enjoys it the most.

Definitely an interesting watch. I certainly would have enjoyed if they gave him a little more time to talk about his collection.

Another heads up to all of you Xbox 360 owners; Two new Neo Retro releases came out last month and both are quite outstanding. There's Galaga Legions, and there's Bionic Commando: Rearmed. Galaga Legions is a fast paced shooter that definitely captures the spirit of the original Galaga, but puts a fresh spin on it. Bionic Commando: Rearmed is a love letter to the original Bionic Commando that appeared on the NES way back in the 80s, and it brings the original levels, abilities, and enemies screaming into the 21st century. If you enjoyed playing the original game at all, you owe it to yourself to pick up BC: Rearmed ASAP.



NES'cade -- Gyruss

by [David Lundin, Jr.](#)

During the golden age of the arcade one of the most important themes of game design was variety. If you were creating a game that was based around a concept yet not previously created then it was more than likely approved and produced. On the other hand it became nearly taboo to create a game similar to a title that already existed, unless you were cloning a rival company's blockbuster of course. Indeed, variety was truly the spice of life in the early 1980's but Gyruss would go a different route to establish its own uniqueness. A year after designing Time Pilot, a classic in its own right, Yoshiki Okamoto created Gyruss for Konami. A shooter in the truest sense, Gyruss borrowed elements from two of the greatest arcade video games of all time - Tempest and Galaga. Imagine taking the vertically oriented gameplay of Galaga and wrapping it around a cylinder with an open center like the basic playfield in Tempest. Stars quickly scroll by from the center of the screen to the edges where the player's ship rotates around the perimeter, shooting toward the center. Enemy ships swarm in from the sides before flying off into the deep space in the center of the screen and settling into circular formations. After formed up, the enemy ships break off and charge back up toward the player, attacking both with laser shots as well as kamikaze maneuvers any Galaga player will be quite familiar with. Each completed wave brings the player closer to the next planet, beginning two warps away from Neptune and ending once reaching Earth. After each planet is reached a "Challenge Stage" begins, which is again very similar to the "Challenging Stages" found in Galaga. After reaching Neptune for the first time, all planets lie three warps apart, including the wrap around to Neptune after reaching Earth.

The NES port of Gyruss is one of those odd rarities where a retrogaming console port was actually designed to surpass and enhance the original arcade title. However Gyruss on the NES doesn't throw away anything from the original version, rather it increases the variety of gameplay, reestablishes the core game functions and pumps up the audio to insane levels. Let's start out with what remains the same - the basic gameplay. Although arcade Gyruss used a vertical monitor nothing is lost on the standard horizontal display of the NES version. This is because of the circular playfield, it's pretty much exactly the same regardless of the screen orientation. Stars stream from the center of the screen toward the edges and the sensation of speed is exactly as it was in the arcade. Enemies start on the outside, head into the distance and then charge the player just as they originally did as well. The double fire powerup is present and is obtained just as before, by shooting the capsule enemy that appears between the pod enemies on the outer boundary. That's about where the similarities end with everything else getting, at the very least, a slight enhancement.

Ship movement from the joystick is replicated exactly to the directional pad although an alternate control setting is also made available. The player's ship in Gyruss is controlled by swirling the joystick in the direction one would like the ship to move, based upon its current location in the outer circle. Imagine a clock face with a joystick in the center. If you move the joystick up the ship moves to 12 o'clock. If you move the joystick down the ship rotates around the clock face to 6 o'clock. If you move the joystick in the direction of 3 o'clock the ship travels around the clock face to that point. Now replace the clock face with a circular star field and you have Gyruss. In this way joystick movements are often at the edge of the joystick throw for the entire game, think Tempest with a joystick. A spinner would make more sense to a lot of people but I've always thought the joystick was in place to make the game feel more accessible. Still, I always did feel bad for the maintenance technicians that would have to service the joystick leaf switches on the Gyruss machines. The standard control method on the NES is the same as it was in the arcade while the alternate setting more closely replicates how a spinner would provide input. The secondary control method changes ship movement to left and right on the directional pad. Left sends the ship around clockwise while right sends it around counterclockwise. If you can get used to it I'm sure the alternate controls are very fluid but I tend to stick with the original setting. Shame the Vaus paddle controller bundled with Arkanoid doesn't work here!



Graphically things take a slightly different approach. Originally the enemy ships had a lot of rotation to them: the tail ends being show as they flew toward the center, rotating side views as they spiraled back up the star field and head-on when they were changing direction. Although there is plenty of scaling for perspective in the NES version, the enemy ships always face one direction. Nice graphic detail and a variety of colors make up for their static sprites, so they still seen very fast moving and fluid. Yet the biggest changes come in the form of gameplay tweaks starting with how each stage is structured. The formula of three warps per planet is maintained but instead of featuring a quick run from Neptune to Earth, Gyruss on the NES traverses the entire solar system from Neptune to the Sun. The first warp between each destination plays out much as it did in the arcade, with waves of enemies and other debris that must be destroyed or negotiated. The second warp adds four small mini bosses to the center of the screen which slowly move in a circular fashion. Standard enemies and debris still populate these stages and it can become difficult keeping track of them since the mini bosses block the center of the star field. Once the mini bosses and any other enemies are destroyed the warp is completed. The third warp begins much as the first one did with standard enemies appearing in formation. However after they are all taken care of the music goes down and changes as a planet specific boss appears. Most bosses are large pods that remain in the center of the screen, attacking with small appendages which must be blown off. The most challenging bosses are those that move about the screen and require careful timing and strategy to defeat. Even the most veteran Gyruss player will find these bosses to be quite a challenge. After the boss is completed the next planet is reached, followed by a rework of the Challenge Stage. The bonus rounds play almost exactly as they originally did, however shooting enemies that are of different color than the majority of the formation will cause bonus capsules to appear. These contain a number of powerups, many of which are new to the game.

While the double fire powerup is obtained in the same way and functions as it did in the arcade, the NES port features a couple new enhancements for your trip across the solar system. Without a doubt the biggest change is the addition of special bombs that work like a super powerful shot. These are picked up by shooting open special capsules, same as how double fire is gained. There are also capsules that add bonus points and those that destroy all enemies on the screen once shot open. 1up capsules also make appearances rarely, which unsurprisingly grant the player an extra ship if you can hit them. The bombs come in handy for making quick work of the bosses but don't expect to blow through them with your increased fire power. If anything it feels as if the game was designed to simply give you a fighting chance, even with the increased arsenal.

Music is almost as big a part of Gyruss as the gameplay, it's one of those things the game has always been remembered for. The familiar rock remix of Johann Sebastian Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D minor plays in the background although it is enhanced over the arcade version. The NES sound hardware really shows its strength here, creating a soundtrack that in my opinion is every bit as

memorable as Life Force, Super Mario Bros. or The Legend of Zelda. It doesn't just stop at a remix of the arcade music however. Since each warp has a different objective on the NES, each warp has a different musical track. The mini boss warps have their own music, boss battles have an epic tune that fades up as they appear while the standard stage music fades down, you can tell Konami went all out with this port. The music almost makes the game feel like a circular version of Gradius, it's that effective.

As I mentioned last month in my California Extreme show report, I love Gyruss, enough to want to own the full size arcade upright. It's obvious those who worked on the NES port loved the game as well. The NES version was adapted from a Japan only Famicom Disk System port, the only big difference being the ending sequence. As usual the Japanese release features a full ending sequence while the NES release only has an ending screen. Don't let that push you away from owning the NES version, the gameplay is what is important here. Gyruss rises from simply being an excellent port of an arcade masterpiece to becoming an amazing NES game in its own right. It's a title that seems to have always been passed over in the wake of other, more popular games, both in the arcade and on the NES. Gyruss on the NES is a classic arcade shooter fan's dream come true. It's so full of content, refinements, enhancements and perfect gameplay that it should be recalled as one of the greatest NES shooters ever released. Without a doubt it is and has always been one of my favorite games on the platform and a spectacular arcade reimagining.

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



The World of the Apple II Today - Part 2 + Summer Games

by [Donald Lee](#)

PERSONAL UPDATE

This is going to be a bit of a long column. I originally was going to do two separate columns, but instead I will combine them all into one. As I write this, it is the day after Labor Day. It was a long weekend as I hung out with friends and family. I played basketball, badminton, golf, and Rock Band along with going to a BBQ.

The biggest news for me is that after two months of not working, I was offered a job about two weeks ago. I accepted the offer and began work last Monday (08/25/08). I actually spent my first day traveling to my company's corporate headquarters in Sterling, VA (near Washington DC). I spent about 2 1/2 days in Sterling for new hire orientation and training. I returned back to the Bay Area Thursday night and made a brief appearance at my regular office Friday.

For those who are curious, my new job will be as a Sales Engineer. I will be providing pre and post sales support for my company's DNS Services. In looking back, while being laid off was a tough experience, everything worked out in the end. I landed a good job with a company that is trying to grow. I got a raise and the commute is shorter. I am excited by the opportunity.

THE WORLD OF THE APPLE II TODAY - Part 2

This month, I will continue on with a look at some of the resources available for the Apple II.

[A2Central.com](#)

A2-Central was a newsletter (originally known as Open-Apple until 1988) that was published from 1985 until 1995. The a2central.com website has nothing to do with the original newsletter in any way. However, the website has become a popular destination for all news and notes related to the Apple II community. True to the name of the site, a2central.com has been the center of the Apple II community as it still exists today. The news section is constantly updated and there are links to all major Apple II

website still in existence. The site is a valuable resource for all Apple II fans.

Syndicomm.com

The Apple II line of computers has been out of the public eye for many years now. However, thanks to the efforts of many in the Apple II community, there are still a few companies that still Apple II products to the public. One of the longest running companies is Syndicomm. The company started out providing message board and forums for various systems in addition to the Apple II store. Several years ago, the owner Eric Shepherd, who runs Syndicomm as a part time business, decided to focus his efforts solely on the store instead. These days, Syndicomm sells various Apple II (and some Macintosh) products like software, books, periodicals and hardware. For those who still have an interest in the Apple II, Syndicomm is sure to have something for you.

Virtual Apple 2 - Online Disk Archive

As this is a game newsletter, I guess I have to mention this site. For many people who want to enjoy retro games of yesteryear, they have to rely on the compilations released by companies or through emulators. A few folks might actually still have the original systems around.

For the Apple II, emulators have been around for many years. One of the most popular (and the one I still use) is AppleWin for Windows based machines. The interface is simple and you just need to have the disk images available to run your favorite Apple II programs.

However, a developer in the Apple II community (I can't remember the name right now) decided to make an online Apple II emulator that was accessible through the Internet called Virtual Apple. The site originally worked with Internet Explorer (because it used an Active X extension), but now has been designed to work with Firefox as well.

Using the site is as simple as pointing and clicking at a game and waiting for it to load. In a brief moment, your favorite Apple II game of yesteryear will be booted and ready for you to play. It is one of the best things the Apple II community has ever had. Even if you're not an Apple II fan, it's worth checking out for nostalgic value.

SUMMER GAMES

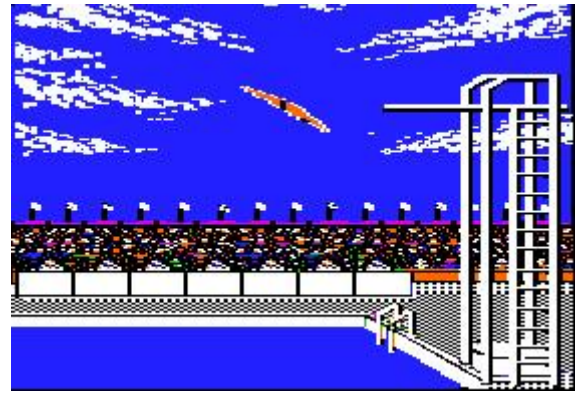
All politics aside, the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing, China has come and gone. By many accounts, China put on a spectacular show especially with the opening and closing ceremonies. The United States won the overall medal count while China won the gold medal count. Michael Phelps set a record with eight gold medals and Usain Bolt was as fast as lightning with his spectacular running.

To commemorate the recently passed Olympics, I re-visited the game Summer Olympics by Epyx. Produced by Epyx in 1984, presumably in anticipation of the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles, the game was a big hit and spawned a sequel as well as several other similar games.

Summer Games offered eight events: Pole Vault, Platform Diving, 4x400M Relay, 100M Dash, Gymnastics, Freestyle Relay, 100M Freestyle, and Skeet Shooting.



I don't remember exactly when I first played Summer Games, but I believe it was after the 1984 Summer Olympics. My experience with the game was very limited. The reason then (and even more so now) was that the game play wasn't very exciting. Plus with the exception of the 100M dash and the Platform diving events, I had little or no interest in the other events.



Also, trying to figure out the mechanics of the using joysticks and buttons to perform some of the events were a frustrating for me. But in the end, I think the game might have been a little too much for the graphics capabilities of the Apple (especially for the high speed events like the 100M dash). The other events which had less going on fared better. Other computers with better graphics and sound capabilities presumably played better overall than the Apple II.

I don't recall seeing any Olympic type Video Games in recent years but with all the graphics and sound capabilities with today's machines, I would like to see someone revisit the concept of Summer Games.

See you next month!



NES Realm - Mid December 1986

by [Scott Jacobi](#)

This month marks a bit of return to form with the original NES Realm. Due to time constraints, I haven't been able to keep up my blog writing so I had to keep these short. The Game Archaeologist may yet return.

King Kong 2 published by Konami on December 18th 1986

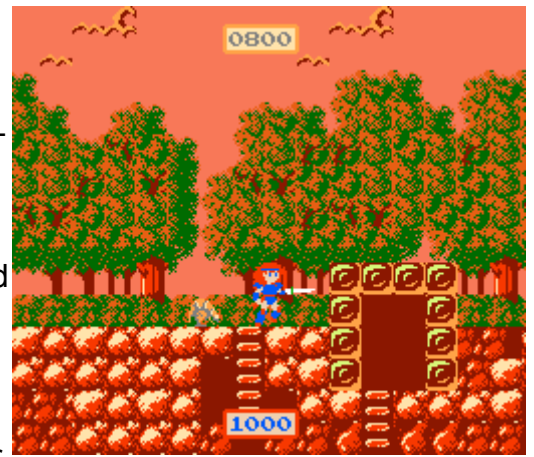
Until Donkey Kong Country came around, there weren't too many games that let you play as a gigantic ape, but Konami saw fit to fill this niche in 1986. The game is played in a top-down perspective. You can walk or bound across the screen, and you can punch with your giant meat-hooks, or throw huge boulders at your enemies. The premise is that you must rescue lady Kong from capture, and in order to do so, you must find and collect eight different keys from eight different "worlds," which are guarded by a different boss. Travel between worlds occurs by way of warp zones that connect one world to another, or several others. Each world has a different premise, like army world, night life world, jungle world, etc., and they are all arranged in Zelda dungeon like fashion, albeit with some non-linear arrangements.



In addition to the keys, you can search for power-ups that increase your speed, strength, or life points. Finding these power ups becomes somewhat essential because the intensity of the enemy attacks pick up quite a bit in the later worlds. The final ninth world contains a few tricks such as hidden passageways that must be discovered in order to find the room to the final boss which blocks access to the cell where Lady Kong is held.

Wing of Madoola published by SunSoft on December 18th 1986

Back in its day, Metroid was heralded as a fairly progressive game just for revealing the secret that the hero you played as was a woman all along. In contrast, Wing of Madoola presented the player as a woman up front the entire time. You play as a red-headed warrior whose mission was to rescue a kingdom by retrieving the Wing of Madoola from a malevolent would-be tyrant. The game is predominantly side scrolling, although there are a few vertically scrolling sections as well. The game is divided into 16 stages, many of which contain a number of items for players to collect, including magic items which expand your arsenal. Earlier stages can be revisited in case essential items were missed earlier along the way. Strong opponents are first introduced as early stage bosses, but are presented to the player as regular enemies in later stages. While the early stages start out quite small and linear, later stages are elaborate mazes with warp doors that take the player to different locations that are difficult to discern from one another. Management of health points and magic points becomes essential to beating the game, as there is a stretch of stages where health cannot be restored for quite some time. The action moves fairly quickly, but so do the enemies, which have a draining effect on the player's health, so it's important not to stick around when you're getting attacked.



Deep Dungeon published by Humming Bird Soft on December 19th 1986

Some people feel that if you've seen one dungeon crawler, you've seen them all. There isn't a tremendous amount that sets Deep Dungeon apart from other early dungeon crawlers, but it's still an impressive accomplishment for a Famicom game. Deep Dungeon is played across eight levels, with typical RPG elements such as earning XP from fights to increase in levels, and collecting Gold to obtain better equipment. The interesting thing is that some of the levels contain "boss fights" where your enemy is in the form of discarded weapons and armor of the previous hero who attempted to rescue the kingdom before you. You must engage in fights with this equipment, and when you succeed, you become capable of utilizing them, and they represent the best available form of that equipment type. Each level contains a unique set of enemies. Gold is largely obtained by searching through trash, and trash reinitializes itself every time you leave and return to a level, allowing you to collect unlimited amount of treasure, provided you have the patience to routinely search through the trash. Limited stat maximums ensure that the game remains fairly challenging all the way up to the end.



Kid Icarus published by Nintendo on December 19th 1986

There's something so endearing about this game, that it has remained a cult favorite of many NES players throughout history. The inclusion of Pit in Super Smash Bros. Brawl for the Wii, the third and latest version of the fighting series, was met with great appreciation. What was it about this game that appealed so strongly to certain players? It could have been the detailed animation (for its time,) the colorful and imaginative enemies that sometimes, but not always, fit into the Greek mythological theme, or it could have been the wide array of power-ups that could be collected throughout the game. One reviewer wrote in a Nintendo Power magazine that Kid Icarus was a combination of several great games; Pit could jump like Mario, shoot like Samus, and collect treasure like Link. Surprisingly, Kid Icarus did not enjoy as huge a reception in Japan. Released as a Famicom Disk System game, it did not seem to make as



large an impression on the playing populace there. In fact, the black and white sequel which appeared on the Game Boy wasn't even released in Japan. Whatever the reason was, Kid Icarus still stands up to the tests of time as a fun and enjoyable game, and a worthy inclusion on the Wii Virtual Console.

Layla published by Db Soft on December 20th 1986

This month's reviews contain, not one, but two games featuring females, the second one being Layla. Unlike Wing of Madoola, Layla is a futuristic sci-fi shooter, where you must race through eight fortresses located on eight asteroids, shooting and firing various weapons at any enemies which get in your way. The goal of the game is to recover eight password disks, each of which is hidden somewhere on each asteroid, and rescue Layla's sidekick Iris. When Iris is rescued, she joins the fight by running and shooting at your side, doubling your firepower, but also doubling your ammo consumption. The game is billed as a Maze Action game, with the emphasis on finding your way through the increasingly complex asteroid fortresses. Without maps to guide you through each fortress, you must rely on your mapping skills as well as your memory to piece together the jumbled arrangement of hallways and elevators which do not always properly line up. You have access to a large number of weapons, some of which are more useful than others at various points in the game. Ammunition and powerups are obtained by destroying crates and collecting the weapon icons found inside. Each fortress has a boss which must be defeated before moving on to the next asteroid, and entering a brief Galaga-like bonus round where you must attempt to shoot down entire groups of enemies for extra points.



Following upon the review of the first Midway Arcade Treasures collection last month, this month we will cover volumes 2 and 3. As there is a great deal of similarity between these collections, it makes sense to combine them into a single review.

Volume 2 was released in 2004. It includes 20 classic arcade games, originally released between 1981 and 1994. It was followed the next year by Volume 3.

Volume 2 was very hard to find for sale locally; I eventually purchased it from an online retailer. It includes several sequels to games that were included in volume 1, such as Gauntlet II, Rampage World Tour, and Total Carnage (sequel to Smash TV) as well as some titles that are arguably not classics including APB, Pit Fighter, and Timber. Some early games, e.g. Wacko, are fun for only a very few minutes. Oddly the collection includes Mortal Combat II and 3, but not the original game. As with Volume 1, several Atari titles are included.

The emulation is very good, for the most part. Wizard of Wor runs way too fast and so it is nearly unplayable. The rotate controls on Xybots were originally handled by a special joystick; these functions have been mapped to the shoulder buttons on the PS 2 controller. This very odd control scheme makes the game more difficult than the original. Otherwise the default controller set-up/mapping works well.

Extras include brief historical notes/credits for the games, an image gallery showing arcade flyers and other advertising material, and some video clips of interviews with developers and programmers. The sound quality on these video clips is not good; it sounds muffled. The overall interface to the collection is "cleaner" and easier to navigate than with Volume 1. Overall, the collection is good, but it is not as

strong as Volume 1.

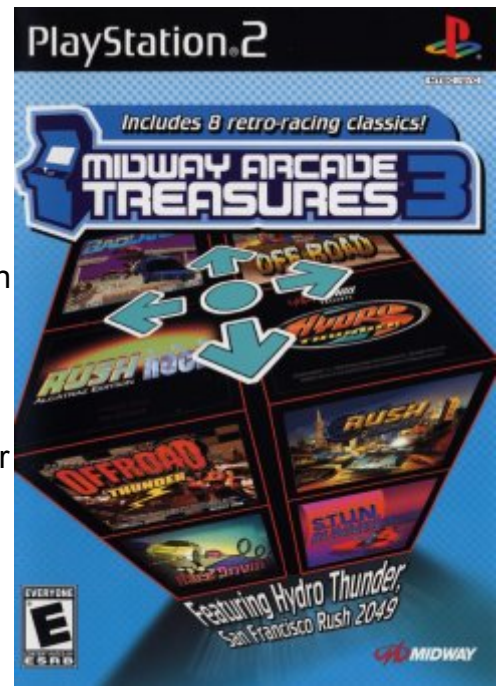
Volume 3 includes only 8 game, all various types of racing games released between 1989 and 2000. It is both very easy to find and relatively inexpensive.

Like the previous two volumes, this collection includes some Atari titles such as Badlands and Race Drivin' (which is a sequel to Hard Drivin', included in Volume 2). The interface and extras are comparable to Volume 2. I was surprised to see that the PlayStation 2 has the capacity to emulate a game as recent as Offroad Thunder; this was only released in 2000.

My favourite game in this collection is S.T.U.N. Runner, though that game was much more fun on the specialized arcade hardware. (For those that never had the experience, the arcade console was shaped like a futuristic motorcycle and the player rode upon it leaning forward towards the monitor).

Volume 3 is, however, the weakest collection of retrogames in the series, and it is definitely one of the poorest arcade compilations available for the PS 2. Obviously the designers were running out of classic-era games to include. I can only recommend this title to fans of a specific game or hard-core collectors who want to have the whole series.

Next month, we will review another collection of classic arcade games for the PS 2. Feedback on this column is always welcome; please send any comments and/or questions to jhd@interbaun.com.



Who'd Win: Altered Beast vs. Golden Axe

by [Andrew Vrba](#)

Welcome back to "Who'd Win?", last month I covered to great side scrolling beat em ups for the NES. This month I'll be looking at two brawlers that aren't so great for the ill-fated Sega Master System. Altered Beast, and Golden Axe. Two games there were huge smash hits in the arcades! They both were ported to the Genesis with great success, but the Master System ports left a lot to be desired. But even losers can be winners, so let us see which of these two bad ports, is the better one!



The sights:

Graphically they are both decently done considering that they are 8bit ports of 16bit titles. Both games feature pretty good sized character and enemy sprites, and the background art isn't half bad either! But those screenshots don't tell the whole story! In motion *Altered Beast* falls apart, like one of the zombies the game's hero punches! It's full of sprite flickering, it's slow, the motions are very stiff, and some sprites are MISSING! You'll get confused by the wolves, the white ones share some sprites with the brown ones. Sometimes you don't know which kind you are hitting! One of the hero's "buffed" transforms is missing as well! The farther you go, the more of a mess it looks! The Boss battles take place against a completely blank background! *Golden Axe* on the other hand manages to do a very workable job! It's far less choppy, and there is less flickering. The motions are smoother, even the magic attacks are animated very well! It is obvious that some frames of animation are missing, but when it comes to graphic goodness even on the SMS *Golden Axe* is just as pretty as the name sounds!

The sounds:

Master System was capable of some good sounds, even some digitized speech as *Altered Beast* illustrates. Both games reproduce the arcade tunes fairly well, and the sound effects are also well done considering this is an 8bit system! As poorly as *Altered Beast* did on the graphics, they did a very good job with the sound! That extra mile by adding the digitized samples deserve some special notice. But I feel that the inclusion of those samples are why the visuals took such a hit. Despite *Golden Axe*'s tunes being a bit catchier, *Altered Beast* is gonna get the last growl in!

The substance:

Keep in mind these are ports of arcade games, so some stuff is missing from both! In *Golden Axe* you can only play as the Barbarian. They try to make up for it by letting you choose from the three magics, but *Golden Axe* without the all three characters just isn't the same! However the gameplay is just about right despite that omission, even the imp kicking mini-game is still in there. Best of all is the fact that none of the levels are missing! Sega really did a bang up job on this port! I really wonder why that game plays so well, while *Altered Beast* is just awful! It really is a beast! The controls aren't all that responsive, and when you move the game just kinda scoots your character across the screen. As mentioned before, the middle transformation is missing. Unfortunately that wasn't the only thing that

this game lost in translation! Some levels are missing. And at least one beast is substituted. Another huge flaw in this one is collision detection. You aren't really sure if all of your blows are even going to connect! What makes it so sad is that they were done by the same development team! Why they could better translate an 8-way beat-em-up that uses more advanced tech, is really beyond me! Golden Axe chops Altered beast down once again!

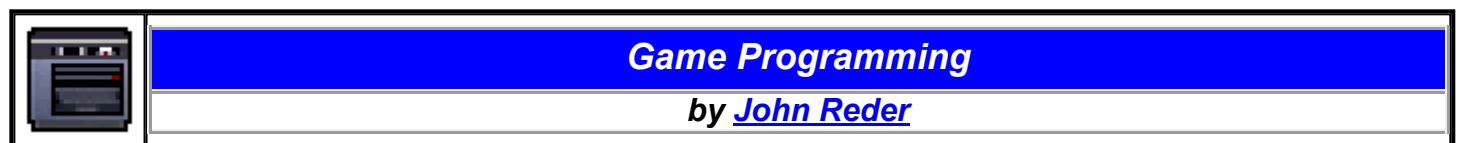
The boxart:



As we all know Master System carts don't have cartridge art, it's just a plain little label, so we'll be looking at the box art for these two games instead! Right off the bat you will notice that there is more going on with the Altered Beast box art! It looks all mystical, and a little bit spooky! You got a mood setter right there! Golden Axe's box isn't as exciting, looks a bit like a Fabio novel cover to be honest...maybe if he was actually fighting that skeleton hoard behind him, or that dragon. Altered Beast takes a bite out of Golden Axe when it comes to the box, but as we all know it's what's on the inside that counts.

Who'd win?

It amazes me that Sega chose Altered Beast as a pack-in title for the Master System, it is such a poorly done conversion! If you ask me they should have packed Golden Axe! It looks better, and more importantly it plays better! Digitized sounds and a pretty box won't save Altered Beast from the executioner's hatchet this day, I say off with its head! Golden Axe comes out on top, and fights on! If you want a good brawler on the Master System, you'll do yourself a favor and pick up a copy of Golden Axe and grab the Control stick accessory while you're at it! It's more fun that way! It adds an extra bit of arcade feel to it! Next month I'm doing something a little weird! I'll be heading back to the NES for Tetris vs Tetris? No, that isn't a typo! I'll be taking a look at Tengen's version and Nintendo's version of the game. Will the two different versions be very similar? Or are there some noticeable differences? Tune in next month to find out! Same VS time, Same VS channel!



I love the old days of 8-bit computing. I knew that I'd grow up to be a software programmer ever since I got my Odyssey2 for Christmas in 1980. I remember reading an Odyssey2 fan club magazine article about the guy behind almost every Odyssey2 game ever written (well, at least 24 of them) Ed Averett. One day a friend and I used the O2 Computer Intro cartridge to write a small Assembler program that consisted of a standard blocky Odyssey2 man graphic walking across the screen from right to left. To our horror after several hours of programming, we realized that there was no way to

save our work! Oh well, over the years I kept up my computer programming skills as I first learned how to program in BASIC on the Radio Shack TRS-80, then while in the Navy I purchased a Commodore 64 where I continued to hone my BASIC programming skills. After many years in the private sector as an electronics technician, I started coding again, and have been a professional programmer ever since. Like most programmers, my career isn't as glamorous as writing video games, no, most of us develop accounting and reporting software, and in my case, I also get to write healthcare management and clinical data entry systems for a large pediatric hospital. Most of my programs these days are web based but I still write in the BASIC language (mostly in Visual Basic and ASP.NET). Although, by day I code for work, but by night I code for fun. Yes, my best video game memories of late have not been from playing games, but from writing them. Seems I have more fun writing games than playing them. Although I have turned my basement into a collection of almost every computer and game console ever created including several Arcade cabinet projects, I keep thinking fondly of my first video game experiences and how they inspired me into both my career and my hobby.



Anyway back to the point of my article. Over the years I have written games that brought me back to some of my favorite experiences. Almost every game I write has its roots in one of my all time 8-bit favorites. They say imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, For example, My first few games 'The Dungeons of Grimlor' 1 and 2, 1994 and 'Soldier Runner' 1995 were inspired by Richard Garriott's 'Ultima III: Exodus' 1983. Later, my 'A.I. Wars (The Insect Mind)' 1996 was inspired by the 1989 C64 game called Omega Cybertank – Origin Systems, where you programmed your own Artificial Intelligence and pitted it against others. These were done in MS Quick Basic and Visual Basic and the newer A.I. Wars 3D elements were done in Dark Basic. Now I'm developing freeware GameBoy Advance games in a language called Dragon Basic (with the Nintendo DS being several years old, the older GameBoy Advance has become another classic system from the past!) My two 2008 GBA games are 'Pocket Commander' inspired by Dan Bunten's 1989 game called 'Modem Wars' and 'Pocket Raider' inspired by Will Wright's 1984 game 'Raid on Bungling Bay', I even hid an Easter egg in the game which was inspired by Warren Robinett's Atari 2600 game 'Adventure' – the first commercial video game to hide a hidden screen giving credit to the programmer (At the time Atari would not let their programmers take credit for their work).



As you can see, I really love video games and their historical roots, which is why I have been reading this newsletter ever since its first issue! Like many of you I am a video game archeologist doing my best to preserve and give credit to the original creators of our favorite hobby. With that said, I only have one more dedication to give. Thank you Ralph Baer for your work on creating the first home console prototype and for inspiring Nolan Bushnell to take it to the next level with his 'Pong' and the formation of Atari!

You can get most of my games for free (Including Adventure Studio where you can create your own ZORK type of text based adventure!) if you want to play them for yourselves at TacticalNeuronics.com

Game Over

Thank you authors, and thank you the readers come coming back every month to check us out! See you next month!

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