

Retrogaming Times Monthly

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Attract Mode

by [Scott Jacobi](#)

It's that time of year again... the time when many people's obligations turn towards home and family. As a result, we have a shortened issue for you this month, but don't worry; what we lack in quantity, I think we more than make up for in quality

Even I fell victim to the responsibility bug this month. I haven't had a lot of time to work on NES guides as I usually do, and as a result, I didn't have enough material for a NES Realm this month. Upon thinking about this lack of time that I and many of my fellow contemporaries find ourselves with, it got me thinking about a certain aspect of retrogames in particular.

Most new games, no matter how linear or non-linear they are, have a hefty time component to them. Not only does it take time to play, but it's not unusual to notice a lot of time passing while you're attempting to solve one problem or another. While the controls of a particular game rarely change, the focus of your mission or your current task will change in order to keep the game interesting.

On the other hand, classic games have a kind of timelessness to them. Even though games like Donkey Kong and Frogger have a timer in them, most of these games serve as a kind of escape from time... a break from the rigors of structured day to day activity. It also helps that when playing these games, I am reminded of a time when I was in fact substantially more blessed with free time.

So I add yet another reason to an already long list of reasons why I still enjoy playing games from an older generation... the gift of the escape from the passage of time that they grant me. Enjoy the issue!



Apple II Incider - Nightmare Gallery / Centipede

by [Donald Lee](#)

It is often said "Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery". In the case of Nightmare Gallery (written by Ron Aldrich and published by Synergistic Software in 1981), the developers took the concept of Atari's arcade smash hit Centipede and took it in a entirely different direction.

In Centipede, the player is in a forest of mushrooms and has to deal with the centipede, fleas, spiders and scorpions. The player can move up, down, left and right at the bottom portion of the screen.

In Nightmare Gallery, the player is in a cemetery. Instead of mushrooms, the playing field consists of gravetones. Instead of a centipede, the player is attacked by a combination of what appears to be werewolves, bats, zombies and mummies. The player is represented by a gun at the bottom of the screen. Unlike Centipede, the player can only move left and right. The player also has a shield he can use to deflect enemies which Centipede did not have.



My memories of when I was exposed to Nightmare Gallery is a little foggy. I seem to recall that I played the game during my elementary school years. I believe it was part of a bunch of disks I had borrowed from my computer teacher when I was in 3rd or 4th grade. After elementary school, I had minimal exposure to the game in the years since.

It was only when I started using Apple II emulators in recent years that Nightmare Gallery crossed my mind again. It took me a little while to actually remember the title of the game. Thankfully, I was able to locate the game in the Apple II archives and I was able to play it again for the once time in many years.

In terms of gameplay, Nightmare Gallery is very similiar to Centipede. The gravestones play the same purpose as the mushrooms. There are fast dropping characters (mummies possibly) that create gravestones ala the fleas that created mushrooms. However, unlike Centipede, there isn't anything that "poisons" gravestones like scorpions.



Alas, while Nightmare Gallery is fairly entertaining to play the first few times, the replay value of the game is very limited. The gameply gets repetitive rather quickly. Also, the game didn't play that well with my logitech joystick.

The graphics for the game are fairly decent but the sound effects are fairly limited. Besides the sound effect of a gun shooting, there is only the sound of the character screaming when it dies. This screaming sound is actually somewhat annoying and may even scare the kids. You may be best turning off the sound as you won't be missing much.

For comparison sake, I gave the Apple II version of Centipede a spin. I had played the arcade and Atari 5200 versions of Centipede over the years but never played the Apple II version. After giving the game a brief spin, I'll have to say that I was impressed. Despite the obvious limitations of Apple II graphics and sound, Atarisoft did a good job in converting the game. All the elements of the game were present and it was very fun to play.

In conclusion, while Nightmare Gallery is a solid game and worth a look, it is the original Centipede that is the most fun to play.



Gametap - Worth the Price?

by [Tom Zjaba](#)

Classic gamers are a cheap lot. We like our games dirt cheap or free. From scrounging around flea markets and thrift stores, looking for cheap games to using emulators, we are tight with our money. So when a service like Gametap come around, there is that small voice inside of you that says "Pay for video games online? Why would I do that? There are thousands of java games to play for free." And you know what, you have a good point. There are tons of java applets littered around the internet. And there are numerous sites that offer free games or a small fee to play. And there is the famous emulators MAME, Visual Pinball and MESS that combined can offer you a lifetime of game play and all free, if you have the time and desire to download and set it all up. But what if you want something more? What if your conscious tells you that the right thing to do is pay for your games? Then Gametap is a real possibility.

I was reluctant to join Gametap at first. I saw the list of free games they offer you to play (over 140 games) and said that I would give it a try. I figured that I could play for a week or two and see if I like it. All you have to do is download a little program and it will set up Gametap for you. You do need to download each game you want to play. This can take anywhere from a few seconds for a classic like Pac-Man to a half hour for some of the newer games. This is based on my experiences with broadband (which is necessary for Gametap). Depending on your service, these times may or may not be the same. Once the game is downloaded, you do not have to do it again. After that, it only takes a minute to set the game up. From there, you can play away.

I know you gamers want to know about the selection of games. There is a good selection of both arcade, console and computer games to play. Systems represented from the older systems are the Atari 2600, Intellivision, Commodore 64, Sega Master System, Game Gear, SG-1000 and Sega Genesis. For newer systems, there is Sega Saturn, Sega Dreamcast and Neo Geo. Add in arcade games, windows games and a few odds and ends and you have a good selection of games. There really is something for everyone as all genres are represented. From RPGs, to shooters, to fighter to puzzle games to even war simulators, there is a game for just about anyone. And there is a selection of educational games like Oregon Trail, Carme Sandiego and Reader Rabbit, so you can use this as a selling point for your spouse (assuming you have kids).

Let us get down to the classic games, since this is a classic newsletter. Start with the Atari 2600. There are currently 104 different games to play and I am sure that list will grow. All of the titles are made by either Atari themselves or Activision (including some of the Imagic games that Activision owns the rights to). So you can pretty much guess what the games are. All the favorites like Pitfall, Adventure, Yar's Revenge and Kaboom are here. Sorry, but E.T. did not make the list. As expected, the licensed games are missing (I know it breaks your heart to not be able to play Cookie Monster Munch). But there is still more than enough Atari games to keep you busy. As for the Intellivision games, sadly there are only 13 games. There are a few rare games like Thunder Castle, Hover Force and Chip Shot Golf. Hopefully, they will be able to get more Intellivision games in the future as I would love to see games like Thin Ice, Diner and Tower of Doom added. The Intellivision has a good selection of games that hopefully will get added.



If you are a fan of the Commodore 64 computer, there is a decent selection of games here. At the present time, there are 43 different games available. I must admit that I really do not know any of the

games on the list, but with the thousands of games made for the C-64, that is not a shock. I was bummed to see no Forbidden Forest, one of my favorite games for the C-64. Some of the games available are Advanced Pinball Simulator, Grell and Falla, Murray Mouse Supercop and Slightly Magic. I have not played too many of these games, but some do look interesting.

The arcade is where Gametap really shines. With 147 games currently available, there is a great selection of titles to choose from. All the popular titles like Bubble Bobble, Space Invaders, Zaxxon, Galaga, Centipede, Tempest and Asteroids are available to play. There are some headscratchers here like how Ms. Pac-Man is missing but you have Pac-Man, Pac & Pal and Super Pac-Man. Of course, there are no Nintendo games available as they want you to pay to download them on the Wii. There are also some newer arcade games, well newer than the classics. There are games like Gigawing, numerous Street Fighter games and a couple of the Mega Man arcade games.

But the system with the most games is easily Windows with nearly half the games available. These cover every genre imaginable and offer many popular franchises. A few of those are the Tomb Raider games (4 different ones), the Splinter Cell series (3 different ones), Silent Hill (2 different ones) and a bunch of other games like Tony Hawk, Rainbow Six and Prince of Persia. As you can see, there is plenty of games for the money and alot of good ones. Many of these games are not that old.

A few nice features with Gametap is first, the layout. The main menu system is very clean and easy to navigate. You have various ways to search for games, including by system, genre and a search feature. Once you download some games, you can make playlists, so you don't have to look for the games. Or you can find them in the Recently Downloaded list. Also, once you play the game, you can either choose to use the default controls or you can change the controls to whatever keys you want. It will remember the setup for each game, so you only have to do it once per game. It also works with some gamepads, but I did not test any. Instead, I used my Devastator II arcade controller to play games and found it worked great with Gametap. I even found the spinner worked flawlessly with Tempest, without any configurations on my part. Each game has a description of it, instructions on how to play (there are a few games that don't but almost all of them do), a screenshot of the game and a rating. The rating is how the members of Gametap have rated it on the scale of 1 to 100. You can rate games as well, so you can let the world know if the game is great or a waste of time.

My personal favorite feature on Gametap is the ability to save and post high scores. On most of the arcade games and a handful of console games (like Pitfall), you can save your high scores and if you choose, you can post them up for the world to see. They keep ranks on games for all-time scores, yearly, monthly and weekly. Unless your name is Billy Mitchell or Alan Hewston (RTM's own who was the first to score a perfect game on Pitfall), you probably will not get the all-time scores. Some of them are ridiculously high. But with a little practice, it is not hard to get on the weekly and even the monthly lists. It is fun to see your name up there and a nice feature is you can choose to not submit your low scores. This way, if you have a really bad game, the world does not have to know.

If you look over the list of PC games, you may be asking yourself if Gametap saves your progress. It does and allows multiple save spots per game. This makes it nice with the games that can take months to finish. Even some games you would not expect allow saves. If a game has continues in the arcade, the odds are you can save your progress. And you will need it as there are so many games that you will be playing multiple games at once.

As I look over the list of games available, I see a few minor problems. If you are a fan of American Football games, then you will be disappointed. The only football games are either the old Atari ones or a game for the Neo Geo. To be honest, the selection of sports games outside of Soccer is pretty weak. They have 70 sports games, but some are a stretch to be called sports games. Billiards, bowling and minature golf are not exactly my idea of sports games. They are more leisure activities, but what do I know.

While the collection of games is impressive, I would like to see more harder to find games. A lot of the console and arcade games are the same as ones you can get on compilation discs from Midway, Atari and Activision. Since they seem to have a good working relationship with Sega, maybe they could persuade them into putting some of the rarer games on Gametap. Stuff like the Sega Saturn games, Panzer Dragoon Saga and Burning Rangers. They have the first two Panzer Dragoon games available, but not the one that few people have played. Some of the oddball Dreamcast games would also be nice to see. Ooga Boogo would be a good place to start. And if they added online play, it could be a very popular game. So could Sega Marine Fishing and Shenmue. These are games that could have a whole new audience.

Now it is time to talk price. Monthly fees are \$9.99, which is fair. But if you buy a yearly membership, it is half the price or \$59.99 for a whole year! That is the price of one new Playstation 3 or XBOX 360 games. For the money, you get nearly a thousand games, with more added monthly. You get original games like Sam & Max and American McGee's Grimm series (both are set up in episode format). You also get webcasts, videos and more. There is quite a bit of original content on the site and more added all the time. They have different contests where you play a certain game and can win prizes. They have a feature where you can challenge other players. As you can see, there is a lot for the price. I think paying \$60.00 for a full year of gaming is a deal. Just remember, you need to have broadband and a fair amount of hard drive space.

In conclusion, I am more than happy with my membership to Gametap. I have found the games to run smoothly and only one game I played has had a problem. Typing of the Dead would not return to Gametap. I had to quit the game and restart Gametap. But otherwise, every game has run great! It is enjoyable to look up and see the scores I put up on various games. And I get a chance to play many games that I never got around to buying like Psychonauts, Beyond Good and Evil, Scrapland, Zoo Empire and the 3D Pinball games. So put it on your Christmas list or give it to yourself as a gift as it truly is the gift that keeps giving.

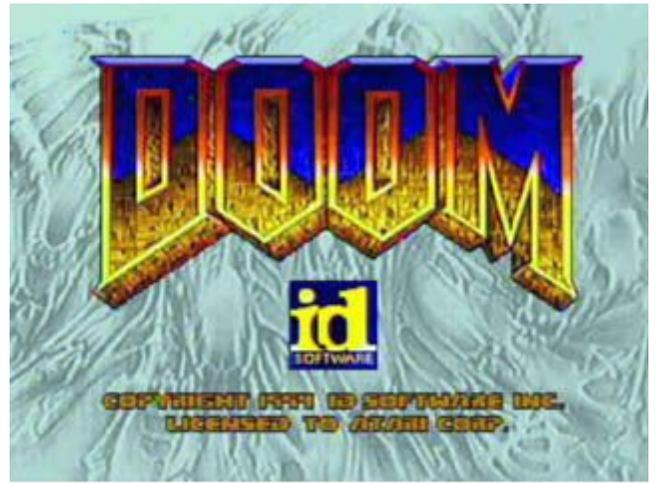
Tom Zjaba (Who found Gametap has cut into the time he has to add stuff to his websites. But he still finds time to do video game comic strips at <http://arcadeafterdark.com>)



Old School Gamer Review

by *[Eric Schuetz](#)*

Hello RTM readers! My name is Eric Schuetz, and I am a new member to the team. After being a reader for a long while now, I am glad to be a part of it. I will be bringing you reviews of various Atari games that I have played over the years, and some I am still playing to this day. I know there are a lot of retro systems out there now days, but I am a tried, and true, Atari fan. I have many fond memories sitting there playing my Atari 2600 when growing up. Even when everyone else had Nintendo's, I still chugged away on my Atari 2600 Jr. So what Atari systems am I going to be reviewing? Every Atari Console out there, essentially. So to kick off my first article, I will be reviewing the Atari Jaguar version of DOOM, a favorite of mine. So here goes!



Ah, the classic that revolutionized the gaming industry with its First Person Perspective, blood, gore, violence and all around fun. This game has been seen on so many different platforms, it is not funny. Do you know them all? Here is a quick run down of what I can remember.

- PC (duh)
- SNES
- N64
- PSX
- GBA
- Atari Jaguar
- Sega 32x
- Sega Saturn
- 3DO
- And numerous others thanks to emulation and hacks

You can't keep this bad boy down. It has aged well, and is still a blast to play. This review, I will be talking about the Atari Jaguar version, then give my opinions on the various others. The rating on this version are in regards to the Jaguar only, and do not reflect all versions of this game.

Graphically, this game has aged fairly well. Sure, all the baddies are 2D characters, but that doesn't take away from the action. The environments are big, well designed, and gory. The overall atmosphere presented in this game provides a great Sci Fi/Horror feel that draws you in. However, some of the environments are altered. First, you will see the pillars on the very first level where you get your first suit of green armor are missing. Other area's you will see elements changed or missing as well. Not a big deal, just takes away from this being the best, and most perfect port from the PC.

The animation in the game isn't bad at all. You can tell that the monsters have lost a frame or three in animation, but that is expected considering it is on a cartridge. Space is always an issue with cartridges.

Sound in the game is rather faithful, except in the music department. Again, in an attempt to save on space, I am guessing, music was removed. No where except the beginning of the game, and in between levels is there music. All of the wails, growls, snarls, snorts, grunts, and screams are intact, along with weapons sound effects.

Controls are smooth as butter. Again, the developers took advantage of the keypad and mapped the weapons selection to them. You will really find this handy when surrounded by minions of hell!

If you are a noob to DOOM, you find that the playability is not to unforgiving. There are different difficulty levels, and cheats. Once you get the hang of playing the game, you will be flying through it. Aiming is a cinch, considering that all you need to do to aim is focus on the general area of where the monster you want to shoot is at. No looking up or down, just aim and shoot.

Overall, this is a really fun and faithful version of the game. It looks great, runs fast, and suffers very little slowdown on the Atari Jaguar. Next to Alien vs Predator, Atari really seemed to want to get the FPS games down pact. When you need a good game for your small Jaguar library, you can't go wrong with this game.

- Graphics - 5
- Sounds - 3
- Controls - 5
- Playability - 5
- Overall - 4.5

Now, with that out of the way, let's take a quick look at the other versions. The Sega 32x version was a sad state of affairs. The screen was shrunk down, levels are missing, and the game just isn't as fun as it should have been.

The SNES version was a real mile stone for the Super FX chip. It showed that the SNES could do decent 3D games. It even had all of the level music. A couple levels and monsters were removed, but it is still a fun romp.

The PSX version was the BEST of them all. I dare say I like it more than the PC version. The game ran fast, smooth, and played wonderfully. In the Doom collector's edition, you couldn't circle strafe, but with the PSX, you can! Every button was mapped to functions to make game play quick and easy.

The Sega Saturn version was really more, or less, just like the PSX version. I never had a chance to really play it, but from what I have seen, it was just about the same.

The Game Boy Advance version is perhaps the most ambitious of them all. With the small screen, they could get away with a few things missing, and the pixilated graphics. However, DOOM on the GBA is a great way to take the game on the go. I would say that it is comparable to the SNES rendition.

The PC version is the benchmark. There is no debating it. All other versions either tried to stack up, or surpass. End of story.

The N64 version of Doom is perhaps my least favorite of the bunch. Not because it was hard, or crappy looking. My issue with it is that the game doesn't look like DOOM. DOOM64 got "updated" graphics and visuals to take advantage of the N64 hardware. That is great and all, but change for the sake of change is never a good thing.

I know that there are some good hacks out there that make DOOM PC playable on other machines. Some do a great job, others don't. Do your research and you will find one that works for you.

Game Over

Thanks to Eric Schuetz and a special thank you to Tom Zjaba. Hopefully we'll have a little more content for you next month, so tune in and see!

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