Retrogaming Times Monthly
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Attract Mode
by Scott Jacobi

Hello again. This is a bittersweet issue for me as it is the last RTM that I will be acting as editor-in-chief of. Other responsibilities are leaving me with an inadequate amount of time to dedicate to this wonderful publication, and I don't want it to suffer as a consequence. I am being succeeded by one of our newest members, Eric T. Schuetz, whose impressive array of web development experience makes him quite qualified for the task. I will no doubt continue to contribute, and I think that by not having to focus so much on compiling each issue, I may be able to make more meaningful contributions in other ways, so this is definitely not good bye.

Case in point about my difficulty finding time to dedicate to RTM, there were two submissions that I completely overlooked last month, that would have been great additions to the small issue. One was from our very own Donald Lee, who submitted this Guest Editorial in comemoration of his two year anniversary as a writer, which happened to be last month. So without further ado, here is the editorial that Donald submitted to me last month.

> For one of the rare times since I've been writing for Retrogaming Times Monthly (RTM), I actually turned in my article early to Scott. Since contributions and articles for RTM have been a little sparse lately, I decided I could write a guest editorial for RTM as well. My planned topic? Writing for Retrogaming Times Monthly! (What else?)
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> Before I started writing this article, I decided to take a count of how many issues of RTM I had written for. In a surprising turn, if you include RTM #54, this will be the 24th issue of RTM that I have written for. It has been nearly TWO FULL YEARS since I became a regular writer for RTM. Thus, it was just perfect timing for me to discuss my experience writing for RTM.
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> Why did I start writing for RTM? Well, I had stumbled upon RTM some years back and was a regular reader. I'd always thought that I should contribute something to the magazine but I always procrasinated. Things changed when Scott took over the editorial reins from Adam King. Scott put out notice that he was looking for writers and I decided to make the jump. Thus, I wrote my first article which appeared in RTM #31.
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> At the outset, I wasn't sure I could contribute on a monthly basis. I work full time and generally keep a very busy schedule with all my various activities. Scott was ok with it. However, I somehow found a way to write at least one article for the past 24 issues, it wasn't always easy. After my initial burst of enthusiasm for the first 6 issues or so, I got into a funk for a while. I'm not exactly sure what it was, but I had trouble mustering enthusiasm to write articles. Yet, as I have noted many times in the past (including in this article), I always managed to submit an article to Scott, even if it was late!

However, as I get ready for my third year writing for RTM, I have found some renewed enthusiasm. After being laid off in mid-June of this year, writing for RTM (along with my other activities) provided me with a nice distraction from my job search. Even though I started a new job in August, the job has been fairly relaxed (even though I will be working from home in a couple of hours....at 10 PM). Having a laid back job has given me some time to focus on writing for RTM.

I find that my topic of choice (the Apple II) has given me a lot of flexibility to choose which topics to write on. The Apple II had a long history to draw stories from. The Apple II had a huge and diverse game library. I was fortunate enough to be a general game enthusiast to play games in just about every genre that existed. People may have noticed that in some of my articles, I discussed a particular topic (Olympics and Baseball recently) and found the appropriate game to talk about. This is one of the reasons why I can whip up articles in one day or less generally.

Finally, I would be remiss if I didn't try and encourage new people to write for RTM. As you have read, it wasn't always easy but I am glad that I did it. As Scott always says, if there is something you want to write about, send it in. You're not obligated to write monthly. I simply choose to do so because there is so much to talk about.

It has been a good two years writing for RTM and I look forward to many more. I'm also looking forward to newer contributors to add to the legacy of RTM. See you all next month!

| TOMY	**_Gaming Studies with the Tomy Tutor -- Loco-Motion_**
	by [David Lundin, Jr.](#)

Since my earliest days I've considered myself a train buff. Sure, trains and railroads are common points of interest for children but as I grew older my fondness for railways only continued to expand. Going back to my younger days, right back around when I was first experiencing video games, a little game about railroading arrived along side my Tomy Tutor. That game was Loco-Motion, a relatively unknown title that appeared in the arcade in 1982. Loco-Motion could be considered a puzzle game with some action and reflex elements tossed in. Imagine a traditional sliding puzzle where a grid of tiles is slid around to create a picture. There is always one vacant title to allow the others to be slid around and rearranged. Draw railroad track sections onto each of the tiles, put little railway stations on the outer boarder of the puzzle frame, then drop a moving locomotive onto the playfield - that's Loco-Motion. Guide the locomotive to pick up waiting passengers at each station without running into dead ends or the vacant square to complete each level.

Although the concept seems simple, there's an awful lot to do. The player has two roles, the first as the switchman that moves the track tiles and the second as the engineer regulating the speed of the locomotive. Tiles are slid into the vacant space by use of the control disc on the Joy Controllers and locomotive speed is increased by holding down either the SL or SR button. The main objective is to create a track path that will lead to a station where passengers are waiting. An equally important objective is to keep your locomotive rolling as reaching the end of the line results in loss of a life. Hitting a dead end section (buffer), the vacant tile space, or reaching the end of a track that goes nowhere will result in a train wreck. To further increase the challenge, bonus stations pop up in each level. A bonus station replaces the awaiting passengers with a number that slowly runs down. If the station is reached before the number reaches zero, the remaining value is added as bonus points and the passengers are picked up. However if the bonus station value runs all the way down to zero, then a Ghost Train leaves from that station and the passengers remain at the platform. If a Ghost Train collides with your locomotive, either on the same track or at a cross track, the resulting train wreck results in the loss of a life. Multiple Ghost Trains can spawn and a bonus can be obtained if two Ghost Trains collide with one another, which also removes them from the playfield. This is where the speed increase comes into play, using it to reach bonus stations before Ghost Trains can depart and also to avoid Ghost Train collisions. Watch the throttle though, the faster your locomotive steams down the line, the less time you have to plan your route. Once all

passengers have been picked up the level is completed and the next one begins, usually consisting of a different size and almost always containing more squares that have buffers.

When the Tutor cartridge boots up the attract sequence begins instantly. The player locomotive slowly chugs around the map as tiles are randomly slid around. A musical tune unique to the Tutor version plays in the background while the player is continuously asked the usual Tomy Tutor question, one or two players. This continues until the locomotive has a collision which triggers the attract sequence to restart, along with the music, on a different board. After making a player selection the player is prompted to select Amateur or Professional skill with the SL or SR button. AMA setting is a normal game of Loco-Motion while PRO sets the default speed of the locomotive higher, making the game more challenging. After selecting the difficulty, the first few notes of "I've Been Working on the Railroad" play, which sounds great on the hardware. Visually the game is beautiful with bright colors, cartoony graphics for the locomotives and passengers and added details such as trees on the outside edge of the playfield. This is a sharp contrast to the black and more muted colors of the arcade version. The current connected path the locomotive is traveling along illuminates white while unconnected track remains black. This also carries over to the passengers with green happy faces along connected lines and red sad faces at the stations which have no connecting service. The illumination of the connected line draws a little faster than the arcade version which makes it a little easier to plan extended routes.
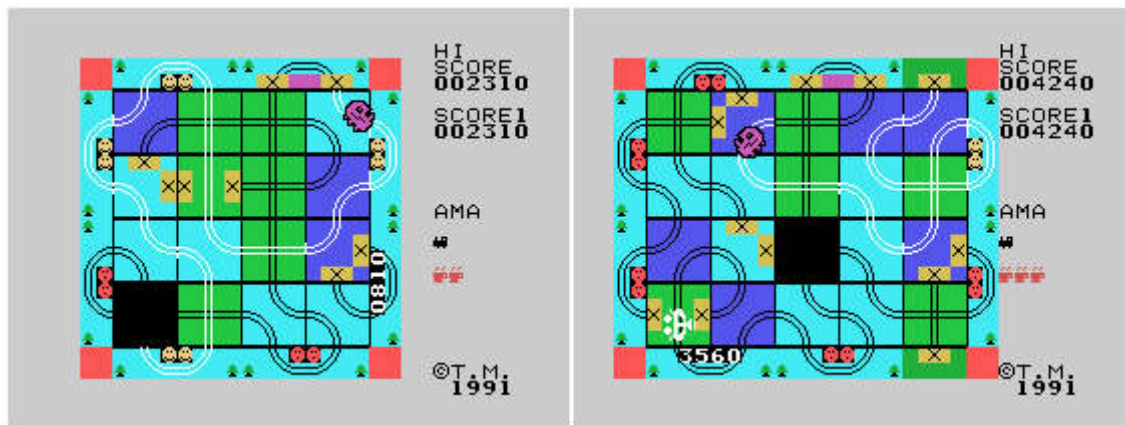

Bonus stations only appear where there are still passengers to be picked up, which is a departure from the arcade version where they would spring up anywhere along the outer boarder. As the bonus timer ticks down to its last few moments, an audible alarm is played with increasing volume which sounds like a railroad crossing signal. A white Ghost Train departs from the platform if the bonus station is not reached in time. Multiple Ghost Trains can depart from the same station if additional bonus station timers run down to zero. Often this can be a good strategy to clear up a line if only one station remains, allowing two Ghost Trains to appear, then letting them crash into one another for safe access for the player locomotive. Once all the stations have been visited the stage is complete and the next one begins. Each stage adds or removes tiles both in over all size and in type. As the game progresses less and less straight tracks are used and more and more buffer tiles appear, including the dreaded four sided buffer which is as deadly as the vacant square. As the locomotive travels around the screen little puffing sounds are produced, increasing in frequency as locomotive speed is increased. Additionally reaching a station causes the whistle to sound. All musical tunes and sound effects are outstanding and truly add additional charm to the over all feel of the game.

There are a few features missing here that were in the arcade version. The first is the Loop Sweeper which appeared if you created an endless loop of track the locomotive was on. The Loop Sweeper would zoom around the loop behind the locomotive, at a rate the locomotive couldn't outrun, eventually causing a collision unless blocked by a track change or the vacant square. Another missing feature is a special tile of track called a Bonus Line. A Bonus Line looks like a standard cross section of track with switches. This special tile allows three directions of exit from the direction of entry. The trick is that the direction the switch is thrown is selected at random, so a perfectly laid out path can suddenly be diverted away from. Due to the added risk, crossing over Bonus Lines is rewarded with bonus points, hence their name. The tile currently moving into the vacant space

also slides smoother in the arcade version, especially if it has a locomotive atop it.

Loco-Motion had a rather limited home release profile, a shame for those of us who enjoy the game. The version most may be familiar with is the Intellivision release, which the arcade original and Tomy Tutor version run right off the rails. Years later the Japanese version (Guttang Gottong) got a port on the Japan exclusive Konami Classics 2 for the Nintendo Game Boy. Interestingly enough that version plays like a miniature version of the Tomy Tutor release. One thing every version of Loco-Motion has in common is that they are all different. The Intellivision version is by far the weakest entry of the bunch. While it still plays well, graphically it's a mess. I put the Game Boy version above the Intellivision release as it's a great portable version of the game that retains the charming visuals of the arcade and Tutor versions. When it finally comes down to the arcade original and the Tomy Tutor version, I have to give the slight edge to the Tutor build. The arcade version has more features and gameplay elements but the Tutor version seems much more polished and stands as a better over all package.

As before, I'd love to review more Tomy Tutor games but sadly I only have three titles from the catalog, the three that were purchased along with the computer many years ago. If you have any spare Tomy Tutor or Tomy Pyuuta games you'd like to sell me for use in future reviews, please e-mail me at insanedavid@classicplastic.net. Thanks!

Apple II Incider - Skyfox	
by [Donald Lee](#)	
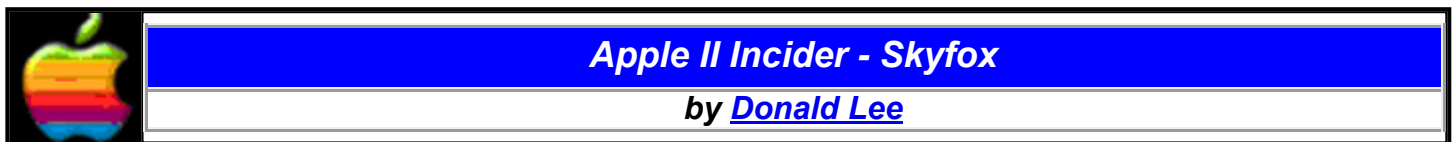
So much for your best laid plans. For someone who typically came come up with article ideas on a short notice, I was lacking inspiration this month. There's sort of a two-fold answer to why. First, Thanksgiving came and went. Thanksgiving day was relatively uneventful, but I took part (in small part) of the Blac k Friday rush. I was up around 5:30 AM and walked around various shopping centers for almost 8 hours.

Secondly, I was very active with my sports activities. I played some basketball Saturday, badminton Sunday and more basketball Monday. Add to the fact that my high school basketball officiating season is now in full swing. All told, you have one very tired writer.
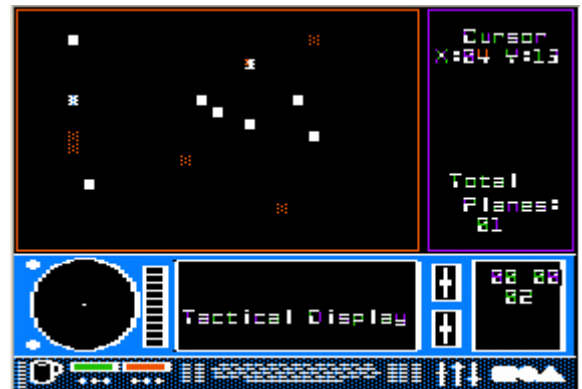
However, I came up with an interesting idea. I usually wrote on games I had played previously. I thought, why not randomly pick a game you never played and try to write a story around it? Good idea in theory. In practice, it didn't quite work so well. Several games I tried didn't seem to want to work on the emulator. Finally, with Scott's deadline coming up, I had to settle on writing for one of most favorite games from back in the 1980's: Skyfox by Electronic Arts.

For the uninitiated, Skyfox is a first person flight simulator/action game. However, unlike other flight games like F-15 Strike Eagle or Flight Simulator, Skyfox was not based on a real plane. However, while not simulating a real plane, you had various controls for weapons, shields, engines and even a tactical computer display.

There were various training missions available for games to get them used to flying the plane and dealing with the various enemies in the game (Tanks, Mother Ships, Jets). You also trained flying at ground level and also up above the clouds. These training missions were optional though helpful for novice flyers.

The real meat of the game were the real missions with enemy invasions. You could choose from smaller to larger scale invasions and the types of enemies you wanted to face. There were various skill levels to choose from from a cadet on up. All in all, the purpose of the game was to destroy all the enemies before the enemies could destroy all the friendly installions and colonies. You had at your disposal regular guns, missles and also the use of the auto-pilot to bring you to enemies automatically. The tactical computer also helped you to find enemies who may be closing in on certain installations.

My opinion was that this was one of the best action games I've ever played. There was a lot happening in the game. Besides flying your plane with the joystick and using both fire buttons, you needed to use your keyboard to bring up the tactical display, arm missles, enable your auto-pilot and even do some speed control over your plane. But despite all these things you needed to do, it was FUN. You almost felt like you were sitting in the cockpit hitting various controls. I found games like F-15 Strike Eagle a little complex and not quite as easy to get into as Skyfox was.
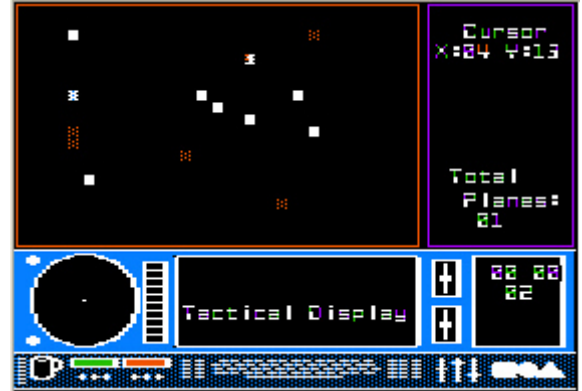
Also, the graphics for the Apple II were very done. The flying was realistic through you couldn't do the 360's and other things that you might with a real plane. Honestly, those moves would have detracted from the game. The sound effects for the standard Apple II was ok, but nothing spectacular. For those with a Mockingboard (or compatible) sound card, you were treated to a nice soundtrack at the beginning of the game. However, I don't recall if that improved the sound during the game.
If Skyfox wasn't already good enough, there was an Easter Egg hidden in the game. You could bring up a game of Space Invaders on your Tactical Computer. I won't give away how to enable the Easter Egg, but I am sure you can find it online.

All in all, Skyfox was an incredible game and one of the best during the 1980's.

	Trevor McFur and the Crescent Galaxy
	by [Eric Schuetz](#)
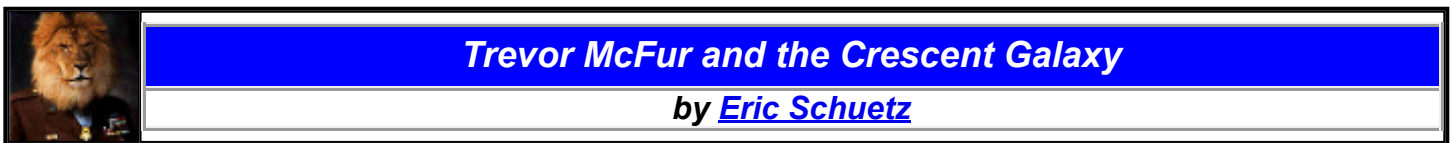
Ok, so the Atari Jaguar wanted to get in on the side scrolling shooter genre because it was relatively popular. However, this game was, and will, never be a classic shooter in the likes of such stellar classics as R-Type. Why, you ask? Well on with the review!

Graphically, this is a very much uninspired game. The Jaguar was capable of displaying some gorgeous 2D visuals, but this game is just ugly. First, the overall appearance is very unoriginal, and has that "thrown together" look. Backgrounds move along slowly, and look bland. They also repeat horribly. Foreground images look odd, and can even make it difficult to see enemies, creating unnecessary deaths. Enemies are all boring, and some even seem out of place in this game. One oddity of this game is the flying EYE BALLS in the futuristic city level at the end. And what does the end boss look like? It looks like some kind of weird 1970's throwback lava lamp looking piece. The boss has distorted images of people on it, which really doesn't make it look all that imposing. I wonder if that was the programmers showing their despair when they realized this game was not just a tech demo, but to be a REAL game?

Some of the character art isn't to bad, but I am sure it was nothing more than some simple PhotoShop work done to fill in. Personally, it wouldn't have made any difference in this game.

Sounds are horribly bland, boring and, in some cases, unheard. It would seem that the developers took some standard stock audio effects and used them in this game. Farts, gurgles, bland explosions and laser blasts. The music is boring "techno" riffs that even Moby wouldn't touch.

Controls aren't bad, but no where near great. Everything moves slow. This is a system with a supposed 64 bit processor, but with a 32 bit bus. I would still have expected it to fly. On occasion it is very difficult to dodge incoming enemies and debris.

Playability is so low, it is sad. If you play without using the cheat code, you will bore quickly, and die a lot. You have "Bombs" that are limp as cooked spaghetti. Once you shoot them, they drop off the screen. What good is that? Your special attacks are decent, but very off balanced and can make the game to easy if you can collect a lot of them, and quickly. When your laser is maxed out, it still doesn't pack a solid enough punch to destroy some of the easier enemies. Again, the balance in the game is terribly off. However, if you decide to use the 1193 cheat, you will find yourself zipping through this game and BEATING it within a single hour.

Overall, I only got this game to add to my abysmally small Jaguar collection. I don't recommend it for anything, but to add to your collection of games, as not to make the Jaguar too desolate.

•Graphics - 2
•Sounds - 1
•Controls - 3
•Playability 1
•Overall - 1.5

Game Over

You know when you stay up real late watching Saturday Night Live all the way to the credits, and they play that music as the guest host thanks everyone and says good night? I hear that music right now. :) I've definitely felt honored to hold this editor position for RTM for as long as I have, and I'm grateful for all the people who I've come in contact with as a result of it. I especially want to thank Alan Hewston for giving me the opportunity and for always fixing my TOC mistakes, Tom Zjaba for starting this great tradition in the first place and for his

continued support, "Insane" David for his fantastic contributions which I felt rivaled my own and inspired me, Donald Lee for always being able to count on him to whip something up whenever we needed it and for his general support and advice, and to all the other contributors who have submitted articles to me in the past. You've all helped keep the RTM fires lit all this time. And with that, I hand her over to Eric Schuetz, and I can't wait too see what our 80th issue will look like in a couple of years. Oh, and Eric... I'm going to be a little late with my submission next month, can I get an extension? ;) Thanks again everyone.