



COVERING 3 DECADES OF CLASSIC GAMING

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Press Fire To Begin

by [Bryan Roppolo](#)

Well, school is back in session and as you all can see, we have a column on that famous school game, Oregon Trail! It doesn't get better than being at school and playing that classic on an original Apple II. I can pretty much say that almost anyone that grew up back in the '80s played that game at their school at some point.

Now on to the serious stuff. I have decided that being the editor/webmaster/graphics designer is too much for one person to do. I have been doing it for one and a half years, but I now find it becoming more difficult to do everything. One of the reasons for this is because I am now getting back into collecting TI-99/4A cartridges and am interested in focusing more time on that. This development does not mean that I plan on leaving Retrogaming Times Monthly, but rather that I want to split the duties that I have onto 3 different people. This should also create more long term stability as not one person is overwhelmed by the workload. I would like to stay on as the graphics designer and also webmaster (meaning maintaining the main page and archives, etc). However, I would like to split off the duties of editing articles and putting together the HTML for each issue to 2 different people. Therefore, one person would put together each issue using Dreamweaver or the like and the other person would edit the articles that the columnists send in. If anyone out there feels like they can do a good job with this and in turn keep the wheels turning here at RTM, that would be great! One of the reasons for this splitting off is because there have been a lot more columnists writing recently, and its become too much for one person to handle. Therefore, if you are interested in helping out send me an e-mail and I'll choose the person who I think will do the best job for the magazine.

Now let's get onto the fun stuff below!



Retrogaming News

Portland Retro Gaming Expo

The Portland Retro Gaming Expo is an annual exhibition of classic video games and systems in Portland, Oregon. We aim to recognize the history of video game systems and their authors, manufacturers and players. The 2010 Expo will operate Saturday and Sunday, September 18-19, 2010 at the Portland Crowne Plaza Hotel. Stop on by <http://www.retrogamingexpo.com/> to find out more.

Vintage Computer Festival Midwest 5.0

This is a free and open exposition of classic computing hardware, software and memorabilia. Presented this year in conjunction with the fifth annual Chicagoland Commodore Expo. The show is being held on September 18, 2010 from 8am Saturday to 1am Sunday at the Heron Point Building, next to Fairfield Inn and Suites (Marriott) in Lombard, IL. Visit <http://vcfmw.org/> for more info.

Too Many Games 10

Do you love games? And I'm not just talking about the games themselves, but the whole culture of gaming? Then you need to be at TooManyGames! TooManyGames is the east coast's longest running gaming event, this fall we're holding our 10th event! TooManyGames is all about the games themselves, sure, that's why we have the nation's largest gaming marketplace where gamers and collectors can buy games, both new and old - but there's so much more about gaming than just the games themselves.

TooManyGames incorporates everything that gaming is about - the games, the music, the art, the community, the development, the competition, the history, the people behind the scenes, the fun. If you are in Wyomissing, PA on Sunday, September 19 you can join in the festivities. This year we are holding the show at The Crowne Plaza Hotel in the commercial district of Wyomissing.

Om Retrogathering

If anyone reading RTM is living over in Sweden you might be interested in attending the Om Retrogathering being held October 2-3. This is the fifth consecutive year we will be putting the show on and it should be the biggest and best so far. We've got 280+140 square meters of space this year, this means more space for sellers, more machines to play, more people, more exhibitions, more of everything! Stop by our website (in Swedish) at <http://retrogathering.se/>.



Redefining Retro One More Time

by [Jason Meek](#)

Before we start, let's tackle an old question: What is a retro game, and furthermore, what does it mean to be a retro gamer? I'm sure many of you have ideas, mostly conflicting, on what entails a retro gamer, or more importantly, a retro game. I like to keep it simple, me, so let us skip the BS and get right down to it.

As far as classifying videogames go, I like to ditch the whole "age" and "generation" talk. Why? Currently there are too many voices out there proclaiming when exactly the golden age of gaming was. Or what game systems, computers, or arcades made up the second generation. Everyone from respected voices such as Steven Kent (author of *The Ultimate History of Video Games*) and Walter Day (founder of Twin Galaxies, the "official scorekeepers" of the gaming world) to every game journalist and blogger on the Internet have their own personal "two cents" on when these events happened. Far too confusing in my opinion. Let me offer a simpler, less messy alternative.

We basically have two time periods: Classic, which encompasses the beginning of all videogames (back in the 60's with Spacewar!) until about 1985, and Retro, which is the entire Classic period up until whenever you stop feeling nostalgic, be it Super Nintendo, Playstation, or Dreamcast (I sometimes get nostalgic for the Playstation 2). Retro is a completely dynamic gaming period that is relative and entirely reliant on the perspective of the individual. To be a retro gamer simply means that you enjoy playing games that make you nostalgic for whatever reason, be it old times or just an older game design philosophy.

So there you have it. A good definition (if a bit bloated) of a retro game and thus, a retro gamer. Now let's get to the fun part – playing old games.



Show Report -- 2010 Big Bang

by [Paul Zimmerman](#)

"Have you ever had a kind of dream where you're so awake in the dream you're not sure if you're really awake or asleep? Have you ever had that kind of a dream?" – Walter Day, [Chasing Ghosts](#).

I have those kind of dreams. Plus, in real-life, there are moments when I think I am in a dream, but the situation is actually happening. The Launch Party for The International Video Game Hall of Fame and Museum which was last year was a good example. Standing and talking up on stage with people like Billy Mitchell, Triforce, Fatality and Tony Temple. Big Bang 2010 was another one of those moments. Making my Demon Attack and Defender world record attempts in Ottumwa Iowa, the Video Game Capital of the World, the original home of Twin Galaxies Intergalactic Scoreboard, with local media outlets, Twin Galaxies Podcast and the Wall Street Journal taking pictures and interviewing me before, during and after my attempts; with people like Walter Day, Steve Sanders, Tim McVey, Phil Day, Todd Rogers, Joel West, John McAllister and David Race watching my attempts, it was truly an unreal event.



Big Bang 2010 was a huge 4-day event that included Twin Galaxies tournaments, concerts each night, reenactment of the famous Life magazine 1982 photo in the original location with most of the original players and the cheerleaders(!) (this will be a yearly event) and of course the International Video Game Hall of Fame induction ceremonies among many other activities. The "Class of 2010" inductees were:

- Eric Akeson, Turbo Pac-Man Champion
- Kevin Bachus, X-Box Design Team
- Ralph Baer, Historic Industry Pioneer
- Rob Barrett, Tutankham Champion

- Otto Berkes, X-Box Design Team
- Seamus Blackley, X-Box Design Team
- Nolan Bushnell, Historic Industry Pioneer
- Brian Cady, Tempest Champion
- Paul Dean, Spy Hunter Champion
- Ben Falls, Moon Patrol Champion
- Dennis "Thresh" Fong, Legendary PC Gaming Champion
- Ben Gold, Legendary Arcade Champion
- Ike Hall, Past Donkey Kong World Champion
- Ted Hase, X-Box Design Team
- Ken House, Dig Dug Champion
- Andrew Laidlaw, Galaga Champion
- Chris Mansfield, Kicker Champion
- John McAllister, Asteroids Deluxe Champion
- Billy Mitchell, Legendary Arcade Champion
- Shigeru Miyamoto, Creator of Donkey Kong
- Masaya Nakamura, NAMCO Founder
- Steve Ritchie, Legendary Game Designer
- Perry Rodgers, Mario Brothers Champion
- Todd Rogers, Legendary Arcade Champion
- Scott Safran, Asteroids Champion
- Johnathan "Fatal1ty" Wendel, Legendary PC Gaming Champion
- Steve Wiebe, Donkey Kong, Jr. Champion
- Phil Younger, Berzerk Champion
- Pac-Man - Classic Arcade Game



Many of the inductees were there in person. It was great to walk around the event and to see these legendary people in person. Many of them would stop and talk to you and sign an autograph. They were very happy to be there, just like the attendees.

The event had a giant LAN setup with hundreds of computers and consoles. Attendees had their own tournaments, plus the event had official tournaments including Gamer of the Year tournament. Star Worlds Arcade was there with a Pac-Man room filled with many different Pac-Man coin-ops in celebration of Pac-Man's birthday and induction. The museum had a display of artifacts that will be in the museum, including arcade machines that were playable. There was a great Life magazine 1982 photo panel discussion. A great historical video was shown that was taken in the early 80's at Twin Galaxies and during the Life magazine photo shoot. Plus video from That's Incredible. Many clips were shown for the very first time in public. There were vendors including Video Game Collector which had tons of games for sale plus a special Big Bang edition of Video Game Collector magazine only available at the event. There were many surprises like the special award for Walter Day during the induction ceremonies, Billy Mitchell showing video proof of his new world records for Donkey Kong and Donkey Kong Jr., Billy Mitchell taking my VCR without asking to play his tapes (in return he did sign my VCR for me), me taking his Donkey Kong tape without knowing it was still in my VCR (don't worry, I returned the tape to Billy right away) and sharing a car ride with Ben Gold who was in the original Life magazine photo to the Life magazine photo shoot reenactment. There were 4500 attendees and this number will only grow in the future. I will never forget this event! I will see you next year! Just don't daydream too much until then.



Retrogaming Smackdown

by [Keith Bergman](#)

"King of Pong" Still Seeks To Break Record Score of 15

BAYONNE, NJ - Self-proclaimed "King of Pong" Arnie Langsamer, a local spittoon expediter, continues to pursue his longtime goal of breaking the world record score of 15 in the classic game of Pong. "I scored 15 back in 1977," he told reporters before a recent tournament held in the basement of his mother's home, where Langsamer has lived since 1998. "Ever since then, I've had my sights set on 16, and though I've come close a few hundred thousand times, I think this is my year to break through."

Langsamer's road to the top has been a hard one - in one setback, his television broke in 1988 and it took him six months to replace it. More difficult has been his quest to find willing partners to play the two-player game with. "My mom told me twenty years ago that she didn't wanna hear another word about Pong, that Pong was gonna put her in an early grave," Langsamer commented. "But when I break that high score, she'll change her tune. They all will! Especially that girl at the Starbucks that 'The Man' says I can no longer be 100 feet away from."

A documentary is being made chronicling Langsamer's quest. "This guy doesn't know the meaning of the word impossible," filmmaker Mark Treacle enthused. "No, I mean, really. He doesn't. I've asked him, and he can't define it." Treacle then refused further comment, loudly proclaiming to the room that "if you're interested, there's a potential Pong kill screen coming up -- oh, no, wait, Arnie just got 15 again. Never mind."

Sinister new viruses target retro computers

LUBBOCK, TX - Malicious software viruses are a common problem for owners of the latest PC technology. But in a stunning twist, a number of newcomers to the world of retro computers are reporting a wave of new viruses targeting these beloved, nostalgic machines.

Reports have surfaced that one such virus, currently unnamed, targets the Timex-Sinclair 1000 computer (known as the ZX81 outside the United States). "As soon as I set up this T/S 1000 I got off Ebay, I knew something was wrong," explained user Tyler Pingleheffer. "The screen would only display in black and white, the sound didn't work, and if I so much as sneezed around the 16K memory expansion pack, the computer would crash. What rotten bastard would cripple my computer this way for kicks?"

A similar misery awaited novice TI 99/4A user Marco Schwartz, when he purchased his first console online. "I typed in some old programs in BASIC out of a book, and instantly, I noticed they were running slow. I mean, painfully slow. We're talking hit a key and then go down the street to get a cup of coffee and

a sandwich slow. And when I tried to save my program to the cassette drive? All the sudden, my computer made this unholy racket, and it took, like, ten minutes to save something. Clearly, someone has hacked my machine."

Similar viruses have been reported on numerous platforms -- one on the Commodore Vic-20 reportedly makes the sound chip "sound like total crap" and the tape drive "touchy as a [expletive deleted]," according to users, while the world's first reported Mattel Aquarius virus "somehow just made this computer really suck."

One veteran scoffs at the troubles faced by "newbies." "These people lack the skills to properly identify a virus, much less take care of it," laughed longtime retro collector Wiffley Snidegarb, from his upstate New York home. "If they can't handle a few problems without a tech support number to call, maybe they'd better stick to playing Farmville."

"I wish!" exclaimed Schwartz. "I bought a Commodore 64 last week, and I can't even get ON Facebook with it, much less get to Farmville. When they find out whoever's infecting all these classic computers with such a destructive virus, I hope they throw the book at them."

Classic arcade characters to appear in reality TV show

With reality television all the rage, and seemingly every celebrity from pop culture's past resurfacing to bare their souls on the small screen, it was only a matter of time until the beloved video game icons of yesteryear followed suit. "Behind the Monitor," a new series premiering this fall on the USA's A&E television network, follows the life struggles of the arcade's most popular heroes.

"Pac-Man, we almost didn't get," explains show creator and producer Flemb Peekins. "He just signed a new deal with Google not too long ago, he's stayed popular all these years, still considers himself A-list. But there's a lot going on behind the scenes with him. Do you know how long it's been since he and Ms. Pac-Man have, you know, cleared the board? And Jr... don't get me started. We've got footage of him face-down in a pile of dots at the Viper Room in LA, begging Miley Cyrus for a ride home in her limo. This is a family who struggles, and America will really connect with them."

In a strange twist, even some of Pac's imitators will be featured in their own segments. "Remember walking into a bar or a convenience store and seeing [Pac-Man counterfeit] 'Hangly-Man' games? Well, that guy hasn't worked since 1983. He was young, he needed the money, he figured no one would see the game... bang, there's a lawsuit, and he's blacklisted. Hangly's got a place up in Oregon with K.C. Munchkin and Munchman, they do transcendental meditation, they're all just trying to come to terms with their past and live their lives."

Other segments focus on Frogger ("an adrenaline junkie who just runs away from his problems in one of four primary directions"), Mappy ("a mouse cop who's big in Japan but can't get arrested over here"), and even the infamous spider from the Centipede game. "There's a guy who's had his ups and downs," Peekins sighs. The show has its tawdry side, as well -- "remember Dirk, from Dragon's Lair? Remember the kid from Paperboy? One's made a few self-discoveries, the other's all grown up, and -- well, I don't wanna spoil any surprises."

While not everyone on Peekins's wish list made it to the show -- "we just didn't have Mario money," he grouses -- he promises more to come in video-game-based reality programming. "We're working with a Travel Channel crew on a documentary about visiting the Gorfian Empire... 'Pimp My Galaga Ship' is almost out of the hangar and on the spring 2011 lineup... and the trainer from Punch-Out!! is working with Glass Joe on a big boxing comeback that'll inspire a whole new generation to "come on, stand up and fight!"

The video game reality show craze should provide classic gaming with its biggest visibility in the modern era until the summer of 2013, when "M. Night Shyamalan's Zork" is slated to hit theaters.



After taking an unintended month off, I'm back! Last month was supposed to be an easy month. I had started playing a game early in July and was all ready to write about it. Alas, I've had a busy summer between work and after work activities and writing the column just got lost in the shuffle.

The game I was going to write about last month will get pushed until next month as Bryan requested educational games to celebrate the start of the school year. I tried to find a couple of games I played in my youth Alge-Blaster and Spellicopter. However, I didn't find the games on the emulator site I use to play games.

Eventually, I just settled on the game Bryan mentioned last month: Oregon Trail!

I think most people my age (mid 30's) played Oregon Trail during their school years. Unfortunately, while I remember playing the game, I forget if I actually played the game while I was in school.

I don't remember a lot of positive or negative memories of playing Oregon Trail. However, knowing how I was as a youth, I imagined that I got a little bored with the game. The game is not a arcade or action game. The game required patience to learn and business and analytical skills to succeed. When you're young, patience and analytical skills are not always in abundance.

However I could imagine my favorite part of the game was the hunting aspect. It was definitely fun to move my character around and hunt for good. It did get frustrating at times when you couldn't shoot some animals due to the obstacles.

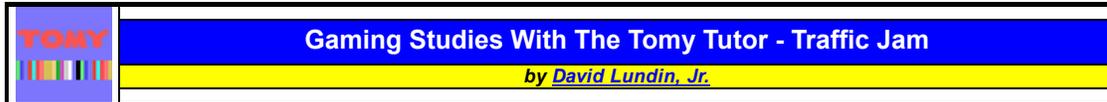


In my preparation for writing this, I played Oregon Trail for about 2 hours. I got my group close to the end but unfortunately fell short. I made a mistake in putting a lot of money on clothes, food and other items when I started when I should have conserved. As an adult now, I can see how the game is educational.

You learn to allocate resources properly and make decisions. Plus, things aren't always going to go right and you have to be creative to survive. Overall, I think the game was great for it's time though I'm not sure kids would appreciate it until much later in life.

I don't know if kids still play Oregon Trail today but I did see a version of the iPhone in the App Store.

See you next month!



Of the ten cartridges that were released in the United States for the Tomy Tutor computer, among those familiar with the hardware, more often than not there is one game that rises above all others. Even among most introduced to the hardware for the first time, that same game becomes the one that gets the most play, the one that is most remembered from the experience of gaming on the hardware. That same game was exclusive to the Tomy Tutor, providing a unique title for a unique system and becoming the killer application for the platform among classic gaming collectors. That game is Traffic Jam and it's reason enough to own a Tomy Tutor computer.

The premise is fairly simple, a city is shown from an overhead view and is laid out like any classic arcade maze game. The player controls a car that is always moving forward unless resting against a maze barrier, just like Pac-Man. Maze navigation is accomplished with the control disc on the Joy Controller or the Tutor Joy Stick. Your car leaves a blue streak behind it, the objective is to travel the entire maze turning the roads from their initial black to blue. Of course the game wouldn't be very entertaining unless there were some enemies and in Traffic Jam there are plenty of obstacles to be dealt with. Three purple drone cars drive around the city, attempting to crash into your car when they get near. They never move fast enough to close in on you but the speed of your car and the close quarters of the city streets make them a major collision hazard. Additionally the drone cars can turn into steam rollers which clear off your blue streets, turning them back to black and requiring you to drive over them again. To counter the drone cars, your car has a secret weapon in the form of emergency hazards. Turning your hazards on by pressing either the SL or SR button on the controller makes your car temporarily invincible. Driving into a drone car with hazards active will stun the drone for a short time and award bonus points. Even more useful, if you drive into a drone steam roller with your hazards active, the steam roller will instantly revert back to a standard drone car in addition to becoming stunned and awarding bonus points. Hazards are limited and can be replenished by driving over oil cans that randomly appear around the maze but they only stick around for a short time. There is a trade off to this invincibility however, as when hazards are active your car will not put down its blue line. The final obstacle is surprisingly the most dangerous - roadblocks. Roadblocks look like a big asterisk and randomly appear on the streets. When first revealed, a roadblock will flash to give warning and then become solid. While they can be driven over when flashing, once solid hitting a roadblock will crash your car and cost a life. Hitting a roadblock with hazards active will still end in a crash and a lost life. Lastly five letters that spell out "BONUS" are littered throughout the city, collecting them in order will award big bonus points. After covering an entire grid of city streets in blue, the next stage begins.



Traffic Jam plays a little like a mix between Pac-Man and Crush Roller / Make Trax. However the game I most closely associate Traffic Jam with is one of my all time favorites, City Connection. When I first played City Connection on the NES it felt like a side view version of Traffic Jam to me. Thinking about it more, it's probably why I enjoy City Connection so much. Maybe the game is a little more like Rally-X but instead of picking up flags you have to cover every spot in the maze, the "BONUS" letters taking the place of the flags. However the use of hazards to disable the enemy vehicles rather than a smoke screen works a little more like Pac-Man's energizers. In the end I suppose one could say it's a solid mix of the most entertaining aspects of many classic games of the era, which lend themselves to a wonderful time and a game that truly stands on its own.

Graphics are sharp and detailed with bright and vibrant colors. Although each stage is made up of the same graphic blocks of grass areas and buildings, there are many different layouts that make the city streets seem just random enough. Every even numbered stage splits the city in half vertically with a river in between and a moving bridge to get between the two sides. Even with the layout changes the game technically only has two different screens, with and without the water and bridge. Still, the challenge does progressively increase as the drone cars will turn into steam rollers more frequently on the higher levels. A few stages in it's not uncommon for a couple of the drones to remain as steam rollers for the majority of the level and roadblocks become far more dense as well. Player car movement is smooth however the drone cars move in flashing increments but there aren't any surprises when getting near one.

Traffic Jam has by far the best soundtrack of any game on the Tomy Tutor hardware with a memorable background tune that plays during the entire game. Completing the "BONUS" pickup or completing a stage also triggers a unique little musical fanfare in addition to unique music for beginning a drive as well as losing a car. Everything makes a sound and each sound is played in a different tone. This means a flashing oil can, a roadblock just appearing, and a drone moving around as a steam roller all sound just a little differently and will all be audible at the same time, taking turns of course. All the sound effects play while the music plays in the background, it's really cool to have so much going on in a Tutor game. The hazard activation sound is similar to a siren

and the default Tutor explosion sound is used in the event of a crash, which works out perfectly in this case.

While the enjoyment of most Tomy Tutor games fall strictly into the eye of the beholder, Traffic Jam is simply an excellent game for anyone. The great thing about the title is it seems to be one of the more common releases for the platform and I usually see it included with the computer itself when one comes up for sale. I suppose a good part of that is probably because of the quality of the game, it was the game to have if you had the computer. Without a doubt Traffic Jam is one of the best games the Tomy Tutor has to offer, if not the best outright.

"InsaneDavid" also covers all types of video gaming at <http://www.classicplastic.net/dvgi>

	Dual Perspective - Dragon Warrior <i>by James Sorge</i>
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Hello, and this is James Sorge back with Dual Perspective, the column that reviews games from both the playing and the World Record Perspectives. This month, the victim is "Dragon Warrior", the first RPG to use graphics and tell a true story on the NES, developed by Enix and artist Akira Toriyama, famous for Dragon Ball Z.

Graphics: 9/10

The game looks cute and has some signature characters. From the cute Slimes and Metal Slimes ("NYA NYA, YOU CAN'T HURT ME!"), to Wolves and Dragons, this game pays attention to detail and lays the groundwork for the future of the series.

Sound: 7/10

Dragon Warrior (a.k.a. Dragon Quest) is not generally known for good music, although the Alefgard Overworld tune is pretty well known. The Dragonlord tune is also ominous.

Difficulty: 3/10

Yeah, you may die, but the game's not terribly difficult. The thing about it is that it takes an awfully long time to level up (100+ battles a level), but once you get the levels the game becomes really easy.

Replay Factor: 6/10

With the way this game levels up, unless you're really serious about it or just love Toriyama, you probably aren't going to be playing this one over again when you beat it, unless you get addicted to the Dragonlord tune.



The World Record Perspective:

Being long and overly tedious (generally about six hours at least, closer to 7 hours and 30 minutes), this is one popular game that hasn't seen a record on SDA or Twin Galaxies. You could be the first, but if you want to make sure you're not beat, make sure your time is under 8 hours and 5 minutes.



The Penguin Says:

"This game really doesn't hold its ground to Final Fantasy or even the later Dragon Warrior/Dragon Quest titles. All the one-on-one combat doesn't make it feel like a true RPG. It was good for its time but doesn't stack up well now. **World Record Potential: 5/5** stars. You could be the first to do it, if you're willing to marathon! Especially with Dragon Warrior/Dragon Quest hype at its peak in years, it's probably one of the hottest titles to hit!"

	Mutated Output: Triumphs & Perils Of Rush-Deadline Programming <i>by Mark Sabbatini</i>
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Envision a job making a product in one-fourth of the industry average time. Regardless of the item – sandwiches or cars – it's going to be hard to satisfy the customer.

One of my first jobs as a daily newspaper reporter was at a small paper that was basically a copy factory. Three or four stories a day was common and I once set a staff record by writing ten bylined articles in one day. It was an entirely different kind of writing than I learned in journalism school, and I used to shake my head in awe and envy at those working at the region's big papers who might spend weeks on a single article.

The possibly strange thing is I tried to do a quality job with all of the articles, even if my attention span for each was brief and I knew the topic and/or my thoroughness covering it was dreadful. In more than 20 years of getting up and writing things for publications every day I can't recall really "mailing it in" because I was too apathetic.

None of this would matter to people interested in reading about game reviews, except something I constantly wondered was if this was how people in other high-volume creative industries felt and reacted, whether it was a rock star performing essentially the same concert every night (at least with jazz improvisation is the heart of the gig) or a chef preparing the same featured dish for decades. It's easy to say someone sleepwalked through a performance – and I admit I'm guilty of harboring such thoughts – but the question is always nagging me when I reviewing something.

Which brings us to Mike Snyder.

He's not unique in the computer programming world and certainly not famous by almost any measure. Some of his games are laughably bad – unless you paid for them – and, in fact, I didn't even start writing this month's column with him in mind.

Instead, I was doing a review of Color Computer 3 games published by T&D Subscription Software, which sent out monthly "issues" of ten programs on cassette or disk for more than ten years. I reviewed some of their better programs for the Color Computer 1/2 in an earlier column, noting that while the

vast majority of their work was throwaway material, the very best easily matched the upper echelon of commercial titles.

Certain programmers' names come up frequently on T&D's titles and in this case it seemed like Snyder's was on every "feature" program that seemed worthy of looking at as part of this review. At some point I decided I had to Google him and see what, if anything, existed about him in the digital archives of CoCo lore. That led to his Web site, www.cocoquest.com, which I vaguely remembered seeing before during the normal course of browsing online for CoCo sites.

Most of his titles for all models of the CoCo are free downloads at the site, making it a far more appealing prospect for retrogamers than hunting through a hundred something T&D issues. This month's capsule reviews look at some of his CoCo 3 titles, with the intention of concluding the topic next month with a look at titles by him and other T&D programmers.

Those not into the idea of CoCo games or hunting down an emulator can try more modern projects he's done as a co-founder of Prowler Productions (www.prowler-pro.com), which was an early entry into Web-based games back in the mid 1990s. Some browser-based single-player games are among the offerings, so immediate gratification from his work is possible.

Finally, it should be noted that while I am very harsh in some of my grading – using the same scale I would for any commercial CoCo games – it can't be emphasized enough the respect I have for his even completing the titles on a month-to-month basis. As a gamer in non-critic mode I find myself looking for nuances he somehow found time for and constantly in wonderment about the lack of bugs, which seem to be at a lower ratio than the individual titles I paid for back in the day.

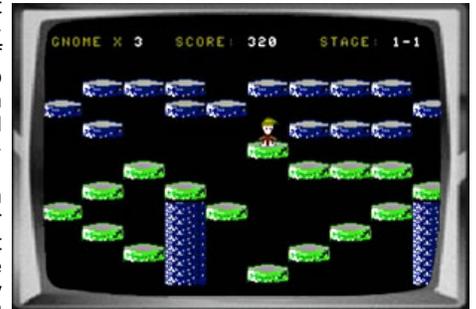
Food Factory (D+)

Food Fight is an awesome-but-ignored arcade game that inspired a surprising number of adaptations for home machines. Food Factory isn't awful, but it's definitely an insipid entree compared to its quarter-fed cousin. Your character runs around a screen collecting cans that appear while avoiding creatures popping up from pits in Whac-A-Mole fashion. When you get enough cans you go to a screen where you use them to fight off burgermen (which look like burgers – I guess I was expecting chefs). It could be simplistic fun of not for several problems. First, things move around in "step" fashion like those fixed-display handhelds of old. The creatures on the first screen pop up randomly, often right where your character is and thus making it more a game of luck than skill. Snyder says some cans are empty and can't be picked up, which to the cynical appears to be a way to disguise a bug. And on a purely cosmetic note, the second screen with the burger(men) is seriously ugly in hue. I might feel better about this one had I never seen the original, but it still wouldn't merit more than a handful of plays while waiting for the next issue to arrive.



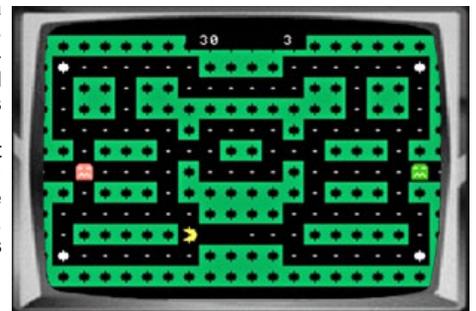
Gnome Quest (B-)

This platform/puzzle game is a little rough around the edges, but an engrossing challenge with a lot of replay value. Your gnome needs to recover the Spirit Sword for reasons laid out in a detailed on-screen narrative, but the bottom line is you're navigating through an increasingly tricky series of single-screen layouts. The "terrain" is a collection of stones you can jump between, while trying to walk across them will cause you to fall through (not always bad, as seen below). Hoping on each stone changes its color and awards points, much like Q*bert, but unlike that game you merely need to locate the designated "exit" stone on the screen rather than touching all of them. You have Mario-like control of your gnome, meaning he can change direction in mid-air, which is critical for landing on solid spots. The challenge lies in trying to reach certain places – it's often necessary to fall between stones with a well-navigated crash landing. OK, that's not "the" challenge, since you'll soon encounter deadly "spirits" as well as falling arrows. There's also some "phantom" stones in latter levels that won't support you. Once you get through a series of caverns and reach a second stage, the ice mountains, there are bonus stages hidden in certain titles, where you can earn extra points by catching jewels. The graphics and sound are below what you'd expect in a full-fledged commercial title, but everything else from the controls to the depth of gameplay is solid. The only thing I'd really like is some sort of continue option to avoid starting every game from the beginning, since much of the challenge lies in learning the pattern to reach the exit stone. Once you know that, repeating the levels over and over to get to unseen stuff is mundane. But I've paid a lot more for "famous name" commercial games with considerably less entertainment value than this.



Munchy (D)

One of my first-ever programming efforts was trying to write a Pac-Man game in BASIC, which was a disastrous non-starter. About all I really managed was to draw a maze that made the Atari 2600's look like Michelangelo. I came away thinking there was no way to do a playable version in that oh-so-slow language, but Snyder proves me somewhat wrong. It's got a maze, four ghosts, dots and energizers, and they don't look awful. There's various minor gameplay differences, like the ghosts emerging from the tunnels at the side of the screen instead of a pen in the center, that I can live with as concessions. But everything moves very slowly as you'd expect, even with the "step" movement thing seen in other games here. There's also some flicker, but certainly not as bad as the 2600 fiasco. I tip my hat to Snyder for an effort that includes all the basics (curiosity from my miserable attempt is why I gave it spin), but it's not much fun. Also, this is from the T&D archive (issue 92 which, like the rest, are easily found online), not Snyder's page, so he obviously didn't think it was among his best.



River Raid (D)

Some of the harshest reviews I've ever read have been for what might called the non-scrolling scrolling game. Super Cobra for the Odyssey 2, where the player flies across to the right edge of the

screen to advance to a new screen of terrain, is an infamous example. River Raid (you'd think T&D would avoid using the actual name of the original in an unlicensed title) is the Activision classic ported – in a way – to the CoCo. You're still blowing up targets and passing over fuel tanks to keep your jet going, but on a screen-by-screen basis. It's not as laughably bad as some of the titles getting the scorched-Earth treatment back then, especially if you drop any comparisons to the real thing, but still in the play-a-few-times-and-done category. One feature I like and is especially useful in this version is a radar screen keeping track of your overall progress. When I talk about making the compromises necessary to churn out games on a monthly basis, this is an obvious example.



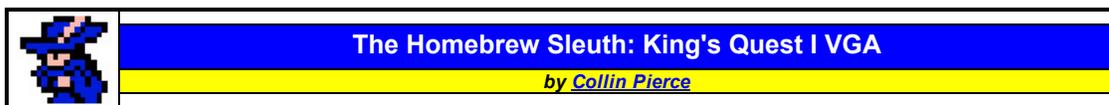
Lord Silvercape (C-)

T&D cranked out adventures every month and, as I noted in my first batch of reviews for the original CoCo, a lot of them seemed like the same program with the names changed and some puzzle tweaks. Lord Silvercape is a step above that in plot and presentation, but still falls short of something I'd want to play to completion. The mission is to rescue Lord Silvercape from the clutches of an Evil Kidnapper by typing in the usual two-word commands. The upper part of the screen has a row of four small boxes with a compass showing directions you can move, items in your inventory, items in the room you're in and the location itself. It makes play easier in an at-a-glance way and also reduces the time needed to draw full-size scenery screens (a blessing for both a programmer on deadline and the player who would endure long waits due to the program being written in BASIC). A nice feature initially is the ancient font the text is rendered in, but after a while the time necessary to draw the letters and other elements does get to be a drag. It's nice you're able to explore a large amount of terrain right from the start (once you figure out the right command to climb the fence on the first screen), but there's not much happening on them. Two things are a major bummer. First, the vocabulary is rather limited, turning this into a guess-what-the-programmer-is-thinking exercise rather than one of logic (there is a help command which actually is helpful many times). Second is the unforgivable "random death" thing, where you die for simply moving to a screen for the first time. That's usually enough to make me abandon many adventure games immediately, although this one had enough positive elements to keep me at it for a bit. But ultimately I found my time better invested in better programs Snyder's done in this genre.



Doctor Who, Part 2 (C)

Snyder's strength is definitely adventure games (some of his best are being saved for next month) and, ending this column on a relatively positive note, this chapter in a four-part series of supposedly related games is a Zelda-lite explorer with some staying power. You wander around an island with the ultimate goal of finding and defeating hidden Daleks, who are then supposed to tell you what year "The Master" has escaped to (presumably to be continued in part three). To do this you visit huts where the occupants may (or may not) offer hints and items to locate/deliver. Like Zelda, bringing things to certain folks results in rewards or at least something new to seek out. It's a great deal simpler than Zelda, without the consistent combat, and wandering the many screens repeatedly without much activity lacks excitement, but it manages to hang onto the edge of having enough content to see what's next. Part one of this series, by the way, is something of an odd space shooter where you try to rack up enough points to get through four different stages. It doesn't seem to have the depth or quality of part two, but a more thorough look at this and the other chapters are part of the plan for next time.



The earlier half of this decade was a simpler time for King's Quest fans for two reasons:

1. AGDI (known as Tierra at the time) released incredible remakes of King's Quest 1 and 2, giving them a chance to rediscover the classics.
2. Activision wasn't trying to ruin their lives yet.

If you haven't heard of King's Quest, it's time to turn in your classic PC gamer card. The original game, created by Sierra On-Line in 1984, was a huge technological breakthrough for computer games, a massive success, and a household name for PC gamers in the late eighties/early nineties. Unfortunately, it has dropped off the map since then, but has enjoyed a revival as of late, due in part to AGDI's remake.

Not that Sierra hadn't remade the original King's Quest before...in 1990, Sierra made a remake of KQ1 themselves, featuring newly redone graphics and taking advantage of what was then a recent invention, the sound card (can you imagine playing a game made today that didn't use a sound card?). However, because it was their first effort to remake the first entry in all their classic franchises, it wasn't as sophisticated as their other remakes. It still only used EGA (16 colors only), and you had to type in what you wanted your character to do. (...And we liked it! Get off my lawn!)

In 2001, AGDI released Version 1 of their own remake of the classic game, and boy is it amazing.

For the purpose of this review, I'll be reviewing the most recent version of this remake, Version 4. It's still the same game, but some features I mention may be missing in earlier versions.

Story: B-

The story of the game is pretty basic, but has a lot of back story in the manual, making it seem a lot more epic. The basic story is this:

After a string of disasters causing the loss of three magical treasures, King Edward of Daventry, having no heir to the throne and knowing that his life is drawing to a close, calls forth his finest knight, Sir Graham, and gives him the command to find the three lost treasures or die trying, and if he should succeed, he will inherit the throne.

Yes, it's not Shakespeare, but it gets you on your way. It gets the grade that it does because of the beautifully written story in the manual.

Graphics: A+

Although it takes its cues from the 1990 version rather than the 1984 original, it doesn't take away from the fact that the graphics of AGDI's VGA remake are at the least on par with Sierra's best work from the early '90s, when VGA (the original version of it, with 256 colors) was first catching on because of King's Quest V (similar to how the original King's Quest I caused EGA to catch on). Everything is absolutely stunning, and perfectly captures the spirit of classic Sierra style (meaning hand painted backgrounds scanned into an early '90s computer), and there are even a few new touches to make it feel as such, like the dialog portraits.

Here's a comparison of the three different versions of the game:



Gameplay: B+

King's Quest I is very "open world." You are given few hints on what to do, and you will be doing a lot of exploring. The one thing I must warn you about if you've never played an adventure game of this type before is what happens when you die. This might not be an action game, but don't think that you can just do what ever you want without fear. If you die, that's it. There is no lives or checkpoint system. Luckily, you can save at almost any time in an almost infinite number of slots, and when you die, it allows you to restore your saved game. There is a famous saying among adventure gamers: save early, save often! And it is quite true to this game.

In the original versions by Sierra, it was quite possible to get into a situation where the game could become unwinnable. Luckily, in this new version, there is a mode that allows you to play without dead ends. This mode not only makes it impossible to get permanently stuck, but it also prevents some of the more obnoxious things in the game from happening.

One thing about the new version is that instead of typing in what you wanted to do, you have a few icons to choose from. Some purists complained that this reduces the challenge, because it allowed you to just click on everything instead of think. I think that in the right hands, both systems can work just fine, but in the case of this game, I actually prefer the new system for two reasons:

1. One major gripe I have with parsers (text-driven input) is playing "guess the verb". It seems like in all text adventures that there is one point where you know what to do, but you can't get the game to understand.
2. There are many instances in this game where you will be going, "How the heck was I supposed to figure THAT out!?" The new system makes things much easier to figure out.

Controls: A+

If you've played King's Quest V or VI, the interface should make you feel right at home. You have four main icons that you use to interact with the game: The walk icon, which makes Graham walk to the place you click; the look icon, which causes Graham to examine an object on the screen; the interact icon, which allows Graham to directly interact with objects on the screen, such as picking up items, opening doors, etc.; and the talk icon, which allows you to talk



to anyone you might meet. Along the way, you may find items that you can use to progress further. It's very intuitive, once you get used to the fact that you're not blowing something up every few seconds.

Sound: A+

The 1984 version had only a few beeps from the PC speaker (remember those?) for sound, the only real music being a rendition of "Greensleeves" on the title screen. The 1990 version had early sound card support, allowing for a soundtrack. It didn't sound up to today's standards, of course, but it made the game more atmospheric in a few parts where music played. This version uses the 1990 version's soundtrack as it's basis, but makes it sound MUCH better for newer sound cards.

The big difference though, is that King's Quest I VGA contains voice acting. Sir Graham is even played by his original voice actor for the CD versions of King's Quest V and VI, Josh Mandel. Now, King's Quest V had god-awful voice acting for the most part, as they used employees from around the office instead of real actors, but Mandel as Graham was quite decent, and he does well here, considering he has about ten lines (there weren't that many conversational types in the game anyway); you don't really get to see Mandel do his stuff until King's Quest II VGA, where he is spectacular.

The narrator also does a great job, and manages to keep a healthy amount of interest, considering he probably has several thousand lines, and probably did multiple takes on most. If you compare him to the narrator in King's Quest V, though...wow, at least the narrator here, John Bell, gave a damn.

Replay Value/Fun Factor: B-

This is one of those games where you either love it or you hate it. I love it. It's fun and engaging if you have the patience for it, and AGDI added a lot of neat little touches and jokes that weren't in the original.

Overall: B+

This game was an instant classic when it first came out, and with this new version, it still holds up today. If you like the series, definitely give this a go. If you think that the idea of exploring a beautiful land, solving puzzles and meeting interesting characters will appeal to you, give it a try. Besides, if you call yourself a classic PC gamer, you owe it to yourself to at least try it.

King's Quest I VGA is available for free download at AGDI's website: (<http://www.agdinteractive.com/>).



Hello Pixelated fans. "Pixelated Paul" is here to let you know about some of the retroware highlights for the month of August. Sadly, it was another slow month for retroware goodies, plus only one Virtual Console game: Ufuria: The Saga for the NES, a fun Sunsoft game that is similar to Metroid and Castlevania.

DSⁱWare™

Cosmos X2 ([Click here to see a video for the game](#))

Divergent Shift (Video to the right)

G.G Series Ninja Karakuri Den ([Click here to see a video for the game](#))

Turn: The Lost Artifact ([Click here to see a video for the game](#))

WiiWare™

And Yet It Moves (Video to the right)

Not sure if I would consider this "retroware," but the graphics are pretty basic (looks like

line drawings filled in with color; even your character does not have a face), with very simple music and sound effects. I think this is a game that "retroware" fans will enjoy very much. It is simple to understand, yet hard to master. It is a platformer where you can rotate the screen in any direction to jump over impossible gaps and to solve puzzles. There are check points throughout each level that point in the direction you need to go (very funny). The goal is to get to the end of each stage. When you die (you do have unlimited lives; well, you are made out of paper and you can always be taped together after all) you rip into different pieces of paper. You can die from falling too far and fast, getting smashed by boulders, falling into a black hole and many other ways. You will die often. The game gets hard...fast, but I love it. I love the style, the minimal music and sound effects, the check points that point you in the right direction (very helpful) and the puzzles you need to solve to move on. You can play with the Wiimote in the retro NES style, the Wiimote and nun chuck combo, or with the classic controller (this is my favorite). Please note if you do not like Super Mario Galaxy because it makes you dizzy, you will not like this game. This game makes you think and be dizzy at the same time. Buy it now!

Enjoy Your Message ([Click here to see a video for the game](#))



Note: most of the videos for the games below are of the originals (meaning they not being played on the Wii). This is because the Virtual Console is emulating the original system and therefore they are identical.

Ufouria: the Saga (NES) (Video to the right)

I will see you next month for hopefully some more retroware goodies!



■ [Retro Games Collector](#)

■ [Game Gavel](#)

■ [Retro Gaming RoundUp](#)



It looks like we rebounded nicely after that short August issue! Next month we will be wheeling out our Halloween issue, so look out for that one. I would think Vectrexenstein would be back for it, I know he wouldn't miss that issue for the world! Hopefully the next time I see you guys there will be more hands on deck helping out with putting each issue of RTM together. This should give me a chance to do more on the website, like adding all those back issues and updating Column Quest. I'll see you when the leaves start to change colors!

- [Bryan Roppolo](#), Retrogaming Times Monthly Editor

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