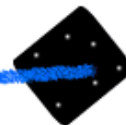




Printing Help



FRONT COVER



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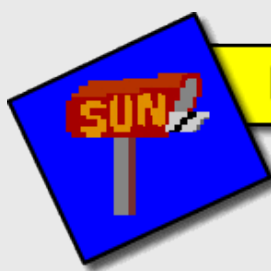
by **Bryan Roppolo**



As I am sure many of you out there know, this issue is hitting the stands a few days late. The reason for this is because of summer vacations. I myself just went on vacation at the end of July and had to scramble when I got back to get this issue together. I apologize for the delay, but at least the August issue is out.

I am happy to say that Donald Lee is back in action this month with the ever popular Apple II Incider column. It was sorely missed last month when personal problems came up and he was not able to contribute.

One thing I want to mention is that I did get an e-mail recently from someone about the back issues of RTM. Yes, they are still being put up, I just have taken a break for them. I have to reformat the back issues so that everything looks good which is the reason why it is taking longer than just simply uploading them all and letting everyone at them. There's not much more to go anyway, so that should be taken care of soon. Anyway, I hope you all enjoy this month's (late) issue!



Retrogaming News

[EGC 2011](#)

Friday August 5 - Sunday August 7 (Las Vegas, NV)

The RetroGaming Roundup show is pleased to announce the Emergency Gaming Convention (EGC) to be held August 5-7 in Las Vegas, Nevada. After passing through the 5 stages of grief upon hearing of the cancellation of our favorite yearly event, CGE, we had an Animal House style epiphany. There was no way we were going to quietly accept this and wait till 2012. So we devised that we would have our own 3 day party in Vegas because we couldn't stand the idea of missing out on hanging out with our listeners and fellow gamers in the happiest place on earth, which is of course Vegas. We have come up with a pretty solid schedule of events that will provide both gaming and the camaraderie that we love so much about CGE. We hope that you will join us for EGC 2011, and we are well aware that the typical barrier to many people making a Vegas trip is the assumption that it is inherently expensive. Our crack travel department has been ferreting out hotel deals and has written a cost conscious guide to a Vegas trip. To find out more on the show, visit <http://www.gamegavel.com/forum/showthread.php?t=4408>

[Retrocade Arcade/MAME Summer Showdown](#)

Sunday August 7 2011 12:00pm - Monday August 22 3:00am (Burlington, NJ)

Competition on seven titles which can be played on either arcade or MAME platforms. The games in this tournament: Pac-Man Turbo, Galaxian, Pole Position II, Time Pilot, Reactor, Star Castle, and Bubbles.

Individual players or arcade operators must be registered with the forums on retrocadeweb.webs.com where the competition will be hosted. Games can be played on either arcade and/or MAME platforms using the ROM and dip switch settings documented per game. No console compilations discs or cartridges. Absolutely no continues. Screenshots/photos are mandatory. Photos of arcade monitors must display the screen in its entirety.

Tournament overall scoring will be the average of the player's percentage score across all seven titles. All titles must be played to qualify in the tournament overall standings.

Tournament results will be published in the first issue of Retrocade Magazine this fall. To read more in depth on the rules and on the tournament itself, check out <http://retrocadeweb.webs.com>.

[Game Warp: Arcade, Pinball and Gaming Show](#)

Friday August 12 - Sunday August 14 (Orlando, FL)

Beat the summer heat with a trip to Orlando's coolest arcade experience!

The Florida Arcade and Pinball Collectors' Group announces the 1st annual Game Warp. The show features over 100 classic and modern arcade, pinball and console games for play. The show will also have machines for sale and auction, parts, dealers, seminars, prizes, tournaments and more.

The show will be held at the Hilton Orlando, 6001 Destination Parkway, Orlando, FL 32819.

Tickets for one-day are \$15, weekend passes are \$30. Kids under 5 are free with a paid adult (one child per paid adult). You can purchase discounted tickets online at the special show rate at <http://www.gamewarp.org>. Discounts available on pre-registration tickets only. Parking available at hotel for a discounted rate. See our website for more info.

[Freeplay 2: Modern & Classic Gaming](#)

Saturday August 27 starting at 9:00am (Chesapeake, VA)

We're looking to have gaming on arcades, consoles, and computers with a few Competitions. We also have the rights to show a few movies and will have a few people participate in panels. Did we mention it is FREE?!

Check it out and let me know if you have any questions or want to help!

Daytime Movies (starting at 9am):

Mario Brothers

Final Fantasy: Advent Children

Double Dragon

Evening films (starting at 8pm):

Scott Pilgrim vs. the World

Tron: Legacy

We will have David Hernly (www.aurcade.com) ranking the high scores on the arcades. More information can be found at <http://www.sevagaming.com>.

If you would like to have your event featured in Retrogaming Times Monthly, just send an e-mail to Bryan Roppolo at bryan@retrogamingtimes.com and he'll make sure to announce it in a future issue.



Apple II Incider

by Donald Lee



News And Updates

Welcome back to the Apple II Incider! After a month away to tend to some personal matters, I am back this month though I will not be focusing on a game due to some time constraints. This month, I will use the column to discuss a couple of news items in the Apple II World.

Juiced.GS to publish in 2012

Juiced.GS, the last remaining Apple II print publication, announced that they will publish the magazine in 2012. 2012 will mark the 17th year the magazine has been in publication.

<http://juiced.gs/2011/07/v17-filexfer-advertisements/>

I know I've mentioned Juiced.GS in this column before, but I have to say that it is incredible that Juiced.GS has lasted for 17 years. When the magazine was originally launched back in 1996, Apple had stopped manufacturing the Apple II series of computers for several years. While there were still active users, the market for software, hardware and magazines had slowed considerably.

In the 1980's into the early 1990's, the Apple II series of computers had many magazines covering it. There were general interest magazines such as Incider and A+. There were magazines focused on programming such as Apple Orchard, Call-Apple and Nibble.

However, as the Apple II faded from the spotlight, many of the magazines folded. In the early 1990's, there was a brief revival in the Apple II market including many publications starting up. Magazines such as GS+ and II Alive arose from companies that also developed and published Apple II software. Shareware Solutions II, a newsletter from former Incider / A+ writer Joe Kohn, also started in 1993 after Incider / A+ had folded. Of course, Juiced.GS would also come into being in 1996.

Despite the best efforts of the magazines, many Apple II users moved onto more modern computers. The market for hardware and software gradually slowed and many companies went out of business or switched their focus to other computers. As users gradually abandoned the Apple II for other computers, readership also dwindled for the remaining Apple II publications. Eventually, GS+, II Alive and Shareware Solutions II all ceased publication.

For me personally, the last two Apple II publications I read were Shareware Solutions II and II Alive. I had subscribed to both but let my subscriptions expire as my use of the Apple II dwindled while I was in college. With access to the Internet, I didn't really feel like I needed to read information from publications.

Despite all the odds against the magazine, Juiced.GS has continued trucking on. The Apple II community is extremely small these days though there is still some new hardware and software development. There are a lot of smart and resourceful users who have created Ethernet cards and other devices that has made the Apple II series of computer as modern as you can get it.

For anyone still interested in what's going on in the Apple II world, Juiced.GS is worth a look. You can subscribe by going to the website: <http://juiced.gs/>



KansasFest 2011



KansasFest (<http://www.kansasfest.org>) was held from July 19th until July 24th in Kansas City, MO. Whereas Juiced.GS is a magazine dedicated to the Apple II, KansasFest is a gathering dedicated to celebrating the Apple II computer. KansasFest has been around since 1989 and thus enjoying it's 22nd year in 2011.

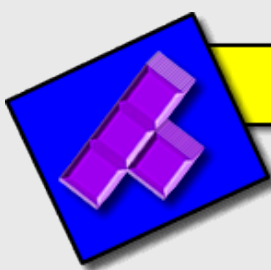
What happens during KansasFest? Have a look at the program here:

<http://www.kansasfest.org/wp-content/uploads/2011-schedule.pdf>

One of the highlights this year was a former Apple employee Bob Bishop doing the KansasFest 2011 Keynote Address. Bob co-founded Apple's R&F Lab and worked heavily in the Apple II community over the years.

Apple II historian, Steve Weyhrich, did a write up of Bob Bishop's keynote address here:

<http://apple2history.org/spotlight/bobbishop/>



Gaming Tetralogies

by Jeff Wittenhagen



The Castlevania Series

Gaming Tetralogies covers four of the best games from any single game series on any platform. The games will not be listed in any particular preference order but by release date and will be more of a must have list for each series. Feel free to comment on any games in the series you feel should have been included.



Castlevania III: Dracula's Curse (1990) - NES

While the original Castlevania established the series as a staple in the realm of platforming and horror, the third iteration is what stood out as truly excellent on the NES. Not only is the music and graphical standard upped a notch from the previous two games, but you also get to make multiple choices. Branching paths and extra characters change the way you experience the game each time you play it.



Super Castlevania IV (1991) - Super Nintendo

If any game is the "perfect" linear Castlevania experience, it might just be the fourth game in the series. The graphics have that 16-bit shine along with great use of rotational and other graphical effects the SNES was known for. The music also received a much appreciated upgrade and has some stellar memorable tracks.



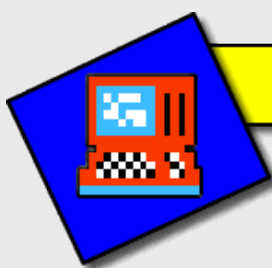
Akumajo Dracula X: Chi no Rondo (1993) - PC Engine

Epic storytelling through action and suspense is what makes Chi no Rondo aka Rondo of Blood one of the most engrossing Castlevania experiences to be had. The fact that Chi no Rondo was only released in Japan on the PC Engine Super CD-ROM2 system made it a historically difficult title to play. Fortunately, this game was released on the Nintendo Wii's Virtual Console in all regions as well as getting a graphical update on the PSP, so a much larger portion of the gaming population has the chance to play this masterpiece. Make sure you avoid the SNES Dracula X release though as it is greatly inferior to the original.



Castlevania: Symphony of the Night (1997) - Sony Playstation

The first in the series to allow for complete exploration of the world, Symphony of the Night is the first game to coin the phrase Metroidvania. Allowing the player to upgrade the main character Alucard, the son of Dracula, allowed for this extended adventure to be even more enjoyable as you continually power up. The score in is indeed Symphonic and the soundtrack alone is worth tracking a copy of this game down.



Show Report

by David Lundin, Jr.



California Extreme 2011

For the fifteenth time arcade game and pinball machine collectors, owners, and fanatics came together in Silicon Valley for California Extreme. CAX, as it is also known, is a two day celebration of how gaming once was. For a very modest fee you are granted entrance into the show, a huge ballroom where hundreds of arcade games and pinball machines are all set on free play. All time classics, forgotten gems, prototype games, rare favorites, all in the same place and all ready to be played and enjoyed by the masses. The 2011 show marked the third time the event was held at the Hyatt Regency in Santa Clara, California and was my fourth CAX show. I've been pretty vocal about the venue and I'll say once again, the Hyatt Regency is a spectacular location for the show for both locals and those traveling a greater distance. There are plenty of places to kick back just outside of the show ballroom, CAX provides a nice discount on room rates if you're staying at the hotel, parking is provided free of charge for all show patrons, there are lots of food choices close by and the show hall is fully carpeted kept at a comfortable temperature - well, as comfortable as a giant room full of arcade games can be.



As usual, I arrived about a half hour before the advance opening on Saturday morning. Pre-registering for your pass allows entrance a half hour early on each day but really I just like to have a laminated badge for the weekend, which is also given as a pre-registration perk. Organization was once again handled superbly and there were no issues between my girlfriend, my brother and myself getting our badges and entrance wristbands. Once inside, the show floor did not disappoint as the ballroom was packed from one end to the other with memories of the past. The layout had a few more dead ends than the previous year, notably lacking a clear cut outer loop around the show, but after a couple hours navigation became much easier. I can't complain as there was still a nice flow throughout the ballroom and after all, I'm sure it's not easy laying out so many games in such limited time. The game count came in at over 500 total machines and I've read that some games actually had to be turned away due to reaching the maximum power allotment during show set up. This should be testament that CAX is the premier arcade show on the planet and anyone thinking about attending in the future shouldn't hesitate to do so.

In fact the only complaint I really heard from anyone was that the show was packed with patrons. Over the weekend there were very few periods of slow down time as crowds were always present on the show floor. However everyone was generally really cool about playing a couple games and moving aside if someone else wanted to play, or getting a doubles game set up on a pinball machine or the like. There wasn't anything that I wanted to play that I didn't have a chance of playing. Of course not everyone has the same gaming etiquette but such issues were very few and far between. Everyone seemed to be having a good time throughout the entire weekend from what I witnessed. In fact one of my favorite parts of the show was talking with a member of the Atari alumni while waiting to play San Francisco RUSH. Many different show panels were held at an adjacent conference room but I didn't attend any this year due to being caught up in games on the show floor. I did check out one of the how to play pinball tutorials in the show lobby

however. In addition to the usual 80's video jukebox there was also a rather large automated band that was set up to play all kinds of music. While I heard some rumblings that it was a bit too loud, I thought it was pretty cool that it was playing California Dreamin' when the show opened up on Sunday morning. My custom Star League shirt from The Last Starfighter got a couple positive responses on Saturday, so if you saw that shirt, then hey - you met InsaneDavid!

My favorite games on the floor shouldn't be surprising to anyone. Lunar Lander and Quantum got plenty of play from me on the vector alley. Strangely enough Quantum was open way more than Lunar Lander, so I was able to play more Quantum this year than in all my previously attended CAX shows combined. Bosconian was a regular stop for me on the corner of cabaret machines, still one of my absolute favorite arcade games. A two cabinet linked four player Cadash setup was located toward the back of the show and was freaking awesome to play. I really should have hung around longer and completed the game since I've never been all the way through the arcade version, although it's one of my favorite TurboGrafx games. A spectacular row of Taito classic cabinets was a beautiful sight, including the universal favorite



Zoo Keeper. Once again I was unable to complete Super Don Quix-ote, my favorite laserdisc game - I just couldn't concentrate on it for whatever reason. I still really need a Gyruss cabinet, I spend way too much time playing it every year. A dedicated Circus Charlie machine was also a really nice surprise to see at the show. Magical Truck Adventure was nice to see again as my brother and I attempted another play from last year. If you haven't seen it before, the game is set up like a full size railroad handcar. You have to frantically pump the handle to progress through the game and use a foot pedal to either get the handcar to lean to one side, or press them both in conjunction to make the handcar jump. This game will make mincemeat out of you regardless of what kind of shape you are in. Nearly all of my favorite pinballs were present including Space Shuttle, The Machine, Jack Bot, Whirlwind, and Capt. Fantastic. However the most awesome pinball machine at the show had to be one of the early version prototypes of The Who's Tommy, which is one of my all time favorite modern pinball machines. Getting the flipper blinders to come out on my first ball on my first play on that machine was one of the heights of the show for me. Marco Specialties also had a special setup with Stern Pinball showcasing the new TRON Legacy pin, complete with a live overhead video feed of gameplay and the audio connected to large speakers.

There was a healthy amount of vendors and collectors with sales tables at the show as well. I picked up a bunch of marquees from one gentleman for \$20 and a few other odds and ends from other people selling goods. There was a pretty nice mix of different items, arcade and pin parts, as well as miscellaneous stuff. I also got a pair of posters from ThisOldGame.com - one a signed limited run show poster and the other an ENCOM branded poster for the Video Pinball 2.0 custom machine. Rich at ThisOldGame.com is good people, the film accurate ENCOM TRON marquees that were up for sale earlier in the year are simply beautiful, I'm glad I got my order in when I did.

As always, the only downside to CAX is that eventually the sun sets on Sunday night and the show winds down as nine o'clock approaches. It really goes all too fast. I can only imagine how exhausted show staff and exhibitors must be after the show as the next day I'm pretty exhausted just from attending and playing games. Another big thanks to all the show staff and exhibitors again this year, the show is an incredible marvel of providing enjoyment to so many people. Seeing the vast differences in age groups throughout the show is what I probably always enjoy most every year. Everyone from nearly every walk of life attends the show and plays the games, which is always a huge reminder of something that the world really lost when the arcades went away. California Extreme allows all of us, even if just for a weekend, to relive and remember those days of people getting together to play games. Whether to complete or just give something new a try, it's the experience of the games and patrons together that really leave the lasting impression on me from year to year. All I can say is I hope to see everyone again next year!

Check out California Extreme online at caextreme.org.



Standalone Spew

by Mark Sabbatini



Machine Against The Rebel

A month beginning with Harry Potter going teabagger on public education and ending with the trauma of back-to-school shopping is a good time to explore alternatives to confronting perhaps the most sinister people alive today: teachers.

We're in an era where they may be committing society's biggest atrocities, even more so than police offices, firefighters and doctors. Concerns are rampant that sending a child to public school risks permanent indoctrination into government enslavement, an immediate conversion to preferring gay and animal sex (unceasingly and in groups, if possible), and death by everything from vaccinations to regime-mandated lunches.

After all, stats don't lie: 77 percent of public high school students use drugs; drinking, obesity, abortions, beatings and mental illness are rampant; half drop out and 70 percent of those who do graduate are unqualified to do anything but watch television at the twice the rate of the average American.

So there's a thriving movement to keep the precious ones home where they can learn about the happy lives of slaves and the Loch Ness monster being one of the modern species of dinosaurs that "scientists" claim are extinct. But those not opting to be Tiger Mom also need at least a facsimile of something fun to give the darlings, perhaps conveying aspects of elitist education that unfortunately must be learned so one can tithe 10 percent and spell "sodomite" for protest signs.

These days there's software for on-the-go devices from phones to Gameboys, not to mention the vast selection of homeschool titles for computers (one major site offers their entire selection "free," although shipping charges are curiously similar to the purchase prices from mainstream online stores. Also curious is the two "most-popular" items are gift certificates for the site).

Back in Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority days, of course, far fewer young minds were being poisoned by the evils of video games. But they were exploding onto the scene in a hurry and, while license plate bingo offered a wholesome way of passing time in the car during family vacations, I remember killing a lot more hours with battery-operated games including a high enough percentage in the dreaded "edutainment" category to make the average dork blush.

Don't get me wrong – I loved Mattel Football as much as the popular kids. But looking at old catalogues from the late 1970s to refresh my memory about that first batch of battery-operated wonders, it's kind of scary how most of those in the math/logic genre I have some memory of owning and/or playing.

So this month's handheld gaming column looks at some of the earliest gizmos that didn't have much allure for a pre-teen unless (s)he was an über-nerd or stuck in a car or campsite in the middle of nowhere. Awful as that might sound, some offer a lot more long-term fun than the "real" games of the era. Those still tempted to run away rather than read this might want to stick around long enough to find out how it can be mathematically proven that raising the U.S. debt ceiling will result in "a suffusion of yellow."

Furthermore, even the most fanatical of handheld gamers may be surprised to learn that one of those edutainment gizmos was the first to use interchangeable cartridges, contrary to the "official" and near-universal belief the honor belongs to Milton Bradley's Microvision.

Grades in the reviews, as always, are for their entertainment value compared to all standalone handheld units made until the present day (thus excluding cartridge-only platforms such as Gameboys, et al). Also, the edutainment units, which obviously score lower as a whole, get a second grade for how well it accomplishes every parent's dream of

getting their demonspawn to learn something while being conned into believing they're doing something fun.

Since nothing in here gets an A in either category, much less both, one might wonder what deserves a spot at the top of my peculiar grade curve. My strictly personal choice would be those 150-in-1 electronics kits that let you build radios and whatnot by connecting wires to a grid of springs on a circuit board (obviously a battery-operated one to even be marginally qualified in this category). Probably not a mainstream choice, but this is coming from someone who got some of the most enjoyment and education out of his edutainment handhelds by taking them apart after growing tired of playing them.

Speak & Spell (D+ for fun, B for edutainment)

Starting here so as not to prolong the pseudo drama – and going beyond the usual one-paragraph review – this 1978 Texas Instruments classic makes a strong argument for unseating the Microvision as the first handheld with exchangeable game cartridges.

Among about a dozen cartridges was a now-scarce ET game that outdid its landfill-packing Atari 2600 sibling (OK, so does counting interstate mile markers, but still). It's also had an amazingly long life despite being out of production since 1992. A child care center I volunteered at recently had one and it was easily among the most popular toys. The appeal is not entirely clear – did anyone really spend more than 30 seconds doing anything with the base unit except play hangman (*besides* articulating profanity, that is) – although I confess I never had any of the add-on cartridges and don't know how popular they were (a list at Wikipedia indicates many involved things like memorizing patterns of letters, suffixes and the like, plus several multilingual titles).



Engineers at TI trying to design an electronic spelling toy realized a voice was a critical element for the unit to be instructional, but existing technology required huge amounts of bulky memory costing thousands of dollars. They spent three months conjuring a form of sound compression that puts MP3 encoding to shame, squeezing a 10 kHz sample from about 400,000 calculations a second down to about 1,200. This voice would later see use in Chrysler vehicles during the 1980s and – to prove there's fans for everything – a website featuring sound samples, projects and other aspects of the automaker's system is at www.stanwatkins.com/eva/eva.shtml.

Speak & Spell, of course, proved a massive hit that spurred several sequels (including one without a display, which I can't imagine was much fun), plus separate product lines for Speak & Read and Speak & Math units. There's an abundance of web, mobile and other emulators available free for download these days, probably a good thing since units on eBay seem to start at \$40 and increase in price quickly.

Its tones and voice have also carved a legacy in the music world, with Beck, Coldplay and Jean Michel Jarre among the many working the sounds into their albums. Depeche Mode's 1981 debut album is named after the toy and, yes, serious critics still favored it with *All Music Guide* awarding the album four stars out of five and called it an "undiluted joy," with *Pitch* bestowing three-and-a-half for being a "lovely 'historical' gem." More reserved opinions certainly exist, with *Rolling Stones'* two-and-a-half stars reflecting "dead-end grooves and the group's boyish caroling (that) is anonymous at best."

Little Professor (D- for fun, D+ for edutainment)

Meet the calculator that can't do math. The success of this 1976 gadget, generally considered the first handheld electronic toy, is what motivated Texas Instruments to design Speak & Spell and several other edutainment units. It presents math questions using one of the four basic operators selected by the user, at one of four levels of difficulty also selected by the user. An incorrect answer results in a flashing "EEE" message, with the Professor displaying the correct answer after three misses.

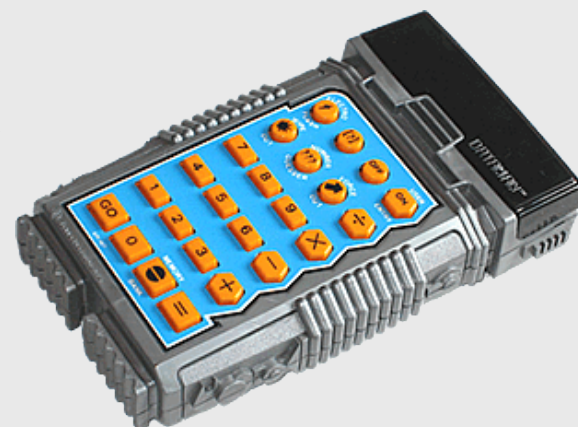
A score is given after ten questions. That means this really isn't a game and its edutainment value is limited since all it does is drill instead of teach anything. But TI did try to liven things up with the instruction book, "Fun With Math Facts," that purportedly offered 18 games to play with the unit. Nearly all involve being able to make some kind of



"move" if you solve a problem correctly and are as mundane as that sounds. But there are a couple of clever ideas. One builds mad libs from a list of words referenced by the numbers in the answers (making your own list vastly expands the entertainment value). My favorite – and almost certainly parents' least – involves players trying to shoot rubber bands onto a target (the book recommends placing the book on the floor next to a wall and requiring shots to ricochet onto the target) if they answer a problem correctly. TI made a few changes to the Professor over time, including replacing the LED screen with an LCD one like many other manufacturers, but it's the handhelds TI went on to develop that earns this any mention at all.

Dataman (D+ for fun, C- for edutainment)

Meet the calculator that can barely do math. An evolved version of the Little Professor, the robot-themed Dataman introduced in 1977 actually offered games and an ability to calculate roughly equal to Dirk Gently's I-Ching Calculator (details and Javascript emulator at www.thateden.co.uk/dirk, where you can test that debt ceiling math). I can't imagine a reason I owned this after finding the Professor a bore, other than being a gift from some well-meaning relative. The default option when you turn it on is an "answer checker," where the user types in a math equation using one of the four basic operators followed by "=" key and an answer. If the answer is wrong the computer flashes the familiar "EEE" message and a second miss results in the computer displaying the correct result. Seems a straightforward calculator wouldn't kill them at that point but – as with today's "no compromise, period" crowd – anything that smacks of not posing things to the user in the form of a problem are unacceptable. "Electro Flash" is the new name for the Little Professor's math quiz, with the user only getting two chances to get problems right. There's also a "Missing Number" option where the user fills in some other part of an equation and a "Memory Bank" option where a parent/teacher/etc. can input up to 10 custom problems. The best game is "Wipe Out," which is basically a math version of Hot Potato. Each player must solve a math problem correctly as quickly as possible (new ones appear after two misses), allowing them to pass the unit to the next player. The game lasts a random amount of time, and the loser is whoever is holding it when the clock runs out and a light show fills the display. It's legitimately fun even though it's still just solving math problems. Another game I enjoyed for educational reasons of a decidedly unwholesome kind was "Force Out," a variation on a classic con man's game. Players take turns subtracting a single-digit amount from a starting number selected by Dataman, with the loser being whoever subtracts the last point. The smart player (or con artist, if you prefer) is the one who can quickly calculate which person should start so the guaranteed loser is someone other than the con. It was the beginning of a lifelong obsession detecting schemers of all kinds, which probably has a lot to do with becoming a journalist. "Number Guesser" is fairly lame, with players trying to guess a secret number between nine and 100. After each incorrect guess Dataman displays two numbers that narrow the range. Sorry, but I prefer games requiring some element of skill (hence my bewilderment at the overwhelming appeal of slot machines). One very cool bit of trivia, if true, is a Dataman did double duty as the Orkan Age Device in the Robin Williams TV show "Mork & Mindy." But the claim comes from a retro forum commenter and I haven't found concrete verification – and I am not going to sit through the show to maybe get a close enough look to find out.



Milton Bradley Comp IV (D for fun, D+ for edutainment)

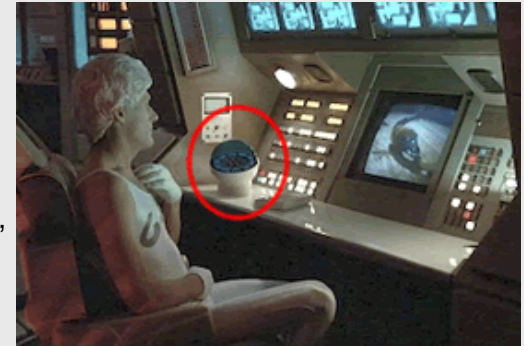
"I AM PROGRAMMED TO BEAT YOU" thunders the biggest letters on the box of this 1977 gadget that is essentially a variation of Mastermind where the player tries to guess a number from three to five digits. The weird thing – one oddity anyhow – is it's actually the player who prevails since an unlimited number of guesses is allowed. Comp IV isn't the most compact or effective of the many handheld Mastermind replicas, with a large phone-like keypad on the lower half of its bulky L-shaped body and two columns of five LED lights on a decal-covered screen on the upper half. One column indicates how many correct numbers you've guessed, the other how many are in the correct sequence. The light at the upper right corner will also flash slowly after 30 seconds elapse and faster after another 30, but this is entirely for show since there's no hard time limit. The only real variation is a repeat play option where the same number is carried over to a new game, allowing multiple players to see who can solve it in the fewest tries. Among the other amusing oddities



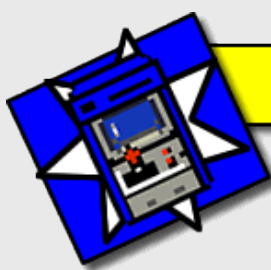
of the device is the self-test, which involves pressing a sequence of keys to trigger a flashing display of lights: 7, E, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, E. Seems excessively complex, more like a cheat code, although not sure what kind of one you could have on this device. I vaguely remember trying Comp IV in a store and, while being a geek who enjoyed Mastermind more than most, found it rather inferior to a couple of competitors I already owned. It's not exactly a rare item these days, with plenty of units selling on eBay for about \$15. This was Milton Bradley's first electronic game and, in yet another display that not all the best toys run on batteries, it pales seriously in comparison to the company's first game, "The Game of Life," released way back when the Civil War was gearing up in 1860.

Computer Perfection (C- for fun, D for edutainment)

This 1979 device by the legendary Ralph Baer was known far more for a futuristic design that earned it a place in various sci-fi movies and TV shows than its gameplay according to numerous retro geeks. Which goes to show I may be more of a nerd than a geek because I remember the gameplay most fondly (although opening the translucent blue dome cover and watching the opening light/sound sequence was always cool). Granted, it was one of the few toys I had at a time when I was in a detention home for troubled youths, but the less said about that the better. There's also the fact I was a huge fan of the non-electronic Perfection game (and even more complex Superfection) where your task is to fit all the plastic pieces in



their proper holes before a wind-up timer expires and sends them flying everywhere. Computer Perfection features four puzzle games (two single-player and two two-player) having little to do with its wind-up cousins. The two single-player games require lighting the entire circle of ten LED lights on the display by pressing the buttons surrounding them in the correct order (the lights are also bordered by various plastic outlines of shapes, I guess to preserve some connection to the "unplugged" version). Game one is a pretty simple "guess which button activates which light" version, while game two complicates things by switching off lights if you press a button for one already lit. The real challenge comes in the three selectable skill levels, where you get 99, 30 or 12 tries to succeed, respectively. Game three has player one trying to activate lights one through five and player two lights six through 10, while game four has player one trying to capture lights one through six before player two can light six through ten (actually it's a zero, but referred to otherwise here for simplicity's sake). In two-player games the skill level also sets the maximum number of moves and if neither player achieves the goal the computer is declared the winner. The obvious downside of Computer Perfection, especially for the solitary player, is eventually it will be mastered at the hardest level, although it takes a while. Its staying power as a sci-fi screen start lasted well into the 1980s, however, appearing in such movies such as "Ice Pirates" and TV shows like "Buck Rogers in the 25th Century."



MAME Reviews

by Mark Sabbatini



Sheriff

Since Robotron 2084 is the best arcade game ever (IMHO), it's physically painful to debunk a major part of its legacy.

The 1982 brainchild of Eugene Jarvis and Larry DeMar is commonly believed to be the first dual-stick shooter, a genre now so cliché nearly all top Google hits for the term are for games on the iPhone which, of course, has no joysticks or fire buttons.

The first correct reference doesn't appear until the second page of links, after results such as "the first twin-stick shooter set in a vagina." Deep in a Wikipedia entry is a one-sentence mention of the true original co-authored by the legendary Shigeru Miyamoto, designer of numerous franchise games including Donkey Kong, Super Mario Bros and The Legend of Zelda.

The honor doesn't go to Atari's 1980 hit Battlezone which, while a good guess, isn't a true dual-stick shooter as currently defined where one stick is used for movement and the other for firing. Plus the true honoree debuted two years earlier. Tossing in the hint the game melds concepts from Robotron, Space Invaders and Outlaw is probably of little help since the coin-op machine is also one of the rarest in existence.

Meet the shuu¹ Sheriff in town.

Sheriff is a 1978 Nintendo coin-op pitting your lawman against a gang of bandits who will ultimately achieve what Bob Marley didn't. The question, of course, is how many hooligans the sheriff can face down before meeting his demise. This shouldn't be too shameful since you're facing 16 at once, odds even Clint didn't draw his guns against (watch the penultimate scene of "The Outlaw Josey Wales" for an all-time display of ballsiness sans guns).

The 16 bandits fill the border of the Ko²-Play Corral, with the sheriff getting a free hand to patrol a central area roughly two-thirds the size of the playfield. Four bunkers are at the four compass points between the bandits and sheriff, similar to those in Space Invaders. The sheriff's task is to wipe out each wave of bandits as they slowly circle the screen shooting back. Occasionally one will shicho³ into the center, putting you and himself in great peril. The speed of the bandits and their bullets increases as time passes, as does the frequency they charge into the center.

There's also several elements adding challenge and strategic value. Bandits shot outside the dotted boundary they generally roam are worth 30 points, while those charging into the center are worth 60. Buzzards occasionally flying across the top of the screen (a.k.a. the UFOs in Space Invaders) are worth 100 to 500 points. The most important element is your score doubles after the third wave, again after the eighth wave and every eight waves afterward, so the obvious strategy is to tsuru no sugomori⁴ as much as possible early when the going is easier.

The only DIP switch setting in the manual is adjusting the number of sheriffs the player starts with from three to six.

While Sheriff may seem complex, especially for the late-1970s, it's actually fairly simple, slow-paced and monotonous by today's standards. That doesn't mean it's easy or boring by any means.

Just the twin-stick element was enough to keep me playing this in MAME



for quite some time, although it should be noted I have one of those massively expensive X-Arcade dual-joystick/trackball controllers I bought solely so I could play Robotron and Marble Madness properly. Using a keyboard isn't as entertaining, but it's still above average for its time and merits a look as an overlooked bit of history by a videogaming genius.

In 1978, however, the challenge combined with the complexity of dual-stick controls was too much for gamers barely weaned off Pong and Breakout. A sequel released in 1979 diluted some things in a futile attempt to expand its appeal, including changing the outlaws to cute creatures and implementing a simplified one-joystick/one-button control system where the sheriff fires in the direction he's facing.

These days Sheriff has a rarity rating of two on a scale of 100 at The Killer List of Video Games. The site claims Nintendo released 91 machines with that name and in 1980 licensed it under the title of Bandido to Exidy, which produced 51 machines.



Despite its obscurity, Sheriff may be slightly better known to modern gamers thanks to the nefarious mascot Wario giving the game new life in the 2003 Gameboy Advance title WarioWare, Inc.: Mega Microgames!. Included are both a "microgame" where gameplay lasts a few seconds (one of hundreds of such challenges, including numerous retro titles such as Donkey Kong) and an unlockable "minigame" that is a conversion of the full coin-op console. The screen seems rather crowded compared to the arcade's, and the WarioWare version also eases the difficulty considerably by making your sheriff move faster and allowing the player to earn extra lives.

¹Japanese for discipline. We aim to educate while we entertain.

²Japanese for hopeless or suicidal, judging by its usage.

³A running attack.

⁴Japanese for confine the cranes to their nest, which we'll also do by making this the last of this particular idiocy.



Commodore Du Jour

by Marc Douglas



Questron

Well, it is hot outside. And what do retrogamers do when the weather is like this? We hide inside and revisit the games of yore. I kept putting this review off but this seems like the perfect time to go back to 1984 in my parent's house in what was dubbed my computer room at the time. I had one of those cheap computer desks that we all had growing up with top section that you put nothing on because everything fit on the main part of the desk. I can remember my dad lying on the floor watching the TV at the opposite end of the room. What he was watching I have no recollection because I was immersed in my first role-playing game that left an indelible mark that is still a part of me today. The game that made me ignore the TV and everything else that was going on could be summed up in a single word...

"QUESTRON"

They say you always remember your first. They were right. This SSI masterpiece from 1984 (programmed by Charles Dougherty) was one of the first games I owned for my 64 and it was the first game I ever finished. This was long before any kind of hints were readily available to refer to. I fought for many hours to finish this game and if you have played and finished Questron, you should instantly know why those hours put in were worth it.

The game borrows heavily from the Ultima series which was on III at the time of Questron's release and it shows from the moment you boot it up and you see that a license had to be obtained from Richard Garriott to make the game. The graphic layout harkens to Ultima's (Pre V) with blocky tile graphics that denote various types of terrain (Swamp, Mountains, etc...) towns, churches and dungeons. When you enter a building other than a castle, it has an Ultima I feel where the town is restricted to one screen with no scrolling. The left part of the screen is saved for the command list that can be accessed via keyboard, or joystick (Unlike Ultima) or a combination. I prefer the joystick especially if you are running an emulator.

The plot which didn't matter back in 1984 is your basic fantasy fare. You are a lowly serf who gets a message from the princess saying that you are the only one who can save the land from the evil magician Mantor who has in his possession a book of magic that holds ultimate power that he will use to destroy the land of Questron. It is up to you to find Mantor and destroy the book of Evil (very much like the Gem of Mondain in Ultima I). So of course, you sell all of your possessions and begin your quest outside of Geraldton, the first city you should visit to get a feel for the game. But before you enter the town, you should take a look at your character sheet to get a better idea of what your serf is like. You will see the basic attributes that are in most RPGs (Strength, Intelligence, etc.) which are all at 15 to start. You will be able to increase them later but not in the usual way. You can boost your attributes by playing skill games at the churches (A skeet shooting game and a memory type game) and you will also get some help from the good magician Mesron as the game progresses. Your serf will level up but not like in most RPGs. You will level up when you reach certain points in the game by completing certain tasks. You'll usually know you're about to get a level boost when you hear that Mesron wants to see you.

But before any of that happens, you need to buy a weapon and some food, then you can set out on the quest proper.



But I would first suggest that you do a little gambling at the casino to beef up your bankroll before heading out. But be careful, if you break the bank, the guards will attack! In the towns, you can defeat the guards with ease. The castle guards, they are another story. The casino games available to play are, Blackjack, Roulette and Double or Nothing. If you are on an emulator it is very easy to boost your gold. But if you are playing on a real 64, you better save before each bet to play it safe. And this being an early RPG means that you can only save outside of town and above ground. This will become a real pain when you get to the last dungeon in the game. The casino games were a new addition to the genre that other series would use in their own later releases.

Ok, so you've won some money and bought your supplies. Now it is time to explore the land. In the beginning you will be attacked by one monster at a time and you'll take some damage, but you should be able to explore for a while before having to find a way to restore your hit points (go to the church!). Combat takes place on the world map, so there is no special close-up view that you would get in Ultima III. You'll probably have a club to start the game and that will be a decent weapon for a while, until you realize that some monsters are immune to certain weapons. You'll need to keep a few weapons in your inventory and swap out as needed depending on what you are fighting. You will also need to keep a rope and hooks in your inventory so you can cross the mountains found in the game. Later on, you will get access to a raft and a boat which will be needed to sail to the land of evil.

After you fight for a while and explore the church (where you can boost your stats), Mesron will send you a message saying he wants to see you. The trek to the castle is a long one as it is at the bottom of the map, so make sure you have enough food and healing vials to make the trip. The castle is unlike the towns as it is a much larger building with guards that will punish you. But after you meet Mesron, he will reveal more of the plot to you and introduce you to the healing powders that will come in very handy and serve a special purpose late in the game. Right now your job is to loot the castle and get as many keys as possible to unlock doors and chests. Don't think you can take on just one more guard, when your hit points are low, get out and wait for the guards to reset so they are not hostile to you then next time you enter.



Your character is going to start becoming more powerful now. The monsters will start to get a little tougher and attack you in groups. Sometimes though, a monster might approach and offer you an item. If you say no, they will not attack and just go away (unlike the salesmen of today).

Now comes the toughest part of the game, the dungeons. The graphics are very minimal here with the monsters drawn in a vector graphics style that works and was on par with the games of that time. You cannot avoid the dungeons as the item you will find at the end of one dungeon will allow access to the next. The monsters here are much tougher than above ground, but you will have an advantage that you do not have when fighting above ground, magic spells. Make sure you stock up on magic spells before going into the dungeons as they will make your spelunking trips much easier. You can buy spells in the towns which are your basic fantasy stock (fireball, lightning bolt, and the stone spell which can freeze a monster). Remember, spells can backfire and it is random, but you should never be afraid of using magic in the dungeons.

The first two dungeons are eight levels each and you can get through them in one sitting. It is the last dungeon, Mantor's Mountain, that will really put you to the test. It is a 17 level gauntlet that you will have to endure to get to the final level and face Mantor and his book of magic.

If you survive and destroy Mantor and the book, you will be treated to one of the best endings in video game history. The ending knocked me off my feet in 1984 and it still impresses over 25 years later.

You will enter the King's throne room and when you do, the guards lining the room will turn and produce horns which they then play as you walk down the aisle. I remember going nuts seeing this and wanted to tell somebody what had just happened. But I'm pretty sure that my parents were both at work and my dog was outside so I couldn't even share it with her. And you couldn't pause the game back then, so I sure wasn't going to leave the room to try to find someone to show this to. I would just have to have the memory all to myself.

After the ceremony, the King makes you a Baron and gives you one of the coolest forms of transportation ever, a trained war-eagle that you can fly anywhere. This was just a mind-blowing ending for a computer game and the fact that it was 1984 makes it all the more impressive. How many times have you slogged through a game for weeks only to get a page of text as your reward and then kicked out to DOS. If you remember the EA game, "Syndicate", the ending to that game was an insult for the effort that you had to put in. But instead of grouching about that, I just go back to Questron and remember how an ending to a game should be!



In the end, if you were to pick up this game today, without having ever played it before, you would notice the basic graphics. The sounds which are really one note variations. A hit is a one note sound, a step is a one note sound and so on. The only music is at the beginning and during the ending in the castle. The leveling system is simplistic since it is event based and on an emulator, it is VERY easy to cheat.

But yet, those childhood memories can make you gloss over a lot and just think about how fun it was to not only play the game, but to be able to finish the game, and be rewarded for your hard work. If only real life could follow these rules as well.

I'm going to be very biased with my score here (and yes, my memories are greatly influencing me)

SCORE, QUESTRON gets a 10!

Oh yes, there were Atari and Apple versions made as well. The Apple version has the better introduction screen. But if you are going to play any version of Questron, it must be the Commodore 64 version. See you all next month!



Commodore Du Jour

by Marc Douglas



A Second Helping - Park Patrol

Ah summer. Back in the day I'm sure all of you retrogamers were looking forward to summer vacation so you could put in some serious gaming time without the distraction of geometry. But alas the nirvana was short lived...mom and dad would knock on your door and give you the one sentence that all teenagers feared the most,

"I think it's time you got a job this summer."

Horrors! Employment would put a serious cramp into my summer gaming. Unless you can combine the gaming with the job. Tony Ngo and Activision would do this in 1984 and create one of my favorites from my early teen years, "Park Patrol."

Park Patrol is one of those games where the concept is simple, but the gameplay is deep. To me, Frogger is the biggest influence in the game you could also say Defender, but even that could be a stretch. It is your job as ranger of Poconose park, to clean up the trash found on the shore and in the lake, and rescue the swimmers that have a tendency to start drowning when you are farthest away from them in the lake. As you do your duties, you will have to avoid the turtles and ants on the land and the snakes and logs in the river. While this is going on, you must keep track of your calories to make sure that you don't run out of energy while working. You start with 1000 in your personal supply and you can get more by going to your ranger shack that is in the center of the map. You can have over 1000 calories which helps if you want to stay out collecting trash a bit longer. But if your backup supply runs out, you will be in a lot of trouble. It seems like a lot, but once you start playing, you'll find that your tasks are manageable.



And why is that? Well, you do have some skills at your advantage. On land, you can jump over the turtles and you can also move in the air while jumping, which allows for a bit of strategy. If you time it right, you can jump, land in your raft, and then watch as the turtles follow into the water where they become harmless and you can scoop them up for some points. But don't wait too long, or they will turn into a speedier blue turtle and this turtle will not go into the water. In the later levels, ants will appear and steal your food. Just sneak up behind them or from the side to get back your food so you don't run out of energy.

As you are cleaning up the trash on the land, watch out for swampy areas that will suck you in. Avoid these at all costs! Also, you may notice an interesting bush next to your ranger shack. Make sure that you touch it each level so it bears fruit. Once it does and you eat that fruit, you will become invincible for a while. A big help when you are surrounded by turtles.

Now to the water, the first level is the easiest. You will only have to deal with logs and swimmers. You will pick up speed in your raft as you hold the joystick in the direction you are traveling. Hit a log too fast, and you get launched from your raft. If you are close enough to the land, you can survive, otherwise, once you hit the water, you will drown and lose a life. You will hear a nice bubbling sound effect after your ranger goes under. You would think you would know how to swim, working at a park. If you hit the log and land on it right, you will start spinning and if you spin for long enough, you will get some nice bonus points.



Watch out for swimmers! The only time they are safe to touch is when they are drowning. IF you touch them when

they are swimming, your raft springs a leak and you drown. You'll know when a swimmer is drowning, as you'll see the word, "Help!" and hear a sound effect that sounds like someone screaming for their life. Hurry and rescue them, or you'll lose a life. Also, when you rescue a swimmer you get points and bonus energy as well.

Starting in level two, the snakes appear in the water (refugees from Frogger) and can burst your raft. At first it is easy to steer around them, but when they attack in a pack, you can launch snake repellent at them by pressing the fire button. It will cost you some energy, but in a tight spot, the trade-off is worth it. Just remember unlike the turtles that are gone when you pick them up, the snakes will come back again.

After you clear a level, the screen will dissolve and you will get bonus points for any leftover energy that you have. Clear a level quickly enough, and you can get a good 7000 bonus points a level. And with extra rangers awarded every 20,000 points, you can be set for quite a while.

As the levels progress, the trash will change from bottles, to can and so on. There will be more enemies on the screen (but always the same 12 pieces of trash to pick up) and the difficulty will increase. But with a bit of practice, you can rack up some nice scores.

There are a lot of plusses in this game. The graphics are colorful and well done. Yes the turtles look like hamburgers but that's ok. You can tell the difference between the male and female rangers. Sound effects are varied. From the sound of the swimmers yelling for help to the little jingle made when you pick up trash. The music is very solid with a nice title tune, and a theme that starts off each level. It will repeat after a while, but it is still very nice.

Controls are tight which is good because it can get hairy in that raft and on land jumping over all those turtles. I never found myself cursing at the game because of the controls failing me. It was all my own doing.

And what might be the biggest plus is that you can configure the game before you start, to give yourself a greater challenge by having more turtles, snakes, etc..

So to conclude and yes, this is a slightly shorter review. Park Patrol is a game that holds up very well today and can be compared with many games from the time period favorably. Is it a classic? I would say no. But is it fun? There, I would say, yes. So if your parents start getting on you about a job in the upcoming weeks, load up Park Patrol and tell your parents, that it's already taken care of.

What makes Park Patrol a little more special is that it was a Commodore exclusive. No Apple or Atari to make comparisons with this month. As a Commodore junkie, I always like the exclusive games a bit more as they were a source of geek pride.



SCORE: My score for Park Patrol is... a very solid 8.

Next month's game will be...I'll have to get back to you. So for now, keep enjoying your summer and stay cool.



Dual Perspective

by James Sorge



Dragon Power

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 Power", a relatively obscure game made by Bandai in 1986.

Graphics: 8/10

For 1986, I have to say that this is a really good looking game! The sprites are big and detailed, and it even has some cut-scenes (though nowhere near as good or innovative as Ninja Gaiden and quite annoying at times). A bit of a surprise.

Sound: 5/10


The sound is average. Nothing too good, nothing too bad. It is 1986 after all and not every game sounds like SMB.

Difficulty: 8/10

Because of unlimited continues, this game can be beaten by the "slug through" method. Basically, the game ticks down your health as you go along, so continues are pretty mandatory. It's an interesting game to run though.

Replay Factor: 7/10

Can be replayed a bit. The cut-scenes and their music are pretty annoying though.

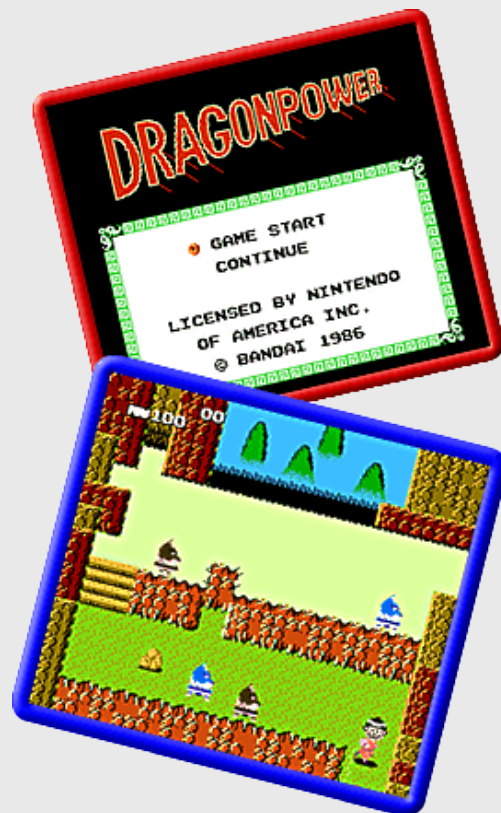
 The World Record Perspective:
Relatively obscure and probably not going to get a lot of attention, but I was looking at this game for the FRAGCon tournament (which I ended up not being able to go to because of the 100+ heat that hit the East Coast that week). It might be worth a quick record to add to the collection. The record isn't out of this world and if you can plan it right and put in a few attempts, it will be a nice notch on the belt. Finding the cart could be an issue though. It is rare.

- NES: Eric Cummings - 74,600 points



The Penguin Says:

"This is a very obscure game. Don't expect to get a lot of press if you set a new record, and you might even lose interest after the initial playthrough. But it's a relatively easy record to beat and won't be a heavy time investment. Do be prepared to defend it though: Other people might have the same idea. It was a surprise for FRAGCon and I kind of enjoyed picking this one up.. Overall I give this a 6/10 with a world record potential of 8/10."





The Pixelated Mage

by Jeff Wittenhagen



DoReMi Fantasy: Milon's DokiDoki Adventure



Synopsis

DoReMi Fantasy: Milon's DokiDoki Adventure is a little known Super Famicom platforming game that is the sequel to the 1988 Nintendo Entertainment System game Milon's Secret Castle. The story has you playing as Milon who is trying to restore the music to the forest of his home and save Alis, his fairy friend from the evil wizard Amon. This wizard is also the cause of the music disappearing.

DoReMi Fantasy differs a bit from Milon's Secret Castle with the concentration shifting more towards straight platforming instead of on puzzles and exploring every inch of a level. No longer is Milon subjected to a dreary castle, but instead a variety of themed levels that spread over seven different areas. Each world must be sequentially conquered before going to another complete with a boss battle at the end.



Gameplay

The gameplay in DoReMi Fantasy still consists of using bubbles to attack but this time it is executed more like Bubble Bobble than the original Milon's Secret Castle. You basically trap your enemies and pop them before they burst out of it. Other more attacks are your typical charged shot and the bubblegum item that allows you to float if you fall into a hole. Milon can also jump on enemies to incapacitate them before capturing them which is a good tactic for more accuracy. As you play through a level and take damage, Milon's clothing will change colors. Once you are red, the next hit means death. This is like having a life bar and doesn't obscure the view which is a bonus. You are also given lives unlike Milon's Secret Castle where one death meant game over.



Graphics and Sound

Say that DoReMi Fantasy has brighter and more lighthearted tone than Milon's Secret Castle is an understatement. This game takes whimsical to a new level with colorful sprites, cheery backgrounds, and animations that would make Kirby shutter. All of this happiness fortunately doesn't take away from the enjoyment of the game at all and surprisingly goes very well as the tone of the game.

The sound in DoReMi Fantasy is also cheery and happy which perfectly complements the graphics. The score keeps you moving and doesn't get too annoying which lighthearted soundtracks tend to do. The sound effects are well done and aren't too distracting. There are some interesting choices for sounds but overall they are what you would expect.

Why It's Rare

Being that DoReMi Fantasy was only distributed in Japan automatically makes it a rarity. The fact that it's a virtually unknown sequel to a minimally-popular and classically panned Nintendo Entertainment System game makes it more difficult to find as collectors tend to snatch it up. You can usually find a copy of DoReMi Fantasy online for around \$50 but if you are looking for it in the box it will obviously cost a little bit more. Super Famicom game boxes were generally taken care of better than their US counterparts so getting it boxed shouldn't break the bank. Overall, if you are in the need of a classic 16-bit platformer and don't mind overloading on cuteness, DoReMi Fantasy: Milon's DokiDoki Adventure is a solid and fun pick.

Rating = 4 Milon Mages out of 5





Homebrew Sleuth

by Collin Pierce



Space Harrier

Author's note: Due to the way this game's graphics are rendered, screenshots do not show the game as intended. Instead, please see the comparison videos.

I'm usually not big on ports, especially when there's no chance of it matching the original version. It's also rare that a game makes me go, "How the hell did they do that!?" I sometimes think I've seen it all; that I know everything that's possible. It happens to the best of us gamers.

However, once in a while a game comes along that raises the bar of what's possible. This is especially true with homebrews. I heard a while back that Sega's classic shooter, Space Harrier, was being ported to the Atari Computer, but since I didn't know anything about the 8-Bit computer line, I didn't think much about it. Well, now I have an Atari 8-Bit Computer (an XEGS model), and I have played some of the games for it, so I thought I knew what it was capable of.

After years of development, Space Harrier has finally come out, and I must say, I am VERY impressed. I never knew this system was capable of pulling this game off so well.

Let's do some investigation. Space Harrier was first released in arcades in late 1985. The first models of the Atari 8-Bits, the 400 and 800, were released in 1979. That's six years before the release of Space Harrier! Under such circumstances, how good a port is possible? Let's find out.

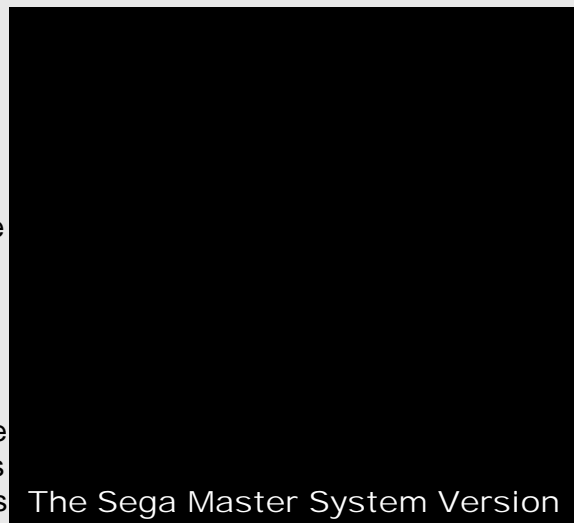
Graphics: **A**

When Space Harrier first came out, there was nothing else like it. The world of the Fantasy Zone was very unique, unique to the point where you realize that this game could only be made by the Japanese. The graphics were bright, colorful, and well-detailed. It's amazing how identifiable everything is, even though it's rushing past at a high speed. It was also one of the first games to use sprite scaling, creating a unique 3 dimensional look.

Obviously, the 8-Bit port is going to have some downgrades, but I was amazed to find that the game still looks very close to the arcade! Yes, the sprites aren't quite as detailed as the arcade version, but you can still make an immediate connection to their arcade counterparts. My only complaint is that the title screen looks quite dark compared to the rest of the game. This is probably due to a flaw with how the game is rendered; the port switches between two layers of graphics at a high speed, each layer with its own color palette, causing the game to appear to have more colors on screen than there really are at any one time. This is more good than bad, though, as the game looks amazing. The actual game is bright and colorful like its original.



The Arcade Original



The Sega Master System Version

Gameplay: **A+**

Space Harrier was one of the first shooters to have a "behind the back" perspective. It is fast, exciting, and a ton of cathartic fun. It's quite simple, even shallow by today's standards, but it's fun flying across an alien landscape blowing up monsters. You'll also hop on a friendly dragon to play a short bonus stage a couple times.

The 8-Bit port somehow manages to capture all of the elements that made the arcade version great. It is just as fast and fun as its counterpart. It's a little choppy, but not enough to take away any of the fun.

Controls: **A+**

The game consists of just moving and shooting, but even then, fluid controls can make or break a game as hard as this one. Luckily, it controls just as well as the original. If you die, it's not the controls, you just stink at the game.

Sound: **A+**

Space Harrier had an amazing soundtrack, with a very memorable main theme. It also had some voice sampling. Upon starting the game, the Harrier would say, "Welcome to the Fantasy Zone! Get ready!" Despite being quaint by today's standards, somehow this line is still very memorable to all who have played the game. There's also a death scream when you die, and when you beat a stage, the Harrier will proclaim, "You're doing great!" Finally, if the Harrier gets stunned by running into a minor obstacle, he'll say "Ouch!"

And Lastly, The Atari 8-Bit Version

Upon playing the port, I was caught completely off-guard when the game began and the voice samples were still there! They sound amazingly good, with very little loss in quality. The music is all recognizable, and well-arranged, despite the difference in sound hardware.

Fun Factor/Replay Value: **B+**

This is a really fun game, but it is repetitive. Still, the difficulty will insure that you probably won't beat it on your first try, and the game is easy to pick up and play due to being a simple arcade shooter. You'll probably come back to it every once in a while to test your skill.

Arcade to Home: **A+**

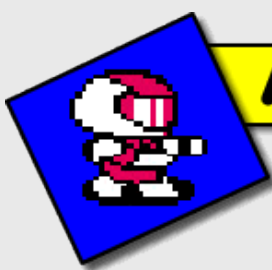
For the hardware it's designed for, this port is as arcade perfect as I can imagine being possible. The levels, graphics, sound, etc. have been skillfully recreated.

Overall: **A**

This port blew my mind. It is amazingly faithful to the original in a way that I didn't think possible on the hardware, and is much more impressive than even Sega's own version for their Master System. The only version to my knowledge that's closer to the arcade is on the 32X. The 8-Bit Space Harrier is not just a technical achievement, but a really fun version of the game that raises the bar for Atari 8-Bit homebrews in every way. If you are a huge Space Harrier fan, this is a must have. The cartridge is a little on the expensive side, but if you don't want to use MAME and just emulate the arcade version, this might be your next best bet after the 32X version.

Space Harrier (Atari 8-Bit Version) is available for purchase at Atari Sales (<http://www.atari-sales.com/>).

Please note that your Atari 8-Bit requires 64k of RAM to run the game.



A Pixelated 21st Century

by Paul Zimmerman



Well, July was a great month to be a Pixelated fan. Here are some of the retroware highlights for the month of July:



3D Pixel Racing ([Click here to see a video of the game](#))

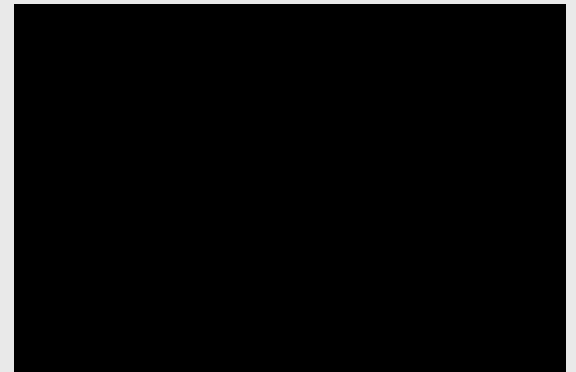
8-bit graphics in 3D for this racing game. Unlock new cars and tracks. Up to 4 can play.

Bobby Carrot Forever (Video to the right)

Puzzle adventures with Bobby Carrot. Bonus mini-games. A multi award-winning game series.

Burn the Rope ([Click here to see a video of the game](#))

Burn the rope!



3D Classics: Xevious ([Click here to see a video of the game](#))

Classic shmup now in 3D!

Antipole (Video to the right)

Gravity changing, puzzle platforming goodness.

Go Series: Portable Shrine Wars ([Click here to see a video of the game](#))

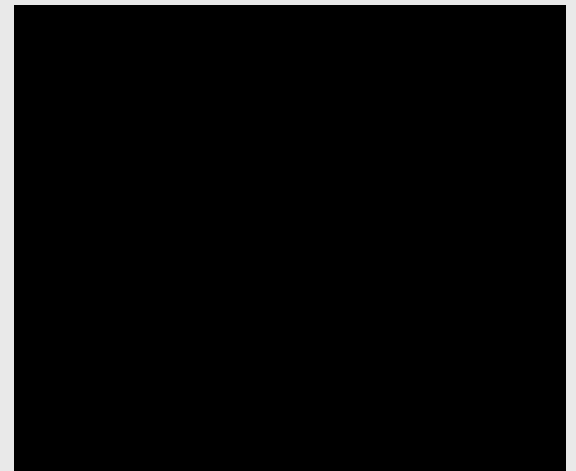
Will your portable shrine defeat the other portable shrines? Run into them, throw team members into them, grab other men to speed up, battle giant bosses and ninjas, avoid the obstacles. Sounds like fun.

Jewel Keepers Easter Island ([Click here to see a video of the game](#))

Another match-3 game.

Kung Fu Dragon ([Click here to see a video of the game](#))

Climb an immense waterfall while jumping. Jump on the enemies. Defeat bosses.



Oscar's World Tour ([Click here to see a video of the game](#))

4th in the series. Collect baby Oscars. 7 new worlds.

Roller Angels ([Click here to see a video of the game](#))

Side-scrolling platform starring Charlie's Angels in a roller derby. Well, that's what I first thought anyway when I saw the title. Turns out it's a side-scrolling platform game where you restore color to your town. No Charlie's Angels here sadly.



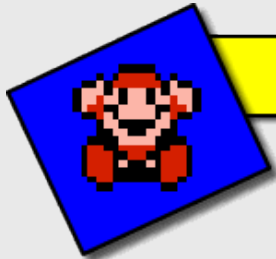
Note: most of the videos for the games below are of the originals (meaning they not being played on the Wii). This is because the Virtual Console is emulating the original system and therefore they are identical.

Qix (Gameboy) ([Click here to see a video of the game](#))

The arcade classic for your Game Boy!

As always, send me an email and let me know if you purchased any of these games and what are your thoughts about the games. Also, let me know your thoughts about any games I did not list.

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



Game Over

by Bryan Roppolo



With this being the final official summer issue, since the September issue will be ringing in the fall months, I hope everyone here was able to get out and plunge in the pool, run through the sprinklers, and all the other fun things that we do in this season. I had a blast and enjoyed reading the columns that were submitted. I never knew that there was a port of Space Harrier done recently for the Atari 8-Bit computers. Being the editor of a classic gaming magazine sure can have its perks, since I get to hear about some of the new developments in the classic gaming world.

Anyway, I hope everyone enjoyed the issues we put out this summer, since the fall issues should prove to be just as good. I did get an e-mail from someone recently who mentioned that the content in RTM is getting even better. Glad to hear that we have been living up to people's expectations as to what a great retrogaming magazine should be like.