



Printing Help



Retrogaming Times Monthly #96 - May 2012



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Press Fire To Begin

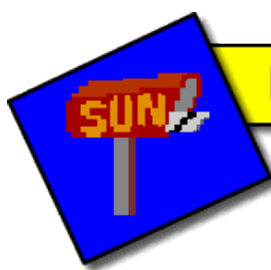
by Bryan Roppolo



Another month, another edition of RTM. This month you will find three big events that have taken place. The first is the sad news, in which Commodore found Jack Tramiel passed away at the age of 83. He lived through a lot of events in his life even well before the days of Commodore, which is probably what made him such a good businessman. Through his years at both Commodore and Atari he put out some very innovative and history making technology. The Commodore 64 still ranks as the highest selling computer of all time. Jack changed the industry so much that I don't think we will ever know just how important of an impact he made on our hobby and current state of technology. He will surely be missed, even to those that have never heard of him, because there is a good chance the computer industry would be very different today without him.

Now for the good news. This month we are celebrating two anniversaries, one for the Apple II and another for the ZX Spectrum. The Apple II has turned 35 (back on April 16/17) and the ZX Spectrum 30 (back on April 23)! Wow, I remember not that long ago when most of the home computers out there were no more than 20 years old at best. Now we are looking at computers over 30! Pretty neat to say the least. Apparently the ZX Spectrum anniversary is being celebrated more over in the U.K. where it originates from, at least according to our European reporter Mark Sabbitini.

Before leaving you all off to venture into the jungle of retrogaming goodness that is RTM, I would like to pose a question to ponder on just like last month. The question that I have in mind is what would the computer world have been like back in the early 80s without Commodore (or today for that matter)? Considering that both the VIC-20 and C64 played important roles in the industry, just imagine that time period without them. Would there have been a computer price war? Would computers have caught on at the pace that they did? Would we have had as many kids trying to learn how to program their own BASIC game which eventually would lead them to become professional computer programmers? We'll never really know the answers to these questions, but it's something to think about as you read through our pages. There is even a good chance that RTM might not exist if it was not for Commodore.



Retrogaming News

EVENTS

[Vintage Computer Festival East 8.0](#)

Saturday, May 5 9:30 AM - 7:00 PM & Sunday, May 6 9:30 AM - 5:30 PM (Wall Township, NJ)

This year's edition of the show (VCF East 8.0) features dozens of computers from the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, all live and working, for the public to see and touch. It also features keynote lectures by Dr. Thomas Kurtz, who invented the BASIC programming language, and by Dan Kottke, who was Steve Jobs' best friend in their college years and one of the first engineers hired at Apple.

Each morning of the Vintage Computer Festival East includes historical lectures, technical workshops, and a marketplace featuring a booksale and consignment sales of vintage computers, parts, and related items. Keynotes are each day at 12:30, followed each day by the exhibit hall.

This year's VCF East lectures, in addition to the celebrity keynotes, include topics such as the history of Commodore, evolution of analog computing, Charles Babbage's mechanical computers, and a reunion panel of the first meeting of the Amateur Computer Group of New Jersey, which formed in May 1975.

The workshop schedule includes classes that will teach the fundamentals of repairing 8-bit microcomputers, creating computer music, restoring data from cassettes and floppy disks, and many other subjects. More info can be found at our website.

[The 16th Annual Pin-a-Go-Go Pinball Show & Swap Meet](#)

Friday, May 18 1:00 – 10:00 PM; Saturday, May 19 10:00 – 12:00 AM; Sunday, May 20 8:00 – 5:00 PM (Dixon, CA)

Here's a rundown on all that is going on at the show: 100+ pinball machines on FREE PLAY, pinball parts, memorabilia and games for sale, win a take home a pinball machine - drawings on Saturday & Sunday, fun adult & kids tournaments, a big silent auction on Saturday, outdoor flea market on Saturday, Sunday Pinball School & Pinball Clinic, "Back in Time" Sunday tour with Larry Z. of the Pacific Pinball Museum, new food menu hosted by the Dixon Teen Center, RV parking on the premises at PaGG ViLLaGE.

This show is great fun for the whole family and we hope to see you there! Visit our site for more details.

[Too Many Games 12](#)

Friday, June 15 5:00 – 7:00 PM; Saturday, June 16 10:00 – 7:00 PM; Sunday, June 17 10:00 – 5:00 PM (Oaks, PA)

TooManyGames is the mid-Atlantic's largest all-encompassing gaming event! If you're any kind of gamer, whether it's console games, handheld games, tabletop games, board games, PC games, arcade games, mobile games or anything else, this is YOUR annual gaming event!

TooManyGames 2012 will be held at the Greater Philadelphia Expo Center in Oaks, Pennsylvania. Once again we'll be filling over 60,000 square feet with our special brand of gaming awesomeness!

We are still offering the most entertainment for your gaming dollars! We offer single-day passes for folks who are looking to just come for a day of excitement with their fellow gamers, but we also offer several options for three-day

passes, each of which has their own perks and bonuses! Check out our website for more info.

[Cleveland's Classic Console & Arcade Gaming Show](#)

Saturday June 23 12:00 PM - 8:00 PM (Fairview Park, OH)

Here at Cleveland's Classic Console & Arcade Gaming Show you will find all games from past to present with an emphasis on the classics, when gaming was at its best. Explore a wide variety of vendors and collectors, games, systems, and accessories in the large main hall.

Play some awesome vintage arcade games in the FREE PLAY Mini Arcade. Challenge yourself in one of the console tournament events for a chance at some amazing prizes. Our legendary Chinese Auction offers many rare, valuable, and unique prizes not to be missed. See CCAGShow.com site for updates.

Tournament Games so far: XBOX 360 - Soul Calibur V, Arcade – Robotron, Super Nintendo - Starfox

The show is being held at the American Legion Hall--Clifton Post in Fairview Park, OH. Admission is only \$3.00, and kids age 12 and under are admitted free. All vendors and attendees will receive 3 Chinese Auction coupons. Hope to see you all there!

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.



The Business Of Gaming

by Jonathan H. Davidson



Good Ol' 1982

Welcome to my new column, the Business of Gaming. Long-time readers of RTM may remember my previous series, “Old Wine in New Bottles”. In this column, I am going to take a completely different approach to writing about retrogaming. Instead of looking at individual games or even specific systems, I am going to look at the overall state of the industry as portrayed in the contemporary business press. This series will cover consoles, home computers, and even arcade games. I anticipate that each column will cover a different year, beginning with 1982.

Introduction

There were certainly video game systems on the market before 1982; both the Atari 2600 and the Intellivision were well established, and early entrants such as RCA and Fairchild had already abandoned the market. That said, by 1982 video games were definitely mainstream; about one in seven American homes had a video game console.

Estimates of the total size of the video game market in 1982 varied wildly; one source reported that retail sales of consoles and cartridges will come to \$3.8 billion, with a slightly more conservative estimate stating that the video game market may reach (only) \$2 billion in sales for the year.

Some industry analysts were starting to show concern, however, as the market became more saturated. In November, Fortune magazine asked, “can the home video game boom continue much longer?” noting that “softening prices last summer and an advertising blitz this fall are raising speculation that there's trouble ahead for game makers.”. Another industry insider was even blunter, stating that “you've got a bloodbath coming in cartridges” as prices continue to fall and profit margins shrink.

Commenting on the rapid proliferation of companies and titles, one writer noted that “cartridge makers are offering some 180 titles this Christmas, giving rise to the theory that a two-tier market is forming, with a hit parade at the top and a confusing abundance of also-rans in the basement”.

Consoles

In 1982, Atari was the clear industry leader with roughly a 65% market share for video game consoles, and an estimated 60% share for cartridges. Sales figures for that year are not available, but in 1981 Atari had made \$740 million from the sale of video game hardware and cartridges. While modern gamers tend to (rightly) disparage the 2600 version of Pac-Man, it was noted that game alone could gross \$200 million sales in 1982.

The Mattel Intellivision was in solid second-place in the marketplace behind Atari, with an estimated 20% market share for consoles. It originally retailed for up to \$250, roughly \$100 more than the VCS, but, in August, the manufacturer began offering a \$50 rebate to purchasers. At Mattel, video games contributed 24% to sales and 50% to profits.

Home Computers

The home computer market was much more chaotic than that of console games, with many more small players competing in the marketplace. Only a few of those companies received any significant media coverage. Surprisingly, except for Commodore, most home computer companies discouraged game development because they felt that games “cheapen the images of their more sophisticated computers”.

Commodore had sold some 129,000 microcomputers in the United States by June 1982, but this still placed it far behind its competitors Apple and Tandy, who had each sold more than twice as many units. Atari had a 40% share of the home computer market.

The \$149.95 Sinclair ZX81 was launched in the U.S. by mail order in October 1981. By May 1982, total sales were over 50,000 units, and they were being sold at the brisk rate of 15,000 units per month.

Management restructuring at Texas Instruments consequently lead to a new approach to marketing its home computer, which was just one small segment of its overall product line. There was a significant price drop, and it started selling through general retailers instead of computer shops, “where the product had gathered dust”. Shipments were estimated to surpass 200,000 units in 1982.



Arcade Games

The arcade game industry experienced a decline in 1982, especially as compared to the peak in 1981 “when players put \$7 billion worth of quarters into arcade game machines”.

Bally Midway was the clear leader with a 50% market share, up from an estimated 35% in 1981. Atari held another 25% of the arcade game market, but its sales were starting to stagnate.

In a presumed attempt to forestall its competition, home video game producer CBS licensed the next four years of Bally Manufacturing's arcade games for conversion to the home screen.

Rumours and Trivia

In February 1982, Radio Shack announced the \$4,999 Model 16, the first personal computer to use the 68000 microprocessor. It was reported that “the Apple IV, not yet introduced, is also expected to use it”.

Quaker Oats subsidiary U.S. Games shipped its first game cartridge in May 1982, and it optimistically planned a new release every month. The company subsequently announced a line of games “to gather such neglected players as very young children, girls, and mothers around the tube”. Unfortunately, no specific titles or other details were presented.

Also in May 1982, President Randolph P. Barton of Parker Brothers told Business Week that “The video [game] business as we know it won't ever be replaced by the computer”.



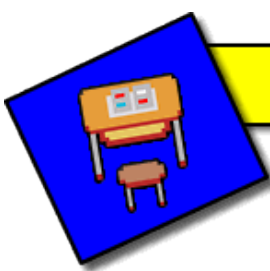
By June 1982, nearly 200 public libraries had installed coin-op computers and they were charging from \$2 to \$6 per

hour for use. It was expected that the hardware will eventually be installed in hotels and airports too.

In November 1982, Perry Odak, President of Atari's consumer products division, promised that “a console and programs designed especially for people over 45 [years old]” would be coming next year. He alluded to another project that would appeal specifically to female gamers, but he was not forthcoming about the details.

Sources

I have reviewed all of the issues of the American magazines Business Week and Fortune for 1982. Neither of these titles is available online – they can, however, be found at most major academic and public libraries on microfiche. If someone needs a citation or reference, please contact me for the details.



Retro Collecting 101

by Jeff Wittenhagen



Is There A Such Thing As Too Many Games?

This is a topic that I have recently been talking about with fellow collectors over at the NintendoAge forums and it is one that avid collectors of all hobbies are asked every day. When is too much, too much or is that even possible? I have my own unique perspective on this subject as I tend to over analyze just about everything I do in life. So is there really a such thing as too many games?

The simple answer to the overlying question of the month is no, as long as it doesn't interfere with other aspects of your life. That being said, I have known people whose hobbies have gotten so out of control that it has put a strain on not only their budget but their families and relationships as well. Some people just need to be reminded that it is just a hobby and not everything there is to do in life. That is where it comes to an individual's tolerance which in turn means there is no set number of games that would be right for everyone. My current collection has gotten to the point that I will likely never be able to play and complete every game. I use that as a reason to hunt for the games, that are left for me to get, more intelligently and look for the best deals for the cheapest price.



Maybe Too Many Games?

As a collector, there are a multitude of ways that you could go about increasing your video gaming stash. Normal means such as want ads, flea markets, game stores still exist, however with the rise of internet marketplaces it has become much easier to get your hands on games that you may have never even come across. This has allowed many people who wouldn't have normally been collectors to amass large collections very quickly. Some get buyers remorse, others turn them for profit which has caused retro games to steadily climb in price and value. It is the dawning of a new age and a great time to be a game collector. How I see it is that this steady increase is only good for the business of retro game collecting as I'm going to still find deals where I can.

My Game Collection Years Ago

Unlike collecting something like precious memories or matchbooks, video games are much more than something to put on your shelf and display. Games are something that anyone and everyone can enjoy. The multitude of games, systems, genres, and accessories that go along with gaming is astounding and no two collectors or gamers are exactly the same. For example, I mostly enjoy playing platform games like Super Mario Bros, Action RPG games like Legend of Zelda, and top-down shooters like Super Star Soldier, however I still like many other games in just about every genre. Other people prefer First Person Shooters such as Doom and Halo along with sport simulation games and can't stand playing anything else. Some people make it their goal to collect every game in box, others just get the game by itself and put their games in custom boxes. This means everyone can find their niche and drive for game collecting and each person will have their own set number in the head. My recommendation though is just to not overdo it. So what are your thoughts on this subject? Post in the comments below.



My Collection From Years Ago



Apple II Incider

by Donald Lee



Apple II's 35th Birthday / Visicalc

After going on a bit of writing spree the past few months, I hit a bit of a slump this month. Between some of my sports activities and a new found love for using iMovie, I didn't have much motivation for playing any games (PC or otherwise). Without any games to look at, I'm going to talk about a couple of other things.

First, Time (or Time.com) had several articles on the 35th birthday of the Apple II computer line. I wrote about the 30th birthday of the Apple II in RTM so I won't rehash my thoughts. However, in thinking of the Apple II, it's hard to believe that 35 years later, there are STILL people who use some variation of the Apple II (if not the original model released back in 1977).



With the mention of the Apple II's 35th birthday, let me share something I tried several years back. As many historians know, Visicalc was released several years after the release of the Apple II and took its place in history as the first productivity program for personal computers.

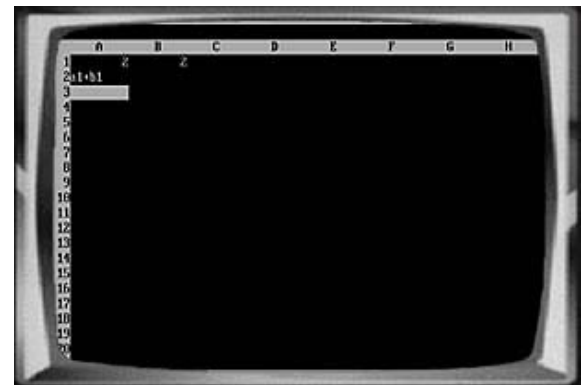
As someone who likes history (why else would I write for RTM about retro games???) I thought it would be fun to see if I could download Visicalc and give it a spin. Unfortunately, I couldn't find an Apple II version to download. But the original authors have the PC version available here:

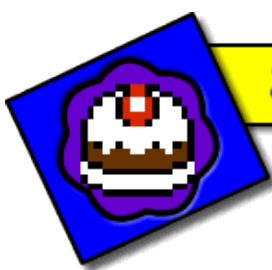
<http://www.bricklin.com/history/vcexecutable.htm>

I don't remember the results of my experiment then. However, as I have a PC emulator on my iMac (Boxer), I downloaded the PC version of Visicalc and gave it a spin a moment ago. I didn't know all the keyboard commands, but I could imagine someone using Visicalc today to do some work.

It might not have all the fancy features of Excel but it still works. Like some people who stick with applications from the 1980's, some people could use Visicalc for work today. For all of us who write for RTM, we are in a great position. We are able to enjoy the technology that exists today but also appreciate what has come before.

See you next month!





30th Birthday Bash

by Mark Sabbatini



ZX Spectrum: The World's Most Emotional Computer Turns 30

If Americans embraced evil, the Brits embraced crazy.

The world's most-emotional computer of the Golden Era, Sinclair's ZX Spectrum, turned 30 a couple of weeks ago. No other jumble of emotionless silicon before it – and few since – got the world to channel its inner lunatic so heartily. It was the constantly unfaithful girlfriend you couldn't leave, the restaurant attracting flocks of tourists because of the profanely abusive staff, the dream car you couldn't give up despite it constantly breaking down when you needed it most.

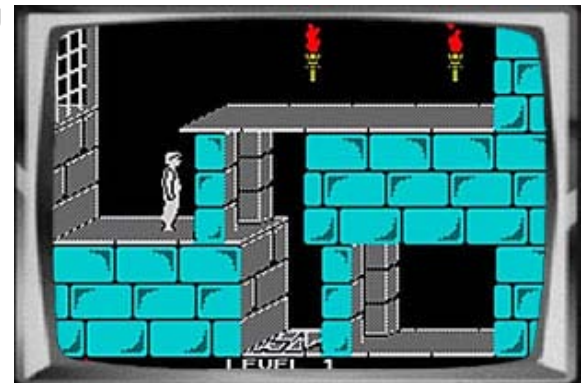


This might seem like too much recognition for those in the U.S., where the Commodore 64 was the undisputed king thanks to the tyrannical and predatory Jack Tramiel (who died in early April, may his soul rest in peace regardless of his exploits). But the Speccy is something akin to futbol (which us Euro Socialists properly call football) in being a quirky and huge presence everywhere but the Bland of the Free.

Besides, it's a landmark birthday bash with an open bar. No reason not to indulge in the finest the host has to offer. You might say your personal fav's fare is of unsurpassed quality, but consider the Speccy has a 23,000-program buffet, which blows away the Commodore 64 and every other competitor. Such was (and is) the passion of users who are seemingly regarded more as cultists than hackers.

(Two paragraphs for those in the know: This is NOT another Spectrum best-of retrospective extolling the wonders of Jet Set Willy, The Hobbit, Sabre Wulf and so on. Those games, bluntly, aren't among the 10 best any longer, if only because a few of the many imitators did fulfill the requisite boast of improving on the original. Equally important, programmers have been busy cranking out new titles to this day which benefit from three decades of accumulated knowledge about maxing the Speccy's wimpy abilities. Not disputing the classics still stay at the top in terms of historical context, but even newbies probably know about them and the idea is suggesting stuff that impresses beyond their experiences to date.

Also, lest anyone think my often blunt works are because I'm still clutching my American-bred hardware, I've been one of the Speccy cultists since the mid 1990s. It was the first emulated machine I encountered, thanks to a free CD-ROM packaged with a Mac magazine. Included on the CD was a "test-drive" program called The Lords of Midnight which, for obvious reasons soon to be detailed to the uninitiated, I played far longer than the 500 Mac shareware/freeware programs on the disc combined. The MacBook I'm writing this on now has three Speccy emulators and every software title locatable on the 'net, plus I'm carrying an iPhone with several hundred games running on four more emulators.)



The Speccy was a poorly made, oddly behaved and technically inferior pipsqueak of a machine. It was sold by people who cut way more than corners to save costs, took months to ship orders to loyal customers and constantly insisted everything was going great as their company went up in flames. They were hardly the only or most egregious example in Britain's computer industry, perhaps due to a national perverse pleasure in abusive indignities thanks to lifetime of eating beans on toast for breakfast and obsessing about follies of

the royal family.

I won't get into the whole sordid history of heroes and villains, but here's a list of thing to Google (along with the word "Sinclair"): microdrive, Imagine software, The Great Space Race, Lenslok, World Cup Carnival, Stuart Campbell, attribute clash and clones.

Yet during the 30th anniversary all the British press, along with muckrakers in plenty of other countries, ran an avalanche of doting retrospectives. Original designers and programmers reunited to share memories and how it's influenced their becoming an important presence in everything from the games developer Rare to Google (which featured a Speccy-themed Doodle on its U.K. page for the occasion). Observations like "probably the single most important factor in the creation of the IT industry in the U.K." and "This is where the U.K. games industry came from" were commonplace.

It's easy to make fun of the cultists, but what they wring from those meager circuits amazes on a level with the best Atari 2600 homebrewers. There's a reasonably playable version of Doom (the lowest horsepower machine able to make the claim), which makes conversions of games like Prince of Persia seem rather humble even though they're more playable.

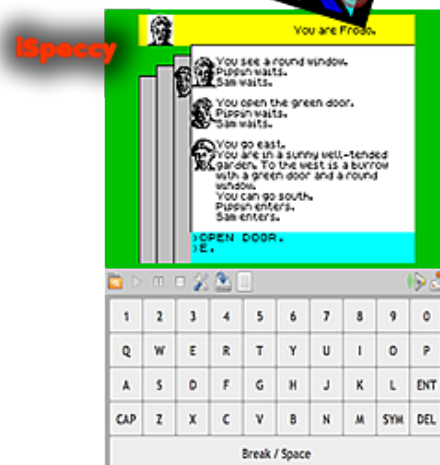
There's enough retrospective columns summarizing the basics of the Speccy and its greatest hits, so instead I'm offering a bite-size appetizer of notable anniversary releases and a few good (mostly alternative) starter titles to whet palates. And at the end I offer a quick peek at what many in the U.K. are hailing as the "next Spectrum" – a full-fledged computer costing less than a couple of pizzas.

Emulators

I've mentioned and reviewed a number of Spectrum emulators in previous RTM columns, so I'm just mentioning one released for the 30th anniversary and couple of often-overlooked but potentially invaluable alternatives. Elite Systems, whose Elite Collection package is generally considered the best of the iPhone/iPod emulators, released a "100 Greatest Hits" app on the 30th anniversary which is almost certainly the best buy for casual gamers wanting to get their feet wet. It costs \$8.99 and includes hallmark titles like Manic Miner, the first two Jet Set Willy titles, Chuckie Egg, Skool Daze and a bunch more including fighting, racing, shooting, and soccer games. There's definitely some great titles in Elite's full collection you'll miss, but acquiring all of what's about a 200-game collection cost me far more than the anniversary package.

A more interesting option for, oddly enough, both the newest and most experienced Spectrum gamers is Spectaculator by Jonathan Needle, which has a relatively paltry three dozen games available in the iOS version (there's also a Windows version). But the range of games is broader (including text adventures and proper RPGs, which are inexplicably absent in the Elite emulators, although Knight Lore and similar 3D isometric games are plentiful) and I increasingly find myself preferring it for at least three reasons: 1) The included games generally aren't the clichéd best-of titles like Jet Set Willy, yet are highly entertaining; 2) you can enter POKE cheat/modification codes, with the app providing the more useful ones through a tips option; and 3) best of all, it's possible to add your own games if you know how to use iPhone Explorer or another computer program that can transfer files to your iOS device. It takes a couple of minutes to configure each title, so doing a drag-and-drop of a thousand titles isn't going to happen, but I'm actually happier being able to load two or three games I'll actually concentrate on and play though at a time instead of being overwhelmed by volume.

The final emulator I'll mention is an incredibly impressive effort that is free, has by far the largest library, runs on almost any platform able to access the internet – and yet may be largely useless. iSpeccy is an emulator written in Javascript,



which by itself blows me away (and, I would think, anyone who's programmed in it and is familiar with its limitations). The interface is simple, but complete and powerful including features like entering POKes and an on-screen keyboard for those using mobile devices (and it may be necessary sometimes on desktop computers, since key response is a bit flaky). The library obviously doesn't include all 23,000 Spectrum titles, but I have yet to search for a major or minor commercial title that I couldn't find. So that's the (very) good. The bad? The small things are you need to be online to load titles and perform most other operations, and there's no way to save your progress. The big problem is the emulator is extremely slow, too much so for action games to be enjoyable unless it's one of those where "select difficulty" can result in unplayably high speeds on a real machine. Adventure, strategy and other non-twitch genres are a better bet, but even some of those (i.e. The Hobbit) that are maddeningly slow loading graphs on a regular Speccy won't be playable here. Also, the previously mentioned lack of saving games will be a real bummer. A fantastic novelty, but it takes a lot of patience and exploring to get real use out of the program.

Now for a few individual games:

The Lords of Midnight

There's more entertainment value in this epic legend than most modern quests. Just the novella in the *manual* is more entertaining than a lot of the adventures I played in the eight-bit era. It's one of the few widely acclaimed "classics" I'm mentioning here because I still can't wrap my head around the scale of its achievement at the time of release (the "first exposure to the Spectrum" thing also adds some personal bias). Most people probably know the vital stats: 4,000 locations with first-person views in eight directions for all of them (critical for everything from scouting/mapping the landscape to managing forces in battle); becoming any of up to 32 player characters (you start with four and recruit more), moving and seeing exclusively through their eyes; playing it as an adventure and/or strategic war game; and – vitally important and neglected in too many games – a deep and intriguing storyline (yes, it's inspired by The Lord of the Rings, but people still keep finding captivating ways to retell Romeo and Juliet as well). The sequel, Doomdark's Revenge, is even bigger and more complex, but there's a lot of controversy about whether it's an improvement or a confusing mess due to various gameplay changes. There's all kinds of options beyond Speccy emulators for playing these since they've been ported to everything from the Commodore 64 to modern operating systems (the source code is freely available). There's also additional professional and fan sequels, game editors and other stuff including novels for those freaks who actually step away from their computers for more than food, sleep and bathroom breaks. Probably the best website of many to use as a hub for all things LOM is www.icemark.com.



Dynamite Dan II

There's no way to pick the best Speccy platform game – and this probably isn't in the top 10 – because there's far too many, to the point there's an abundance of titles in various subgenres. So I'm just picking one high-quality game from the "lost in the pack" jumble (would any newbie discern this from the also-great Technician Ted or a few hundred similar choices?), with the additional oddity of picking a sequel because they're seldom what sticks in the mind when it comes to the classics. The original Dynamite Dan was voted one Speccy magazine's platform game of the year in 1985, but the sequel is a considerably better and more playable game (the improved controls alone made all the difference for me) that won the same award the following year. The 200-screen game is divided into eight island areas, with a bizarre mission for those who choose to accept it. The evil Dr. Blitzen is trying to take over the world by putting subliminal messages in popular albums. Dynamite Dan has to find a record and a jukebox to play it on each island, which reveals a password. Getting all eight passwords allows you to enter and destroy the manufacturing plant. No single element is the best you'll see of the genre, but the total package scores big with me. Controls, which as mentioned before are problematic on the original DD as well as many other games, are responsive and seldom send Dan to a doom you feel isn't of your making. The graphics are novel, lively and far more colorful than most while avoiding the dreaded attribute clash. The ability explore plenty of screens is liberating, unlike classics like JSW where it may take forever to get past the first few. Even the sound and background music, generally among the



things I dislike about Speccy games, are nicely done. It's definitely a tough game and I ultimately used a near-invincible cheat (I can't die except by falling off the bottom of the screen), which greatly reduced the stress while still imposing a decent challenge. Not a lot of newcomers will take the time to wander through hundreds of titles in search gems, but this is a great example of why doing so can be worthwhile.

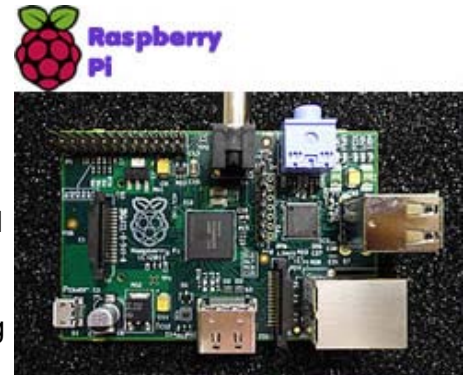
Doom

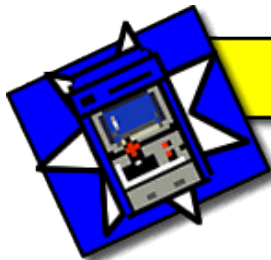
You are, of course, thinking this is insane and perhaps a joke. Yes and no, as the saying goes. It's a real program released a few years ago by some Russian hackers that's more fascinating than entertaining, but still manages to keep its feet in terms of legit gameplay. It requires one of the latter-model 128K Spectrums, which shouldn't be a thing for emulators these days. Not only is a playable 3D engine squeezed into that memory, but the entire game as well since loading levels one at a time from a disk wasn't a realistic option. Obviously a lot got tossed over the side. The graphics, while good by Spectrum standards, will be hideously ugly and primitive to most gamers familiar with even the most humble official versions. The action is fast enough, but the animation is choppy. There's not much sense of aiming when shooting (just make sure creatures are basically in front of you) and anything but a direct from assault from baddies is nearly impossible to anticipate. Fans of the real thing will doubtlessly find plenty of other things to gripe about, but let's talk about what works. The thrill of exploring and seeing what is behind closed doors is intact. The techobeat music is amazing, enhancing the game by building up tension and avoiding monotony by combining loops in various ways. The full range of menu options is there, including difficulty levels and adjustable displays. The monochrome option might sound absurd, but actually offers better detail and less confusion. It's intriguing to think what the reception for this might have been back in 1984, although my guess is it would be considered a monstrous feat of programming that couldn't quite match the gameplay of the best titles because it was trying to bite off more than it could chew. By the way, FPS fanatics wondering what they might have been addicted to back in the Speccy era might try one of the 3D isomeric-view classics for the machine such as Ant Attack, which offered plenty of tension and gore despite the usually drab (to modern eyes) monochrome graphics.



The 'Next Spectrum'

A full-fledged computer that can play Quake III deathmatches and perform 90 percent of what most people do with their machines for \$25? Yup. Say hello to the Raspberry Pi, which most of all reminds me of the very first microcomputers sold to consumers during the mid 1970s that consisted merely of an exposed circuit board you had to add your own accessories to. In the Raspberry's case you'll need a monitor, keyboard, SD card to store the Linux operating system and programs, and other various tidbits. It's hardly a modern powerhouse, with a 700 MHz ARM processor and 256 MB of RAM, but that's plenty for Web surfing, word processing and other practical applications, plus oh so many games. I'd highly advise springing for the "deluxe" model at \$35, which gets you an extra USB hub (two instead of one), built-in Ethernet and a higher power load rating (more important than many realize when plugging those accessories in). The British geek scribes have been going nuts about it and I fully channel their enthusiasm. I'm waiting a bit to make sure any initial bugs are worked out and a decent user support structure is in place (although a highly lively group of users is thriving rapidly). Everything and anything you want to know about the "next Spectrum" is at www.raspberrypi.org.





MAME Reviews

by Mark Sabbatini



Snap Jack

If Pac-Man had a drunken tryst with a drunk female truck driver, this might be the result.

I've mused before about the big-headed yellow guy having more one-night stands than Wilt Chamberlin claims to, resulting in a multitude of bastardized offspring mostly dragging down decent video game society. Still, some of more eccentric fruits of his proclivities have bootstrapped themselves into positive contributors, or at least have a "look at the funny homeless guy scaring people by pretending to be a shrub" charm.

Snap Jack is a 1981 coin-op by Universal that's the result of a boinkfest with Scramble and, maybe, a three-way with Moon Patrol. Considering Universal is the company that released games like Lady Bug and Mr. Do! at around the same time, it's a bit amazing Snap Jack has a most-rare rating of one out of 100 on the Killer List of Video Games scale.

Gameplay fundamentals are easy to describe: Eat dots and avoid enemies while moving across a continuously scrolling horizontal landscape. But the presentation, enemies and various challenges are very diverse – and very weird. It's a game definitely worth playing long enough to get familiar with it, although I'm having trouble seeing a lot of people embracing it as a long-term diversion like Universal's biggest hits.

I actually heard about this game back when it was in the arcades, somewhat strangely as something sought out by women. One high-profile woman, anyhow, as it was her coin-op of choice for a video game player of the year competition among the higher-ups at Creative Computing magazine (archived at www.atarimagazines.com/cva/v1n2/gamsterofyear.php). The magazine's offspring publication Video & Arcade Games lists the highest claimed score in its Spring 1983 issue as 112,790 points achieved by John Anderson of Morristown, N.J., if you're looking for some kind of extra goal.

Snap Jack got a seemingly decent review in the March 1982 issue of Computer+Video Games, although the only actually words of praise in the mostly descriptive text was "marvelous graphics." It also implied Snap Jack was difficult, with the reviewer needing all of the lives the generously set machine offered to reach the end of the first wave.

Also, in a clear demonstration to never quote Wikipedia without checking the original source, the gang-bang encyclopedia's entry on "Shoot 'Em Up" games lists Snap Jack among the notable releases of the year in that genre alongside "equals" such as Defender, Tempest and Galaga. The rankest idiot would know Snap Jack isn't a shooter – even during a power outage – just by looking at the controls, a single four-direction joystick. Of course, that's assuming a person can find one, which back then might have required the IQ of Sharon Stone (154, seriously, although she's surpassed by Rocky IV opponent Dolph Lundgren with 160).

The demo mode adequately shows 95 percent of the game's simple objective: Cross the terrain in a vehicle (which looks more like a giant, squarish and flat mouth with an eyeball) eating dots, avoiding things coming at you mostly from



behind and, if you eat 20 dots, eating a power pill that appears so you go after baddies in sort of a mazeless Pac-Man fashion. Then again, driving is a simple concept: move, stop, turn. It's the variables that make things complex.

Your vehicle, for instance, isn't just a hug-the-road cruiser, or even one of those Newt-does-NASA moon buggies that can jump. Instead the body is apparently attached to the wheels on a hydraulic lift, since you can move vertically on the screen as well as at various horizontal speeds. Practically, this just means you have maneuverability similar to Scramble, since enemies can't take you out at the legs.

Among the main baddies are something called Medusa Jacks, although I'm not entire sure which of the many weird beings they are, nor how to completely explain in mere words the others. To say one of the enemies frequently chasing you from behind looks like radioactive sperm is accurate, for instance, but also an indicator this whole sexcapade analogy is getting out of hand. There's a cable car line across the top of the screen, but instead of passenger cars it transports things like boots and teakettles, stacking more of them vertically as the game progresses. You'll also eventually encounter bouncing barrels (if you're wondering where all the ones departing the Donkey Kong screen went...), fish (despite the lack of water), flaming meteorites and other normal pitfalls of L.A. traffic.

When you eat a power pellet the landscape stops scrolling and all the foes vanish except for a select few left behind as prey who dash about the screen. Your rather squashed self instantly bulks up to a Pac-like roundness, the legs beneath vanish, and you can move in all four directions in pursuit of enemies. You can Jack-up by eating all the flashing "E-X-T-R-A" letters (hmmm...seems like something I've seen in other Universal games, although I have an easier time achieving it here), although it doesn't have to be all on one power pellet as the game keeps track of the letters you've consumed.

There's three distinct stages during each wave. The first is a hilly but relatively flat landscape where the only real challenge is avoiding bad guys. The second is a series of caverns and tunnels that seriously ramps up the difficulty, since it's also where those barrels and some of the more fearsome creatures come at you (from the right, making them much harder to evade quickly than the regular foes still pursuing from behind). The final stage is a short and rather easy "boss" challenge where you "jump" trampoline-style boxes until you clear some not-too-menacing dragons guarding the end of the level.

Snap Jack has some appeal for both players and arcade operators, since it's possible for even beginning players to make decent progress while feeling deaths are usually self imposed. Yet everything move quickly enough that the modestly challenging task of completing a few waves doesn't last that long. There's no continue option, something video game companies were beginning to realize the advantage of about that time, denying the player the ability to see undiscovered territory quickly and operators the profits from the resulting series of shorter games.

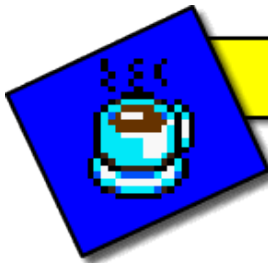
The only manuals I can find on the internet are in German and I don't trust Google Translate enough to rely on it for technical specs. But it's easy enough to figure out the DIP switches, obviously the most important part for MAME players. There's four difficulty levels and starting with two to five vehicles. This is one of those games where's there's no shame on setting everything at the easiest level and doing constant saves when making progress without losing men, since seeing what new elements are thrown at you outweighs the likelihood you'll be addicted enough to play it long enough to discover them legitimately.

Not surprisingly, Snap Jack's presence in the home market is essentially non-existent. But oddly, an unlicensed replica called Wheelin' Wallie was released for the Commodore 64 by an obscure U.K. company. The literal few internet commenters who remember it have generally favorable opinions, although the screenshot looks rather mediocre for a C64 title (not unusual in the U.K., where cranking out games quickly to be sold at cheap prices was the norm).

Snap Jack has one other bit of modern infamy in that, while a failure in the '80s arcades, it still merited inclusion as an available title for the UltraCade, a series of full-size uprights with customizable multi-platform emulators (Snap Jack was part of an add-on chip featuring Universal's games from the era). Released in 2000, the UltraCade had a fledgling



existence and in 2009 a grand jury indicted company founder David Foley on 35 counts, claiming he sold counterfeit game packs for the machine. An outstanding write-up of the company's history is at www.gamasutra.com/php-bin/news_index.php?story=24691.



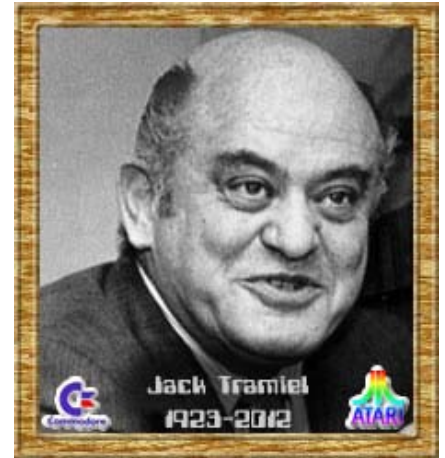
Commodore Du Jour

by Marc Douglas



Jack Tramiel & Breach

Welcome back, everyone. Even though the weather is getting warmer, that still doesn't mean that we can't find time to hide from the sun and go back in time to the games of our youth. Before I begin, I would like to mention the passing of Idek Trzmiel, better known as Jack Tramiel, the founder of Commodore International who died of heart failure on April 8th, 2012 at the age of 83. Commodore International started as a typewriter repair company and as the years passed, it would branch out to calculators and then finally to personal computers with the two most famous being the Commodore 64 and then the Amiga. Though Jack had left the company in January 1984, before the release of the Amiga, his influence would be felt for years to come. Most people in our circles know that the Commodore 64 is the best selling personal computer of all time at near I believe 22 million units but that is an estimate. What some might not know is that he was at the helm when for the first time in history, a computer sold 1,000,000 units. That computer was, the Vic-20. I never owned a Vic until I started collected a few years ago, but I still remember the day I got my 64 back in 1983 and the many years of fun I had with it. I then went to a Commodore 128 and then finally to an Amiga 500 in 1988. Again, Jack was gone before the 128 and the Amiga, but it was because of him that Commodore was able to survive as long as it did. And Mr. Tramiel knew a thing or two about surviving as he was at the German prison camp of Auschwitz until it was liberated back in 1945.



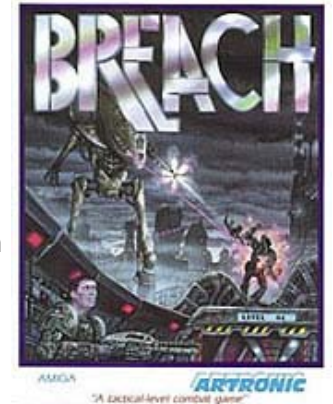
So I would just like to thank Mr. Tramiel for making a computer that my family could afford and that I would still be using almost 30 years later.

Breach

By Omnitrend Software

Now on to the review. I'm still on my Amiga kick so after playing the heck out of Star Fleet I, I decided to take my battles planet-side and go back to 1987 and spend a few days with Omnitrend Software's - Breach.

Breach was an early squad level strategy game that I could see being an influence on the more fondly remembered X-COM. In both games you control a squad in tactical combat against various alien creatures. X-COM was far more in-depth as you had to set up and maintain bases, do research and development to create new weapons and there was also an economic part to the game where you had to make sure that you could keep your X-COM bases funded. With Breach, the focus is on combat alone.



Before you can start blasting aliens, you must create a squad leader. Using the included utilities on the game disk, you'll have you SL created in a matter of minutes. He (or she) will become your on-screen persona as the success of the mission rests on your ability to keep your SL alive to see the mission through to its completion. At first, you'll use your SL as a support member of you squad as his skills are very low. Your leader and all of your squad members are ranked in three abilities, Accuracy (Shooting), Cracking (Gets you a map of the current floor level) and Detecting (Gets you the location of enemies on the current level).

As you successfully complete missions, your SL will gain stat increases depending on what they did during the mission. If you killed a lot of aliens, your accuracy goes up. If you used a crack unit, that stat will go up and so on.

You won't be going into combat alone. When the mission begins, you will have a squad at your disposal. There are four other types of marines that can be a part of your mission...

- Marauder - Very good with a gun
- Scout - Good at detecting
- Infiltrator - Give them your Crack (unit)
- Psionic Talent - Bad with a gun, but has a solid mental attack

Each marine carries a blaster to start the mission its strength depends on the character carrying it. The SL will always have the most powerful blaster.

After you choose the mission you'll be inserted at the drop point. You can get the mission objectives and the victory conditions by selecting it from the menu bar. Typical victory conditions range from prisoner rescue to data pack retrieval. There may also be a time limit and a certain kill percentage that your squad must obtain attached to the mission as well. After you have done that, you can pick up the supplies that will be placed on the ground. You can usually find grenades, a Cracking unit, first aid kits during your early missions. As you get deeper into the game, rocket launchers and demolition charges will become available. Each item has a different encumbrance rate which will affect how much you can carry and how far you can move per turn.

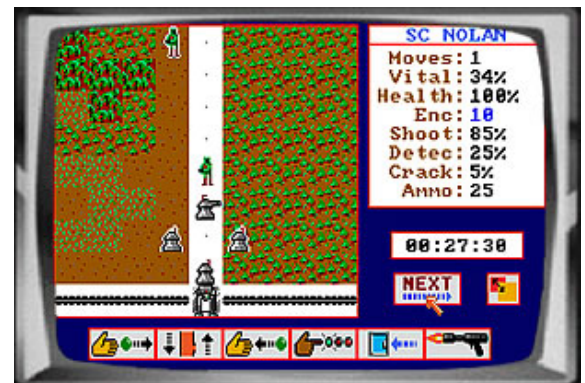


After you grab you gear, you will then enter the movement phase. Each member of your squad has a certain amount of movement points. Actions such as firing a gun, or throwing a grenade use various amounts of actions points, as does moving over different types of terrain. Moving over dirt uses less points than scrambling over solid rock. During your movement phase, you may encounter the enemy. There are six basic enemy types...

- Enemy Marines - Very much like your own and they have access to the same weapons as well
- Beasts - Round little buggers that sound like a lion when they attack
- Aliens - Green alligator-like creatures that use conventional weapons and they also have strong psionic abilities (The love to stun your troops halting their movement)
- Battle Robots - Can kill most marines with two hits
- Overlords - Darth Vader type creatures that use a vibroword/psionic combination. Very dangerous
- Autoguns - Non-moving Battle Robot

Your early missions you'll mostly face beasts and aliens. As you gain experience, you'll start seeing the more dangerous opponents. Those later missions will have you appreciating your victories as they will be harder to come by.

If the enemy is within range, you can fire your blaster at them. Each blast uses 3 movement points and one unit of ammo. Your blaster has 50 units. You can find ammo clips to reload and all blasters use the same type of ammo. If you want to conserve your ammo, you can throw a grenade at your target. It uses more MPs, but a grenade causes more damage. Just make sure that none of your squad is within the blast radius (two squares).



After you have complete your movement round, the enemy will have their turn. They will waste no time attacking you and all enemies are very smart. The beasts will quickly surround you while the aliens will use a deadly combination of psionic stun and grenade toss. Depending on how you left your squad at the end of your turn, you could possibly see most of them get wiped out at the end of the enemies first turn. Oh yes, your squad members have a limited amount of vitality and health. Health is your hit points and if they go to zero, you are dead. Vitality is more tricky, as it defines how many movement points you'll have per turn. The more you move and the more items you carry will have your vitality lessened and that can become a problem as the mission progresses. If you are lucky enough to survive a round of combat, you can then plan out the rest of your mission. You'll need to break up your squad and also make sure that

you don't have one member holding on to all the grenades or the first aid kits which are in short supply and you'll find yourself using them quickly if you don't plot your squad strategy ahead of time.

As you continue your mission, you'll find transport shafts that will drop you down or rise you up a level. You may get dropped down into a prison level where you'll have to rescue captured marines or at the higher levels, the Admiral of the entire space marines. Make sure to keep an eye on your victory conditions as you can easily lose track of your time limit when you are having fun blasting creatures left and right.

I'm going to give a quick overview of the graphics, sounds and what I liked and didn't like about Breach.

Graphics - Colorful, small yet detailed. This was an early Amiga release and you can tell that programmers were still learning what it could do. This is far from a showcase piece but you won't mistake this for a C-64 game. I like the explosion effects and the blaster beam is a nice bright blue. The rockets fly across the screen and you actually brace for impact.

Sounds - Nice use of digitized sounds. When the beasts attack you, they sound like the old MGM lion that would open the movies. Not only do explosions look nice, but they sound nice too. When a marine or alien is killed, they give out a hearty death scream that reminds one of the Wilhelm scream heard in countless movies. I have to admit, the coolest sound effect in the game and the main reason I bought this game back in 1988 was that when you opened a door, it made the same sound as the doors did when they opened on Star Trek TOS. I know, sad. Music unfortunately is non-existent but it isn't missed.

What I liked - This game got me hooked on squad sims and showed me that the Amiga could play some very detailed games. For the time, the graphics and sounds drew you into the game. It is very easy to jump into and the interface is very easy to grasp. There are six buttons at the bottom of the screen. From left to right they are - Drop, use shaft, pick up, use item, use door and, fire blaster. Seeing your Squad Leader rise through the ranks is fun and it motivates you to play just one more game. There is a scenario builder where you can create and share your own missions. I didn't cover this as I really need time to delve into it. But for 1987 this was a cool game element and it added life to the product. You could also import your squad leader into another Omnitrend game, Paladin which was basically Breach in a fantasy setting.

What I didn't like - The game has not aged well. Having to pick up all your equipment at the beginning of the mission is time consuming as your enemies are already equipped. Modern games allow you to equip your party before you send them into combat. You can only move in the four cardinal directions but to be fair, your enemies are limited by the same constraint. Also to turn you marine to face an enemy, you must hold down the shift key to change the direction you are facing. You also can't see enemy movement. One moment they are off the screen, the next, they are sticking a vibroblade into unpleasant places on your body. One big way Breach shows its age is the fact that you can scroll the map. This isn't a major concern as most game maps are small, but when you compare it to games of today, this is a pretty obvious omission that would not float today. One of my biggest peeves with the game and I remember thinking this back in 1988 was that you couldn't tell what the difficulty level was and there are five different levels, from beginner to the damn near impossible STAR level missions that only the most battle hardened Squad Leader can complete without going into the game and starting the mission. Again, this is not surprising as many early games were still working the kinks out so you wouldn't find them in later games.

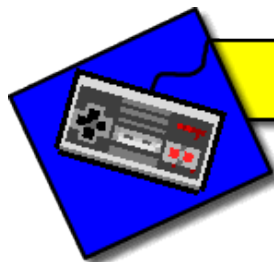
Overall, I didn't have the same nostalgia factor that I did when I played Star Fleet I. Sometimes you just have to realize that it isn't 1988 anymore.

Final Score



Breach Gets A 5.5





NES'cade

by David Lundin, Jr.



Chase H.Q.

Last year in an attempt to further expand the scope of NES'cade, itself an expansion of the older Tengen NES column, we began looking at Famicom arcade conversions that never made it over onto the NES. Many classic early arcade games were left out of the release profile for the NES simply due to the amount of time between their original release and when the NES took off in America. However not all these games are looked at as early industry defining masterpieces that simply didn't have their Famicom versions localized. Often converting a fairly recent arcade title to home hardware isn't exactly the best idea, especially as the bleeding edge of arcade technology advances much more rapidly than that of home consoles. This is one of the reasons that arcade conversions tend to be released early on in a console life span and a big reason why many early Famicom arcade conversions weren't brought over onto the NES. In the classic era, at the very release of a home console the gap between arcade technology and console technology is as small as it ever will be. As time moves on this gap widens as the key to arcade success is to provide something you can't get at home, something that will be worth pumping quarters into for a unique experience. Unless the game has an eternal classic branding, Pac-Man for instance, timing is everything for getting the game out of the arcade and into the home. It has to be fresh and current or at the very least timeless. Being fresh and current falls away when the gap gets too wide as the home consoles simply can't replicate the arcade experience as arcade technology grows by leaps and bounds. Occasionally a developer attempts to buck this trend and release a flashy, modern, current arcade game to the older home consoles where it simply cannot be recreated. One such blunder Taito published on the Famicom is Chase H.Q., an example of how you can take one of my favorite arcade games and strip away anything worthwhile.

Released to arcades in 1988 by Taito, Chase H.Q. was a unique blend of driving and action with a heavy amount of 1980's police cheese tossed in for good measure. The player assumes the role of police officer Tony Gibson, a member of the Chase Special Investigation Department, a task force specializing in high speed pursuit. Along with his partner, Detective Raymond Broady, he drives a modified Porsche 928 to chase down and arrest the most dangerous criminals in the nation. At the start of each stage Nancy, the Chase H.Q. dispatcher, will give a description of the suspect's vehicle as well as the crime they are wanted for. After that it's time to hit the streets. Gameplay is similar to OutRun in this respect as you must maneuver your car around civilian traffic to catch up to the suspect's vehicle. The suspect's vehicle is always moving down the road so slow driving or frequent crashes will allow them to escape. Additionally each stage has a fork in the road with the shorter route shown on screen via a large arrow. On some stages the Special Investigation Department helicopter will radio you the information on the shortest route and provide back up. However in all actuality their helicopter really just obscures more of the road on the horizon and adds to the challenge of the game. To give the officers an advantage their pursuit vehicle is equipped with a turbocharger which can be used three times per stage, activated by pressing a button on the side of the high / low gear shifter. The suspect's vehicle must be caught up to before time runs out or the game ends and the suspect will continue to gain distance while the continue option is displayed. Once the suspect is in view the timer resets, the game goes into apprehension mode and Raymond Broady will put the police light atop the car and turn on the siren. From this point forward the objective is to repeatedly ram the suspect's vehicle until it becomes so damaged that it cannot carry on. At that point, the arrest is made and remaining time is converted into bonus points.

The arcade game featured bright, big, vibrant, detailed visuals with fast movement and varying terrain. It had off-road sections, dark areas in tunnels, variances in road height that would make your car jump, cloud cover and changing skies - it was simply a very engaging game to look at. Nancy's pursuit dispatch at the beginning of each stage was fully voiced and sounded great. The same for Gibson and Broady who would make various comments throughout each drive. Nancy would chime in if you were lagging behind or when you caught up to the suspect and the helicopter would radio in with information when it arrived overhead. At the end of each stage each suspect would be told what they were under arrest for, again, fully voiced. The marquee featured special blue and red panels that had strobe lights behind

them, which would flash during the apprehension phase while the police siren sound wailed from the game cabinet. It was an experience, something unlike any other game at the time, something worth pumping quarters into.



One year later, Chase H.Q. would appear on the Famicom with minor gameplay upgrades and major disappointment. While visuals aren't everything in gaming, they definitely are a big part of Chase H.Q.'s appeal. The arcade version really got your adrenaline pumping with its flashy visuals and fast action. There are some great driving games on the NES with solid visuals and superb gameplay but Chase H.Q. on the Famicom falls well short in both regards. It's definitely no Rad Racer / Highway Star with messy graphics and uninspired terrain. Car control can be considered passable due to a few options the game provides. Steering can be toggled between two different settings that effect how quickly handling reacts to pressing the directional pad, with the fast setting being my preference. Additionally there is support for the Famicom version of Taito's Vaus controller that came bundled in with Arkanoid, a nice gesture for analog control even if unnecessary. The gearbox can actually be set to automatic on the home version but the driving isn't complex enough to warrant this, even for beginners. The turbo boost is engaged by pressing the Select button, which is a little awkward since it requires you to either take your thumb off the accelerator or the directional pad to press it. I almost would rather have Up on the directional pad engage the turbo boost and have Down on the directional pad toggle between gears.

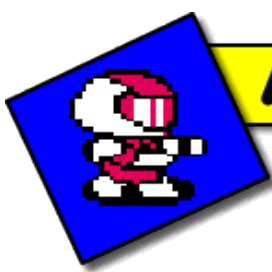
Along the way the road has the split routes just like in the arcade and an arrow will direct you to the shortest path. However the road split is nearly seizure inducing in its visual execution with how it flickers. Once a suspect vehicle is caught up to the siren sound effect plays although the police light is atop the car from the beginning. The suspect vehicle simply has a small arrow pointing to it as opposed to the big "CRIMINALS HERE!" arrow of the arcade version. In a slight change over the original, the suspect vehicle needs to be smashed to its frame before it is pulled over, rather than just being incapacitated. It's a little strange to see just a frame with an engine, tires, and seats pulled over in the end of stage cut scene. Gameplay enhancements come in the form of vehicle upgrades that can be purchased at the end of each stage. Points can be spent on upgrades that effect your car's acceleration, grip, top speed, turbo boost, and damage causing ability.

The problem with all of this is that the game is simply completely unenjoyable to play. The bland visuals don't help a game that is barely playable due to controls that can be considered decent at the very most. You'll often find yourself smashing into civilian cars and objects in the road because they popped out of flicker without any warning. The music and sound effects are completely forgettable, sometimes bordering on annoying. From start to finish it really just feels like the game is asking too much of the Famicom to be able to run smoothly and the whole thing ends up feeling broken. I will give the game some points for a decent attempt to replicate the "Push Start Button" screen of the officers getting into their car and the dispatch information sequences. Each suspect car is shown here with a scrolling display of the description, in Japanese of course. Nancy even gives her usual radio communication and while I don't understand much Japanese, the sound quality is pretty impressive and clear. I wonder if the developers spent more time getting this sound clip into the game then was spent on developing a competent arcade conversion.

It really is no surprise why Chase H.Q. was never released on the NES - it should have never been released on the Famicom! Maybe with a different developer and a different design approach something better resembling the arcade game could have been released on the NES hardware. However this simply isn't it. I love Chase H.Q. in the arcade as

it's a blast to play and is extremely rewarding and satisfying to run down the suspect vehicles and smash them into submission. The only satisfaction that can be had from the Famicom version is that it can be replaced with a more enjoyable game. The first really solid conversion of Chase H.Q. at home would come on the PCEngine / TurboGrafx-16, which is the version I recommend if you want to play a conversion of this game done right. "Let's go Mr. Driver!"

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



A Pixelated 21st Century

by Paul Zimmerman

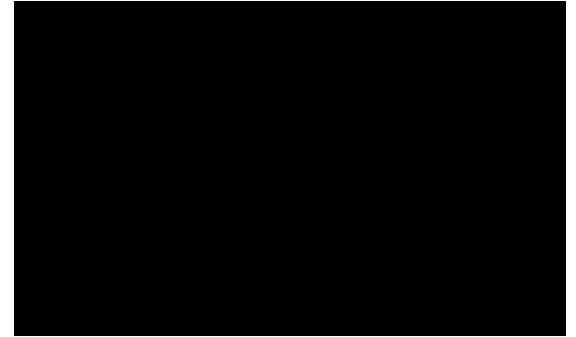


Hello Pixelated fans. "Pixelated Paul" is here to let you know about some of the retroware highlights for the month of April. Slow month, but at least there is a Virtual Console game! Enjoy!



3D Classics: Kid Icarus (Video to the right)

The 3D update of the NES classic, Kid Icarus! You play as Pit, with your trusty bow and arrow. Seek out the Three Sacred Treasures and then destroy Medusa. Save Angel Land and rescue the goddess Palutena. As hard as ever, even more beautiful. From the creators of Metroid.



Block Factory ([Click here to see a video of the game](#))

Create your own puzzle block game and share it with the world. Something unique for the puzzle block genre? Right on!

Chuck E. Cheese's Arcade Room ([Click here to see a video of the game](#))

Skee-Ball! Redeem virtual tickets for virtual prizes. Really?

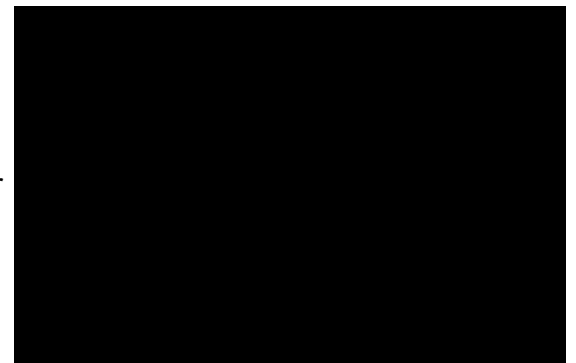
I Must Run! ([Click here to see a video of the game](#))

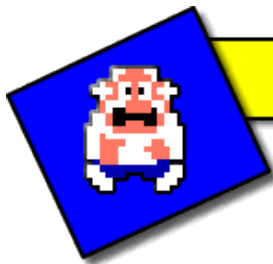
Skill-based action running game (aka a twitch game). I love twitch games.



Super Street Fighter 2: New Challengers (Genesis) (Video to the right)

Four new challengers – Cammy, Dee Jay, T. Hawk and Fei Long. Three new modes – Group Battle, Tournament Battle and Time Challenge. Plus, the classic game is updated with online play! Play your friends or anyone around the world.





Middle Aged Gamer

by Tom Zjaba



It's All In Your Mind

Welcome to the second installment of Middle Aged Gamer. This month, I am going to take a look at a mindset that most of us had back in the early days of gaming, but sadly like our parachute pants and feathered hair is long gone. That mindset when it came to gaming was the ability to be happy with less. You may not understand what I mean by this but listen for a moment and it will come back to you. If you were like I was as a kid, your first game system came with a few games when you received it. There was always the pack-in game and your parents usually bought you an additional game or two with it. Or you are really old like me and your first unit was a pong unit with no ability to add more games. Think back to when you first received that game and how much fun you had with the few games. You spent countless hours playing the same few games over and over. You were happy with less. Now look at your kids' video game collection. Whether it be a Wii with dozens of games, or an iPhone with hundreds of apps, or a computer with tons of games, you know they do not have that same mindset you had as a kid. Heck, you don't have it anymore. If you read this newsletter, the odds are you have more games than you will ever play in a lifetime. There are games sitting on your shelf, collecting dust that you bought in a bargain bin and probably never played. I know I have a few hundred apps on my iPad and I probably play a dozen or so with any regularity.

Try to remember back then when Donkey Kong or Pacman or Combat would entertain you for hours. It was a special time, one that will never come back. And by the looks of the newest generation of game players, one that is all but gone.

Here are some more ways to tell if you are a Middle Aged Gamer:



If you ever thought about calling off school with Pacman Fever.



If you remember the first video game flame war between the Atari 2600 and the Intellivision.



If you still dream about being on Starcade.



If you ever used graph paper to map out a game.

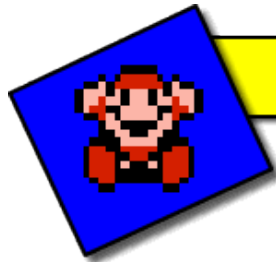


If you can remember the first time you saw Dragon's Lair.



If you know who Evil Otto is.

Tom Zjaba (Who is a Middle Aged Gamer and proud of it. Don't believe it, check out his two websites full of video game stuff – Tomorrow's Heroes (<http://tomheroes.com>) and Arcade After Dark (<http://arcadeafterdark.com>)).



Game Over

by Bryan Roppolo



So have you all pondered that question I asked back in the introduction? A life without Commodore? Well, I have and I have to say that if I were to predict how things would have went in the computer industry I would say that we would probably have had another player enter the market as there would have been more room, but chances are nowhere near as good as Commodore. My guess is that the computer price war still would have happened as that seemed to be where things were trending. However, I think that most of the companies would have bowed out of the market, leaving Atari as the main manufacturer. Would the price wars have been as intense as they were without Commodore? I'm not really sure, but my guess is that they would not have been which would have led to somewhat higher computer prices which would have kept them out of the reach of more families. This is all just a guess, but without Commodore there probably would not be a computer that had sold over 17 million units and changed the lives of so many people. Then again, without Jack Tramiel Atari might have went under as well!

I wish you all a good month of May and a great Memorial Day! Keep those grills grilling and games gaming!