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Retrogaming Times Monthly #111 - August 2013 Pizza Edition



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Press Fire To Begin

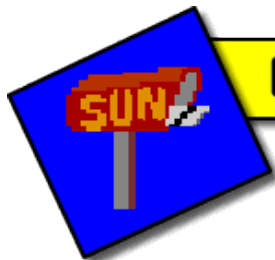
by Bryan Roppolo



It's the pizza edition of RTM! When it came time to do the August issue I knew we had to do something yummy, so I figured why not put together a pizza edition of RTM? Well, here's the final product, topped with your favorite retro gaming articles. I was hoping we would get some Samurai Pizza Cats, Yo! Noid, or TMNT articles, but instead those that submitted pizza articles went a different route, bringing attention to some more obscure games dealing with everyone's favorite party food.

I personally have played TMNT I & II and Yo! Noid on the NES as well as an interesting game called Skunny Save Out Pizza's (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iV6Qo2KTo6Q>). Skunny was made by Copysoft which was an appropriate name considering that the Skunny series was very similar to Super Mario Bros. I mean, they even made a game called Skunny Kart (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j0JzpjIleEQ>). It took me a while to remember what this series was called, as it's been a while since I've played any Skunny games, but I'm definitely going to be checking out the rest of games in the series. Even though they aren't anything special (just ripoffs of Super Mario games), the music is pretty darn good (at least in Skunny Kart).

Anyway, hope you came hungry, as we are offering some good retro cooking in this issue!



Retrogaming News

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Upcoming New Releases from Revival Studios

August:

VIDEOPAC / ODYSSEY2: Down! (cartridge)

SINCLAIR ZX-81: Boxing Champ (tape)

COMMODORE PET: Boxing Champ (tape)

September

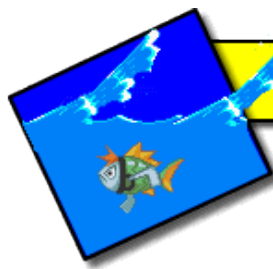
COLECOVISION: TBA Q3 (cartridge)

MSX / MSX2: TBA Q3 (cartridge)

SEGA SG-1000 / SC-3000: TBA Q3 (cartridge)

They put out some very good stuff, so be sure to check out these new releases once available!

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.



After The Floods

by Nick DeMarco



Saving 41 NES Games From Certain Death

As you all learned in the last issue of RTM, I run a small business of selling retro video games and systems at a flea market on Saturdays and Sundays. It has quickly become a passion of mine, and with it my love of video games, as great as it was, has seemingly grown even more. Like a lot of people who sell items at this flea market, I look forward to the weekends, and spend as much time as I can trying to find some great items for my shop, whether it be during the week, or that weekend. I bring in new stock, then start fresh looking for something new. I frequent flea markets and yard sales, just to see what I can find. Sometimes I luck out, sometimes I don't but the thrill of the chase is so much fun, I enjoy myself either way.

Now then, a time out here for a moment just to say, despite the area I live in, I consider myself very fortunate. I live in a part of the world where there's very little if any activity on the earthquake front, we don't deal with hurricanes, and tornadoes, even though they happen, never seem to pack quite the punch as those that other folks in other parts of America have to face on a yearly basis. That being said, there is one thing we do deal with from time to time in my area, and that's flooding. Now, we're not talking terrible, awful, floods that you see all over the news, but floods that do make it difficult to get around certain areas, and, as in the case of this story, do some property damage, especially in basements.

Alright, back to me and my shop. So it's Saturday and my fiancée Kathy and I are done with our usual Saturday ritual of waking up early and bringing items to the shop. We have quite a bit on this day as I managed to secure a lot I paid \$150 for that included three systems, an NES, SNES, and Genesis, as well as games for all three, and these are some pretty good games. So we bring the tote in of all these priced items, Kathy uses her Tetris skills to fit all of this on two shelving units and a table, and I'm looking pretty proud of myself. I find some minor things outside, and we're heading back home because Kathy has work later in the day. It's been rainy in this area, and it continues to be, so when we came home, I was expecting to do nothing else but to plop myself in front of the television, pop in my new copy of Chrono Trigger, and enjoy some RPG goodness.



However, we were both taken by surprise by a small grocery bag sitting on our front porch, a yellow bow sticking out of it, and an old scrap of newspaper in it as well. On closer inspection I was amazed to find there were about 15 NES games sitting in the bag! I was excited! I was wondering just who could have been the person to do such a thing for me?

Occasionally I do get friends and family who have things they want to get rid of, and I call it a shop donation. I take the games apart and clean them, thank the person for the donation, and continue on my way. But this situation, this was something totally different.

These 15 games were in some pretty sad shape. Whoever dropped them off obviously knew, or had hoped I could save them. Some were covered in dried up mud, some rusted, and just covered with so much dirt, you could barely see the labels on some of them. Was it ironic that the worst of these games was Mission Impossible? Maybe. But there was this twinge of sadness in my heart that someone had entrusted me with the task of saving pieces of gaming history, and would allow me to keep them should I complete the mission. Keep in mind, some of these games were not slackers by any means. In this batch was a copy of Contra along with some other decent titles. I just knew I had to try. Thankfully, I

had a new pack of Magic Erasers, Brasso, Q-Tips, and a mix of alcohol and water. This was going to be a haul, but I was ready.

As I took careful precision with each game, one by one, stacking the finished products on our kitchen table, a phone call from Kathy came in, informing me of who the wonderful person was who dropped off these games. It was her niece, Ashley, who after helping in the process of cleaning up a flooded basement had discovered these in a bag. What's more, I was told, there were more games heading my way. More games? Were they worse than these? What games were they? My heart skipped a beat as I finished up the 15.

I sat there, so proud, almost beaming, knowing I had just taken 15 games and made them all work again. Sure, some were beyond my saving cosmetically, but I did what I could, getting off as much dust, rust, and whatever else that I could find. I patiently waited until Kathy's mother pulled into our driveway, handing me another bag. This bag was bigger, heavier, and with a deep breath I opened the bag to see what was there. Super Mario Bros. 3, Bubble Bobble, and Ninja Gaiden 3 caught my eye, along with Metroid and Donkey Kong Classics. Burgertime elicited some fond memories as well. Double Dragon sat faded and in need of some TLC. I was like a surgeon at this point. I went straight to work on 27 more games.

It was certainly a chore, trying to take these games apart, some of them so rusted shut I had to essentially rely on just a Q-Tip and my alcohol mix to clean them. Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles was by far the most difficult, even to the point of me having to break it open to get it to work, but thankfully, our Heroes In A Half Shell made it through. Sadly, however, Ms. Pac Man did not make it through the ordeal. That being said, I saved 41 NES games from certain death, thanks to the careful eye of a little girl, and my love of video games. What's even better is 5 of these games have already been claimed at discounted prices by a customer of mine, so their lives will go on. I know it may sound lame to some people, video games are inanimate objects, but they still tell a story of simpler times in our lives, so the fact 41 of them will go onto bigger and better things, that really makes this guy feel good.

I'm definitely on the look out for more impromptu projects like this, because there is nothing like taking a piece of gaming history and bringing it back to life. Ninja Gaiden 3 and Bubble Bobble are now a part of my collection, less because of their value or importance to my collection, and more about how they were among the worst in the lot, Ninja Gaiden having so much mud and filth on it I could barely make out the label. Bubble Bobble may not look great cosmetically, but it works like a charm.



No one ever hopes for floods, for tragedies, but if I can pull something great out of the water, then let it rain I say.



The Bane Of Your Existence

by Nick DeMarco



Beating A Game Years Later

I don't fancy myself a philosophical or deep person, at least, not on a regular basis, but I do feel there are certain things that connect us as people. We all panic when we don't wake up on time to make it somewhere in the morning. Many of us hate going to the dentist, and we all have that one person in our lives that really brings us down, really makes us want to avoid them at all costs. This is not quite a story about that, but it is about something I feel we share as retro gamers. Just as we always have that one person we dread in our lives we all have that game or even games that have haunted our very existence. They are our sworn enemy, our white whale, our bane. Maybe they are because you've been trying to find a copy of it and still can't find one at a reasonable price. Or maybe, in the case of this story, it is a game that used to make you cry or learn expletives at an early age, and now, years later, you want revenge. Will you get it? Well, here's hoping my story restores some of your faith in your own gaming skills, should you lack confidence in that area.

Let's flash back to 1988. My mother is making breakfast, it's a Sunday morning. The birds are chirping, the sunlight is peeking in through the 1980's curtains, and I am sitting down at the table, watching the television and stuffing pancakes and bacon down my throat. All is right with the world. Then my brother comes down the stairs. Nowadays my brother and I have a great friendship, but this is 1988, and I'm 7 and he's 12. What do YOU think our relationship was like then? If you guessed about as pleasant as people falling to their death off the Titanic, you've got a pretty good idea. Well on this day my brother was touting the new NES game called Contra. At this age, I had heard rumors of it, but nothing more than that, just rumors, yet here was my brother, holding it high as the greatest thing sliced bread. I had to play it.

Just as immediately as I needed to play was about as quick as I began to hate it. I was never the kind of kid who ever deliberately thought of breaking things, but I can still recall having to talk myself out of smashing the controller and the whole NES to pieces because this game was just royally ticking off my 7 year old self. Keep in mind readers, I was 7, and while I was a great reader, my parents didn't have the money to buy me a Nintendo Power subscription, so I was not privy to the now common sense notion of the Konami Code. No dear reader, I was left shaking my fist at the screen, wondering just where that one shot kill was coming from, never able to make it out of the first level of this game.



In fact, I will sadly tell you it was many years until I got wind of the Konami Code, and it would be longer than that until I could talk myself into sitting down and playing Contra. I almost became intimidated by it one might say. I thought to myself, "If I sit down and play this again, I'm going to lose my mind" or something overly dramatic like that. Still the idea of defeating Contra was beginning to take up space in my mind, and as I began more and more to listen to music from the game and stare at the Konami Code, I finally warmed up to the idea of giving this game a try, even if I'd be labeled a cheater cheater pumpkin eater by my friends (admit it, you still have friends that say that).

So this is the part of the story where I tell you I got 30 lives and in one shot defeated Contra, right? Wrong. If I had to use math, which I hate doing, I probably ended up using close to 120 lives to defeat this game, which really didn't do much good for my gamer ego. Still, the fact I could finally say I defeated a game that had haunted me for 25 years is a pretty cool thing to say, even if there are people you know who beat it when they were 10. Yeah, whatever.

I offer this story to you all hoping it will offer you some encouragement as you try to tackle games that are WAY harder than today's games that reward you for practically everything. So what's next for this gamer?

I see that copy of Little Nemo: The Dream Master is giving me a dirty look. I think it's time for another showdown.



More 64!

by Andrew Fisher



Psytronik Software

This year marks the 20th anniversary of Psytronik Software, the small British software company that continues to release new games for the Commodore 64. This is a good time to look back at the history of the company, the great games it has released and plans for the future.

Beginnings

Jason Mackenzie started Binary Zone PD in the early 1990s. This was a software library, selling compilation disks of public domain software - initially demos, later moving into utilities and games. Through Binary Zone, Jason got in contact with programmer Jon Wells and Alf Yngve, a Swedish fan of the *Shoot 'Em Up Construction Kit*.

Jon Wells had created a conversion of the Spectrum game *Sceptre of Baghdad* for Atlantis Software. Sadly the company closed before the game was published. Jason had the idea of publishing the game himself and selling it mail order. And so Psytronik was born. The name came from combining the names of two famous British software companies - Psygnosis (best known for *Shadow of the Beast* and publishing DMA Designs' *Lemmings*) and Mastertronic (the highly successful budget company). With the c changed to a k, *Sceptre of Baghdad* became the first official release from Psytronik.

Next up was *Archetype & Cops III*. These were two of Alf Yngve's SEUCK creations, enhanced by Jon. Alf also provided cover artwork for many of the original Psytronik games, with Jason printing labels and inlays at home. The double-pack was released as Supportware - the idea being that the games were free to pass around, but those that enjoyed playing would send a small payment in thank you to support the development of new games. With the Commodore 64 in decline and the commercial market disappearing, the scheme was not a success. Jason was also running a fanzine called *Commodore Zone*, which published 16 issues accompanied by a cover disk or tape.

The next big release was called *The Shoot 'Em Up Destruction Set*, or *SEUDS* for short. Four enhanced SEUCK games were presented on a single disk or tape with a menu system. The four were *Silverfish* (inspired by *Silkworm*), *Flight of the Albatross* (inspired by *Flying Shark*), *Nukenin & The Ronin* (with the player controlling a ninja) and *Insectophobia* (an unusual single-screen game where the player has to swat flies).

More games were in the pipeline, but Jason turned his attention to new projects - including a website for TV star Emily Booth (nicknamed Bouff, then famous for being part of computer TV show Bits). The Psytronik label was put on hiatus.

Reborn



With new interest in retro gaming and regular events dedicated to retro being held in the UK, Jason felt the time was right to relaunch Psytronik in 2008. New games from Jon Wells (*Escape from Arth*) and Alf Yngve (the previously unreleased *Psykozone*) emerged. The label also published the excellent *Sub Hunter* by Richard Bayliss. The packaging became more professional and the new premium disk versions (in specially sourced plastic cases) were also released.

C64 fans were treated to a special re-release of *Mayhem in Monsterland*, the incredible console-style platform game from John & Steve Rowlands. This marked the 15th anniversary of the original game and also fixed a bug with the lives counter that had affected the original release. The pair's earlier games *Creatures* and *Creatures 2* were also re-released by Psytronik with new artwork.

The re-releases continued and the range expanded with new titles, including *The Wild Bunch* (another Spectrum conversion by Jon Wells) and the tomb-raiding *Joe Gunn* by Georg Rottensteiner. *Hyper Viper* was converted from the MSX, *Knight 'n Grail* brought classic *Metrodvania*-style gameplay to the C64 and there was *SEUDS 2* with four new enhanced *SEUCK* games. But perhaps the most impressive release was *Soulless*, produced in co-operation with RGCD. The packaging of the deluxe version included a CD, comic book manual and poster.

Back to the Future

Psytronik has also published games for other formats. These include VIC-20 RPG *Realms of Quest Trilogy* and platformer *Carling the Spider*, *Adventures in Time* for the C16/Plus4 and the Amstrad CPC conversion of *Sub Hunter*. PC fans were treated to a new version of the classic shoot 'em up *Armalyte*. Spanish team the Mojon Twins have been prolific in creating new games for retro formats, and Psytronik published a triple-pack of their C64 games on tape and disk - *UWOL's Quest for Money*, *Sir Ababol* and cute puzzle game *Nanako in Japanese Monster Castle*.

The upcoming release list looks fantastic, with Trevor Storey (the designer behind *Soulless*) heavily involved. From sci-fi exploration game *Hyperion* to car chase filled *Vice Squad*, cutesy *Catnipped* to *Rocket Smash EX*, the twentieth year of Psytronik is looking like one of its most exciting yet.

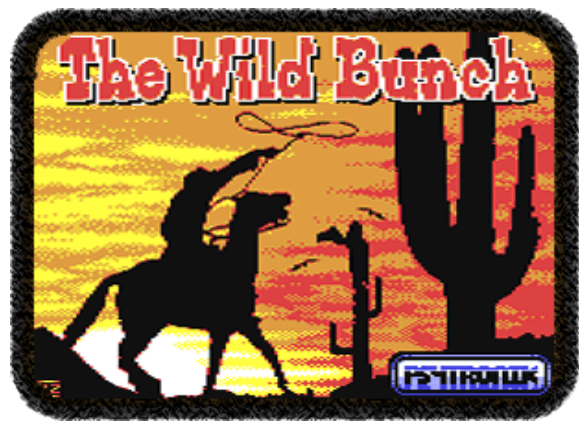
Web Links

www.psytronik.net/ - home of the software label, news of new releases is posted here regularly

www.binaryzone.org/retrostore/ - the Binary Zone online shop for all Psytronik releases, as well as music CDs, posters and retro prints

www.binaryzone.org/podcast/ - the One Man & His Mic podcast, dedicated to retro music & remixes

www.binaryzone.org/thezone/ - the Binary Zone PD site, with free disks to download



Ordering

You can order titles in the following formats (US dollar prices, the web store offers alternative currency prices):

Digital download for emulation - \$4.01

Budget disk or tape - \$10.06

Premium disk - \$20.14

Cartridge - \$50.40

Shipping is extra, estimate for one item is \$9 surface mail or \$13 air mail (the site offers a shipping calculator). Ordering a physical product entitles you to a free digital download of the same title,

Note that the majority of titles are designed for PAL systems.

Mayhem in Monsterland, Creatures, Creatures 2 and Sub Hunter all ship with an NTSC-fixed version when ordering the physical copies.

The following titles are also confirmed as NTSC-compatible:

Assembloids, Carling the Spider (VIC-20), Get Em 'DX, Greenrunner/Redrunner, Guns 'n Ghosts, Soulless*, Hyper Viper, Knight 'n Grail, Sceptre of Baghdad, The Mojon Twins - 3 Games in 1, and Wanted: The Wild Bunch

*Soulless deluxe editions cost extra



Des Gamer

by John Wedgeworth



Fanboyism, And The 16-Bit Console Wars

Part 5: SNES vs. Genesis - Software

Hey Retrogaming Times Monthly readers! This is installment #5 of the series, and we are done talking specifically about SNES and Genesis hardware. To see how that treatment went, and what my objective conclusions and subjective preferences were on the matter (they were not one and the same...told you so!), check out last month's installment here: [Part 4: SNES vs. Genesis: Hardware](#). Of course, part four won't really make any sense unless you see what's before it, so here are [Part 1: The "Preamble Ramble"](#), [Part 2: SNES vs. Genesis: Graphics](#), and [Part 3: SNES vs. Genesis: Sound](#).

Now to move on, I was faced with a dilemma. So much of the flame wars that happen with SNES vs. Genesis have to do with a confusion of categories, subjective and objective. We have people treating preference as fact, and people treating fact as preference. The latter is called relativism, and as an absolutist at large, I find myself doing battle with relativism all the time. So my knee jerk is to react more sharply against that, than against the other. But in the SNES/Genesis debate, I think the bigger problem is actually not relativism, but an unwarranted hyper-absolutism, which takes crass subjectivism (i.e. I like SNES better, therefore SNES is better), enshrines it, and goes to war with it. This is one of the major reasons why in dealing with SNES vs. Genesis, I've labored to be as objective as possible.

However, my dilemma here comes in the form of having to choose between a) doing a largely subjective treatment on a crucial topic in comparing the systems, for which, there isn't a really meaningful objective argument, or b), just leaving out a crucial topic in comparing them. Of course, I'm talking about software. If I were to try to be completely objective when it comes to software, all I'd be able to say is which systems has the most games, the most diverse in terms of genre, and the arc of success over the years. I could not find numbers for North America only, but for North America, and Europe combined, the number of officially released games for the Super Nintendo I found was 784, and the number for the Genesis/Mega Drive was 915 (US only numbers, I suspect, would not be radically dissimilar, as I do not believe there were a ton of games that were released in Europe, and not also in North America (I'm open to correction on this point)...and these numbers do not count games released in both regions twice.) I haven't researched genre spread on each system, but would estimate them to be comparable, though I would suspect that with the larger total library, a slight edge would go to the Sega here as well.

While they both cover comparable ground in their libraries, they do have different emphases (let's spend a little time on this point): Genesis, while it has plenty of RPG/Adventure games, focuses more on action genres, such as shooters, sports, and well, action. Things that depend less on color palettes, and orchestration, and more on big, fast, fluid, and/or plenteous sprites, and high res is where the Genesis puts most of its energy. Super NES has plenty of shooters, action/adventure games, and sports. But its focus is more geared towards things that capitalize on the SNES' color palette, and the diversity of the sampler sound system, such as rich orchestral pieces, like RPGs and Adventure games. Also, there is a key difference to the approach both systems take with their first party, and second party (which we'll just call first party) library as a whole:

I'm struggling to find the right way to put it. I guess the way I'll put it is the



SNES focuses on the telescope, and the Genesis focuses on the microscope. Let's compare any of the games from the Sonic series, and Super Mario World. Sonic is a very straightforward game. It's level after level after level. Yes, there are three levels per zone, but it's still level after level after level. There are also no overworld elements to the game at all, and a bare minimum amount of story. Small from the telescope perspective. Super Mario World has, what, a hundred some stages? It also has a robust overworld that you spend the game traveling through, and in some cases, even going back and forth through. Super Mario World is big from the telescope perspective. However, the individual levels in Sonic are huge, and gorgeous, and complex, with a lot going on. So, big from the microscope perspective. Meanwhile, SMW has levels that are comparatively small, and simplistically rendered, and generally simplistic in themselves. So, small from the microscope.

Perhaps not without exception (definitely not without exception considering the 1st party Sega RPGs, and SNES' Killer Instinct), and perhaps a little oversimplified, this is nevertheless, a trend that I notice across the spread of the first party games for both systems. Perhaps this is a tenuous comparison, but neither Super Metroid, nor Shinobi III have a really good direct 1st party comparable on the other system. In fact, for as wildly different as the two are, they may in fact be each other's best comparable. That's the way I'm going to treat them anyway. With that said, in macro, it's the same dynamic as SMW vs. Sonic. Metroid is this huge world that you are constantly star patterning across over the course of the game. Super Metroid also has a fairly robust story arc to it, whereas, Shinobi, once again, is just level after level, with only a vague awareness of a story propelling it. Yet, Shinobi has bigger sprites, faster action, more action, more engaging action. Super Metroid is a telescope game, Shinobi III is a microscope game.

The case I'm making is that big picture, SNES 1st party games are telescope games, and big picture, 1st party Genesis games are microscope games. This trend continues to be observed, on a far less consistent and reliable level even into the third party games. I'm not saying one approach is inherently better or worse than the other, only that the mega-level approach is different. What it translates to on the SNES side are these rich, long, engaging epics that take several sessions usually to complete. And what it translates to on the Genesis side is great bursts of action for quick gaming sessions. Which approach a person prefers depends on their personal tastes and/or their personal circumstances (for me, it's both tastes and circumstances, but mostly circumstances. I'll divulge later.)

And as for the success arc: in the early days, Sega dominated. During the height of the 16-bit heyday, it was pretty neck and neck, and in the end, SNES pulled ahead where it was to remain (although I don't believe it ever caught up in terms of career wide sales numbers – I'll see if I can find those numbers, and include them in the cleanup installment at the end of the series).

However, I'm really not saying all that much there. Hardly worth making an installment of Fanboyism and the 16-bit console wars out of that! So, I guess I will throw my hat in on the subjective side of software after all. Keep in mind I am speaking subjectively here (though I can't quite shake the feeling that there may be something of an underlying objective basis for this subjectivity). Therefore, allow me to address it first through the use of an analogy, and then through an anecdote.

Analogy: You've got two snow-capped mountains that are each surrounded by swamp.

Mountain A is a little bit taller. The snow cap itself is about the same size on both mountains, but the snow is deeper, yet less fluffy here. However, the mountain is not as thick, the circumference at the base is smaller, and the swamp surrounding it is bigger.

Mountain B, of course, would be a little shorter, with a comparably sized snow cap, with shallower, but fluffier snow, and a broader, wider base circumference, with a smaller swamp surrounding it.



Interpretation: The snowcapped peak represents the –essential games–, the –killer apps–. The mountain with the bigger snow cap has the higher number of "killer" apps. They're about neck and neck here. The height of the mountain represents the quality of those "killer" apps. Higher is better. Mountain A, the victor. The depth and fluffiness of the snow is our telescope/microscope distinction from earlier. Deeper snow is telescope, fluffier snow is microscope. The remainder of the mountain represents the quantity, quality, and diversity of the apps that are "good-great" but not "stellar" or "killer". The broader the mountain, the better. Mountain B is the better one here. The swamp surrounding the mountain, then, represents the proliferation of the games that range from "meh" to "gaaaaah"...the garbage titles. The broader the swamp, the more prolific the garbage titles. Since its swamp is smaller on Mountain B, it is the better mountain here. Knowing which apps are killer is like taking a helicopter to the top of the mountain. Knowing which apps are good/great is like taking a helicopter to the middle of the mountain. Either way, you can bypass the swamp. Purchasing games sight unseen is like traversing through the swamp to get to the mountain. Therefore, both A and B are about equally desirable by helicopter. However, it is a far more unattractive option to head for Mountain A from the ground. There be gators, and all kinds of nasties in them thar swamps! And even if the gators don't get you, you're liable to get lost in foul smelling waters.



Therefore, as a whole, I prefer Mountain B.

Mountain A = Super NES
Mountain B = Sega Genesis.

DISCLAIMER: I can totally see how someone who would agree with my analogy would still prefer SNES. I could even see how someone would agree that "the mountain is thicker", "the snow is fluffier", and "the swamp smaller" with Genesis, and still prefer the SNES for the "higher peaks" and the "deeper snow.".....and I'm totally fine with that!

POINT OF CLARIFICATION: I had made mountain A a little taller, meaning that I said the SNES killer apps are slightly more killer than the Genesis apps. In a sense I feel this way, and in a sense I don't. I feel that the telescope approach makes for a game that is more epic, and long-term memorable, meaningful. That's why I made mountain A a little bit taller. The games are better on the grounds of being more substantial. However, I actually by and large personally prefer the microscope games of the Sega Genesis. First party Sega games get tons of play time at Chateau Des Gamer, while first party Nintendo games get far less air time.

One, for all the writing and talk about video games that I do, and as involved as I am in the fan-level activities of the video game industry, I really get a surprisingly small amount of time to partake in its chief ritual....actually playing the things! So, I don't often really feel free to plug into something so involving as an SNES game, whereas, it's much easier to fire up, say Gunstar Heroes, or Streets of Rage, and find fast fun escapism through them. Two, a lot of the SNES games I've played and beat already, and I personally find a lot less replay value in an epic than in a quick button masher. For instance, maybe once every 5-10 years, I'll undertake to play through the Metroid series, or Zelda III, yet, several times a year, Shinobi III gets a play through. Lastly, three, I just like the look, feel, sound, and vibe of the Sega games. They are home base for me.



So, Mountain A may indeed be incrementally taller (like the difference between 801 Grand in Des Moines' 630ft, vs. First National Bank Tower in Omaha's 634ft... if we only mounted a life sized bronze statue of Emmanuel Lewis at the tip of 801, we'd take them...I'm not advocating this, mind you) but I like fluffy snow so much more than dry, blowy snow, that I actually prefer to spend the lion's share of my time on the shorter mountain...and similarly, I prefer the look of 801 Grand, and the Des Moines skyline as a whole...but that's a completely different discussion! You know, now that I think about it, I could've done this whole analogy thing completely different: with Omaha's two tallest buildings being taller than Des Moines' two tallest, but with the next 8 tallest buildings being taller in Des Moines than the next 8 in the O,

plus Des Moines having a denser, tighter skyline, with greater architectural diversity, and [I believe] less bad neighborhood in and around the DM d-town, I could've just used these two actual mid-sized city downtowns as the analogy (Omaha = SNES, Des Moines = Genesis), rather than these hypothetical swamp laden snow capped mountains, and been able to hit all the same points...man, wish I'd thought of that sooner...oh well. Not going to go back and rewrite the article now!

Anyways, now, for the anecdote: I have a bunch of killer apps for both systems already, and I have a mental list of a bunch of games for each system I really want. I currently have nearly twice as many Genesis games as I do SNES games, yet the list of games I really want for each system is about the same size...that says something. Moreover, I would be far more inclined to take a chance on an unknown Genesis game than I would be to take a chance on an unknown SNES game....I just don't like them thar gators!

And that's my take on software! At this point we are essentially done with our treatment of SNES vs. Genesis altogether. To those of you of who have read the whole thing, I would welcome your feedback. Also, for making it all the way through, I can only echo the immortal words of the end screen from the NES version of Ghostbusters:

"Conglaturation!!!

You have completed a great game!

And prooved the justice of our culture.

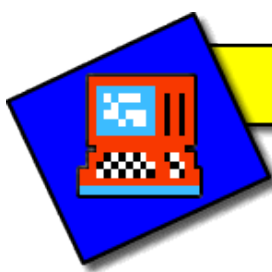
Now go and rest our heroes!"



Also, as a bonus, a confession: In this series, on an objective front, I've called SNES and Genesis a draw at each and every point (well, I guess, on the software side, I technically gave a slight objective nod to the Genesis), but also declared my subjective, personal preference for Genesis at each turn. Would it surprise you to know that back in the day I was rabidly pro-SNES? What brought the change and when? Well, it was probably 2003 or so (I would've been 23ish), and it all started when the first chink in the SNES spec sheet's armor cracked and I discovered that SNES actually ran in lower nominal res than the Genesis. It kind of snowballed from there over the ensuing decade between.

Next month will be a long one, as we're going to be throwing the TG16 into the mix. Keep in mind, though, that we'll be doing in one extended length post for TG16 what it took us five regular length entries to do with SNES vs. Genesis.

Cheers!



Show Report

by David Lundin, Jr.



California Extreme 2013

This July, California Extreme once again returned to the Hyatt Regency Santa Clara for their seventeenth annual arcade video game and pinball expo. While classic arcades are few and far between, California Extreme is a showcase of collectors and enthusiasts who keep arcade games alive through private collections and then bring the games to one location over a weekend for all to enjoy. A very modest fee gets you in for the entire weekend, beginning Saturday morning until into the early hours of Sunday. Sunday morning the show opens up again until the late evening. That entry fee covers all the games you can play, as everything is set on free play and every game inside the show is there to be played. It also allows you to get into special film screenings, vendor tables, guest panels, special events, even live music. This year's show took place over the weekend of July 13th and 14th. It's no secret to frequent RTM readers that California Extreme is one of my most looked forward to events of the entire year. Heck, all six years I've attended the show have been covered right here at RTM. Unfortunately the previous three year trio of my girlfriend, my brother and myself couldn't be in full attendance as my brother couldn't make it at the last moment. Quite humorously his favorite game at the show, 1978's Speed Freak by Vectorbeam, wasn't in attendance either. Jokingly I later told him, "Well your game wasn't there, so you didn't miss much" but nothing could be farther from the truth as there really isn't anything else like California Extreme.

Ample free parking is one of many things that makes the Hyatt Regency an excellent location for the show, especially compared to the first year I attended when the show was still at Parkside Hall in downtown San Jose. Although the Hyatt Regency / Santa Clara Convention Center lot was filled due to another event, we were promptly directed to a new parking structure less than a minute away. This was fine but the off site garage closed at 10pm, four hours before the end of the event. Much to their credit, show staff did make announcements that the garage would be closing at ten o'clock and that a few hours before then the on site garage should be cleared out and open so you could move your vehicle and not be locked out. Granted, this is an issue, albeit a small one. I have no problem with having to park in the other garage, the venue is a large and busy place that is always hosting different conventions and shows. However upon being directed away from the Hyatt / Convention Center garage on Saturday morning I told the attendant from the Convention Center that we were there for an event in the Hyatt Regency, not the Convention Center, and that it ran until Sunday morning. He would have no part of this and actually got right on the edge of raising his voice and arguing with me. Not a big deal in the end, but it's frustrating how poorly trained the parking area staff are, especially when the structure was in no way full, and the alternative parking closed up four hours before the end of the event we were attending. I'd really hate to be staying at the Hyatt and be asked to park in the far lot upon arrival if I hadn't yet checked in, something that would probably happen as that parking attendant demanded I show him a room key if I wanted into the garage. Thankfully after dinner that night the on site garage was open, the parking attendant was back home living out his meager existence, and we didn't have to worry about moving the car. Sunday we went straight to the offsite lot since the show ended at nine o'clock and getting locked in wouldn't be an issue. I want to stress that the only real inconvenience of the off site lot is that it did not remain open past 10pm, oh, and the elevators barely worked.

As for the show itself, awesome from start to finish. Pre-registration not only allows you to get into the show half an hour early each day, it also allows you to bypass the regular registration line. You simply arrive a little before the show starts, present your identification, pick up your badge and wristband, and you're good to go. Regular registration at the show looked to be moving faster than in years before but walking past that long line in the morning to head directly into the show really shows the value beyond thirty extra minutes of play time. For the first time ever, the show had the entire combined ballroom area belonging to the Hyatt Regency, allowing for an incredibly vast space to house the games. The entire section was open except for a single dividing wall in the middle, allowing the central vendors an area to back up against. This also allowed the room to have a bit of a split, creating two distinct sides of the show, which was very nice for explaining to people where games were located. I'll admit, at first blush it may have seemed like the show was smaller this year but that was due to the excellent job staff did in laying out the machines to allow

smooth passage without feeling like you were in a sardine can. Quite the contrary actually, this year the show hosted a record breaking 569 machines across all eight ballrooms totaling 22,000 square feet! All the while remaining comfortable and relatively cool inside. Sure there are crowds, that's kind of one of the big points of the show - to allow people to remain familiar with these old games and possibly even be introduced to owning and preserving them as well, but the crowds were well managed. There wasn't a single game at the show that I wanted to play that I couldn't get at least a few games on. In fact I think I played more games, and a bigger variety of games, this year than in any previous show.



It's difficult to mention the games at the show without leaving things out but as I've said before, think of five of your favorite arcade games and you'll probably find four of them here. Upon entering on Saturday morning I happened to walk by the area populated with the small cabaret machines and took the opportunity to get in a few games of one of my favorites, Bosconian. Sadly overlooked in the wake of Galaga, it plays a bit like if Rally-X was a shooter and instead of collecting flags the objective was to destroy enemy bases. Another game I heard was going to be at the show is another unsung favorite of mine, Taito's Great Swordsman. I suppose if Great Swordsman were to be released today it would be called a weapon-based fighting game. A two-way joystick controls left and right movement while a series of three buttons direct sword height and angle. Holding a button down will perform a lunge at that height and the objective is to strike your opponent without getting touched in return. See, rather than what one thinks of as a fighting game, Great Swordsman is a game about swordfighting through three different eras. Things begin with contemporary era sport fencing and after a few rounds move to Japanese kendo and finally to single strike battles to the death in Roman gladiator combat. In between each discipline of swordfighting a bonus game is played where you must deflect arrows shot by an archer. Although the game sounds both simplistic and overly complex at the same time, the game almost always had someone on it every time I would pass by and I would stop and play whenever the machine was open. As for pinball, many of my favorite machines were there once again including a few Data East tables such as WWF Royal Rumble, Lethal Weapon 3, and of course The Who's Tommy. Once again one of the extremely rare prototype Tommy machines was at the show along side the production model. It's still very interesting to inspect the differences between the machines and see how they affect the flow and play. Personally the verdict is still out on which I like more as they're just, well, different... and the same.

Hyperdrive is another game I really enjoy, kind of like an arcade version of the PlayStation era classic Wipeout. I played a Defender pinball machine for the first time, assuming it would be like Joust pinball which I really don't care for at all. However I was pleasantly surprised and found Defender to be a great table with good action at a relaxed pace. It reminded me a lot of Space Shuttle, one of my absolute favorite pins. I spent a lot of time playing Kicker, the US

version of Konami's Shao-Lin's Road, one of those games in the classic Konami series I talk about quite a bit (Time Pilot, Gyruss, Circus Charlie). Shao-Lin's Road is a multi level early beat-em-up that plays on a fixed screen that scrolls back and forth a little as it uses a vertical display. The objective is to defeat all the enemies with your martial arts abilities, primarily kicks, to clear out a stage. Enemies spill out of doorways, including special enemies that offer power up items after defeat. Each stage runs for two rounds, the second of which features a boss enemy which must be defeated along with all the regular guys. The cool thing about the game is you can take three hits before the fourth puts you down, this goes the same for the boss enemies. Interestingly falling off the edge of a platform will also cause one point of damage, meaning that in addition to fast reflexes for dispatching enemies you must also keep your wits about you when making jumps between rooftops and other platforms. Next to Kicker was Warp Warp by Rock-Ola, the US release of Namco's Warp & Warp, which would later have an enhanced remake on the Famicom as Warpman. Similarly Namco also did this with Tank Battalion, enhancing it on the Famicom as Battle City. In Warp Warp the player controls a monster fighter that walks around an open screen, using his gun to attack monsters that enter from the corners. The monsters slowly change in color as they move about and shooting three of the same color in a row will cause a special monster worth bonus points to come out. As the monsters change color they move faster and become more dangerous. Eventually the area in the middle of the screen will flash, opening the warp, and entering this area will warp you to the maze. Here things play a little differently as now you drop bombs rather than fire a gun. The longer the button is held down when a bomb is dropped, the longer the duration of the explosion delay will be. This part plays a lot like Bomberman with much more aggressive enemies, or I should say Bomberman plays a lot like this. If you are unable to dispatch all the monsters in the maze area, the warp will open once more and you can head back out the the space area. I had dismissed Warp Warp in the past but it wasn't until really spending time with the game at the show this year that I realized the depth of the game. Once the strategy "clicked" in my head I found myself coming back to it again and again.



There were a couple Spiders machines, something I had never played on an actual cabinet and a really cool shooter if you're into games like Galaxian. A beautiful Q*bert machine was located close to Great Swordsman and it was a lot of fun to play on actual hardware with actual controls. Speaking of Q*bert, I have to mention another game that was at the show in a Q*bert cabinet. Sly Spy is a Data East side scroller similar to their RoboCop arcade game but this time it's an homage to James Bond. I love Sly Spy, it's probably my favorite single-plane side scroller ever and it remained exclusive to arcades until a fairly recent Data East arcade compilation on the Nintendo Wii. I have a Sly Spy PCB, marquee and bezel myself but once I saw it at the show I was down for a quick run through the game. However this machine would prove to be the conversion from hell. It was in a Q*bert cabinet as I said before but it was using the

original Q*bert joystick simply rotated 45 degrees. The player one start button wasn't responding so a game would have to be started up with two players alternating. That joystick, even rotated to the standard directions, is only good for playing Q*bert. I can honestly say that if there is an arcade cabinet in purgatory, this is the one it will be. Control was so stiff and unforgiving that I actually ended up walking away half way through the first stage. Never mind that it's a four way joystick, that I could have dealt with to some degree, but it was completely the wrong control setup for this game - a trackball would have worked better. The only thing that could have been worse was for the machine to give you a shock every time you pressed the joystick right.

I also played lots of Dig Dug, of which there were at least three machines including a cocktail I was pondering making an offer on. I put up a pretty decent run on Gyruss for not playing in nearly a year and came to the full and complete realization that while it's a game that makes perfect sense in my head, my girlfriend is completely terrible at it. Exidy's Teeter Torture, an extremely rare treat and almost worth making the trip to California Extreme for on its own, was on the show floor once again and although it had an audio issue it was still fully playable. Another prototype, Atari's Akka Arrh, is a game I find myself coming back to year after year. From what I was able to gather only two of the machines exist and it plays a bit like a circular Missile Command. Supposedly the game was deemed too complex and never went into production but all you need is to watch someone play or talk with someone familiar with the game for a couple minutes to figure it out. I will say Akka Arrh has what has to be the most comfortable control panel in video game history. It's at the perfect height and angle, especially for a game that uses a trackball. Tenkomori Shooting by Namco is a game that I played for the first time this year, and plays as if you were to take the light gun shooter Point Bank and convert the challenges into standard fast response arcade games. It was a ton of fun, quite intense and features a few classic Namco characters and games in some of the challenges.



Vendor offerings this year weren't what I was looking for but there was still a lot to see. The people getting rid of boxes of cheap manuals, junk control panels, stacks of PCB's, Neo-Geo cartridges, and the like simply weren't there this year. Marco Specialties and Stern Pinball once again had a large presence at the show, this time showcasing Stern's Metallica pinball with a full bank of four machines. There were also multiple tournaments taking place including the expected pinball competition as well as the annual Panic Park tournament. Additionally there was a Street Fighter II Hyper Fighting tourney that got big support from both CAX staff as well as Capcom. The Street Fighter II HF competition was very entertaining to watch and had the feel of an old school competition at your local arcade. This tournament was pulled together, hosted and run completely by show patrons and looked to be a big success. Speaking of competition, I was pleasantly surprised to see the same Klax machine that I put up some big scores on last year return to the show again this year. Even more surprised to see my score still on top and more surprised still that on my first game of the show I surpassed it. Granted there are some close scores on the machine since last year but the score to beat for next year's show is 1,055,310 points. Not bad at all as I haven't really turned my Klax cabinet on for a few months, for shame, I know. I should also mention that one of us finally won a raffle prize. My girlfriend won a print of Kevin Tiell's awesome photography / digital artwork from the 2009 show of the depths of the Funhouse pinball machine with Rudy watching the ball.

This year, as in the five previous years I've attended California Extreme, really the only thing I can complain about is

the weekend inevitably has to come to an end. Nine o'clock on Sunday evening has to roll around, the games have to be turned off, and the doors have to close. Then again it only means the next show is that much closer. Now there is something I want to address because some, and those some are a very few, show patrons can't seem to just let it pass by. Perhaps I've overstepping my professional status as an amateur writer but it's something I want to say. The Hyatt Regency and Santa Clara Convention Center buildings are quite expansive with lots of ballrooms, places to rest, vending machines, and refreshment areas. Reports have come up that the restroom facilities near the main entrance became in need of maintenance on Saturday evening and some went as far as to take pictures of backed up toilets and post them online. Here's a tip - instead of taking pictures of a plugged toilet or dirty restroom, simply go up to the main desk and let the clerk know the restrooms need to be serviced. That's what, you know, an adult would do. With thousands upon thousands of patrons there for multiple events and using the location's amenities, restrooms are bound to require maintenance throughout the day. Additionally there are at least three restroom locations within a less than a minute walk from the entrance, all of which are usually in great condition and regularly serviced throughout the day. So next time there's a restroom scandal, rather than adding fuel to the fire, just let convention and hotel facilities know the restroom requires service - your fellow patrons will thank you.

As in previous show reports I want to say thank you to the Extreme Team, all the vendors and exhibitors, and to show attendees for making CAX 2013 another great show and consistently more enjoyable year after year. Check out California Extreme online at caextreme.org and I hope to see you on the show floor next year.

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



Apple II Incider

by Donald Lee



KansasFest 2013

Happy July everyone. It's Monday July 29th and this is late. I've been late before but probably not this late! Bryan sent an email to the writers reminding us of the deadline. Alas, I saw it but have been occupied by a lot of things (work, personal, hobbies) and the date just slipped my mind.

This month, I'm not going to write about a game but about a very special Apple II event called KansasFest. The event was held from July 23 to July 28th and the 2013 edition was the 25th Annual incarnation of the show. Randy Wigginton was the keynote speaker and even Steve Wozinak made a surprise appearance at the event.

You can read up on some of the happenings from the 2013 event here:

<http://a2central.com/5009/kansasfest-2013-is-officially-here/>

Unlike most of the games I've written about, I've not personally attended any of the previous KansasFest events. When the event first started in 1989, I was in high school. At this point in time, I was aware of the event from reading magazines such as A+ and/or Incider. As I progressed through college, other magazines like II Alive picked up the slack in talking about KansasFest.

But as I got onto the Internet around 1995, I was able to follow the happenings of the group via Usenet on the comp.sys.apple2 newsgroup. As the Internet got bigger and bigger, KansasFest had a website and A2-Central's website started having updates daily as well.

The thing that most impresses me about KansasFest is that it still is going strong after 25 years. According to numbers on the KansasFest wiki page, 62 people attended in 2013 and that's not bad for a computer line that dates back in the late 1970's.

While I am not a hardware or software developer, I do hope to attend one KansasFest in my lifetime. It's a rare thing to be part of a long standing tradition.





The Video Game Archeologist

It's not often one finds an encyclopedia based on the extensive library of Sega Master System games. It's also not often one finds a 435 page encyclopedia and bi-monthly magazine written, published, and distributed by a single person. In many ways, Derek Slaton, The Video Game Archeologist, has already earned a great deal of credibility as a classic gamer and author. He has written for Retro Gaming Times, designed his own classic gaming website, released dozens of video reviews, and has now started The VGA Magazine and completed The Sega Master System Encyclopedia—all on his own. However, after having the privilege of interviewing him earlier this month, we think it's safe to say he's only getting started!



The Interview

TRJ (The Retro Junkies, Rob & Landon): *Before we discuss The Sega Master System Encyclopedia and The VGA Magazine, we would like to know which consoles and games inspired you to become a gamer growing up.*

Derek: "Well, I started with the Atari 2600. I had just about everything that was released during the 8 and 16-bit era—the Sega Master System, Nintendo Entertainment System, Sega Genesis, Super Nintendo, you name it. The Genesis was actually my favorite system of the 16-bit era, but I had the Super Nintendo and Turbo Grafx-16 flanking it just in case. Growing up, the big game around the neighborhood was Metroid. Then I discovered Final Fantasy and a few other role playing games, and it's been downhill ever since!"

TRJ: *Metroid. Nice choice! Okay, Mega Man VS Samus—who wins?*

Derek: "I've got to go with Mega Man. With his lower center of gravity, there's not much to shoot at. He also has enough weapons in his arsenal that whatever Samus can throw at him, he has a response. And, of course, with that saw blade, anything is possible."

TRJ: *So when did you start writing video game reviews?*

Derek: "I started writing about three or four years ago as a means to cope with the loss of my job due to the economy. My entire industry practically disappeared over night, so I was left to fend for myself. I had always been a fan of classic video games, and decided that I wanted to write about them. That was definitely the catalyst."

TRJ: *Was this around the time you began writing for Retro Gaming Times?*

Derek: "It was. They were the first magazine to give me an opportunity to write. That meant a lot, and things sort of ballooned from there."

TRJ: *What motivated you to write The Sega Master System Encyclopedia?*

Derek: "I remember reading a modern gaming magazine that featured the top 200 classic video games of all time.



Flipping through it, if memory serves me correctly, there wasn't a single Master System game and only a few Genesis games that made the list. Being a huge Sega fan growing up, I knew this simply wasn't true. That particular issue truly inspired me to focus on the early Sega systems and try to preserve the memories of the games, because obviously they were being forgotten. I decided I wanted to start with the Master System and go up from there."

TRJ: *It's challenging to pinpoint exactly why the Master System was poorly received in the US because of its success in Europe and South America from the late 80s to the mid-90s. Do you think the Master System was an underrated console in the US?*

Derek: "It really was. Don't get me wrong, there were some truly horrendous games for the Master System, but there were also some solid gems that were overlooked. In my opinion, when comparing the Master System ports with their NES counterparts, the Master System often surpassed the NES. I think the reason the Master System wasn't very successful in the US was the fact that Nintendo had already had such a strong foothold in the gaming market by the time the Master System was released. I also think because Nintendo had such a strict third-party licensing agreement policy, Sega had to release a lot of their games in house which led to a limited library of Master System games from third party developers."

TRJ: *In addition to completing The Sega Master System Encyclopedia, you have also started a bi-monthly magazine called The VGA Magazine. Can you describe what this magazine features?*

Derek: "The VGA Magazine is a bi-monthly magazine that covers games up to and including the 16-bit era. There are fifteen reviews in each issue with at least three for the Super Nintendo and three for the Sega Genesis. I also try to include reviews of Turbo Grafx-16, Sega CD, and Atari 2600 games among others. I try to include two Japanese sections in each issue as well. One is a review of a Japanese game that can be played without having to understand the Japanese language. The other, conversely, is the "I Wish I Knew Japanese" section where I discuss a Japanese game that I wish I could play, but can't because of the language barrier. For instance, Tao, which is an 8-Bit Famicom role playing game—I played it for half hour and I got absolutely nowhere. But on the back of the box, the main character is riding a dinosaur down railroad tracks. I want to know what that is!"



TRJ: *How much is each issue of The VGA and the complete volume of The Sega Master System Encyclopedia? What formats are supported?*

Derek: "The first issue of The VGA Magazine is free and each of the following issues are \$1.99. The VGA Magazine and Sega Master System Encyclopedia are both supported in PDF and iBook formats. The iBook version of both works includes gameplay videos. I don't have a print version of The VGA yet, but I would eventually like to combine three issues into one and release them to reduce the price of the printed books. As for the Sega Master System Encyclopedia, in addition to the digital formats that are \$10, you can purchase the black and white print version for \$25 or the color version for \$65. All of my books can be purchased on my personal website: www.TheVGATV.com and Amazon.com."

TRJ: *So now that The Sega Master System Encyclopedia is completed and The VGA Magazine is running in full force, what does the future hold for The Video Game Archeologist?*

Derek: "Well, I'd like to eventually start another encyclopedia project—perhaps something even more detailed than The Sega Master System Encyclopedia. For the short term, I'd like to write a Turbo Grafx-16 encyclopedia since it seems to be a system many people have forgotten. Ideally, if I could ever make enough money to write full time, I would absolutely love to take on a Sega Genesis encyclopedia project."

The Wrap Up

Derek Slaton is currently working on the Turbo Grafx-16 encyclopedia project along with the third issue of The VGA Magazine. We are also proud to announce that he is a cohost of our new show: Genesis Gems Podcast, which is

featured on iTunes and www.theretrojunkies.com.

To order his books and stay up to date with all of Derek's projects, be sure to check out his personal website at www.TheVGATV.com and Facebook page at www.facebook.com/VGATV.

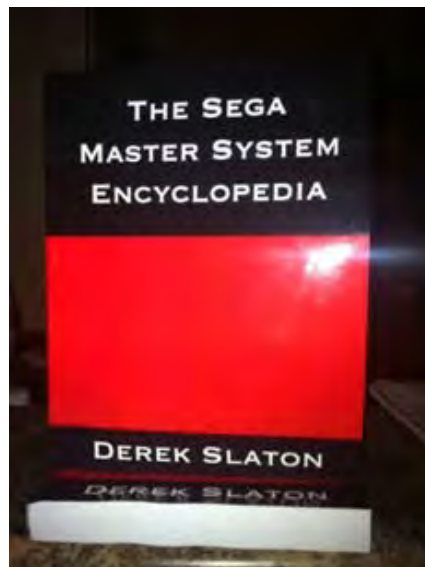
As classic gamers, we're truly thankful of all the work Derek Slaton has already done for Sega fans and the retro gaming community as a whole.

...And we can't wait to see what he has in store for us next!

Rob Luther and Landon Long

www.facebook.com/retrogamingjunkies

Breaking News! Amazon is running a sale on Derek's Sega Master System Encyclopedia right now. You can get the colored print version for just \$24 dollars plus tax and shipping!



The 435 page Sega Master System Encyclopedia



Early Computer Pizza Games

Italy might be the birthplace of pizza, but it's sagging compared to other European countries these days.

Norway's citizens eat the most per capita. Iceland offers more exotic toppings such as snails. Spain, Germany and at least a few other countries simply bake better pies.

Of course, there's always Britain.

Trendy in the land of spotted dick means a proliferation of hot dog-stuffed crusts at ubiquitous chains such as Pizza Express. The English can get a traditional breakfast of eggs, bacon sausage and chips on a carryout crust, and haggis really does show up with delivery drivers in Scotland.

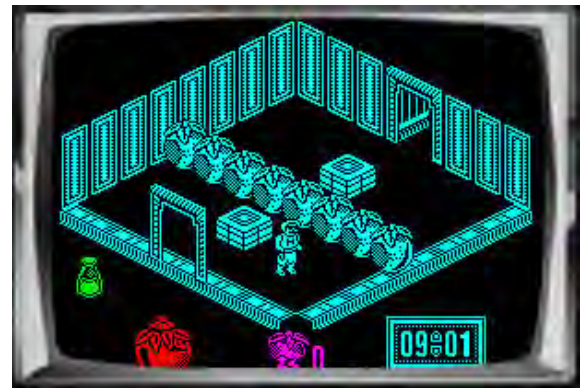
On the plus side, the Brits had the best retrogame programmers, but on a diet like that it should be little surprise the best pizza-themed game involves giant rebellious mutant tomatoes. The only other title of any merit involves throwing just-baked pizzas at customers. A third title is basically a supplement to a poorly reviewed children's game.

Scanning the globe for other such games on early computers yields essentially nothing of note, at least outside the U.S. While the first game mentioned above may prove satiating for pizza fans, back then it had about as much chance of moving from niche to mainstream audiences as Provel cheese. A sample taste of the latter two titles is provided here for those into devouring cold seafood pizza that's sat on the countertop overnight.

Attack of the Killer Tomatoes

A game like this is destined to have a built-in audience on its name alone, all the more so in this instance since it's ostensibly based on a 1978 comedy film with the same name (Rotten Tomatoes rating: 27 percent).

The computer version – debuting in 1986 on the Sinclair Spectrum, and ported to the Amstrad CPC and MSX series – will probably not excite fans of those machines on first glance because it's yet another isometric 3D multi-room explorer in mostly monochromatic hues. In short, another wannabe Knight Lore, Sabre Wulf, Atic Attack, Underwulde, etc., etc., etc. (Incidentally, the game has nothing to do with the NES/Gameboy platformer of the same name released in 1991.)



The good news for those who persist (and the masochistic Brits always did back then) is it's a quite competent contender in the genre that gets a dash of extra spice from the macabre humor. The protagonist is Wimp Plasbot, apparently the lone employee on the day shift at the Puritron Processing Factory, who arrives one day to find some tomatoes aren't in the mood to be smashed into pizza sauce. Since the Brits are apparently clueless about *pizza bianca*, this is a major crisis since the factory is the primary supplier for the country's pizzerias.

Fortunately, there's three types of tomatoes and only one has actually become homicidal. Unfortunately, it happens to be the largest variety, with eight of them sprouting legs and wandering in square-like patterns, killing Wimp if he touches them. Wimp has to locate a hammer somewhere in the factory and smash them. Smaller tomatoes merely bounce and Wimp can take the spring out of their step by dousing them with tomato sauce (think how you feel being splattered with

the stuff coming out of the wood chipper in "Fargo") and then taking them to the puree machine to keep the sauce supply steady. Finally, the immobile tomatoes are mostly an annoyance, causing the clock to speed up briefly. While the ability to shorten a shift might be the fantasy of every other employee in the world, Wimp needs every minute he can get to finish off the mutated tomatoes before his shift ends.

A similar paradoxes are time cards – a nightmare at any other job – which here give Wimp extra time when punched into a clock.

I had a few minor problems when first playing the Spectrum version of this game, most having to do with spotting and identifying items in the monochrome rooms. It should be noted that while I'd probably give it a B-/C+ grade – good, but noting special – Speccy magazine reviewers back in the day generally put it in B+ territory. Reviewers on other machines, which were considered more powerful than the Spectrum, scored it roughly even with my assessment.

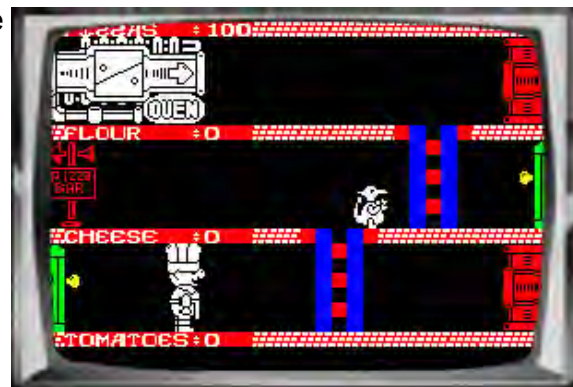
One consensus is it's a legit contender for the Best Video Game Based On The Worst Movie About Vegetables, even if certain plot holes remain. Why, for instance, does Wimp have a large "H" on his shirt when neither the factory name nor his name contains the letter?

Pizza Bar

This is another game that ought to win over a large audience on its premise alone: Make pizzas and "serve" customers by hurling the pies at them. But as soon as I mention it was from one of the Spectrum's many monthly magazines, I'm guessing a lot of appetites will wane.

As an appetizer, it's worth noting the game was developed by the Shaw Brothers in 1986, a couple of years before their many programming efforts finally resulted in a couple of commercially released games. Their success, such as it was, led to Sinclair User including Pizza Bar on a cassette of programs accompanying an issue in 1993.

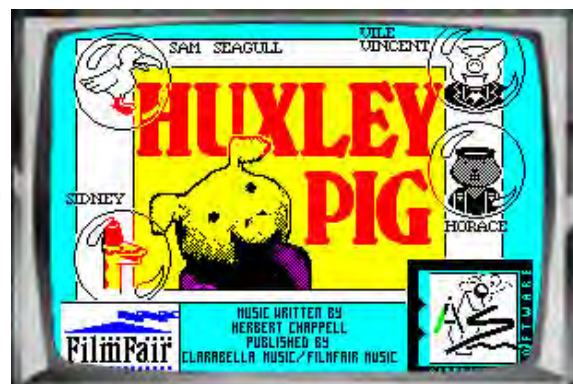
At heart it's a simple platformer and not one of the Speccy's better ones, seeing as how the hundreds (if not thousands) of them make those isometric 3D games look like an endangered species. But if you've gobbled up all the other pizza game goodness in this month's RTM and still have hunger pangs, it'll do much in the same way a leftover Tombstone slice will when you're hungover at 4:30 a.m.

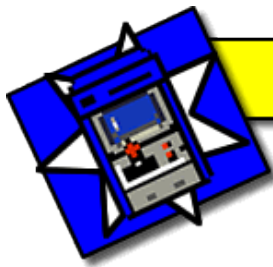


Huxley Pix

This game, however, is what you stuff in your mouth when you're so hungover you don't realize you're eating the cardboard box that still has congealed cheese attached.

Huxley Pig was a reasonably charming TV character, but every reviewer playing the game back in the day agreed it's the swine's bollocks. The main game was a simple collect-the-objects quest whose demographic appeal was kids young enough to be enthralled with hand-eye coordination exercises. The pizza game was essentially a B-side extra where the players chooses ingredients to top a pie with. As one magazine reviewer (who gave the programs a score of 25 percent) noted at the time, "it's simple, but at least it has some function and sense of direction, things lacking in the main game."





MAME Reviews

by Mark Sabbatini



Radikal Bikers

Want to know the real reason so many freakish games come from Japan? They're created by programmers working 16-hour days on a diet of pizza topped with eels, corn, potatoes, tuna, bacon and mayonnaise.

Their idea of "American" pizza is bacon-wrapped hot dogs, mini-burgers, mushrooms, onions, peppers, garlic, ketchup and maple syrup. Not surprisingly, their understanding of Americans' gaming tastes can also be a bit awry.

Which may explain why the tiny number of pizza-themed coin-op arcade games known to mankind are about as classic as anchovies and pineapple. Nearly half are aberrant exclusives for Chuck E. Cheese (where a kid can be a kid and a lone adult male can be suspected of pediophilia). Another that seems to exist only as a watermarked photo stars a marionette pizza chef resembling a pedophile. Then there's probably the best-known game, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, which I absolutely refuse to play since I agree with Steven King's observation in the post-apocalyptic *The Stand* that TMNT are a good argument the world's better off destroyed.

Which means the only actual review in this roundup is of *Radikal Bikers*, a 1998 Gaelco coin-op that's also known as *Generic Cycle Racer But With Pizza Box On Back*. The rest of this column details why the half-baked concepts in the other games mean you're not really missing much as far as play value, but are an interesting bite of history.

Radikal Bikers

This me-too racer seeks identity by having the delivery driver terrorize the streets of pizza's birthplace which, since Greece and Italy both lay claim to the honor, is a wimp-out compromise of a "Mediterranean environment" where you're driving a rare Italjet Dragster scooter. But it fails to offer authentic-era pizzas such as the Italian *placenta* (dough topped with cheese, honey and bay leaves).

Instead you're doing exactly what you'd expect with 15 years of gaming evolution after *Pole Position*, complete with the gaudy dude-I-got-'tude title. Pixelated graphics straight from a Playstation One bargain release, a mishmash of feature creep, and hyperfast action during a short lap timer that will devour coins shamelessly.

If you're getting the impression *Radikal Bikers* left me less than satiated you'd be right, but I also spurned the endless proliferation of beat-em-ups back then and 99 percent of the gaming population proved my tastes are clearly deviant in both genres. I don't recall seeing it in arcades back then, but it's got a rarity rating of 13 out of 100 from *The Killer List of Video Games*, which translates to "popular today, gone tomorrow" in arcade terms. It did have enough of a legacy for a home version to be released on the original Playstation.

The goal is straight from Domino's pre-lawsuit employee manual: Deliver an order of pizza to its destination, safety to yourself and everyone else on the streets and sidewalks be damned (not to mention damage to the pizza – one can only imagine what looks like after a demolition derby ride on the back of a motorbike). The X-tra twist to the plot is you'll need to beat a competing computer-controlled delivery driver there, since your customer apparently was arrogant enough to order two pizzas with the intention of only paying for one.

The controls are an X-treme-size set of handlebars with throttle and brake controls, and back then 50 cents bought you 45 (slightly accelerated?) seconds of time to complete the first of two laps on each of four street circuits. There's three



selectable difficulty levels, although they're as messed up as that pizza is upon reaching its destination:

- **Margherita (easy):** Admittedly this is one of the simplest of pizzas (cheese, tomatoes, basil leaves), but something at least 99 percent of the world's pizzerias can't make authentically.
- **Capricciosa (medium):** Probably the most accurate classification, since it's your standard mishmash of typical toppings (mozzarella, tomato, mushrooms, artichokes, cooked ham, olives and oil).
- **Diavola (hard):** Ought to be switched with Margherita, since any 99-cent slice joint can simply throw a random and unappealing assortment of toppings on (tomatoes, garlic, basil, mozzarella cheese, onion, salami, anchovy filets, black olives and peperoncini) and give it a name.

Anyhow, if you complete all four tracks on one of the lesser levels, you move up a notch.

Gameplay – with the expected X-treme beat music and chatter in the background – consists of navigating streets and tunnels that tend to be Olde European narrow. The route is preset – no trying to figure out the shortest route on a multitude of streets – and arrows flash briefly right before steep turns. Errant turns and collisions are merely a moment of indigestion, as your cycle and rider appear to be as immortal as the cheese-like topping used by (insert your favorite delivery chain here).

Various power-ups offer turbo speed, extra time, a "power kick" that destroys cars you sideswipe and other help along the way, although you'll often need to do things such as hit a ramp with good timing to reach them (something I couldn't do with anything other than luck). The computer opponent is a real bear to overtake, although it's not overly different to block their attempt to pass you.



As mentioned at the beginning, the biggest issue with this game is it lacks the quality of the best driving games of the era and fails to offer any strong novelties as enticement, unless you really like pizza. As evidence, consider that the following games were released at about the same time: Smashing Drive, ATV Track, Surf Planet, Snow Board Championship, Speed Up and World Rally 2 – all by Gaelco itself.

Chuck E. Cheese's Electric Pizza

"Today our birthday stars are Johnny who's seven, Susie who's four and Mark who's 21."

I'm hardly in a position to question what goes on in the creative minds at Chuck E. Cheese, since the looks I got at my coming-of-age party likely rivaled those given to a newly-arrived neighbor who's on a sex offender registry. Chalk it up to dating a girl whose most-quoted idol was the Swedish Chef from The Muppet Show.

Still, it means I was old enough that I can remember certain overall impressions from that landmark birthdate more than 20 years ago. The main one (besides pizza ranking somewhere between Totino's and Tombstone) is Chuck's proprietary games were a bigger hit than the major-name coin-ops one could find in any arcade. Unfortunately, for the purposes of this column, we're talking about Chuck's "redemption" games such as Skee-Ball variants, where it was a modest challenge to bully Johnny and Susie out of the way so we could accumulate massive piles of tickets redeemable for useless junk.

Their few efforts at video games were, not surprisingly, designed with young kids in mind. And while the suits and/or geeks might have envisioned they were creating entertainment for eight-year-olds, the true demographic was more like the Fischer-Price crowd.

In that context, their game Electric Pizza succeeds in one critical area – eye appeal. The bright yellow cabinet is adorned with three large colorful buttons on the control panel, plus a large hand crank next to the coin slots. But Kip



Atchley, a longtime company employee who until a few weeks ago was one of the few (only?) owners of a still-functioning machine, observed "kids would tend to play it only one time."

"When you insert a token, the game starts (and) you turn the handle to make the sounds go faster or slower," he wrote in an e-mail interview. "The L.E.D. lights spin around in a circle. When you push the buttons, the sound changes just a bit. I assume this was very poor with repeat-play sales."

Atchley, now a car dealership executive in Napa Valley, began collecting arcade games at the age of 13 and worked for five of video game legend Nolan Bushnell's companies during the 1980's. Far from being a mere pizza baker, he worked on projects such as designing the huge Chuck E. Street in-store playgrounds set in a faux cheese factory. Later Atchley would co-design and become general manager of The Wooz, a maze-themed amusement park in Vacaville. Some still post fond memories about their visits, although a rather scornful, but colorful, retrospective comes from a San Francisco Chronicle blogger who wrote "it may not have been the worst amusement park in history, but it was without question the worst amusement park ever built in the Bay Area ... The coolest thing about The Wooz happened a few years after it closed in the mid-1990s. Instead of dismantling the maze, they simply burned it to the ground."

Atchley said he acquired his Electric Pizza machine when the company closed some of its offices and warehouses.

"There were piles of stuff everywhere. I remember someone telling me I could pick through the 'stuff,'" he wrote. He believes the machine he obtained is one of the early prototypes.

After keeping it in storage for "many, many years," Atchley put the machine up for sale on eBay this spring, but the first bidding period ended without any takers. A single bidder, whose recent history suggests an interest in video games and collectables of little interest to others, won the machine with an offer of \$199 (Atchley estimated shipping to be about the same cost as the actual item).

Still, even if Electric Pizza has little play value as one of the company's early gaming projects, Atchley noted it has one key quality.

"It's a piece of history from Nolan Bushnell," he wrote.

Chuck E. Cheese's Coloring Book

Many years after Electric Pizza, another kid-themed game from the restaurant chain debuted with Chuck E. Cheese's Coloring Book. Released in 2001, it appears to be similarly high in eye appeal and low in play value, although the latter might not have been as vital since it's also described as one of those "redemption" games that spit out those oh-so-cherished prize tickets.

There's few online details about the game – and no pictures I could locate – but a vague description is provided by The Killer List of Video Games, which notes the machine was released only in a cocktail-style cabinet and "the marquee is shaped like a crayon."

"Pick a picture and then fill it with color," a brief description of the gameplay notes. "Touch Chuck E., his objects and the background to paint the picture. Hurry up before time runs out."

In 2010, a seller in Houston named "Bottlejunkie" tried to unload his machine for \$40 in a message about as sophisticated as he made the game sound.

"dont know why i bought this in the first place i dont even have young kids,its on ebay im trying to get my money back on it and get it out of my storage unit would make a great conversion cocktail cab top is heavy fiberglass cab is 3/4 inch plywood in great shape everything works except the touch screen is off when you touch a spot it colors a diffrent spot.\$40 bucks."

Not surprisingly, the supposedly attached images of the game are missing.



There was little response beyond a couple people agreeing "little kids would love that," although a message by "TheDrewster" noted "I am surprised you ended up with that. Make sure the CEC police dont come after you. Those machines are NEVER supposed to leave CEC's possession in 1 piece."

While Chuck E. Cheese's games might not have amounted to much or have any collector appeal now, there is some modern-day entertainment value for both young and old from the company. Kids can play ripoffs of various Flash games at the company's website (www.chuckecheese.com). More suitable adult entertainment can be found in the archive of corporate documents at the site and that of merger partner ShowBiz Pizza Place (<http://showbizpizza.com/info/documents>). Things like the franchisee newsletter put a new perspective on "game tips" columns, offering suggestions about what game settings will maximize profits and how to prevent equipment drivers from stealing arcade games using their truck.

The Original Luigi Pizza Man

Finally, as essentially a postscript, I deliver The Original Luigi Pizza Man. Or at least a tiny slice of it.

A game by United Billiards Inc., it's described as a variation on the game "Bimbo the Clown" – which itself is a ripoff of Williams Electronics' 1950s classic "Peppy the Clown." The Luigi variant features a pizza man marionette and a row of buttons on the front cabinet. A description of the Williams' game at the Killer List of Video Games rather breathlessly provides the essentials.

"It looks like a regular arcade game but, it has some class to it," the author notes. "Instead of a screen inside that might show an action fighting game, there is a cute clown in a red, blue, and yellow clown costume that is made to be a marionette ... It runs on (a) dime. When the money is in place, circus music and an organ come on. There are four buttons on the front. You can make the marionette dance. You control both of his hands and feet. He moves his mouth and sings on his own. ... This game is run on an 8-track ... This is, in my opinion, the best arcade game ever!"

Luigi obviously fared less well, with the only mention I could find online being from a second-hand dealer at www.flippers.com, which is selling the machine for \$495. A "hilarious" video of the game in action is missing, but the seller reassures it's a "very cool and funny game – just wild!"





Gaming Studies With The Tomy Tutor

by David Lundin, Jr.



Deep Six

Last month we studied the underwhelming and rather mediocre undersea shooter Torpedo Terror but you would believe the Tomy Tutor was home to yet another undersea shooter? That's right, the home computer that barely made a ripple in the pond of early 1980's computing, the computer that only had ten cartridges released in the United States, has two different shooters that involve underwater eradication. I really wish I knew the reasoning behind releasing two fairly similar games, rather than dropping one for something different from the slightly larger Japanese catalog - which we'll get to toward the end of this year. Deep Six, at the very least, is a much better game than Torpedo Terror. Incredibly it is also the Tutor game that carried with it the lowest list price, five dollars less than any other Tomy Tutor cartridge at the time of original release. The argument against Torpedo Terror seems to be getting worse and worse but Deep Six isn't without its problems.

In Deep Six you play the role of a treasure hunting diver equipped with a SCUBA suit and a harpoon gun. Although your weapon has unlimited shots your air reserves slowly drain down and each area must be completed before the tank is depleted. The diver can face up, down, left or right and his harpoon gun can be fired in those same four directions. Pressing a direction on either the Joy Controllers or Joystick will cause the diver to face that direction. Repeated presses in the same direction, or holding that direction on the controller, will move the diver in the direction he is facing. Diagonal movements can easily be accomplished but the diver will always face one of the four cardinal directions. Pressing either SL or SR will fire the harpoon gun and while you never run out of ammunition, only one shot can be on the screen at any given time. Due to this, the closer the diver is to the edge of the screen, the faster he will be able to fire. Additionally hitting an enemy with a shot will allow the diver to fire again instantly as the shot is absorbed by the enemy as it is destroyed. Holding down the fire button not only allows the diver to have what is essentially a rapid fire gun within proximity to the screen boundaries, but also affects his movement. While holding down the fire button the diver will continuously face in the direction he is firing but can be moved in any of the eight directions. This plays a lot into the strategy of Deep Six, as getting set up to face a group of enemies and then sweeping back and forth to shoot them is often the best way to go. While the controls seem simple and well developed on paper, the rigidity of the Tutor control devices make controlling the diver more difficult than it should be. The result is a usually frustrating experience as the stiff control makes it all too easy to miss a shot or be overwhelmed by a fast moving enemy.

There is a sense of progression in Deep Six makes it stand out from most other Tomy Tutor games due to the fact that it has three screens of action that are cleverly connected to one another. The game begins on the surface with light blue water and small black fish that slowly move around the screen. None of the objects really scroll all that smoothly but the movements are small enough that it never feels like objects are moving unexpectedly. Along with the small black fish there are randomly appearing larger red fish that spit out projectiles. The large fish can be shot for bonus points, while shooting their projectiles will award even more points but they are not the objective of the first screen. Instead the small black fish must all be destroyed before the stage will advance and since this is a diving game, the direction of advancement is down. The tranquil blue waters will scroll by as the darker depths fill the screen. It's not much but as Tutor games go the transition is very nice and gives you a moment to prepare for the next screen. The second screen is completely black while scores of small green and red jellyfish scramble about. As with the black fish on the previous screen, all the small jellyfish must be destroyed before progressing. Replacing the large red fish from the surface area are large green jellyfish which move in a diagonal pattern. They tend to follow you into the corners more than any of the enemies from earlier so constantly dispatching them seems like a great idea. That is until you realize that every time a large jellyfish is shot it spawns a smaller yellow jellyfish. These small jellyfish move faster than their bigger brothers, tend to dart around in hard to shoot patterns, and will often home in on your diver at a moments notice. They also look like one of the invader designs from the Atari 2600 version of Space Invaders. After all the small jellyfish are gone then

the screen advances once more to the ocean floor.



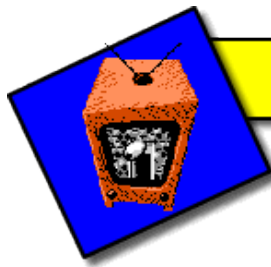
The third and final screen is what Torpedo Terror should have looked like. We have a fully realized ocean floor of rock and sand that utilizes two different colors along with underwater grasses littered here and there. The final screen has small enemies like the previous two but this time they are multicolor sprites and are not the main objective. Instead there are two huge octopuses resting on the ocean floor, guarding a treasure that sits between them and that treasure is the main objective of Deep Six. So not only does Deep Six provide the surprise of an end of stage boss, something not really encountered on the Tomy Tutor, but doubles it up with two end of stage bosses that are huge compared to anything else in the game. The octopuses move their tentacles back and forth and fire ink blobs in the direction of the diver. While they can't be destroyed they can be subdued. Shooting the head of an octopus will cause it to progressively get beaten down, changing its facial expression in the process. Eventually an octopus can be shot into submission and no longer be a threat but be warned, until they are completely subdued an octopus will slowly regain its composure and continue to attack. You really do have to get several clean shots in before the threat is neutralized. It's awesome to see some real character be designed into the octopuses rather than just having them be stationary background graphics. This makes the final screen feel much more like a battle rather than simply shooting an object to pass. My strategy is to wipe out most if not all of the small fish to give me more room to dodge the ink blobs all the while getting a shot in here and there to briefly stun the octopuses. Then I can concentrate on completely stunning both octopuses and recover the treasure. Of course if an opening presents itself to end the stage quicker I will often take it but that usually proves to be very risky. After recovering the treasure, bonus points are awarded and the game begins again. On subsequent loops it seems like the air gauge depletes a little faster and the shooting enemies tend to fire more frequently.

Outside of the diver himself I really like the presentation here. Each screen has a specific set of enemies that isn't reused in subsequent screens, each sea creature has a decent amount of detail, and the final screen looks great. I can't say enough about the personality drawn into the octopuses and that it really does a lot to add an additional layer of charm to the game, especially on a platform that usually is devoid of such things. Each screen has white bubbles in the background that grow in size as they float upward for a nice visual touch and again something not seen very much on the Tutor. Deep Six even has a simple looping attract screen that visually sums up the most basic game rules in about three seconds: Shoot enemies to destroy them, a large jellyfish spawns a smaller jellyfish once destroyed, red fish spit projectiles, if anything touches the diver a life is lost. Nothing spectacular or anything but I think it's kind of a little elegant way to explain how the game works without giving away what the depths below the surface hold. Compared to the other games on the hardware, sound is much quieter and more fitting for a game that takes place at the bottom of the sea. Gone are the expected jarring sound effects and instead you're presented with beeps and boops in line with an arcade style game of this vintage.

While it is in no way perfect, Deep Six is a good game for the Tomy Tutor and has all the trappings of a great game that is sadly derailed a bit by stiff controls. Unfortunately the controls do spoil what would otherwise be a very entertaining and reasonably polished experience. If there's one thing the Tomy Tutor really needed outside of more software it was third party after market controllers. One of these days I'm just going to buckle down and build myself some kind of Tutor controller adapter so I can use a Wico Atari 2600 joystick or something similar. As it stands Deep Six is definitely worth checking out if you're a vintage computer enthusiast, is infinitely better than Torpedo Terror, and is all around a well designed game. Competing for high scores is a lot of fun and opens up a lot of different strategies to push scores higher. One of these is to hang out on the first screen and shoot the red fish projectiles as much as possible before

taking out the last small fish with the diver's last few breaths of air. You can do a lot worse on the Tutor and after learning how to compensate for the stiffness of the controllers, a little of what makes Deep Six infuriating will begin to fall away.

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



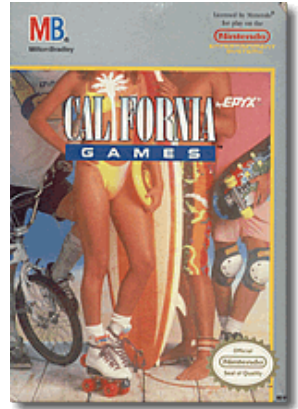
Turn To Channel 3

by Nick DeMarco



California Games

As I'm sure some of you know, my family was NEVER the first family on the block to have a new system, as much as we always wanted to be. My mother didn't start working until I was 9 years old, and as hard as my father worked, there never seemed to be money left over for things like video games after all the bills were paid. So I did not become a part of the Nintendo Power phenomenon until 1988, 3 years after the debut of the NES, but it was certainly worth the wait. I can still remember my parents looking at my brother and I disapprovingly as we would literally play the picture tube off a television or make the AC adapter on our NES as hot as something out of an oven. We were hooked, and, probably sadly, a lot during the summer with school being out in Northeastern Pennsylvania. Yes, we played outside, Wiffle ball, football, tag, and we rode bikes around the neighborhood, but on those rainy days, as long as there were no thunderstorms, we were plopped in front of the NES, playing whatever game or games we had begged our mother to allow us to rent.



One of my earliest memories of the NES is my subject for this review, California Games. It is a game I still play quite frequently, especially on rainy days. What has made this game have such staying power on my list of favorite titles for the NES? Why do I feel like, at least for this gamer, it is synonymous with summer time fun? Read on, RTM fans, read on.

Sound

8

True to form, like most NES titles that begin on the C64, the sound is not as great as it could be, but that isn't to say it is downright terrible. There are certainly some cliché tunes and sounds in this game, the surfing stage music, including the Jaws type sound bite whenever a shark emerges when you fall off your board, but all in all the music fits this game well, and further enhances the overall enjoyment of the game. Each event has their own music, and the title screen tune isn't that bad either. While there are sounds in the game, they are minimal in comparison to the music, and I'm not sure how I feel about that. California Games doesn't have quite as iconic music and sound effects as other NES titles, but I wouldn't consider it a total loss in this area either. I guess the best way to sum it up is the music is very summer, if that makes any sense.

Graphics

8

Like the sound in this game, some levels are better than others. While I found such levels as the BMX and surfing events really well done, I thought others, like the skateboarding and Frisbee events to be downright boring in comparison. I'd probably say the foot bag level to be the most iconic, and between the player and the seagull soaring overhead, I can see why. Still, the surfing level has the most going on, and even the scoreboard for that level is very well designed. California Games has some great graphics, but in the end it's kind of a matter of personal preference as

to which one is best, each have their own unique quirks. The skating level was well done too, but since the event itself is a pain in the butt, it is often overlooked graphically.

Gameplay

7

Don't let the catchy music and great graphics fool you, this game definitely has some very difficult events while at the same time some that are also too easy. For instance, I think the reason the foot bag event is my favorite is because getting a high score is fairly simple, you do the same moves over and over, alternating here and there, to win, its pretty straight forward. On the other side of the coin, the skateboarding and skate levels trip me up even years later with the difficulty, especially the skating. You hit a crack, you fall, you hit some weeds that grow up in the cracks of the sidewalk, you fall. Heck, if a beach ball hits you, that's the end of your try. It still frustrates me! The skateboarding is fun, but I don't know many moves and it seems like you don't have much time to work with before your time is up, and when you try to get fancy, you end up messing up big time. The Frisbee level can also be annoying because the action you do to make the disc fly also makes the other character jump, so you'll have a perfectly tossed disc soaring over a guy who looks like they are eating the grass. Still, the surfing, BMX, and foot bag levels are a blast to play even years later, and have easy to grasp control schemes.



Overall

7

California Games, one could argue, doesn't live up to the hype, but it really does offer a lot to the casual gamer. There are several events, each with some great tunes, and it was really ahead of its time allowing several players to enter their names and compete against one another. Certainly there are better multiplayer games out there, but this was a part of their humble beginnings, and if you look at it in that respect, you really can't go wrong with getting some friends together and traveling back to the 1980s, whether you like surfing events, skating events, or riding a BMX bike. California Games has something for everyone, and I think in that, is what makes it such an endearing game even so many years later.



Hope you enjoyed turning to channel 3 with me this issue. Down the pipe we have Streets Of Rage, Déjà vu, and Adventure Island, just to name a few!

Thanks so much, and remember, **GAME ON!**



All good things must come to an end, so this concludes the pizza edition. Hopefully it gives you a few good ideas on what games to play when you have a craving for pizza. I know that I have played a few pizza games in the past and in case you didn't know, there were two Dominoes sponsored games featuring the Noid, Yo! Noid for the NES and Avoid the Noid on the PC. I don't know if anyone reading has played Avoid the Noid, but the object of the game is to climb to the top of an apartment building to deliver a pizza. It's filled with many obstacles and is a pretty challenging game. Even though the delivery boy can do some athletic jumps and summersaults, he still has a hard time avoiding the Noid. I never made it above floor 12 I think, and to think there are 30 floors is pretty crazy. If you are interested in getting your Noid fix, check out Yo! Noid and Avoid the Noid. In my opinion, both of these games are better than their pizza, although that might not be saying much!