

The Retrogaming Times

THE BIMONTHLY RETROGAMING HOBBYIST NEWSLETTER

TWENTY-FIFTH ISSUE - MARCH 2020

DESPERADO WANTED ON TWO COASTS!

The Retrogaming Times
- The Bimonthly Retrogaming Hobbyist Newsletter -

The Retrogaming Times

Twenty-Fifth Issue - March 2020

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Prepare to Qualify

by [David Lundin, Jr.](#)

As this year marches on we begin to head into an interesting time for video games, as both retro and current games continue to bleed into one another more and more. In just a few weeks the TurboGrafx-16 / PC Engine will have a return to the spotlight with its own mini all-in-one system. A new Intellivision console is slated for release at the end of the year. The next generation of modern gaming is waiting just over the horizon, ever blurring where the retrogaming line falls. Flash cartridge technology continues to mature and improve, continuously adding value as hobbyist projects become legitimate gaming solutions. It's all pretty great as it gives the player choice and variety - as does this issue!

We get underway with Merman's comprehensive look at the roster of Capcom games on Commodore 64, featuring titles both classic and obscure in this issue's cover story. Donald Lee returns with his thoughts on the current incarnation of Namco Museum as well as some Atari homebrew news, straight from Don's Desk. With less than a year until its planned launch, the Intellivision Amico is back on Sean Robinson's radar as he details his views on how the upcoming console is being presented. Absence may make the heart grow fonder but have the nearly two decades since the Shenmue series began on the Dreamcast allowed the flames of revenge to cool down? The promise and the problems of Shenmue III are detailed in a special article. Regarded by some as little more than a failed gimmick, Todd Friedman presents his case for the importance of the Power Glove in The Controller Chronicles. Video Game Haiku returns after a short hiatus, along with a reader submission! All that and more are ahead in this issue of The Retrogaming Times!

I want to again remind our readers if they have comments or questions about anything covered in the newsletter, or there is something they would like featured in a future issue of The Retrogaming Times, to contact me directly at trt@classicplastic.net! Of course article submissions are also always open. If you have something ready to go, the address is the same, trt@classicplastic.net. **"If there is something you want to write about, send it in!"**



Upcoming Events

Compiled by [David Lundin, Jr.](#)

Midwest Gaming Classic, April 3rd - 5th 2020, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA

The Midwest Gaming Classic is a trade show featuring 150,000+ square feet of retro and modern home video game consoles, pinball machines, arcade video games, table top RPGs, computers, table top board games, crane games, collectible card games, air hockey, and that's just the start.

The Midwest Gaming Classic is about celebrating gaming, trying new things, learning about the gaming hobby, about meeting others who share the love of gaming, and having fun doing it! No matter if you have one console and a handful of games or thousands of games in every room of your house, you'll find something to celebrate with us!

For more information, visit <http://www.midwestgamingclassic.com/>

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Pintastic Pinball & Game Room Expo, June 25th - 28th 2020, Sturbridge, Boxborough, USA

Flippin Fun For Everyone! Are you looking for a little relief from the hot summer sun? Look no further than Pintastic New England, which is the first of its kind, centrally located in Sturbridge, Massachusetts. This expo is 30,000 square feet of fun for the whole family. The kids can have never-ending excitement with a caricature artist, face painting, friendly clowns & balloon animals. The adults can bring out their inner child with over 200 pinball machines set on free play, all while enjoying an ice-cold craft beer.

For more information, visit <https://pintasticnewengland.com/>

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Video Game Summit, July 11th 2020, Villa Park, Illinois, USA

The date for the 2020 Video Game Summit has been set! It will be held on July 11th at The Odeum Expo Center, 1033 North Villa Ave., Villa Park, Illinois. More information to follow shortly!

For more information, visit <http://www.videogamesummit.net/>

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KansasFest, July 21st - 26th 2020, Kansas City, Missouri, USA

KansasFest 2020, the 32nd annual Apple II convention, is scheduled for July 21 - 26 in Kansas City, Missouri. Robert Woodhead of Sir-Tech Software, well-known as the co-creator of the Wizardry series of computer role-playing games, will join us as the keynote speaker.

At an early age, Robert Woodhead, aka Trebor the Mad Overlord, was consumed by two passions; computer programming and not having to have a real job. He first achieved this by writing computer games for Sir-Tech Software, most notoriously co-authoring the first four Wizardry CRPGs, first for the Apple II, and later for other, lesser computers. In 1989, deciding that this wasn't nerdy enough, he founded the oldest surviving anime releasing company, AnimEigo. Other things he's done include: writing one of the first MMO bots, building a 2-time National Champion Combat Robot, serving 4 terms on the EVE Online Council of Stellar Management, and not being "liquidated" by his wife. Yet.

KansasFest is an annual convention offering Apple II users and retrocomputing enthusiasts the opportunity to engage in beginner and technical sessions, programming contests, exhibition halls, and camaraderie. KansasFest was originally hosted by Resource Central and has been brought to you by the KFest committee since 1995. Any and all Apple II users, fans, and friends are invited to attend this year's event. Registration details will be announced on the KansasFest Web site, and registration will open on March 31. For photos, videos, and presentations from past KansasFests, please visit the event's official website.

Will you be among the 2020 attendees? Mark your calendars for July 21 - 26, 2020.

For more information, visit <http://www.kansasfest.org/>

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California Extreme 2020, July 25th - 26th 2020, Santa Clara, California, USA

California Extreme is very pleased to officially announce the dates for this year's California Extreme Arcade and Pinball Show. It will be held on July 25 - 26, 2020 at the same fantastic location - the Hyatt Regency in Santa Clara, California. Please join us for our 24th show with hundreds of your favorite arcade and pinball games, both past and present, all gathered for another fun-filled weekend of arcade excitement for everyone!

We will announce later when the hotel will be accepting reservations (please don't contact the hotel as the block is not set up yet) and when show tickets will be on sale.

For more information, visit <http://www.caextreme.org/>

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Classic Game Fest, July 25th - 26th 2020, Austin, Texas, USA

The biggest retro gaming event in Texas is back on July 25 - 26, 2020! Classic Game Fest returns to the Palmer Events Center in Austin, TX on July 25-26, 2020. The annual summer event will feature all the expected attractions including special guests, live music, free play games, a massive vendor hall and more. Vendor booth and ticket information will be available soon.

For more information, visit <https://classicgamefest.com/>

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If there is a show or event you would like listed here, free of charge, please contact David directly at trt@classicplastic.net. Please include a short official blurb about your event along with any relevant links or contact information and it will be published in the next issue of The Retrogaming Times. The event listing will remain posted until the issue following the event date. Big or small, we want to promote your show in our newsletter.

Check out these great events, shows, and conventions and let them know you read about them in The Retrogaming Times!



More C64! - Capcom USA

by Merman

Everyone has heard of Capcom, right? IRM (formed in 1979 by Irem's founder Kenzo Tsujimoto) and Capsule Computers (formed in 1981) made sales through a company called Capcom (a contraction of Cap-sule and Com-puters, the company was headed by Tsujimoto after he left Irem). The two companies would merge under the Capcom name and became one of the leading arcade manufacturers in the 1980s, with a string of hits including Commando and Ghosts 'n Goblins. The Capcom USA subsidiary was founded in 1985 primarily as a publisher, with the majority of its titles released on C64 and DOS. Capcom USA still exists today, but we are going to look back at its catalogue of C64 titles - which are nearly all arcade conversions. Much of the conversion work was done by Pacific Dataworks International, a company formed by Troy Lyndon and Christopher Riggs. But as we will find out, not all of those conversions were originally from Capcom's own arcade titles.



The Capcom presents logo from Bionic Commando (US version), and the Pacific Dataworks logo from Street Fighter (US version).

BIONIC COMMANDO (US VERSION)

The highly original mechanic of swinging through the levels on a bionic arm made Bionic Commando an arcade hit, with some great cartoon-style characters and excellent music. When it came to the home computers, there were actually two versions - the UK game developed by Software Creations for US Gold's Go! label, and the US version from Capcom USA.

However, the US version is markedly inferior to the UK incarnation. The UK game has a superb soundtrack by Tim Follin, using many of the themes from the arcade machine and elaborating and expanding on them. The US soundtrack is poor in comparison, although it does only use two channels to allow the third to play sound effects. And while the small sprites of the UK version are no match for the arcade game, they move and look so much better than the US game (although the main sprite is quite effective, the rest are poor). The US version also suffers with a really short bionic arm that makes hard work of climbing upwards; you often find yourself falling off the end of a platform because you didn't hook in far enough. The final nail in the coffin is the poor scrolling.



About to blow up a generator in the UK level 1, and grabbing a branch with the claw in the US version.

CABAL (US VERSION)

The arcade original is a tough game filled with destruction, with the player moving a cursor to fire their machine gun and grenades at enemies and background features alike. A lot of players remember it for the strangely camp way the hero runs up the screen on completing a level.

There were two versions of this title too. Special FX developed an excellent port for Ocean. The graphics are really well drawn (especially the hero sprite with its black overlay giving detail), it features all the levels and controls really well. It lacks the victory "dance" - the hero simply walks off screen to the right instead - and a two-player mode but it works well.

Sadly the US version is another let-down. Graphics are notably worse, enemy bullets can be hard to spot and it is tricky to control. (Interestingly, it also uses sprite overlays but the larger player character is not as well drawn). It also lacks the two-player mode, and the collapsing background details are poorly handled. Stranger still there is no dodge roll and no actual grenades - you simply double-tap fire and it does extra damage to the target, without showing the grenade at all. The difficulty level is high too.



Level 1 of the UK version on the left, level 2 of the US version on the right.

GUN.SMOKE

Capcom's vertically-scrolling run & game has a great Western theme, with a series of bad guys to catch depicted on a wanted poster. Developed by the legendary Yoshiaki Okamoto, it took the idea of Commando and made the player push forward with its forced scrolling. The player could aim in three directions, and shooting barrels revealed power-ups. These included boots to speed up movement and rifles to increase shot distance. Waiting at the end of each level was the bad guy the player had to kill for the bounty, with the scrolling stopping.

There is only one version, developed by Capcom USA. And that may explain some of the poor reviews, as the game was not properly optimised for the PAL (European) market. ZZAP! 64 magazine in particular was very harsh in its review. There were bugs, poor graphics and terrible sound. Reviewer Julian Rignall suggested the American programmers should have been given a copy of The Shoot 'Em Up Construction Kit (a programming utility by Sensible Software, which ironically contained a game inspired by Gun.Smoke called Outlaw - which is more fun to play, despite lacking the power-ups). The final overall score was 15%, with the acerbic comment, "Any decent cowboy would have this lame horse shot and sent to the great software shelf in the sky." Perhaps my least favourite aspect of the conversion is the fact that you restart at the beginning of the level when you die; at least the arcade game had checkpoints in the levels so you restarted further along when you had reached one.



The WANTED first villain is named after a type of rifle, and setting off into level 1.

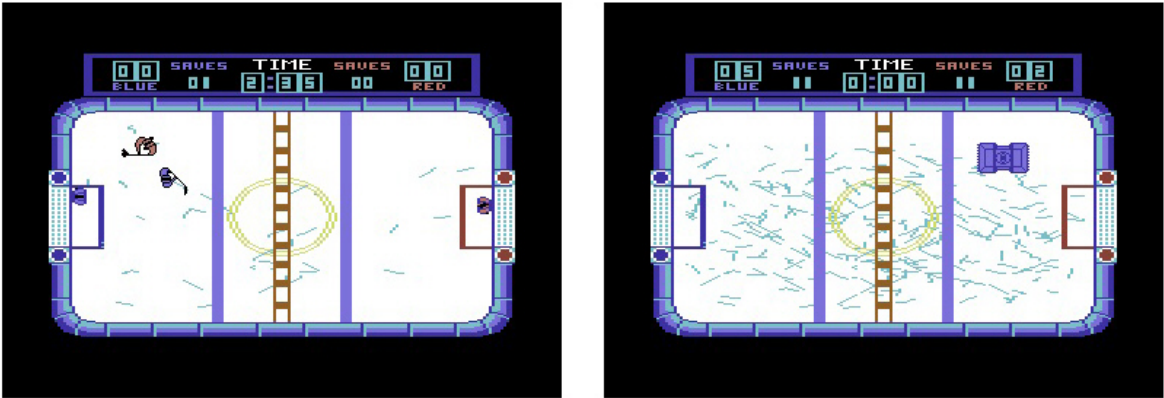
An interesting postscript to the Gun.Smoke story was unveiled by journalist Jeremy Parish for the USGamer website. Capcom in the early 2000s had developed several new games related to but not directly based on its classic properties. One such game was Maximo, a 3D game loosely inspired by Ghosts 'n Goblins. Parish discovered Capcom had a 3D cowboy game in development in 2003, drawing on Gun.Smoke's heritage. However the company halted development - only for Rockstar Games to step in and buy the prototype. Rockstar continued development and released it under the new title Red Dead Revolver in 2004. Six years later came the best-selling sequel Red Dead Redemption and in 2018 the mammoth follow-up Red Dead Redemption II.

HAT TRICK

This is the first of three games that were not originally Capcom's in the arcade. Former Atari personnel set up a new firm in 1983, called Videa. Atari founder Nolan Bushnell needed games for his Chuck-E-Cheese restaurants, invested in Videa and renamed the firm Sente Technologies. (Sente, like Atari is a term from the Japanese game "Go." Where Atari means to "hit the target", Sente means to "have the initiative.") It did lead to a lawsuit from Atari, who claimed Bushnell was violating his "no competition" clause from his dismissal settlement. Although that was settled and Atari got first rights to Sente's games, when the firm hit financial trouble it was bought up by Bally to become Bally Sente. One of Sente's key concepts was a cabinet with interchangeable games, the idea being operators could refresh the cabinet with a new game regularly. This was before the widely-used JAMMA standard came into being. Bally Sente closed its doors in 1988 and Capcom USA bid for the rights to develop home versions of key Sente titles.

Hat Trick was Sente's ice hockey game, with the rink viewed from overhead. Simplifying things with just a single player and goalie on each side, it leads to frantic action. The goalie moves vertically at the same time as the player, allowing you to save an opponent's shot. (A four-player version was tested in Canada but did not go on wider release). One of its most memorable ideas was the way the players left trails in the ice. And like the real game, the Zamboni machine would appear between periods to resurface the ice.

The C64 conversion gets it right. Everything is there, including the ice trails and the Zamboni machine. While there are not a lot of sounds, there are some jingles. An effective conversion that remains very playable, especially in two-player mode.



Taking on the computer in one-player mode, and the Zamboni clearing the ice at the end of the game.

MINI GOLF

A second Sente arcade game, and another viewed from overhead. Up to four players can join in, controlling the aiming cursor with a trackball. Having placed the cursor, the power is set by moving left and right and the player presses a button to make the shot. Fail to make par and the player loses a "hole"; run out of holes and it is game over. Slopes, loops and electric fields feature in the 18 different holes available.

The C64 version is quite good, with the graphics closely resembling the original. However, the control method was changed. To time the shot, the player presses fire and the power dot moves around the ball in a declining spiral pattern. If it reaches the ball before the player hits fire then it costs a shot. Moving the joystick left and right then sets the power and fire takes the shot. While it is a reasonable conversion, the tricky control method can be off-putting.



Choosing the number of players on the menu, and tackling hole 2.

POCKET ROCKETS

This stands out as being an original title published by Capcom USA, although it did not make it overseas. It was developed by Riggs International, a company formed by Christopher Riggs (Lyndon's former business partner). There are four different models of superbike (based on real motorbikes) to ride. The action takes place on a road course and the drag strip. On the road the player must avoid roadside obstacles and set the fastest time to become champion. The bike is viewed from behind in 3D, which works ok. On the drag strip the player has to avoid a false start, over-revving the engine or falling off by accelerating too fast. The aim is to set the lowest time for the quarter-mile; this part of the game is viewed side on with the strip scrolling horizontally. There were also Amiga and DOS versions. The presentation of the game is really good, but it does mean a lot of disk accessing; at times a small stopwatch animates onscreen as a bar decreases to show how long loading the next section will take. The controls are quite difficult to master in both sections, and the circuit race is purely for time - there is no one to race against.



Racing around the bend in the Pocket Rockets circuit race, and falling off after accelerating too fast in the drag race.

SIDEARMS HYPER DYNE

This was an impressive shoot 'em up for its day, featuring both horizontal and vertically scrolling sections. One of its key features was the ability for two players to team up; by collecting a specific icon, the two sprites merged to give a larger character with heavier firepower.

The C64 conversion resulted in a heavy multiload to cope with the changing background graphics. Sadly it does not look great, and the difficulty level fluctuates widely. Part of the problem is the controls, with the player having to turn before firing backwards - and since many waves approach from behind, it becomes an annoyance. Like Gun.Smoke, this game suffered from being poorly optimised for PAL computers - and it also has a habit of crashing during play.



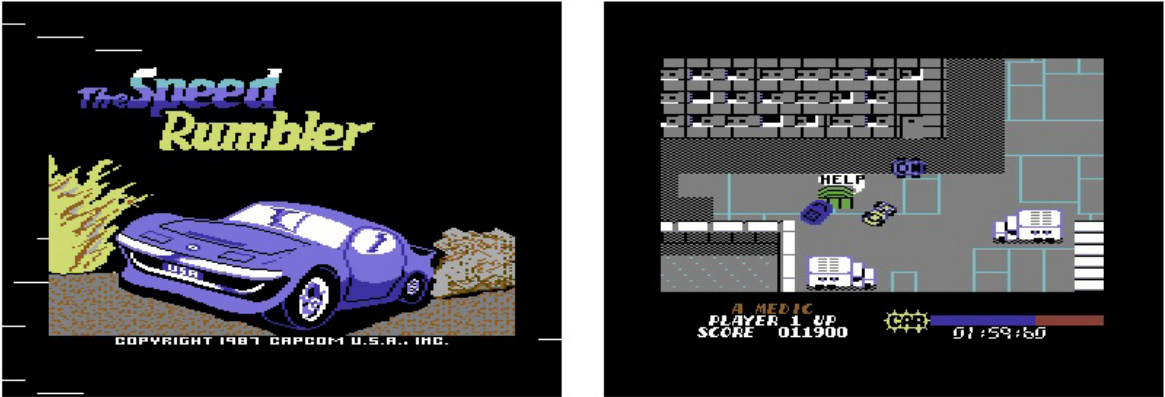
Flying through level 1, and the loading screen (with added HOTLINE logo from the cracking team).

THE SPEED RUMBLER

This was a personal favourite of mine in the arcades. The European version of the arcade game called its hero Super Joe, connecting it to Commando and Bionic Commando; the lives counter in Speed Rumbler resembles the one in Bionic Commando. The player must drive their car through six zones, rescuing hostages before time runs out. The car can shoot enemy vehicles, but when it takes too much damage the player must bail out and wait for a new car to be delivered. Shooting cages releases the hostages, who carry bonus items to be collected. A spanner repairs the vehicle, for example, and the red gun improves the main weapon. It is an incredibly tough game, especially when running around on foot.

The C64 version starts with an options menu controlled with the function keys and then loads the game. The disappointment is the small playing area and the very grey graphics, particularly in the first city section. Scrolling is not very smooth and the difficulty level matches the arcade game. You cannot run around on foot in this conversion, and prisoners are released by running over the cages; the cage flashes multiple colours and a message onscreen shows what you have been awarded. It takes perseverance to make progress, and while I still load it up now and then it isn't the best conversion. The pity is, it was the

ONLY conversion of Speed Rumbler back then.



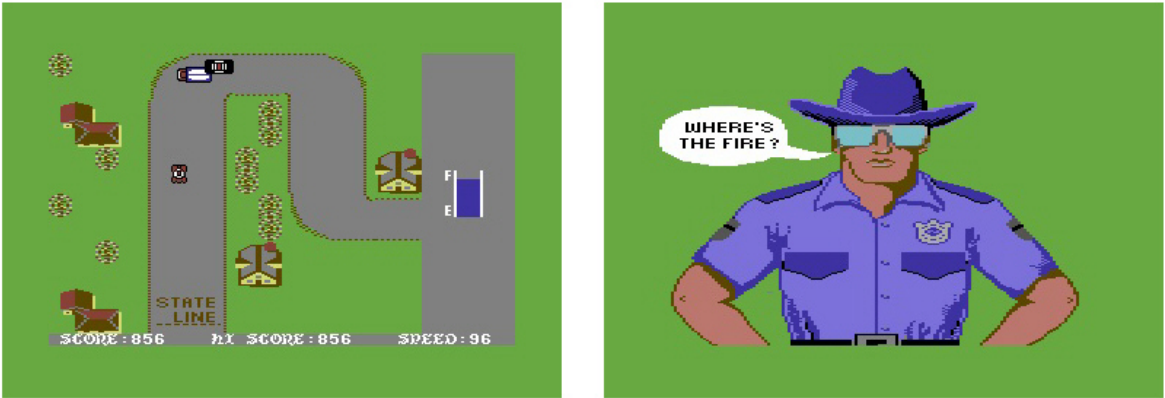
The disappointing loading screen, and picking up a prisoner in level 1.

STOCKER

This was another Sente arcade title, the first of a three-game series. The game was viewed from overhead, with the player controlling a stock car that had to race along the road that twists and turns through a large scrolling map. The car starts with a set amount of fuel, and is controlled by pushing in the direction you want the car to go. Running into obstacles or other cars drains fuel, and the game is over when the fuel gauge runs out. The course contains timed sections, where the faster you complete it the higher the bonus score awarded. Speeding and crashing attract the police, and when they catch you the player is issued a ticket when they catch you (with a close-up view of the cop, asking 'Where's the fire?'). But you can evade a police chase by crossing the "state line." Each ticket reduces the total score, which is based on distance traveled.

The original arcade game was followed by Euro Stocker, with different courses and graphics; it is rated rare by the Videogame Museum website. Night Stocker was very different as it had a 3D view, with the car driving on planet surfaces to take out alien bases.

The C64 version of Stocker plays reasonably well, with average graphics and sound. The map is made up of a series of still screens, with the occasionally shortcut or dead end to steer down. Control is ok but it soon becomes frustrating and repetitive. The presentation screens, including the cop, are good though.



Being chased by a police car, and the bitmap that is shown when the police give you a ticket.

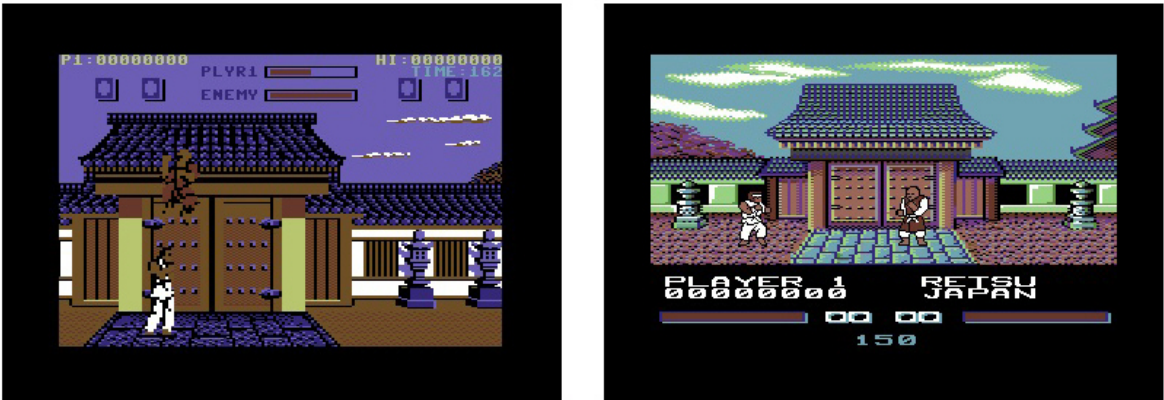
STREET FIGHTER

For the world-beating Street Fighter II to exist, there had to be a Street Fighter 1. Launched in 1987, the memorable thing about the first game was its original cabinet design. This had large pressure-sensitive buttons, turning the strength the player hit them into the strength of attack by the player's fighter. The buttons proved unreliable, leading Capcom to create the now-familiar six button layout to give different strengths of punch and kick.

As with other games discussed here, there were separate UK and US versions. The UK game developed by Tiertex tried to carry over the large size of the fighters and the panning background (moving left and right) in the arcade game. But by using the built-in sprite expansion, the characters appeared very blocky. It did not do well in reviews, with the control method also criticised.

Capcom USA developed the US version itself. After the menu system (which looks very similar to Speed Rumbler's) the in-game graphics appear very good at first glance - but much smaller. The sprites use an overlay (a black outline) to give definition. The backgrounds are well-drawn but do not scroll, giving an almost widescreen appearance. However the speed of the game here is much slower than the UK game, and the special moves are harder to pull off.

In an interesting twist, US Gold published a disk version with the UK game on one side and the US game on the other. Although this represented good value for money, neither was a great conversion of the arcade game. And Street Fighter II was poorly served by its C64 conversion as well (developed solely in the UK).



The same fight, shown two ways. On the left is the UK version from Tiertex, on the right is the Capcom USA version.

TIGER ROAD

In the process of researching this article, I found references online to a different US version of this coin-op. The game sees a martial arts master rescuing children from the bad guy, with a mixture of horizontally and vertically scrolling levels. One interesting power-up gives the power of flight.

However, all I can actually find is the different packaging used for the Amiga game in the American market. There doesn't seem to be any download images of a distinct US version of Tiger Road. So unless this claim was based on a particular catalogue, advert or magazine article, I believe it may be speculation and never actually existed. The graphics of the C64 version are ok, with some effective backgrounds (including the animated waterfalls). Sprites are rather small, and certain other elements of the presentation suggest it may have been developed in the US - including the function key controls on the menu. It's not a great game to play, with some levels simply being a case of hacking through enemies or tackling the large bosses.



Heading off into level 1 of Tiger Road, and taking on the first boss.

CONCLUSIONS

A real mixed bag of games from Capcom USA, then. A lot of it can be put down to different development strategies between US and UK companies. Many US games access the disk regularly, drawing in extra graphics or presentation sequences. In the UK programmers tried to optimise loading times, partly because fewer users here had disk drives and had to rely on the much slower tape deck.

Troy Lyndon would go on to greater fame as a key developer on the Madden series, with his PC experience on Monday Night Football helping the Madden games move into 3D. Capcom continues to develop games, most notably its Resident Evil franchise with a remake of Resident Evil 3 and new spin-off Project Resistance due this year.



An early logo for Troy Lyndon, and the Capcom USA logo.

Here's a final thought. The original name Capsule Computers came from the arcade games it was making, designed to be a "capsule of fun." And there is no doubt Capcom have continued to make fun and interesting games - even if they did not translate well to the 8-bit Commodore 64.



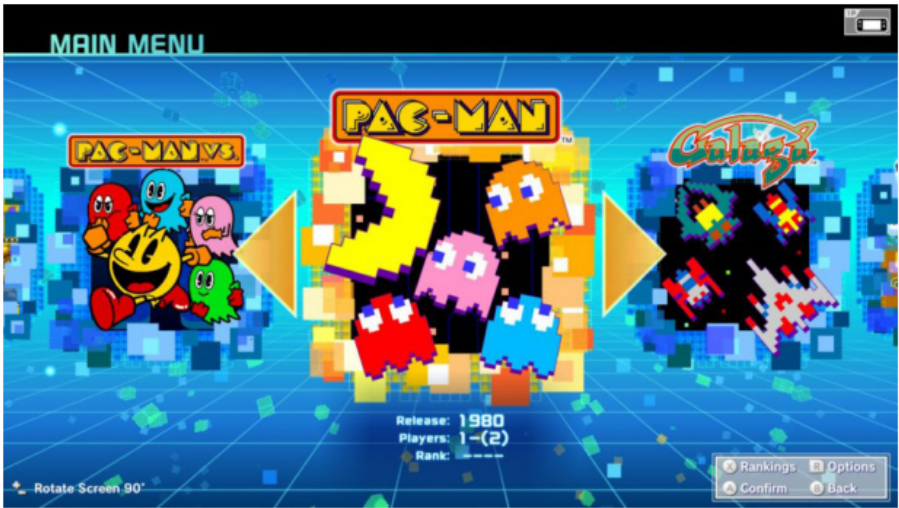
Don's Desk - Namco Museum / Galagon

by [Donald Lee](#)

Happy New Year folks. This is my first official column for 2020 as I missed the deadline for the January issue. It was a busy time toward the end of 2019 as I am a high school basketball official. If anyone of you are high school sports fans or have kids that play high school sports, you may have heard there is an official shortage. While I don't necessarily have to work a lot of games, I chose to go full bore and work a large number of games this season. That means a lot of evenings I'm out of the

house until late. Thus, when I had some downtime to think about things, I realized I had missed the deadline for the January issue.

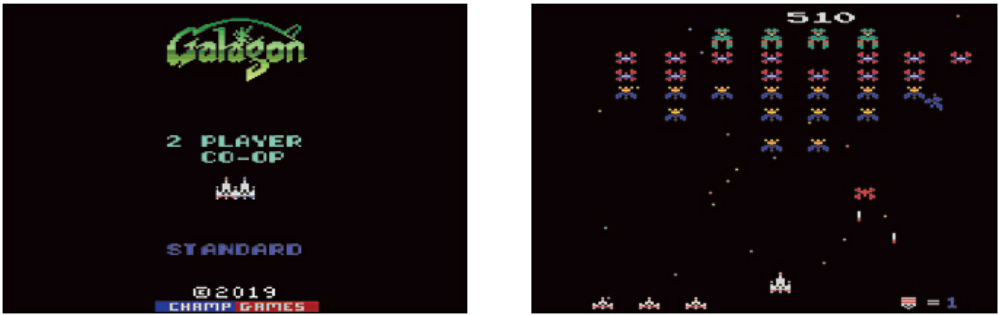
It actually worked out for the best as I'm not sure what I may have talked about in the January issue. I don't think I mentioned it in any articles, but during Black Friday, I picked up several games for my modern systems (Xbox One and Nintendo Switch) because they were on sale and I thought they were a good value. For the Xbox One, I picked up Grand Theft Auto V. It was relatively cheap and it had been a long time since I played a Grand Theft Auto game. For the Switch, I picked up Rocket League and the **Namco Museum**. Rocket League has a big learning curve, but once you get the hang of it, it's pretty fun.



But as this is a retro gaming magazine, let's talk about the Namco Museum. I primarily picked up Namco Museum to play Galaga though I have played Pac-Man and Dig Dug in the arcades and other platforms. Unfortunately, the other games in the collection weren't all that familiar to me and I haven't played the other games yet. In playing Galaga, Pac-Man and Dig Dug, it was fun to relive the arcade experience and also get to compare scores around the world and not just the top 5 scores that showed up in the arcade machines in our youth.

There was a bit of a downside to Galaga on the Switch's pro controller. The response and feel seemed different than the arcade joystick and fire buttons. I haven't messed with the default settings, but it just seemed a tad slow to me. I am a decent player of the Galaga arcade machine and get pretty far, but it was a bit of struggle for Galaga on Switch. Maybe I need to adjust the settings and see if that helps. I thought Pac-Man and Dig Dug played ok. Maybe because the games were a tad slower and the response time was better. All in all, for the price I paid, even if Galaga doesn't quite feel 100% arcade like, I enjoy playing the game and it's nice to have on the road. Worth a look if you're a fan of the games in the collection.

Speaking of Galaga, I have mentioned **Champ Games** a lot in past columns. I think I mentioned in some more recent columns that Champ Games is back in business. One of their first releases is a remake of Galaga for Atari 2600 called **Galagon**.



The game is on sale at Atari Age here:
https://atariage.com/store/index.php?l=product_detail&p=1203

From watching gameplay on YouTube, the game looks terrific and worth a purchase. Alas, I don't have a 2600 on me but I'm sure many others do.

Have fun!



Remember, you can't spell Nintendo Famicom without Amico! ;-)

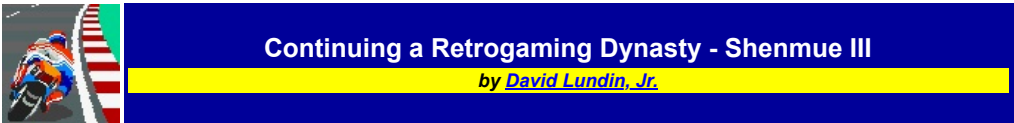
Seriously though, my attention was returned to the Amico - which is being designed by "new Intellivision" - thanks to the videos they have been posting recently on their YouTube Intellivision channel. They are sending some really mixed messages via this medium and wherever else they are re-posting these videos. On the one hand, they are claiming to be for casual gamers and local multiplayer. But their videos with their "tension-inducing music" seem to be aiming these ads and updates more at the hardcore gamer crowd with the percussion-driven, heavy musical tracks and the "We'll show you all!" attitude. Where's the emphasis on single player gaming? I spent a lot more of my time with solo gameplay than multiplayer back in the 80's & 90's and even today, and I know I'm not the only one. However while their emphasis is on local multiplayer, the videos they have shown so far of their games and remakes seem to confusingly only show single player gameplay with no multi-player footage. I understand they have a lot to prove, but I think if they want casual gamers to buy the Amico then their videos should be more like the classic Nintendo Wii advertisements from 2006 through 2009.

It seems like modern Intellivision - lead by Tommy Tallarico - is going for a combination of Nintendo's Wii with the "casual console" and Apple's classic iPod with the "simple controller" (though it is obviously also inspired by the Intellivision controller's design) for the Amico. Their goal seems for the Amico to be as accessible and popular as either one or preferably both devices. But with the Amico's Internet access requirements for purchases as well as a credit card or debit card or gift card just to be able to buy games by downloading them (even if it will work offline after the games are downloaded), I've got to wonder if it will really be enough to make the world care. It's not like physical copies of games will be sitting on store shelves to act as a form of advertising or marketing for the thing, and look at how quickly "everyone" forgot about the Ouya without physical

games on the shelves to remind them. Heck, look at the money and advertising that Sony put behind the PlayStation Vita, and yet without lots of physical games sitting on retail shelves to remind people that it is still alive and getting new games, most people figured the Vita (ironically meaning "life") was dead long ago.

The reasons the Nintendo Wii was so popular for casual gaming might have been in small part thanks to a simple controller and motion controls, along with accessible games and local multiplayer. Additionally it benefited from the "lack of DLC and in-app purchases" (although those actually existed on the Wii in a limited capacity), but the main reason was that the "smart phone revolution" where everyone had a phone that was good enough to play Wii-quality games or better hadn't happened yet... but did a few short years later, "killing" off the Wii when the general public all had smart phones and were bored of motion controlled-games. Granted, the Wii didn't really die off until Just Dance 2020 was released as the final Wii game on November 5th, 2019, but most Wii players (not counting retro gamers) had moved away from the Wii sometime around 2010.

It would be nice to play some Imagic, Atari, and Intellivision remakes though, such as Tempest, Centipede, Adventure, Miner 2049'er, Moon Patrol, Yars' Revenge, and Thin Ice. Thankfully most of those have been announced for the Amico even if Thin Ice has not. (Thin Ice was so much fun and one of my favorite Intellivision games, so it really deserves a remake - if nothing else, please at least pay attention to that important last point, new Intellivision!) However, as some or all of these will probably be ported to PC or consoles eventually, we can likely purchase them gradually via, say, Steam in the next few years without an Intellivision Amico. And ironically, if that happens, we'll be able to play them with Steam's Remote Play Together to play local co-operative and competitive games with the local multiplayer portions both offline **and** online contrary to only on a couch or chairs in the same room as the Amico's designers envisioned.



Shenmue is one of my favorite video games of all time. The series revolves around the sudden murder of martial artist Iwao Hazuki on the evening of November 29th, 1986 in Yokosuka, Japan. His assailant, a man named Lan Di, confronted Iwao in search of a stone artifact known as the Dragon Mirror. Threatening to kill Iwao's son, Ryo, unless the mirror is given to him, Lan Di is told the location of the mirror. After his men recover the artifact, Lan Di finishes off Iwao as retribution for an alleged murder in China and flees, leaving Ryo injured and unable to pursue. The next day Ryo sets off to investigate the circumstances surrounding his father's death and avenge him. A revolutionary experiment to create a fully immersive and open world, Shenmue leaned heavily into the details of everyday life, with realistic locations and characters that would go about mundane daily routines - including Ryo until his life is turned upside down on that November evening.

I came to the party late, buying a Dreamcast in early 2001, after the release of PlayStation 2 but before the formal announcement of Dreamcast discontinuation, picking up Shenmue in February of that year. I played the game near constantly over four days and upon my first completion I was blown away by the attention to detail. Part detective story, part adventure game, part revenge epic, part fighting game, part life sim - completely unlike anything else I had played before but familiar at the same time. After the Dreamcast release of Shenmue II in North America was canceled, I held off on importing the subtitled UK version as the English voices were a core part of what made the Shenmue experience to me. I have no shame in admitting that I bought an original Xbox the week Shenmue II was released specifically to play that single game in English. I loved the sequel as well, even with its cliffhanger ending that made the original game's cliffhanger ending look like it was sewn up tight in comparison. The financial idea behind the Shenmue series was to spend most of the series' budget on the first game and then make back the costs over the course of the sequels, as the tools and development technology would already be in place. When the Dreamcast ended production just as Shenmue II was finishing up, it cast doubt if the series would continue as everything would have to start over again on new hardware.



A series that has literally spanned generations, continuing a narrative that began twenty years ago

In 2015 Shenmue creator and gaming icon Yu Suzuki launched a crowdfunding campaign to fund Shenmue III as a licensed Sega property. This wasn't to be a remake or a reimagining, rather a direct continuation, as if the almost fifteen years since the release of Shenmue II were non-existent. The campaign would raise over two million dollars within seven hours and become the highest funded game on Kickstarter to date. I never kick in to anything on a crowdfunding site, it's just not my thing, especially when so many high profile projects end in disaster. This one however was an instant contribution from me for the PlayStation 4 version. Sure it was basically a pre-pay for the game but in this case I was happy to allow Yu Suzuki to work on an unfinished game series that he loved. In late 2019 the game finally shipped, eighteen years after the release of Shenmue II. It became apparent almost immediately that it would be a very slightly modernized take on the Shenmue gameplay formula, feeling like the most unapologetically retro of modern game sequels. Shenmue III almost feels like an unreleased completed game from two decades ago, given an HD polish, and then released to the masses. Ryo Hazuki has certainly come a long way in his continuing investigation.

This look at Shenmue III will **not** be free of spoilers for a couple of reasons. Firstly, most of my issues with the game have to do with how the ending is structured or lack thereof. Second, the way Shenmue III is designed, simply talking about the game spoils a tremendous amount of what the player will do over the course of its events. This makes it difficult to talk about the game and attempt to be free of spoilers, as rather than having an overarching narrative, Shenmue III elects to make the day to day grind of life the narrative itself. Shenmue has always been about the day to day interactions with the people who inhabit

the world around you and working out clues obtained via conversation. Shenmue III doubles down on the former, with the vast majority of the game spent simply living within each day, completing tasks to sustain Ryo financially, building relationships with locals, and going home every night before it gets too late. Rather than piecing together clues one after another as in the previous two games, Shenmue III is more about Ryo exploring an older foreign land and becoming part of the communities he passes through.

Unlike previous games in the series, Ryo's health bar is now always present and slowly depletes over time as it is also tied into his stamina. Keeping it replenished requires purchasing and eating food or other health supplements. The game provides a few free food items for the taking every day but they aren't enough to keep Ryo properly sustained, meaning money is required for survival. Money having real weight is the biggest and most welcomed change in Shenmue III, as earning wages actually amounts to something more than a gimmick to play arcade games or buy capsule toys. Gone are the days of carrying around a hundred worthless chocolate bars or bags of potato chips, as this time around Ryo can finally sell virtually any item he has in his possession. Every item has some kind of use, even if it's only to be consumed for HP replenishment or sold for a couple bucks. Pawn shops exist much as they did in Shenmue II, purchasing capsule toys from Ryo and paying higher rates for complete sets. Additionally they offer more valuable items, such as skill books, when trading in specific combinations of goods. Drug stores not only sell replenishment items, they will also purchase herbs that grow in abundance throughout the adventure. Specific sets of herbs fetch insane prices and aren't all that difficult to obtain, making them an ideal way to build a healthy cash flow. Gambling makes a return but rather than directly wagering currency, tokens are purchased at the various venture areas and gambled with. Tokens can then be taken to prize exchange areas and traded for items - which can then be sold for cash in pawn shops. Unless you're looking to complete an item set, the best bet is usually to trade tokens for something such as a gem that will fetch the most money when pawned.

In addition to buying and selling items and herbs, money can also be obtained the usual way via part time jobs. The most prominent job on offer is splitting wood but later in the game Ryo can saddle up a forklift for some dock work. Fishing straddles the line between collecting and working as caught fish are then sold at the bait and tackle shop after completing a fishing session. Unfortunately I found the fishing segments to be unengaging with very little strategy other than selecting a casting point. Additionally reeling in the line requires repeated circular analog stick motion, something I wish developers would stop doing as it prematurely wears out controllers - and has since the Nintendo 64 era. Between hunting out herbs here and there, completing a single capsule toy set, and redeeming venture area tokens I was never hurting for money - or at least never felt that I was having to go out of my way to grind for cash. Commerce is truly the vehicle in which Shenmue III rides and it's a nice change for the series.



Shenmue - Dreamcast (left), Shenmue II - Xbox (center), Shenmue III - PlayStation 4 (right)

Aside from the commerce system, the other big change this time out is how combat moves are learned and utilized. In previous games combat efficiency was generally built upon while Ryo slept via a menu, simply because there was only a minimal attack statistics and practice system in place. New moves would be purchased and mastered instantly, meaning very little work had to be done to grow the moveset. The same cannot be said for Shenmue III, where training and hard work are the order of the day. Attack power and stamina now need to be built up by training with wooden dummies, with the stamina building particularly important as it directly relates to the maximum size of Ryo's health meter. These training modes are slow and repetitive but I have a feeling that was the intention - putting in the time and work to better oneself. New moves are learned by obtaining skill books and then selecting them in a submenu before engaging in a sparring session. Then during the sparring session Quick Timer Events (QTEs) will pop up relating to the selected moves. The more frequently the move is pulled off correctly, the faster its level builds. Once mastered, complex moves can be activated with a single button press while in combat, with up to five special moves selectable at a time. The fighting system mirrors this change and puts more emphasis on evasion and making openings rather than positioning and counters as in the previous games. I've read that some people dislike the new system as it removed lunges and throws from the moveset but I honestly like the faster combat of Shenmue III.

With so much going on in the game, so much to do and so much to see in its densely packed game world, my biggest issue with Shenmue III is how empty it feels after a dozen or so hours. Sure, there are storefronts everywhere - and at a few points in the game Ryo will have to venture into many of them to ask around for specialty items - but for the most part they're all the same. Aside from a couple of them, I never felt like I had any rapport with the shopkeepers like in the previous games. While there are different game centers throughout the adventure, they all have the same games in them and after a few plays I didn't feel the need to return. It was understood early on that Shenmue III wouldn't feature any classic Sega arcade games - and that's fine - but there's just nothing in the game centers to kill time. Adding the dart machines from Shenmue, and specifically dart competitions from Shenmue II, would have done a lot to alleviate this feeling of the game centers being dead. Smart Ball is a new addition that is a bit like early pinball but the player has so little influence on the action of the game, even less than with Lucky Hit, it feels like a waste of time. Aside from simple fighting competitions at martial arts schools there is a fighting arena, the Rose Garden, that is found early in the second half of the game. I was actually looking forward to this as I enjoyed the multiple street fighting areas in Shenmue II, but not only are the battles here easy, they are extremely repetitive and boring. That in itself is a problem with the later half of the game, as although the areas to explore are truly massive, they all feature exactly the same stuff - same shops, same games, same venture areas.

Yet my single biggest gripe with Shenmue III is the anticlimactic ending. The core story of why Lan Di killed Iwao Hazuki in pursuit of the Phantom River Stone mirrors is only marginally moved forward but I don't have any issue with that, as it was known early on that Shenmue III would not conclude the story. However Shenmue III itself doesn't go anywhere with the events it specifically sets into motion on its own. The original Shenmue built up the need to get to Hong Kong and the conflict with the Mad Angels that it resolved at its conclusion, finishing with an unresolved battle against Chai. Shenmue II established Ryo in China, ultimately taking down Don Niu and his Yellow Head crime syndicate and finishing with an unresolved journey with Shenhua. Shenmue III is about finding Shenhua's father as yet another crime syndicate, the Red Snakes, has been kidnapping stonemasons who may know details about the mirrors. Unfortunately beyond a few local ruffians, the Red Snakes don't seriously come into play until the very end of the game.

Eventually a background character Ryo has run into a few times, Feng Li, says that Shenhua has been kidnapped by the Red Snakes and taken to an ancient castle. This event comes across as strange but little more, as Feng Li was barely encountered throughout the game. As Ryo and company set off to storm the ancient castle where the Red Snakes are hiding out, Chai is encountered once more. However rather than having a big final battle against his earliest adversary, Ryo simply dispatches him with a two-button QTE and Chai is down for the count. I was in shock that Chai was simply cast off quicker than a common thug, when Ryo had encountered him so many times throughout the series. A rather sudden betrayal sets the finale of the game into motion, as it is revealed that Feng Li is actually Niao Sun, one of the leaders of the Chi You Men along

with Lan Di. My problem with this is that I don't feel enough contact was made with Feng Li throughout the game, she didn't seem mysterious or suspicious or really anything until thirty minutes before the big reveal - in fact she barely shows up at all! She should have been encountered more throughout the game to at least have her be on the player's radar, so that the reveal at the end is actually shocking rather than confusing and forced. Then once Ryo gives her the Phoenix Mirror in exchange for Shenhua, Niao Sun tells him Lan Di is at the top of the castle. Ryo and Ren continue on while Niao Sun instructs her men to set fire to the castle, with her aim to kill Lan Di and gain complete control of the Chi You Men. They try to make Niao Sun an interesting character - she has a visual style different from everyone else in the series, she's obviously powerful, and she comes across as calculating but insane - however as it's all so crammed into a five minute exchange at the end of the game there's absolutely no payoff to her inclusion.



Although it seems Niao Sun was intended to be an intriguing new character, her inclusion stumbles out of the gate at the end of the game

The fight up to the top of the castle is nothing to write home about as most enemies only have a couple units of health and are dispatched without much fuss. It should be said that I put in the time to completely max out my stats - both stamina and attack - and at the end of the game felt it was a waste of time as no enemy approached any sort of difficulty during the finale. There is a boss battle with the leader of the Red Snakes at the end of the climb, however aside from having a new QTE at the end it's just as easy as when he is fought earlier in the game. The battle against Lan Di is little more than a story event but that's perfectly acceptable as this game wasn't meant to conclude the series. Honestly it was about what I expected and thought it was handled fine. This is followed with a reasonably short story scene that gets the main narrative moving and then... the game ends. While I thought the ending scene was acceptable with the hopeful progression toward a Shenmue IV, the notion that Shenmue III ending with absolutely nothing other than a few fights with common thugs irritated me. It's almost as if the castle area was intended to be more fully featured (it does have a store staffed with a shopkeeper, complete with an optional fetch quest) but perhaps the developers ran out of time or money. Some kind of battle with Niao Sun should have occurred, even if it ended in a stalemate where Ryo was forced to hand over the Phoenix Mirror before continuing the climb to Lan Di. As it stands, there is simply no satisfaction in terms of completing a story arc at the end of Shenmue III. I wasn't expecting some huge conclusion or revelation at the end but at the very least maybe a big battle against a big player. Seems to me like Niao Sun was intended to be such, at least at one point, but that never materializes.

There are also some technical issues I have with the game that as of date have not been patched. The biggest offender is the QTE system, which feels just a little too fast for its own good. While it's phenomenally better than the mess that Shenmue I & II HD made of the QTE system, input prompts feel like they don't allow enough time for the input to be executed. This leads to continual failure of QTE sequences until they are memorized through trial and error. Simply adding two or three more beats to each prompt would alleviate the issue completely and feel more natural as they did with the original releases of the first two games. There are a couple points in the game where Ryo must catch live birds and the QTEs here are the stuff of nightmare and frustration. Thankfully there aren't any massively long QTE sequences unlike the later parts of Shenmue II. Additionally when picking up either kind of orange while herb hunting the screen goes black while Ryo reaches out for the fruit, almost as if the scene was never rendered, as he harvests every other kind of herb without cutting away to a black screen.

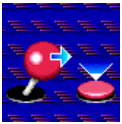
Even with the anticlimactic ending and minor technical issues, I really did enjoy Shenmue III, especially the first two-thirds. It truly feels like a game from two years after Shenmue II, with more modern visual polish. It also must be said that the music is made up of some of the finest compositions I have ever heard in any video game and perfectly it complements the tone throughout. It was also cool to sneak in music from classic Sega arcade games here and there, as well as call backs to songs from previous Shenmue games. I don't fault Shenmue III for sticking true to its reasonably archaic roots while Sega's Yakuza series essentially took the Shenmue game style and cranked everything up to eleven - and continues to do so to this day. If Shenmue was further modernized beyond what was seen in Shenmue III, it would feel like a stunted Yakuza, rather than its own game. Being rooted in the earlier games makes it feel like a continuing progression, which it is, and that's what I wanted it to remain.



A Shenmue sake set I hand painted in reference to my favorite character from the first game, Yamagishi

While I doubt Shenmue III will bring new people into the fold, it really wasn't intended to. "It's a game for the fans" is a term that was thrown around a lot with Shenmue III and while it may sound like an easy way out for describing the game, at least in this case nothing rings more true. I cannot think of a more retro "modern" game in the history of the industry, where its

aesthetic is not to be an homage to an earlier generation of gaming but rather a heartfelt continuation of a unique and still unfinished narrative. Simply that Yu Suzuki and his team got to continue making a game series that they all really love and want to make is a wonderful thing and something that should happen more in the gaming industry. I truly hope Shenmue IV comes around and I will be right there to help fund it as with Shenmue III. In the end, this is an odd game - a modern title that is twenty years retro, making it unlike anything else... Exactly as the original Shenmue was unlike anything else when it was released in 1999.



The Controller Chronicles - Power Glove (NES)

by [Todd Friedman](#)

Some call it a controller, some call it a peripheral, some even call it a gimmick. I would say it is all of these and more. The Nintendo Power Glove is one of the most talked about pieces of the juggernaut system we know as the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES). Critics have said it was a failure, but some hardcore gamers and programmers knew it was ahead of its time. There were so many ways to use the glove, but when it was released to the public in 1989, it did not have enough software created to display its full capacity. One reason was that Nintendo really wanted this item to ship before the holidays of 1989. They knew they had another year or so to make the games for the glove but were forced to release it without any games to really play with it. The one game the glove was designed for and the commercial showed, was a game called Super Glove Ball. The game was not completely ready at release so the gamers were disappointed to pay for the glove and not be able to play the game. What designers had to do was to use the current games released to interact with the glove. Games like Mike Tyson's Punch Out!!, Super Mario Bros, and Metroid. The problem was that it was very difficult to make the Power Glove as accurate as the standard controller that was used for the system. This made gameplay very hard and frustrating and gamers felt like they wasted their money. Before we talk about what games worked and how to use the Power Glove, lets break down how this futuristic glove worked and where the idea originally came from.



The idea of the Power Glove start long before the release in 1989. Designers and programmers had the idea of an interactive glove since the late 1970's. The idea was first called the "DataGlove." It was an interactive glove that was used for big corporation testing such as NASA and government agencies. When the growth of home consoles became mainstream, the idea of using the glove as an interactive toy was appealing to companies such as Mattel. The design and feel of the glove were tested and tested many times over. The final product had a RoboCop feel to it and responded well to the designers. Like I said earlier, the problem was software that was not designed to work perfectly with the glove and that was its ultimate downfall. Games were not as interactive as we were told. In fact, it made games a lot harder and less fun.

A couple games did make it to the public after the glove was released. One of these games is Super Glove Ball. This 3-D puzzle game came out in 1990 from the publisher Rare. The plot was mainly about the player saving a shuttle commander who is trapped in a maze. The only way to win is to throw the Energy Balls at the walls and break the commander free. To do this would involve incredible timing and skill. Practice was the ultimate key in this game. The glove itself controls the hand on the screen. The first-person perspective gives an almost virtual reality feel to it. The player is not allowed to have the ball pass the hand or the game is over. When a ball hits a tile, it is destroyed. The player will get five chances (balls) to defeat the wall. Another way to battle is to hit the select button on the glove to shoot Robo-Bullets. These can destroy the walls with one hit, but still need to maintain the ball from passing you. When all the walls are destroyed, the game progresses to the next level. Other items that can be used in your favor are Ice Balls, Bomb Balls, and Super Balls. If anyone wants to use the glove in the way it was intended, Super Glove Ball is the game to play. It was designed specifically for the glove. You can play the game with the standard controller, but it is not that much fun. It really needs the glove to get the full experience.



Super Glove Ball (left), Bad Street Brawler (right)

A totally opposite game that was created for the NES as well as other systems was Bad Street Brawler. Mattel released this fighting game for multiple platforms. The NES version, however, was more realistic using the Power Glove. This beat 'em up game took place on the streets where gangsters are getting in your way. The object is to, well, beat them up. This Double Dragon type game was difficult to handle with the Power Glove. The reaction time of hitting the bad guys to the actual timing in the game seemed to be a bit delayed. Using the buttons on the glove with the idea of punching your way through levels, was frustrating at best. Once you get past the gangsters, each level brings new trouble to the streets such as gorillas and circus dwarfs. All in all, there are 15 stages to this fighting game. Being one of very few games to use the Power Glove, it still was not flying off the shelves.

Once the Power Glove hit the consumers, the first thing a lot of technically savvy people did was to hack the glove. Like the world today of hacking consoles and loading hundreds of game roms on it, the Power Glove was one of the first items to have the gamers program it and use it in different ways. The glove could be seen used as a musical instrument, a DJ turntable, robotic arm to move household items and of course the use of the glove as normal clothing attire. One of the most recognizable people to wear the glove, even today, is Isiah TriForce Johnson. TriForce is historically known for his Zelda

knowledge, his week long waiting in lines for the new Nintendo product and an advocate for eSports in the USA and other countries. The Power Glove is with him always and is like putting on your socks, he puts on the glove wherever he goes. It's a status symbol for him and is proud to wear it and talk about its history.



Here is a little story from TriForce about the Power Glove: "The power glove has played a significant role shaping who I am as a gamer. When I was a kid in the late 80's going into the 90's I use to hang with my group of friends, and we call our group 'Videoland.' Yeah, that was before Captain N the Game Master. Our group leader and Game Master Kevin got a Power Glove and I always thought it was cool. In '91 though he just wasn't into games the way he used to be in the 80's. He then told me I was the group's Game Master. He gave me his Power Glove and told me that it was like the crown for being the Game Master so wear it so long as you represent the group. 30 years later, I still wear it and Videoland has now become an Empire with my eSports Brand Team Empire Arcadia. I still wear it but not just as a Game Master but the Emperor of Arcadia. It is the symbol of my history growing up as a gamer and I still wear it to this day."



Video Game Haiku

by [David Lundin, Jr.](#)

Along The Ridge

Perfect off the line
Just what I wanted to see
Overtake them all

Register For Full Version

Free DOS game download
First ten levels scratch the itch
Shareware satisfies

Wingates Wanted

If you were really
On my side of frontier law
Poster would be free

Funcoland Golden Days

Grab the current list
Talk to the game adviser
Walk out with bags full

Reader Submissions:

Untitled, by gjm

Ancient water world
The silence of Big Bertha
A plumber jumps in

Have a video game haiku of your own? [Send it our way!](#)



Weekly Retrogaming Trivia Recap

by [David Lundin, Jr.](#)

Every Friday on The Retrogaming Times Facebook page (facebook.com/theretrogamingtimes), we present a Weekly Retrogaming Trivia question. This just-for-fun trivia challenge provided each week is an opportunity to test your arcane and oddball retrogaming knowledge. The answer to the question from the previous week is posted along with a new trivia question every Friday!

Below is the recap of all questions and answers posted between this issue and the previous issue:

01/03/2020 - WEEK 145

Question: What is the name of the grand prix series contested in R4: Ridge Racer Type 4?

01/10/2020 - WEEK 146

Question: What was the final game in the largely forgotten Gex series?

01/17/2020 - WEEK 147

Question: Mega Man Legends takes place on what island?

01/24/2020 - WEEK 148

Question: Opa-Opa is the star of what video game series?

01/31/2020 - WEEK 149

Question: The Black Bass (NES) is actually a localization of what Famicom game?

02/07/2020 - WEEK 150

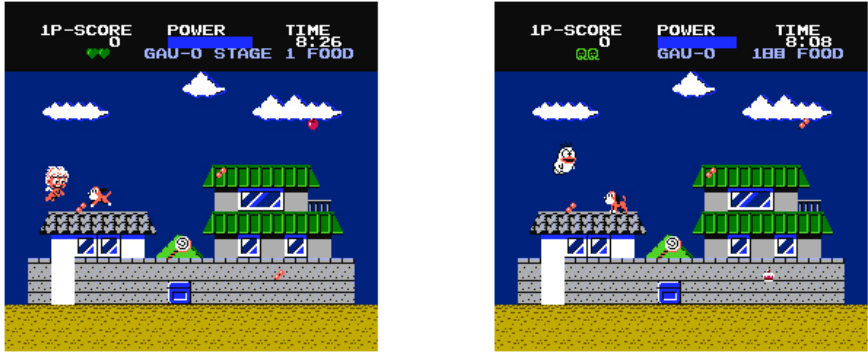
Question: What was the only baseball game to be released in North America on the TurboGrafx-16?

02/14/2020 - WEEK 151

Question: Infamous NES game Chubby Cherub is actually a heavily reworked localization of what Famicom game?

02/21/2020 - WEEK 152

Question: What was Sega's first home video game console?



Strange early NES release Chubby Cherub (left) is actually a rework of an earlier licensed Q-taro Famicom game (right)

Answers:

- Week 145 Answer: Real Racing Roots '99.
- Week 146 Answer: Gex 3: Deep Cover Gecko (1999).
- Week 147 Answer: Kattelox Island.
- Week 148 Answer: Fantasy Zone.
- Week 149 Answer: The Black Bass II.
- Week 150 Answer: World Class Baseball, a localization of the first Power League game.
- Week 151 Answer: Q-taro the Ghost WanWan Panic.
- Week 152 Answer: The SG-1000, first released in 1983.



Sega's home console legacy began with the SG-1000, which would eventually be enhanced as the Mark III / Master System

Don't be left out! Be sure to follow [The Retrogaming Times on Facebook](#) or [The Retrogaming Times Info Club on Twitter](#) for a new retrogaming trivia question every Friday!

We need your questions! If you have a trivia question you would like to submit for possible inclusion in the Weekly Retrogaming Trivia question pool, e-mail it to trt@classicplastic.net! If your question is selected to be featured, you will be entered in our year-end prize drawing!

See You Next Game

by David Lundin, Jr.

One of my favorite accounts on Twitter is Game Magazine Print Ads (@GameMagPrintAds), which posts classic video game magazine advertisements. Not too long ago the account posted an advertisement for The Black Bass from the January 1990 issue of Electronic Gaming Monthly. As per our last group of Weekly Retrogaming Trivia questions, the US release "The Black Bass" was actually a localization of sequel "The Black Bass II" and was alternately titled "Black Bass USA" on the game's title screen. Although I love classic fishing video games, the advertisement that was posted wasn't something I had seen before but it caught my eye as it looked very similar to artwork I **was** familiar with - namely the box art for The Black Bass II.



Magazine advertisement for *The Black Bass* for NES (left), box art for the Famicom release of *The Black Bass II* (right)

Interestingly enough, the American advertisement is more or less a westernized version of the exact scene depicted on the Famicom game box. A television with water spilling out of it to flood the room, a giant bass brought from the game into reality, and a kid in a collared shirt and cap shocked at the catch he has reeled in. Heck, even the window and curtains make the journey across the Pacific for the advertisement. Unfortunately the box art for the NES release of the game went for a more generic illustration of a bass against a picture of a lake but the illustration of the kid waist deep in the water was used on the back of the box. I suppose someone at HOT-B must have really liked the Famicom artwork to put so much effort into adapting it for the NES advertising campaign. By the time *The Blue Marlin* (a game I much prefer over *The Black Bass* games) was released a few years later, identical box art would be used for both the Famicom and NES releases, featuring an illustration of a marlin that falls in between the realistic and the stylized. I plan on bringing the classic fishing game reviews back sometime this year as there are actually a couple really great fishing games that sadly get overlooked. Do you have a passion or strange fascination for a nearly forgotten video game genre? If so, drop me a line and let me know!

Thank you once again for reading *The Retrogaming Times*. We'll be back on May 1st with our next issue. Be sure to follow [The Retrogaming Times on Facebook](#) and join our community for the latest updates and information! Additionally [The Retrogaming Times Info Club on Twitter](#) features up-to-the-moment news and notifications for all things *The Retrogaming Times*! I sincerely hope you enjoyed this issue and that you will return to read the next issue and possibly submit an article yourself. **Remember, this newsletter can only exist with your help.** Simply send your articles directly to me at trt@classicplastic.net or check out the submission guidelines on the main page. Submit an article today and join a great retrogaming tradition!

See You Next Game!



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