

The Retrogaming Times

THE BIMONTHLY RETROGAMING HOBBYIST NEWSLETTER

THIRTY-FIRST ISSUE - MARCH 2021

IRRESPONSIBLE PET OWNER AT IT AGAIN!

The Retrogaming Times
- The Bimonthly Retrogaming Hobbyist Newsletter -

The Retrogaming Times
Thirty-First Issue - March 2021
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Prepare to Qualify

by [David Lundin, Jr.](#)

Kicking off our sixth year in style, The Retrogaming Times welcomes everyone to our continuing celebration of all things retrogaming. There has been a marked increase in our readership since the beginning of the year. If you're new to the newsletter, everything here is created by retrogamers just like you. So if you enjoy reading The Retrogaming Times, consider sending in an article of your own! I sincerely hope all our readers are doing well, taking care of themselves, and enjoying classic video games.

Our biggest issue in quite awhile features returning faces and new contributors. Things start off with More C64 and Merman's round up of homebrew Commodore 64 games that were released at the end of 2020. In a combination of Don's Desk and the Apple II Incider, Donald Lee touches on some recent retrogaming purchases including his first physical Apple II software purchase in many decades. This issue's cover story features an often overlooked licensed platformer for the NES based on the second Gremlins film, with Dan Pettis delivering the details before midnight. Miniature tabletop arcade games have come a long way since the 1980's and a new offering of a quarter scale Dig Dug cabinet is put through its paces. On the eve of an upcoming new Mortal Kombat movie, Dan Pettis gives his opinion on whether or not the original is still worth a watch. After some time away, Jerry Terrifying returns to the newsletter with a chronicle of his experiences playing Roguelikes on both home and portable consoles. Street Fighter II recently celebrated its 30th anniversary and new contributor George "mecha" Spanos details its origins, development, and influences. Not seen since our first issue, Pyuuta Tutor is finally back again with Saurusland, an obscure game for the obscure computer. It's no secret that rising retrogame values can seem a bit crazy these days and Todd Friedman talks about his brush with the changing collecting landscape, something that sooner or later we will all face. 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!"**

If you're stir crazy at home and are a retrogamer, there has to be something on your mind - let us know by submitting an article!



Upcoming Events

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

NOTICE: Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, many shows and events have canceled, postponed, or modified their dates. For the latest on the events listed below, please visit their individual websites or contact their relevant customer support channels as the current situation continues to unfold. Thank you.

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KansasFest, July 23rd - 24th 2021, Kansas City, Missouri, USA

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. For photos, videos, and presentations from past KansasFests, please visit the official website.

Since last July, we had hoped that things would have returned to normal in time to hold KansasFest 2021 in person. Although the pandemic situation has improved and vaccines are on their way, there are still too many health risks and potential travel restrictions to attempt an in-person gathering in 2021.

Given the success of last year's 8-bit Virtual KansasFest (over 500 attendees!), the KansasFest Board is pleased to announce "KansasFest 2021: 16-Bit Virtual Edition." Similar to 2020, our plan is to hold an online event Friday and Saturday, July 23-24. The event will include lots of exciting talks, panel discussions, and other fun events. We'll also have time in the evenings for get togethers on Discord, where you can chat through text or video, get advice on hardware or software mods, or just hang out with fellow Apple II enthusiasts.

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

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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!



The end of 2020 brought us some fantastic new games for the C64. There was also the Retro Games Winter Dev Competition, creating new games for the C64 and VIC-20 - hosted by the company behind the C64 Mini.

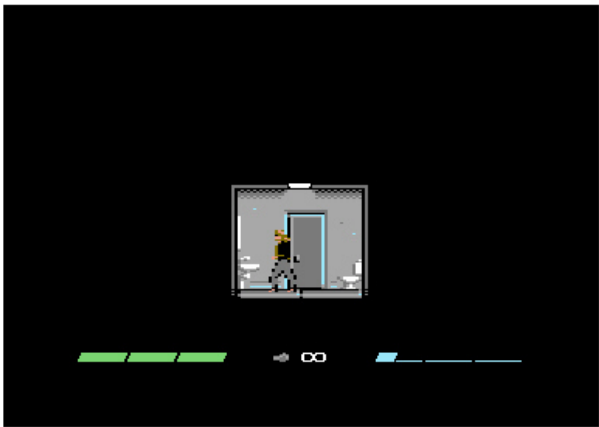
All three games listed here are PAL and NTSC compatible, and the developers offer digital downloads that are designed to be compatible with the C64 Mini / THEC64.

MW ULTRA
Developed by Covert BitOps, published by Protovision (cartridge) & Psytronik (disk)

This is a remake of the first Metal Warrior game. If you are not familiar, this series of run & gun platformers mixed with exploration and heavy-metal-inspired music. The original game was released in 1999 and has had three sequels so far. Ultra adds modern ideas and presentation, extending the storyline of the first Metal Warrior. Programmer Lasse Öörni also created the recent Hessian and Steel Ranger games.

Ian just wants to play guitar and drink beer, while around him the future city is filled with violence and cops that attack any citizen openly using a weapon. Waking from a strange dream, Ian is asked to help with a simple burglary - but his friend dies during the raid and Ian gets drunk to blot out the memories. A phone call invites him to audition for war metal band Cyberpriest and he is drawn into a complex plot.

The storyline is advanced by talking to characters, with their portrait appearing when Ian talks; at certain points, the player can choose a dialogue option. Ian's mobile contains extra information and reminders of what to do next. Exploring the city is done by going through doors/gates and using stairs and ladders. Important doors will be highlighted with an arrow. Ian can also use cover to hide from attack.



Search everywhere including the bathrooms for items, and talking to guitarist Jo (shown larger at the bottom of the screen with the dialogue).

Enemies and police signal their attention with a ? when Ian is acting suspicious, or a ! when they will attack. Ian can fight hand-to-hand or use a variety of weapons. Items and credits to buy things are found by searching furniture or dropped by defeated enemies. Killing or subduing an enemy earns experience; using non-lethal weapons earns experience faster. Fill the experience bar and a Skill Point is earned to upgrade Ian's abilities (including his endurance and hand-to-hand fighting) from a menu. His energy is shown by three bars that can be refilled by sleeping or using a first aid kit. Run out of energy and Ian can continue from the last door used. The game can be saved to disk or cartridge to resume later.



Run over by a motorbike in the wilderness, while the Skill Menu requires earning a lot of experience to upgrade Ian's capabilities.

There is a huge city to explore and lots to uncover, including a brilliant grapple gun to swing around on - like the bionic arm in Bionic Commando. The graphics are great, particularly the character portraits, and there is a fantastic soundtrack backing the action. A minor niggle is using keys to select an item or weapon, although extra joystick buttons are supported. The main story will take about eight hours to complete and is linear, but the player can explore (including the dangerous wastelands outside the city) and fight without advancing the plot.

Protovision's cartridge version has already been released, with a special golden cartridge for regular Patreon / Tippee backers. The gold edition included a soundtrack CD and a mini first aid kit. Psytronik launched the disk version in January 2021, as a Collector's Edition with extra goodies in the box.

Buy the boxed edition starting at €45 plus sales tax (shipping to the US has been disrupted by coronavirus): https://www.protovision.games/shop/product_info.php?products_id=287&language=en

Digital download (\$15.99 plus sales tax): <https://protovision.itch.io/mw-ultra>

Psytronik information about the Collector's Edition, with the extras to be available separately: <http://www.psytronik.net/newsite/index.php/c64/128-mwultra>

OYUP!
Developed by Arlasoft and Mike Richmond

This was the stand-out C64 game in the Retro Games Winter Dev Competition. It is based on Puyo Puyo 2, which many people will know better as Dr. Robotnik's Mean Bean Machine on Sega Genesis / Mega Drive. Pairs of coloured beans drop from the top of the screen, and the aim is to make groups of four or more of the same colour to clear them. Create several groups or a "combo" and black rocks are sent to the opponent's side of the screen to block them. Rocks can be removed by making a match next to them. But if your side of the screen fills up to the top, you lose the round.



On the left player 1 has created a combo, and on the right the AI player has sent huge numbers of rocks to the player's side.

Practice Mode lets one player compete for a score until the screen fills. Two-Player is a head-to-head mode, with optional handicap settings available. Scenario sees the player taking on the computer, with a series of opponents chosen randomly from the 48 AI characters - with a choice of four difficulty levels. One of the more interesting settings is the Colour-Blind option, designed to help people who are red / green colour-blind to spot the different colours easily.



Setting the handicap and other options, and the Scenario Map is split into levels that must be climbed by reaching a points target.

This looks and plays a lot like the console game, with Mike Richmond composing some suitably jolly tunes. At times it can be very frustrating, especially in Scenario Mode. The need to plan and build "combos" can be tricky to master,

especially with the frantic pace the game moves at higher levels. This is a fun but frustrating conversion from the console game, but I did find myself going back to it again and again.

Name your own price for the digital download / free:

<https://arlagames.itch.io/oyup>

Official page for the Retro Games Winter Dev Competition:

<https://retrogames.biz/thec64-winter-games-development-competition>

SOUL FORCE

Developed by Sarah Jane Avory, published by Protovision

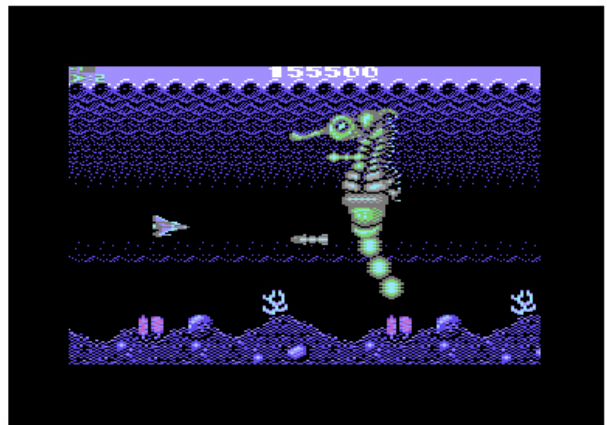
Like so many shoot 'em ups before, the Soul Force fighter is the last ship standing up against the odds to a larger invasion fleet. The plot is told through small animated "talking heads" and static bitmap pictures between levels. There are 20 varied levels to play through, with huge bosses waiting at the end of each one. Each boss will have one or more weak points that can be shot to cause damage, and some bosses have more than one form - or change attack pattern - as they are damaged.

The action scrolls horizontally, with layers of parallax scrolling. Shooting a complete wave of enemies earns 500 bonus points. Small transport ships carry upgrades that can be picked up, increasing the strength of that weapon type (to an initial maximum of 3) and making it the current weapon. Later in the game a ship upgrade offers new types of weapons and increases the maximum strength to 5. Dying by hitting scenery or being shot by an enemy reduces the current weapon's strength by one. A Shield power-up will protect from three hits as shown by its colour; shoot enough enemies and your shield can regenerate its strength by one level. The Invulnerability power-up will only last for a short while when you collect it. An extra life is earned every 50,000 points or by picking up the small ship icons hidden in the levels. There is a choice of four difficulty levels (Easy, Normal, Hard and Manic) and an optional Auto-fire mode. Progress can be saved to the cartridge or disk before starting a new level, but only one save slot is available.



The first of the impressive bitmap screens that appears between levels, and fighting through the Gradius-inspired first level.

The large cartridge format gives Sarah Jane Avory a real chance to improve on her previous games, the vertically scrolling Neutron and Zeta Wing, and she does it in some style. The polished level designs hark back to classics including Gradius / Nemesis and Thunderforce IV; level 3's chase across an aquatic planet looks like it came from the latter 16-bit game! Later levels take on a maze-like aspect with barriers to break down. The soundtrack is clever too, with sound effects playing simultaneously and a series of recurring motifs that tie the tunes together. Sprite work is impressive with lots of enemies and bullets onscreen at once, but those parallax scrolling layers in the background really help the game look superb. The presentation graphics by Gergely Sinko and Paolo Pomes are good too, especially the talking heads. Control is very responsive, and it never feels unfair; the difficulty levels are well tuned, and it is possible to make progress with each new game. The save feature is clever too, allowing you to resume at a higher starting level once you have reached it. Note that there were some initial compatibility problems with the C64 Mini, but these have now been fixed.



The Soul Force fighter prepares to go underwater, where it finds this massive seahorse boss waiting...

Not only is Soul Force one of the best games of 2020 - releasing on the 31st of December - but it lays claim to being one of the best C64 games of the last thirty years. If you love the C64 or shoot 'em ups you should be playing it now.

Buy the boxed edition starting at €45 plus sales tax (shipping to the US has been disrupted by coronavirus):

https://www.protovision.games/shop/product_info.php?products_id=302&language=en

Direct link for digital download (€7.99 plus sales tax):

https://www.protovision.games/shop/product_info.php?products_id=316&language=en

itch.io link for digital download (\$8.99 plus sales tax):

<https://protovision.itch.io/soul-force>

ON THE WAY

There are lots more games to look forward to in 2021, including Arlasoft's Funfair Inc. (based on the classic Theme Park) and Megastyle's graphically impressive conversion of The Empire Strikes Back (with huge AT-AT walkers to destroy). There is also the Cassette 50 Charity Compilation to look forward to, where creators are challenged to use a small amount of memory and create a game in the spirit (or using the original graphics) of Cascade's Cassette 50 compilation. And 2021 will also be the final edition of Richard Bayliss' long-running Shoot 'Em Up Construction Kit Competition, for games created with the SEUCK utility.



The weak point has opened on this AT-AT, so blast it quickly in Megastyle's The Empire Strikes Back (based on the Atari 2600 game).

Cassette 50 game jam page:
<https://itch.io/jam/the-c64-cassette-50-charity-competition/rate/862296>

SEUCK Compo 2021 main page:
http://tnd64.unikat.sk/Seuck_Compo_2021.html



Don's Desk / Apple II Incider - Supporting Retro Systems

by [Donald Lee](#)

Most people may be at home but as we write this, lots going on in February. Valentine's Day has just passed. Chinese / Lunar New Year has just passed. I've been super busy at work. In fact, before started writing this, I just finished editing a video project I volunteered for at work. I'll share more on that in future columns. For this month's column, I've going to discuss a few things I purchased recently. However, these won't be full commentary or reviews and you'll see why. I anticipate writing more about these items in future columns though.

Several weeks ago, I was up late talking to someone on the phone. After I was done, I couldn't quite get to sleep. So I surfed around the Internet and was reminded that there was a new game for the Apple II called Nox Archaist that had been released. This wasn't exactly new news as the game's been publicized for a long while. However, it suddenly dawned on me that since I had purchased the Virtual II emulator back in 2020, I actually might be able to play Nox Archaist on my iMac.

So I browsed around the developers website (<https://www.6502workshop.com/p/nox-archaist.html>) and saw they had a downloadable version for sale. There was also some higher priced versions where you get some physical packaging and goodies (ala Ultima games of old). I seriously thought of just getting the download version but I decided to support the developer and plunk down a decent amount of change for the physical goodies. I downloaded the game immediately after but the physical goodies won't be coming until March.



I had a good laugh at myself as this was probably the first time in some 30 years that I had purchased an Apple II game! I remember picking some old Arlasoft games at like a thrift shop out here in the Bay Area in the mid to late 1990's.

But I wasn't done with my retro purchases. I've talked about my exercise plans involving my Nintendo Wii and Switch. I've added some programs to my Switch recently (Fitness Boxing 2 and Zumba). For whatever reason, I've been looking for some additional options. There were some options for the Switch that were only released in Japan only (Finc Home Fit). So I looked at the Wii instead. I saw that Wii Fit Plus (and the Balance Board) had been popular. I saw someone had a brand new (or unused) Wii Fit Plus and Balance Board on eBay. I put my money down and just got it this past Friday. I also saw another program called Gold's Gym: Cardio Workout that was available. So I put in some dollar for that program as well (hasn't arrived yet as I write this).

Of the three purchases, I've only used two of them and the last item hasn't arrived yet. I booted Nox Archaist to make sure I could get it running but haven't started playing it yet. I opened up Wii Fit Plus and the Balance Board to make sure it was working. I've used it the past couple of days to get in some exercise. Is it crazy to spend this money on retro system programs? You know, I've been home for the past year and haven't spent as much money as I usually do on things. Nox Archaist will be fun and it's good to support the developers. The Wii games are practical and will get some usage as do all my exercise programs.

So as you see, once I get a chance to dive into the programs more in the coming months, I will discuss each one in more detail. See you next issue!



A Fun Batch of Cuddly and Creepy Platforming

by [Dan Pettis](#)

As any child of the 1980's will tell you, there are several important rules when it comes to caring for a Mogwai. Don't get them wet, don't expose them to bright light, don't feed them after midnight, and perhaps most important of all - don't forget to write down your passwords so you can continue your progress in their video game. So grab your Gizmos and hold on to your Mogwais, because the Gremlins are back in Sunsoft's **Gremlins 2: The New Batch** video game for the Nintendo Entertainment System.

A licensed adaptation of the second movie, the Gremlins 2 game puts players in the role of the ultra adorable and fuzzy Gizmo as he tries to fight his way through a Gremlins infested New York City skyscraper. As for the film this game was based on, word has it that Warner Bros. was so hungry for a sequel to the original movie, that returning director Joe Dante was given complete creative control of the movie and a huge for the time 50 million dollar budget. The film Joe Dante turned in was a hilariously self aware, fourth wall breaking sequel that pokes fun at the very notion of sequels and the original Gremlins movie itself. The movie traded the small town charm and Christmas setting of the original for a cold industrial office building but upped the ante with countless new bizarre gremlin types like a bat shaped Gremlin, an electricity powered Gremlin, a tarantula Gremlin, and perhaps most bizarrely, an ultra smart brainy Gremlin who could eloquently speak full sentences. Also in a move way ahead of its time, the film parodies rich egotistical businessman types with a character named Daniel Clamp who loves to name giant skyscrapers in New York after himself. The world was not quite ready for this movie and it vastly underperformed at the box office, but it's absolutely essential viewing if you want to see a campy cult classic and have some more silly fun in the Gremlins universe.

Getting back to the video game, it's a good sign that you're in for a fun time when the options on the start screen are boldly punctuated with exclamation points by Sunsoft. This game takes place from a top down original Zelda style perspective, and the action takes place entirely within the setting of the movie, the Clamp office building. The game starts out innocently enough, with Gizmo fighting giant tomatoes, and smaller enemies like rats and bats. But when the Gremlins finally start showing up, the gameplay variety and difficulty ramps up immensely. As previously mentioned, the film was notable for having an utterly insane cast of themed Gremlins with bonkers powers and this game delivers almost all of those Gremlins and even ups the ante on the movie with more unique types of the monsters to defeat. There are Gremlins on helicopters, fire breathers, skateboarders, and a Tasmanian Devil style Gremlin who throws top hats. There's even Gremlin arms that pop out of the ground without warning and hurl projectiles at your poor Mogwai.



Gizmo getting chased by gigantic tomatoes (left), Gizmo raises a matchstick to help power up his weapon (center), a battle with boss Gremlin Stripe (right)

In the film, Gizmo eventually hardens up and turns into a Rambo-esque action hero, complete with a red head band, to help defeat the Gremlins overrunning the office building. That may sound crazy, but I swear I'm not making that up. Gizmo's only means of attack in the game is to throw items at attackers. Just like in the movie, his weapons upgrade as the story goes on with each set of levels passed. You start with a puny low range tomato, but by the end you'll be awarded a super powered bow and arrow that shoots a large four-pronged fireball, perfect for roasting those pesky Gremlins. You don't have a punch move or melee attack so you'll want to be sure to strike from a distance to keep the Gremlins at bay. The enemy Gremlins will chase you and Gizmo relentlessly so you'll have to get good at punishing them from a distance. You're going to need the upgraded weapons and a lot of patience as the boss Gremlins in this game are just plain tough to take down. They include the incredibly fast moving electricity Gremlin and a machine gun wielding Gremlin. These fights are a real endurance test with some of the bosses taking over 30 hits to defeat!

There's also a lot of platforming to be had even with the game taking place from an overhead perspective, with gameplay reminiscent of fellow NES cult classic StarTropics. There are lots of tricky treadmills and moving platforms to be found, and you'll have to master your jumping ability if you want to make it out of Clamp Tower alive. Luckily, the game contains life saving balloons which let you float safely above trouble spots for a few seconds. Just be careful where you land because the game has a tendency to re-spawn you really close to pits after you fall in and you'll want to have a little bit of a running start to make some of the longer jumps in the game.

The game also has a really interesting heart based health system. You'll start out with only three hearts and can be hurt twice before losing one full heart. You start out with just one life, and since there are no check points, you'll frustratingly have to start the level completely over from the beginning every time you die. So be prepared to hear the game over jingle quite a few times if you plan on finishing this otherwise fun game. Fortunately, extra lives and other power ups can be bought with crystals, the game's currency, at stores run by original Gizmo owner Mr. Wing. So to put it in the words of Depeche Mode, the old man from the movies is about to become your own personal Jesus.

Graphically, this is a very nice looking game. The design of Gizmo is a perfect detailed likeness and the developers also nailed the overall look of the many types of Gremlins. The backgrounds can be a little basic at times, since the game takes place entirely within an office building, but there is still some interesting variety and décor. The cut scenes are also very pleasant to look at despite being very simply animated. There is very little pixel flicker, and strangely enough, I spotted more of the obnoxious flicker in the earlier levels of the game. I also did not encounter a trace of slowdown in my complete Gremlins 2 play through.



Gizmo on the run from some pesky Gremlins (left), the cuteness of Gizmo in a cut scene (center), Mr. Wing helps save the day with power ups for sale (right)

As for the music, it is a great combination of creepy and catchy. It is mischievous and a just a little scary, just like the Gremlins themselves. The music from the first two stages are real ear worms and bound to get stuck in your head long after you turn off your NES. To me it sounds vaguely reminiscent at times of the music of the Journey To Silius soundtrack, another Sunsoft produced 8-bit classic. That's because the tunes for both games were composed by Naoki Kodaka, who also created the music for Sunsoft's excellent 1989 Batman NES game. The music for the first stage, the office, is so catchy that it was covered by guitar god Nostalgebra in his trademark heavy metal style for his 2016 album "Feed. Play. Sleep. Repeat." I highly recommend checking his version out, as the song translates incredibly well to his trademark crunchy guitars.

Overall Gremlins 2: The New Batch for the Nintendo Entertainment System adds up to being a very fun and unique experience, that I'd definitely recommend giving a shot, especially if you're a fan of Gizmo's big screen adventures. I think it earns a place in the upper tier of licensed movie based games for the NES thanks to Sunsoft's knack for making extremely fun games out of established licensed properties. So the next time your gaming console of choice goes on the fritz, or your copy of the Gremlins 2 game isn't working - before you look up a tutorial of how to fix it on YouTube, turn on all the lights, check all the closets and cupboards, and look under all the beds. Because you never can tell. There just might be a Gremlin in there!



Numskull Quarter Arcades - Dig Dug

by [David Lundin, Jr.](#)

Small tabletop replicas of arcade cabinets are nothing new, reaching initial peak popularity in the early 1980's with Coleco's vacuum fluorescent display based re-creations of Pac-Man, Frogger, Galaxian, and Ms. Pac-Man. While those games are and were cool little collectibles that played a reasonably similar version of the title they were representing, they were very much deluxe handheld games rather than miniaturized arcade classics. It wouldn't be until a few years ago with Replicade Amusement's 1/6th scale Centipede cabinet that a miniature arcade game became available as an accurately detailed and functional collectible. Continuing with the trend, a collectible merchandise company by the name of Numskull Designs introduced an accurate 1/4 scale version of Pac-Man to wide distribution in 2019. Under then moniker "Quarter Arcades" they would follow it up with Galaxian, Ms. Pac-Man, and Galaga - all functional and accurate reproductions except in quarter scale. That assortment of four games is nothing out of the ordinary and has been re-licensed and re-produced in many forms many times, not to mention are contained in what are essentially the same cabinets. Their next game would be something different however and genuinely piqued my interest - a faithful quarter scale replica of Dig Dug.



The Quarter Arcades Dig Dug is an incredibly accurate and functional reproduction of the classic cabinet, except at quarter scale

While Midway originally manufactured the smooth low profile cabinets for Pac-Man, Ms. Pac-Man, Galaxian, and Galaga for American distribution - it was Atari who would manufacture Dig Dug outside of Japan. Atari arcade cabinets of the era tended to be tall and angular, with marquees that would jet out to attract a player's attention and monitors that were positioned more upright than the laid back approach Midway used. Dig Dug was no exception, a towering white cabinet clad in bright pop art depicting the game's characters and mechanics. The objective of Dig Dug is to guide the titular character through underground mazes he digs himself, snagging enemy pookas (red balloon-like creatures) and fygars (green fire-breathing dragons) with his air harpoon and pumping them full of air until they explode. Alternatively large boulders can be dug free and used to crush foes as they fall into the shaft below. The side art uses this tall profile and angular shape to outstanding effect, with a falling rock following the upper contour to smash a pooka, while a partially inflated fygar occupies the center of the illustration. The air harpoon stuck into the fygar twists downward, around a dancing pooka, and to Dig Dug's air pump where he is squatting at the handle. The art is bold, beautiful, very unique - and perfectly re-created on the Quarter Arcades cabinet. The detail continues around to the front of the cabinet with a beautifully accurate control panel overlay, and what I believe to be a screened glass marquee and bezel. The text on the control panel could have easily been phoned in at this scale but Numskull's attention to detail means that every word is legible - although you may need a magnifying glass.

Rather than scaling up the control inputs, the joystick and buttons are in line with the rest of the 1/4 scale reproduction. The player one and player two start buttons are even little illuminated cone buttons, something Atari cabinets are known for. The "Pump" buttons used to activate Dig Dug's air harpoon and pump have a very smooth and responsive motion and honestly feel far better than they should given their size. The joystick is microswitched with the correct four-direction gate and a reasonably accurate and responsive throw. I am very impressed and a little blown away at how good the game feels to play on a control panel of this size. Admittedly there is a little bit of slop in the joystick and it remains to be seen how well it will hold up over time but I have seen videos online of the cabinet being given heavy play by a Dig Dug expert who had no problem racking up huge scores. As for the game, it is running the authentic arcade version of the original Namco release of Dig Dug on a custom PCB that Numskull had manufactured specifically for the Quarter Arcades line. It features full DIP switch game settings accessed by holding both player start buttons upon boot up, allowing difficulty selection, starting lives, attract sound, and where extra life bonuses fall. Additionally Dig Dug is the first of Numskull's Quarter Arcades cabinets to retain high scores even after the cabinet is turned off, adding in a feature many had requested after the release of the previous games.



Controls and control panel overlay are also in scale, right down to tiny illuminated cone buttons and full game instructions

The display is an LCD panel, as is expected on a product made in the current era, even a retro reproduction. However it looks great, with good detail and bright and accurate colors. The viewing angle is also spot on perfect when playing the game or having it run while on display. The glass marquee, player start buttons, and coin reject buttons are all illuminated and with the room lighting dimmed the entire cabinet gives off the same soft glow of a full size machine, albeit at quarter scale. Sound is delivered through a speaker over the bezel, exactly where it was in the original cabinet, and sound volume is controlled by a dial located on the back of the cabinet. Sound reproduction,

while accurate, sounds a slight bit off but I feel that's mainly due to the small speaker size and accurate placement in the cabinet. While it's nice to be able to adjust the volume on the fly with the mechanical adjustment on the back, I would rather volume adjustment be handled in software as it would be one less part that could potentially fail, as I have read product reviews stating that some people have received cabinets with dead audio. I will also say that while the audio can be turned up fairly high, it sounds distorted when up beyond what I would consider "scale volume" - again, I believe the scale speaker and its positioning is the culprit in this case.

Power is supplied via a USB connection and as is common with many consumer electronics these days, you will need to supply your own USB power adapter. I know this is a point of contention with some but it makes global distribution of electronics a lot easier for manufacturers and at least a USB cable is provided in the box. Speaking of the box, it is very well designed with tons of packing foam at both the top and bottom that keep the cabinet securely isolated from the walls of the display box. This is then further protected with cardboard slats along each edge between the display box and the outer shipping carton. It appears the shipping carton had a reasonably hard impact on one corner while in transit but due to the well-designed packaging the cabinet was unaffected. Unlike many other arcade cabinet reproductions, Numskull actually had the foresight to include a built-in rechargeable battery. After a full charge you'll get about four hours of gameplay away from wall power. I find this a nice touch as it allows the cabinet to be functionally displayed in more locations than if it had to be tethered to a power cord. I also want to mention that the power switch is a soft toggle, meaning that you hold it down for a couple seconds until the cabinet powers on and then do the same to turn it off. This isn't specifically explained anywhere in the instruction booklet and it may catch you off guard at first if you're expecting a solid on / off rocker click.



Pictures don't do the screen justice as it looks outstanding in person (left), minor bezel damage that escaped quality control on this cabinet (right)

As has been described, cabinet fit and finish is very nice with wood, metal, and glass construction throughout. The entire assembly has a solid feel and good weight, with grippy pads on the bottom to prevent it from sliding or toppling while being played or on display. My cabinet had a minor quality control issue with a small area of the bezel either not being screened correctly or lifting off during final assembly. I contacted Geek Store, the company I purchased the cabinet from through Amazon, and they offered either a direct exchange or 20% off the price as an apology. Not wanting to ship the cabinet back to the UK, I accepted the 20% refund, which I feel was a generous offer. Manufacturing and longevity issues will come up with any mass-produced item, this is expected, but it would be nice for a much wider distribution to help alleviate them. Understandably in the time of our current global pandemic manufacturing, distribution, and warehousing are uniquely overburdened but when things improve I hope that the supply and support chain for these products is expanded.

Numskull is a UK based company but they do offer worldwide shipment and distribution through their retail partners depending on your region. I purchased Dig Dug via Amazon but it was fulfilled and shipped by Geek Store (which has apparently recently re-branded as Just Geek) in the UK and it was shipped directly from them, taking only a few days to arrive. Shortly after my order arrived the Amazon inventory disappeared but you can still order directly from Just Geek. Additionally for USA customers, Gamestop was allocated a small quantity at one time but is currently sold out as this issue goes to publication. While Quarter Arcades production doesn't seem as limited as smaller 1/6th scale Replicade Amusement cabinets from New Wave Toys, it also appears that they are not made in massive quantities and demand is outweighing supply. Just Geek's website does, however, have the earlier out of stock cabinets (Galaxian, Galaga, Ms. Pac-Man) with future release dates, so there's a chance they are going back into production in the future. This would be awesome as there's no sense in a company leaving money on the table when there is obviously continued interest and people selling their products second-hand for up to three times purchase price.



Putting things into scale - Quarter Arcades Dig Dug, a vintage Coleco Ms. Pac-Man VFD tabletop, and a standard coffee mug

Now that purchase price may be the sticking point for many. Quarter Arcades cabinets range in price from between \$130 to \$150 depending on where they are purchased. After tax and shipping they're about \$170 out the door, as the higher priced distributors tend to offer free shipping, leveling out the final price regardless. Without a doubt that's a lot of money but it's not severely more than a Replicade Amusements 1/6th scale cabinet and those tend to sell out almost immediately. Additionally it's not all that much more than what a good condition 1980's Coleco VFD tabletop goes for these days but admittedly I find that pretty crazy. I think there's an appropriate value here for what you're getting for the money, as you can tell there is a real attention to detail throughout. Certainly far more care is put into these than pretty much any other lower cost alternative to these specific cabinets that have been released by other companies. They truly are collector's pieces that can actually be played and with the presentation Dig Dug's cabinet is known for, you really can't go wrong with this one.

The Quarter Arcades lineup can be found at Numskull's Quarter Arcades page, along with ordering links:
<http://www.numskull.com/quarter-arcades>

Quarter Arcades Dig Dug can currently be purchased from Just Geek's US storefront for delivery outside the UK:
<https://us.justgeek.com/products/official-dig-dug-quarter-size-arcade-cabinet>



Caught On Film - Mortal Kombat (1995) A Fun But Not Quite Flawless Victory

by [Dan Pettis](#)

MORTAL KOMBAT!!! From the second you hear that opening scream followed by the drop of a glorious techno beat, the fun is on. The first Mortal Kombat movie is an entertaining spectacle full of epic fight sequences and glorious fan service ripped straight out of the arcades that was way better than it had to be. It was the first time a video game based movie truly connected with audiences and became a smash hit in the summer of 1995. With the film series resurrected by a brand new movie coming in April to movie theaters and HBO Max, now is the perfect time to look back on the original hit film that first brought the series to life.

The success of the Mortal Kombat video games is owed heavily to the classic action packed karate movies that were a huge influence on the developers of the games. Movies like Bruce Lee's Enter The Dragon and Jean-Claude Van Damme's Bloodsport played an essential role in shaping the look and feel of the games. Here that debt is repaid with Mortal Kombat becoming a classic martial arts film in its own right. This is one of the biggest reasons for its success. It pays homage to the very things that helped inspire MK's creation in the first place. The second biggest reason the movie works so well is how seriously it takes the source material of the first two games. Director Paul W.S. Anderson played the games religiously in the arcades before making this movie and his passion for the project shows up on the screen. The movie is played entirely straight with little hint or irony or mockery. It includes most of the dialogue and catch phrases of the games and features the special moves from the games brought to life with some of the best effects the 1990's could offer. The fighting is even faithful to the games with many of the physically impossible moves recreated in a semi-realistic style.



Christopher Lambert plays a slightly goofier version of Raiden

The movie begins with a lusciously haired version of Liu Kang, played by Robin Shou, heading to the Mortal Kombat tournament and out for revenge after Shang Tsung (Cary-Hiroyuki Tagawa) kills his younger brother. Our other two main heroes who enter the tourney are actor Johnny Cage (Linden Ashby), out to prove that he's as tough as his movie characters, and Sonya Blade (Bridgette Wilson), who inadvertently joins the action after chasing her nemesis Kano on to a boat taking competitors to the tournament. Thunder god Raiden, as played here by Christopher Lambert of the Highlander movies, also offers protection and guidance to our heroes as they seek to save Earthrealm from sure destruction.

The movie mainly focuses on characters from the first Mortal Kombat game, but also features characters from the second game like Jax and Kitana in supporting roles. Series stalwarts Sub Zero and Scorpion appear, but their intense rivalry from the games is eliminated, as in the movie they are both generically evil and under the mind control of Shang Tsung. But the movie absolutely nails the original pallet swapped look of the iconic ninja characters, and green ninja Reptile, who also briefly shows up. As for the look of the rest of the characters, the movie doesn't really seem to care to put them into their colorful outfits from the games, which admittedly could have looked a little cartoonish, but the characters still look appropriately dressed in their more bland, restrained costumes.



Sub Zero is ready for a fight

The martial arts in the film is top notch especially during a fight between Johnny Cage and Scorpion and also in a fight featuring Liu Kang versus Sub Zero. Robin Shou is generally outstanding as Liu Kang in his many fight scenes. It must have been an incredibly physically demanding role given the amount of fight scenes he has throughout the course of the movie. Supposedly he broke several ribs while filming, but kept on taking the hits to get the movie done. Speaking of the fight scenes, this is another aspect of the games that film scores a flawless victory on. All of the fantastical special moves are taken seriously and represented with the proper flair that performing them in the real world would have. The PG-13 rating of the movie however does not allow for the bloody brutality that is the series trademark. Although the movie does push that rating to the limit and gets away with the bloody decapitation of a skull and a few other toned down fatalities but they are still not nearly as gory as the games. The new Mortal Kombat movie will have an R rating and could feature more of the ultra violence and the over the top fatalities that the series is famous for.

The main villains of the movie are also fantastic. Cary-Hiroyuki Tagawa does an incredible job as the imposing soul stealer Shang Tsung. He radiates evil intensity as he spouts many of the series famous one-liners. As a viewer you'll truly love to hate him, in an outstandingly hammy performance. Trevor Goddard also seems to be having a blast putting on an Australian accent to play the crude red Terminator-eyed villain Kano. Goro also appears, played here by a high tech animatronic that cost over one million dollars to make. He looks a little rubbery, and the decision to use practical effects to bring him to life may have been due to the technical limitations of the time, but I'll still take a physical puppet over computer animation any day.



The movie focuses on Sonya, Johnny Cage, and Liu Kang

However, some of the film's special effects that looked great at the time, have aged poorly. This is similar to what has happened with many of the other pioneering movies of the era that dipped their toes into using the mediocre computer animation of the day. Two of the cheesiest offenders in the movie are the effects used for Reptile in lizard form and Scorpion's iconic hand blade. With a bigger budget and better graphical designers behind it, this is another area where the upcoming re-boot can easily improve on its predecessor.

The movie was a massive success, grossing over 122 million dollars world wide, and spawning a sequel movie in 1997: Mortal Kombat: Annihilation. Director Paul W.S. Anderson would go on to make more video game movie history as he directed another one of the only truly critically and financially successful video game adaptations, the first Resident Evil movie. It would go on to become a six movie franchise that also has a reboot movie scheduled to come out later this year. Anderson is still at it, and he directed a movie based on the Monster Hunter video game franchise which was released last year. So until the new Mortal Kombat movie gets over here, now is a good time to revisit the original classic movie. It's by no means a flawless victory, but its got such good action and is such a blast that it'll give your boredom a real fatality and you'll have a bloody good time.



Learning To Enjoy Console Roguelikes

by [Jerry Terrifying](#)

The Roguelike genre just is not for some people. The first barrier to hurdle is the name of the genre, at least it was for me. It harkens back to the mid 90's before games were called "First Person Shooters" and were all just referred to as "Doom clones." Once you get past the obtuse genre classification you're thrust into a fairly simple but relentlessly unforgiving style of game. Rogue: Exploring the Dungeons of Doom was developed in the early 1980's for Unix based mainframes. Basically extreme nerd content for computer science majors and engineer types. Some of the key components of the Roguelike, a game that is like Rogue, are permanent death, managing a food meter, randomly generated dungeon floors and randomly dropped equipment.

If a player happens into a game like this expecting your typical Role Playing Game that lasts for tens of if not hundreds of hours, they will be sorely disappointed when their character dies only to start the game anew. Which is what happened to a lot of players that experienced Roguelike games on early consoles. My first experience with a Roguelike was actually ToeJam & Earl for the Sega Genesis. The creator of the game, Greg Johnson, was directly inspired by Rogue after playing the game in college. Forgoing the typical setting of a musty dungeon full of traditional fantasy villains, Johnson was inspired by the previous game he had worked on which took place in space. The titular ToeJam and Earl are stranded on Earth and need to traverse different levels looking for spaceship parts while dodging Earthlings and using randomly generated items to aid them on their quest.



The first time I played the game I was over at a buddy's house playing on a soft modded Xbox. During those times it was a common occurrence for us to get a few cases of the cheapest headache-inducing Honey Brown beer and a large quantity of fried chicken (my friends younger brother worked at a Lee's Chicken at the time) and have all night gaming sessions. We fired up ToeJam & Earl on the emulator and were blown away by how fun the co-op mode was. I didn't realize it but I had just played my first Roguelike.



The next time I would have any real experience with the genre was with the Sega Dreamcast in the form of Time Stalkers. My main interest in the game was the character Nigel who first appeared in the Sega Genesis masterpiece Landstalker. The general plot is various characters from different universes are being brought into a hubworld for the amusement of a malevolent force. The worlds range from medieval to futuristic. The player can play as the hero named Sword or other characters as they are unlocked by beating dungeons. Each time you enter a dungeon you start at level 1, have a limited inventory, and if you die all your items except equipped gear are lost. Level layouts are randomly generated with randomly dropped gear and items. A lot of reviews had a hard time with this gameplay but I believe it was due to the Roguelike genre not being widely known or appreciated. If you go into the game with the right mindset it's a very enjoyable game, especially if you're a fan of Climax Entertainment's other games. It really was a treat getting to play as Nigel from Landstalker and Lady from Ladystalker again.



My next trip into the world of Roguelikes would be with the Mystery Dungeon series. My love for Dragon Quest put the game World of Dragon Warrior: Torneko The Last Hope on my radar. This is the seventh entry into the Mystery Dungeon series and the second in the Torneko games. The series is actually a bit of a big topic to tackle. But to keep it brief the developers of Dragon Quest, Chunsoft, approached Yuji Hori and asked if they could use characters from Dragon Quest IV to make a spin-off game, Torneko's Great Adventure. The gameplay was based on Rogue but in the world of Dragon Warrior IV, featuring the chubby merchant Torneko going on a quest to explore dungeons to make his store famous by stocking great treasures from the mystery dungeon. The game was a huge hit in Japan for the Super Famicom. The sequel on PlayStation, World of Dragon Warrior: Torneko The Last Hope, was released in North America during the RPG craze on the PS1 without much fanfare. But my love for Dragon Quest has had me picking up all of the mainline Dragon Quest games and their spin offs over the past decade or so and eventually I would pick up World of Dragon Warrior: Torneko The Last Hope.

After playing this gem of a dungeon crawler, I went down the rabbit hole of Mystery Dungeon games. The second game in the Mystery Dungeon series was called Mystery Dungeon 2: Shiren the Wanderer. Shiren was a character developed by Chunsoft which gave them a bit more freedom in creating locations, characters and enemies separate from Dragon Quest. The series would continue making unique games as well as plenty of other spin-offs, most famously the Pokemon Mystery Dungeon games. Thousands of Pokemon fans have been playing Roguelikes, although toned down in difficulty, without even realizing it! So after reading a bit about the Mystery Dungeon series I picked up a copy of Shiren the Wanderer, which had been ported to the Nintendo DS. Shiren is still going strong today with the fifth Shiren game appearing on the PlayStation Vita and recently being ported to Steam and Nintendo Switch. For my birthday this year I preordered a Limited Run Games physical copy of Shiren the Wanderer 5 and can't wait to play it!



Part of the appeal to me with Shiren on the DS is being able to play in short bursts. I have a three-year-old daughter and one-year-old son so time to play games comes at a premium. Being able to open up the DS and make a quick run through some dungeons before being taken out by an enemy can be perfect for an impromptu 10 minute game session. I hope the same will be true for Shiren the Wanderer 5 on the Switch. Now that I've been exposed to the genre I've been looking for other similar games. There is Fatal Labyrinth on the Sega Genesis and Dragon Crystal on the Sega Master System / Game Gear which are also great games to play in short bursts. There have been many a night my son has woken up and been rocked to bed in the gentle glow of Fatal Labyrinth. As of yet I still haven't played the original Rogue although it sits in my Steam wishlist. Perhaps if it goes on sale from its already affordable price of \$2.99 I just might take the plunge and play the original.



30 Years of Street Fighter II - A Look Back

by [George "mecha" Spanos](#)

Capcom's Street Fighter II: The World Warrior turned 30 years old recently. Based on accounts from the development team itself it would appear this was intended to be the only sequel effort to the original Street Fighter. What they had stumbled upon with the re-energized franchise was nothing short of truly amazing. Here's the tale of how Street Fighter II took the arcade coin-op world by storm.

The franchise's roots lie in the 1987 release of Street Fighter, a game based around an international fighting tournament concept inspired by the 1973 Bruce Lee film, Enter the Dragon. At the head of its design was its producer Takashi Nishiyama, who had successful titles Moon Patrol and Kung Fu Master to his credit with his former company Irem. Fascinated by martial arts themes, he and his team set out to take fighting games in the vein of Karate Champ (Technos) and Yie Ar Kung-Fu (Konami) to the next level.



Street Fighter

Street Fighter's primary innovation was the implementation of sequenced special moves, consisting of a motion of the joystick followed by an attack button, albeit its poor execution in the game is among what it was best known for.

Arcades at the time almost required new games to have unique aesthetics or mechanics (driving games with full motion cockpits, for example) in order to enable them to stand out in a sea of titles battling for floor space. Street Fighter came in a large 25" display "Deluxe" trim consisting of pressure sensitive pads that you would hit with great force to determine the strength of your attack in the game. It was another bust for the game, as players literally experienced injuries from trying to play the game. In its native Japan, Capcom shipped the game also with the familiar 6 button layout consisting of 3 punch and 3 kick attacks. The Deluxe cabinets were "upgraded" to use this arrangement instead. Although a successful game in its own right, it developed a poor reputation based on its Deluxe pad controls and would serve as a valuable lesson for later.

Nishiyama and other members of his team were subsequently poached to work for SNK shortly thereafter. Although a certain demand existed for a future sequel to Street Fighter, it would not be under his direction. Another development team at Capcom was headed by Yoshiki Okamoto, who at the time was directing a shoot-em-up game with a unique rotary dial control for aiming called Forgotten Worlds. Rounding out this team were designers Akira Nishitani, Akira Yasuda, and Noritaka Funamizu. Forgotten Worlds was the first game designed on Capcom's new universal arcade hardware, the CPS (Capcom Play System), powered by a Motorola 68000 CPU. From a purely hardware perspective, it was a highly ambitious effort, requiring a significant amount of ROM storage, and thus had a high cost of production. Although the game was well received, it was a major financial burden on Capcom. With the demand for a Street Fighter sequel looming, a ROM chip shortage in 1988 sidelined the project and a different kind of "Street Fighter" game was on the horizon instead.



Final Fight

Okamoto used the same personnel for the new project that Capcom initially wanted to brand as part of the Street Fighter lineage, titling the new game Street Fighter '89. Double Dragon (Technos) had been a major hit in arcades, drawing mass popularity and garnering critical acclaim. With its 2 player cooperative gameplay, players were rewarded with the opportunity to team up and operators saw double the profits. A contrast to the development of Forgotten Worlds, the new game was engineered with the utmost frugality. Clever tricks to save on the ROM storage were employed. The idea was to make a lean and mean street brawler like Double Dragon, but orchestrated with a higher degree of precision in the gameplay. When the game started making the rounds at operator conventions with the Street Fighter '89 title, however, people were confused as to how it had anything to do with Street Fighter. Capcom responded by renaming it Final Fight, and giving one of the playable characters a background as a "former Street Fighter" instead. Due to the heavy losses from Forgotten Worlds, the new CPS entry was a make or break for the company. If in the event it were to fail, Capcom could potentially go under. The game wound up being a success, the company responded in kind by asking for a sequel.



Street Fighter II: The World Warrior

Okamoto had a storied history before his career at Capcom. He had worked for Konami years earlier and was tasked with producing a driving game, but instead created the shooter Time Pilot. Despite the game's success, the company parted ways with him and he wound up with Capcom instead. The ROM chip shortage had subsided, and with instruction to make a follow-up to Final Fight, it was here he chose to go with the game they had wanted to do all along: Street Fighter II. The official title was Street Fighter II: The World Warrior, patterned around the same basic concept as its predecessor, the new game expanded beyond Players 1 and 2 controlling identical characters in Ryu and Ken. Now there were eight selectable characters to choose from, each hailing from their own respective home countries, to compete in a fighting tournament hosted by M. Bison (Vega in Japan). Bison and three other characters: Balrog, Vega, and the previous game's champion Sagat, were a cast of "boss" characters the player couldn't play as.

Getting a shot at doing another Street Fighter meant that Capcom could fix all the blemishes from the original title. Out of the box, the game came only with the 6 button attack layout, to alleviate the symptoms of players with busted open bloodied hands. The special move execution was fixed by being programmed to work more leniently with the button input following the joystick motion. Oh, and this design inadvertently gave birth to the combo, a standard in fighting game nomenclature ever since, by way of the leniency opening up the possibility of chaining multiple attacks. Each fighter had authentic settings representing their countries in the background art, and the iconic music to match composed by Yoko Shimomura.

Although Street Fighter had head to head 2 player fighting, real world demonstration showed that it was particularly limited. For Street Fighter II having many different selectable fighters with unique fighting styles meant there were significantly more options for competitive play. In Japan when the game was placed on location test, the team observed that most players were only playing 1 player games against the computer instead of their intended "battle play" with 2 players. Japanese publications began to promote the concept and the players subsequently caught on. The game was location tested in California for its United States release. Distributors were leery at operators requesting more cabinets since the single cabinets they'd put out were backed up from players waiting in lines to play, believing that adding another cabinet wouldn't result in added profits, but splitting them between the games. Perceived estimates were that the game would be capable of taking in \$800 a week. Milpitas location Golfland got their additional cabinet; the two machines drew \$1,400 each. Capcom had a mega hit on their hands.



Street Fighter II': Champion Edition

Although great care went into the refinement of the gameplay in the initial World Warrior release, there were a few areas of potential that weren't even realized until demand among players grew. In The World Warrior, there were no "mirror matches," meaning it was impossible to have match-ups in the game between two of the same fighter. Players also wanted to tap the potential of the four boss fighters for their own playing needs. Additionally, going without saying, the game could have used a little more refinement too, as well as a fix for the game-breaking glitch of Guile's handcuffs. Through the instruction of James Goddard, a forefather for the fighting game community and esports in general, all of these new design aesthetics were put into place. The result was the next iteration of the series, Street Fighter II': Champion Edition. With Street Fighter II already cemented in arcade lore, Champion Edition sold a staggering 140,000 units and in the infancy of its battles with Mortal Kombat, ultimately won the first round.

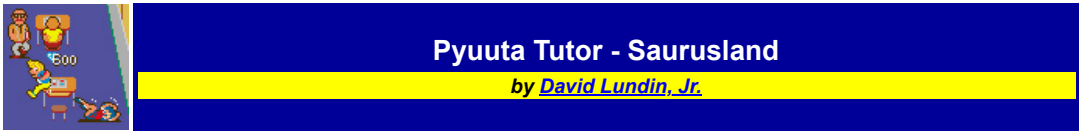


Street Fighter II' Turbo: Hyper Fighting

Effectively a standard in arcade coin-op, bootlegging of game circuit boards was inevitable. It stung Capcom pretty bad, with an array of bootlegs showing up in countries in the hundreds of thousands where distribution didn't even think to go to. Profits were starting to be adversely affected, as these were unsanctioned by Capcom and their distributor networks. One of the companies producing these bootlegs was Hung Hsi Enterprise Taiwan. They also published one of the more prevalent ROM hacks that existed for Champion Edition named Rainbow Edition. Rainbow Edition sported significantly faster gameplay, and also enabled the ability to throw (spam) multiple projectile attacks at once and also notably perform special moves in mid-air. Capcom facing pressure turned to James Goddard once again who had played Rainbow Edition in the wild. Although Goddard was unimpressed with how the special move hacks broke the game, he did find the turbo element fascinating and suggested Capcom use it. The development team had expressed disinterest in speeding the game up as it would break their gameplay balance set forth in Champion Edition. After much coercion by way of player demand, the next upgrade release, Street Fighter II': Turbo

Hyper Fighting emerged.

Akin to a great offense being a great defense, Turbo Hyper Fighting was engineered to carry the benefits of the hacked Rainbow Edition by way of faster gameplay, new moves, and mid-air execution but with balance. Rainbow Edition was perceived as silly due to its imbalance; Capcom could change the tide completely if they offered the fresh spin with balance that players argue was superior even to Champion Edition. Using data from the tournament scene for Champion Edition and that game's flaws, Turbo Hyper Fighting had a chance to be innovative and win over fans in a huge way. A stormy, and rapid, development cycle on the game alternating between Goddard's requests and Capcom's resistance resulted in Goddard getting his way. Capcom was able to secure a third victory with Turbo Hyper Fighting, their reluctance to even make the game at all was silenced when the game was a success on play test in Japan. Ultimately Street Fighter II, and all three flavors of it, went on to set many standards in fighting games for three decades. Capcom is still in business today as a result of their efforts on the project, spawning many more successful franchises in their Marvel vs. Capcom crossovers, Resident Evil, and of course, many more Street Fighters.



Way back in March of 2016 I began this column with our first issue and intended it to become a regular fixture from then on. For whatever reason I never followed up its first entry, a review of Bombman, and the subject at hand soon became a distant memory. As we begin our sixth year at The Retrogaming Times, I thought it fitting to get Pyuuta Tutor rolling again and deliver on my intent from half a decade ago. The Tomy Pyuuta is the original Japanese version of the Tomy Tutor, a rather obscure home computer from the very early 1980's and the very first computer I ever used or owned. While only ten games were released for the Tutor, the Pyuuta had many more, running the spectrum from outstanding arcade conversions to quality original games specifically for the Pyuuta market. Even though the Japanese market had multiple Pyuuta models and a healthy library of games, it was still a very obscure platform even in its country of origin.

Before we get going again after all these years, I want to once more give a huge thanks to those who acquired, archived and added these Pyuuta cartridges to fill out the entire Tutor / Pyuuta library in MESS (Multi Emulator Super System), particularly Team Europe. It is due to the efforts of these hobbyists that we are able to enjoy these games and ensure the Pyuuta's place in video game history is preserved. Thank you!



Saurusland is labeled as the third cartridge in the Pyuuta lineup but in terms of game design and visual styling it feels much more like it was developed in tandem with Bombman, which was labeled as release number one. In Saurusland you control a caveman armed with a large club that he uses to clobber moles, mammoths, and dinosaurs. There's no objective beyond obtaining points and staying alive, as Saurusland is a game of high score in the style of early arcade and computer games. Initially I was impressed that Saurusland has an honest to goodness title screen, something not seen in many Pyuuta games, with the game name displayed in large letters as three volcanoes erupt in the distance and a little title melody plays. With that said, the background of the title screen is the one and only playfield in the entire game but single-screen games were common in the early days of the Pyuuta so it's not surprising.

The caveman can freely move in eight directions with very fast response and instant movement when turning from left to right or vice versa. Pressing either the SL or SR button swings his club and again this action is very rapid instant. He also has a few different frames of animation as he walks and even though his sprite is very blocky, his design and movements lend the character a bit of personality. As he walks around the grassy area, mounds will begin to appear in the dirt, with a mole eventually popping out of each one. Neither the mounds or moles can hurt the caveman, however they can both be smacked with the club for 100 points, with no difference between them that I could ascertain. It seems that smashing moles is the main concept behind the game, so it's surprising that they don't offer any challenge beyond lining up your club and absolutely no risk in attacking them. What does pose a risk however are the mammoths and dinosaurs that also roam the grassy area. These are roughly the same size as the caveman and also feature a few animation frames but each are a single color - the mammoth in black and the dinosaur in pink. Only one mammoth and one dinosaur can be on the screen at a time but they tend to leave and appear quickly from the left and right edges of the screen, making them a constant obstacle even once clobbered. The touch of either of these larger animals is deadly and their speed and direction of movement can change at a moment's notice, however they award 500 points if successfully hit with the club. Hit detection may take a few minutes to become familiar with but once the sweet spot for the club is understood, attacking is consistent and solid.



Title screens are a rarity on the Pyuuta (left), a dinosaur closes in (center), evading volcanic rocks during an eruption (right)

As the caveman and creatures run around the playfield, the three volcanoes in the distance will continuously steam and smoke but they're more than just background decoration. The volcanoes will frequently erupt, throwing three flumes of lava into the air. When this happens the moles will retreat underground and the dinosaurs and mammoths will stampede, making them a much larger threat to the caveman. Volcanic rock will then begin to rain down, two boulders at a time, and must be avoided as even the slightest touch will kill the caveman. The score counter runs continuously during the eruption, making the time spent avoiding the constant barrage of rocks easily the most lucrative scoring part of the game. The rocks seem to home in on the caveman just a bit if he is near them, so avoiding them completely is often the best strategy. After the eruption calms and the skies clear, the moles will begin to tunnel back up and the mammoths and dinosaurs will return once again. While there are no stages or levels in Saurusland, the frequency of eruptions and the speed and unpredictability in which enemies move constantly increases the longer you play. Additionally the boulders that rain down will move faster and faster as the game continues on, showing some pretty smooth and quick sprite movement on the hardware.


What I find most charming about Saurusland is the sound effect package it uses, something often not said about games on the Pyuuta. Generally there are one or two sound effects that overpower everything else with Pyuuta / Tutor games but such isn't the case here. Nearly everything has a different sound, even the footsteps of the caveman and those of the larger enemies. The enemy footstep sound even increases in time with their movements when they speed up or slow down. Volcanic eruptions use the standard Pyuuta "explosion / collision" sound but rather than stomp on the rest of the sound effects it actually blends in with and complements them. Amusingly the sound that plays when clubbing a dino sounds like part of the harpoon sound effect from Dig Dug, a game that influenced the box art for the first Pyuuta game, Bombman. Speaking of Bombman, Saurusland plays a rendition of "Shave and a Haircut" upon the caveman being killed, same as was played during a game over in Bombman. Saurusland takes things a step further with the caveman turning into an angel, complete with a halo, and floating up toward the top of the screen. Again, a nice little touch that adds just a bit of personality to a very simple game.



Defeating a mammoth earns 500 points (left), getting into position for an attack (center), the caveman didn't make it this time (right)

As expected of a Pyuuta game, Saurusland features both AMA (amateur) and PRO (professional) game modes, selectable after inputting the number of players. PRO difficulty simply ramps things up quicker with more frequent volcanic eruptions and dinosaurs and mammoths charging around at different speeds. After playing a couple games to work out the hit detection for the club, it is my recommendation to play this one in the PRO mode only as it provides a much faster paced and challenging game compared to the AMA setting. Additionally the faster the enemies move, the smoother the scrolling is. I have no idea why that is but it seems to be common among all Pyuuta / Tutor games when it comes down to object movement - faster equals smoother.

Saurusland isn't an incredible game or a lost gem, even on the Pyuuta. It is very simple, has even fewer mechanics than Bombman, and as with the first Pyuuta games it feels like an exercise in something you could program on the computer yourself. Yet I still find it a lot of fun in the style of an early arcade or computer game with simple action, simple rules, and just enough of an addiction factor to remain fresh for a few games here and there. While it would be left in the dust by the next generation of Pyuuta games I still believe it to be a good introductory game for the hardware. If anything games like Saurusland, and the Pyuuta in general, were more victims of being released on the eve of big changes in the Japanese home gaming industry than anything else. It's important to understand that the Pyuuta launched in 1982, just a year before Sega's SG-1000, and the revolution of Nintendo's Famicom. Things were changing and simple games like Saurusland would soon be rendered all but obsolete. That doesn't mean they still aren't fun and I found myself really enjoying this one for what it is.



The Value of Retrogames

by [Todd Friedman](#)

I have been seriously collecting retro video games for the last five years or so and I have learned a lot about what games are worth. It seems that certain games that would most likely never be played or kept can be worth a lot of money. Recently I am in pursuit of loose NES games, to collect all licensed and unlicensed games. At the time of this article, I have 450 individual loose NES cartridges. I still have a long way to go to the official 685 licensed and the 97 unlicensed games for a total of 782. In this process I have done a lot of shopping around, researching and even bidding on eBay for some. Everyone has a different way of truly collecting the games, but because of COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021, it is almost impossible to go to an event or a video game store and do the game hunting I am used to. There are many ways to find the value of a game and to truly get what the game is worth and not feel scammed. Some apps like Retro Game Collector, tell you what the game is worth for loose, with manual, and complete. There is also website like www.pricecharting.com who most gamers stand by for the value of a game. The problem is

pricecharting.com uses eBay to average the amount for what a game is sold for. So if eBay sells a game too high it changes the value on the website. It is a good for gathering a range of gaming prices, but I still look around at others.

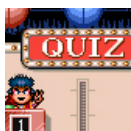
What confuses me are the games that are sold for hundreds of dollars and even thousands in some cases. Prices are based on rarity, condition, and history. The condition of a game is sometime the difference between buying a game for \$10 to \$45 If it is graded and in mint condition, it could sell for up to \$200 for the same game. For my current goal to get every NES game, it is not possible unless I get the rarest of rare games, like Stadium Events (selling for over \$9,000) or 1990 Nintendo World Championships (only a handful of games created and in existence, selling for over \$13,000). Those are considered unlikely on my list. But there are games like "The Flintstones: Surprise at Dinosaur Peak" which I would have never bought as a kid and for sure never kept it around. It is selling for around \$800 for just the game, that does not include the manual or box. If you want that you need to spend over \$2,000. Last year I was grouping up the current games to see what I needed and I came across Bonk's Adventure for the NES. At first, I thought it was a fake and maybe a reproduction game that someone created. I never did remember Bonk being on the Nintendo, I always remembered that game on the TurboGrafx-16. I did a search and come to find out it is one of the hardest games to get for the NES. So, I took it to the next level and searched the value. When I checked at that time, it was selling for \$600. Mine was in perfect condition just the game, nothing else. I asked around and gamers told me to make sure the game was legit and check the board. It seems that gamers are reproducing the same game with the same cover but with a different gaming board inside. I am not sure why that fad started, as getting tricked on the Internet by buying these is cruel to me.

The madness of the value of video games goes way beyond just Nintendo. For example, if you happen to have the NBA Elite '11 for the PlayStation 3 (like who would not, right?), it sold for over \$9,000 in an auction because there were only a limited number produced. Another example is Superman for the Atari 2600. You may say you do own that, but wait, be careful and check the label - there was a different version with the same name sold at Sears back in the day and the Superman lettering was yellow. This game can go for up to \$30,000. A sealed copy of Nintendo's "Super Mario Bros. 3" has become the most expensive video game ever sold, going for a whopping \$156,000 at an auction.

I was always told things are only worth what people pay for them. I had baseball cards back in the 1980's. Rookie cards, complete sets, rare glossy ones that came in special packs. I packaged them up and put them in binders knowing one day they will be worth money. A few years later they did hike up in price and I was very excited. Fast forward to 2021 and a Mark McGwire rookie card which at one time in the 1980's went for \$600, now goes for maybe \$10 if you're lucky. Now of course history had a lot to do with baseball cards going down, but it was also the idea that baseball cards are not that cool or popular anymore, devaluing the amount they were worth. Same with video games, I feel like the last five years or so retrogaming is at a peak, and gamers of all ages are buying, selling, and collecting games for the older generations. This is spiking the value of the games. Like everything else that was "rare," after a time the value goes down. This is what I believe will happen to retrogaming. As games are going more digital and most systems and portables can download a retrogame in minutes, the originals are going to go down in value. Collecting games will be like collecting old pennies. They look cool but are not worth much more than they were 40 years ago. I will keep my Bonk's Adventure for now, but I would have to gamble and say in the next few years to sell it as twenty years from now it will probably be worth \$12.

Then there is the current generation who buys games, console, accessories, but does not open them and weeks later sells them for multiple times the purchase price. To me, this is not what collecting is all about. That is more of a fast investment on an item you never really wanted. This has been seen in items like the new Super Mario Game & Watch, PlayStation 5, and the NES Mini, which originally retailed for \$59.99 and was being resold for \$600 or more. Now you can get them anywhere for that \$59.99 or even less.

Collecting is an obsession. The idea of getting every game or toy lineup, or trading card, is a rush. The idea of getting something and storing it in good condition seems very boring as you never get to enjoy it. I admit I have fell down that trap for video games. However in 2019, it took courage, but I sold about 2,800 of my retro games. It was just getting too crowded and I was only playing about 30 of the over 3,900 games I owned. I decided to keep a handful of games on each console I owned and sell the rest - except for the NES. I kept those to try to collect all of them. I kept it simpler and narrowed down to one system. So far, I have not paid more than \$20 for a game which gets me up to 450 games. I still have a few more than I can get for that price, but then everything goes up and up and up. I am not sure how I can pull it off other than spending thousands of dollars to get 80% of the rest of the games. The other 20% of games that are selling for \$400 or more, I will just wait until they go down.



Weekly Retrogaming Trivia Recap

Compiled 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:

12/21/2020 - WEEK 195

Question: The phrase "SHY GYPSY SLYLY SPRYLY TRYST BY MY CRYPT" is the solution to a puzzle in what classic CD-ROM game?

01/08/2021 - WEEK 196

Question: Where does the arcade game Virtua Cop take place?

01/15/2021 - WEEK 197

Question: Jonathan Ingram and Ed Brown are the protagonists of what game?

01/22/2021 - WEEK 198

Question: The puzzle shooter Quarth was released to arcades outside of Japan under what title?

01/29/2021 - WEEK 199

Question: What PlayStation shooter features a soundtrack composed by The Crystal Method?

02/05/2021 - WEEK 200

Question: The objective of the arcade game Journey is to collect what type of items?

02/12/2021 - WEEK 201

Question: What simplified Final Fantasy game was specifically designed for American audiences?

02/19/2021 - WEEK 202

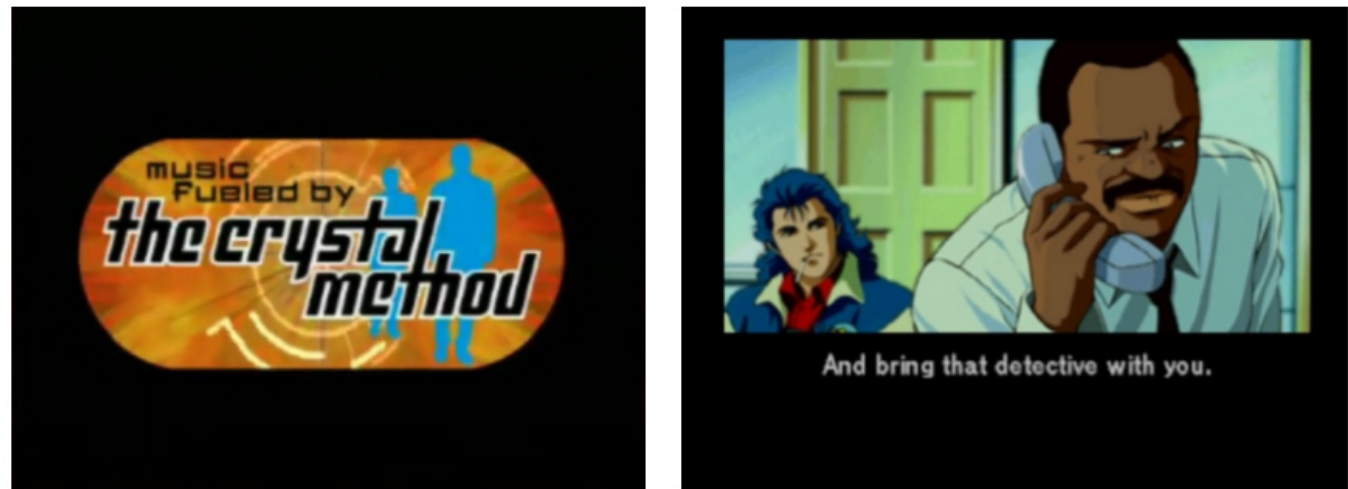
Question: What game was introduced as The Real Driving Simulator?



Arranging cans in the pantry to make a phrase with Y as the only vowel in The 7th Guest (left), Gran Turismo was marketed as a simulator from the beginning (right)

Answers:

- Week 195 Answer: The 7th Guest.
- Week 196 Answer: Virtua City, hence the VCPD.
- Week 197 Answer: Policenauts.
- Week 198 Answer: Block Hole.
- Week 199 Answer: N2O: Nitrous Oxide (1998).
- Week 200 Answer: Musical instruments.
- Week 201 Answer: Final Fantasy Mystic Quest.
- Week 202 Answer: Gran Turismo.



The Crystal Method's involvement with N2O: Nitrous Oxide was promoted as a selling point (left), Jonathan and Ed in Policenauts are an homage to Lethal Weapon (right)

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.](#)

I'd be remiss if I didn't take even just a moment to touch on what March of this year signifies in the ongoing pandemic. March of 2020 was when the greater California Bay Area and Silicon Valley, where I reside, first began "shelter in place" protocols aimed to slow infection rates. As time went on the optimism of a fast return to normalcy began to fade, particularly as events all throughout 2020 began to be postponed or outright canceled. As 2021 began a lot of those same events, which were holding out hope of resuming this year, have once again had to postpone - this time to 2022 when it is widely believed they will be able to resume following current trends.

Now I didn't bring this topic up to step on a soap box concerning public health - I think most of us escape a bit into recreational activities such as retrogaming specifically to get away from current events for a moment. What I do want to emphasize is the impact on the vendors that make their livings at these shows and events that have been delayed or discontinued. Many I've talked with said they could have floated a few months with a delayed convention season but an entire year has deeply impacted many of them - and it may be another year before they can resume any form of their regular business. If there is a vendor or artist at an event you frequent, please consider reaching out to them to see what you can do to support them remotely. If a convention or show has open communication channels, perhaps contact them to see if they can furnish a list of vendors from their most recent event. While times may not be hard for everyone right now, things are very different for a lot of people. Please support convention vendors and artists if you are willing and able, so that on the other side of this conventions and shows are able to resume once more.

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!



The Retrogaming Times

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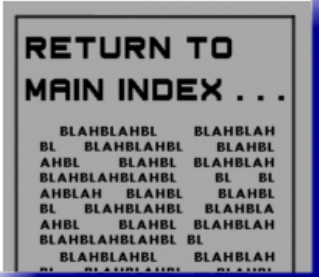


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