The Retrogaming Times

THE BIMONTHLY RETROGAMING HOBBYIST NEWSLETTER

SECOND ISSUE - MAY 2016

NEW ADVENTURES FOR ENDURING GAMES!

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Prepare to Qualify

by David Lundin, Jr.

Greetings! Before we get started I want to once again thank everyone who has taken a look at the newsletter, joined our Facebook community, sent in an e-mail or contributed an article! I cannot stress enough how much The Retrogaming Times depends upon fellow retrogaming hobbyists. You drive the newsletter! This is your publication, plain and simple. The universally positive response to the relaunch of the newsletter as The Retrogaming Times has far exceeded any expectations I could have possibly had at the outset. With that in mind, we have some exciting things ahead in this issue including returning columns, a hardware review, a big new multigame feature, and the personal stories that make this such an enriching and enjoyable hobby. In putting together this issue the greatest commonality I observed, regardless of the subject or the approach to covering a topic, is the sense of enjoyment that video games bring to everyone. That word "enjoyment" means something different to everybody - as do video games. It is in that enjoyment, that sense of goodness - fun - whatever you what to call it, that we truly all share in a camaraderie as retrogamers. With that camaraderie in mind, I present our second issue.

Upcoming Events

Compiled by David Lundin, Jr.

California Extreme 2016, July 16th - 17th, 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 16-17, 2016 at the same fantastic location - the Hyatt Regency in Santa Clara, California. Please join us for our 20th show with hundreds of your favorite arcade and pinball games, both past and present, all gathered together for another fun-filled weekend of pure arcade excitement for folks of all ages!

California Extreme is working on this year's lineup of seminars, guest speakers, and other arcade-themed events that make the show so much fun each year. On that note, we are looking to you, the arcade community, for suggestions for topics and speakers. Is there something you would like to see presented (or even to present yourself)? This is your chance to let us know what you would like to see! Send us an e-mail at info@caextreme.org and let us know. We welcome all suggestions and will consider each one carefully.

Thanks to all of our previous exhibitors and volunteers. We hope we can count on you again, and if you've never brought games or volunteered before, why not give it a try this year? You'll have a great time!

For more information as it becomes available and pictures from previous shows, visit our website at www.caextreme.org.

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Video Game Summit, July 16th, Villa Park, Illinois, USA

Remember how much fun you used to have playing Atari, Nintendo and all kinds of games on your computer? Well, you will have the rare opportunity to play these great games again at the Video Game Summit, Chicago's premier video game trade show. In fact, dealers in retro games will be on hand offering games, controllers, systems and memorabilia and will be prepared to buy or trade for the games you have held onto since you were a kid. Who knows, you might just have an Atari cartridge worth $1000 or more collecting dustin your attic.

The Location of the 2016 Video Game Summit is at The Odeum Expo Center in Villa Park , IL.
The date of the show will be July 16th, 2016 from 10am to 7pm.
Admission is $10.00 per person.

For more infromation, please contact tfried0237@gmail.com or dan@videogamesummit.net
For complete details, please visit videogamesummit.net or avc.videogamesummit.net

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KansasFest 2016, July 19th - 24th, Kansas City, Missouri, USA

KansasFest 2016, the 28th annual Apple II convention, is scheduled for July 19 - 24 in Kansas City, Missouri. Mike Harvey, a business executive, salesperson, technologist, project manager, entrepreneur, programmer, and best known in the Apple community as the founder and publisher of Nibble magazine, will join us with a keynote presentation.

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, game tournaments, and camaraderie. Any and all Apple II users, fans, and friends are invited to attend this year's event. Please visit the event's official Web site.

CONTACT:

KansasFest 2016
http://www.kansasfest.org/
http://twitter.com/kansasfest/
https://www.facebook.com/events/1546619762296713/

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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.

RetroDuo Portable V2.0 Review

by Todd Friedman

The RDP RetroDuo Portable V2.0 handheld system is a fairly new item that has been on the market less than a year. I purchased this item with the excitement of playing the original classic Nintendo and Super Nintendo games on a portable handheld device.

There are many recycled versions of classic Nintendo and Sega games on Gameboy, Wii U Shop, Xbox Live, PlayStation Network and MAME, but to me there is nothing like playing the original cartridge that was played back in the 1980s and 1990s. I do own the systems and controllers from back in the day but most of the time they are stored away or unplugged. With this new portable device it's easy to turn on the classics and play them anywhere. There is no TV required. When I first saw this item online, I immediately got excited and had a vision of myself playing The Legend of Zelda in my backyard on the deck or in the bedroom at night with headphones so no one was disturbed.

The time came to order this ultimate handheld device and when it was time to checkout it was SOLD OUT everywhere. It was indeed the hot item of the year. I had to wait around 3 months for it to be back in stock and immediately placed the order. It finally came and I was ready to begin the experience. Overall there are many positives and negatives of this device. I will explain and go into details.

First impression out of the box was good. The size of the unit is not too big and no too small. The screen size is about what you would need and expect on a hand held portable. Some of the previous Gameboy systems had small screens which made gaming hard and bad on the eyes. The standard + direction pad was just the way it used to be on the old NES controllers. The buttons were what you normally would see on a SNES controller with the A, B, X, Y layout. Certain NES games took some getting used to on that layout. The Volume control is easily accessible on the bottom of the unit and there is a headphone jack as well for standard headphone use. The Power switch is at a good spot on the side of the unit so it's not in the way when holding it and moving around with the control pad. The charge on the unit is very good in my opinion. I fully charged it when I received it for about 6 hours and it lasted me almost a week of play. I would say a good 8 to 10 hours of play total.

The games itself are inserted directly into the unit. A firm fit makes the game work every time with no need to keep the unit still so the game stays in. The one negative about the game insertion is the NES

cartridges. For SNES games, they directly go into the unit with no adapter needed. The NES games on the other hand need a special Retro Duo Port that does come with the system in the box. The problem is the port is almost as big if not bigger than the NES cartridge. After putting the NES cartridge into the port, you then insert both into the Retro Duo system. When all said and done the system looks like a huge long clunky handheld system you may have seen back in the 80s as prototype portables. I was expecting the NES to be a little bit quirky looking as they are large cartridges going into a portable system, but I never expected another large port extending out as well as the NES game. This makes it a little less “portable”. There is also an extra DuoPort that can play Sega Genesis games on the RetroDuo, this item is sold separately, (the Genesis DuoPort will also let you play the Genesis games on a SNES system, but not sure why you would ever need or want to do that).

The visuals are average at best in my opinion. It does bring back the old memories of the original graphics, but on certain games it does not enhance the colors like a TV or an emulated version would do on a Gameboy. There are times that the graphics at the top of the screen will not catch up to the movement and looks choppy while scrolling on the screen.

The Sound from the system itself is again not what I expected. There are some games where the sound is muffled and digitized. The sound effects in the 80s and 90s were not as they are today, but hearing the original sounds from a cartridge game are what makes the experience true. I think the company could have done a better job with that.

One other item that to me is frustrating is the way to take out a NES cartridge form the DuoPort. The port itself comes out and goes in smoothly into the game unit, but the NES games coming out of the port take a lot of effort. Almost every time I take a game out I feel like I am going to break either the game or the port. It's not very smooth at all. I understand the game needs to be secure and tight to make it work but it may be too tight and too secure.

There are many positives to the unit as I explained. The idea of grabbing an NES, SNES or Genesis game off the shelf and being able to play anywhere, without hooking up the system to a TV, is very convenient. There is even an extender piece that comes with the RetroDuo Portable that will allow you to use your original NES and SNES controllers to play on the screen if you wish. This would ensure true original gameplay. The battery life is much better than I expected and it really makes you not have to worry about playing a long ended game which does not have saving points. Fully charged system will let you play endless hours without having to plug it in. The system itself is lightweight and even with the DuoPort attached with an NES game, it is manageable to carry and not strain your arms or hands.

Overall I recommend this item for any old school gamer. It's definitely worth the $79.99 price and can be found at amazon.com.

More C64! - SEUCK Competitions

by Merman

Since I last wrote about SEUCK there have been three more competitions - the 2014 and 2015 competitions, and a special Sideways SEUCK competition. Here I will give a brief introduction to SEUCK (The Shoot ‘Em Up Construction Kit) and go through some of the best entries from the recent competitions.

SHOOT ‘EM UP CONSTRUCTION KIT

Sensible Software were a British company, made up at the time of just Jon Hare (design, graphics) and Chris Yates (design, programming, sound). After the success of Parallax and Wizball, their next release was unusual. The Shoot ‘Em Up Construction Kit was designed to allow the user to create their own shoot ‘em up games. Using a series of editors - sprites, backgrounds, levels, attack waves, sound FX, front end and game testing - the user could save out a complete game to be played separately from the Kit. There have been hundreds of great and original games produced with the Kit over the years.

More recently, two exciting new developments have expanded the Kit further. Jon Wells created Sideways SEUCK. The original Kit could only produce vertical scrolling or still screens. Jon's Sideways hack allows the creation of horizontally scrolling games (only from left to right at present, rather than the more common right to left). And Martin Piper's SEUCK Redux expands on the original Kit and adds the possibility of programming new features such as power-ups, as well as reducing problems with sprite

flicker and other small bugs in the original Kit. Both have allowed exciting new ideas.

THE COMPETITIONS

Richard Bayliss is a long-term SEUCK fan, having created many games with it himself. Over the last few years Richard has organised an annual SEUCK competition, encouraging people to submit their new games. The top three entries are then enhanced by adding music, introductory screens and more. The 2014 and 2015 competitions produced 20 new games, with three more entries in the 2015 Sideways SEUCK contest.

Below are the results of the recent contests, along with short descriptions of the best titles. All the games can be accessed through the website at http://tnd64.unikat.sk.

2014 COMPETITION RESULTS

1. Double or Nothing by Alf Yngve - 65 points
2. The Last Hope by Gaetano Chiummo - 64 points
3. Vampire Hunter 2 by IndyJR/FanCa - 60 points
4. NOXUS by Alf Yngve - 57 points
5. Shaken - Tale of the Swordless Ninja by Roberto Dillon - 54 points
6. Another Day, another Zombie by Carl Mason - 52 points
7. Hero Time 2 by IndyJR/FanCa - 48 points
8. 1941 - The Secret Conflict by Gibranx - 33 points

Alf Yngve's DOUBLE OR NOTHING split the screen into two zones and won in 2014

Alf's winning entry **DOUBLE OR NOTHING** featured a unique split-screen view, with the player controlling one sprite fighting aliens on the left and one sprite fighting robots on the right simultaneously. Then the game surprises you by uniting the two players towards the end. **THE LAST HOPE** is a polished vertically scrolling game in the style of Gradius/Nemesis. **VAMPIRE HUNTER 2** scrolls sideways, with the player tackling bats and obstacles in a New York possessed by evil creatures.

2015 COMPETITION RESULTS

1. Abyssonaut by Anthony Stiller - 171 points
2. Gigablast by Alf Yngve - 158 points
3. T-UFO by Errazking - 157 points
4. Snatch McBlagger - 156 points
5. S-F-S by Wile Coyote - 141 points
6. Shamai by Slavia - 134 points
7. META14 by Errazking - 130 points
8. Shoot or Die by Tommy Nine - 116 points
9. Ocean Ninja by Slavia - 113 points
10. Scoff by PieVSPie - 99 points

11. Naait Raider by Fritske - 87 points
(Payback Time, a 12th entry, was disqualified)

Anthony Stiller's ABYSSONAUT won in 2015

ABYSSONAUT was a wonderful horizontally scrolling underwater game, featuring well animated enemies and a tough difficulty level. **GIGABLAST** used a new trick – expanded sprites – to give a Terra Cresta-style game with metallic sprites. The player's ship also came in two parts, by linking the control of both players to a single joystick. **T-UFO** used single screens to portray a worldwide fight against aliens, with the player controlling a mobile missile launcher. Special mention must also go to Alf's second entry **SNATCH MCBLAGGER**, with its cartoon graphics and newspaper cutscenes portraying a criminal breaking out of jail. Believe it or not, this game even has stealth sections with the player hiding in bushes and dark patches to avoid capture.

SIDEWAYS SEUCK COMPETITION RESULTS

1. Pan by Errazking - 79 points
2. U-91306 Eidothea by Errazking - 76 points
3. Edge of Time by Alf Yngve - 72 points

Alf's EDGE OF TIME features huge enemies

While it was disappointing there were only three entries, the standard was incredibly high. **EDGE OF TIME** was a follow-up to **DOUBLE OR NOTHING**. This time the two sprites are large robot mechs, fighting in a war set in the future. The twist is that one is fighting at the start of the war in a slow and cumbersome mech, while the second is fighting years later in a more desolate landscape with a faster and stronger mech. Big enemies and great details (including walking behind scenery) make this stand out.

The start of Errazking's U-91306

U-91306 draws on the classic film Fantastic Voyage, with a miniature submersible injected into a human body. With clever X-ray interludes, the plunger launching the sub and tricky levels to navigate, this was very original.

Big cartoon graphics made PAN a worthy winner in the Sideways SEUCK competition

The ultimate winner was **PAN**, featuring huge cartoon graphics and a clever story of a mad villain taking over the world using a machine powered by food. The introduction is a short animation created with the Kit itself, featuring huge characters, speech bubbles and clever scrolling. The game is packed with attention to detail, from guys hunched over playing arcade games to the moment where the player is zapped into a circuit board and chased by Pacman-style ghosts!

CONCLUSIONS

The Shoot 'Em Up Construction Kit continues to inspire new C64 games, and new users to pick up the Kit to try and create something. The Sideways SEUCK and SEUCK Redux have expanded the possibilities.

And at the time of writing, the 2016 SEUCK Competition is underway, once again accepting submission in both standard and Sideways SEUCK. There is more than one category to cater for games that have been modified. Read more at the competition page:

http://tnd64.unikat.sk/Seuck_Compo_2016.html

WEB LINKS

http://www.tnd64.unikat.sk - the website of Richard Bayliss

http://www.tnd64.unikat.sk/Seuck_Compo_2014.html - direct link to the 2014 competition page

http://tnd64.unikat.sk/Seuck_Compo_2015.html - direct link to the 2015 competition page

http://www.tnd64.unikat.sk/Sideways_Seuck_Compo_2015.html - direct link to the Sideways SEUCK competition page

http://www.seuckvault.co.uk - the SEUCK Vault homepage, with an archive of games, advice and articles on using the Kit

http://www.github.com/martinpiper/c64public - Martin Piper's code repository for “SEUCK Redux”, an updated version of the SEUCK game engine allowing players to modify the code, add extra features and even create their own game separate from the Kit.

http://gamesplaygames.co.uk/seuck/ - The Sideways SEUCK homepage from Jon Wells.

Apple II Incider - Space Ark - Datamost

by Donald Lee

Welcome to the May issue of The Retrogaming Times. Hope everyone enjoyed the first issue. I definitely enjoyed reading the columns that were written and hope the magazine lasts another 20 years or so!

I was going to seriously focus on a game for this month’s issue but ran into technical issues. I’m pretty technically minded but I had trouble getting the Virtual Apple site (http://www.virtualapple.org) to run inside my browsers (Firefox and Safari on a Mac). I finally got it working using the Java version but it’s late (nearly 2 AM West Coast time) as I write this.

The game I was taking a look at was Space Ark by Datamost. I remember picking the game up at a bargin bin type sale at Kay-Bee toys. Unfortunately, i can’t remember exactly what the purpose of the game was. I vaguely remember my experiences gathering some animals and then going off to space to do something. Given the game name is “Space Ark”, I presume it’s something like “Noah’s Ark”.

However, in revisiting the game for about 10 to 15 minutes, I basically took off from the planet (Earth??) I was on and basically engaged in a space battle. I had no idea what I was doing but did figure out the keys I could use so I could hyperspace and fire my lasers to defend myself. I think I have the original manual somewhere at my parent’s house. I’ll have to go look for it and see if I can play the game better.

In any case, that’s my brief article this month. Enjoy some Apple II News and we’ll see you again in a couple of months.

Apple II News

From A2-Central:

A new role playing game is being developed:
http://a2central.com/6965/6502-workshop-announces-nox-archaist-rpg/

Juiced.GS 21st Year Begins:
http://a2central.com/6948/juiced-gs-v21i1-mar-2016/

A Pirate's Life For Me - First Journey

by David Lundin, Jr.

Bootleg pirate multicarts, that is a video game cartridge containing multiple games that would otherwise have single cartridge retail releases, were something that exploded with the Famicom era. Although bootleg cartridges of some form or another existed before, the mass proliferation of cheaply made cartridges containing dozens of games, is really something that exploded with the popularity of Nintendo's 1983 tan and burgundy little machine that could. While some of these cartridges would see similar counterparts for the Nintendo Entertainment System in the USA and other parts of the world, generally under the Supervision brand, nothing compared to the mass amount of bootleg cartridges for play on the Famicom and Famicom clone hardware. Generally these cartridges contained a few dozen early Famicom titles, as they had relatively small file size and required uncomplicated cartridge hardware to function. Additionally a cartridge proclaiming hundreds of games would more than likely be twenty or so titles, repeated a hundred times over, with slight variations in the code to allow for stage select or modifiers to make the game easier.

During the heyday of the Famicom and NES, an affordable cartridge containing multiple games sounded like a great proposition and for the people who came across them it was. So much that Nintendo would eventually regularly print statements in their Nintendo Power publication, cautioning would be buyers that said multicarts had the potential to damage their hardware. It was also a reason behind Nintendo implementing a software lockout, their 10NES chip, in the NES to attempt to curb unlicensed games from functioning on their hardware. As games became bigger and required more complex cartridges, the allure of multicarts began to fall away due to their limitations of generally featuring earlier Famicom titles. Still, collecting multicarts became a fun collecting sub genre for me, especially when NoaC (Nintendo on a Chip) clone hardware started to flood virtually every flea market in the early to mid 2000's. Often times games would have sprite hacks, gameplay changes, hilariously incorrectly translated game titles, amusing cover art that more than likely had nothing to do with the games contained within, and on rare occasion "pirate original" games - completely new games or extensive reworks of existing games. On an even rarer occasion a pirate original game would actually be entertaining! I would buy about any pirate multicart I could find for less than ten bucks, more if it looked particularly interesting.

Pirate multicarts have become bigger and better over the past couple years. Sure, if you want to play a bunch of games on a single cartridge you have options these days such as flash memory cartridges, which allow play of virtually every game ever released on a specific platform. Yet, at least to me, there's just something about these stupid little bootleg Famicom cartridges that I enjoy. Maybe it's the surprise of seeing exactly what they contain, as even if a game list is included, rarely are all the titles the games you think they are. Two of the currently most popular multicarts are branded under the "CoolBoy" name and are generally known as "198 in 1 Real Game" and "400 in 1 Real Game." These cartridges can be found as a pair for less than $20 USD with multiple sellers, both within the USA and abroad, on eBay and other such commerce sites. While the 400 in 1 cartridge contains more total games, I find that the 198 in 1 contains a more interesting mix of titles with less filler. This is due to the 400 in 1 cartridge containing more pirate originals including a rather large library of games released by Thin Chen Enterprise, the Taiwanese company better known as Sachen, history's most prolific producer of unlicensed Famicom games. While these games are an interesting collecting sub-genre onto themselves, and a sadly forgotten part of modern NES and Famicom collector culture, they're not necessarily all that fun to play. It should also be said that the back half of the game list for each cartridge is generally filled with these type of Taiwanese and Chinese pirate original games. Many of

these games are developed by Nice Code Software, a rather prolific modern Chinese game developer, whose games can generally be found on Famicom clone hardware. The 198 in 1 cartridge isn't too bad in this respect, with fifty or so games falling into this category.

CoolBoy "198 in 1" and "400 in 1" cartridges along with a custom made Famicom to NES converter

This ongoing column will be quickly evaluating the 198 in 1 cartridge, fifteen games at a time, until the entire list is completed. Additionally each issue will also evaluate a single game from the 400 in 1 cartridge that does not appear on the 198 in 1 cartridge, as these multicarts are generally sold as a pair. For the entire duration of this column, each cartridge will be played on an original toaster-style North American NES console. To convert the bootleg Famicom cartridges for play the NES, I will be using a Famicom to NES converter cartridge built from parts out of an early release copy of Gyromite. Some early NES releases utilized a converter board with a 10NES chip, a converter board to Famicom pass-through, and the circuit board out of a Famicom game - all contained within a NES cartridge. I modify these cartridges to build standalone Famicom to NES converters, sourced from 100% Nintendo parts, that allow the 60 pin Famicom cartridges to operate on the 72 pin NES hardware. There are a number of third-party converter cartridges on the market, most famously the HoneyBee, but this is the way I do it. A final note before we get started, many of the games contained on these bootleg cartridges have their title screens altered to strip away any copyright dates or the like. As this is an extremely common practice, I will generally not note when this is an issue as it should be expected. Lastly, there are multiple versions of these specific multicarts available. I am using the later and more widely released versions of each, which actually contain 205 and 403 games respectively.

CoolBoy 198 in 1 Real Game, Games 1 - 15:

001. Contra 1 - Let's take a look at the game list and, wow, that's a lot of Contra games! "Contra 1" is just that, the USA release of **Contra**. However the game starts up with a long list of different options. While the game can be played as standard, you also have the option of starting with 30 lives in reserve without requiring entry of the Konami code. The default weapon can also be changed to always begin with the machine gun, fireball gun, or the spread gun. Picking up another weapon while utilizing one of these starting modes will change to it, but a new life will always come out packing whichever weapon you began the game with. Additionally an option is given to start on any stage but you must use the standard starting weapon. The game is otherwise unchanged although there are slight graphics errors in the corridor "Base" stages where graphics either don't draw in correctly or aren't removed correctly as the doors are blown open. These errors do not hurt game functionality and the game plays as expected.

002. Contra 2 - Much like the first game on the cartridge, "Contra 2" is a rather extensive hacked version of the Famicom conversion of **Super Contra**, released in the West as Super C. The game can be started as normal or with 30 lives in reserve, which was what the extra life code provided in the Japanese version, while Super C only awarded 10. Both the normal and 30 lives modes replace the default weapon with the machine gun as standard, which is really how this game should have been from the start in my opinion. Then again, I'm one of those crazy people who swear the machine gun is the best weapon in the Contra games. Default weapon selection is a little different as you can select

between the spread gun, laser gun, or three modifications of the fire gun. In Super Contra the fire gun can be charged up to release a greater blast radius upon impact by holding down the fire button. Here the first fire gun option works normally, while the second always uses the charged blast radius, and the third is more of a rapid shot version that has no impact radius. Additionally any of these default weapon selections can be used in tandem with the 30 lives setting. Interestingly there are also selections that allow the starting stage to be selected with either the spread gun or machine gun as the default weapon. This is unnecessary as regardless of the mode selected, the level select cheat is always in effect and the starting stage can be selected from the title screen, with the machine gun always as the default weapon unless set otherwise.

003. Contra 3 - This is a game I really hate. "Contra 3" is actually **Contra Force**, the Contra game that's not a Contra game. Originally intended for release in Japan under the title Arc Hound, the game had no ties to the Contra series. However the same year it was canceled in Japan, Arc Hound was localized for North America as what would have been the third Contra title, with a planned late 1991 release date. When its release was delayed until late 1992, after the North American release of Contra III: The Alien Wars, it was retitled as Contra Force and relegated to be a spinoff of the main series. While it has an interesting premise of using a squad of four characters with different abilities and weaknesses, the game has never quite worked for me. Contra Force is a technical mess that has tremendous amounts of slowdown and flicker, to the point where the game feels as if it's constantly slowing down and speeding up. Perhaps that's why Konami passed on it in Japan, as Contra Force only had a North American release.

004. Contra 6 - The disappointment continues with "Contra 6," a minimal hack of **Contra Force** with the title screen and cutscene graphics replaced or blackened over. The biggest change is that the player characters have been replaced with Rambo (using Bill's title screen sprite from Contra), Guile of Street Fighter II, Ryu (using Billy's mode B player select sprite from Double Dragon), and Bill (using an intermission graphic from the Japanese release of the original Contra). Aside from some minor sprite changes to reflect the altered character roster, the game is Contra Force and plays just as poorly.

005. Contra 7 - Now for something completely different, "Contra 7" is a pirate original Contra game that has shown up on many bootleg multicarts over the years. Copyrighted to "E.S.C. Co. Ltd." (AKA Chinese developer Waixing) in 1996 and titled **Super Contra 7**, we have a game that plays a lot like Contra while "borrowing" graphical assets from many other NES games and mixing in a few new ones. Interestingly enough the demonstration sequence shows both players beginning with 50 lives in reserve, although a new game only starts with a measly five. By holding either A or B while pressing Start to begin the game you will be granted those 50 lives in reserve yourself. Thankfully the default weapon is Contra's machine gun and you'll need it, as the game can be relentless in the amount of enemies it throws at you. If the sheer amount of enemies isn't enough, nearly everything requires multiple shots to defeat. Even the weapon balloons require a barrage of shots before they'll spill their upgrade! The object collision detection is far from what would pass for a Konami game of this vintage as well. I still find it more fun than Contra Force though, as the pace remains quite brisk. Super Contra 7 does tend to spawn multiple enemies atop one another though, making cheap deaths common as you attempt to whittle down a stack of enemy sprites charging toward you, never quite knowing how many are there. As a final insult, running enemies speed up once they reach the middle of the screen, stacking the odds even further against the player.

CoolBoy 198 in 1 menu screen and Super Contra 7

006. Contra 8 - Ah, the end of these Contra games is in sight! "Contra 8" is... well, Super Contra 7 retitled as **Super Contra 8** along with an English language title screen graphic... and that's about it. I suppose this is a title screen hack of a pirate original that's mainly made up of stolen assets from other games. Way to go above and beyond, Waixing, shoveling the same garbage twice!

007. Kage - While the arcade and early NES classic The Legend of Kage may come to mind upon seeing the title, this game is in fact a completely unrelated game, known as **Shadow of the Ninja** in the USA and Yami no Shigotonin Kage (Darkness Worker Kage) in Japan. The Japanese version is what is included on the cartridge and while I wouldn't consider this a completely lost classic, it is a great game that people never talk about and a solid action title from Natsume. The best way to describe Shadow of the Ninja is Ninja Gaiden with simultaneous two player support. Having been released in 1990, only four months after Ninja Gaiden II: The Dark Sword of Chaos in Japan, it is quite amazing how much of Shadow of the Ninja looks ahead to Ninja Gaiden III, which wouldn't be released until over a year later. For instance the ability to hang onto a platform from beneath and flip up or down as desired is something that the Ninja Gaiden games wouldn't incorporate until their third title, but it can be done here. Of course it can be said that Capcom's 1989 arcade game Strider influenced this mechanic but this has to be one of the earlier examples of such on the Famicom / NES. The Ninja Gaiden connection goes even deeper as a Game Boy conversion was planned but eventually reworked into "Ninja Gaiden Shadow," developed by Natsume and published by Tecmo. This is cool game and definitely worth checking out, especially with a second player.

008. Final Mission - The Japanese title and release of **S.C.A.T. Special Cybernetic Attack Team**, Final Mission is what would happen if Contra were changed from a run-and-gun into a conventional shooter. It also has a Forgotten Worlds vibe, which is interesting, as Forgotten Worlds never had a good home conversion due to its very unique control scheme. That said, it's another solid Natsume developed action title for the platform and I find it nice to see it paired with Kage / Shadow of the Ninja at the top of the list. In the game, up to two players take on the role of flying soldiers with jet packs, battling a horde of alien invaders in horizontally and vertically scrolling stages. While your gun can only fire forward or backward, a pair of orbiting weapon satellites provides additional cover fire. They can either be left to move freely or be locked in place at will with a button press. Interestingly this is one of those games where the USA release is superior to the Japanese original. Not only was the game made easier for the USA release with the amount of starting lives doubled from three to six, the control method for the weapon satellites was completely overhauled. When not locked in the Japanese version, the satellites move relative to the direction of opposite momentum of the player. In the USA release when not locked, the satellites automatically and continuously move back and forth along their patrol arcs. The Japanese original also features two generic soldiers as the player characters while the USA release featured "Arnold" and "Sigourney," with their likenesses based on Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sigourney Weaver respectively. In Europe the game was retitled yet again, as "Action in New York," possibly the lamest title of all time for a video game.

009. Double Dragon 1 - The infamously complained about one-player-at-a-time home conversion of the hugely influential arcade game **Double Dragon**. Sorry guys, while the Sega Master System home conversion features simultaneous two player action, the game itself stinks. Sure Double Dragon on Famicom / NES is ripe with changes and compromises but the game still plays very nicely and is tons of fun to this day. Would it have been even better with a second player? Absolutely! However it is no reason to shun this outstanding home conversion of Double Dragon. It looks good, plays well, and sounds great. I doubt there is a single person who owned an NES during its heyday who never played Double Dragon on it, even a friend's copy or as a rental. The included version is the Japanese release but it plays the same as the USA release we all played as kids. I think something not a lot of people pick up on when they play this game, is that although special moves must be learned by acquiring enough experience points to use them, the rate in which experience is earned depends on the type of attacks used to bring down enemies. This adds a lot of depth to the game, especially in the earlier stages where the enemies are generally weaker and can be pressed for maximum experience without using glitches. This adds a huge layer of risk / reward to an already challenging game and lends a lot of legitimacy to the leveling system.

Kage (Shadow of the Ninja) and Double Dragon

010. Double Dragon 2 - More or less the gold standard for two player beat 'em ups on the NES, we have the USA release of **Double Dragon II: The Revenge**. Although some complain how the control scheme was altered over the previous game, this is precisely how it was done in the arcade sequel as well. Button B is a left attack, Button A is a right attack, and pressing both at the same time jumps. Billy or Jimmy will always punch in the direction they are facing and kick in the opposite direction. I will never understand why so many people hate the controls of this game as they're one of its biggest innovations. Rather than becoming a victim of the squeeze play, the player can now work out of nearly any situation by utilizing the advanced direction specific fighting system. The USA release is the one included on the cartridge and this is a game that is just as fun now as it was when it first came home.

011. Double Dragon 3 - What better way to follow up a super popular, super satisfying, super enjoyable sequel to an influential and well-loved game like Double Dragon than this game, **Double Dragon III: The Sacred Stones**, a game that takes everything that makes the series great and throws out the door of a helicopter. If you thought the RPG elements that found their way into the NES conversion of the first game felt out of place, they're nothing compared to this game. Acquiring additional characters to fight in your party? Permanent deaths? In-level dialogue and story progression? Yeah, this really isn't Double Dragon anymore. I've only ever encountered one person who liked this game and actually considered it the best of the series. You got me on that one. Sure, there were some difficulty changes in the USA release to curb rentals rather than purchases and the story was altered severely in some spots but the game itself just isn't enjoyable. It's also a very ugly game, with some really janky looking character sprites that just don't fit together smoothly. I've always felt that Technos just didn't care about the Double Dragon games at this point and didn't even develop the arcade counterpart, Double Dragon 3: The Rosetta Stone. Although the home game is quite a bit different and was developed by Technos themselves, it feels tainted by the radical departure in the arcade version's gameplay style. Rather than loosely basing the NES version on the arcade game, I would have rather this been a direct sequel to Double Dragon II in terms of game design.

012. Double Dragon 4 - Don't get your hopes up that this is some all pirate original rework of Double Dragon, it's actually **Target: Renegade** with the title logo replaced with "Double Dragon IV." Target: Renegade is an even worse game than Double Dragon III. What we have here is the NES port of a British developed sequel to Renegade, the game that was essentially the jumping off point for the original Double Dragon and beat 'em up games in general. When Ocean Software acquired the rights to convert Renegade from the arcade to home computer systems, they were given the option to develop and release sequels in the same markets and that license bore this rotten fruit. The whole thing plays like some bootleg low quality clone of Double Dragon and is completely generic and uninspired in every way. There are some graphics flickering and corruption issues with the hacked version on the cartridge, which display some errors in the text and a shaking colored blob to the right of the status bar. However the game plays as it should, although I don't know why anyone would want to play it. That said, I would like to check out "Ruddy's Cheese Emporium" sometime, that sounds pretty cool. Terrible game, avoid this one - and of course this pile of garbage was a huge hit in the UK. Brilliant.

013. Chip & Dale 1 - The first of one of the more "advanced" classic games to be included on this multicart, this is the Japanese release of **Chip 'n Dale Rescue Rangers**. Considered a golden era 8-bit Capcom platformer, so many people absolutely love this game and why shouldn't they? It's a good quality, well designed, two player action platformer with bright visuals, catchy music, and solid play control. Well I'm going to break a lot of hearts and anger a few people when I say that I really don't care

for these Capcom / Disney partnership games. Although well produced and enjoyable games, they never resonated with me, even as a kid. Yes, I watched these shows in my youth and liked the properties as most people my age did but never cared for the games. In fact the only NES Disney game I ever really played a lot of was Mickey Mousecapade and that game wasn't even developed by Capcom, it was a Hudson title, and not a very good one at that. Approaching it as a game on its own merits without the license, Rescue Rangers feels a bit like a soulless contract job from Capcom, which should show how competent a developer they were at this point in time. Meaning even sub-par Capcom in 1990 yielded a solid game such as this. To me though, even as a kid, this game just felt empty. I can completely picture the design meeting at Capcom going something like, "Here are the character designs, they're all really small rodents, so make levels where everything else is really big. Make sure the main characters are easily recognizable, fill everything else in as you see fit." I guess that can be said for most of the licensed Disney games that Capcom developed, starting with DuckTales. Oh, now I'm really going to make people mad... Everything said, the game is enjoyable and aside from the Japanese text, it's the same game you probably loved in your younger days.

014. Chip & Dale 2 - Now we're getting into the money. As one would assume, this is **Chip 'n Dale Rescue Rangers 2**, the Japanese release that is. This can be an expensive one to pick up, as it was a fairly late and limited NES release, hitting stores in the USA four years after the previous game. For the most part it's more of the same with slightly polished graphics and some small refinements in terms of control and movement. Over all I enjoy the sequel more, mostly due to slightly improved level design and the aforementioned tighter control, especially when moving vertically. At the end of the day I can take it or leave it but as I sated before, I'm not a huge fan of these games. All things considered, this is a nicely polished late release NES platformer and is worth taking a look at.

Chip 'n Dale Rescue Rangers 2 and a sprite hack of Heavy Barrel titled "Chip and Dale 3"

015. Chip & Dale 3 - No, there wasn't a third Chip 'n Dale Rescue Rangers game released. This is actually a rather hilarious sprite hack of the NES home conversion of Data East's arcade game **Heavy Barrel**. Instead of playing as a grizzled commando, you play as either Chip or Dale. The really strange thing is that the NES version of Heavy Barrel, more than likely developed by Sakata SAS who did a lot of Data East home conversions, is actually a really decent run-and-gun. On top of that it's one of those rare games that originally used a rotary joystick that actually plays just fine on the NES with the standard control pad. A terrorist organization has seized control of a nuclear missile site's underground control complex and one or two players are tasked with regaining the base and killing the terrorist leader. Along the way keys can be found, either on the battlefield or by defeating enemy officers, which are used to unlock power-up crates. Crates contain general upgrades but a few of them will contain one of the six pieces of the Heavy Barrel, a super weapon with unstoppable - albeit limited - firepower. Other than the title screen and player sprite changes, this game plays and looks as it should. Heavy Barrel on the NES is one of the most overlooked arcade conversions on the platform and will eventually be covered in more detail in my NES'cade column in a future issue of The Retrogaming Times.

CoolBoy 400 in 1 Real Game, Spotlight Selection:

257. Castlevania 2 - Sure, this game isn't all that hard to come by or even that valuable, but **Castlevania II: Simon's Quest** is a criminally underrated game that does far more things right than the unslient majority of "popular gaming" would lead you to believe. This is the USA release as the Japanese version was only released to the Famicom Disk System, so the game is in English. I know what everyone is about to say, "It doesn't matter if the game is in English, it makes no sense either

way!" You would be correct, astute reader, Castlevania II is all sorts of confusing. However that confusion doesn't stem from the game itself but rather the expectations a player generally has on what a game should provide to them. For instance the townspeople in Castlevania II not only talk gibberish and nonsense for the most part, they give incorrect information either intentionally or accidentally, often times seem to lead the player astray, and can be generally all sorts of unhelpful. Some of this is due in part to localization mistakes but a surprising amount of the in-game misdirection was present in the original Japanese game as well. The reason for this should be fairly obvious, that is Simon has the curse of Dracula upon him. Yet it's not only Simon himself but all of Transylvania that seems to be under a blanket of darkness from the curse. At night more powerful enemies roam the countryside and towns are closed up as zombies walk the streets - Simon has brought a period of turmoil upon Transylvania. The closer Simon travels to Dracula's castle, the more rundown the towns become, life replenishing churches all but disappear, and the townspeople become even less helpful. There are few NES games that create such a feeling of dread and despair as well as Castlevania II. The amount of traps and puzzles only further cement the feeling that Simon has a futile task ahead of him. Yet as long as you level up properly and keep your wits about yourself, the game never feels excessively cheap, only challenging. Leveling up is really the key as it not only extends Simon's health bar, it also reduces the amount of damage he takes. To prevent early grinding, the game stops awarding experience points at specific thresholds, forcing the player to move on and fight tougher enemies to build additional levels. Contrary to what some may say, Castlevania II didn't invent the roaming quest action platformer, as there were many similar games released before or at the same time in Japan, but it is a superb example of a well crafted game. I don't know how anyone can honestly say that the deaths in Castlevania II come cheaper than those in the original Castlevania or Castlevania III - or really any game in the series for that matter. If you die in most Castlevania games it's because the game wants you to die, usually by bombarding you with enemies at an unexpected or defenseless moment. If you die in Castlevania II it's because you made a mistake, were unprepared for the challenge ahead, or became overwhelmed.

Next time we'll pick up the list with game 016 on the 198 in 1 cartridge. Although there are some real stinkers in the next fifteen games, there are also some quality Japanese exclusives and a few NES classics, including one of my all time favorite games on the system. See you then!

Retro Gaming Heroes - The No Swear Gamer

by Rob Luther

As a writer, sometimes you wish you had a great story for every single encounter you've had with someone. Meeting Phil, aka The No Swear Gamer, is a classic example of why I need to write things down - or perhaps why I need to use my creative liberties a bit more when writing these introductions! Regardless of who initiated our first conversation, I've had the privilege to know Phil for a few years now, and I can say this with full confidence: he is a stand-up guy inside and outside of the retro gaming community.

I can also say that I do remember the first No Swear Gamer video I watched. It was a Monday morning, and I had to take off work because of a stomach virus. In between my crackers and Gatorade, I finally had enough strength to grab my iPad and peruse the Retro Junkies Network page, where Phil had uploaded a video review of Pole Position II for the Atari 7800. I was especially curious about the review, because I had never owned a 7800, and I loved Pole Position in the arcades and the Atari 2600. So, I decided to check the video out. Then, I decided to check another one out. And another one. And another one. Three hours later, on that fateful Monday morning, I was caught up on The No Swear Gamer. I was officially a fan!

So, what exactly makes The No Swear Gamer special? Well, I'll try my best to nail it down, even though I'm pretty sure Phil would say something like, "It's all in the eye of the beholder, my friends." First of all, Phil's videos are high quality, meaty episodes that gamers can really sink their teeth into. From descriptions of the box art detail, manual, and historical context to the gameplay, trivia, and Easter eggs you can find in the game, Phil delivers on all fronts in a fun and humorous way. Speaking of his humor, he kicks off just about every episode with a special guest of sorts, which immediately sets a light-hearted tone for the rest of the show. His humor and content-driven shows instantly reminded me of another high quality, legendary YouTube channel I still follow to this day - Classic Game Room. That's right, my friends. I believe Phil's show is that good.

Did I mention that Phil is a machine? With over 150 No Swear Gamer episodes to date, Phil also hosts a fantastic podcast dedicated to the Atari 7800, aptly called The Atari 7800 Game by Game Podcast. Covering at least two 7800 games per episode since early 2015, Phil has become exceptionally prolific. I admire that about him.

However, what I admire most about Phil, aka The No Swear Gamer, is the man himself. Within the Retro Junkies Network, he and William Culver from Arcade USA (another fantastic show - see my last article for more info!) are the two guys who usually start the Retro Junk Boxes for all of us podcasters and YouTubers. He records bumpers, lends his voice talents in skits, and has always promotes other shows inside and outside the network. Conversely, it goes much deeper than that. On a personal level, I consider Phil a great friend. When my father passed away last summer, he was one of the very first guys to send his prayers and condolences. That goes a very long way. Lastly, I believe he and I share the same opinion about games. They're meant to be fun. Just remember to keep first things first!

If you love fun, family-friendly, content-driven reviews, I can't encourage you enough to check out The No Swear Gamer and The Atari 7800 Game by Game Podcast. You won't regret it. I promise.

...Even though I still disagree with his review of Chester Cheetah: Too Cool to Fool.

P.S. Congratulations to Phil on his recent gaming achievement! I won't spoil it here. Just read on, my friends!

Can you tell us about your retro gaming podcast and YouTube shows?

It began two years ago with a family friendly YouTube show called The No Swear Gamer. Most of my videos are reviews of old video games, but I also have videos showing straight gameplay, Easter eggs, endings, retro toys, unboxings and more. One interesting thing I do in my reviews is I rank the game with other games on the system I've already reviewed.

Early in 2015 I started my podcast, The Atari 7800 Game by Game Podcast. The typical episode covers two games from the original library. I anticipate that I will have covered every officially released game for the system by the summer of 2016.

Do you have any personal heroes in the gaming community?

My heroes in the gaming community are those who also serve in the military to help protect our nation. I know a couple of guys who are currently serving and both come across as a combination of pleasant and humble. They don't make a big deal of it, yet they willingly put their lives on the line to protect our freedom. Sometimes I think we take for granted how blessed we are to live in a country where the average citizen can afford to buy and play video games without having to worry about rockets crashing into our homes.

What inspired you to contribute to the retro gaming community?

For my YouTube show, it was a combination of enjoying The Retro League podcast and the difficulty I had in finding game review shows on YouTube I could watch without language I wouldn't want my kids to repeat at school.

For my podcast, it was heavily inspired by Ferg and The Atari 2600 Game by Game Podcast. He jokingly asked me on Twitter when I was going to start the 7800 version and before you knew it, it became a reality."

Where did your passion for gaming begin?

I recall being fascinated with both early Arcade games and Atari 2600 games as a kid. When my father brought home a used Magnavox Odyssey 2 for me one day that sealed the deal.

Can you recall your first gaming experience?

Nope, but don't feel bad. I also cannot recall my first pizza topping, TV show or bath towel color.

What is your favorite arcade game?

The four player version of Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, pretty much from the moment I first played it as a kid. If I could own any single arcade game, that would be it.

What is your favorite console? Console game?

I really don't have a favorite console, but I do have a soft spot for the Atari 7800, Sega Genesis and Sega Saturn which were the systems I bought growing up.

I also don't have a single favorite console game at the moment, but I really enjoy Adventure (2600), Pitfall! (2600), Ballblazer (7800), Ninja Golf (7800), Sonic the Hedgehog (Genesis) and Super Mario World (SNES) among many others.

What's one interesting or funny fact about you that makes you unique?

Ironically I just broke the Twin Galaxies World Record for Tax Avoiders (Atari 2600), a game I have constantly called one of the worst of all times on my YouTube show. Now all I need to do is learn how to submit my score!

What does retro gaming mean to you on a personal level?

It's just a fun and at times nostalgic hobby that helps keep my mind sharp and connect to other great gamers around the globe.

If you could describe gaming in one word, what would it be?

Fun (If you listen to my podcast, that answer makes perfect sense).

How can our readers find all your work?

The No Swear Gamer: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChtJuo040EOCTVziOblgVcg

The Atari 7800 Game by Game Podcast: https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/episode-27-mat-mania-challenge/id958792862?i=365994531&mt=2

You can also find me on the Facebook and the Twitter:

https://www.facebook.com/thenosweargamer

https://twitter.com/thenosweargamer

What's your favorite movie?

Again, I don't really have a single one, but I really enjoyed the original Star Wars Trilogy, the Lord of the Rings Trilogy (extended, of course), Babe (Yes, the pig movie) and Jurassic Park.

Book?

The Bible, but since it is more than just a book and your readers might want something related to being an 80's kid, I think "The Monster at the End of This Book" has one of the best endings in the history of children's books.

Other hobbies aside from retro gaming?

My life is currently too busy for other hobbies, but when I have the opportunity, I do enjoy playing card & board games, going fishing (although I don't enjoy seafood) and in the past have dabbled in writing music.

Retro Gaming Heroes is a bimonthly column dedicated to classic video game writers, podcasters, YouTubers, world record holders, and overall ambassadors in the retro gaming community.

Rob Luther has been writing for The Retrogaming Times since 2012. He is also the cofounder of [The Retro Junkies Network](), a family friendly podcast and YouTube video network dedicated to all things retro. In addition, Rob is a cohost of The Retro Junkies, Turtle Flakes, and Genesis Gems podcasts. Outside of the gaming realm, he is a proud husband and father who enjoys teaching, reading, writing, hockey, guitar, and all things Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. His email is rob2586@comcast.net, and you can follow him on Twitter @rob2586.

Thank you for reading. Good day and good gaming!

My Video Game Collection

by Todd Friedman

I started my collection of games and systems back in 2008. This is when I started to become heavily involved in the gaming community and attending events and conferences around the area. I had video game systems growing up such as Sega Genesis, Nintendo GameCube, and PlayStation 1. I played Atari 2600, NES and others as well just did not own them. When was younger they had stores such as Babbage's and Funcoland - this is pre-Gamestop. In those days you could trade in your old supplies and get credit or cash back, same as today, but the value was more. So I would do just that and get the newest items. I had a pretty good inventory of stuff back then but was not into collecting them, just playing them and trading them in. The only item today I still have form the original is the Sega Dreamcast, purchased on 9/9/99.

In 2008, I really got the itch to play those old systems and games again. So I told myself I would get these systems and games at conferences and trade shows I go to. My original intention was to get the systems I used to have and the games I used to play. My favorites in the day were games like Shinobi for the Sega Master System, Mike Tyson's Punch-Out for the NES and Final Fantasy VII from the PS1.

Attending such events as the Midwest Gaming Classic and The Video Game Summit, I found these treasures I grew up with and my collection began. I started out playing the games and systems and enjoying the memories of them. But as I played I felt like I wanted to play more of the old games and play them on the original systems. I did not enjoy playing the remakes, or the emulators like MAME. They were not the same as the originals. So I would go to more events and trade shows in the area and find the best deals on games and systems. I also found out that thrift stores and Goodwill sell many retro systems and games. The prices can be very reasonable as well.

As technology got better and websites such as eBay and Craigslist got popular I would expand my outlets to online purchasing. The one thing I told myself I would not do is spend thousands of dollars on huge lots of games and complete systems in the box, etc. I know a lot of people with collections that were purchased and completed one time online, spending $5,000 - $10,000 on them. I am not saying that isn't good or anything, I am just saying that is not how I want to achieve my collection. I choose to find the best deals and the best items for my budget. I offer trades and other items that I do not necessarily need or want. I would move on if I see an item over 5 to 6 dollars. I will just have to find that elsewhere. It's too easy in my opinion to get 10 games for 100 dollars. I am willing to move on and find it cheaper. Sure, there are games that are “rare” or worth hundreds of dollars, but as I explain later, I am ok passing those up.

A couple years went by and I was pretty happy with my collection. My goal in the beginning years was to get up to 500 games and the standard popular systems from the 80's and 90's. Once I got to that level, I really got excited to keep going. I found out with talking to friends and family that they had or know someone who had video games in their basement and storage that they were going to throw away. I stepped in and said I would be happy to take them. My collection grew bigger with the help of people who had these items stored away for years and never played them. Years passed and my goals changed to 1,000 then 1,500 then 2,000. It was fun to hit those milestones.

My collection has always been games and systems. Console games, not PC. Systems include handhelds as well. I did have the original Gameboy when it came out in the 80s. Another item I traded in for credit. I have since got the Gameboy collection back through the years and all systems I own work and are operational. The lists of games I own are all individual games. I do not keep or collect doubles of games. If I happen to get a double or a game I already own I would trade them for others or sell them

to get newer games. When I do my inventory of games and come up with the total they are all different and I do not count a duplicate as a game I own. My inventory is organized by system and each game under that system is alphabetized. This makes it easy to use my phone and bring up my list and search to see if I own it already or not. If I do, it goes back on the shelf.

I do own games without boxes and manuals. Some have just the box, some have both box and manuals. Some are just the CD for systems for PlayStation and XBOX systems. If I find the box for that game I will get it and see which CD is in the best condition, then I get rid of the other CD. My games range from Magnavox Odyssey 2 to PlayStation 4 and everything in between. I love in the summer to set up my garage to run all the systems at once, like a mini console arcade. All the neighborhood and family come over, play the old games as well as the new and have fun discussing and talking about gaming. It brings a lot of people together which is the ultimate goal in my opinion.

My collection has expanded to other items gaming related. I try not to look or pursue these types of items but when I have opportunities and are given these things from friends I keep them as well. These items include posters, books, figures, magazines, manuals and trading cards. I also have an extensive collection of autographed items from authors of books, stars of documentaries and musicians who recorded gaming content. People always ask if I have anything “rare” in my collection. I always respond by saying no. There are games which I believe are old enough to classify as “rare” but in no way are they the typical game which is worth thousands of dollars and only one person in the world owns. Again, I could jump on eBay and purchase these for a ton of money and own it but that is not my intention and not my plan. I am happy with seeking them out. It's more exciting to me if I find them at events or from people I meet. Again, I do look around the online sites to see what's out there and if I see a cool deal or a game less than a few bucks, I may get it, but it has to be the right price.

As of April 30th, 2016, I am at 3,013 Games; reaching my goal of 3,000. Looking ahead, I don't know how much bigger this collection will go. I do know there are many more games to find and with new systems and games created every week, there is always more to wait for in the future.

Retrogaming Feels - Lemonade Stand

by "Mighty" Matt D.

Hey there retrogaming reader! My name is Matt, and I've pretty much been obsessed with gaming my entire life. I've often considered writing about it, and seeing the open call to do so by The Retrogaming Times was a good enough reason for me. The thing is, I really don't want to do reviews - I think there are plenty of those out there already, well written and thoughtful pieces weighing the pros and cons of games that haven't been published in years. I love reading peoples thoughts on games I've played, as they often bring up ideas and issues I hadn't even considered when I had played the game. Instead, I'm going write about what are, to me at least, the most important games I've played. Not important in the sense of being the best, or worst, but important in the sense of how they made me feel when I played them. Gaming feels, if you will indulge me. So which one to start with...

You have to begin at the beginning, right? Sometimes it's hard to know exactly when that was, or where, but you really need to dig until you figure that out before you can truly start. Oh sure, a story can start anywhere. Start in the middle at some tense and exciting part, grab your reader's attention with your masterful descriptive prose that brings a shootout, murder, explosion, or other suitably climactic event to life. Then, after the reader is hooked, you can go back to the drudgery of explaining how everything came together to make that excitement possible. If you don't know where it all started, well then you had better figure it out. You can't make progress without a beginning.

I was born in 1974. Computer Space, the first commercially available video game, was released in 1971. So the way I see it, I've grown up right alongside video games. No, I don't remember playing Computer Space, and this article isn't about that. Or Pong, which was released in 1972, and wasn't a big flop like Computer Space. I didn't actually get to play Computer Space until just last year. But like I said, this article isn't about that.

For me, I'm going to have to say the beginning was either 1979 or 1980. I would have been 5 or 6, so at this point in my life I'm sorry to say I can't be any clearer than that. What I can be clear on was what game it was, and what we played it on. It was Lemonade Stand, and what we played it on was the Apple II personal computer. It was really more of a business simulation than a video game. The player enters in parameters, such as the price they want to charge for the lemonade, how much lemonade to make, and how many advertising signs to use. The game will tell the player what the weather was for that day (complete with a color picture) and would report back your earnings. Sounds amazing, right?

I laugh when retro gamers gush on and on about how awesome their first game of Super Mario World was when they were little kids and their parents bought them a Super Nintendo. Please, you know nothing about retro. I was born in retro! Forged in it! Okay, I'll stop. It doesn't matter when you started playing - whatever was out when you were a kid is going to be your soft mushy center of retrogaming feels. I might be a bit older than some, that's all. Everyone's first gaming experience is amazing, that's my only point. If it wasn't, well I don't think we'd be gamers, now would we?

Back to Lemonade Stand. Apparently the Apple computer company packed this game, along with some other software, in with every computer sold throughout the 1980's. That must be how it came to be that when my dad brought home the one computer the company he worked for had, a brand new Apple II, we played it. My father was a chemical engineer, and at that time he worked for a company called GAF. They made, among other things, photographic film. They are still around I think. Hard as it may be to to believe, computers were not ubiquitous in offices at that point. I remember my father saying that the computer was brand new, and very expensive, and that it belonged to his work and not to us. He had brought it home for some reason, maybe under the guise that he needed extra time to investigate what could be done with it.

I'm sure the real reason was simply that he thought the machine was endlessly fascinating. He wanted to show it to his family. So he set it up on the kitchen table and gathered us around. I sat in his lap, and my older brother sat next to us. I'm sure my mom looked on as well. We played it as a family, my dad getting opinions on pricing, quantity, and advertising budget from us and then entering them on the keyboard himself. He let my brother and I hit the enter key a few times - that is how exciting it was to us,

to push a button and watch the image on the screen react was all we needed to get pulled in. It had mass appeal in that way, if only for an afternoon. My dad and older brother were trying to amass a lemonade fortune, and I'm sure I got most excited when the weather turned foul and the graphic for thunderstorm was drawn. I've always been a sucker for flashy visuals.

He had to take the computer back to work soon after of course - but it had lit the fire. I'm glad my first gaming and computer experience were one, and I'm especially happy that it was something we did together. My father's interest in computers never waned after that (and neither did mine), and although he felt the Apple II didn't fit into our family budget it did lead to the purchase of another early home computer which I will get into next time.

Lemonade Stand engaged our sense of wonder, and it might have been the perfect thing for our family. Something more arcade like would have put my father off, and something that was text only wouldn't have held my interest since I was so young. I know we couldn't have spent long on it as it was borrowed, but it has stuck with me all this time nonetheless. It might not hold up today, but I'm happy to have it as my first gaming memory.

If you want to try Lemonade Stand for yourself, you can play it right in your browser: https://archive.org/details/Lemonade_Stand_1979_Apple

See You Next Game

by David Lundin, Jr.

In all honesty this issue was more nerve-racking to assemble than the first! I really didn't know what kind of response the relaunch would be met with but I was going to get that first issue out anyway. Even after receiving positive feedback from staff and readers, the task of getting everyone together to do it again in two months was looming large in my mind. Then articles and columns started to roll in, interest continued via e-mail as well as The Retrogaming Times Facebook community, and the previous issue continued to be read. After awhile I was able to relax and get to working on my own columns - gotta lead by example! Now with two issues out the door, I think we can all begin to settle into a nice smooth rhythm. Famous last words, I know. Really everyone, thank you all for continuing to be a part of this endeavor.

Thank you once again for checking out The Retrogaming Times. We'll be back on July 1st with our next issue. Be sure to follow The Retrogaming Times on Facebook and join our new community! 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!

Content and opinions on this page are those of their respective writer(s)

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