

The Retrogaming Times

THE BIMONTHLY RETROGAMING HOBBYIST NEWSLETTER

THIRD ISSUE - JULY 2016

CRAFTING NEW COMPUTER CLASSICS!

The Retrogaming Times
- The Bimonthly Retrogaming Hobbyist Newsletter -

The Retrogaming Times

Third Issue - July 2016

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Prepare to Qualify

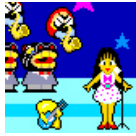
by [David Lundin, Jr.](#)

Greetings! We're back yet again with another diverse assortment of retrogaming content by, for and of retrogaming hobbyists. As our reader base continues to grow, I want to endlessly stress that all of our content is written by regular retrogamers who take time to put their thoughts to written word. It is through their efforts that I have this and every issue to publish. If you have something you would like included here, just send it in! The Retrogaming Times crossed its first one hundred likes threshold on Facebook recently, and I am filled with gratitude to know that there is a genuinely interested audience for an old school publication such as this one. If you manage a website and will help us announce when a new issue is published, we will provide a return link on the main page to your site as a thank you for your announcements. If this interests you, contact David directly at the e-mail link above and you will be added to the announcement e-mail list. Consider it an old fashioned link exchange. This is the first issue to include a specifically featured cover story, a full rundown of Christian Gleinser's four player homebrew Commodore 64 game "Shotgun," from the creator himself! Future issues will generally feature a cover story selected from among all submitted articles.

Warmer weather means the flea market and yard sale season is upon us in the USA and early last month I was at one of my few remaining flea market haunts, the Silicon Valley Electronics Flea Market, currently held in Cupertino, CA. Although I have been known to come back with some gold in the form of extremely hard to find and uncommon video game items, over the past two years the EFM has been dry as a desert. Even some of the usual suspects that deal in electronics surplus and new old stock electronics tools have been absent recently. Prices have also gotten uncharacteristically and unreasonably high from many of the regulars in the past two years, making the desire to get up at 5:30 in the morning and head out there lessen each month. Yet, after missing the previous two months I made myself get out to the June market and scour the boxes of junk. Just as I was about to leave empty-handed, I came upon a Super Wild Card DX, a Super Nintendo / Super Famicom cartridge copier, something you don't see in the wild much these days if ever. This type of device allows you to dump the program data off of a cartridge onto a floppy disk and to also load program data off of a floppy disk to

play on the console. Cartridge save data can be backed up to floppy disk as well. Files can also be transferred via a parallel cable utilizing modern PC emulation tools. I've owned disk copiers in the past and the SWC-DX really is my favorite of them all and finding one was like reuniting with an old friend. I've been having a lot of fun re-learning the romdump interface and utility programs again, not to mention remembering why I always swore by Verbatim floppy media. Have you found anything unexpected or interesting this summer while out hunting for games? If so, let us know on The Retrogaming Times Facebook page at facebook.com/theretrogamingtimes.

July looks to be a busy month full of retrogaming shows and conventions, so I thank you again for taking a moment to read our humble retrogaming publication. Spread the word, this is your newsletter.



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. The pre-registration deadline is July 5th however tickets are also available at the door during the show.

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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 dust in 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 information, 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/>

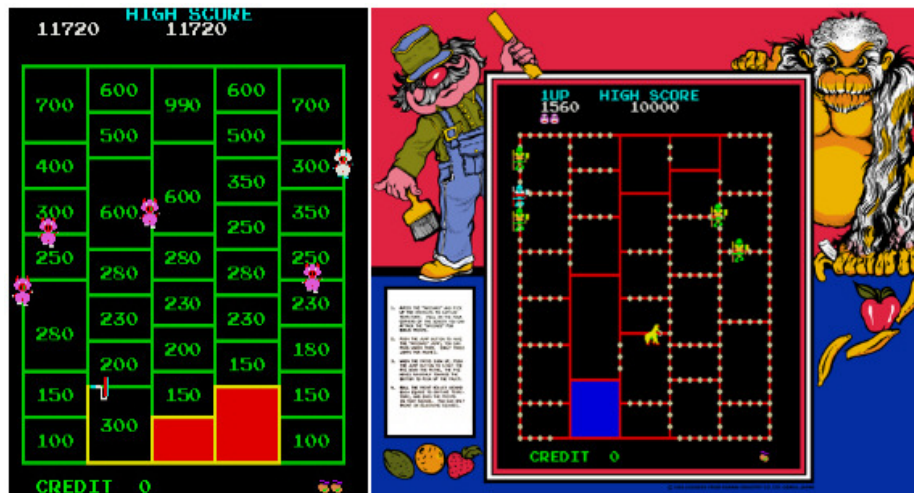
<https://www.facebook.com/events/1546619762296713/>

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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. The event listing will remain posted until the issue following the event date.

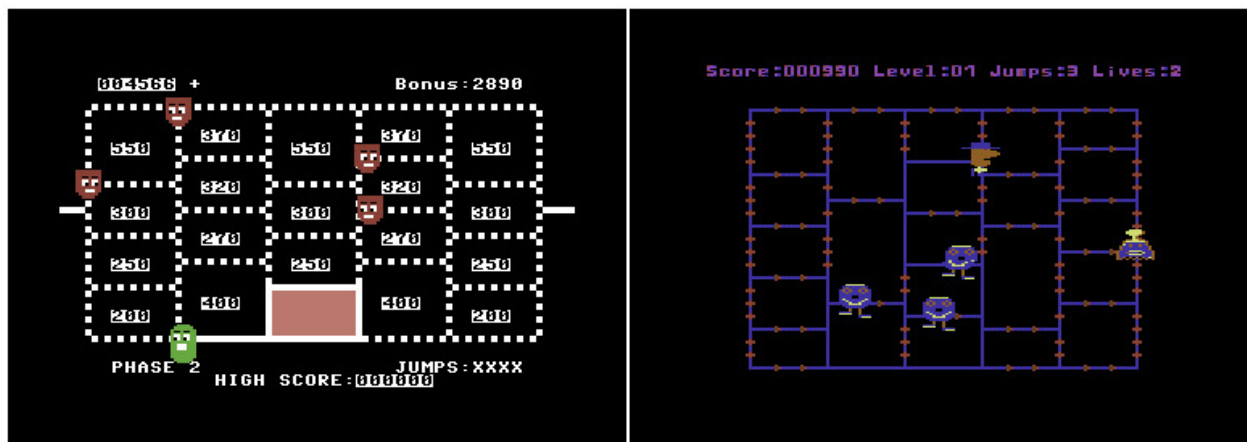


Amidar is one of my all-time favourite arcade games - even if it is a game I am not an expert at. At first glance it is a simple maze game, but it pulls a few surprises out of the bag. The first is that there are two different types of levels. The first phase sees the player control a gorilla chased around the grid by toy soldiers. Collecting dots allows the squares of the grid to be filled in to earn points. Completing the four corner squares awards a brief period of invulnerability (similar to a Pac-Man power pill) that allows the player to attack the enemies. The player also has a limited number of jumps, which make the enemies jump off the grid briefly and allow the player to pass unharmed. Completing the level reveals the bonus sequence - press fire at the right time to drop the gorilla down to the bonus fruit through the grid of lines, the gorilla changing direction at each junction. Then the second phase appears. This time the player controls a paint roller, painting lines around the boxes to complete them. However, this must be done in a continuous line or the paint "runs out", forcing the player to try again. The two types of level and bonus screen alternate, becoming faster and more challenging. It's a great game in Konami's back catalogue and one worth checking out.



Amidar as it appeared in the arcade

Sadly, there was no official conversion on the Commodore 64, but there are some great clones to check out. Here are some of the best, rated out of five paint pots (with 1 being poor and 5 being the best).



Blade Runner, 1982 (left) and Hooper, 1984 (right)

BLADE RUNNER aka Time Runner

Scott Maxwell & Troy Lyndon for Wizard Soft, 1982

The player here controls a cute green blob and avoids red blobs. Phase 1 sees the player filling in boxes by collecting the dots, with the grid having two "safe spots" left and right. The four corners rule is in play allowing the player to attack the enemies. Phase 2 adds an extra feature, with the value of the boxes starting to count down when more than half the dots have been eaten. Another interesting change is the way the player is safe after being hit for a short time, until Fire is pressed to continue playing - but the player cannot collect dots while safe. Fairly basic graphics and sound for the time, but a good attempt at recreating Amidar's gameplay.

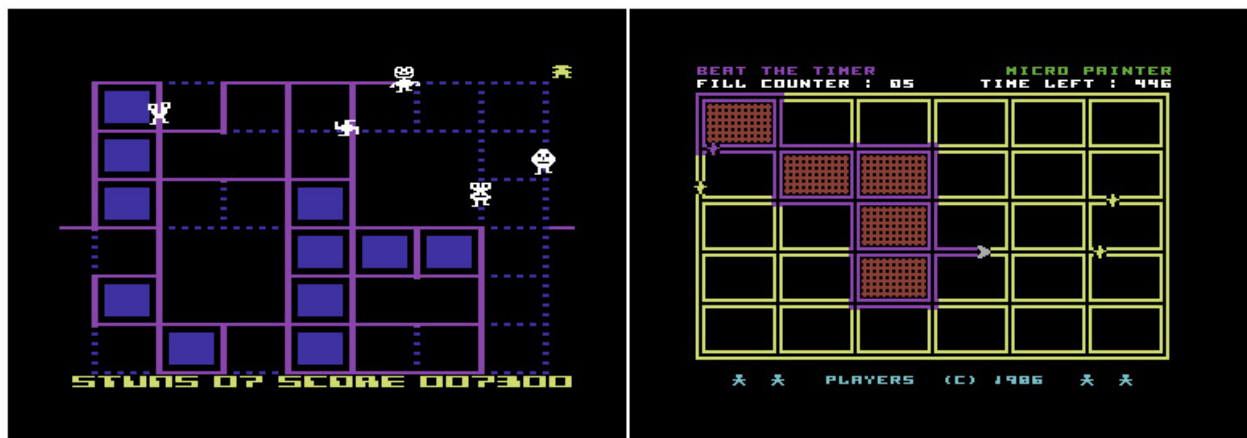
3 paint pots out of 5.

HOOPER

Mak Jukic & Volzana Rehak for Calisto Software, 1984

First impressions are not good with a simplistic title screen and slow music. The odd pace of the enemies on the first screen is offset by a fairly playable attempt at the Amidar gameplay, with the omission of the four corners rules. Phase 1 sees the player filling boxes by collecting the dots, Phase 2 sees the player character leaving a trail of dots to fill the boxes - but without the limitation of drawing complete boxes at once, making things a little easier there. For the time, a fairly average game.

2 paint pots out of 5.



Kid Grid, 1983 (left) and Micro Painter, 1986 (right)

KID GRID

Arti Haroutunian for Tronix, 1983

It is nice to get the option of adjusting the difficulty and number of stuns (3, 5 or 7) available to the player in Kid Grid. Then the game starts and it has several key differences to Amidar. There is no bonus screen and the level layout varies as you progress. In addition, the player can run off the left and right edge to wrap around to the other side (at the middle of the grid). Every now and then a question mark will appear, and filling in the block with the question mark awards bonus points or extra stuns. Cute characters and sound effects leave a good

impression.

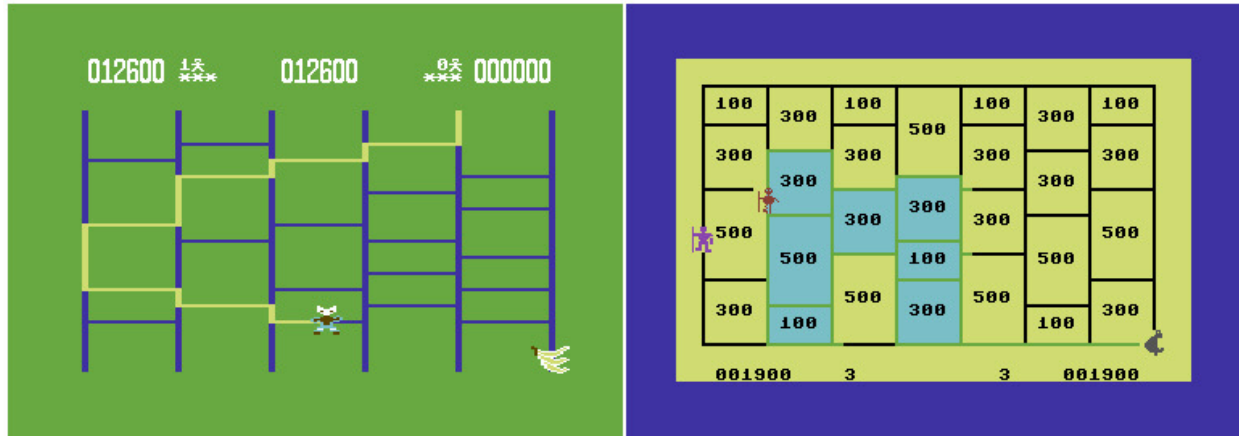
4 paint pots out of 5.

MICRO PAINTER

Andrew Challis for Players, 1986

This is an interesting little game - because it was designed to be played while another game is loading from tape. There were several of these load-a-games on cassette, perhaps the most famous being Mastertronic's *Invade-a-Load*. Micro Painter is a tricky variant on Amidar, your arrow-shaped ship having to fill in a straightforward grid of squares before the time limit runs out or the enemy gets you. Dying sees the fill counter reset to zero and the level restarted. Obviously it's only fair to be kind to such a small game, but it is rather difficult.

3 paint pots out of 5.



Pesky Painter, 1984 (left) and Potty Painter in the Jungle, 1983 (right)

PESKY PAINTER aka Paint Pot Charlie

John Twiddy for Supersoft, 1984

This is an early game in the programming career of John Twiddy, later known for *The Last Ninja* and the *Expert Cartridge* (as well as co-designing the hardware for the C64GS games console). It sticks very well to the Amidar formula, emulating both rounds and the bonus round. It has the four corners rule, reasonable graphics and music and authentic movement patterns. All in all a very good effort at recreating Amidar from a man who would go on to be a programming legend.

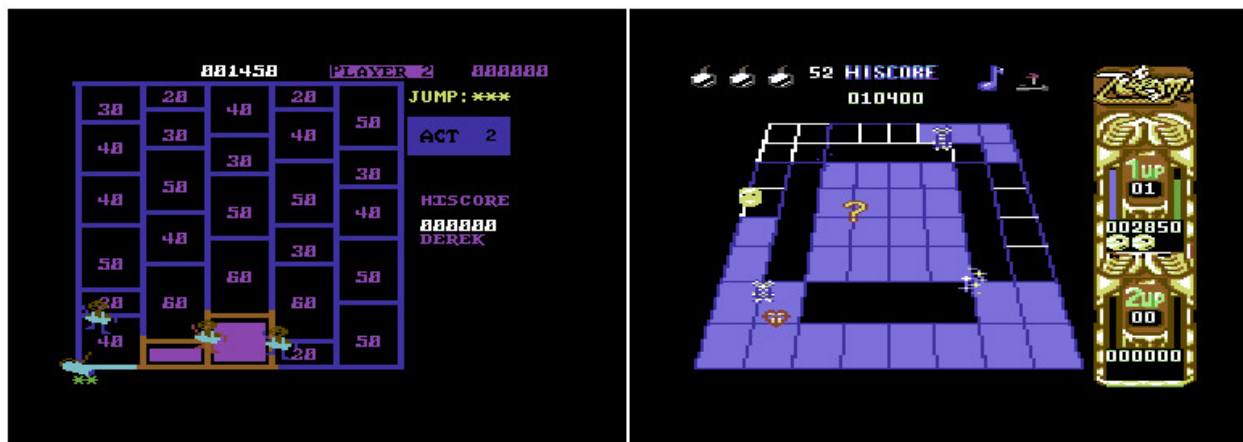
4 paint pots out of 5.

POTTY PAINTER IN THE JUNGLE

J.F. Cain for Rabbit Software, 1983

Another early attempt at Amidar that does well - the two types of screen and the bonus level are present and correct. It is let down aesthetically by the jerky movement and simplistic characters, plus the way the levels are oriented horizontally rather than vertically.

3 paint pots out of 5.



Rollin, 1984 (left) and Zoom!, 1988 (right)

ROLLIN

Micke Nordstrom for Scandsoft/Atlantis, 1984

First published in Scandinavia and then overseas by Atlantis, this is as close to Amidar as the C64 ever got. We can forgive the slightly simplistic enemies because the gameplay is replicated so well, including the important four corners rule. I really like the music too.

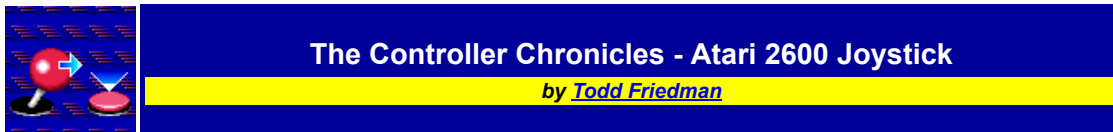
5 paint pots out of 5.

ZOOM!

Andy Hook & Johannes Bjerregaard for Discovery Software International, 1988

I first encountered this as an Amiga game, unaware that there was a C64 conversion. The basic idea of Amidar is put onto a 3-dimensional grid, leaning away from the player and changing layout as the level and difficulty increase. Another nice addition is the way completing two or more squares at once enables x2 scoring for a short time (shown by a decreasing bar). Enemies and power-ups also add spice to the gameplay, from the rocket that moves you on to the next level to the apple that fills in surrounding grids. Graphically it is poorer than the 16-bit version and it can be irritating to miss just a small pixel of a grid and have to backtrack, but this is a lot of fun.

4 paint pots out of 5.



This will be the first of a new column talking about and remembering the retro controllers, also called joysticks or gamepads. Each issue I will take one console controller and write about its positives, negatives and advantages with some of the games as examples. These, of course, will be my opinion of them and is always open for discussion on which one is the best and worst.

The first controller to discuss and to me the father of them all is the Atari 2600 "Joystick". There have been controllers made before the little black stick with the red button, but this controller changed the way gaming was played on what is considered the birth of home console era. The idea was simple; to design a controller that has a direction stick that can move up, down, left right and also diagonal. Of course there would need to be a button to execute the necessary shooting and jumping aspect of the games. This is probably the most basic controller ever assembled but the most powerful in terms of what it could do for the all games. Anyone at any age could pick up the controller and know how to hold it and what it is meant to do; but each game was different and it took a lot of practice and patience to master some games with the joystick.

My fondest memory of a game I played as a kid was Moon Patrol for the Atari 2600. I still play this version today. The joystick had a different way of executing what needed to be done for the game. For example, the control stick right accelerated the car forward, left would slow down the car backwards. Pushing it up will make the car jump over rocks, pits and mines. The challenge was to time the car in terms of the settings on the screen and not crashing. Of course the red button shot the bullets from your car. The shots would shoot up as well as straight. This was a great adaptation of the arcade game by just using a control stick and a button.



The standard Atari 2600 Joystick and Moon Patrol

Other games that took precision and skill to master were games like Dragster, Asteroids, Yars' Revenge and Pole Position. These games were just as challenging as today's generation console games but in a different way. It took a lot of hand eye coordination to master the joystick to do what you needed it to do on the screen.

Of course this joystick executed the most basic moves for games such as Pac-Man, Donkey Kong and Pitfall. Moving the joystick in any direction controlled the movement on the screen. The button typically would shoot or jump. These were the days that you could just plug in a game and play it without having to check the setting on the controller to see what each button and trigger does. The positive of this most basic controller is the just that. It's a basic controller that anyone can pick up and plug in to play. One button and a control stick. Enough said; the design one of the most recognizable controllers today and has been revamped in today's society such a candy tins, Christmas ornaments and seen on vintage T-shirts.

I can say with experience that the Atari 2600 controller can age over time. This is probably the only negative of the controller. I have gone through dozens of controllers because of the button not working, the stick getting dirt or dust in it and not working correctly. Wear and tear on the controller causes clicking sounds and frustration trying to go one way and it will go the other. I do have some original controller from the 80s that still work but it's rare to get same response to the original years of the controller to using it today.



A standard Atari 2600 Paddle and Demons to Diamonds

The sister controller is the 2600 paddle. This was an additional controller for the Atari 2600 that was used for such games as Pong, Demons to Diamonds and Super Breakout. This controller uses more of a disc shaped controller that could turn in a circle to move the item faster. Only a select number of games were produced for this controller.

Atari has made a Plug and Play TV game where they remastered the controller to play the originals without the system or cartridges. It has the power, select and start button right on the controller. In my opinion there is nothing like playing with the original system and controller. But for today's generation these plug-and-play controllers work just fine.



Jakks Pacific Plug and Play TV Games all-in-one Atari 2600 controllers

Overall I give this controller 7 out of 10. It is one of first console controllers on the first home consoles created and it still holds up today when people break out the old school games. There will never be another like it and it probably is one the most recognizable controllers made. The Atari 2600 "Joystick" is a must addition to a collector's retro game stash. Good luck and high scores.

Next issue we will explore the most popular and world changing controller of all time, the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) controller. UP-UP-DOWN-DOWN-LEFT-RIGHT-LEFT-RIGHT-B-A-SELECT-START!



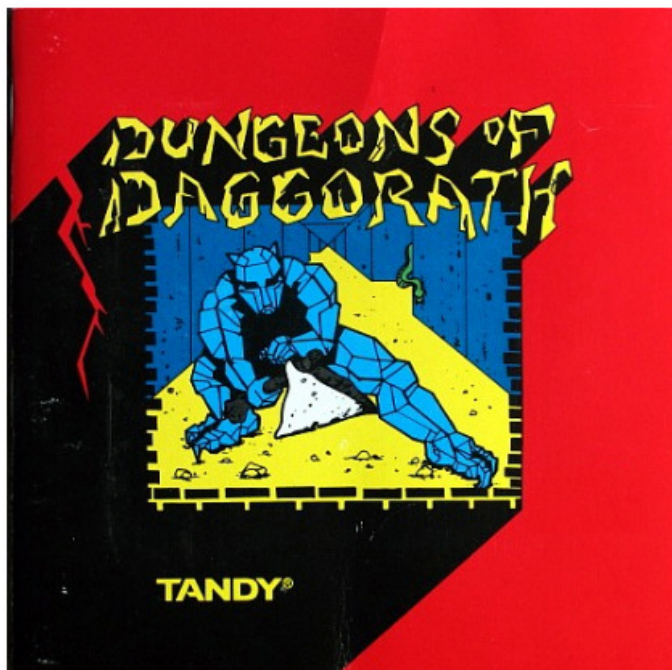
Retrogaming Feels - Dungeons of Daggorath

by "Mighty" Matt D.

"What you seek lies hidden in the trash on the deepest level of Daggorath"

- Ernest Cline, Ready Player One

Hello again retrogaming reader! Welcome back to another edition of Retrogaming Feels, where I discuss the most important games to me, focusing on how they made me feel when I played them. This time we are going back to 1983 and visiting one of the lesser-known home computers of the time, the Radio Shack TRS-80 Color Computer, to explore the depths of a little gem called Dungeons of Daggorath.



The Color Computer was sold exclusively through Radio Shack stores, and never caught up in popularity to the likes of Atari, Commodore, or Apple. It was a unique and wonderful computer - quite versatile and hobbyist friendly, both key selling points for Radio Shack customers. It had a cartridge slot, which could be used for any number of upgrades as well as cartridge based games. Many of the games available for it were clones of arcade games, named something different enough to avoid lawsuits, and again you needed to go to a Radio Shack to find them. Honestly, most of these clone games weren't bad, and I certainly spent countless hours playing them. However, the CoCo was meant to be a general purpose computer, not a video game console. Although it could run circles around an Atari 2600 in many ways (memory capacity, built in programming language, expansion ports), mimicking arcade games wasn't really its strong suit. A 4 color limit on graphics, no hardware sprite capabilities, and the worst joysticks ever created (yes, even worse than the Atari 5200) made it lag behind the game consoles in the blasting aliens department. A talented programmer could work around these limits, but the grass usually seemed greener on the Atari side, at least for an arcade loving kid. For a while, I would often wish that my father had bought us an Atari 2600 instead of the computer.

Daggorath was what changed my mind about the computer. It was different - it was a CoCo exclusive, and a completely new type of gaming experience for me. My older brother got it as a birthday gift, and he and his friends were excited to play it. Of course, that meant I had to find out what all the fuss was about. It required typing, had a black and white display, and reading the instructions was a must. All three of these things were off-putting to me. But it was also mysterious and invoked a sense of adventure and exploration. It seemed impossibly large and involved - nothing like what I was used to seeing in the arcades. Even learning how to play it would be a challenge. I was torn between curiosity to explore this strange game, and frustration of trying to remember commands and finding the right keys on the keyboard in time to avoid a monster beatdown. It rewarded patience, and in the end the sense of accomplishment and discovery won out.

Dungeons of Daggorath is a first person, real time dungeon crawl RPG. It is said to be the first game of this kind. The player explores the dungeon with the goal of reaching the bottom and defeating the evil Wizard. Monsters roam the halls, and must be either avoided or defeated. Knowing when to run and when to fight is essential. The player must light their way by using torches, which become dim over time (illustrated by the game's simple solid line graphics first becoming dashed lines, followed by dotted lines before finally disappearing altogether). In typical RPG fashion, better weapons, magic rings, potions, scrolls, and armor can be found. The game is controlled entirely by keyboard commands, using simple phrases such as GET LEFT SWORD, MOVE, and TURN RIGHT.

Also consistent with other RPG's are the elements of experience and hit points, allowing your character to become stronger and more resilient as you defeat monsters. Where it differs, however, is that no numbers for these characteristics are ever displayed. A successful attack is denoted only by three exclamation points and a satisfying "thwack" sound. The only clue the game provides about the players overall health is in the form of a beating heart, located at the bottom center of the screen. In a healthy state, the heart beats slowly and steadily. Under stress, or due to injury, the heartbeat will speed up. If it beats too fast, death is near! Try to get away and hide if you can - but beware, as running contributes to an increased heartbeat.

The graphics, though consisting entirely of simple black and white lines, are amazingly effective, especially the dimming torch light. At first, the walls of the dungeon become slightly dimmer. A few minutes more, and they become dimmer still, and approaching monsters become hard to distinguish. You might check your inventory to see if you have a back up torch. Movement through the maze becomes more hurried as you search for a new one. A few minutes more and the walls are barely defined, and monsters are only visible if they are too close for comfort. Panic sets in - without a torch, the game is effectively over, as you are left to bumble around in the dark, bumping into walls until you are overtaken by monsters. Wait - there, left on the floor by the spider you just slew, is that a torch? It's nothing but a scattered cloud of pixels, only one way to find out. GET RIGHT TORCH is quickly typed. Or rather, G R T is typed, as the game allows abbreviations and nobody has time for unnecessary typing when a stone giant is pummeling you. Success! USE RIGHT! You breath a sigh of relief as the sound of a matchstick being struck is followed by the bright image of the dungeon walls, now fully restored.



Image courtesy The CRPG Addict, cpgaddict.blogspot.com

As effective as the graphics are in instilling a feeling of claustrophobia, fear, and sometimes even relief, where Daggorath really shines is in its use of sound. Each monster makes a unique sound as it moves through the dungeon, so you will often hear them long before you see them. The sounds are soft and barely audible at first, becoming louder as the monsters get closer. The oozing sound of a blob often stopped me dead in my tracks, as I'd hurriedly prepare weapons and shield, and ready myself for a showdown. The sound of your heartbeat is a constant reminder of your state of well being. Reassuring when times are calm, and panic inducing when it is racing and monsters are about.

The heartbeat is a genius play mechanic - condensing a series of numbers down to a simple two frame graphic and familiar sound. It says more about the game than any of descriptions I could present here - it is in this way that Daggorath turns the cerebral, calculating world of Dungeons & Dragons into something much more immediate and visceral. The stats and dice rolls are still there, making the occasional appearance as nothing more than a slight delay between commands to calculate whether you hit that armored knight or if he will be the end of your adventure.

Our computer was set up in our basement, which was finished with garish orange carpeting and fake wood paneling. The walls and carpet were, by the way, an architectural requirement for all homes in the 1980's. I'm sure the basement had a lot to do with how I felt during Daggorath games, the dim light and cool air seemed a fitting environment for dungeon crawling. I always seemed to play Daggorath with the sound up and face inches from the screen, as though that would somehow make things easier to see in the diminishing torch light. It drew me in and demanded 100% of my attention until the screen faded to black. Each strike from a monster caused my own heartbeat, along with the virtual one, to increase. My hands would get sweaty as I fervently typed "A L" (ATTACK LEFT) over and over during a heated battle. I hadn't learned to touch type yet, and it would be years before I did, but I sure learned where A and L were. I turned these keystrokes into a ham-fisted keyboard beating. Our poor CoCo ultimately had its spacebar damaged by this game - or rather by my brother and I's inability to contain our excitement during a pitched battle. I'm not sure my father thought that vicious stone giants were a justifiable reason for such aggression, but he fixed the keyboard and we learned to reign it in a bit.

I've never completed Daggorath. It offers a game save function, but on a real CoCo that meant saving to audio cassette. If you've ever complained about loading time on a game, I am here to tell you that saving and loading data on audio cassette will give you a whole new appreciation for modern technology. It would take several minutes to cue the tape, enter the correct command, and reload a saved game. To an impatient 9 year old it may as well have been several hours. Of course playing in emulation eases all of that, but I still find myself trying to beat it in one go. I've read that the ending is a bit of a letdown considering the scope of the game, but that is understandable. In just 8 kilobytes, the programmers created a great adventure I won't ever forget. If that didn't leave enough ROM space for a flowery ending, so be it, I'll keep visiting Daggorath anyway.

Want to try Dungeons of Daggorath? Of course you do:

https://archive.org/details/coco2cart_Dungeons_of_Daggorath_1982_26-3093_DynaMicro

But you'd better read the manual first. Don't worry, it's entertaining in its own right:

https://archive.org/details/Dungeons_of_Daggorath_1983_Tandy

Have you read "Ready Player One"? No? Well, if you like websites about old video games, you'll probably like it too. Also, Dungeons of Daggorath plays a big part in the story!



A Pirate's Life For Me - Second Journey

by *David Lundin, Jr.*

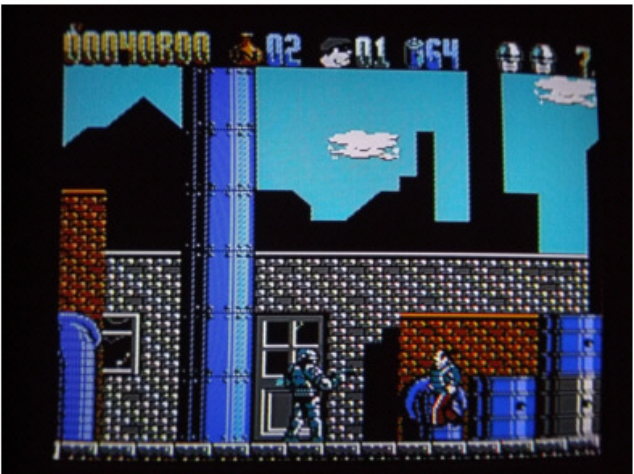
Welcome back as we continue our voyage with the CoolBoy Real Game 198 in 1 bootleg Famicom multicart. If this is your first journey with us, a bootleg pirate multicart is a video game cartridge containing multiple games that would otherwise have single cartridge retail releases. Pirate multicarts have become bigger and better over the past couple years. Although these days you have options such as flash memory cartridges if you want to play a bunch of games off a single cartridge, there's just something about these bootlegs that appeal to me. I've found collecting multicarts a fun collecting sub genre since the early to mid 2000's. 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" and these cartridges are usually sold together as a pair.

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. The 198 in 1 cartridge isn't too bad in this respect, with fifty or so games falling into this category.

This scope of this ongoing column is to quickly evaluate 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 counterpart. 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. It should also be noted that many of the games contained on these bootleg cartridges have their title screens altered to strip away any copyright dates or the like. 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.

Now, back on to high seas and high excitement!

CoolBoy Real Game 198 in 1, Games 16 - 30:

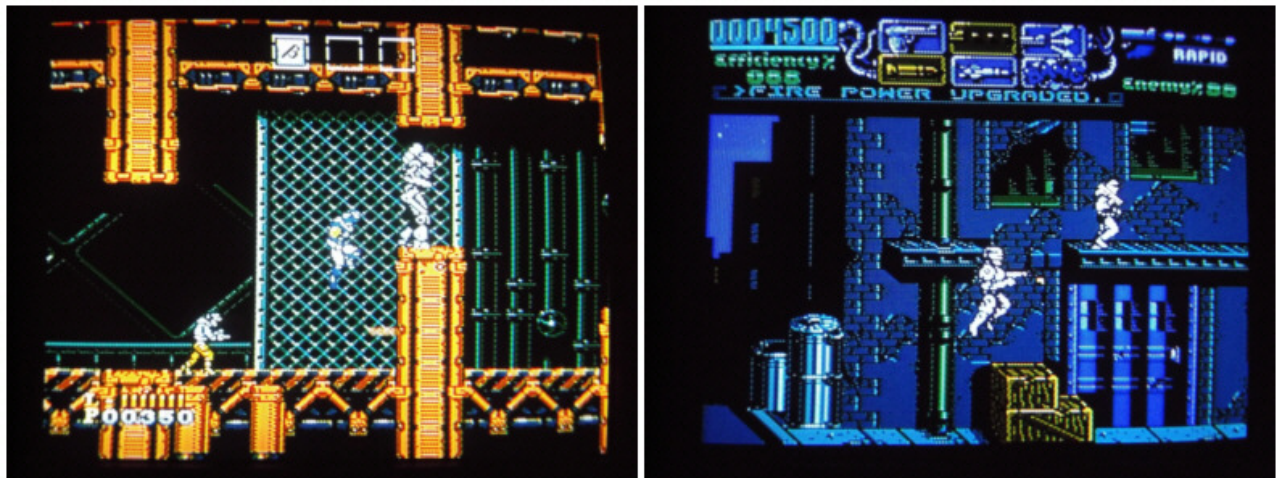


RoboCop and RoboCop 2

016. RoboCop 1 - Ah, yes, RoboCop - a true classic of 1980's film. I have to give thanks to one of my uncles for introducing me to the movie and tangentially to the genius of Paul Verhoeven. When I saw RoboCop on video around 1988 I was about six years old at the time and it has been one of my favorite films to this day. Data East developed a RoboCop arcade game that was a standard, albeit slower paced since Murphy doesn't move that fast, run and gun with solid graphics and a healthy dose of in-game speech. As film to arcade game adaptations go, it wasn't bad at all, and its design would inspire an even better spiritual arcade sequel, Sly Spy. For Robo's home outing on the NES it seems as if Sakata SAS used the arcade game as a starting point and the whole thing was made more "Nintendoized" from there. The game actually reminds me a lot of Rush'n Attack except

RoboCop can't jump. You'll spend most of your time punching down enemies with your metallic fists, similar to all the knife work in Rush'n Attack, only using weapons in specifically designated areas. The game isn't spectacular but it has good music, good controls, good graphics, and the entire experience is competently programmed and enjoyable. The game's timer can bite you on your metal ass in some spots but other than that this is a solid game, especially for being a film adaptation. This game only had a North American release and was actually the featured challenge title on the "GameCenter CX in the USA" special episode of the Japanese retrogaming program "GameCenter CX."

017. RoboCop 2 - The NES adaptation of RoboCop 2 on the other hand, well... I suppose if anything this game mirrors the quality of the film sequel. From the moment this game is turned on and the terrible watery echo of the title screen music kicks in, one thing will be instantly apparent: that bleeding in your ears, yeah, that's the sound of a British game developer. Sure enough, Ocean Software developed RoboCop 2 for the NES, and it plays like a bog standard British-developed platform game of the time. RoboCop can now jump! He also slides around like the floors are made of ice and gains and loses momentum like a locomotive! There is also a ridiculous first person shooting range tossed in that may in fact be the first NES game to give people vertigo. What's even worse that the shooting range modes are actually punishment for not arresting enough suspects or not destroying enough narcotics in the previous regular stage. Simply getting to the end of a stage in this game is a big enough challenge, so expect to spend a lot of time at the shooting range. While the first RoboCop game existed in a fairly concrete world that more or less represented modern day Detroit, the sequel is a mess of over-animated graphics, flashy and overly bright colors, ridiculous enemies, garish background patterns and all the other out of place garbage generally associated with British developed games of this era. On top of that the game is simply a pain to play. The more I think about it, this is actually an accurate representation of the quality of the second film compared to the first. "Patience, Lewis. We're only human."



Super Rescue Solbrain (listed as RoboCop 3) and RoboCop 3 (listed as Robocop 4)

018. RoboCop 3 - Okay, let's get this one out of the way. Wait a minute this isn't RoboCop! This game is actually the Famicom title Super Rescue Solbrain, which was reworked and released on the NES as Shatterhand. Super Rescue Solbrain was based upon a 1991 Japanese tokusatsu television show, part of Toei's "Metal Hero Series" franchise, which ran from 1982 to 1999. Rather than playing the role of a New York police officer with cybernetic arms like in Shatterhand, the original follows the plot of the Solbrain television series and you play as a detective who wears a cybernetic power suit. Solbrain is a fast paced action platformer, a "run and punch" if you would. Think of it like Sunsoft's NES Batman games with a bigger emphasis on being quick with both your attacks and your footwork. Picking up "alpha" and "beta" icons in mixed sequences of three will call upon a robotic satellite with different icon combinations generating different offensive weapons for the satellite. Additionally the satellite can be used to hover in the air and a double pick up of the same sequence of icons will allow you to combine with the satellite to gain even more firepower for a limited time. I really love this game as it rewards timing and boldness in terms of platforming skill. I think this game is a sadly overlooked title in the NES library and the original Famicom version is a great alternate take on the title if you're a fan of Shatterhand. Unfortunately the version included on the cartridge is corrupted and only allows play of a very small portion of the game. After completing Area A, you will then begin Area F, and upon completing Area F the game will endlessly load the Area F boss battle from then on. It's really a shame when bootleg cartridges have problems like this, especially considering what a great game this is.

019. RoboCop 4 - Well here's the real RoboCop 3 and it follows the "game matches the quality of the film it is based upon" creed that RoboCop 2 on the NES established. All right, it's not that bad. RoboCop 3 blends the ridiculous design decisions of RoboCop 2 with the more grounded and cleanly designed original RoboCop NES game. RoboCop can still jump but he has an expected weight while both in the air and on the ground, making control feel far more natural. Some of the graphics and enemy designs are a little too bright and cartoony for my taste but the actual gameplay isn't bad. It features an interesting mechanic where individual body parts of RoboCop take damage independently, which may result in control malfunctions. At the end of each stage repairs

can be made on each system to restore functionality. The music on the other hand is terrible and just as with RoboCop 2 it's comprised of that watery echo that is a hallmark of a British developer of this era, in this case Probe Software. Sorry, if you were a composer for a British game developer making NES games and your name wasn't David Wise, your music probably sounds terrible. Some of this stuff may sound great on a Commodore 64 but these are NES games, you need to design your audio package with the requirements of the console in mind. I have an odd relationship with Probe Software as I've always felt most of their library to be complete garbage. Yet they also had some titles that I really enjoyed on the PlayStation and Saturn, and the later Extreme-G games are really good and absolutely worth checking out. As for RoboCop 3, it's pretty mediocre but at the very least it is playable and it's a heck of a lot more enjoyable than the film it was based upon!



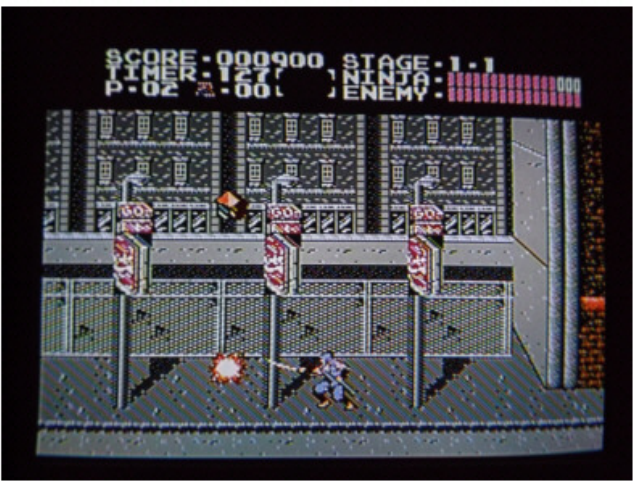
Tiny Toon Adventures and Tiny Toon Adventures 2: Trouble in Wackyland

020. Tiny Toon 1 - Capcom wasn't the only developer that had a big kid's license during the NES era. Konami was a big player as well with the licenses for Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles as well as Tiny Toon Adventures. This is the first console video game based on the Tiny Toon Adventures cartoon show. It would begin a series of over a dozen video games, with Konami handling the license up through the Super Nintendo and Sega Genesis platforms before moving on to other developers and publishers, with the final Tiny Toons game appearing on Game Boy Advance in 2002. The NES game is a standard side scrolling platformer, very similar to Super Mario Bros. and the countless other platform games it inspired. While it's not top tier Konami, the game looks nice and plays well with a good representation of the characters from the Tiny Toons license. It also has a bit of replay value as a different secondary character, each complete with a different special ability, can be selected at the beginning of each stage. I doubt it's anyone's favorite cartoon platformer but it's relatively enjoyable and not a bad game for the younger set. It's a nice and gentle game, a stark contrast to the ridiculously difficult 16 bit Tiny Toon Adventures games that would come in the future.

021. Tiny Toon 2 - And now for something completely different. Rather than make another nice, happy, relatively harmless, cute little platformer like the previous game, Tiny Toon Adventures 2: Trouble in Wackyland sort of forgets what makes a game fun. Rather than the sequel that may have been expected, the game is now set on a series of amusement park attractions with different objectives to complete in order to earn points. Points are then exchanged for tickets, which are then used to play the attractions again. After earning enough tickets, the final stage can be accessed. If this whole thing sounds like work rather than play, you would be correct in your assessment. Each attraction plays like what would be a part of a level in another game, as if this entire title is made up of assets and gimmicks that were developed for or dropped from other games. The game looks and sounds nice enough, a very slight improvement over the previous title, but it's just a hassle to play as the whole objective is to farm for points.

This game reminds me of a Japan only Game Boy title that would be released two years later called Welcome to Nakayoshi Park. That game was based around comic characters that appeared in the pages of Nakayoshi Magazine of the time, including Sailor Moon. Nakayoshi Park contains a series of mini games set in an amusement park that earn the player tickets, which in turn grant the player access to more areas of the park. Of course the game also features such upstanding ventures as Three-card Monte hosted by an amusement park clown and other assorted crooked gambling games to rob you of your hard-earned tickets. It's just as frustrating but least that game has some variety.

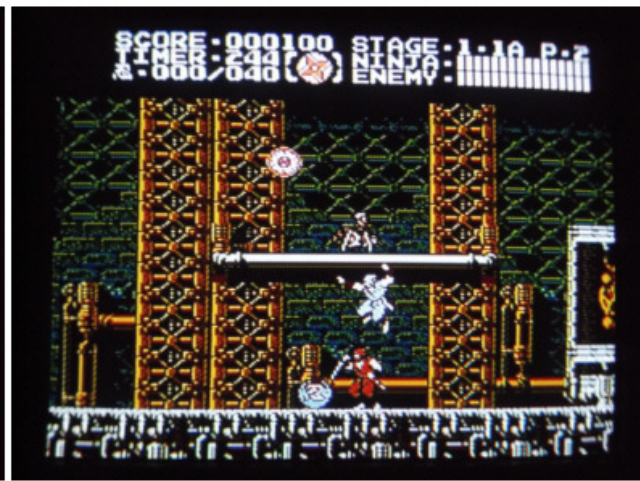
I've never been a huge fan of the Tiny Toons console games but I enjoy the two original Game Boy titles quite a bit. Both of those games expand on the notion of a character platformer that the first NES game entailed and are a lot of fun to play.



The Bugs Bunny Crazy Castle (listed as Tiny Toon 3) and Shadow Warriors

022. Tiny Toon 3 - No, there wasn't a third Tiny Toon Adventures game for the NES. Well, wait, there were actually three, the second was Tiny Toon Adventures Cartoon Workshop while Trouble in Wackyland was actually the third NES game. Cartoon Workshop was, for its time and hardware, a fairly robust piece of animation software featuring Tiny Toon characters. The game here on the multicart however is The Bugs Bunny Crazy Castle with a title screen hack to display "The Tiny Toon 3 Crazy Castle" as the name of the game. Aside from that it is completely the same as The Bugs Bunny Crazy Castle, a game that actually used the Roger Rabbit license for its original Famicom Disk System release. While the Crazy Castle series has both vocal fans and detractors, I remember the first title being reasonably popular back when it was new. I find it a fun collection-based action puzzle game in which Bugs Bunny must collect all the carrots in a stage while avoiding other Looney Tunes characters.

023. Ninja Gaidem 1 - It shouldn't be too much of a stretch to guess that this game is actually Ninja Gaiden, however you would only be half right. "Ninja Gaidem 1" is actually Shadow Warriors, the European release of Ninja Gaiden, itself a North American release of Ninja Ryukenden. Content naming restrictions were kind of weird in Europe so a lot of games with "ninja" in the title had it changed to something else, Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles for instance. In some cases games with perceived excessive violence had their characters sprites or stories altered, such as Contra being reworked into Probotector, which had all the humans changed to robots. Shadow Warriors is simply the North American release of Ninja Gaiden with a different title screen and copyright date. There is a problem however and it's something we will continue to run into with these pirate multicarts. Some European NES games were optimized to work with the European PAL television standard, operating at 50Hz. North American and Japanese NES and Famicom games use the NTSC standard, operating at 60Hz. A PAL optimized European game is generally slowed down by 16.7% to prevent timing problems or unexpected programming issues. Of course this means Europe really got the shaft concerning a lot of these great console games and by the next generation of video games it became reasonably common for European gamers to modify their consoles to run at 60Hz. Shadow Warriors is a PAL optimized game so running it on NTSC hardware gives the opposite effect: the game runs 16.7% faster. This also creates a secondary problem as the faster speed creates timing issues that corrupt the game. In the case of Shadow Warriors the lanterns and torches in the background that contain special weapons and power ups do not display or register properly, if at all. When they do show up they are often in impossible to reach areas and drop incorrect items. While this doesn't make the game unplayable it does make it quite difficult to enjoy. A bit of a shame as Ninja Gaiden is not only a hugely influential title it's also a great action game.



Ninja Gaiden II: The Dark Sword of Chaos and Ninja Gaiden III: The Ancient Ship of Doom

024. Ninja Gaiden 2 - Ninja Gaiden II: The Dark Sword of Chaos is one of my all-time favorite NES games and the most shining example of how to make a perfect sequel to a game. A direct sequel to Ninja Gaiden taking place one year later, Ryu Hayabusa is confronted by followers of Ashtar, an even more powerful adversary than Jaquio from the previous game. Ashtar has also kidnapped Irene Lew but that's only the beginning of the challenges that lie ahead for the Ninja of the Dragon Sword. This sequel takes the concepts of the first game and polishes them beyond perfection. Graphics, sound and play control have all been enhanced. Ryu is more mobile than ever and is now able to climb freely up and down walls. New power enhancements allow Ryu to have up to two shadow clones that follow behind and attack with him in unison. The story is even more engaging than the first since it builds upon the history of the characters and mythology introduced in the previous title. In my opinion the difficulty is turned down just a little from the previous title, especially in the earlier stages. I find this a welcome change as the game over all has a smoother difficulty curve than the original. Ninja Gaiden II is nothing approaching a cakewalk however, and the brutal challenge is ever present. Everything simply comes together perfectly in this game and it holds up incredibly well to this day. Everyone should give this game a try as the slight fine-tuning in control and difficulty ramping makes it a lot more accessible than its predecessor. Additionally Nintendo Power published a full special issue guide to the game that is a great resource for assistance if it is so desired. This is one of those games that I can pull out almost any time and instantly kill the better part of a day with. Heck, up until very recently the rendition of Irene Lew from the act introduction screen had been part of my professional letterhead for years.

025. Ninja Gaiden 3 - Ninja Gaiden III: The Ancient Ship of Doom on the other hand, is a way to make a sequel that pisses off your fans - at least in the USA anyway. This game actually takes place between Ninja Gaiden and Ninja Gaiden II and focuses on Foster, who was head of the CIA's Special Auxiliary Unit in Ninja Gaiden, and the mystery of Ryu Hayabusa being framed for Irene Lew's apparent death. The staff of Ninja Gaiden III had some slight changes in development roles and also a change in direction. As the previous two games were considered very difficult, it was the desire of the development staff to make a game that was more approachable to someone who had never played a Ninja Gaiden title before. They implemented a password system, included a sword upgrade item, added the ability to hang down and flip up onto overhead structures, made item types visible before slashing open their containers, allowed Ryu to directly jump onto a platform he was climbing without having to execute a reverse wall jump, did away with endlessly respawning enemies, slowed pace down, and gave Ryu the windmill shuriken as his starting default secondary weapon - my favorite weapon in the series, which first appeared in Ninja Gaiden II.

Things were a different story in the USA where the Ninja Gaiden series was known for being an extremely difficult pair of video games. This became such a famous part of these games that it was, if you can believe it, a primary selling point. For the NES release the core difficulty was completely altered. All enemies do more damage to Ryu than they do in the Famicom version or any version of the classic Ninja Gaiden games. Item locations were moved around to make the more powerful stuff intentionally more sparse and item orb frequency was also decreased. However the worst change, and the one that robs this game of most of its enjoyment, was the decision to not only remove the new password system but also to limit the amount of continues. In effect the game that was supposed to expand the Ninja Gaiden fan base only made it all the more exclusive. Meaning in the USA at least, the classic Ninja Gaiden trilogy didn't end with a whimper but with an aggravated sigh. Unfortunately it is the NES version of the game that is included here on the multicart.



Nekketsu Kakuto Densetsu and Downtown Nekketsu Monogatari

026. Hot Blood Wrestle - Here's where we get into some cool games that weren't released outside of Japan. Nekketsu Kakuto Densetsu (Hot Blooded Fighting Legend) is part of the Nekketsu or Kunio-kun series, better known to gamers in the West as the River City Ransom series. This title is basically a four-player fighting game that uses the Nekketsu beat 'em up play style along with the series' trademark graphical design. The game is a lot of fun in short doses and is best played with a friend. Very few of the Nekketsu games were released outside of Japan but in the case of this title I don't think we missed a whole lot. While the game is fun, outside of the general concept of a four-player fighting game it's pretty light on content.

027. Hot Blood Story - Of all the Nekketsu games this is the one that will probably be most familiar to the NES audience. Downtown Nekketsu Monogatari (Downtown Hot Blooded Story) is a sprawling open-world beat 'em up with RPG elements. The game was localized for release on the NES as River City Ransom and became an instant classic almost overnight. Years ago when you could pick up almost any NES cartridge at FuncoLand for a few bucks, River City Ransom always held high value by my memory. This was that sort of odd game that wasn't often discussed but nearly everyone had a recollection of playing at one time or another. The original Japanese Famicom game was about high school delinquents rather than American teenage street gangs so the majority of the characters are dressed in Japanese school uniforms.

Downtown Nekketsu Monogatari's biggest innovation over other beat 'em ups came in the form of money. When you dispatch a rival they leave behind a bouncing coin, which can be grabbed and spent in stores. Shopping malls are not only areas safe from attacking gangs, they are also host to an assortment of stores that allow you to replenish health, build stats, and learn special attacks. Eating food not only replenishes your life bar but specific foods have specific effects such as increased speed and defense. Bookstores sell books containing special techniques that allow you to build a customized roster of advanced attacks. When coupled with equipment that increases attack power, your character can become a force to be reckoned with. All of these little extras elevate the game beyond its simple "rescue your kidnapped girlfriend" plot line. Unfortunately playing the game in Japanese can be difficult simply because it is necessary to be able to read the item lists when making purchases. However if you've played River City Ransom to death, you may find stumbling through the Japanese original an interesting distraction.



Nekketsu Koko Dodgeball Bu: Soccer Hen and Downtown Nekketsu Koushinkyoku Soreyuke Dai Undoukai

028. Hot Blood Soccer 1 - Here's another Nekketsu game that actually had a reworked release on the NES. Nekketsu Koko Dodgeball Bu: Soccer Hen (Hot Blooded High School Dodgeball Club: Soccer Edition) was localized as Nintendo World Cup, easily the most action-packed soccer game on the platform. I won't say it's the best as Tecmo Cup Soccer Game / Captain Tsubasa is another really interesting NES soccer title. The Nintendo World Cup localization turned the title into a professional soccer game but the Famicom original was a high school soccer tournament in which the goal is to lead Nekketsu High School to victory over thirteen rival high schools - this time on the soccer field rather than in the streets. The graphics are a different between the two versions, making them just different enough to warrant checking out each. I find the more diverse graphics of the Japanese original more pleasing. This is an outstanding Famicom / NES sports game and I still find it a ton of fun to this day.

029. Hot Blood March - Another Nekketsu game! Rounding out this four pack of Kunio-kun classics we have Downtown Nekketsu Koushinkyoku Soreyuke Dai Undoukai (Downtown Hot Blooded March: Let's Go! Great Athletic Meet) which is my favorite of all the unlocalized Nekketsu games. This game more or less plays like a super violent and comedic version of Track & Field mixed with the Nekketsu play style. Things begin with a foot race through various locals around town with weapons and obstacles strewn about along the way. Some of these are single screen affairs while others scroll around a bit and many of the scenes have multiple paths that can be taken. Additionally you may have to enter a door, swim through a pipe, or climb up a building to progress. The next event is similar but has more emphasis on platforming and vertical movement as the players run through a sprawling indoor obstacle course. The third event is a free-for-all to climb up one of two poles and break open a celebratory ball, kind of like a Japanese pinata. Finally there is a four-player elimination brawl, very similar to Nekketsu Kakuto Densetsu, game number 026 covered above. What is interesting is that Nekketsu Kakuto Densetsu was released two years after this game, basically taking the final portion of this title and expanding it a tiny bit to make it a standalone game. I think it works much better as a finale to the events here than it does trying to stand on its own. Visuals are very vibrant and detailed and if you're looking for something different for a quick play, this is the title for you.



Takahashi Meijin no Bouken Jima and Hammerin' Harry

030. Adventure Island - The Japanese release of the first Adventure Island game, known in Japan as Takahashi Meijin no Bouken Jima (Master Takahashi's Adventure Island) is a slight rework of the Sega published and Escape (later known as Westone) developed arcade title Wonder Boy. Sega controlled the rights to the Wonder Boy name and characters while Westone controlled the rights to the game itself. This allowed Westone to license the game to Hudson Soft with the requirement that used different characters. Hudson Soft decided to replace the player character with a caricature of Toshiyuki Takahashi, a Hudson Soft employee better known as Takahashi Meijin, literally "Master Takahashi." Takahashi Meijin was kind of the idol of 1980's - early 1990's Japanese video gaming youth. He was well known throughout Japan for his skill at video games and primarily for his finger speed, being able to fire sixteen shots per second, most famously on the Famicom shooters Star Force and Star Soldier. Takahashi Meijin was more or less the first superstar gamer, where his skill at playing video games made him a national household name.

The game itself is a running platformer with a heavy emphasis on speed and jumping accuracy. Takahashi's vitality is always decreasing, even when standing still, so he must constantly collect fruit to stay alive. While the game may look simple with its bright and colorful graphics, happy music, and seemingly light challenge, there is actually a lot more to this title. See, Adventure Island is the most difficult and unforgiving video game ever made. I know, you read that and probably had a good chuckle, maybe even burst out in laughter. When someone has that response I can tell they have yet to make the journey themselves. Yes, the game begins very gentle and easy and even when it becomes more difficult a few stages in, it still doesn't feel ultra challenging. Then you get to the last couple areas and you realize this game has it out for you.

While all the areas near the end are hard, nothing compares to area 8, round 3, stage 4. This is the most difficult platforming area in all of video gaming, as the end of 8-3 seems nearly impossible. You must perfectly run and jump along a series of platforms that drop off the moment they are touched. Yet that's not what makes it difficult, in fact this little area is recycled from earlier in the game. The reason why 8-3-4 is hard is because there are three bats that swoop down at the absolute worst angles as you're jumping across the platforms and on top of that this area auto scrolls up and to the right as well. Watching a video of this area being played is nowhere near an accurate representation of the subtle movements and skill it takes to complete. Until you get there yourself, until you wrestle with that stage for hours or days until you complete it, the difficulty contained within cannot be accurately expressed. All that said, the game is incredibly well designed and a lot of fun, just don't expect to breeze through it or finish it quickly, if ever. Completing Adventure Island, after weeks of continuously playing up to and attempting to get past that one spot, is my number one all-time video game achievement. The NES release changes the title to Hudson's Adventure Island and renames Takahashi Meijin to Master Higgins but aside from that they are the same soul-crushing game.

CoolBoy 400 in 1 Real Game, Spotlight Selection:

137. Hammerin' Harry - Known in Japan as Daiku no Gen-san (Gen the Carpenter), Hammerin' Harry was originally an Irem arcade game that had a reworked Famicom home conversion. The Famicom game was localized into English, based on the English arcade localization as Hammerin' Harry. However it was never released in North America and was a European exclusive. I actually covered Hammerin' Harry in the very last NEScade column in the previous newsletter, Retrogaming Times Monthly issue #113, as the arcade original is one of my favorite obscure arcade games. Play as Harry, a construction worker out to prevent the destruction of his home by breaking up the evil construction mob with his trusty giant hammer in this action game. Unfortunately instead of a straight conversion of the arcade game, the decision was made to add more Famicom-centric platforming areas. That would have been fine but instead of running with the gameplay change, the home conversion of Hammerin' Harry plays like a hodgepodge of arcade accuracy and less than accurate NES conventions of the day, and is ultimately unsure of what type of game it wants to be. A lot of enjoyment can still be had here as the game is a lot of fun but I only wish it stuck closer to the arcade original.

Next time we'll pick up the list with game 031 on the 198 in 1 cartridge. The next fifteen games are a pretty nice assortment with some outstanding sequels, lesser-known rarities, a nearly forgotten spiritual sequel to The Legendary Axe, and a prototype game. Don't worry though, there are also a couple terrible pirate original games - wouldn't want me to have too much fun.



SHOTGUN - Four Player Action On C64!

by [Christian Gleinser](#)

SHOTGUN is a new action game for the C64, which can be played with up to 4 players, using a special Userport adapter that allows you to connect two additional joysticks to your computer. As the author of this game, I would like to present the game and talk a bit about its development process.

First of all, some words about the game itself. The game throws you and your friends into an arena, each of you standing in one corner of the screen, ready to battle each other. There are guns lying around which you can pick up, each gun carries three bullets. Once a gun has been collected, it will reappear in the same spot after a few seconds. If you get shot by someone, you will respawn in your corner and the action continues. As soon as one player reaches the objective of 20 kills, the match is over and he is the winner.

It is possible to choose from seven different arenas, which all have their little specialties (e.g. one of them has only two guns instead of four, one of them has a huge open space, others are more maze-like etc.) and you can also choose out of three color schemes. Also, it is possible to configure the number of players, so a match with only 2 or 3 players is also possible (this means you can also play this game without needing 4-player adapter - though it is highly recommended to get one!). Last, but not least, you can also choose the number of total kills that have to be reached in order to win the match.

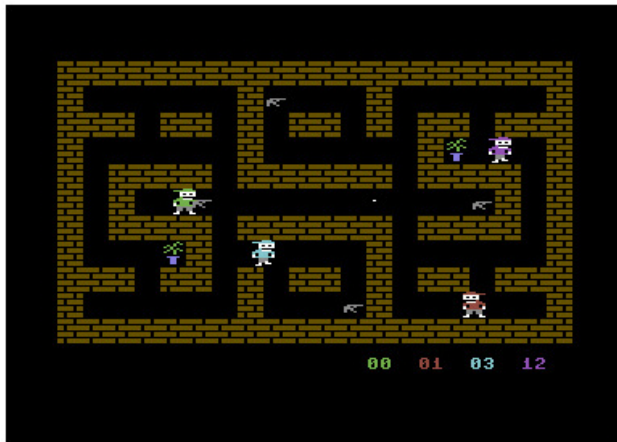


Now, what is this special Userport adapter, that I was talking about? Some of you might already know this device, it's the "Classical Games 4-Player Interface" by Protovision. As far as I am informed, this is the most popular of all 4-player adapters out there, and there are about 25 games that support it. You can buy it online in several shops and you can also build it by yourself (see the links at the end of this article for more information).

DEVELOPMENT of the game took place in April 2016. Actually, I am surprised myself how quickly the game emerged, but this has its reasons, and I'm happy to share those with you. First of all, how did I get the inspiration for this game? I was attending a retro gaming party called Videospieltreffen Süd-West (VSTsw), which is held about 4 times a year near Stuttgart in Germany. I have been there a few times already, and each time, besides the other cool games that we play there, one of the most fun parts of the meeting was when we got to play 8-player games for the Atari XL. There is an interface called "Multijoy8" (and there is also a Multijoy16), which allows you to connect 8 (or 16) joysticks to the Atari, and to my knowledge there is only a handful of games that support it. The cool thing about those games is that they are very simple - simple graphics, simple gameplay, everyone knows immediately what to do - yet (or quite certainly because of that) they are so much fun. Check out those games: Cervi, Cervi 2, Helicops, Mashed Turtles, Rubacka vo kopec, and Shot'em All. There are maybe 5 or 6 more, but those are the ones we played.

Now, last time I was attending that party, I also brought my C64 and the 4-player adapter to play "Bomb Mania" (a Bomberman clone) there, and after seeing those Atari games again, I thought - well, wouldn't it be a nice idea to program a new 4-player game for the C64? As I said before, there's not that many games that support this adapter, so it should be about time for some new material. And being inspired by those Atari games, I wanted to offer the same kind of simplicity.

So, after thinking a few days about what kind of game it should become, I dug out an old 2-player death match game which I wrote in Python for a small competition among working colleagues (the competition goal was to create a game in Python with a source code size of max. 2048 bytes). I made a screenshot of the game, converted it into 320x200 and C64 color palette, and thought, okay, this might work. So I decided to make a quick prototype of that game first, and I used Python for that (along with the Pygame library, which is basically a wrapper for the well-known SDL multimedia library). And I think this was actually a very good idea, because this prototype was finished in about one week (it was playable already after 2 or 3 days), and it gave me a very precise vision of what the final C64 game should become. In fact, all the graphics and even sounds and music were created exactly as they would look/sound like on the C64. Once the gameplay was working, I even decided to put the title screen / menu screen and also a score screen already into the prototype (as opposed to just prototyping the core gameplay). That way, this prototype was basically an exact representation of the final product, and because it was really just a prototype, I didn't care too much about good code or code reusability or whatever, the only goal was to have something to test and experiment, and to finish that as quick as possible.

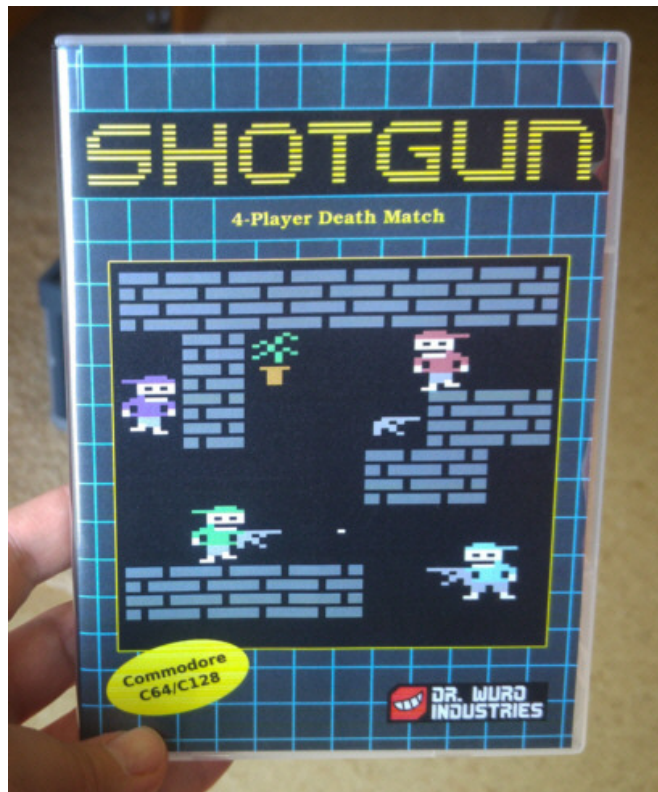


When I was satisfied with gameplay and everything else, I started re-writing the game from scratch for the C64. I used the ACME Cross-Assembler, which I have also used for a previous project already, so it wasn't completely new to me. But in general, I am not an assembly expert, so I thought this might get tough. In the end, I was surprised that I finished the whole game in another three and a half weeks. But this was due to several reasons: First, the prototype was giving me an exact idea of what to do and what to do next. I didn't have to experiment with collision detection or stuff like that, because I already did that in the prototype, and I "only" had to find a way of how to implement that in 6502 assembly language. Also, I didn't have to make up a title, menu or score screen, as this was also already there, so in the same manner, it was just a question of "porting" that. This way, every evening when I came home from work, I had a clear next goal of what to accomplish. On the first evening, I implemented the rendering of the level. On the next evening, I implemented the displaying of the player sprites. Next was movement. After that came collision detection. And so on.

While I have experienced problems with finishing or continuing projects in the past, this project felt like a breeze, even though it was an assembly language project - which means the programming was a lot harder than usual (for me at least). But since I always had a clear goal in mind (not only for the next task, but also for the whole product!), it was actually not a problem at all to complete this game. And from this experience, I think it's really an important thing to know what you are working on - the more exact, the better. For example, I am glad that I already put the menu and score screens into the prototype. If you just have to code, you don't have to spend time on thinking too much about other things that have nothing to do with the code itself. If you still have a lot of decisions to make or some designs are still very immature etc., this is what can really block you (subconsciously) and kill your motivation. At least that's my experience from my past projects.

Ah, and one more thing: To give myself an idea of how the final product will look like (and in order to keep the motivation levels high), I converted screenshots from the prototype into Koala format (a multicolor picture format for the C64) and displayed them on my real C64 on a real CRT monitor. Later, I had an even better idea: I simply connected a Raspberry Pi via analog video-out to one of my CRTs, and played the prototype there. With the C64 standing in front of that CRT, it really felt like it's the real thing!

BOXED VERSIONS are a nice thing, I really love to design physical stuff along with my software creations, so when the game was finished and released, I thought about creating a boxed version for the game, too. Thanks to schlonkel, the guy who creates the "Boulder Dash - The Lost Caves" boxes, I found out about a DVD-like plastic box that is big enough to contain a 5.25 inch floppy disk. The good thing about DVD-like boxes is that you can simply include a printed piece of paper as the cover, and you're done. Creating a complete and fully printed cardboard box is quite expensive in comparison. So my choice went for those plastic boxes instead. Along with the box, there will also be a printed manual, and the floppy disk will have a custom-made paper sleeve. To make the package complete, there will also be some nice extra gimmicks inside, but I won't talk about that now, you will see that once you open it or when someone posts pictures on the net. :-)



The prototype of the upcoming boxed version

The box is about to be released in June, so the chance is high that it's already available while you're reading this article. Just check out the game's website in the links below and you will know!

LINKS:

The game's website: <http://shotgun.drwuro.com>

Here you will find some infos and pictures of the game, and of course a download link (the download is free!)

The 4-Player Interface: http://protovision-online.de/hardw/4_player.php?language=en

You can either buy it there or download instructions for building it by yourself.

Our gaming meetings in Germany: <https://www.facebook.com/Videospieltreffen-VST-211549465530845/>

Currently, there are three sub-groups of this meeting:

- VSTrm (Rhein-Main)
- VSTsw (Süd-West)
- VSTbo (Bodensee-Oberschwaben)

My e-mail address: zeha@drwuro.com

Feel free to contact me if you have questions about the game or anything else related to this article!

I hope you liked to read about all those insights and hopefully you will also have some fun playing the game on your next retro parties or friends-come-overs :-)



Jason Knigge Collection Profile

by [Todd Friedman](#)

Last issue I wrote about my video game collection. I always knew people had a bigger collection than I did and I knew a lot of people had more complete collections as well but years ago I met a person who lives about 20 minutes away from me that blows my collection away. His name is Jason Knigge. I decided to ask him about how his collection became one of the most impressive collections in the Chicagoland area if not the Midwest.

Before we talk about his collection, we should know a little about Jason and his family. Jason grew up in Hoffman Estates, IL. The last 15 years he has lived in Island Lake, IL with his wife and two sons, Jacob and

Matthew. He has been working for UPS for about 24 years, the last 17 as a UPS driver. He loves fishing and any activities that involve his boys including video games. After all, Jason has a few video games for them to play.



As of May 15th, 2016, when this interview was done, Jason had 5,421 individual video games. These games range from Magnavox Odyssey to PlayStation 2. Jason's collection is more about the retro old school games (before the year 2000) than the current systems of today like Xbox One and PS4. He does however, have a few of those games. If you include handheld systems, Jason has 62 workable systems in his collection. This breaks down to 31 consoles and 31 handhelds. Also in his collection are 20 tabletops (mini games) as well as 26 Game and Watch systems. Jason's family is supportive of his collection. His wife is not a gamer and stays out of the scene when Jason travels to different gaming events. His friends are very impressed with collection. Jason's kids love showing their friends the collection when they come over to the house.

Jason remembers seeing his first console video game in the early in early 1980s at his best friend's house. The game was Pac-Man for the Atari 2600. From that point forward Jason spent a lot of time playing these home consoles at his friend's houses. Jason began collecting video games back in the late 1980s when the Sega Master System came out. He would play games and would not trade in or sell the game which was something most kids did back in the day. Instead, Jason kept the original games throughout the years and has them currently in his personal collection. His next phase of collecting games came in 1999 when he wanted to get the older Master System games he never owned. Jason would shop at FuncoLand and other gaming stores to get as many games as he could. But the biggest era of collecting is when he attended the Classic Gaming Expo in Las Vegas and found the "Collectors Guide" book, Part 6. This book showed what games you needed to fill anyone's gaming habit, then his collection kicked into high gear.



Jason's favorite portable system is the Game Boy Advance system playing such games as Metroid and Advance Wars. His favorite video game character is Samus from Metroid. Jason's ultimate goal is to get completed sets or as close to it as he can. His biggest completed set is the Sega Master System and he is very close to having the complete NES set (box and manual). Jason takes pride in getting the complete collection of games with the systems. Box, manual and game intact and playable make the completed game collecting experience. His current complete collections of games include Action Max, Adventurevision, APF MP-1000, Arcadia 2001, Atari 7800, Channel F, Sega Master System, Microvision, Nuon, Odyssey, Odyssey 2, RCA Studio 2, Sega 32X, TelStar Arcade, Vectrex and Virtual Boy. Some of the systems he is close to completing are NES, Sega Saturn and Sega Master System.

Some of Jason's favorite games of all time are Super Metroid, Phantasy Star for the Sega Master System, Final Fantasy II for Super Nintendo, and Lunar for Sega CD. Notable mentions for Jason are The Legend of Zelda for the NES and Phantasy Star which is one of Jason's favorite genres, Role Playing Games. The systems Jason seems to play the most are the Sega Genesis and the NES. So what games are out there that Jason would love to add to his collection? Some that come to his mind are Dragon Force for the Sega Saturn, Gunstar Heroes for the Sega Genesis, Mega Man X series for the SNES and Mario Party 3 for N64, which is the only Mario Party Jason does not own in the series.

I asked Jason where he typically gets his games in his collection. He said he used to be an avid eBay shopper back in prime of eBay but now Jason attends many conventions to find hidden treasures he needs for his collection, along with some garage sales and thrift store shopping. Jason also has a YouTube channel that he displays his finds on and has a good following of gamers who let him know of finds in the area and other ways to obtain games he is looking for.



Jason has considered selling collection when retires to downsize to systems he prefers to keep and play. However, that will not happen anytime soon as he still loves the collecting experience. Kids will possibly take over the collection one day if they choose. He would love one day to start a small arcade machine collection as well as pinball if he ever got more space.

The next 20 years of gaming, Jason predicts everything going digital, which is a shame for a collector who enjoys the physical hardware. One day we may not see games in stores to purchase, everything will be downloaded to a hard drive. This will make the original games from the 1970's, 80's and 90's more valuable in the future. Jason's collection has plenty of room to grow so you will see him at events and conferences for a lot more years to come.

Take a look at Jason Knigge's YouTube channel by searching his name. He would love some more collectors to chat and trade with.



Carly A. Kocurek Interview

by Todd Friedman

Carly Kocurek is what you call a gamer for life. She is dedicated to spreading the word of gaming and the importance of it in our history and our everyday lives. She loves to give her opinion on the good and the bad of video gaming in the world today as well as the past. Carly has an M.A and Ph.D. in American Studies and a doctoral in Cultural Studies from the University of Texas at Austin. She also majored in English and History at Rice University. Carly currently is a Professor of Digital Humanities and Media Studies at the Illinois Institute of Technology. She teaches students about the history of video gaming as well as the way people use it to better their lives. Carly has written a book about the early and modern arcade days called "Coin-Operated Americans: Rebooting Boyhood at the Video Game Arcade" and it can be found on amazon.com.



Do you remember your first video game / arcade you played and what do you remember about it?

The first arcade I played at was definitely the Aladdin's Castle -- now, sadly, long closed -- at Sikes Senter in Wichita Falls. I don't remember the video games I played there, but I definitely played a lot of ticket redemption games. I still love those, actually.

What are your opinions about today's generation of video games? How do you compare them to older, classic games?

I think there are some really cool things happening in video games right now. I've just played Never Alone (E-Line Media, 2014), which I think is really amazing and innovative for how it incorporates cultural education. I assigned it to my students, and most of them liked it, too. I also keep thinking about Gone Home, which I know has gotten a lot of flak. But, that game just gutted me. I finished it, and I was just sobbing on the way to the gym.

It's such a powerful game. I think in some ways those types of games really have adapted some of the best parts of interactive fiction and point-and-click adventure games, and Never Alone is a platformer at heart. I also play a lot of mobile games, and I think some of those have a lot in common with old arcade games since they're meant to be played for short bursts of time.

What is your favorite portable gaming device?

Probably my iPad, although I use my phone more out of convenience.

Do you prefer PC or Console gaming and why?

I own several consoles, but I prefer playing on my PC. I think of console gaming as a social activity, something I do with friends or family members -- which is great. But, I play PC games alone, and sometimes it's just really great to be able to go into a whole other world alone.

What games today do you play and what are your favorite genres of games?

I love puzzle and adventure games. I get excited about figuring out how game worlds work. They don't have to be big worlds, though. One of my favorite games is The Path (Tale of Tales, 2009), which is so simple but has such a rich, eerie atmosphere. That sense of being in another world is something I really enjoy.

If you could own one arcade game or pinball game, what would it be and why?

I think I'd go for Q*bert (Gottlieb, 1982), because it's probably my favorite arcade-specific game. Tetris is maybe my all-time favorite game, but I prefer the Game Boy version of it.

Growing up were you team Sega or Nintendo and why?

Team Nintendo, because the only system from either that I ever personally owned when it was new was a Game Boy, plus several of my friends had NES and Super NES systems, so I got to play those the most. So, mostly due to circumstances.

Are video games aimed mainly at children, adolescents or adults?

I think this varies a lot with who is making the games. Shigeru Miyamoto talks a lot about trying to make games that can be enjoyed by whole families or by people outside of who we might think of as playing games. Numbers wise, most people who play games are adults, and a lot of games are aimed at adults. But, we also have great games that are for children or for a diversity of ages.

Do you believe some Video Games are too violent and lead to violence in America today?

My stock answer on this is that I think some games are bad for some people, just like some TV shows are bad for some people or some books are bad for some people. The research in this area is largely inconclusive, and there's been a lot of back and forth between games researchers and the APA about this. I think the best thing researchers can do is to complete more rigorous studies so we have better information to work from.

Do you prefer playing video games alone, against friends or online against the world and why?

I like to play alone. A really good game alone can feel like the best parts of reading a really great novel to me, and I love reading because it gives me room for exploration and reflection. I like having similar experiences in games.



Which company makes the best games and why?

I think a lot of companies make great games. I really love Tale of Tales, even though they're moving, I think, back towards interactive experiences and things that aren't quite games. But, they do such strange things. I like their work for that. I want to have experiences in games that I might not have otherwise. That doesn't mean they have to be fantasy; just that I really want to feel something.

Do you learn anything from playing video games?

Well, I've learned a lot from Never Alone, because it integrates a lot of fantastic documentary content, but I also think playing video games has helped me a lot with problem solving skills and creative thinking. There's some research showing that reading novels can make people more empathetic, and I do think we're starting to see games that similarly ask us to really imagine lives and experiences pretty far removed from our own in a way that can be transformative.

Are video games good for relieving stress?

They can be -- that's why I play Tetris, for sure. But, I think they can also be stressful. I really like the new Tomb Raider reboot, but that first game, I had to play in sort of contained increments, because it was such an anxious experience for me. Great game, but just really tense.

Do you like it when Hollywood makes a movie from the video game?

I have really enjoyed most of the Resident Evil movies, but there have definitely been some terrible video game movies. I'm hoping we'll see more great adaptations in the coming years. I think it's interesting when there are movies made from video games, even when they're bad.

Are you still involved with gaming today, and what role do you play?

I still play games, obviously, but my main role is as a historian and university professor. I wrote a book, Coin-Operated Americans, about the early video game arcade in the U.S., and I'm working on a new book now about the game designer Brenda Laurel. Jennifer deWinter and I co-edit the Influential Game Designers book series that Bloomsbury publishes. At Illinois Tech, I teach courses on game design and the history of video games. For the history class, I send students out to interview people about Chicago's coin-op history for the Chicago Coin-Op Archive.

Where do you see Video gaming in the next 20 years?

It's kind of exciting to imagine. I hope we continue to see gains in diversity of types of games. I think right now that's something that is really exciting is we're seeing all kinds of interesting uses of new technology, innovative storytelling, diverse perspectives. I also hope we see more use of accessible controllers and things. Accessibility of games for people with disabilities is a serious issue, and I hope it's one where we see some real progress in

the coming years.



See You Next Game

by *David Lundin, Jr.*

As I've read over each article and assembled each issue thus far, one thing has become clear to me - I'm really growing interested in the Commodore 64! As one of the three people on the planet who had a Tomy Tutor as their primary home computer in their youngest computing days, there's a huge part of the home computer scene that I missed out on outside of school. I dabbled with an Apple IIe and a pile of related equipment I was given for free in the very early 1990's, but left that behind rather quickly for a 386 PC clone and began the run up through that era of computing, only tasting the very waning moments of the BBS scene. However I went full-bore into the exploding era of emulation and chat rooms throughout the remainder of the 1990's, so I can't feel too left behind. While I've always played everything, there is undeniably a sweet spot of game design and hardware performance that I find appealing, although that sweet spot is on a sliding scale. It's the same reason why I enjoy the Sega SG-1000 way more than I should. The titles on C64 and the TRS-80 CoCo covered here so far are definitely on my list of games to take a look at sometime soon.

If you're on my side of the world, I hope you are having an enjoyable and relaxing summer. As this issue goes to print I'm getting psyched up for the 20th annual California Extreme arcade and pinball show, my ninth in attendance, as well as reviving my annual show report for this publication. If you happen to be attending the event and see the guy in the Star League (the one on Rylos that trains starfighters, not the StarCraft team) shirt, say hi as that would be me. "Victory or Death!" Depending on the weather there's also a small chance I may be there for a little bit in my Dig Dug suit - and yeah, that's exactly what you might think it is. It can get hot in that jumpsuit and helmet but protection from Pooka and Fygar shouldn't be taken lightly! Hope to see you there and then see you here next issue.

Thank you once again for checking out The Retrogaming Times. We'll be back on September 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!





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