

# The Retrogaming Times

THE BIMONTHLY RETROGAMING HOBBYIST NEWSLETTER

TENTH ISSUE - SEPTEMBER 2017

**TWENTY YEARS OF RETROGAMING TIMES!**

The Retrogaming Times  
- The Bimonthly Retrogaming Hobbyist Newsletter -

## The Retrogaming Times

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## Prepare to Qualify

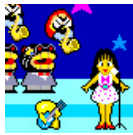
by [David Lundin, Jr.](#)

Twenty years ago this month a gentleman named Tom Zjaba published the first issue of an online newsletter he titled Retro Times. Billed as "The Newsletter for the Retro Gamer in All of Us," it featured his commentary on which system he would choose to be stranded on an island with, a rather ahead of its time musing on the caveats of shrink-wrapped video games, and how he got started selling classic video games himself. By the eighth issue his newsletter had adapted the title Retrogaming Times, and with issue ten he was joined by Fred Wagaman and Doug Saxon, beginning the tradition of the newsletter having a staff of readers-turned-writers. Things would continue to expand in this manner across seven years and 80 issues. As Retrogaming Times came to a close in 2004, a group of staff spun off a continuation of the newsletter as Retrogaming Times Monthly. Retrogaming Times Monthly would have 116 issues across ten years and continue the theme of an open newsletter than anyone could contribute to. In early 2014 Retrogaming Times Monthly itself came to a close and the staff disbanded. Two years later in 2016, we got the ball rolling again with returning former staff and a continuing commitment to the idea of an open newsletter that any retrogamer can contribute to. That brings us to today, twenty years later. What was considered retrogaming twenty years ago is generally referred to as vintage gaming or the golden age today. The time when the Atari VCS, ColecoVision, Intellivision and their contemporaries were the premier way to play games

on a home television. As time has rolled on the definition of "retrogames" may have changed and expanded but people are still enjoying those same games - the old platforms are just a little older now.

This very special twentieth anniversary commemorative issue is our biggest yet, featuring both returning staff and new contributors alike. If there was to be a theme for this issue it would be that of legacy. This begins right from the top, with Merman celebrating the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Commodore 64 and the people who not only keep the legacy of the C64 alive but also continue to add to it every day, in More C64! Donald Lee looks back on over a decade of contributing to retrogaming newsletters as well as what legacy means to him with the Apple II Incider. Nick DeMarco is a new contributor to The Retrogaming Times but the name may be familiar to Retrogaming Times Monthly readers. He joins The Retrogaming Times with two articles, one detailing his perspective on writing about retrogames, and another that approaches retrogaming history with a twist of fate in the "What If" Universe. Speaking of returning staff, Rob Luther returns after a few issues away to recall when he first began writing for a Retrogaming Times newsletter in The Retro Junkie. Retrogaming Times founder Tom Zjaba observes the differences in the retrogaming culture of today and yesteryear with a trip down memory lane that long time readers won't want to miss. After beginning the era of home video games with the Odyssey, Magnavox quickly found themselves playing catch-up to the rest of the industry. When they launched their next generation home console, the Odyssey 2, it featured a more standardized joystick, which Todd Friedman investigates in The Controller Chronicles. Arcade games at home were always big business both on classic consoles and home computers. However there were only so many licenses to go around but that didn't stop programmers from designing clones of arcade hits. In Retrogaming Feels, "Mighty" Matt D. takes a look at a pair of these reasonable facsimiles from his youth. Expanding the capabilities of stock hardware with special cartridges would become the rule rather than the exception but one device on the Atari 2600 took a novel approach to this. New contributor Eugenio "TrekMD" Angueira details this device, the Starpath Supercharger. We also have a rather eclectic mix of Famicom and NES titles as always in A Pirate's Life For Me. All that and more are ahead in this issue of The Retrogaming Times.

I want to again remind our readers if they have comments or questions about anything covered in the newsletter, or there is something they would like featured in a future issue of The Retrogaming Times, to let us know via The Retrogaming Times on Facebook at [facebook.com/theretrogamingtimes](https://www.facebook.com/theretrogamingtimes) or contact me directly at [trt@classicplastic.net](mailto:trt@classicplastic.net)! Of course submissions are also always open. If you have something ready to go, the address is the same, [trt@classicplastic.net](mailto:trt@classicplastic.net). "If there is something you want to write about, send it in!"



## Upcoming Events

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

### **Retropalooza, October 7th - 8th 2017, Arlington, Texas, USA**

A celebration of all things retro! Retropalooza was started in 2013 in Arlington, Texas by a couple of guys who enjoy all things retro; from toys to music, to video games... especially video games. As video game collectors, they spent a lot of time and money looking for retro games when they figured it would be easier to bring the games to them. Thus, Retropalooza was born.

The goal of Retropalooza is to bring nerds from all walks of life together for an enjoyable, family friendly time. Good old fashioned fun with like minded people where it will always be affordable, and forever improving.

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

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### **Retro World Expo 2017, October 14th - 15th 2017, Hartford, Connecticut, USA**

RetroWorld is a video game related expo held annually in Connecticut. It is a celebration of Classic and Retro Video Gaming that also embraces Tabletop Gaming, Modern Video Gaming, Homebrew Gaming, Anime, Action Figures, Comic Books, Cosplay, Arcade Machines, and much more.

Now in its third year, RWX is driven by Vendors, Exhibitors, Panelists, Tournaments and a robust Freeplay Arcade & Console Gaming area. RetroWorld Expo brings gamers and retro enthusiasts from all over the country (and beyond) together for an awesome event to look forward to every year.

After two successful years at the Toyota Oakdale Theater in Wallingford, CT RWX is moving to a much larger venue at the Connecticut Convention Center. With over 100,000 sqft, the convention center accommodates approx 200 exhibitors, a larger free play arcade, console freeplay and additional gaming tournaments. Additional guests and panel rooms will also be added with extended hours. With all these additions and even more planned, RWX 2017 will be the biggest yet! RWX 2017, Bigger, better, radder!

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

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### **Portland Retro Gaming Expo, October 20th - 22nd 2017, Portland, Oregon, USA**

The 2017 Portland Retro Gaming Expo will take place at the Oregon Convention Center on October 20-22, 2017.

For the second year we will be extending the expo to include Friday. The arcade will open at 3:00 PM on Friday, October 20 and remain open until 10:00 PM. There will be a limited number of exhibitors open in the arcade on Friday, but the main exhibitor hall will open on Saturday morning at 9:00 AM for pre-sale ticket holders and 10:00 AM for the general public. All panels are scheduled for Saturday and Sunday.

Retro Gaming Expo, Inc. is a Portland, Oregon-based 501(c)4 non-profit cooperative organization dedicated to creating awareness of, and appreciation for classic video and arcade games through the presentation of events and conventions that celebrate the historic contribution video games have made and continue to make in popular culture.

For more information and to purchase tickets, visit <http://www.retrogamingexpo.com/>

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### **Sac Gamers Expo, December 10th 2017, Sacramento, California, USA**

A video game convention featuring special guests, panels, work shops, vendors, food trucks, displays, artists, game developers, tournaments, console gaming room, viewing room, video game museum, video game music and so much more! Sac Gamers Expo is a family oriented event for all levels of gamers.

Online pre-registration opens October 10th!

For more information and to purchase tickets, visit <http://www.sacgamersexpo.com/>

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### **Pintastic Pinball & Game Room Expo, June 28th - 30th 2018, Sturbridge, Massachusetts, USA**

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

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

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**If there is a show or event you would like listed here, free of charge, please contact David directly at [trt@classicplastic.net](mailto:trt@classicplastic.net).** Please include a short official blurb about your event along with any relevant links or contact information and it will be published in the next issue of The Retrogaming Times. The event listing will remain posted until the issue following the event date. Big or small, we want to promote your show in our newsletter. **Check out these great events, shows, and conventions and let them know you read about them in The Retrogaming Times!**



#### **More C64! - The Commodore 64's Legacy**

*by Merman*

Looking back at the twenty years of the Retrogaming Times in all its forms, I personally have only been involved for the last four and a half years. It was Bryan Rappollo as editor who invited me to write for the project, and I suggested regular features on my favourite machine - the Commodore 64. When David Lundin Jr. revived the Times, I was happy to carry on writing my More C64 column.

And this is a milestone year for the C64, as it is thirty-five years since it was launched. That's quite a legacy. But there are many who seem to overlook the machine when it comes to the history of home computers.

The Guinness Book of World Records cites the C64 as the biggest selling computer of all time, quoting a figure of over 20 million. A more accurate figure is likely nearer to 17 million, based on evidence from former Commodore employees. But in line with Jack Tramiel's policy of "computers for the masses, not the classes" and aggressive price cuts, the C64 was one of the first machines to become truly widespread in homes. (The Apple-II was a big seller too, but the many revisions mean no model sold as many).



*Commodore founder Jack Tramiel, who passed away in 2012*

Perhaps as significant is the fact that the C64 was there as a pioneer in online services, building on the back of the VIC-20's low-cost modem. CompuServe had a large dedicated Commodore section, and Quantum Link came from the company that later became known as America Online and eventually AOL, provider of cheap Internet access for so many. (In the UK there was Compunet, a service that promoted the talents of programmers, artists and musicians, many of whom went on to create games. The demo scene also owed a large amount to its exposure through Compunet.)

My personal journey with the Commodore 64 started with a cassette deck (the official Datasette) and a couple of games (Arcadia 64 took 18 minutes to load, and 3D Time Trek was partially programmed in BASIC). Over the years I learned to program in BASIC and machine code, and then to compose my own music. I became a writer thanks to the machine, appearing in the pages of Commodore Force, and many club magazines and fanzines. I helped create the disk magazine Scene World, working with people worldwide. And in the last fifteen years I have traveled to retro events in the UK and Europe. The highlights so far would be publishing my own book on Commodore 64 games in 2008 - and the time famous programmer Jeff Minter bought me a pint of Guinness.



*The cover of my book on C64 games, "The Commodore 64 Book - 1982 to 199x"*

There are so many people still working to keep that legacy alive. The music and remix scene owes so much to Chris Abbott and <http://www.c64audio.com>. The Back in Time Live events Chris organised have seen the music of the SID chip performed live by bands, a vocal group and DJs. Jason Mackenzie began selling games through his



Psytronik label twenty-three years ago, and revived it in recent years to publish outstanding new titles through his retro store at <http://www.binaryzone.org/retrostore/>. James Monkman of <http://www.rgcd.co.uk/> is another publisher who puts so much effort into his highly polished releases on cartridge. And Protovision from Germany (<http://www.protovision-online.com/>) have a long track record of hit titles and hardware. The itch.io website even has a section dedicated to C64 homebrew.



*A tribute to music from The Last Ninja games, Ninja Musicology rocks! (left)  
RGCD published the brilliant "demake" of popular app Canabalt, coded by Paul Koller (right)*

Crowd funding has also helped the C64 scene. Kickstarter has given the chance for people to publish books. A prime example would be the amazing Commodore 64 Compendium (in two volumes) from Bitmap Books (<http://www.bitmapbooks.co.uk>). Fusion Retro Books (<http://www.fusionretrobooks.com>) have also put together successful crowd funding campaigns, including The Story of the Commodore 64 in Pixels. This included a perk in the shape of Barnsley Badger, a brand new platform game - and one I provided the music for, as well as writing for the book. Indiegogo and Megafounder have also seen the C64 love, backing albums of remixes and other projects.

On the hardware side, the biggest developments have been in storage. The SD2IEC has been developed and improved over the years, allowing the mass storage of an SD card to be accessed from the C64 (and other Commodore computers that share the IEC serial bus). Even more impressive is the 1541 Ultimate (<http://www.1541ultimate.com>), with its huge range of features and impressive level of compatibility. The C64 Reloaded and the forthcoming Ultimate-64 motherboard (which includes all the features of the Ultimate) are new ways to keep the C64 hardware running.



*The 1541 Ultimate II+ has so many amazing features*

To keep up with what is happening there are many great web pages, and even new fanzines. Both FREEZE64 (<http://www.freeze64.co.uk> - dedicated to cheats and game development) and RESET64

(<http://www.reset.cbm8bit.com> - filled with news, reviews, interviews & features) have recently taken the big step of being professionally printed.

The Commodore 64 has left a huge legacy in the games industry, with many of those brought up with it now being the people running the companies and leading the teams shaping the modern games. The fact that so much new hardware, software, books, fanzines and web pages are still being created means that legacy will only grow.



Hello again retrogaming fanatics! This month we are going to stay on the CoCo train for one more stop to look at a couple of arcade games that were pretty early releases. They did a lot in just 4K of memory, and I had a tons of fun playing these growing up. Neither of these games is an official arcade port, but I don't think you'll have much trouble guessing where they got their "inspiration" from. The Radio Shack Color Computer was always a bit of an underdog in the marketplace, so it was common to see software publishers opt to skip out on expensive licensing fees and Radio Shack themselves were no exception to this. So while other kids were defending their cities in Atari's Missile Command, I was playing:

### Polaris

This game was released in 1980 in cartridge format. Getting its name from the polaris missile, the player uses submarines rather than missile bases to defend islands instead of cities. Gameplay is very similar to Missile Command, and even though the playfield is drawn at the CoCo's lower screen resolution mode everything is well-represented. I think this came off as a better home port than Atari's own 2600 version - and that is largely due to the controls.



All three missile bases (submarines) from the arcade game are present, rather than a single base at the center of the screen as in the Atari home versions. It made sense to do this on the Atari 2600, as the controller only had one fire button. Here on the CoCo, the programmer took advantage of what was normally a liability on the machine - its free floating, non-centering analog joystick. It also only had a single fire button, and its loose non-centering stick made it a nightmare for many arcade games that used 4 or 8 way joysticks. For Polaris however, it is the perfect controller. The player simply guides the cursor with the stick, as it acts like a mouse pointer here (in 1980, I might add - long before such things were commonplace). Firing is accomplished using either the "Z" "X", and "C" keys (one is assigned to each sub) or the ";", ".", and "/" keys. By pointing with one hand and firing with the other, it made for a control setup very similar to the trak-ball and 3 fire buttons of the arcade. It actually makes things easier on the player, since the cursor can instantly be positioned where needed rather than trying to quickly muscle it around the screen with a trak-ball.



*I was a surgeon with this thing.*

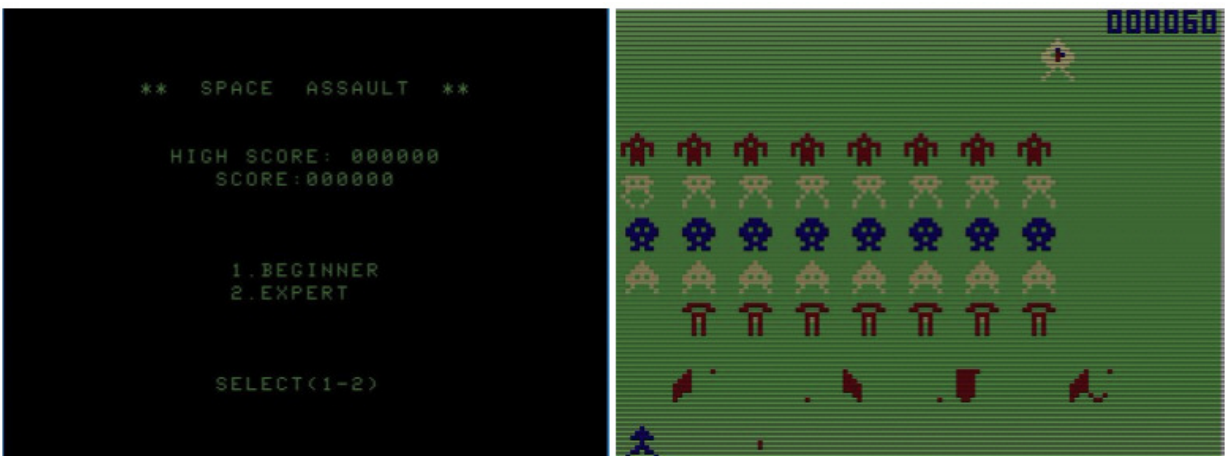
Now for the feels - this was the first game I remember getting that was "mine" - that is, I got it as a Christmas gift rather than it being one of the games my dad brought home with the computer. It is easy to understand, and I took to it immediately. I think this is the first game that I ever felt any sense of mastery of while playing. As I mentioned the control scheme allows for pinpoint precision and lightning quick response time - given some practice, of course. And practice I did! I was glued to the CoCo for many weeks with this title, and although I have no recollection of what my scores were I know I could play until enemy missiles and smart bombs would streak almost immediately towards the islands at the bottom of the screen. The CoCo can only display 4 colors at once in the graphics mode used by Polaris, but there is a larger palette to choose from so the game cycles color sets as you progress. I love the feeling of moving further along in the game - a simple color swap goes a long way toward reducing the monotony of single screen games.

I got a great sense of accomplishment from continually topping my high scores, and was ready for the world championships whenever they might be announced. Of course, that never happened. I saw news of Atari competitions and hoped for something along those lines to be announced at our local Radio Shack but they never were. So my plans to ditch school to become a professional Polaris player were not meant to be, but I'll always remember feeling like a winner anyway.

Another big arcade hit came home in the early 1980's about invaders from space - but who needs to worry about that when you need to defend yourself from a:

### Space Assault

This is another 4K cartridge game, released in 1981 by Radio Shack. It is an obvious Space Invaders clone, but again with some key differences (notably due to the analog joystick).



As expected, you start the game with a screen filled with invaders which march relentlessly towards the right, only to drop down one level when they reach the screen's edge. Your spaceship is situated at the bottom, and some barriers (which can be blasted away) are between you and the invaders. An alien mothership occasionally flies along the top of the screen, and can be blasted for extra points. The goal is to clear the screen of invaders before

they reach the bottom and wipe you out completely. If you manage to get them all, it starts anew with faster and more aggressive invaders.

So what's different? Well, the most obvious difference of course is color. The original arcade game was in black and white (with colored gels placed in front of the screen to simulate color), and the famous Atari 2600 version isn't much more colorful than that. Here we get the oddball mix of yellow, green, blue and red that is so common to the CoCo. You are stuck with these 4 colors during gameplay unless you manage to hit the mothership. On doing so, the screen will flash to 4 alternate colors, a bright white and purple mix to indicate a massive explosion. On occasion, the program will fail to revert the colors back to normal and you will be stuck in this eyestrain inducing colorset until you take out another mothership.

Another difference is speed. This game starts more quickly than Space Invaders, and in general moves at a lightning pace. Upon firing it up for the first time in more years than I'd like to admit, I immediately lost all of my spaceships in matter of seconds. Life comes at you fast here - be ready!

The most noticeable difference comes in the controls - as with Polaris, this game was meant to be played with the analog joysticks that were packed in with the computer. Also like Polaris, your ship acts a bit like a mouse cursor - immediately being positioned to wherever the joystick is pointed. A small amount of vertical movement is even allowed. The single fire button shoots missiles at the invaders, so no need for the keyboard here once gameplay has begun. Having this much control over your ship is a mixed blessing. On one hand, you can very quickly move out of the way of incoming fire. On the other, it is very easy to accidentally barrel into an enemy missile if you aren't careful.

The feels here aren't as pronounced for me as they are with Polaris, unfortunately. I wanted to share it as I have strong memories of playing this, but I think this is more of an example of a case where I would have rather had something closer to the real thing. A black and white version of the game would have offered higher resolution (the CoCo's high-res mode affords 2 colors only unless you take advantage of color artifacting - I'll spare you the details seeing as I don't fully understand them anyway), and the keyboard could have easily been used to control the ship in a manner much closer to the arcade game. I do give them credit for tailoring the game to the machine, I just think it fell a bit short. Not that it kept me from playing it, mind you. I'm sure I logged nearly as many hours on this as I did on Polaris. The game's high rate of speed was just the thing for a hyperactive Mighty Matt D back then - I took a lot of pleasure in being able to weave my spaceship in and out of the withering hail of enemy fire. The takeaway from this, I suppose, is that when you have fewer choices in gaming you appreciate what you do have all the more. It's hard to see the appeal when you have thousands of games at your fingertips, but I certainly gave this title its due when I only had it and a few others to choose from.

Want to try some CoCo fun yourself? You'd do well to start here:

[The Color Computer Archive](#)



The September 2017 issue of The Retrogaming Times marks the 20th Anniversary of the original "Retrogaming Times" magazine that was started by Tom Zjaba. Since the original Retrogaming Times debuted in 1997, the magazine has gone through many iterations.

It is funny that David asked writers to write about the **LEGACY** of Retrogaming Times. Legacy seems to have been on my mind a lot in recent years. What does legacy mean? To me, legacy simply means "what we leave behind" after we (the person) have left the world. A couple of examples follow.

I participate in a Christian basketball league out here in the Bay Area (I myself am not Christian). The league itself has been around for over 50 years. But the sponsor organization celebrated its 100th Anniversary last summer. The theme of choice for the summer basketball league? **LEGACY**. Having the sponsor organization celebrate its anniversary helped me look back at the 25+ years I've been part of the league and remember the friends and memories I've had. Thanks to my friends and the power of technology, I left behind some video (via YouTube) from several seasons (1998 / 2002) of my time in the basketball league. I've also recorded several more recent seasons (2012, 2013, 2015, 2016) and documented them for my memories.

The other theme of legacy I've been thinking about is my own personal legacy and family legacy. I'm a middle aged man who is single and not married. For many people with families, their legacy is their kids. Their kids will carry on the genes and the memories of their parents forward. For me, while I don't have kids yet, I've been focusing on preserving my personal and family legacy in different ways.

My parents are aging and like everyone else, I realize that they won't be here forever. Just like my basketball leagues, I've been preserving old memories by scanning photos and doing family videos of various things. Besides



family, I document a lot of my experiences with my friends via photos and video too. At the end of the day, when we are "gone," it's the memories that will sustain your legacy.

So what's the legacy of Retrogaming Times from my point of view?

For any magazine to last 20+ years means there is some sustained readership. Fortunately, we are a free magazine so even if our readership isn't in the millions of readers (what exactly is our readership anyway???? hahaha), it means people are interested in what is written.

Given the magazine is published on the Internet, the legacy of the magazine is preserved in all its glory. The original magazine and some of the more recent iterations are all saved for anyone to read if they are so inclined. However, there is a possibility that if any of the sites that hosted the various iterations of the magazine shut down, we may lose access to a lot of the history that predated the current iteration of the magazine. Hopefully we can find a way to preserve this for future generations.

Also, it is worth mentioning that I am happy David Lundin REVIVED the magazine after several years of hiatus. I'll spare everyone the long story, but the magazine unceremoniously shut down a few years ago, it was disappointing. I tried to revive it but there didn't seem to be much interest. So I let the magazine go thinking the end had come. When David suddenly e-mailed last year about reviving the magazine, I was 100% on board and glad to be back.

As for my personal legacy and Retrogaming Times, I actually had to look back at an article from a previous issue of Retrogaming Times Monthly:

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### **Apple II Incider by Donald Lee**

#### **What A Long Strange Trip Its Been**

Back in 1991, when I was still a junior in high school, Incider / A+ magazine celebrated its 100th issue. Back in the mid 1980's until 1989, Incider and A+ magazine were the premier general interest Apple II magazines. Due to declining interest in the Apple II line, the two magazines were merged in mid 1989. In an editorial titled "What A Long Strange Trip Its Been", editor Dan Muse looked back at the history of the magazine, some of the hijinx over the years and also noted that "100th issues only come every 8.3 years".

This month, Retrogaming Times Monthly (RTM) celebrates its 100th issue. 8.3 years ago (in June of 2004), RTM was started after the old Retrogaming Times (RT) ceased publishing after 80 issues. To celebrate, here are some thoughts on the first 100 issues:

1. My first article for RTM appeared in Issue #31 (December 2006). It's hard to believe it has almost been SIX YEARS since I started writing. If you look back at Issue #31 (and also Issue #30, especially the editorial), you will see why I started writing. The magazine had considerably thinned down and I wanted to help keep it going. Plus, in all the years of RTM, I thought it was interesting that there had NOT been a dedicated Apple II column.

As the years have progressed, I branched out and wrote some columns on the Atari 5200, Vectrex, PC Games, Mobile Games and other topics. The Apple II is my main love but I enjoy many aspects of retrogaming besides the Apple II.

2. Early on, I wrote about multiple games but it was a little later I started focusing on single titles. I also saw that many people are quite serious about their columns (points, rating systems, etc). There's really nothing wrong with that, but I wanted to share my gaming experiences of titles I played in the 1980's. However, there were a wealth of games I didn't have a ton of experience with, so I decided to just see how those games were and get my feel for them. It may be a little unconventional but I found it works better than just throwing around ratings.

3. In going through the past issues, I took note of the various editors that have graced RTM. Here are some thoughts on each:

#### **Adam King (June 2004 - October 2006)**

I had no direct experience working with Adam. I signed on to write for RTM two issues after he left. However, I will say I saw that he had lost interest in the magazine toward the end of his run. He had minimal to say for his editorials and ultimately decided to step down.

#### **Scott Jacobi (November 2006 - December 2008)**

Scott was the first editor that I worked with writing for RTM. Scott didn't do anything too fancy, he mainly maintained the magazine as it was and many people liked it that way. However, he did come up with the idea to use icons for each column, which continues to this day. I also thank Scott for being super patient as I turned in many articles right on the dot (or late) during this time. Actually, I still do that today!

The magazine had thinned down right around the time Scott took charge. Despite some months of 7 or 8 articles, Scott's last issue only had five articles. It was a tough time for the magazine.

#### **Eric Schuetz (January 2009)**

Unless you look really carefully, you won't even know Eric took over. He was announced as the new editor by Scott in the December 2008 issue and took the reins in January 2009, but then gave way to Bryan Roppolo. If I recall correctly, Eric e-mailed the staff sometime after the January issue saying that he had apparently underestimated the amount of time to put the issues together and decided to step away.

#### **Bryan Roppolo (February 2009 to October 2010, January 2011 to Present)**

Bryan took over after Eric and probably has done the most to push RTM to the future. All of us reading know that Bryan has done a lot of work:

- 1 - He changed the old HTML format to the more advanced format that we have today. This wasn't popular with everyone but many of today's readers prefer a fresher look.
- 2 - RTM was originally on Alan Hewston's website (Tom Zjaba's before that), but Bryan got RTM its own [retrogamingtimes.com](http://retrogamingtimes.com) domain.
- 3 - Bryan has a creative streak in him as he created plenty of graphics, icons and did other creative things with some of our screenshots in the articles.
- 4 - Lastly, Bryan put up the past issues of RT and RTM on the website plus an article search along with some other features.
- 5 - Under Bryan's leadership, there appears to be a renewed enthusiasm for the magazine among the writers and the readership.

#### **Chris Osborne (November 2010 to December 2010)**

While Bryan did plenty of great work, he announced in October 2010 that he wanted to step away from being the editor and focus on the creative aspects of the website. Someone named Chris Osborne offered to assist in Bryan's place. He wrote one editorial for the November 2010 issue. Based on the editorial, I recall that I had suggested RTM have a group of editors that could take over on a rotating basis. This would take the pressure off of one person having to do everything.

Beyond this, Chris wanted to change the format of the magazine and thus in December 2010, published RTM in a blog style format. However, the new format was heavily criticized. It was at this time that Chris went out of touch. Despite efforts by Bryan and me to reach Chris, we never got in touch and made plans moving forward.

#### **Donald Lee (November 2010 to Present - Rotating Editor)**

After a couple of months I took over as the sole editor for about three months in 2011. In looking over the past issues, Bryan wrote the editorial in the April 2011 issue and has continued on since then. I am noting that I am still an editor "presently" mainly because I am still listed on the website as such. In reality, Bryan has quietly done the work in putting the issues together for quite a while now. Of course, I am always ready to step in to assist.

4. For any publication to get to 100 issues, it takes dedicated readers and a dedicated staff. Even though I wasn't with RTM at the beginning, I feel I am part of a family writing for RTM. I want to thank all of our readers and the staff of RTM (past and present) that have contributed to the magazine reaching its 100th issue.

What does the future hold for RTM? The magazine will continue to chug on and celebrate the 200th issue (RT and RTM combined) in about two years. If you think about this, RT and RTM have been around for over 15 years combined.

Then, in another 8.3 years, RTM will hopefully be celebrating its own 200th issue. I will be curious to see what RTM is covering then.

*As published in Retrogaming Times Monthly, Issue 100, September 2012*

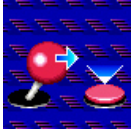
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The article above was written in celebration of Retrogaming Times Monthly's 100th issue and contains my thoughts at the time. That article explains why I got started with RTM and some other thoughts and I think all of it still applies.

My thoughts now? **IT SURPRISED ME** that I started writing for the magazine over a **DECADE** ago. I admit I don't think about the amount of time I have spent writing for the magazine. Yet when I think back, I remember the company I was working for and the job I had. I'm no longer at that company and have moved onto bigger and better things.

Yet, why I do I remain writing? It's a passion and I want to share my love of the Apple II computer and other games I've played from my youth through college and even into adulthood. I have married friends who think I should spend more time trying to focus on meeting women and find someone to marry. While I appreciate their concern, I figure that for as long as I have time, I am going to do what I love (writing, basketball, photography, etc) and let other things come to me naturally. Plus I'm not writing for the magazine for hours on end!

So congratulations to Retrogaming Times for celebrating 20 years. I hope the magazine is around for 20 more years. Or at least enough years to get to its 200th issue overall! :)



## The Controller Chronicles - Magnavox Odyssey 2 Joystick

by [Todd Friedman](#)

In 1978, Magnavox came out with their sequel to the original Magnavox Odyssey system. The Magnavox Odyssey 2 did a great job in improving what they started and making a complete gaming system as well as refining the controllers to please the consumer. Like its counterpart and trying to compete with Atari, the controller for the Odyssey 2 looked similar to the Atari 2600 joystick, with the stick in the middle and a red button on the left-hand corner. The controllers were hard wired into the machine, which made it hard to lose them. The Odyssey 2 also used its keyboard to act as controls, but the majority of the action was used with the joystick.



*Magnavox Odyssey 2 console and hardwired joysticks*

The Odyssey 2 did not have a huge game library in its life cycle, but the ones they had were pretty good. The big draw of games for the system were sports games. These games were a step up from the Atari 2600 in graphics and gameplay. Examples of these games were Computer Golf, Bowling, Basketball and Electronic Table Soccer. Each game had you control the players via the joystick and use the red button as the "Action" button. In terms of Soccer, the ball was controlled by the joystick and when you aim the ball and hit the button the ball would go in that direction to the next player or the goal. Another fun sports game is Hockey where the idea is the same as Soccer, just control the players with the stick and shoot the puck using the action button, you can also pass the puck to the next player by directing the joystick in that direction. In a different type of sport such as Alpine Skiing, the gamer would control the skier with the control stick and maneuver them between the posts or trees. This time the action button would act as the speed control of the skier. When you hold down the button the skier would go faster.

A cool non-sport game that I have played on the Odyssey 2 is Showdown in 2100 A.D. This is an old west shooter game that resembles the Atari 2600 game Combat. Instead of tanks and planes, you are two cowboys trying to out gun the other, shooting them as they hide behind trees and other obstacles. The object is to hit the opponent more than he hits you. The controls are simple yet sometimes difficult to control, moving the character with the joystick and then shooting with the red button. The direction you control the person and the gun is where the bullet will fly. You can shoot up, down and diagonally.

A classic game that the Odyssey recreated is Frogger. This game was only released in Brazil and Europe. I think most systems have some version of Frogger but the Odyssey 2 at the time was trying to make it feel like the arcade as best they could. The movement was simple, moving left, right, up or down and trying to pass the cars on freeway and jump across the logs in the water to get to the spot where you can escape at the top of the screen. The movement with the controller was much easier to use than say the Atari 2600, which could be harder to move the frog with the tight control stick. With the Odyssey 2 joystick it is easier to move Frogger and make it more like an arcade control stick. It was not perfect, but it made the game a lot of fun to play on a home console.



*Alpine Skiing (left), Showdown in 2100 A.D. (center), Frogger (right)*

Overall, this controller has a lot of positives for the time. In my opinion was a step up from the standard Atari 2600 joystick but was still just a control stick and a button. The Magnavox Odyssey 2 is still one of the most popular original home consoles of its time and there are a group of gamers who still play the system as well as design games for it.

Next issue we will explore the fan favorite system and the controller that made game play Super fun and Super entertaining - the Super Nintendo (SNES) control pad.



### **A Pirate's Life For Me - Eighth Journey** CoolBoy 198 in 1 Real Game, Games 91, 93 - 97, 151 - 153, 155 - 160

*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.



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

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. As a final note, many of the games contained on these bootleg cartridges have their title screens altered to strip away any copyright dates or the like.

Now, back on to high seas and high excitement!

Things are still a little choppy as we navigate out of the uncharted waters of the previous journey. While the games on the horizon are all official retail releases, we'll be doing a bit of island hopping to collect the titles that we plotted around when clearing out all the Nice Code Software games. The titles we have today are a very diverse mix including the series that put Nintendo on the video gaming map, the first truly outstanding shooter to appear on the Famicom, a vehicular shooter that everyone except me seems to love, two terrible games both based on extremely popular licenses, and much more. Let's set sail!

### CoolBoy Real Game 198 in 1, Games 91, 93 - 97, 151 - 153, 155 - 160:



*Spartan X and Gradius*

**091. Spartan X** - Irem's seminal side scrolling arcade beat-em-up, **Spartan X** is probably better known to most outside of Japan as Kung-Fu Master. In Japan the game was based on the 1984 Jackie Chan film "Wheels on Meals," known there as Spartan X, which was optioned as a license by Irem at some point in development. However most of the game itself, including the five-level pagoda setting and bosses, are elements incorporated from Bruce Lee's unfinished film "The Game of Death." As outside of the title, the game had no connection to the Jackie Chan film, Irem simply changed the name to Kung-Fu Master for release outside of Japan. As the game was always known as Spartan X in Japan, that title was kept for the Famicom release, while the American title was shortened to simply Kung Fu when the game appeared as one of the original NES launch titles.

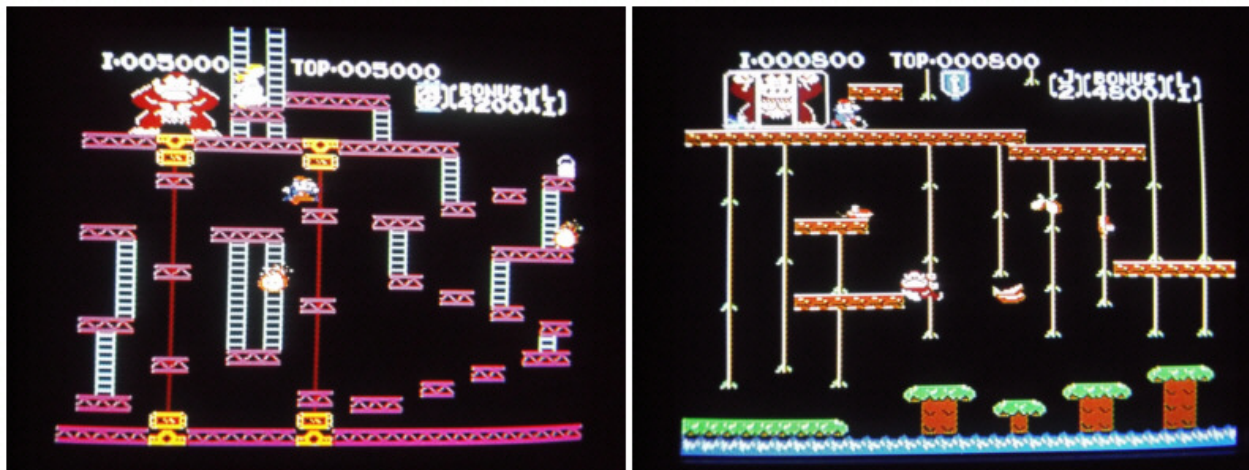
Mr. X has kidnapped Thomas' girlfriend Sylvia and he has imprisoned her on the fifth floor of a pagoda, with a different fighting style master guarding passage to the next floor. Thomas must fight his way through the hordes of henchmen and obstacles, defeat each martial arts master, and climb the pagoda to rescue Sylvia. While the objects are smaller and not as detailed as they are in the arcade original, I actually prefer the simplified colors and bolder shapes of the Famicom version. I've always considered the arcade game's color choices to be rather strange, appearing to look washed out due its light colors. Sure the perspective of the Famicom version looks flatter but everything also stands out better with the solid colored backgrounds. Spartan X controls perfectly and each of the bosses are faithful recreations, right down to the laughs they have after defeating Thomas. In fact I'd go as far as to say that audio package is better than it was in the arcade, with the loud battle cries reworked to be quieter and more appropriate. It's amazing to think the game that created the side scrolling beat-em-up genre can still be just as fun decades later but Spartan X is. The version included on the multicart has some minor issues with the status bar in terms of incorrect colors. This also causes the visual representation of the Player and Enemy health bars to drain oddly, although the game is not otherwise affected.

**093. Gradius** - Released to arcades by Konami in 1985, there are few shooters that are as influential or important as **Gradius**. Simply put, it's a master class in how to design a horizontal shooter. Visually stunning, smoothly playing, extremely challenging, great sounding, and what the game became best known for - on-the-fly customizable weapons. The player's ship, the Vic Viper, starts out relatively weak. It can fire only a single, reasonably low power offensive cannon and moves very sluggishly. In fact a stock Vic Viper is barely adept at even defending itself, much less launching an offensive through waves upon waves of enemies. The key to Gradius lies in collecting power-up capsules that are left behind when destroying key enemies. Grabbing a capsule doesn't

immediately upgrade the Vic Viper, rather it advances the power-up meter at the bottom of the screen. Each subsequent power-up capsule collected will advance the meter one space. At any time the player may activate the currently highlighted power-up, effectively cashing in the capsules collected to advance to it, resetting the meter. On the next power-up capsule collected, the meter will begin again from the left side, always remaining static.

The six power-ups on the meter are SPEEDUP, MISSILE, DOUBLE, LASER, OPTION, and "?" which acts as a defensive shield. Speed Up can be selected multiple times, increasing movement speed each time. Missile adds a secondary weapon in the form of missiles that are dropped from the bottom of the Vic Viper. If there is ground terrain at the bottom of an area, the missiles will follow along it until they hit an enemy or object. Double and Laser replace one another as the standard weapon. Double grants an additional shot at an upward angle, allowing for a wider spread of fire, but shoots at a slower rate than the standard cannon. Laser fires a powerful beam that can burn through multiple enemies at once, however it fires in a narrow path. Option spawns a small glowing indestructible orb that follows the movements of the Vic Viper and fires in tandem with it. An Option will mirror the current weapon loadout of the Vic Viper, including all weaponry and speed increases, effectively functioning as a second ship. Multiple Options can be activated at once, up to four in the arcade original and up to two on the Famicom. The "?" calls a defensive shield made of two blobs to form up in front of the Vic Viper, protecting it from forward fire. The shield can only take a few hits before it is destroyed. Keeping the power-up meter filled and ready to replenish the shield on a powered up Vic Viper is a key to doing well in Gradius, as a fresh Vic Viper always begins with the standard cannon and default slow movement speed.

Almost a full year after its arcade release, Gradius came home to the Famicom in mid 1986. By the time of its home release, the three-year-old Famicom could no longer accurately reproduce the visuals of a modern arcade game such as Gradius, as arcade technology had simply progressed too much. This meant there would have to be some compromises and downgrades. Yet unlike nearly every arcade shooter converted to the Famicom that came before Gradius, the spirit of the game remains in tact. Konami did an outstanding job in reworking virtually everything to run within the confines of stock Famicom hardware. While the graphics are noticeably downgraded compared to the arcade version, they are still very pleasing to look at and the game retains its signature art design. The levels that originally had a bit of vertical scrolling are now locked horizontally, and the core bosses at the end of each stage are noticeably smaller than they were in the arcade. Honestly the game doesn't sound that much different from the arcade original and most importantly it plays just as well. Looking at shooters on the Famicom that came before Gradius you'll find it's a wash of watered down and generally poorly programmed arcade conversions such as Argus, TwinBee, Exed Exes, Space Invaders, and 1942. Less popular conversions and original shooters like Formation Z, Field Combat, Gyrodine, and Macross don't fare much better. Compared to their contemporaries, 1985's Star Force was easily the most polished earlier Famicom shooter, but it looked like a relative antique compared to Gradius. Gradius was by far the best looking, best sounding, and best playing shooter of its time on the Famicom and is a solid home conversion of an arcade classic.



*Donkey Kong and Donkey Kong Jr.*

**094. Donkey Kong 1** - It's hard to think of a game more important to the launch of the Famicom than **Donkey Kong**. One of the three original Famicom launch titles, along with Donkey Kong Junior and Popeye, Donkey Kong set the standard for the early days of the system when it launched in 1983. Although Donkey Kong had been in arcades for a couple years by this time, it was still a very popular game, and a title Nintendo could use to display how powerful their new hardware was. Coleco used Donkey Kong to a similar effect one year earlier with their ColecoVision console, releasing a solid version of the game to promote the performance of their hardware. For its time, Donkey Kong on ColecoVision was considered spectacular, with incredible fidelity to the arcade original. Yet one year later here was Nintendo with new hardware, featuring a version of Donkey Kong that completely blew away Coleco's version, albeit only in Japan at the time. Compared to virtually every home conversion that came before it, the Famicom release was easily the gold standard in terms of presentation.

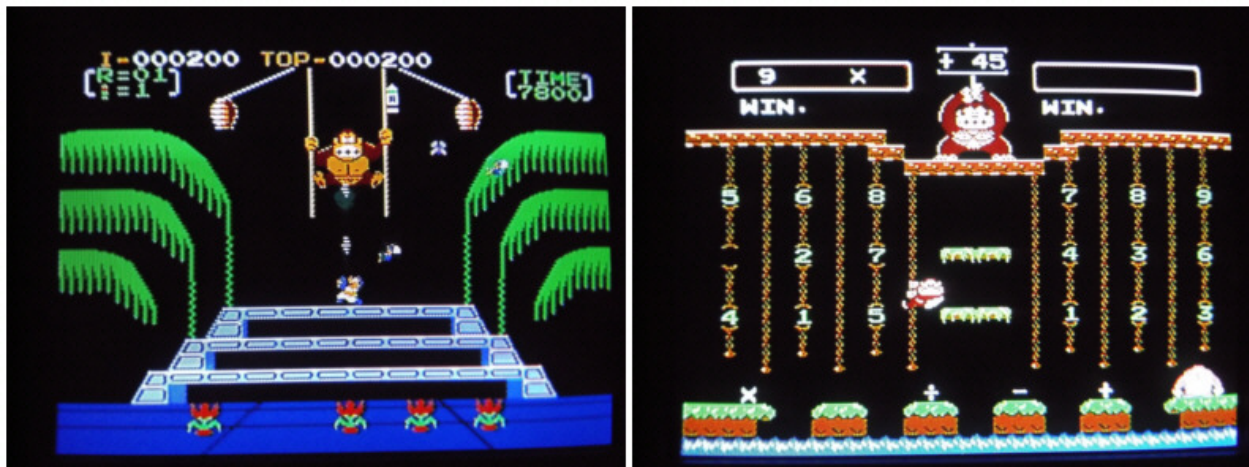
It's almost as if Nintendo were making a statement with Donkey Kong on the Famicom. Here we had an accurate looking, accurate sounding, accurate playing conversion of Donkey Kong that on first pass appears to be a



miraculous reproduction of the arcade original. Of course, that wasn't the case as the Famicom release has quite a few compromises compared to the game it was converted from. The screen dimensions are stretched and squished a little, reworking the playfields slightly, due to the differences between the horizontal display of a television and the vertical display the arcade version used. Additionally the sprites aren't quite as detailed or colorful but are still very nice representations of those in the arcade. Most notoriously however, there is an entire missing stage, the cement factory / conveyor stage. Its never quite been explained why this stage was omitted by Nintendo but I can excuse it, as this is such an early title in Nintendo's console history. Additionally the three stages loop in order, rather than the growing stage sequence that the arcade original featured, with varied progression depending on which region the arcade boardset was designed for. Even with these compromises, with this title Nintendo came out of the gate saying, "Hey, if you want to play arcade games at home, that's what the Famicom can do." Even with the included shortcomings, the game plays extremely well and was very popular when it finally did make it to the NES a couple years later. It was even re-released on the NES along with Donkey Kong Jr. as "Donkey Kong Classics" in 1988 - a full five years after its Famicom debut.

**095. Donkey Kong 2** - One year after Donkey Kong's 1981 arcade release the sequel, **Donkey Kong Jr.**, hit arcades as well. Rather than a direct sequel starring Mario, the game cast the jumping carpenter in the role of the villain, having captured Donkey Kong. Donkey Kong's son, Junior, was now who the player controlled, with the objective to rescue his papa and thwart Mario. Even with the hero and villain roles reversed, Donkey Kong Jr. was one of the first games that continued the story of a previous title by reusing known characters as well as introducing new ones. Where most sequels of the time would simply change the graphics or make the game more difficult, Donkey Kong Jr. extended the same concrete world forward while providing new challenges to the player. The objective is unchanged from the previous game, centering on reaching the top of the level. However the game mechanics and levels themselves were completely reworked to match the change in player character size, ability, and species. Although Junior is a born climber, the emphasis in Donkey Kong Jr. has more to do with horizontal movement, navigating a specific path up each stage following a switchback pattern for the most part. Junior can still run and jump but his forte is climbing up, sliding down and swinging across vines or chains. Junior's rate of climb depends on whether he is hanging onto two vines or one, climbing faster by pulling himself up alternately with two hands, while sliding down quicker when hanging onto a single vine or chain.

As with Donkey Kong, Donkey Kong Jr. is comprised of four different screens that are linked together to complete a loop of the game. Unlike the Famicom conversion of Donkey Kong, all four screens make their way onto the home hardware this time. Vertical to horizontal screen aspect differences mean the graphics are compressed down and stretched out a little but since the stages in this game have more to do with making progress horizontally, the change in perspective doesn't seem as drastic as it did with Donkey Kong. Changes in platform spacing are negligible and the basics of each stage are recreated pretty much verbatim. While the Famicom conversion falls victim to the same slight reduction in color and detail that Donkey Kong had, everything still looks very nice and is a solid representation of the arcade original, especially given its 1983 vintage on the Famicom. I also find that the Famicom version plays faster than the arcade original, making it an easier game in my opinion, even when utilizing the more difficult game mode. While not a perfectly accurate conversion, it is still very striking for its time and still entertaining to play.



*Donkey Kong 3 and Donkey Kong Jr. Math*

**096. Donkey Kong 3** - Although presented from different sides of a conflict, Donkey Kong and Donkey Kong Jr. were still both cut from the same cloth in terms of over all objectives. Heck, they even both have a fourth stage that breaks the mold of "reach the top" by having the player run around and unlock things. **Donkey Kong 3** on the other hand takes a different approach, combining the Donkey Kong character with gameplay of an earlier Nintendo arcade shooter, Space Firebird. The player takes on the role of Stanley the Bugman. Donkey Kong has invaded Stanley's greenhouse, is hanging from the rafters, and stirring up nests of insects to eat Stanley's flowers. An exterminator by trade, Stanley grabs his bug spray gun and attempts to rid his greenhouse of the attacking swarms and the giant ape.

At the start of each stage, Donkey Kong riles up a pair of hives to send insects out to capture Stanley's flowers. In addition to the shooting and diving bugs, some will crawl out from the sides of the screen and stop once shot, both blocking shots and creating an obstacle for Stanley to avoid on the platforms. Donkey Kong himself isn't much of a threat with the exception of the few stages where he throws down coconuts. However if Donkey Kong is allowed to get to the bottom of his poles, he will jump to the ground and cost Stanley a life. There are two ways to complete each level: either by killing all the insects or forcing Donkey Kong to the top of the rafters with shots from the spray gun. To say it's a radical departure from the previous two games in the Donkey Kong series is an understatement. The game isn't bad, it's just very different from those two other titles. As with the conversions of the other Donkey Kong games, there is a degree of detail and color lost in the translation to the Famicom hardware but all objects and objectives are faithfully represented. Also following suit with the other Donkey Kong Famicom conversions, the game plays very smoothly and is a very solid home version of yet another early arcade game from Nintendo.

**097. Donkey Kong 4** - The black sheep (or is that pink ape) of the Donkey Kong family, **Donkey Kong Jr. Math** is a reasonably hard to find game that I don't think anyone would really want to play these days. However at the time of its release, it was common practice to graft an educational title atop assets that were otherwise taken from a hit game. This allowed more games to be put on the shelf while at the same time tapping into the edutainment market, all with a minimal amount of development cost. As for Donkey Kong Junior's outing, well it's about as light on effort as one could possibly imagine. The game either seems rushed or unfinished with two different game modes that work the same yet play completely different. The first, Calculate, has both an A and B mode as was standard of Nintendo's early Famicom titles. Although a single player can play it, Calculate really is dependent on having an opponent to squeeze any amount of fun out of the mode. Player one controls Donkey Kong Junior while player two controls... some pink version of Donkey Kong Junior? It's the same exact sprite otherwise, right down to the "J" emblazoned on his shirt. Regardless, Donkey Kong stands at the top of the screen and holds up a signboard representing a numerical value. It is the objective of the younger Kong... twins, to traverse the chains hanging throughout the stage to build an equation that will total the value Donkey Kong is holding overhead. Equations are built by grabbing numbers off the chains, then modifying them using the mathematic operations at the bottom of the screen. The first Kong who successfully matches Donkey Kong's value wins the round. With a single player, Calculate is nothing but basic arithmetic problems played out in slow fashion. A second player makes the game much more tolerable, opening up not only a race to grab numbers and operations, but a degree of strategy in what the quickest way to reach a total is. The B mode for Calculate increases the values Donkey Kong requests, in addition for asking for negative values, which doesn't add much to the game but does make it a little trickier.

Operation Exercise is the mode here that nearly everyone seems to forget about, which is understandable because it's even less of a game than the Calculate modes. Here Junior can select from one of nine different types of mathematical exercise. Taking a cue from the final stage of Donkey Kong Jr., this mode features blue chains and girders as well as the flying Nitpicker enemies, along with math problems. A problem to solve is presented in the upper right corner of the screen, with a chain hanging beneath each space in the equation. Junior must set the value of each portion of the solution by climbing up and down the chain beneath it. Moving to an adjacent chain sets the previous part of the answer in place, making the whole thing play like a standard arithmetic exercise with really awkward and touchy controls. This actually wouldn't be the only Nintendo developed educational title for the Famicom, as in Japan assets from their Popeye game were used to create an English vocabulary themed game for Japanese children. Obviously that title wasn't released on the NES and a third game, Donkey Kong Music Education, has been seen in prototype screen shots but has never been confirmed to exist.



*P.O.W.: Prisoners of War and The Jungle Book*

**151. P.O.W** - I'm going to stand on my own here but **P.O.W.: Prisoners of War** is a game I like. It seems nearly everyone else on the planet hates this game, both this NES release as well as the arcade original. Sure it doesn't have much variety and moves at a reasonably slow pace compared to Konami and Capcom's top tier beat-em-ups, but it also predates them! P.O.W. was released to arcades in 1988, a year before both Konami's Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles and Capcom's Final Fight. On its own merits P.O.W. is an extremely competent beat-em-up that



simply happened to fall victim to the impending modern beat-em-up revolution, which even Technos' Double Dragon series suffered at the hands of. The objective is simple: fight your way out of an enemy prison camp on a mission to destroy the enemy's main base, beating up everyone who stands in your way. In addition to using your fists and legs, weapons such as knives and guns can be picked up from defeated enemies and you can also perform a jumping kick and a back-punch.

P.O.W. looks great with detailed enemies, weapons and environments. The backgrounds in particular are very nicely drawn, some of the nicest background work done on an NES beat-em-up. The game sounds great too, with an assortment of memorable tunes that fit the "behind enemy lines" feel of the game, easily some of the best music SNK published on the hardware. Sound effects are the standard crunches during fights and swooshes as items and bodies go flying through the air. While these are nothing spectacular, they also do not sound out of place. As a whole the game plays well and is professionally designed. Yeah, the jumping kick looks pretty ridiculous but that's how it was in the arcade version so I can't fault that here either. P.O.W. can be a rather difficult game however, especially considering that the home conversion is single player only. If you like the genre and you're up for a challenge, this is still one I would recommend giving a try - you could certainly do a lot worse.

**152. Jungle Book** - One of the very last NES games ever released, **The Jungle Book** is based on the 1967 Disney animated film of the same name. In this side scrolling platformer the player is tasked with guiding Mowgli, a young boy who was raised by wolves, to traverse the jungle and collect gems. Once the required number of gems in a stage is collected it will end and Mowgli will move onto the next. I've never been a very big fan of platform games built around searching out objects hidden in obscure places as the primary goal, and The Jungle Book is no exception. Running around and investigating every nook and cranny for the little gems becomes boring rather fast, as you continuously cover the same ground again and again looking for an inch of the screen you may have missed. In fact it is possible to maroon yourself on the very first stage, as Mowgli can swing over a large pit to an area he can't get back from, leaving a jump to his death and a subsequent restart from an earlier checkpoint as the only way out. The kicker is this area has a checkpoint flower that once activated forces Mowgli to constantly restart in the isolated area. If more gems are still required to complete the level, the game must be reset. To add a little variety to the tedious gem collecting gameplay, boss encounters are sprinkled throughout, however these stages still require collection of a prerequisite number of gems.

Mowgli's movement feels rather stiff and unresponsive, especially when attempting to get a running start or jump up vertically. This is compounded with very poor collision detection, both with enemies as well as platforms. It's extremely frustrating, as the stage layouts often require precise platforming. Something as simple as grabbing and swinging from vines is plagued with random collision detection problems, leading to unfair deaths. While Mowgli is well animated, he's not very detailed and ultimately looks unimpressive, as do most of the graphics. Thankfully the music is good and there's a rather detailed tutorial that plays out like an attract mode, illustrating the objectives and controls complete with on-screen explanation. In some ways such as this there seems to be a genuine effort put toward making this game a quality production but ultimately The Jungle Book simply doesn't play well and isn't fun. Eurocom never really developed a game worthy of much attention and spent most of their years classified as yet another British contract developer, a cheap gun for hire that generally developed games of questionable quality, based on licensed properties.



*Abarenbou Tengu and Tom & Jerry (and Tuffy)*

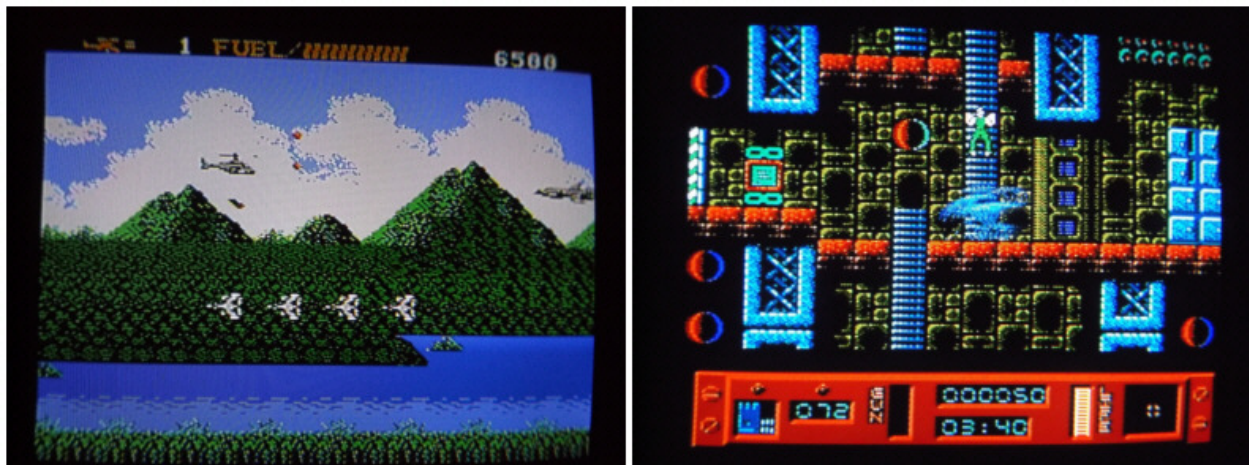
**153. Abarenb** - Easily the strangest game on this multicart, **Abarenbou Tengu** is a shooter about an evil alien entity called Eva enslaving the population of the United States. Rather than a heavily armed fighter plane or spacecraft, a giant tengu mask arrives from Japan to save the citizens. A tengu is a creature of legend from Japanese folklore, generally depicted in modern times as having a red face and long nose. While tengu are common in Japanese culture, including video games and popular media, basing a shooter around a tengu mask saving the United States from an alien attack is just as insane as it sounds. Compared to most other horizontally scrolling shooters, Abarenbou Tengu appears to be total chaos right from the beginning. The majority of the environment in each stage is destructible, with buildings erupting into flaming rubble when shot. As the

environments are destroyed, civilians will be freed and call out to be rescued. Collecting five civilians will grant the tengu a twin shot and collecting ten will award a triple shot. Both the tengu and enemies fire massive volleys, leading to shots spreading out in seemingly every conceivable direction.

The biggest danger usually lies in the laser beams that will flare up in the background in most areas. Coming into contact with these will shave a tremendous amount of health off of the tengu. In fact although the tengu can absorb a lot of shots, extra care has to be taken to avoid colliding with objects or enemies. Many bosses will cause instant death if come into contact with and generally getting caught in their primary weapon will do the same. Honestly background hazards prove to be the most deadly obstacle and throw a lot of unpredictability into an already intense game. Abarenbou Tengu is a wash with questionable design choices such as this and coupled with how frantic the game is right from the start, it developed a bit of a reputation in Japan as a bad game. As with many other games that gain this distinction in Japan, it eventually garnered a bit of a cult following due to just how crazy the gameplay is. One may assume this is a title that would have zero chance of ever being released in the United States, however the game was localized as *Zombie Nation* and released on the NES about a month after it appeared on the Famicom. As a tengu wouldn't be as familiar to American gamers, the player character was changed to that of a disembodied samurai head, which almost seems even stranger by comparison. Additionally the first stage boss, a fake Statue of Liberty, was given a makeover to look more like Medusa. Aside from that the game is pretty much the same, just as obscure, and just as freaking weird.

**155. Tom And Jerry** - When I was a kid old Tom & Jerry reruns were my favorite cartoons, and while Voltron and The Transformers grabbed a lot of my attention, they remained my favorite for many years. Of course the video game license for an old property such as this tends to find its way into the hands of companies who should have stayed far away from the NES, in this case Software Creations and Hi Tech Expressions. While Hi Tech Expressions never published a worthwhile title in their history, Software Creations at least had a couple passable titles on the NES, with *Treasure Master* being the most interesting in my opinion. Unfortunately while **Tom & Jerry (and Tuffy)** is a technically functional and reasonably proficient game, it's just not very fun to play. For this adventure of cat and mouse, Tom has mouse-napped Jerry's nephew Tuffy and stashed him in the attic, prompting Jerry to set out and rescue him. At the beginning of the game the player is cautioned to "watch out for hidden dangers," so I suppose I can't fault Software Creations for more or less admitting to the cheap enemy and hazard placement contained within.

Jerry himself looks good, is nicely animated and controls reasonably well. However his collision detection seems a little off, feeling like the boundaries around his sprite are a little sticky when it comes to meeting with platforms or climbable objects. Enemy movement is a little odd and unpredictable, leading to some cheap deaths that are compounded by the very short and low arc that Jerry's standard attack follows. I've also seen enemies come off of their paths many times, such as spiders moving away from webs, adding more seemingly unintended unpredictability to their movement. Level design also follows the messy disorganized maze layout that so many British developers seem to love to program into platformers on the NES. Given that the perspective of this game is that of a tiny mouse it makes a little more sense here, but I find that there's still way too much aimless wandering around. The lack of direction is only made worse by cheaply placed hazards and traps that are designed to punish minor mistakes or blind jumps. It also doesn't excuse how unfinished some of the tile work looks, with large square borders around curved objects that don't fit smoothly into some backgrounds. While I'm not the biggest fan of composers Tim and Geoff Follin, the music here is at least somewhat in the style of the cartoon. However it is extremely repetitive and grows annoying rather quickly. The entire game comes across as hastily conceived and cheaply made, which of course it obviously was. I can't fault contract developers such as Software Creations for taking on licensed game development, they have to eat, but it leaves little reason to play games such as this beyond curiosity.



*Airwolf and Alien 3*

**156. Air Wolf** - While we may think of licensed games generally featuring movies or Japanese animated properties, there were also quite a few games based upon contemporary American television. **Airwolf** is one such property, a

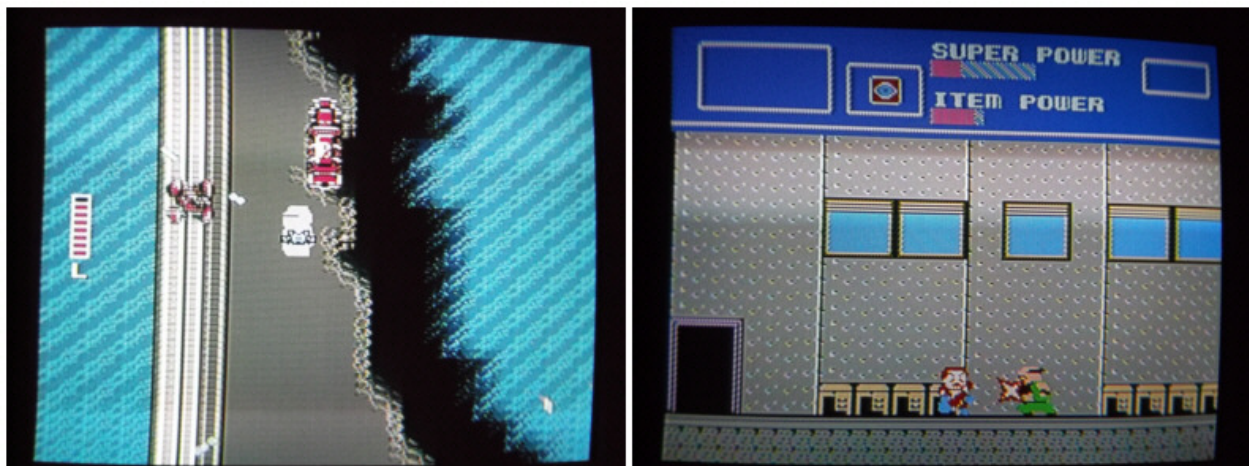


1984 television series about a high-tech military helicopter and the international espionage that went along with it. There were tons of Airwolf games, including one developed by Beam Software and published by Acclaim for the NES. With those two names on the box you can bet that game was terrible, however the game included on the multicart is actually the Japanese release of Airwolf, a completely different game entirely. In fact the Famicom version of Airwolf is based on the even more obscure arcade game developed by Kyugo Boueki. Airwolf on the Famicom plays like a conventional horizontal shooter with a customizable air and ground weapon loadout. Interestingly the B Button fires both weapons in tandem, while the A Button is used for a burst in speed. Adding a bit of realism, the helicopter pitches up when moving to the back to the left and pitches the nose up or down when climbing or descending while moving to the forward to right. This doesn't affect how the weapons fire however it can be used to weave through enemy projectiles. At the end of a stage the view moves into a first-person perspective as the mission objective is confronted head on, which does add a bit of variety to an otherwise standard shooter, although the entire package is nothing special.

My biggest gripe with Airwolf has always been the poor performance of the frame rate. There's simply way too much stuff on the screen compared to the abilities of whoever wrote the program to keep it moving smoothly. This leads to the game constantly slowing down and speeding up, making dodging the thousands of tiny enemies, as well as their hard to see projectiles, a complete chore. Additionally there's a lot of flicker and this is compounded with the frame rate issues, making the game a wash of cheap deaths. Using the A Button to speed up makes this problem even worse, getting to the point where it seems like the game is on the edge of crashing, as the visuals become a flickering mess. The first person sequences at the end of a level are nice but they play even slower than the standard shooter areas. The music is also pretty poor, sounding more like something in line with the worst the Sega Master System had on offer at the time, rather than the Famicom. Airwolf isn't a terrible game - it's simply a standard shooter with frustrating technical challenges that prevent it from being as enjoyable as it could be.

**157. Alien 3** - Ah, the LJN logo followed by the Probe Software logo, could there be anything you'd want to see less at the beginning of a Nintendo game? In 1992 the film **Alien 3** was released to heavy hype and mixed opinion, so of course there had to be some video games to tie into the revival of the franchise. As was expected with film tie-in games, they were created on thin budgets by less than stellar developers, generally resulting in very mediocre games. Alien 3 is no exception, with Probe squeezing as much shelf space out of the license as possible with versions for the NES, Amiga, Commodore 64, Master System, Game Gear, and Sega Genesis. Unfortunately the NES release is the worst looking of the bunch with muddy backgrounds and poor animation that seems to cycle just a little too fast. The player controls Ellen Ripley with the aim to rescue all the prisoners on a level and then find the exit before the time limit expires. The concept is a bit like a mix between Alien Syndrome and Contra but it plays far worse than either of those games. Ripley can find an arsenal of weapons that include a pulse rifle, grenades, and a flamethrower. Ammunition is rather limited so firing in short bursts and using the right weapon at the right time is an important strategy.

My biggest gripe with Alien 3 is the terribly inconsistent scrolling that tends to pull Ripley into Xenomorph attacks. Generally the screen scrolls with Ripley, however it requires her to be more than two-thirds across the screen to get it to move with her, making it hard to react to enemies or hazards. Other times the scrolling seems to "snap" onto an area, moving automatically to frame part of the stage in a specific way. Honestly I think this auto scrolling / snapping issue is tied into a post-stage event where the location of each remaining prisoner is shown. If the timer runs out without all the prisoners being rescued, the game's camera essentially scrolls around the stage, showing where each remaining captive prisoner was located. The movement here seems to be directly related to the areas in which the game exhibits odd automatic scrolling behavior. The only thing that cripples this game more than the scrolling is the time limit, which essentially ruins any enjoyment that one may be able to force out of this title. The time limits are ridiculously strict, to the point where a wrong turn often ends in failing the mission. The time limit doesn't add anything to the game other than frustration, as without it you could take your time to explore the corridors, approach enemies slowly and carefully, and maybe have the game create a little ambience. However due to the asinine time restrictions, the order of the day is failure.



*Super Spy Hunter and Superman*

**158. Super Spy Hunter** - Bally Midway released Spy Hunter to arcades in 1983 where it became a smash hit. A love letter to the gadget-laden autos of James Bond, Spy Hunter dropped the player behind the wheel of the Interceptor, a high-tech spy car. By driving into a Weapons Van, the Interceptor could be outfitted with a smokescreen, oil slick, and surface-to-air missiles in addition to the standard complement of machine guns. In 1987 Sunsoft converted Spy Hunter for the NES as their first USA specific release. Although the game was pretty old at the time, I can still remember it being quite popular in local arcades and the NES version was a frequent rental among my friends and I. Four years later in 1991 Sunsoft created Battle Formula, a Famicom game very much inspired by Spy Hunter. It was so much like Spy Hunter in fact that Sunsoft reached a licensing agreement with Bally Midway to re-title the game as **Super Spy Hunter** and release it on the NES. Battle Formula is one of the most difficult to find and expensive standard releases for the Famicom, while Super Spy Hunter is reasonably uncommon and can generally be purchased for around thirty dollars at the time of this writing.

It seems Super Spy Hunter is loved universally by almost everyone who is familiar with the game. I however have never cared a whole lot for it because it doesn't feel like Spy Hunter to me. Sure it's a vehicular shooter with vertically scrolling roadways and an arsenal of weapons to collect but the pace feels completely different. The main weaponry gimmick is a pair of roof-mounted guns that can be swung anywhere from directly forward to directly behind, in addition to a standard fixed forward-firing gun. Instead of pulling into a Weapons Van, the upgrade vans are shot until they drop a rotating icon that denotes what power-up will be granted once collected. These can do everything from enhancing the power of your guns, completely upgrading the entire vehicle, adding spikes to the tires or increasing the length of your life bar. Yes, in Super Spy Hunter there is a life bar that absorbs gunfire, however a direct collision will still destroy the car immediately. If this brings to mind a conventional shooter more than a game based on Spy Hunter, you would be correct and this is where my problem with the game lies. Super Spy Hunter feels less like a game about driving and more like an odd ground-based take on something like Star Soldier. The game looks good and has a lot of variety, as well as the typical assortment of awesome Sunsoft music. There are some parts I really like, such as driving across a suspension bridge and having it sway due to high winds, yet the gameplay just never feels quite right. I do seem to be clearly in the minority when it comes to my opinion on this one however, so I would recommend giving it a try if you're a fan of Spy Hunter or shooters in general.

**159. Superman** - Very loosely based on events from the first two contemporary Superman films, from 1978 and 1980 respectively, **Superman** brings America's favorite superhero home to Japan's most popular game machine. Rather than create a platform game or a beat-em-up, Kemco took a unique approach with Superman and essentially created an open-world title. While everything is still interpreted from the perspective of a side-scrolling action game, locations are broken up along different streets with subway lines linking them to one another. There are different ways to get from one area to another, including using Superman's ability to fly, and nearly every building can be entered. While this may sound like it would give the player a lot to do, the biggest failing with Superman is how poorly the game plays. Controls are fidgety at best and unresponsive at worst, with a jump that clears almost the entire screen vertically and a standard attack that looks and feels as if it were unfinished. Superman has a host of super powers, which the game refers to as "item powers." These include heat vision, ice breath, the ability to fly from location to location and others but none of them are really any fun to use and none of them do much to make the game feel any less generic.

It may seem that Kemco were going for a cute or super-deformed look for the characters in this game but anyone who has played a lot of bad licensed Famicom titles knows better. Superman is simply a terrible game with little effort put into its design and even less put into programming and presentation. While this is common for a Famicom game based on a licensed property, the difference here is that its been served up to the North American market for a change. Someone at Kemco must have had some reservations about the quality of the game, as Superman's sprite actually looks better in the NES release than he did on the Famicom, if you can imagine that. However the NES localization had the John Williams' Superman theme at the title screen removed and replaced with music from another Kemco game, Indora no Hikari, a rather standard Dragon Quest clone. The version included on the multicart is the NES release but that doesn't make it any more enjoyable as dialogue in the game is rather minimal.

It's not fun - this game is simply not fun, from the moment it begins until it is inevitably turned off in favor of playing something better. Now I can only imagine how difficult it is to make a compelling and enjoyable game where the player controls a character that is more or less indestructible but this surely isn't the way to do it. This license is snake oil, it has been like that since the beginning, and Kemco's Superman is no exception. One thing I have to make note of is how the software pirates scrambled the copyright screen for this game. Rather than blank it out they simply rewrote it, giving it a copyright date of 1999 to "FFGIRL" and stating it is "LICENSED BY SUPERMAN OF CHINESE." Is there any question why I love these cartridges?





*Sword Master and Q\*bert*

**160. Sword Master** - A rare and obscure one developed by Athena, **Sword Master** is a hack and slash with a difference, that difference being an emphasis on strategy. **Sword Master** opens with some pretty metal intro music and an opening cutscene that makes it look like a medieval *Ninja Gaiden*. Although I've seen **Sword Master**'s gameplay compared to *Zelda II: The Adventure of Link*, I've always thought the game felt more like a sword and sorcery take on Jordan Mechner's classic 1984 Apple II game *Karateka*. As your knight progresses across the land, very minor enemies will stream toward him and attack. These can generally be dispatched with a single swing of the sword and feel a bit like the underlings in Irem's *Kung-Fu Master*. As enemies are defeated, an experience meter will fill, and filling it completely will extend the player's life bar.

Generally your knight will always face to the right side of the screen, which plays into **Sword Master**'s main feature, its combat. The type of sword swing executed depends on stance, whether or not you are jumping, and direction pressed on the control pad. Additionally pressing down will defend low with the shield, while pressing up will defend high. What gives **Sword Master** its spice are the enemy encounters outside of the very minor foes. These each take on the feel of a mini boss battle and are what remind me most of *Karateka*. When one of these battles begins, the experience meter is replaced with the life bar of the enemy and the screen stops scrolling. Quick reflexes and finesse are required, as the techniques to counter each new enemy type must be revealed through experimentation. These battles are difficult, fast-paced, and intense. As these battles make up the majority of the game, the player must learn to minimize damage while defeating each enemy. Getting through a confrontation by the skin of your teeth will not get you very far in **Sword Master**, as there's always another just over the horizon, usually with a more powerful foe. As different techniques become second nature, mastery of combat in **Sword Master** becomes an extremely satisfying experience.

**Sword Master** is a beautiful game, easily one of the most striking games on the hardware and reminds me a lot of *Castlevania II*, except with bigger sprites and more detailed backgrounds. The music is superb, extremely moody, and right up there with the best tunes that Konami and Capcom were cranking out at the time. Upon completion of the second stage your knight is granted the ability to transform into a wizard. The wizard can fire an upgradeable assortment of energy projectiles but each one he fires drains the experience meter, an interesting alternate utilization of that mechanic. Now a trick to getting around the perceived extreme difficulty that many will experience with **Sword Master** has to do with how life bar extensions are granted. While the game has a limited amount of continues life bar extensions are permanent. That means even if you use up all of your continues and begin again from scratch, any earned life bar extensions will remain in place. While not the most amazing title in the NES or Famicom library, it is a high quality yet seldom talked about game with a very technical approach to sword combat. Those who like games such as *Kung-Fu Master*, *Karateka*, *Great Swordsman*, and *Karate Champ* should give this one a try.

#### **CoolBoy 400 in 1 Real Game, Spotlight Selection:**

**033. Qbert** - Originally released to arcades in 1982 by Gottlieb, **Q\*bert** is a game unlike pretty much anything that has come before or sense. Defying genres it could be described as a combination of an action game, a puzzle game, and a maze game. Players guide Q\*bert, an armless orange creature with a long nose, atop a pyramid made of twenty-eight cubes. Each time Q\*bert lands on a cube its top surface will change color, with the goal to change the surface color of every cube on the pyramid to a target color. At first this is achieved simply by having Q\*bert stand on each cube once. After clearing a couple pyramids the cubes will require being traveled over a second time, first changing to an incorrect color and then to the target color. Later stages feature cubes that will cycle through multiple colors each time they are stepped on rather than remaining locked to the target color once set, adding an additional level of strategy to Q\*bert's movements. As the pyramid is viewed from an isometric perspective, Q\*bert can only jump diagonally and is controlled with a diagonally mounted joystick, an interesting and unique concept for the time.

In addition to simply covering ground on the pyramid Q\*bert must avoid red balls that bounce down the pyramid from the top, Ugg and Wrongway - creatures that hop along the sides of the cubes, Slick and Sam - creatures that descend down the pyramid and revert the surface of any cube they land on to its previous color, and Coily - a snake that bounces down the pyramid as a purple ball before transforming at the bottom and giving Q\*bert chase. Collisions with red balls, Ugg, Wrongway or Coily will result in death. Collecting Slick or Sam will cause them to disappear. Additionally green balls will bounce down the pyramid from time to time and collecting one of these will temporarily freeze all enemies for a short while, giving Q\*bert a brief moment to regain his bearings. Upon a fatal collision with an enemy, Q\*bert will swear in random incoherent electronic gibberish along with "@!#?@!" appearing in a speech balloon over him. While leaping off the pyramid also results in death, Q\*bert can be directed to hop on floating discs that appear to the sides of the pyramid. Landing on one of these will carry Q\*bert to the top of the pyramid, and this maneuver can be used to trick Coily into following Q\*bert off the pyramid to his death while Q\*bert safely rides away on the disc. Few video games of the era had as much character and personality as Q\*bert and the game was tremendously popular, leading to massive quantities of Q\*bert merchandise, as well as home conversions for nearly every home platform of the time.

Seven years later in 1989, Konami released an NES version of Q\*bert exclusively to the American market under their Ultra Games label. Classic arcade games on the NES were always a reasonably popular sub genre and I'm assuming that was what Konami had in mind when deciding to dust off Q\*bert for yet another home release. Compared to the conversions that came before, the NES release is easily the best looking and playing of the bunch. While not an absolutely perfect recreation, the full pyramid is accurately drawn with a correct perspective. The enemies and objects are good representations of the original sprite work and Q\*bert himself looks pretty good. Game mechanics are also nicely reproduced and while the sound obviously cannot match the speech synthesizer used in the arcade original, the audio package is quite acceptable. Interestingly the controls can actually be configured to suit what is most comfortable for the player, displaying a level of attention to detail normally not seen in an arcade conversion of the time. Personally I prefer to simply hold the NES control pad at a 45 degree angle to mirror the diagonal orientation of the arcade joystick. Q\*bert controls very nicely on the NES and the over all package culminates in a very solid home conversion of one of the most popular arcade games of the early 1980's. My favorite home version of Q\*bert is the Parker Brothers VFD mini arcade tabletop but the NES conversion is a very close second and well worth playing for fans of the arcade original.

Next time we'll settle back into sequential numbering as we continue to sail down the backside of the game list at flank speed. The next fifteen games will feature two basketball titles, the game many consider the most technically advanced and impressive shooter ever released on the Famicom, and a completely different shooter that is my personal pick for the greatest Famicom / NES shooter of all time. We'll also have the European release of a cool little platformer, the sequel to a game we looked at this issue, a few awesome high quality action platformers, a game based on a Japanese animated property that is surprisingly good and lots more. See you then!



## The "What If Universe" - E.T.

by [Nick DeMarco](#)

So when you're me and you're starting over with something you once loved you can't throw the same stuff at it, at least as first, and just hope it sticks and resonates with people. True writers must evolve and change it up from time to time. I have always been a big fan of the idea of the "What ifs" within something I am passionate about, whether that be history, music, sports, and yes, especially within the realm of video games, so with that I created this, "The What If Universe." Here we are going to take pieces of gaming history and spin it on its head, hopefully making us either pine for or dread what could have been. Some of these may feel pretty realistic, and some are going to be so bombastic you're going to wonder just what's going on upstairs. Either way, I hope you're all just as excited as I am for this, or at least really good at faking it.

Welcome to the "What If Universe."

We begin today with an age-old question tied into a bold statement so many gamers make. I lose count how many times on a weekly basis someone comes into the store, sees my copy of E.T. for the Atari 2600, there with its instruction booklet that is as useful as a single napkin in a buffalo wing eating contest and say, without hesitation, "Man, that's the worst game ever!"



*E.T. gets bad rap, hits critics with phone - image courtesy atariage.com*

I wholeheartedly disagree. I don't even feel that is the worst game on the Atari 2600. My constant argument is that you cannot blame Howard Scott Warsaw, creator of E.T. and games far more successful like Yars' Revenge, for making something subpar on a highly limited time line and Stephen Spielberg breathing down his neck to have this done by the holiday season as provision of signing over the license to Atari. As "Atari: Game Over" the documentary on the urban legend of all these E.T. copies being buried in a New Mexico illustrates, yet cannot be stressed enough, you feel bad for Howard.

However, I personally do not feel bad for whoever gave the green light to the Atari 2600's putrid adaptation of Pac-Man, which was already an institution by this point, and in my view, is a far bigger embarrassment than E.T. Messing up Pac-Man, to me, is like knowing the ingredients to Coke but only making brown, tasteless seltzer. It doesn't compute to me, and I am far more respecting of a new concept in gaming, or a new take on something that fails than something already established in blue prints that are then strewn all over a busy highway and run over by no less than 50 big rig trucks.

And yet, a far greater group of gamers gave Atari a pass on Pac-Man, while wanting to roast Howard, E.T. and the creator of cartridge plastic at the stake. As I watched this documentary and felt some deep pride to people giving some respect and laying off Howard after all those years, it begs the question, dear "What If Universe" explorers... What if E.T. wasn't a bust? What if countless customers didn't come into my store, pointing and laughing at my copy of the game with manual in my center case? Well, to figure that out, we need to remind ourselves what happened...

### **The Abridged (And Gamer Tampered) Synopsis**

Prior to the documentary, most younger gamers had no idea who Howard Scott Warsaw was or why this whole piece of video game history even happened. In short, Warsaw was a programming wiz, a prodigy, a guy who could take a basic idea and expand upon it in a way that brought fun to the gamer and money in Atari's pocket. If you need further proof of this, look no further than one of the more popular games on the console in Yars' Revenge, which is why to consider Warsaw a hack is as asinine a statement now as it was then. When Atari brokered the deal with Spielberg for the E.T. license it was done so with the desire for the game to be out by the holiday season. In these days, games took up to 6 months to be programmed and released, and Warsaw was taxed with doing it in far less time. Some felt Warsaw believed his own hype, but in reality Howard was simply a young programmer hungry for the next challenge.





Sadly, the gaming industry and gamers nationwide didn't care or even know what Warsaw was taxed with having to do, bringing work home with him and doing his absolute best to give gamers a new experience with a hit movie license. E.T. was doomed, and many insiders and gamers alike would credit E.T. with the market crash of 1983 that nearly ended what Nintendo so bravely resurrected.

### Phoning Home For Success

While this scribe still defends E.T. on the daily at his shop as 2nd or even 3rd in the list of worst Atari 2600 games, and even further down on the list overall in gaming, what if there was definitive proof? What if Howard Scott Warsaw was given a full 6 months to make the game deep down he wanted to make, what he had all the skills to do? What would have happened to the video game market? Well, here's one writer and fellow gamer's belief.

### Welcome To The New Synopsis:

The market crash still would have occurred. In the same way that E.T. was not the only piece of the domino effect, it would take more than our alien friend to save it.

Howard Scott Warsaw would have utilized the same dual joystick technique he popularized in Indiana Jones Raiders Of The Lost Ark game, complete with a digitized sound bite of E.T. saying "Elliott" making parents line up in droves to get this game for their kids that Christmas. There won't be enough copies left to bury in a New Mexico landfill, not even the 10% found many years later. Most of all, in 2017, customers will agree with me when I say wholeheartedly that Pac-Man on the Atari 2600 is the worst game on the console, and we spend more time debating which one, this or Donkey Kong shows that Atari had a "hit or miss" approach to arcade conversions.

Spielberg is so impressed with Warsaw he allows him to work on other movie licenses of his, and, as his greatest gift to gamers and mankind as a whole, Warsaw ends his programming career as a member of LJN where hit after hit of movie license games are created under Howard's watch. So much so that gamers actually seek out that rainbow label and the LJN Defender ends up resting easy and having to look for another job.



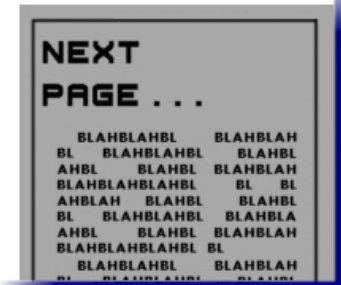
*Hey, it could happen*

In a world where we as gamers groan at delays, it's amazing to think what the landscape would have looked like if one man, one prodigy, one guy who loved video games, was just given that one thing that we as human beings never seem to have enough of, and that's time.

Next time on "The What If Universe" we take a look at a well-known prototype, the SNES PlayStation and what the gaming scene would have looked like had it actually come to pass.

Until then, there's nothing wrong with living in a fantasy world, if that one happens to be the What If Universe!

**Be sure to [CONTINUE TO THE NEXT PAGE](#) to read more of this issue of The Retrogaming Times!**



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