

The Retrogaming Times

THE BIMONTHLY RETROGAMING HOBBYIST NEWSLETTER

TWENTIETH ISSUE - MAY 2019

THIRTY YEARS OF GAME BOY!

The Retrogaming Times
- The Bimonthly Retrogaming Hobbyist Newsletter -

The Retrogaming Times

Twentieth Issue - May 2019

- [Prepare to Qualify](#)
- [Upcoming Events](#)
- [More C64! - Game Testing](#)
- [Game Boy and Super Mario Land's 30th Anniversary \(1989 - 2019\) *COVER STORY*](#)
- [Raiders of the Lost Arcade](#)
- [Twenty Five Years of Final Fantasy VI](#)
- [The Controller Chronicles - Sega Saturn](#)
- [Weekly Retrogaming Trivia Recap](#)
- [See You Next Game](#)



Prepare to Qualify

by [David Lundin, Jr.](#)

Welcome to another issue of The Retrogaming Times! We begin with a look behind testing new games for classic hardware, as Merman explains some of the challenges and rewards of being involved with play testing in More C64! Nintendo's Game Boy turned thirty years old just a couple weeks ago and Sean Robinson recalls his first encounters with both the handheld and Super Mario Land in this issue's cover story. Waxing nostalgic, Raiders of the Lost Arcade explores memories of the last of the Silicon Valley classic arcades. Sean Robinson returns with another anniversary tale, this time the 25th anniversary of Final Fantasy VI, originally known as Final Fantasy III in the West. Sega Saturn is on tap with The Controller Chronicles as Todd Friedman looks back on some of his favorite games on the platform. 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 or contact me directly at trt@classicplastic.net! Follow [@TRTInfoClub](https://twitter.com/TRTInfoClub) on Twitter for release notifications and immediate newsletter updates! Of course submissions are also always open. If you have something ready to go, the address is the same, trt@classicplastic.net. **"If there is something you want to write about, send it in!"**



Upcoming Events

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

Pintastic Pinball & Game Room Expo, June 27th - 30th 2019, Sturbridge, Massachusetts, USA

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

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

~ ~ ~

Video Game Summit, July 13th 2019, Villa Park, Illinois, USA

Remember how much fun you used to have playing Atari, Nintendo and all kinds of games on your computer? Well, you will have the rare opportunity to play these great games again at the Video Game Summit, Chicago's premier video game trade show.

The Video Game Summit, now in its 16th year, brings together classic and modern generation gamers from all over the country to swap stories and games. Best of all, admission to The 2019 Video Game Summit is only \$10.00 per person (kids 12 and under with adult are free). We will have Early Admission (\$15.00) this year again due to positive response from last year.

The Video Game Summit is being held on July 13th, 2019 from 10 am until 6 pm at The Odeum Expo Center, 1033 North Villa Ave., Villa Park, Illinois.

For information on the show visit us at: <http://www.VideoGameSummit.net>

~ ~ ~

KansasFest, July 16th - 21st 2019, Kansas City, Missouri, USA

KansasFest is the world's only annual convention dedicated to the Apple II computer that revolutionized the personal computing industry. Held every year in Kansas City, Missouri, KansasFest offers Apple II users and retrocomputing enthusiasts the opportunity to engage in beginner and technical sessions, programming contests, exhibition halls, game tournaments, and camaraderie. Mark Pelczarski of Penguin Software, well-known for numerous graphics utilities, books, and games, will join us this year with a keynote presentation to celebrate the Apple II.

KansasFest invites any and all Apple II users, fans, and friends to attend the largest and longest running annual Apple II conference. For photos, videos, schedules, and presentations from past year's events or to sign up for the email list and for inquiries, please visit the event website.

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

~ ~ ~

California Extreme 2019, July 27th - 28th 2019, Santa Clara, California, USA

California Extreme is very pleased to officially announce the dates for this year's California Extreme Arcade and Pinball Show. It will be held on July 27-28, 2019 at the same fantastic location - the Hyatt Regency in Santa Clara, California. Please join us for our 23rd show with hundreds of your favorite arcade and pinball games, both past and present, all gathered together for another fun-filled weekend of arcade excitement for everyone!

The Hyatt, Hilton, and Marriott are now accepting room reservations. Pre-registration for the show is currently open as well!

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

~ ~ ~

Classic Game Fest, July 27th - 28th 2019, Austin, Texas, USA

Classic Game Fest is "The Biggest Retro Gaming Event in Texas." The 12th annual Classic Game Fest will be on July 27 - 28, 2019. Enjoy 70,000 square feet of retro video games and fun at the Palmer Events Center in Austin, Texas. Overlooking Lady Bird Lake and the downtown Austin skyline, the Palmer Events Center is conveniently located only a short walk from many hotels, restaurants, bus stops, and bike rental stations.

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

~ ~ ~

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



More C64! - Game Testing

by Merman

Over the last two years I have been lucky enough to help test some new Commodore 64 games - before they are released. This is actually hard work, playing through and finding the bugs or problems. Here is how it was done.

EXPLODING FISH

This game was a project from former Psygnosis programmer Chris Stanley, his first C64 game. Having seen the game previewed on Twitter I offered to write some music for it. And when it came time to put that music into the game, Chris sent me a series of previews to help test it.

In general this was a pretty straightforward game to test. An infinite energy cheat was included in the previews to help me reach the later levels, and mostly it was about checking the enemy movement patterns. I did suggest a couple of enemies were tweaked

or moved further away from where the player started. It was also great to hear my music in situ; Chris had requested music "in the style of Rob Hubbard's 1980s work for Mastertronic or Firebird." So one tune was based on the bouncy Gerry the Germ soundtrack, another on a tune from one of Rob's early music demos. There was a limited edition tape release of the game, but it is free to download.

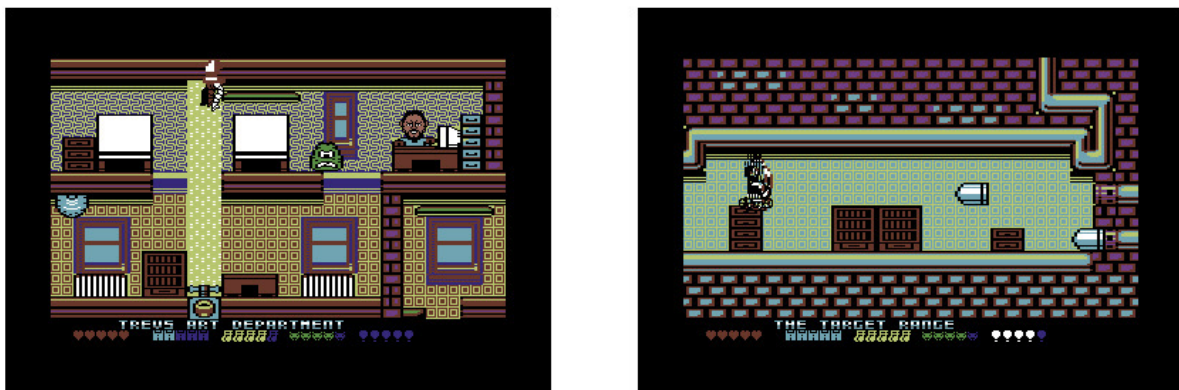


The first level of Exploding Fish is the Shallow Reef, while the pause mode adds text to the screen.

SIZZLER

This game from Trevor Storey and Stuart Collier was a perk for the Kickstarter campaign of the ZZAP! Annual 2019, so there was time pressure to get it working. The aim of the game is to help the robot Mik3 make a "game," by collecting the parts (graphics, music, code) and getting the team to put them together. Finally the tape must be duplicated and taken to ZZAP! Towers to be reviewed.

There were two main problems that arose during playtesting. At times the main character would lose the overlaid sprite (a high-resolution sprite placed on top of a multicolour sprite, giving an outline in black pixels) when on the air currents that lift him up the screen. There was also a problem with timing, making glitches when run on an NTSC machine. I found that the overlaid sprite disappeared when crouching on the disappearing platforms, which required another fix. And when I finally reached one of the hidden rooms, there was a point where the sprites corrupted. Fortunately there were no major bugs left when the game was duplicated and sent to the Kickstarter backers. It is now available separately through Psytronik Software.



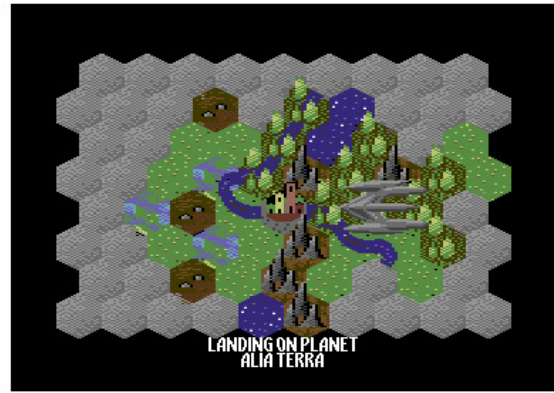
The overlay is missing as Mik3 enters the Art Department, and the sprite corrupts in the Target Range hidden room.

SPACE MOGULS

Carl-Henrik Skårstedt has a day job at Space Yacht Games, the company responsible for Shovel Knight. But in his spare time he coded a tribute to the classic Dani Bunten strategy game M.U.L.E.

This was another project I saw on Twitter and offered Carl help with playtesting. I was very flattered to see my name in the credits when it was released by Protovision.

The first bug I encountered was in the landing sequence of the Space Yacht. This was done using sprites and the MSB (Most Significant Bit) was not set properly. [The MSB allows sprites to have an X co-ordinate greater than 256; when the MSB is set to 1, sprites appear to the right of the screen effectively adding 256 to the X value]. This meant the Yacht did not move across the screen smoothly from right to left, staying on the right. Other small bugs included a % appearing instead of the value 5 in the scrolling message for random events, and a glitch when the bitmap for capturing a Grumpling (animals that wander the land map and can be caught for a bonus) appeared. It took me a few games but I eventually got a winning strategy and really enjoyed playing. The boxed edition from Protovision is excellent, with lots of "feelies" - including a Space Trading License, a ticket for the Space Yacht and a small plastic alien stowaway.

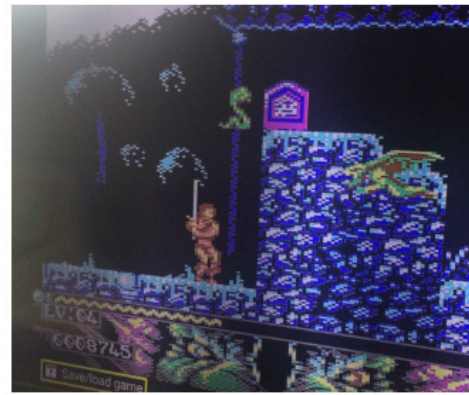


There was only one planet (of four) available to test, and here the Space Yacht makes its landing.

AGE OF HEROES

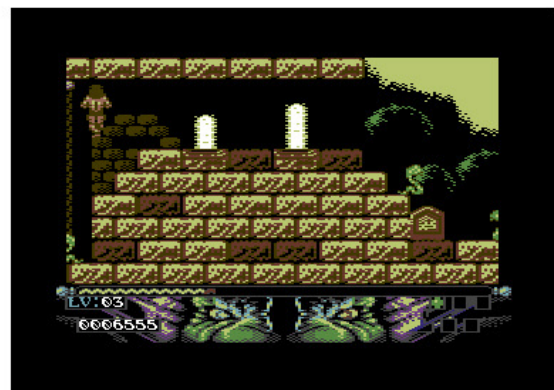
The prolific Trevor Storey asked for my help in testing his next title, this time coded by Achim Volkers. It drew inspiration from the classic Rastan game, although it was horizontally scrolling only. As the player kills enemies, they gain experience points and level up to make them stronger. Extra weapons are given after defeating the boss characters, and crystals are needed to open gateways. My fellow C64 enthusiasts Vinny Mainolfi (of the FREEZE64 fanzine) and Mat Allen (who also writes for Retro Gamer) were also testing the game; this was Vinny's first time as a tester.

Most of the testing was done on the VICE emulator, but I did want to try it on real hardware too. As I was away from home during the testing period, I relied on my C64 Mini - downloading the game files to a USB stick and testing it on my fiancée's HD television. In general the Mini did a good job, and bugs that appeared in emulation also appeared on the Mini. This included a problem with the main character "falling" through the pathway.



Testing on the C64 Mini - the hero falls through the path, and a snake climbs onto the rope.

One suggestion I made was implemented, with the hero holding up the crystal to place it on the plinth and open the locked gateway. Vinny encountered several problems with climbing the ropes, where the screen would scroll on a little too far and the hero would appear to climb in mid-air. A strange bug occurred when the hero reached level 12, with the game freezing completely. This turned out to be a mathematical problem and was easily solved. As testers we could make use of a cheat mode to give infinite health, but it was still tricky to conquer the game. Having finished the main quest, a second Challenge Mode is activated where you must play through all the levels in order again but with tougher enemies and bosses. By the end of the testing period I could complete the game without cheating. Age of Heroes is now on sale from Psytronik Software.



Version 5 had the problem with the hero falling through the path, while I encountered the rope bug testing Version 7.

CONCLUSIONS

Testing sounds like it will be great fun, getting to see a game early and trying it out. In reality it can be hard work, playing through multiple times to reproduce a bug and taking notes to help the team solve it. Fortunately the emulators allow screenshots and even video to be saved, which makes that part a little easier. In some cases it comes down to having the experience and knowledge to know why something is happening.

I hope you have enjoyed this glimpse behind the scenes, and I can certainly recommend all the games mentioned in this article.

WEB LINKS

<https://megastyle.itch.io/> - visit this page for Exploding Fish and other Megastyle games, including the new Bruce Lee - Return of Fury (another game I helped test, based on the classic Datasoft title.)

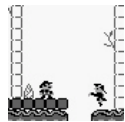
<https://psytronik.itch.io/> - downloads for Age of Heroes and Sizzler are here, along with many great Psytronik titles.

<http://binaryzone.org/retrostore/> - physical releases and links for more of Psytronik's software, including the impressive Collector's Edition of Age of Heroes.

<https://protovision.itch.io/> - digital downloads of Protovision games, including Space Moguls.

<https://www.protovision.games/?language=en> - the Protovision homepage, for physical releases of games including Space Moguls and other C64 hardware (including the four-player adapter).

<https://fusionretrobooks.com/> - for the ZZAP! Annual 2019 and other retro gaming books. Also check out FUSION gaming magazine at <https://fusiongamemag.com/>.



Game Boy and Super Mario Land's 30th Anniversary (1989 - 2019)

by Sean "Nz17" Robinson

April 21st marks the 30th anniversary of the Game Boy. Originally released in 1989, the GB is now thirty years old as of 2019. It also has one of the largest game libraries especially for a cartridge-based console. Not only is the Game Boy the home to a lot of games, it also saw official releases for a very long time.

Myself, I didn't originally like the Game Boy. As Nintendo Power's attention drained from the Nintendo Entertainment System and was then showered on the Game Boy and later the SNES, it felt to me like the NES and I were being abandoned. After Nintendo Power went all-SNES-and-GB, I stopped subscribing. I figured with its lousy green visuals and poor sound, that the "Game Brick" would be discontinued after a short amount of time and replaced with something better. But the games kept getting released, big name games (eventually having games from venerable series like Mario, Castlevania, Tetris, Metroid, Contra, and more) and with all of the coverage which Nintendo Power and TV were giving the Game Boy, I asked for one for Christmas. Imagine my surprise when for Christmas 1991 instead of a Game Brick (I mean, "Boy."), I got a Game Gear! I was befuddled as the Game Gear was definitely not what I was expecting!

As I scanned over the Game Gear's box and the info and screenshots printed there, it started to dawn on me that this might... be better than the Game Boy! In addition to Columns (which was included with the Game Gear), I also got Shinobi and Dragon Crystal. It was only a few months later that I got Sonic The Hedgehog, the game which I wanted to play the most of the games featured on the Game Gear's printed promotional materials. Sure, Columns and Shinobi and Dragon Crystal were all good games - with Shinobi being the high-quality stand-out for me - but Sonic was the awesome game starring the famous gaming icon!

So with awesome new game console in tow and a newfound confidence that the superior visuals and sounds of the Game Gear would eventually trounce the pretender to the throne that was the Game Boy, I played and thoroughly enjoyed my NES, Atari 2600, PC, and Game Gear games in the meanwhile. I would show the Game Gear and its games to my friends, proud of the audiovisual splendor and high-speed game-play of many of the games. Most of these were definitely leagues beyond that of which the Game Boy was capable.

And yet, something odd happened. While many of my friends liked what they saw or played, only one of them ever got a Game Gear. Everyone else either stayed with their NES, got a Game Boy, or upgraded from NES to Genesis or SNES. I saw the Game Gears and their games and accessories in the stores, and I could tell they were selling as they got replaced with new stock, but nobody I saw other than the one friend ever got a Game Gear. For some reason, the Game Gear didn't take off like wildfire like the Game Boy had despite my expectations!

Fast forward a few years to perhaps 1993. I was in Germany on a family vacation. My mother convinced me to leave my expensive Game Gear and its games back home in America so they didn't get lost or damaged. It was hot and humid as Germany tends to be in the summertime. I wasn't having a very fun time. Most of the people around me knew little to no English and my immediate family who were there were too busy talking to our German relatives to speak much with me. But there was a ray of hope! One day, the German family that we were visiting had children. They were older than me and so didn't spend much time with me nor at home from what I can recall. They were probably off with their friends much of the time if I had to guess.



But lo and behold! The family had a Game Boy! The children had grown tired of it, only owning two to four games for it. The two I remember were Tetris and Super Mario Land. Though a good game, I had little interest in Tetris as I had played the NES variant for quite a bit and action games were more my style. Super Mario Land, however, was of great interest to me. The others might have grown bored of their Game Boy, but I, having very little experience with Game Boys and wanting to play video games, was keen to play Super Mario Land. After all, I had played the NES some in Germany at a house or two, but mostly it was a video-game-less experience. And the Super Mario Bros. series, I knew I liked Super Mario Bros. games from having completed Mario 1, 2, and 3 over the years. After all, I had played them as well as Donkey Kong, Dr. Mario, Donkey Kong, Jr. and (non-Super) Mario Bros. on my NES at home.

So with permission, I began to play Super Mario Land. I was surprised at how similar yet different it was to Super Mario Bros. for the NES. The Super Mushroom was there, but the Fire Flower had been replaced with something else. At first glance this power-up looked and functioned the same... or so I thought! It turned out it wasn't a bouncing fireball which Mario was throwing, but a bouncing super ball that would ricochet off the ground and, if nothing stopped it, off into space!

Well, with the blurry green Game Boy screen and trying to play the game in the bright summer sunshine, I didn't make a lot of progress with the game. One of the older children commented to me that the game had "only" four levels so they had all finished it and weren't interested in Super Mario Land anymore. Well to me, this was a new challenge! I had to adapt my brain to the odd quirks of Mario Land versus Mario 1. I tried to stand in the shade of the house's outdoors-facing stair hallway to try to see better. A lot of shifting and adjusting of the bulky Game Boy was required to see what was happening.

Many Mario lives were lost.

The one older child that had been talking to me got bored and wandered off. I didn't see him for a long time. I didn't see anyone for a long time. Suddenly the heat, the humidity, and the boredom of a trip overseas in a country where people didn't speak my language much... all faded into the background. With the quiet of everyone else being somewhere else and the shade helping me to see, I started to enter, "the zone."

You know the zone. It is that state you enter when your brain suddenly clicks with a challenge or event happening around you. Smoothly yet suddenly your perspective changes and your mind operates in a different way on another level. Some people call it, "the flow." But whatever you call it, I was entering that state of being there with Super Mario Land. Once my mind had adjusted to SML's quirks ("Koopa shells aren't for kicking, they don't slide away, they stay in place and explode!" "The flies from Mario Bros. are here!" "The stages have two exits - what's the difference between them?") and I started to learn the layouts of the levels, my mind began to flow with the actions on-screen. It no longer mattered that the screen was difficult to see unless I couldn't see well enough at that particular second. It didn't matter that the sound wasn't "high fidelity." It didn't matter that I had to start over many times due to all the lost lives. What mattered is that I was improving, that I was making progress, that I was losing lives less and using continues less often.

I was in the zone and I was having fun!

My prejudices towards the Game Boy and the "wrongs" I had suffered by Nintendo Power and society in general seemed to drift away to "nothingness" at that time. It was just me, a handheld console, a video game, and great fun. And I had finally made it to World 2!

But then my midsummer Nirvana was interrupted. The others had been looking for me. They having wandered off, everyone else forgot where I was because none of them had remembered nor checked where I had been for the last long while. It was late afternoon leading into early evening, and the summer sunshine had turned orange. The Game Boy and game were taken away from me. It was dinnertime. The lightness of my gaming bliss left me as I was taken to the dark indoors to the dinner table. The high heat and oppressive humidity of the world returned to weigh me down. I was once again painfully aware of the many mortal concerns of life like fighting the summer's weather; living on a new, foreign diet; being told when to go to sleep even if I wasn't tired or if I was still hungry; being told when to wake up even if I was still sleepy; and being towed from place to place by well-meaning relatives.

After that day, I never did get to play that Game Boy again. My family said goodbye to our relatives and were off to our next destination in Europe to see more sights or meet more relatives. At the time I wished that I could have taken the Game Boy and its games with me - after all, my young self thought, "They aren't using it and they don't appreciate it."

Eventually our summer vacation ended and we flew back to America. While I didn't get to take the Game Boy with me, I did take something else away: a greater respect for Nintendo's monochrome handheld console. While I don't have an original Game Boy

even to this day, I do own several Game Boy Advances, a DS Lite, a 3DS, and a New Nintendo 3DS LL. Yes, I even own the GBA-to-GameCube link cable. And yes, though I don't own an old-school Game Brick (Forgive my sauciness, but the old GB really is as thick as a brick.), I do have respect for it and wouldn't mind owning one. I also have Super Mario Land for the 3DS's Game Boy Virtual Console. It took many years to finally get it, but I have owned it for several years by now. And yes, I was able to complete all four worlds despite the sudden shooting stages.



I also bought Super Mario Land 2 for the 3DS and completed that. After all, I should have been able to: years earlier, it was on my recommendation that my grandmother and mother bought a Game Boy Color and Game Boy games for my sister as birthday and Christmas presents. And, among the Zelda and Harvest Moon and Pokemon and other Game Boy and Game Boy Color games, that's how Super Mario Land 2 first entered our lives. I helped my sister on many occasions to complete levels or defeat bosses on Super Mario Land 2. I actually had to defeat the last boss for her as she just wasn't able to defeat it. So when I finally was able to own and play these two Mario games on my own portable Nintendo console, it was like two different times in my life were revisited from two different time periods.

It was a nice way to bring things full circle.



Raiders of the Lost Arcade

by *David Lundin, Jr.*

I was born at the very beginning of the 1980's, which means by default I both missed out on the prime golden age of arcades and was one of the younger gamers during the big fighting game boom in the 1990's. Although born just before the decline and subsequent resurrection of home gaming in the United States, the arcade scene remained reasonably healthy for my entire youth up through graduating high school just before the turn of the century. I believe that was at least partially in part to growing up in Silicon Valley and residing just outside of the South Bay Area for most of my adolescence. Most of those arcades finally fell to changing times and changing tastes, which is what ultimately kills most arcades worldwide, but I thought I would take a look back at some of my old arcade haunts - a couple of which are amazingly still around.

Looking back at my younger days, two arcades stand out more than any other although they actually belonged to larger chains - Bullwinkle's and Tilt. **Bullwinkle's Family, Food & Fun** had multiple locations, some of which are apparently in operation to this day, but the location in Santa Clara was my absolute favorite place to go as a kid. Essentially a higher quality version of Chuck E. Cheese's, Bullwinkle's utilized an animatronic stage show featuring characters from The Rocky and Bullwinkle Show performing songs and comedy. During intermissions from the stage show, automated fountains would spray moving jets of water in time with music and lights, providing a water show similar to what would take place outside of a casino rather than a family entertainment center. The darkened main seating area where the stage shows took place was divided off from the rest of the facility by the food ordering counter and prize redemption area, leading to the arcade area on the other side. Bullwinkle's always had a great mix of well-maintained games. Even more oddball stuff like the terrible run-and-gun based on The Real Ghostbusters had a rotation in their game area. Redemption prizes were generally of higher quality than other establishments and most of it was branded with characters from Rocky and Bullwinkle. Just inside the main entrance they had a lone game on free play - Fax by Exidy. Fax looks more like an old jukebox than an arcade game and is more or less fast-reaction bar trivia. As obscure and forgotten as it may be, Fax is my favorite Exidy game to this day at least in part to hours of playing it for free while my family was in line at Bullwinkle's.

While **Tilt** is a large chain of game centers that continues to operate to this day, primarily in shopping malls, the location at the currently dead Vallco Fashion Park mall in Cupertino is by far the most impressive arcade I have ever seen. Opened in 1990, the Vallco Tilt not only featured a massive arcade, it also had bumper cars, a full size carousel, an electronic shooting gallery, massive redemption area, and served as a test location for many arcade developers such as Sega and Namco who had offices in the Bay Area. It was there I first played Time Traveler and Virtual Racing, on beautiful newly delivered cabinets maintained to the highest standards. It is also the only place I have ever seen a four player version of Sega's overhead racer Hot Rod. Large arcades are nothing new, now or then, but the attention to detail and the layout of that location made it feel more like a prototype or trade show example of how arcades SHOULD be, rather than what they usually are.

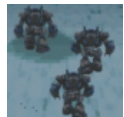
I also found a lot of fun at smaller arcades. A tiny Namco / Atari Cyber Station location (which I believe was advertised as **Cyber Expo**) at Westgate Mall in San Jose would be where I first encountered what would become my favorite arcade game, StarBlade.

That location really was little more than a broom closet with maybe a dozen games, and that big beautiful StarBlade cabinet at the front - beckoning me to play. The local bowling alleys always had pretty solid arcades - both **Moonlite Lanes** and **Saratoga Lanes**. While I spent way more time at Moonlite, Saratoga Lanes had a pretty great pinball lineup and was also the only place I've ever seen an original Street Fighter cabinet (with the big pressurized buttons), Leland's Pig Out, and Rad Mobile - sadly Sega's most forgotten racer. Saratoga Lanes closed years ago for redevelopment and Moonlite closed its doors just a couple years ago - it was a pretty great place that felt nostalgically like home right up until the end, I truly do miss it. The **Galaktican** was located just down the street from where Saratoga Lanes was but it lasted until the late 1990's. Typical local hangout place with a solid selection of both new and old games, kind of the stereotypical arcade you'd see in television shows and movies. Still had a ton of fun there, especially in my early teenage years.

In the old Town & Country Village open air mall in San Jose another massive arcade known as **Playland** operated for a few years until the whole place was demolished for a massive European-style mixed use high-end residential / retail neighborhood project. In the building of a former grocery store, Playland had a large mix of redemption and large attraction type games downstairs, as well as an amazing selection of pinball. This is still the only place I've ever seen or played Sega's Rail Chase. However what made Playland special was a staircase at the very back of the arcade. This went up into a darkened loft, a space originally occupied by the grocery store's offices possibly. This upstairs area was more or less what everyone's dream arcade would be. Mood lighting, icy cold temperatures, and a selection of beautifully maintained arcade and pinball games. To this day that loft at the back of Playland is the only place I've ever seen a Space Lords cabinet, and they had two full banks of them networked. Playland was truly a magical place in the south bay arcade scene, for the brief time it was around. Interestingly some of the people who operated games in Playland would also host a small arcade expo in a vacant bookstore at Town & Country Village. That little get together was known as California Extreme, an annual assembly of local arcade and pinball collectors and fans that continues to this day.

Of course you can't mention the South Bay Area arcade scene without **Golfland**, specifically the Sunnyvale and Milpitas locations. Milpitas Golfland was my favorite of their locations and my home away from home throughout the summers - I would be there nearly every day. They're still around and the Milpitas location is still my favorite "heritage" arcade I have ever been to, both a good balance of the current and the past - and very well maintained throughout. In the late 1990's into the early 2000's when Dance Dance Revolution was at its peak, the Golfland locations became famous for featuring DDR tournaments that emphasized fun and participation, a sharp contrast to other DDR communities I had witnessed. At the time I was living about an hour and a half away, so my journeys out were relegated to a week here and there and an occasional weekend. Since moving back to the Bay Area about a decade ago, I can tell you that Golfland is just as busy as it always was - with the focus now upon fighting games as they continue to be the largest arcade draw. Some of the best in the world tune up their skills at those locations and being the local champion carries with it the same pride and respect as it did long before eSports became a global phenomenon.

There were lots of other arcades that I frequented throughout my life, and those local to me I continue to visit on occasion. I could go on and on about them in detail but I'll stop here and possibly revisit the subject at a later date with an expanded format. I only wish I had taken pictures of these locations and the games in them. If not for historic record, then at the very least to help supplement my failing memories of a passing era. If you have a local arcade - be it a massive family fun center, a barcade, a retro throwback pay-by-the-hour, or a couple games in a laundromat - head out and play them. You never know when that location may fade into the past, and that's coming from a guy who had some of his best gaming memories on a Neo-Geo cabinet at the entrance to a Japanese supermarket.



Twenty Five Years of Final Fantasy VI

by Sean "Nz17" Robinson

The May 2019 issue of Famitsu, the well-known Japanese video gaming magazine, says that Squaresoft [Square Enix] is planning on some special events in 2019 to coincide with the Final Fantasy VI's 25th anniversary. I'm guessing we are going to see a lot of retrospectives, perhaps a stage show in Japan with the creators talking about the game and its development, and - naturally - much FFVI merchandise for sale.

This got me to thinking about my memories of initially watching and playing Final Fantasy VI. While it has always been known as VI in Japan for the Super Famicom and later video gaming platforms, back before 1997 it was known as Final Fantasy III for the SNES in North America and Europe. Therefore I will be using both III and IV interchangeably throughout this article.

For me, I didn't own any 16-bit consoles at the time. The newest I owned were my NES (1989), Game Gear (1991), and PC (1993). Therefore, though I couldn't play FFIII at home, I could watch my friend play it at his house on his SNES. After all, his family won a medical lawsuit and the mom spoiled them so they had the newest consoles and computers (PC, Genesis, SNES, 32X, N64, etc.) and their latest games as they were released. Occasionally my friend would offer to let me play FFIII, but usually I would just watch as he played the game. After all, the few times I would play, it would usually be from the beginning for a bit or using his game save - but without overwriting the save - so I could see what he wanted me to see. Therefore I wasn't very far into the game, and he was much further into the game than I, so watching was good enough as I didn't want him to be bored, to spoil things for me, nor to tell me where to go.

Final Fantasy III / VI was majestic. I thought FFII and FFIII were incredibly awesome, and watching them be played and sometimes playing them was really cool at the time and the beauty of the graphics and soundtrack often left me gobsmacked. Mostly my friend would play whatever was newest, so FFIII was what I saw the most and what I wanted to play the most. While I liked and respected FFII, something about FFIII resonated with me more.



It would be years before I would own both the hardware and software which would allow me to play Final Fantasy VI on my own. However the waiting made me appreciate it all the more. When I finally was able to properly play Final Fantasy VI, it was the CD version for PlayStation released as part of Final Fantasy Chronicles. And yes, despite all the lengthy and frequent loading times, I played through the whole game from beginning to end.

Yet there is one part which I wish was "more spoiled" for me. You see, my friend played through the game first and yes, he even showed the ending to me. Thankfully, I didn't retain much of it thanks to being unaware of what happens in the rest of the game and mentally trying to avoid remembering such knowledge as I didn't want it to spoil the events in the game and the story's conclusion.

One thing he did explain to me about the ending was about a certain ninja character. Now I won't repeat it here in case you want to play Final Fantasy VI in a spoiler-free manner, but otherwise I recommend conducting a little research before you play too far into FFVI. Unfortunately, while my friend did explain things to me years earlier, the important part which he had said didn't fully stay in my mind. When I finally properly played through FFIII and remembered part of what he had told me, I couldn't remember it all, so I had quite a bit of anxiety around a certain moment in the game. However, I didn't want to lose all of my progress through the many difficult battles since the previous save spot. I didn't want to spoil things by reading a strategy guide or a FAQ or a walk-through as I like discovering the content of games for myself and forging my own path. I had a decision to make.

So I took a chance and bit the bullet. I wish I hadn't. I considered making two different game saves - one save before the moment and one afterwards along the path I first chose so I could go back and replay the section in question, continuing with whichever path I would later choose to stay with - but I wasn't sure how long it would take before I'd see the differences caused by my actions. Ever since then, I've been tempted to replay through Final Fantasy VI, but it seemed like so much work just to change one little yet important decision. Sure, I could watch a video of it, but it's not the same, now is it? Besides, for better or for worse, the past is what makes us what we are today.

Remembering the past is a funny thing. The video games I played back then are a big part of my past and what I recall when thinking about those times. I often enjoy the nostalgic trip of reminiscing about them. I wouldn't want to trade away these good memories of my past. Games will continue to be an important part of my present and my future. I wouldn't have it any other way. So here's to another twenty-five years of gaming and Final Fantasy!



The Controller Chronicles - Sega Saturn

by [Todd Friedman](#)

Growing up I was team Sega. I never really played Nintendo Systems until the mid-1990s and there was a reason for that. I was such a fan of the progression of the Sega consoles. I played the Master System, Genesis, Sega CD, Game Gear, I even loved the 32X. Then in 1995, Sega released the Saturn. A similar looking box and controller with the all black look, just a little modified. The games for the Saturn can be debated, but in my opinion, there are not a lot of standout games that were released. The library of games is dull and seemed rushed. Not all, but I believe this is one of the downfalls of the system. Of course, the release of the Nintendo a year or so later did not help. The Nintendo 64 (N64) was the Sega Killer in my opinion and Sega never really recovered. Some say the Sega Dreamcast was ahead of its time but in this era of consoles, the Sega Saturn was the final blow for the Nintendo vs Sega debate. The Sega Saturn was discontinued in 1998.



The North American redesign of the Saturn controller (left) was later replaced with the standard version originally released in Japan (right)

For me, the Sega Saturn had an average controller, with a shape similar to the Sega Genesis. The first release had squared handles and the second generation had the usual rounded edges. It did not feel too bulky in your hands. The control pad, like the Genesis, had the circular motion with the plus shaped pad. The Saturn had the standard A, B, and C buttons but also had three more additional buttons, labeled appropriately X, Y and Z, with button L the left trigger and button R the right. The cord length for the controller was pretty good at six feet. Input on the Saturn is almost identical as the Sega Genesis, except for the extra buttons. These extra buttons were good for fighting games and first person shooter games. Most games didn't necessarily require extra buttons.

One of the first games I played on the Saturn and one that is still fun to play today, is Daytona USA. This, for me, was the most realistic driving game I had played to date. This game was also one of the highest grossing arcade games at that time. In this game you could customize your controls to what makes you comfortable. Some use the L and R triggers to shift gears if using manual drive. Others use those to change views of the driving perspective. Again, all this is customizable, but the default has the C button to accelerate. My strategy is to let go of the acceleration button and slow down rather than braking. If you would like to use the break, you can simply hit the Z button. The playability of the Saturn version tries to come close to the arcade but falls a little short. With the hardware they had, Sega did the best they could to give the most realistic driving game and make arcade lovers play at home. I do love the game and think that it is one of the best driving games of that time. A sequel was made for the Saturn that made some good improvements.

There were many fighting games in the 90s that became legends of the industry. Mortal Kombat and Street Fighter are without doubt the top of the list. Sega did a great job in those days keeping up with the fighting genre. They created a game called Virtua Fighter. The game really took off and got rave reviews. Sega made a console version for the Saturn and really hit the mark. They made the 3D graphics of the game look pretty spot on of the arcade version. There were a few tweaks that were fixed the later Remix version, but all in all the graphics and gameplay made Virtua Fighter an instant classic. The controls of this game are the key to success and getting better each time you play. Each character has specific moves that are displayed by the different button combinations along with the controls. Depending who you choose, the combinations can be powerful and hard to defend. The more practice, the better. The main buttons to begin with are kick, punch, and block. Using Lau Chan as an example, specific timing of the control and action buttons make a lot of Lau's moves. A double punch heel kick, would require you to quickly hit the punch button twice then kick. It must be done quickly to apply the combo. Another move is the flip throw, which involves getting close to the opponent and hitting block then punch. This action will flip the opponent over and take some damage. A more advanced move would be a Kick, Punch to a Straight Kick. This move increases the damage of the opponent. This move takes some practice and precision. With the control pad and at the same time you will need to press down then right and punch, punch, kick. This combination, if done right, will take away a lot of damage to the opponent. Playing around the with combinations create multiple moves that sometimes can be unlockable. This is what make this game fun and exciting each time you play.

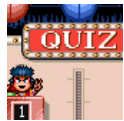


Virtua Fighter (left), Daytona USA (center), Virtual Cop (right)

Sticking with the Virtua theme, this last game was a fan favorite and one of mine as well. This first-person light gun shooter put you in the world of police officers to take down the syndicate (E.V.I.L.). You can choose between two cops, Michael Hardy and James Cools. The graphics are the same blocky 3D images that make these games like Virtual Fighter stand out from others. The controls with the Saturn controller are pretty standard, however, this game was one of the titles that utilized the 'Stunner' Light Gun controller for the Sega Saturn. This gave a more realistic, true arcade style gameplay. The light gun was pretty much easy to use, as it was a point and shoot weapon. Just plug it in and hit start and you are ready to go. To reload with the gun, you just aim the gun away from the screen. If you wanted to stick with the control pad or do not have the light gun, the game is still fun and easy to play. The A button will fire the gun and the B button will reload. The other buttons on the control pad are not used in this

game. The directional pad is used to aim your weapon at the target. There are two modes for this game, story and training. I recommend the training to begin with to get used to the movements and the reload option.

Even though the Sega Saturn was not a commercial hit for Sega in America, it still holds up today and can still be played with excitement and enjoyment. It paved the way for my favorite system, the Sega Dreamcast. Some may disagree, but Sega has always been ahead of its time with hardware and software.



Weekly Retrogaming Trivia Recap

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

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

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

04/19/2019 - WEEK 113

Question: Double Your Fun: At the beginning of Double Dragon II, the helicopter in the hangar Billy and Jimmy Lee walk out of is an homage to what game?

04/12/2019 - WEEK 112

Question: At the beginning of Double Dragon, the car in Billy and Jimmy Lee's garage is an homage to what game?

04/05/2019 - WEEK 111

Question: Nintendo's jet ski racing series Wave Race began on what hardware platform?

03/29/2019 - WEEK 110

Question: Sega's Virtua Racing (1992) only has one in-game advertising billboard, what does it read?

03/22/2019 - WEEK 109

Question: Although a shooter of a completely different type, what arcade game is the sequel to Robotron: 2084?

03/15/2019 - WEEK 108

Question: What was the only Famicom 3D System compatible game released by Konami?

03/08/2019 - WEEK 107

Question: The unreleased Atari 2600 game Saboteur was reworked into another unreleased game based on what television show?

03/01/2019 - WEEK 106

Question: What rock band was featured in the television commercial for Activision's Megamania?

02/22/2019 - WEEK 105

Question: What is the only non-racing game that has been developed by Polyphony Digital?



The Tubes singing about the addictiveness of Activision's Megamania (left), the only billboard in Sega's Virtua Racing (right)

Answers:

Week 105 Answer: Omega Boost (1999).

Week 106 Answer: The Tubes.

Week 107 Answer: The A-Team.

Week 108 Answer: Falsion (1987).

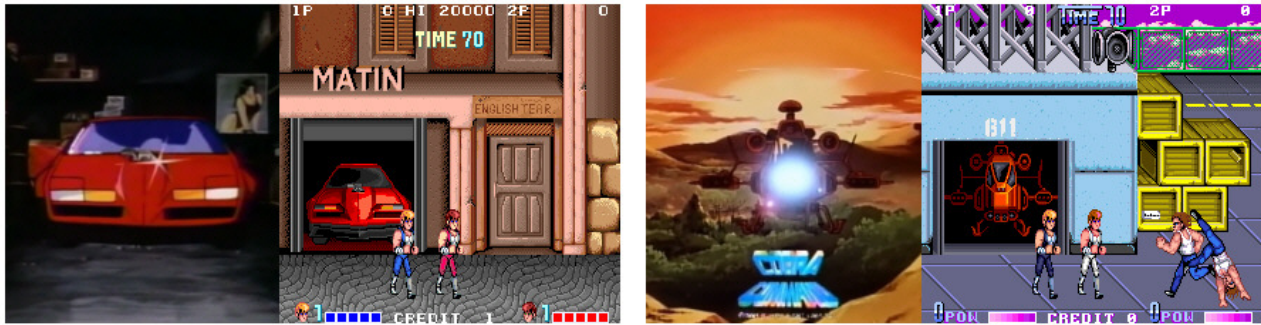
Week 109 Answer: Blaster (1983).

Week 110 Answer: 7 Seas, seen before the turn into the hairpin at The Acropolis (Expert).

Week 111 Answer: Game Boy, in 1992.

Week 112 Answer: Road Blaster (1985), as Yoshihisa Kishimoto directed both it and Double Dragon.

Week 113 Answer: Cobra Command (1984), as with Double Dragon and Road Blaster, Yoshihisa Kishimoto directed both Double Dragon II and Cobra Command.



Road Blaster and its homage in Double Dragon (left), Cobra Command and its homage in Double Dragon II: The Revenge (right)

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

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



See You Next Game

by [David Lundin, Jr.](#)

The 30th anniversary of Game Boy being released in Japan on April 21st, 1989 (the North American release would follow that July) brought back a lot of memories, not only of gaming but of childhood at the time. I received a Game Boy that Christmas, having been given an NES the Christmas before. Sure enough, Super Mario Land was also a gift that year and the game I played most. I wouldn't complete it for many years, often falling victim to the fast moving enemies in World 3 and the reasonably irritating platforming in World 4. The other title I put a lot of time into was Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Fall of the Foot Clan - it seems everyone I knew had a copy of that game. After that I didn't get very many Game Boy games as gifts or really have interest in buying many myself, which is strange now that I think back.

I can remember buying Motocross Maniacs from Toys R Us on an especially rainy day, the memory of sitting in the back seat of the car and reading the instruction manual is burned into my mind. For whatever reason after that I bought Golf, which I became ridiculously good at over the years. That's actually a really solid game, an enhanced overhaul of Nintendo's old Famicom / NES Golf. I probably put more time into that title than any other Game Boy game, if you were to total up all the time spent playing here and there. Another odd purchase was Kwirk, which I never really played all that much of - still don't know what drew me to that one. Super R.C. Pro-Am was a birthday gift from my parents a couple years later and I enjoyed it - outside of Rare's usual cheap A.I. programming. I took a break for awhile before eventually purchasing Turn And Burn (which I actually really liked), Star Wars (which I hated immediately - the NES and Master System versions as well), and Link's Awakening (which I still haven't completed). After that it was all flea market purchases that occurred well into the Game Boy Advance era. I think the biggest buffer to buying more Game Boy games was the massive amounts of cheap NES games I was able to get at FuncoLand just a couple years later. That's where my focus was - and where it would remain for many years. Just the same, I still have my original Game Boy from Christmas of 1989 and it still works fine.

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

See You Next Game!





Hosted at
ClassicPlastic.net

Content and opinions on this page are those of their respective writer(s)
Assembled and published by David Lundin, Jr. on May 1st, 2019 at ClassicPlastic.net
© 2019 The Retrogaming Times. All Related Copyrights and Trademarks Are Acknowledged.