

# The Retrogaming Times

THE BIMONTHLY RETROGAMING HOBBYIST NEWSLETTER  
THIRTY-FOURTH ISSUE - SEPTEMBER 2021

## TRACK & FIELD CHEATER STILL AT LARGE!

The Retrogaming Times  
- The Bimonthly Retrogaming Hobbyist Newsletter -

### The Retrogaming Times

Thirty-Fourth Issue - September 2021

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### Prepare to Qualify

by [David Lundin, Jr.](#)

I don't know about our readers out there but things on this side of the screen have been incredibly busy lately. At first I thought it was just me but hearing back from much of our usual staff, it seems it was that way across the board. Even with that in mind we put together an incredible issue filled with stories and articles that run the full spectrum of retrogaming, from conversions of the industry's earliest home titles to modern ways to play decades of its history. What I enjoy most about putting this together every issue is seeing opinions and memories from different perspectives, which can take something that has been talked about endlessly and give it a fresh outlook. That holds especially true with this issue, so let's get into it!

More C64! leads off with a rundown of some very interesting and accurate conversions of popular Atari 2600 games making the leap from console to Commodore 64. After some time away the Apple II Incider returns as Donald Lee muses a memory of how he ended up with some unexpected free software. Handheld emulation devices have been around for over a decade and while not mainstream they have become far more commonplace among many gamers. Anbernic's RG300 is a slightly older device that continues to cling to life. Find out how this blast from the near past holds up in a detailed review. George "mecha" Spanos is back with an extremely detailed and researched chronicle of how the development of Quake began a rift in developer id Software, setting many industry icons along different paths. Legendary Wings is an often overlooked arcade shooter that combines many different mechanics of the genre. Somewhat of a lost Capcom game, Dan Pettis takes to the skies to review the NES version. This issue's cover story features the history of Konami's Hyper Olympic and Hyper Sports and how their frenzied button tapping action took the early days of the Famicom by storm, along with its special controller. Cursing the horrible night, George "mecha" Spanos whips the walls to crack open his thoughts concerning Castlevania II: Simon's Quest and the era in which it was originally released. All that and more are ahead in this issue of The Retrogaming Times!

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

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



## Upcoming Events

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

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

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### Pinball Expo, October 27th - 30th 2021, Schaumburg, Illinois, USA

The longest-running pinball event is Pinball Expo which has run 36 consecutive years! Pinball Expo will be holding its 37th annual event held at the Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center in Schaumburg, Illinois. The festivities will include a tour of the Stern Pinball factory, a full schedule of speakers and seminars, pinball tournaments, a vendor hall to find anything and everything imaginable for the pinball curious, and a host of other activities that, once again, will bring the best of what pinball means to so many. Also at the show will be Retro Gaming Expo. In 2019 the Pinball Expo reserved a room for retro gaming consoles to be played. It was our first introduction to this genre. It was a big hit so we decided to expand on this idea and dedicate a whole section of the expo to retro gaming.

For more information, visit <https://pinballexpo.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! - Atari 2600 to C64

by *Merman*

The Atari VCS console may be even older than the Commodore 64, but in recent years there have been some impressive conversions from the 2600 to the home computer.

### Achim Volkers

**RENT-A-COP (2012)** <https://csdb.dk/release/?id=113181>

Achim entered the RGCD 16K Cartridge Coding Competition with this title inspired by Activision's KEYSTONE KAPERS. Chase the thief through the floors of the mall, avoiding obstacles and moving hazards. Catch the thief before time runs out and you get a bonus score before moving on to the next level. You can use the escalators at the end of each floor or move up and down in the slower elevator. The graphics are upgraded from the cartoon style of the 2600 game and it is quite good fun. It also has four fun Easter Eggs to discover by moving in the right place. There is a problem with the thief getting stuck on the roof, but it reached a respectable seventh place in the voting.

In 2018 Achim released an updated version known as **RENT-A-COP RELOADED** (<https://csdb.dk/release/?id=166946>), with multiple background styles and the ability to shoot enemies. Ste Day added a fantastic loading bitmap too, linking it to the games mentioned below. It is a much tougher game to play but worth a look.



*Patrolling the mall in Rent-A-Cop, then clearing out the airport in the Reloaded upgrade.*

### **Antonio Savona**

Antonio created games including Planet Golf and the conversion of L'Abbaye des Morts before putting together a team to tackle some memorable Activision games from the 2600. Graphics were handled by Ste Day, with music and sound effects by Saul Cross. The credits / menu screen for each game evokes the memory of classic C64 games from Activision, giving you the option to start at later levels. This team also did the amazing Fix-It Felix Jr. game in 2020.

In order of release, Antonio's conversions are:

#### **CHOPPER COMMAND (2019) <https://csdb.dk/release/?id=180944>**

Bob Whitehead's 1982 title was inspired by Defender, the player taking control of a helicopter defending a convoy of trucks. Enemy helicopters and jets try to destroy the player and bomb the trucks, with a useful radar display to guide you. The graphics are upgraded from the original, with the "sunset" effect looking very cool. The unpredictable enemy movement makes later levels harder and this was a good start to the series.



*The intro bitmap, with jets moving in to attack the player.*

#### **KEYSTONE KAPERS (2019) <https://csdb.dk/release/?id=182116>**

This is more faithful to Garry Kitchen's original design than Rent-A-Cop, with jolly music and cartoon sprites. Dodge the shopping trolleys and bouncing balls, collect objects for bonus points and watch out for the remote-controlled planes that rob you of a life. It plays really closely to the original too; dedicated players note that timings are almost identical - including a bug. This is so much fun to play, gradually getting tougher.



The comic bitmap, with a biplane heading right for the player.

**FROSTBITE (2019)** <https://csdb.dk/release/?id=183742>

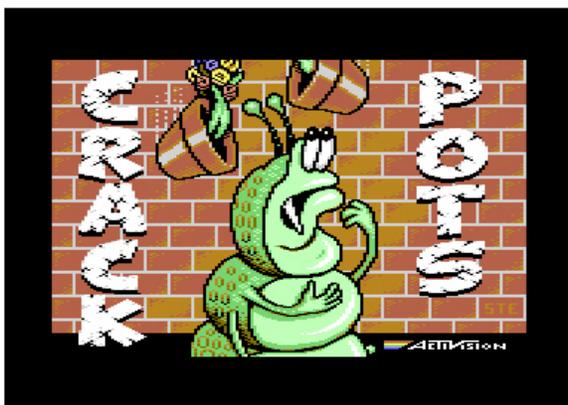
Steve Cartwright's lesser-known game deserves to be remembered, as Frostbite Bailey tries to build an igloo to escape the arctic temperatures. Jumping on a white ice floe adds a brick to the igloo; once all the floes turn blue, there is a short delay before they become white again and can be collected once more. Complete the igloo and enter the doorway to complete the level for a temperature remaining bonus, while dodging the patrolling polar bear. Birds and crabs will try to knock you into the cold water, costing a life. The improved presentation includes alternating day and night levels with a pretty skyline effect. Control is spot on and the increasing difficulty makes this a real challenge to get through.



Another great STE bitmap, as Bailey heads back to the finished igloo.

**CRACKPOTS (2020)** <https://csdb.dk/release/?id=187270>

Dan Kitchen's first game for Activision was inspired by the earlier Kaboom, with Potsy the rooftop gardener throwing down plant pots to squish the attacking insects. If six bugs make it up to the apartment windows, a layer of the wall is eaten away. Lose six layers of wall and it is game over. The colour of the insect tells you its attack pattern, making it easier to predict. It is fun to pick up and play, but ultimately it lacks a little in depth. The conversion is very good, with well-animated insects and cute flowers. Version 1.0.1 fixed a minor bug with the first window.



A cute cartoon critter, as Potsy watches the blue bugs climb the walls.

As well as these four titles that have been released in a handy EasyFlash cartridge collection (<https://csdb.dk/release/?id=195565>), work has been partially completed on a conversion of **PRESSURE COOKER**. This is a game that never made

it to the C64, although a rendition of the theme tune can be heard as a demonstration file in Garry Kitchen's Game Maker. Working in a burger restaurant, the player must assemble ingredients and send the orders off to the customers as quickly as possible.

Antonio is also working with Dan Kitchen on **GOLD RUSH**. Dan found a prototype of the unfinished Atari 2600 game - a follow-up to Keystone Kapers, with the cop becoming a sheriff on a Wild West train - and began plans to revive it. It will be released on 2600 by Audacity Games, and on the C64 in a conversion programmed by Antonio and his team. This is another one to look forward to.



*How the Atari 2600 version of Gold Rush looks, and Antonio's work in progress on the C64 version.*

## Haplo

**SPIDER FIGHTER (2020)** <https://h4plo.itch.io/spider-fighter>

With the help of Richard Bayliss (font and music) and Marukpa (graphics), Australian coder Haplo took on the conversion of Larry Miller's 1983 VCS shooter. The player must protect an orchard full of fruit from insects that gradually mutate into stronger form. If an insect reaches the right-hand side of the screen, it will pick up one of the remaining fruits at the top-right and attempt to escape to the left. The player can save the fruit by shooting the insect in time but run out of fruit and a life is lost. It is quite a simple game idea, inspired by the arcade game Stratovox and similar in style to the C64 / Atari 8-bit game Bandits from Tony Ngo.



*The intro bitmap by Haplo's partner Marukpa, while the player has just three fruit left to defend here.*

## Arlasoft

Nick Sherman recently produced a series of ports from classic LCD games and has gone on to tackle some of his favourite 2600 titles. A couple of these were written in an evening as an exercise in conversion. He is currently working on Funfair Inc. (inspired by strategy game Theme Park) and Galaga C64 (a conversion of the old arcade game inspired by the NES adaptation). These are all free to download. (<https://itch.io/c/1718842/c64-atari-2600-ports>)

**MEGAMANIA C64 (2020)**

Activision never released an official C64 port of Megamania, although you can find a recreation of it on the disk version of Garry Kitchen's Game Maker. It is a straightforward single shooter, with you trying to wipe out all the aliens in an attack wave before your energy runs out. There are ten types of aliens. The settings menu before the game is all controlled by the joystick and allows you to select one or two players, slow or fast bullets, auto-fire (by holding Fire) on and off, and whether the bullets "curve" or not. This is an option in the original; by default, when you fire a bullet, it will follow any movement by the player's ship until it hits something or goes off the top of the screen. Changing it changes how the game plays. Purists

have noticed slight differences in the attack waves, and it is currently running on PAL machines only. But it is a fun implementation of the classic idea.



*The bitmap is based on the Atari 2600 artwork, as the player tackles wave 3.*

### TAZ (2021)

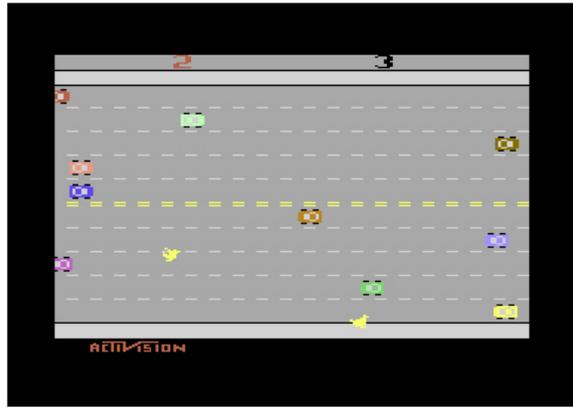
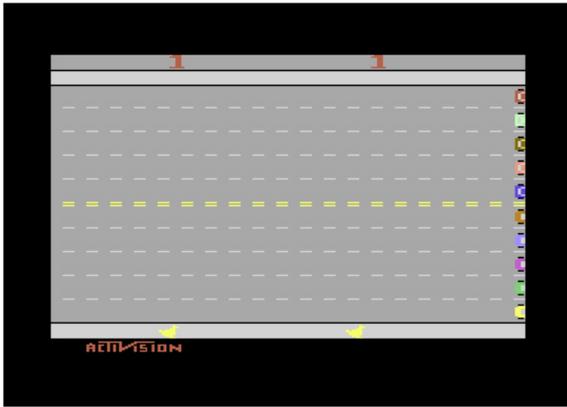
Based on the cartoon character, the whirling Tasmanian devil must eat food as fast as he can to score points - avoiding the dynamite that will cost you a life. Eating twenty items changes to the next food type and increases the score value. There are three "meals" of eight courses to complete before the surprise dessert. Extra lives can be earned at set scores. This is another simplistic idea but ideal for those who want to chase a high score. The presentation is reasonable, with recognisable food sprites and an image of Taz on the title screen, but there are no real options to speak of. It reminds me a little of Mark Turmell's Turmoil but is not as sophisticated.



*The title screen Taz is nicely done, as in-game he spins around to collect some beer (hic!)*

### FREEWAY (2021)

David Crane's classic that asked why the chicken crossed the road was originally a 2-player game only. Neil has added the option of a computer AI chicken for a solo player to complete against. You have 136 seconds to cross the multiple lanes of the freeway as many times as you can. In Easy Mode being hit by a vehicle knocks you back a few steps, while on Hard you get sent back to the start. The original game had eight levels to conquer, but this conversion adds a ninth with the maximum number of vehicles moving at variable speeds. It will probably hold fond memories for anyone who played it back then but comes across as pretty simple nowadays.



*Joystick selects the mode and number of players, before the chickens try to cross the busy roads.*

### FAST FOOD (2021)

Another game with food in, the player here must control a mouth around the screen to eat as many calories as quickly as possible. But eating six purple pickles will end the game, as shown at the top of the screen. This conversion awards double points for items moving at the higher speed. Eating thirty items displays a message that you are getting fatter, and the game then continues at higher speed. Another simplistic score chaser.



*Faster-moving food scores more, but I have already hit two purple pickles here.*

### THUNDERGROUND (2021)

Sega's 1981 arcade game Borderline was converted to the Atari 2600 under the alternative title Thunderground in 1983, one of the last titles Sega published as a third-party developer for the system. There are some similarities to the later Dig Dug and Mr. Do. The player controls a tank that can dig underground, trying to destroy the enemy Vector bases at the surface. Two types of enemy tank are on the defensive. White Core Rangers can only move on existing paths, while blue Digger Tanks can tunnel through the earth too. Later levels mix things up by only revealing one base at a time. Hidden tokens award extra points when uncovered.

This is not a game I was familiar with before. The premise is quite simple and while the AI does a decent job, it's not particularly challenging to get far into the game. The hidden items add a little wrinkle, but with no real options and simple graphics it's not a long-term prospect.



*Digging up and across at the start of level 2, with bonus points for uncovering the hidden flag.*

So that was fun to explore, and there will surely be more Atari 2600 ports to look forward to soon. Join us next time for More C64!



I'm writing this on a Friday after I had to drive 50+ miles to do some work stuff and just got home. Its been a busy time at work and with other things happening, life *almost* feels like normal again. I recalled something of interest I wrote at the end of July on the Apple II Enthusiasts group on Facebook:

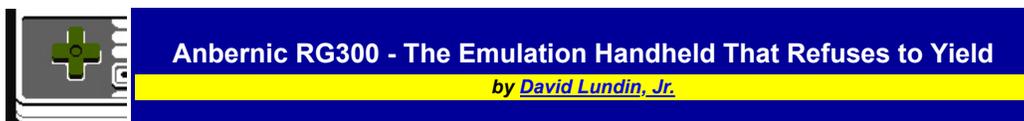


*I don't think I shared this before. Here's a decades old but yet still unopened copy of Epyx's Print Magic. Can't remember the full story but some bits and pieces. I was a big user (even as a teen) of the Print Shop by Brøderbund. I think I heard about Print Magic via magazines or something. I seem to vaguely recall maybe there was a free offer or discount if you showed your were a Print Shop user. So I ended up getting a copy of Print Magic and used it for a time though I think I was going to high school soon after.*

*But what about this unopened copy of Print Magic? To this day I have no idea why I was shipped a second copy. I just remember a package arriving and I was shocked it was another copy. Since I was already using the first copy this package has remained unopened for a long time.*

*Probably my last remnant of my Apple II software. I think my dad dumped all my old Apple II stuff we he remodeled his house last year.*

So re-reading my post on Facebook, I should have clarified that my dad dumped all of old Apple II software stuff (and boxes). However, I still have a box of old Apple II manuals lying around. I think most Apple II manuals have been scanned but I still have a bunch of originals and maybe some programming books, but this gave me the idea to go through them and talk about them in the future. See you next time!



Linux-based handheld emulation devices have been around for almost two decades now. The idea is that a small pocket computer running a lightweight operating system is the perfect environment for emulation on the go, with everything specifically tailored around playing video games. The early devices were impressive for showing that the concept could be

mass produced but were often underpowered, overclocked to the limit, and had heavy power consumption. I myself had a GP2X handheld during that early boom and while it was a lot fun to play around with, the experience was more of a novelty rather than a way to realistically play games. Within the last five or so years things have really matured as more powerful chipsets have come onto the scene, coupled with dedicated software developers, modern battery technology, and a few companies taking a serious approach in developing quality emulation handhelds. I finally took the plunge and bought a couple of emulation handhelds manufactured by Anbernic, one of which is a much older device - the RG300.

The RG300 was more or less the grand finale of the previous generation of emulation handhelds before being surpassed by the RG350 family of devices a couple years ago. It runs a MIPS-based JZ4760B processor (528MHz but generally overclocked to 600MHz), 128MB of DDR2 RAM, a built-in rechargeable battery, dual micro SD card slots, USB-C charging, headphone output, and composite video output. It also features a 3" display with a 4:3 aspect ratio, however there are a couple of caveats concerning the display, which will be detailed later in this article. The overall size is just a hair shorter and wider than a Game Boy Pocket with a similar thickness and feel. The directional pad is more akin to what you'd find on an NES controller in size and response, with the four face buttons being a little smaller than what is found on that controller but with a similar feel. Start and Select buttons rest below and to the middle, as is standard, with an unlabeled system / menu button and a brightness adjustment button above them. The back of the handheld has both a left and right shoulder button inset behind the screen. These shoulder buttons are large and feel good but I find that they flex a little bit more than I would like.



*The RG300 running the RetroFW firmware with my preferred complement of emulators (left), back of the unit with battery and internal SD card access (right)*

There have been quite a few different releases of the RG300 over the years, many of them shipping with a lower quality display than what is generally found in most emulation handhelds these days. To breathe new life into the aging RG300 platform, Anbernic began outfitting them with a more modern 3" IPS display. Unfortunately other than turning the system on and seeing the difference, this is only denoted by an "IPS" sticker inside the battery compartment. There is no reason to buy an RG300 that does not have an IPS display, so make sure you're purchasing from a reputable seller or at the very least can confirm that's what you're going to get. Additionally it seems that while Anbernic was shipping these with a 3" display at first, over time they have moved to a 2.8" display as it tends to be a display size they prefer to trade in for the lower cost devices. It's still an IPS screen and you really couldn't tell any size difference unless you had them side by side. Additionally this isn't something denoted anywhere on the box or device, it's simply a production change. For awhile the translucent black version still had the 3" screen while the gray version had moved to 2.8" but it seems that they're now being manufactured as 2.8" across the board. That all said, the IPS screen that the RG300 currently ships with is beautiful and vibrant, even more so than what is found on many more powerful devices. It almost seems as if it has been tuned specifically to have color saturation that really makes classic video games pop in a way that, while maybe not totally accurate, seems absolutely fitting at the same time.

The current version of the RG300 with the IPS screen also comes shipped running the RetroFW version 2 firmware. This is a big step up from what came installed on the earlier incarnations of the device. It also means one less step in getting the most out of the hardware as RetroFW is a stable and mature firmware that has years of development and testing behind it. Installing it is generally the first thing one would do with a fresh RG300 but Anbernic has taken care of it for you. It generally will also have an assortment of emulators preinstalled along with some applications, and depending on the vendor it was purchased from, will have a host of games already onboard. The emulators and games can be customized to a near endless degree if you are comfortable with learning how RetroFW works (be sure to back up an image of your SD card firmware before tinkering with anything) or are familiar with this type of emulation. On the other hand, for someone looking to just buy a device and play what's on it, there will literally be thousands of games that can be played straight away. The inclusion of most of these games is totally illegal but that's how it goes with these devices. This review isn't intended to promote any games that may come pre-installed as an added value, but rather to detail the hardware and software performance so that you may add the games you wish you play yourself and are comfortable with possessing.



Side by side with a Game Boy Pocket running the same game, the RG300 is more or less about the same size as the classic handheld

As this is an older generation processor with less RAM than what is found in the devices that followed, there is way less power under the hood. Most handheld systems run great, this includes Game Boy and Game Boy Color (Gambatte), Game Boy Advance (ReGBA), which both look incredible on the display. Other handhelds such as the Atari Lynx (Handy), WonderSwan / WonderSwan Color (Oswan) and NeoGeo Pocket / Pocket Color (Race-OD) are all very solid as well but you will probably want to reconfigure the control options for Oswan as they had some conflicts on my stock setup. NES / Famicom / Disk System (FCEUX) work great and scale wonderfully on the hardware, as does Sega Genesis / Sega CD (PicoDrive). PC Engine / TurboGrafx-16 (Temper) also works great although I had performance and loading issues with PC Engine CD / TG-16 CD games but support for these have always been erratic with Temper in my experience. Game Gear and Master System (SMS Plus GX) run well but SG-1000 games have incorrect colors under this emulator, for the two people out there other than me who play them still. Atari 2600 (Dingux 2600) is hit or miss but generally works well enough. MSX (Dingux MSX) support is a bit of a mixed bag as the emulator isn't as robust as some options on other hardware and lacks proper configuration options but a few games can be played without issue.

Super Nintendo (PocketSNES) is where some problems really begin to creep up as the hardware is just not up to the task of running many of the more processor intensive games, generally stuff with a lot of sprites on screen or those that originally used additional cartridge hardware. A lot of the library can still be played perfectly fine but there are certainly limits here. Arcade (Final Burn Alpha) emulation is also a series of hits and misses, with the Capcom CPS1 and CPS2 based games working the best - maybe around 90% of those games running at full speed. Neo Geo (GnGeo) support is even better, with about 95% of the games running at full speed by my estimation. My recommendation with Final Burn Alpha is to add games to the favorites list upon finding what works best and then use that to load games under FBA. For Neo Geo I recommend using GnGeo as I find the performance slightly smoother than FBA although FBA will run most Neo Geo games fine as well. If you want to play some Marvel vs. Capcom or Metal Slug on the go you'll be good here but it will drop a frame now and again in the process. PlayStation (PCSX4All) really needs more powerful hardware than what is found here and should best be avoided as the performance isn't even what I would consider playable.



*Game Boy emulation with my preferred green palette (left), Game Boy Color can be made quite vivid (center), Game Boy Advance never looked better (right)*

There are many other emulators and standalone applications that can be installed, some of which are actually already on the device but not installed to the menu interface. However I would recommend that only intermediate users pursue such (and only after creating a firmware backup) as most of the best stuff is already installed. Thankfully RetroFW is a much more user friendly frontend than some others I've used in the past and features reasonably easy to understand file structures and customization options within the GUI. There isn't so much of a hidden dark art about it, having to do everything in a basic file interface and punching in text strings to link applications like in some other firmwares. That said, Anbernic did ship my device with the firmware language set to something other than English but it only took a couple moments to find where the option to change it was located.

This will be the third time I've mentioned backing up the firmware but it is always a good idea with these devices as they often ship with low quality SD cards. The main SD card in the RG300 is located behind the battery. Now this can't be copied directly over on a Windows PC like an SD card out of a camera or phone. I use the program Win32 Disk Imager to both backup and restore my emulation handheld SD cards and tutorials on how to do this can be found online. The process is fairly straightforward but must be done correctly. With a backup if you ever do something to muck up your firmware you can simply re-flash it from the backup image and get back to square one. I also recommend changing over to name brand SD cards for increased reliability, especially given how cheap they are these days. I can tell you that as long as you are using the same size SD card for a replacement, you only need to flash the image to the SD card with Win32 Disk Imager - there is no need to mess with the partitions in another application or anything like that, and I've found doing so only creates headaches with RetroFW. There is a second SD card slot on the outside of the system that can be used for ROM files and the like, if you're up for more customization beyond what the unit ships with. Personally I slimmed down the internal SD card to just the emulators, applications and required files and use an external SD card for my custom romsets. The external card needs to be formatted to FAT32 and I use a program called GUIFormat / FAT32Format to take care of this. As with tutorials on how to backup your firmware card, GUIFormat and more information about it can be found online easily.



*Neo Geo arcade games on the go (left), an NES screen that our social media followers should recognize (center), a handheld Sega CD (right)*

Something I've seen others not like about the design of the RG300 is that it has a sliding power switch rather than a pushbutton. This means after performing a safe software shutdown (generally accomplished by pressing Menu or holding Start and then selecting shutdown when prompted) the switch needs to be flipped as well. This doesn't bother me much but there have been times when I have forgotten to flip the switch after shutting the system down. The build quality is also

not as nice as some of the more modern offerings from Anbernic - such as the RG350, RG351, and especially the RG280V - but feels solid enough and the directional pad and face buttons are excellent. I also find the overall design comfortable to hold and use. The external volume wheel tends to be the most problematic aspect of quality control with the RG300, with touchy response and an inability to completely mute the system. There is a volume control in the firmware options where this can be adjusted and I recommend turning it down to at least half volume to get a bit more control with the physical volume wheel. I'm not really sure where the problem is here, possibly something with the audio amplification circuit, as when using headphones the volume wheel works perfectly and is smooth with full range.

Most models will come with a composite AV out cable, which can be tapped from the headphone jack. Knowing full well it would look terrible, I connected the RG300 to my regular modern HD TV - no converter, no filter - just straight to a modern TV. Sure enough the picture was very dark and the control input had unbelievable latency but it did work. This piqued my curiosity enough try it connected to a small CRT, which yielded far better results. The colors were still very flat, which I suppose is a testament to just how perfectly tuned the IPS display in the RG300 is, but much closer to how they should look. Input latency was also far better - not gone completely but perfectly manageable. A difference I did notice was that processor intensive games that would run fine on the handheld actually had some trouble once plugged into the TV. I assume that the additional processing power required to output the signal tipped the scales just enough to cause the slowdown. So while the composite AV output does work, I can't think of any time that I would use the feature. The output quality is simply too far below what is considered any form of standard, even for composite video on a CRT.

For those interested in picking one of these up, I have to emphasize to be very cautious that you are purchasing the IPS display model. There are a lot of older RG300's in the supply channel that vendors are trying to unload, both authentic Anbernic devices and clones. This is why buying from a reputable seller is important for the RG300 in particular. Anbernic's official stores are generally the best bet but prices have begun to climb and the further you get away from that \$50 - \$60 price point, the closer you get to more powerful handhelds that can run a lot more emulators. I purchased mine from Anbernic's eBay store, from one of their USA-based listings. I attempted to purchase a translucent black model but they realized the USA warehouse was out of stock after I made the purchase and offered the gray model instead. After it was sent my way I noticed that they had marked both colors as out of stock from the USA-based listings, although both are still in stock if shipped from China. Additionally they have begun to sell what they call a "Dual System" with some strange multi-boot setup that will boot into a distribution of Linux in addition to an emulation firmware. This seems rather totally unnecessary and only serves to further complicate the marketplace for the RG300. So if you're going to go down the road of the RG300: reputable seller, IPS screen, Single System.



*Capcom CPS1 support and performance is surprisingly good under Final Burn Alpha - pictures really don't capture how great the screen looks*

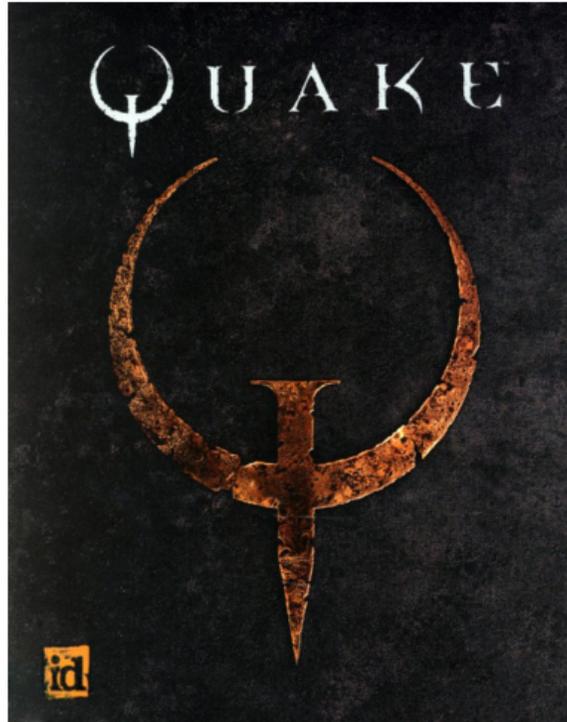
It may not be the best emulation handheld, have the most stellar build quality, the most powerful hardware, or the highest resolution screen. Yet for the emulators it runs, the Anbernic RG300 runs them very well, with a display that seems specifically tailored for the era of gaming that it is most comfortable with. If you were to use it as a modern Game Boy / Game Boy Color / Game Boy Advance handheld and nothing else it would be an almost perfect device. In addition to that it's a great portable Genesis / Sega CD, the ultimate Turbo Express replacement, a handheld NES library, and an excellent Neo Geo on the go. For the price point you really can't go wrong in my opinion, even with a sea of other options in the handheld emulation marketplace. We truly are spoiled for choice when it comes to these systems right now, a time where the question isn't so much, "Which one is the best?" but more, "Which one has the features that match my gaming tastes most?" There's also a bit of a collecting aspect here for some, as it can be fun to have a couple of these with different designs and control layouts. Regardless of personal preference, it's wonderful that the technology has gotten to the point where you can get in some serious retrogaming on the go - all in one device - with a high quality modern display.



## Quake: id Software's End of an Era

by *George "mecha" Spanos*

id Software were constantly pushing the boundaries of what PC gaming could be in the early 90s. Starting with **Commander Keen** upon their founding in 1990, John Carmack introduced screen scrolling to PC gaming. He then popularized the first person shooter (FPS) with **Wolfenstein 3D**. Finally, the envelope of the FPS was pushed even further with **Doom**, introducing networking multiplayer and crashing the networks of many office buildings and college campuses. So at the end of 1994, a plan was being put in place for what would become the next big thing in PC gaming. By 1995, the next project known as **Quake** was coming to fruition. Many obstacles lie in the path of making this dream a reality, and little did anyone know it would inevitably spell the end of the original team that comprised id Software.



Wolfenstein 3D was a huge success with the shareware distribution format. Shareware was a method of a game developer sharing the first episode of a game for free, where consumers could freely copy games on floppy disks and share them with other people. It was a novel approach of word of mouth promotion. The remaining episodes of id Software's Commander Keen and Wolfenstein 3D franchises were sold commercially by Apogee Games. This form of distribution would also be known as "The Apogee Model." Commander Keen was making \$30,000 in sales, and by Wolfenstein 3D that number rose to \$300,000. Apogee's staff were unable to keep up with the demand. With Doom, id Software added Jay Wilbur to handle the business end and resorted to an aggressive method of shareware distribution. Shareware was supposed to be free, but when retailers were selling it in stores, Wilbur made no attempts to stop them as a means of getting the game in as many hands as possible. When Doom's release was delayed and it inevitably hit the University of Madison's server, the school's network was demolished instantly. The shareware episode titled Knee Deep In The Dead, was the game's masterfully crafted sampler engineered to get fanatical players to buy the full game. This was achieved entirely in-house with a mail order system, costing consumers a cool \$40 to obtain. Although this approach was relatively successful, the company would have fared even better selling the full game in stores. They then brokered a new distribution deal with GT Interactive (GTI), to release six titles. GTI offered up the promise of pushing over 2 million units on their next game housed on Walmart store shelves. **Doom II: Hell on Earth** would see a full commercial release popping up in big box stores in 1994 and indeed shipped over 2 million units. With the Internet beginning to gain traction with the advanced Doom editing mailing list, custom levels (or in FPS terms, "maps") for Doom and Doom II were becoming highly plentiful. Entire packs of WAD files (the file format for Doom add-ons) were being distributed online and on compilation CDs. id Software weren't profiting off this, so they opted to produce their own commercial add-on pack called **Master Levels For Doom II**. Sourcing some of the best mod authors for the project, a 21 map collection was compiled and sold at the end of 1995. This would eventually prove to not be the final release within the Doom realm however.

id Software had been licensing their technologies, or more commonly referred to as engines, to other game developers throughout their existence. During their brief stay in Wisconsin between moving from Louisiana and before heading to Texas, id Software got to develop a working relationship with Raven Software. Their first licensed game was called **ShadowCaster**, which was an in-between hybrid of technologies post-Wolfenstein 3D but pre-Doom. When Raven Software got a chance to produce a game with the Doom engine, they created **Heretic**. Essentially Doom in a medieval setting, it featured a host of unique features including the ability to look up and down within the Doom engine, and an inventory system for holding various items and power-ups. In order to get a handle on how to develop a game with the Doom engine however, John Romero who had programmed all of the editing tools for id Software was given the role of Executive Producer on the project. Heretic was distributed the same way as Doom in December of 1994, only through mail order, and with the first episode as shareware. Heretic was not as big of a seller as Doom, but a follow-up was warranted titled **Hexen: Beyond Heretic**. Much grander in scale in every way, Hexen was class-based featuring 3 different playable characters with different weapons and attributes to provide a unique gameplay experience for each. The biggest innovation however was the hub system, a structure where a singular "hub" map would have unlockable entrances to a series of other

maps to enter and backtrack to. The game wasn't as linear or straightforward like Heretic was, instead providing an elaborate set of puzzles to progress through the hubs before reaching the climactic ending. The Hexen project took place during approximately the first year of development on Quake, putting John Romero in the Executive Producer role on the project while Quake engine development was taking place.

id Software's previous Doom engine offerings were plenty playable on PCs of the time, but in the infancy of the project in 1995, Pentium-based computers were very costly, leaving an abundance of the base being dominated by 486 processors still. In spite of this, John Carmack was setting out to produce a fully 3D engine, optimized as much as humanly possible to run on computers of the time. So ambitious was the project, Carmack enlisted some other help. One of his programming heroes, Michael Abrash, was tapped from his job at Microsoft to assist with programming the 3D engine. John Cash entered the company in a very intriguing fashion, having discovered the broken network code in Doom, and wrote to the company about the inability to achieve the desired four-player multiplayer the game had been billed as supporting. Having submitted his fixes, he was placed in charge of building Quake's network model, which was a large scale project all to its own given the game would be playable on the Internet too. John Romero was the project lead, intent on crafting an elaborate adventure rooted in their Dungeons & Dragons campaigns with an H.P. Lovecraft twist. Quake was hinted as being a future nemesis in the Commander Keen universe years earlier, but the series was placed on hold indefinitely while they set out to dominate the FPS genre instead. Quake's hero was to be a character with a large hammer like Thor, but as the development cycle progressed plans would wind up changing drastically.

Although a portion of Quake's team were carryovers from Doom or Doom II, very few members had experience with working on a game from start to finish. In interviews Romero had stated that in the past for Carmack to build a new engine and have it workable to create the graphical and map assets within it took about two months. For Quake, it would wind up taking all of 1995. American McGee was one of the map designers on the project, having logged some time in id Software's tech support for a time before being promoted to mapping in Doom II. He worked directly under Carmack to design test maps, occupying much time building and inevitably having to scrap his work as significant changes were being made to the game code. Artists Adrian Carmack (A. Carmack, no relation to John) and Kevin Cloud would draw textures for worlds that inevitably wouldn't even be used. Other map designers Sandy Petersen and Tim Willits would sit idle, pondering when they could start constructing Quake's dark world. Then somewhere in the mix was Romero, the project's lead designer, likewise left without direction beyond creating QuakeEd, the engine's level designer. Doom would see a commercial release through GTI branded as **The Ultimate Doom**, the original game plus an all new episode called Thy Flesh Consumed. In 1995 alone, Romero was overseeing Hexen's development, The Ultimate Doom's release, and production of Master Levels. He was also in another precarious position, being id Software's gateway to the fan community, famously spending much time playing Doom II against other players, but handling all media as well. Carmack on the other hand was isolated from any press relations, intended as a means to keep him entirely focused on the project at hand. So valuable was Carmack, the company had actually taken out a key person insurance policy on him if the event anything bad happened, valued in the millions.

Towards the end of 1995, actual game development outside the engine design was still frozen. Artists and mappers alike were already burned out and restless, eagerly awaiting a time to start churning out material. Romero completed his missions in getting The Ultimate Doom and Hexen out, with Master Levels on the way. He had taken notice of a project put out by an amateur modding group called TeamTNT, titled TNT: Evulution. The TNT mod was a 32 map megawad, the same size as Doom II, but with new texture assets and a menacing new soundtrack. So impressed with TNT, Romero offered for id Software to buy the mod and commercially distribute it. The team ultimately agreed, on the eve of when they would have released it for free as they initially intended, striking a nerve with the fan community decrying them as sellouts. How much Doom was too much Doom though? With Quake seemingly still at a standstill, it made perfect business sense to open up another channel to make money off the megahit franchise. TNT would be rolled out as one half of a game branded as **Final Doom**. TeamTNT mappers, brothers Dario and Milo Casali, submitted the equivalent of a map "demo" to American McGee weighing in at eight maps. Impressed was McGee, along with the rest of id Software, and the brothers were assigned to produce another 32 map megawad of their own design. This would become **The Plutonia Experiment**, built to be the most difficult Doom campaign yet for masters of the game to appreciate. It would take time to produce Plutonia though, which roughly coincided with the last brutal six months of Quake's development.

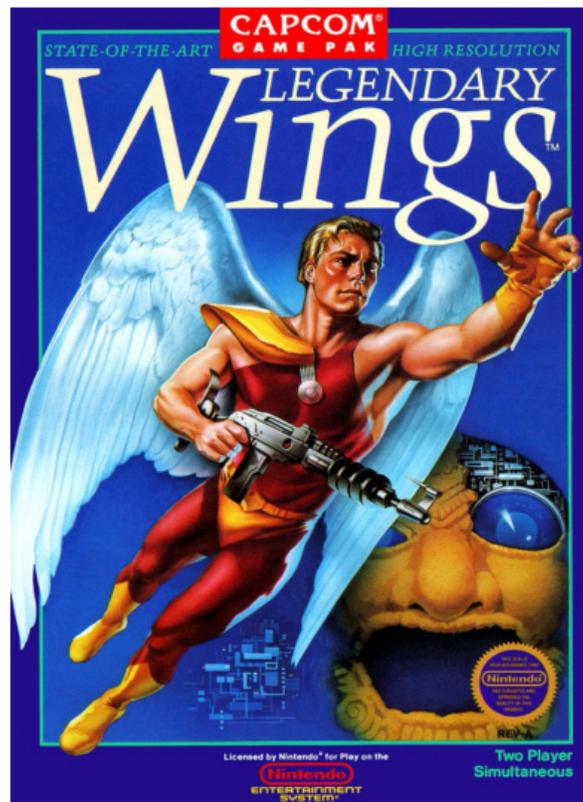
Romero's seeming absence, trying to build a bigger name for the company in multiple ventures, was beginning to grate on John Carmack. Although the engine development had left the rest of the team with almost nothing to do for months, Carmack was ready to give them a forceful boot into game design overdrive. It was 1996 now, the engine finally assembled, it was finally time to get to work. The last six months of development would become a virtual hell on Earth, the office walls torn down to erect what would be known as the "War Room." All of id Software were now occupying one singular space. Romero spoke of how they made Commander Keen under similar circumstances, in one room of the house they rented when they lived in Louisiana. The great bastion of creativity it was, everyone enjoyed the experience of making Keen and changing the PC gaming world forever. The War Room however, nobody wanted to be in the War Room. Having already logged twelve months on the project, it was getting to the point where they just wanted to be done with the game and move on. Romero's plans of a hero wielding the Mjolnir were going a similar route to how his friend Tom Hall's design document The Doom Bible was washed away in favor of Doom having nearly no story to speak of in favor of just pure unadulterated action. Hall himself was washed away by way of Carmack's insistence on the more simplified format, unanimously axed by all the founders of the company months before Doom dropped. Carmack said Quake should be made to be just like Doom, with very similar weapons with a very similar premise. Doom after all seemed to work out just fine sans Hall's extravagant narrative, so the team set out to build the best game they could with Quake's advanced technology minus its own set of lore. Everyone was tired and miserable, plodding away just to get to the finish line. A release date was nearing in June 1996, but it would wind up just being John Romero sitting in the office by himself laboring away at putting the finishing touches on their technical masterpiece. Much of the rest of the team fell completely off the radar. McGee had become deathly ill and was completely unreachable. Romero having lost out on his vision and having to operate under the stringent direction of Carmack, had felt he'd achieved all he could with the company he helped create. He phoned his former stablemate Tom Hall and requested that after they'd both finished their projects that they would leave to form a new

company. Although Romero had seemingly done everything right during his tenure with id Software, it was Carmack that decided he would be the next to go, with Romero seemingly bowing out on his own accord before it came to that.

Final Doom and Quake would be released on June 17th and 22nd, 1996 respectively, capping what would go down as the end of multiple eras. The classic Doom lineage was coming to an end, and although Quake's legend would just be beginning, only half of the original id Software would remain with Romero's exit. Half of the entire id Software team would leave the company after the nightmarish development cycle. Despite being philosophically nerfed in favor of basic FPS simplicity, Quake would go on to rewrite all the standards of FPS and become one of the first Internet online games shared by players the world over. Multiple online gaming services were spawned supporting the game, and multiple tournaments and ladders for competitive play sprung up. eSports were equally synonymous with the game, acceptably beginning with the Red Annihilation tournament in 1997, which saw Dennis "Thresh" Fong as the victor and winning John Carmack's 1987 Ferrari 328 GTS as the prize. The company would ultimately rebound from Quake, with its sequel **Quake II** released at Christmas 1997. With Romero gone, Kevin Cloud became the project lead, and the dark H.P. Lovecraft medieval setting was abandoned in favor of a futuristic sci-fi romp with the protagonist crash landing behind enemy lines, facing a mechanized race of monsters known as the Strogg. Quake had become a full fledged franchise, followed up with the ultra successful **Quake 3 Arena**, featuring all new technologies from Carmack to push 3D graphics in the PC market to new heights. id Software continued to be independently operated until they were purchased by Zenimax Media in 2009. Zenimax was later purchased by Microsoft this past March 2021.



At a time when most auto-scrolling shooter games, or shmups as they're more commonly known today, starred a spaceship usually killing hordes of other enemy spaceships, *Legendary Wings* dared to be unique. Very, very, unique. Featuring a post-apocalyptic style all its own, it certainly is not what you'd expect from a flying shooter from the 8-bit era. But is this game as Barney Stinson used to say on the hit show *How I Met Your Mother*, legen... wait for it... DARY?! Or is it just another ordinary shooter with a fancy coat of paint?



Released for the Nintendo Entertainment System in 1988 by killer third party developer Capcom, *Legendary Wings* is a scaled down port of the arcade original for two players. This port was interestingly enough released only in North America in an attempt to diversify the shooter genre. *Legendary Wings* combines a wide array of influences to create an incredibly unique game. The story and design of this shooter is an interesting mix of Greek mythology, dystopian futuristic sci-fi, and ancient Egyptian iconography. Since there are no cut scenes, the game unfortunately doesn't give you the full story but the NES and arcade operator's manuals do. The lore of *Legendary Wings* involves a super computer named Dark that had helped mankind prosper since ancient times, suddenly going haywire and deciding to instead wipe out the human race. Fortunately, two warriors are given a pair of Icarus-style wings by the Greek God of War Aries, and must use them to fly

and to destroy the giant evil computer to save the human race.

The gameplay is a pleasant mix of both a top down perspective and a side scrolling section, and each stage plays out in the same way for one or two players. You'll start each stage with a difficult vertical section, featuring a bizarre cast of enemies to gun down. There is a lot of variety in enemy types, with the instruction manual listing a surprisingly high thirty-two different types of enemies. They do however all seem to attack in fairly predictable patterns, many of which may give you real Galaga flashbacks. After battling your way through the first part of the level, you must fight and slay a fire breathing dragon mini-boss before you can move on to the second section, dubbed "The Palace." This tomb-like area switches the perspective horizontally as you fight from left to right. When you reach the end of the palace, you must face off against a creepy evil bio-mechanical being with flying eyes and brain matter. The stages have a very similar progression which some may find repetitive, with a bit of lather, rinse, and repeat, but I enjoyed the routine structure to each stage.



*Playing the first stage in two player mode (left), the evil computer Dark attempts to swallow the player (right)*

Along the way in each level there are also two optional sections for the player to encounter, both of which involve getting sucked into a tornado. One of these you'll most definitely want to avoid called the "Danger" area. Whatever you do, try to avoid taking the highway to the danger zone, because when an onscreen version of the evil computer Dark draws you inside of him, you'll find yourself in a disgusting and dangerous vertically scrolling area full of bones, guts, and brains. The enemies you'll face inside of Dark are equally grotesque, like flying bugs and wasps. But on the other, happier side, there is an area full of Egyptian culture influences that the game calls "Lucky." It sure is because the area is full of various power ups, and bonus point adding items. There is one of these special sections per stage that can be accessed if you bomb a particular enemy base, and then touch the tornado that comes out of it. Finding and reaching this stage is a huge help if you want to complete the game.

That's because you'll want to power up your legendary character to his maximum status as quickly as possible and maintain it for as long as you can. The power ups of the game each progressively improve the style and power of your blaster, but each time you get hit, it takes you back down a level. When you are completely unpowered and get hit, your character loses a life. Once you collect four power ups in a row without getting hit, you reach your highest level, which the manual calls the "Firebird" level. Once you become the Firebird, you become a shining pink and yellow screen clearing badass, with a super powered gun that shoots in large waves. You can also then take two hits before dropping down a power up level. Be careful though, because after taking a few hits you pull a reverse Hercules and go from hero to zero in no time flat.

The power up system of *Legendary Wings* practically demands you to keep your player powered up if you want to go the distance. That's because some of the enemies in the later stages are nearly impossible to beat unless you are powered up. But you don't need to panic if your character suffers some pain, as the game does give you ample opportunities to power up. As previously mentioned there are also the Lucky sections. It seems like these Lucky stages were the developers attempt to ease up on the difficulty by giving players some easy upgrades, as long as you know where to find them. I wouldn't say this game is easy, but thanks to the frequent power ups, it is on the easier side for a shmup from the NES era. But it'll still take a quick trigger finger and a lot of skill to beat this game and destroy the evil computer Dark, especially if you're playing without a turbo controller.



*A gross view inside of Dark in a Danger stage (left), battling with a dragon in Firebird mode (right)*

Another part of the real challenge of this game comes from the unique inclusion of the bombing element. There are bases and turrets below the player that cannot harm you if you fly above them, but they will shoot extremely accurate shots at your player like a real Jerkules if you do not blow them up first. You can destroy them by dropping bombs simply by pressing the A Button. Their shots have a real tendency of being exactly where you want your character to be, so destroying them before they shoot is one of the real keys to victory. It's not exactly bullet hell territory, but dodging their shots becomes an enjoyable challenge after you get really good at maneuvering your flying character around the screen.

It should also be mentioned that the music, graphics, and sound of *Legendary Wings* is also top notch. As is the case for most Capcom games of the era, the presentation of this game is simply superb. The main stages are varied and full of vibrant, colorful graphics and enemies. The music is at times very up-beat and catchy, and at other times it is skin-crawlingly creepy. It always seems to set the mood perfectly whether you're flying over an ocean, or stuck in the bowels of a disgusting robot. Two of the real standout songs are the up-beat game over music, and the super catchy, bouncy, tune that plays in the Lucky stages. Both are sure to be stuck in your head long after you turn off your NES.

All of this adds up to make *Legendary Wings* one of the best, weirdest, and most under appreciated shmup style shooters on the NES console. Perhaps the sheer overall weirdness of this game is why it doesn't have a much bigger and deserved following. It's a fantastic combination of an incredibly interesting setting, fun gameplay, unique graphics and co-operative multiplayer. Longtime veterans of the genre may find it a tad easy and perhaps a bit repetitive, but for others, it's one of the game's strengths. Capcom certainly helped to diversify a genre that could've gotten stale with this gem of a game. There truly is no game quite like it, and makes it well worth strapping on your controller and your very own *Legendary Wings*.



## Konami's Hyper Olympic, Hyper Sports, and Hyper Shot

*by David Lundin, Jr.*

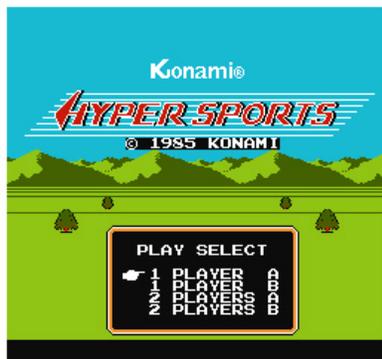
At the beginning of last year, in preparation for the then upcoming 2020 Tokyo Olympics, The Retrogaming Times was planning a special retrogaming sports issue. Of course as 2020 rolled on and the Olympics taking place as originally scheduled became less and less of a priority the idea was shelved. Consideration was made to revive the idea in tandem when the Olympics were rescheduled for July of 2021 but the uncertainty surrounding the event once again prevented the idea from coming to fruition. With the 2020 / 2021 Olympics now in the past and the end of the summer fast approaching, let's get one last competition in with that most classic of Summer Olympic-themed video games - Konami's Track & Field. While extremely popular in 1980's arcades and at home on the NES, the button-mashing action appeared on the Famicom a little differently.

The original arcade game was released in 1983 in Japan as *Hyper Olympic* and in the USA as *Track & Field*. Released to coincide with the then upcoming 1984 Los Angeles Summer Olympics, *Hyper Olympic* featured six events: 100m Dash, Long Jump, Javelin Throw, 110m Hurdles, Hammer Throw, and High Jump. Rather than a joystick, control input came in the form of a pair of "Run" buttons and a "Jump" button positioned in between them. The events used quick and rhythmic tapping of the Run button to build either speed or rotational energy, with the Jump button used for everything else - jumping over hurdles, jump timing and trajectory in the jumping events, and aim and release in the throwing events. A year later a sequel made its way to arcades, again with different titles depending on region - *Hyper Olympic '84* in Japan, and *Hyper Sports* in the USA. Utilizing the same input scheme, the sequel added seven new events with more of an emphasis on input reaction and timing: 100m Swimming, Skeet Shooting, Long Horse, Archery, Triple Jump, Weight Lifting, and Pole Vault.



*Hyper Olympic for Famicom features four events taken from the arcade version of Hyper Olympic / Track & Field*

Konami converted the games to a number of different home console and computer platforms, sometimes simply porting over the existing arcade events, other times adding a bunch of new ones as in the case of the MSX versions. Hyper Olympic arrived on the Famicom in June of 1985 and featured four of the six arcade events: 100m Dash, Long Jump, 110m Hurdles, and Javelin Throw. The events are run through in that order and play out much as they did in the arcade, with players competing to make the fastest times in running events and longest distance in the jumping and throwing events to earn points. Three months later in September of 1985 the sequel hit the Famicom but this time using the title the arcade sequel carried outside of Japan, Hyper Sports, rather than Hyper Olympic '84. This made sense from a marketing perspective, as 1984 had since passed and using it in a title surely wouldn't sound modern as Konami continued to build out the series as an early home gaming franchise. As with Hyper Olympic, Hyper Sports on the Famicom featured four events: Skeet Shooting, Triple Jump, Archery, and High Jump. Three of these events were ported over from Hyper Olympic '84, while High Jump was one of the missing events from the original Hyper Olympic.



*Hyper Sports for Famicom features three events from the arcade version of Hyper Olympic '84 / Hyper Sports and one from the previous arcade game*

Both games are very reasonable approximations of the arcade originals, with only a slight downgrade in visuals and audio. Notably the huge amount of speech featured in the arcade games is absent but unsurprising for a Famicom conversion. Most importantly the games still feel and play like their arcade counterparts and run extremely smooth. I also think everyone loves the rendition of the "Chariots of Fire" theme that plays on the title screen. Two years later in 1987 the Famicom versions of Hyper Olympic and Hyper Sports would be combined into a single game on the NES, released under the title the series was best known as outside of Japan: Track & Field. While not reaching the same level of prominence it held on the Famicom, the NES version was a very popular game in its own right, especially during the early days of the hardware.

For the eventual NES release, control had to be reworked slightly to best accommodate the standard control pad. Rather than placing Run and Jump crowded together on the B and A Buttons, the A Button was used for Run while any direction on the directional pad was used for Jump. This spread things out just enough and allowed for rapid tapping of Run without drifting over and hitting Jump in error. Yet the small buttons on a control pad weren't an ideal method of input on a game that is all about extremely fast and rhythmic button taps. Not to mention the excessive wear this could create on the controller, especially with the Famicom where the controllers are hardwired and require a degree of disassembly for replacement or repair. Konami seemed to have figured this out early on and sold an accessory to better mirror the arcade experience, a pair of controllers called the Hyper Shot. In fact the Famicom versions of Hyper Olympic and Hyper Sports require a Hyper Shot, they will not work with the regular controllers. Initially Hyper Olympic was sold in a special package bundled with the Hyper Shot, with both the game and controller sold separately upon the release of Hyper Sports.



*An unusually clean Hyper Shot controller, Hyper Sports, Hyper Olympic and Hyper Olympic Genteiban! for the Famicom - author's collection*

Plugging into the 15-pin peripheral expansion port on the Famicom, Hyper Shot has two cables that run to two separate controllers, similar to the arrangement of Atari 2600 paddle controllers that many may be more familiar with. Both controllers are identical in design, roughly the same thickness as a bar of soap and a little larger than an index card. All edges are smooth and nicely rounded and the underside of each has small rubber feet to keep the controller from sliding while being used in play. Spaced equally apart in the center of each are two large red buttons, Run and Jump, featuring a gentle concave design and surprisingly quick button response. This is because in addition to a very short button throw, each button has a spring in between it and the rubber actuator. The spring tension is decently stiff and the actuators are much larger and thicker than what is found in a regular control pad, designed for heavy duty and high frequency use. The artwork on each controller is mirrored like a tiny cocktail table, with a large Roman numeral in the middle to denote which controller number it is. The Hyper Shot logo is styled after the arcade Hyper Olympic logo, complete with an American flag motif, and everything is set against white plastic for a very unique and high quality look.

As Hyper Olympic was a bit of a phenomenon on the Famicom, the Hyper Shot was immensely popular in Japan as Famicom accessories go, making it possibly the best selling Famicom controller just by how many of them are still out there in circulation. Of course it being required to play the games has a lot to do with that and it's up for debate on what Konami's motives were in designing the game in such a way. Was it so they could sell their game at a premium price due to the inclusion of a special controller? A way to make Hyper Olympic stand out on the store shelf next to all the other small box early Famicom games? Or did they simply not want to be responsible for consumer complaints directed toward Nintendo for players wearing out their Famicom controllers while playing the game? I suppose all three are valid points and all three could be true.

There have been various tricks used to facilitate more rapid button tapping in the arcade versions of these games, probably the most widely known being to use an implement such as a pencil to quickly rock between the two Run buttons alternately. It seems everyone who played these games back in the day developed some sort of trick for faster times and less fatigued fingers. The arcade control panels also would often take a beating, especially when being played by someone pounding on the buttons as fast as possible rather than using a lighter and more advanced touch.



*How most Famicom Hyper Shot controllers look these days after decades of hard use*

On the Famicom, the most popular technique seems to be that of rapidly rubbing one's fingertip or fingernail back and forth across the Run button in quick, short movements - just enough to come off the button and back on. The wear pattern on most surviving Hyper Shot controllers seems to confirm this, as many of them have an arc of smeared printing and scratched plastic on the controller face across the Run button. The scratching doesn't surprise me but how smeared and melted the printing tends to be does - undoubtedly from the heat generated by rapidly sliding a fingertip back and forth across the controller for years. While this method is effective, after playing for awhile I ended up with a small blister on the tip of my index finger - the full arcade Track & Field experience at home for a lot of people.



*Shinya Arino demonstrates the ruler technique on episode nine of the very first season of the television show GameCenter CX*

Another apparently popular technique in Japan among students was to use a flexible ruler to tap Run. The ruler is held flat over the Run button with the end hanging off the side of the Hyper Shot. The player then flicks the edge of the ruler upward with their fingertips in a quick wrist motion, causing the ruler to vibrate against the Run button. The vibration resonance can be adjusted depending on where the ruler is being held, with optimal run speeds dependent on a smooth ruler flicking rhythm. This technique was so well known and nostalgically remembered, it was featured in one of the very first episodes of the of the popular Japanese retrogaming television show GameCenter CX. Show host Shinya Arino demonstrated the ruler technique when tasked with beating the in-game world records in each event of Hyper Olympic, instantly recalling how to perform the method as in his youth. Sure these "special techniques" essentially boil down to cheating but if everyone playing is using one then it still comes down to skill, competition, and fun.

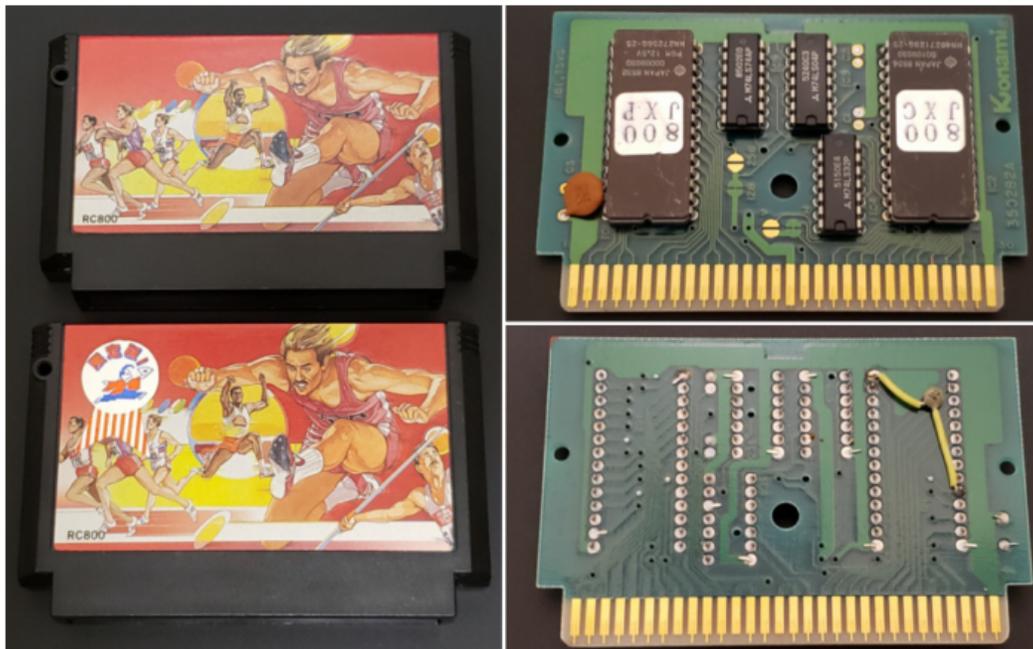
One last item of interest is a rather peculiar version of Hyper Olympic for the Famicom that often gets mixed in with all the regular cartridges. Both the box and cartridge are that of a normal copy of Hyper Olympic except for a small foil sticker denoting it as "Genteiban!" (limited edition) along with a jumping sprite of a very non-Hyper Olympic character. The game itself still starts up as Hyper Olympic but the player's character has been changed to resemble someone out of the Edo period or dressed in festival attire complete with kimono, hair in a topknot, and celebratory fans that he pulls out once completing an event. Additionally an extra options menu allows selection of the starting event, with each event continuing as usual after. Aside from the player sprite and starting event selection, the game seems otherwise unchanged and plays

as Hyper Olympic does. While uncommon compared to a standard copy of Hyper Olympic, there does seem to be quite a few of these Genteiban cartridges out in the wild. In most complete emulation sets the Genteiban version is included along with all the other Famicom games, not as an alternate or a hack, but as a standalone cartridge. It has also been registered in the NES Cart Database since 2012.



*Hyper Olympic Genteiban! plays exactly like Hyper Olympic with a change in the player character*

The real question that I have never been able to find the answer to, is if the Genteiban version was an official special release from Konami or a seemingly large scale fan hack and redistribution of the game. The PCB has two EPROMs for the PRG and CHR data along with a bit of rework on the backside, both an uncommon sight on a licensed production game. I have also seen at least two different versions of the PCB layout although both are on Konami boards. If they were handmade by a hobbyist or bootleg group, the work is extremely clean and professional, only creating more speculation that Konami may have had something to do with it. Unfortunately there seems to be little to no information on the origin of the Genteiban version although it comes up in discussion online from time to time. If anyone reading knows more about how the Genteiban release came to be or who was behind it, [please let me know!](#)



*A standard Hyper Olympic (left top) and Hyper Olympic Genteiban! cartridge (left bottom), the front (right top) and back (right bottom) of the Genteiban PCB*

The popularity of Hyper Olympic, Hyper Sports, and the Hyper Shot controller means that not only are there tons of them out there, they are also extremely affordable. For less than \$20 out the door you can often find a full boxed set in good condition with a little bit of hunting. It's also one of the few game series from this era I can think of that is just as universally engaging and enjoyable as it was when it was originally released. Everyone seems down to play a few rounds of these games, especially when using the Hyper Shot, whether they're big into classic games or not. It's also a cool set to have if you're a Famicom player and looking for a unique hardware-specific experience.



## The Myth, The Legend: Castlevania II: Simon's Quest

by [George "mecha" Spanos](#)

Konami's *Castlevania II: Simon's Quest* was released in North America in December 1988 in an eerie time period for console gaming. The Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) was a runaway success for Nintendo, and with each passing year new games brought about new and exciting innovations. In the case of sequels to games from certain franchises, those innovations were probably more like deviations. Chronologically starting this trend was *Zelda II: The Adventure of Link* in early 1987, the next chapter after 1986's *The Legend of Zelda*. Taking away the overhead combat format and turning it into a side scroller was an ambitious move for the time. It set about the precedent that there was no one truly definitive way to play *Zelda*, that there could be variation. Although it took a little while to get to it in the United States, the domesticated rendition of *Super Mario Bros. 2* arrived, likewise changing its core concept from original *Super Mario Bros.* and its true Japanese sequel which later came to be known as *The Lost Levels* in America. Rather than a platformer that consisted of stomping on enemies or throwing fireballs at them, you now were able to uproot vegetables and other objects from the ground and throw them at your enemies. Technologically however, the biggest change in the game was the ability to scroll the screen vertically, making the levels a lot deeper in their layouts. The takeaway was the late 80s in NES gaming demonstrated there was no fear to drastically alter the gameplay, and for all intents and purposes, the format worked, generating massive sales.

1986's *Castlevania* was the first outing in the series, starring the hero Simon Belmont. The game was a linear platformer, pitting Belmont against an array of enemies navigating through labyrinths to a boss battle at the end of the level. Rooted in the lore of various characters from monster movies of the past, the final boss is Count Dracula himself. *Castlevania* was designed within the lens of trying to convey a cinematic experience into a video game or at least within the bounds of the technology available at the time. Aesthetically the levels had creepy visual themes with equally haunting music. Belmont had a selection of different weapons to obtain throughout his quest to aid in defeating enemies, along with other hidden items. About the only real flaw in the entire game was probably the jumping mechanic, and experienced players would find ways to overcome the limitations of this movement in levels where you can fall into pits. The game is near unanimously considered to be one of the greatest games ever made for the NES by multiple publications, both of contemporary 1980s vintage or today. It was the first step in what would go on to become a franchise spanning 35 years of existence, and undoubtedly a sequel would need to follow.



Enter *Castlevania II: Simon's Quest*, Konami's deviation with this outing was to expand its horizons, in a huge way. Gone was the linear format of a simple start and finish from the original game, replaced by free roaming between towns, fighting in the woods, and entering the occasional mansion. The game takes place immediately after the first with Simon Belmont resuming his role as the hero. Although he successfully killed Dracula before, a maiden informs Belmont that Dracula had placed a curse on him. In an effort to break the curse, Belmont must reclaim Dracula's remains and resurrect and kill him once more. RPG elements were introduced with the ability to build up an inventory and even upgrade some items along the way with currency in the form of Hearts, which are dropped from slain enemies. The towns consist of people to talk to that will give subtle clues about where to go or have items for sale. Experience points are generated from a portion of the Hearts obtained, expanding your health meter over time in certain regions of the world. In all, since you need specific items for tasks, the majority of the game consists of collecting Hearts to be able to buy equipment. If all lives are lost and it's game over, all Hearts and experience points following the last level up will be lost and the player will have to amass them all over again. The last new feature of the game is a password system in the North American release (or saves to disk with Famicom Disk System) to continue previous progress.

So with all the great additions that came with *Simon's Quest*, now it's time to talk about all its flaws and why isn't considered a classic like *Castlevania* or *Castlevania III: Dracula's Curse*. The Angry Video Game Nerd (James Rolfe) cut his very first review with this game, and watching it for the first time back in 2006 it was as if all the things I noticed were wrong but couldn't articulate were all thrown out in a hilarious laundry list. One such flaw sticks out very much, in the transitions

between day and night. A text box appears and the letters animate in what seems like slow motion saying the same exact thing you've already read about 200 times verbally dictating it's daytime or nighttime now. Its abrupt interruption of the gameplay is frustrating. Many of the clues that the townspeople speak of are effectively useless in the English version of the game due to mistranslation. One of the most famous typos is when you acquire a part of Dracula and it says you now "PROSSESS" the part. Hidden away in walls that you can break are books, that actually have useful information contained within them, but when the text box appears you can cancel it with the press of a button. This is understandably a problem because you probably don't expect it and are in mid-button press; there's no way to re-read the hints the books share. Speaking of famous, there's a part in the game where you have to kneel beside a wall with the Red Crystal item to have a tornado sweep you away to the next otherwise inaccessible part of the game. It's famous because unless you saw an NES tips & tricks VHS tape back in the day, there's no indication anywhere within the text of the game that tells you that you need to do this. The mansion levels are either entirely absent of bosses or made them so easy to strategically defeat that you can just walk past them entirely. Seriously, the jaunt through an empty Transylvania devoid of anything dangerous en route to the weakest boss battle of all with Dracula is borderline insulting. Konami probably thought you had to occupy so much time collecting Hearts and going through a near impossible to navigate world was enough that they'd cut you a break somewhere. Even more amusing is the world map, like on pages in a book in the official Nintendo strategy guide, the Game Atlas, also doesn't make any sense.

A fan made modification of the game titled Castlevania II: Simon's Quest Redaction was released in 2011 that corrected a lot of the issues with English translation making the clues useful and speeding up the day / night transition to not be so much of a nuisance. Angry Video Game Nerd was able to create a brand off his Simon's Quest review and has since posted two additional episodes covering the game in a Re-Revisited retrospective review and also showing Redaction in action. (Not to mention popularizing the Internet online video review format in the process!) While it may not be held in the same regard as its two other NES stablemates, much credit is owed to trying something vastly different the second go around. The series has so many entries that I've never even seen myself but have consistently pushed the envelope over time. The series continues to be highly regarded to this day, going as far as to extend into other media with a Netflix series in 2017 that's both critically and commercially successful. If Simon's Quest taught us anything, it's not to trust the floors and to throw Holy Water wherever possible so you don't fall through.



## Weekly Retrogaming Trivia Recap

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

Every Friday on The Retrogaming Times Facebook page ([facebook.com/theretrogamingtimes](https://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:

### **06/25/2021 - WEEK 220**

Question: The cover of the Who's 1982 album "It's Hard" features what arcade game?

### **07/02/2021 - WEEK 221**

Question: Cleopatra, Leonardo da Vinci, Sherlock Holmes, and King Arthur are all encountered in what NES game?

### **07/09/2021 - WEEK 222**

Question: Son of Phoenix is a bootleg of what arcade shooter?

### **07/16/2021 - WEEK 223**

Question: What arcade shooter developed by Toaplan contains no flying enemies?

### **07/23/2021 - WEEK 224**

Question: Hyper Sports is the sequel to what game?

### **07/30/2021 - WEEK 225**

Question: What unlicensed NES game features pool tables, bath tubs, and cereal boxes?

### **08/06/2021 - WEEK 226**

Question: What is the only Pokemon species to be named in the title of a Game Boy game?

### **08/20/2021 - WEEK 227**

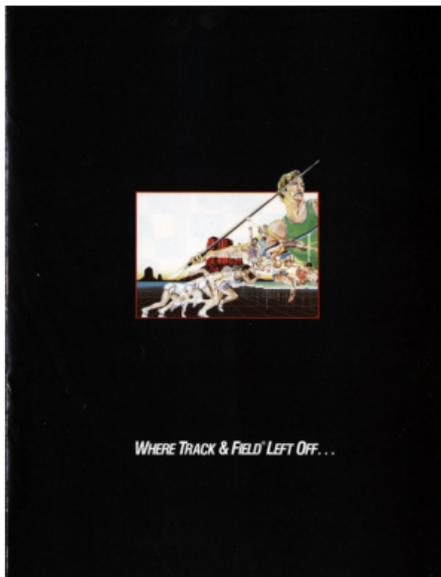
Question: Marco, Tarma, Eri, and Fio are characters in what arcade game series?



Space Duel on the cover of the Who's It's Hard (left), Mike Jones encounters Sherlock Holmes in Zoda's Revenge: StarTropics II (right)

**Answers:**

- Week 220 Answer: Space Duel.
- Week 221 Answer: Zoda's Revenge: StarTropics II.
- Week 222 Answer: Repulse (1985).
- Week 223 Answer: Tiger-Heli (1985).
- Week 224 Answer: Track & Field / Hyper Olympic.
- Week 225 Answer: Micro Machines.
- Week 226 Answer: Pikachu, in Pokemon Yellow Version: Special Pikachu Edition.
- Week 227 Answer: Metal Slug.



The rather striking flyer Konami used to promote Hyper Sports to arcade operators in the USA

**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](mailto: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.](#)

In getting this issue finished up for publication I realized a number of articles I had been working on wouldn't be completed in time. I hold myself to the same deadline as everyone on staff and when that magical date comes around (almost always the 20th of every even-numbered month) that's when submissions for that issue are locked. Anything that comes in after

that date gets collected for the following issue, even if they are submitted the next day, and that goes for me as well. That was exactly the case as I finished up an article after the deadline while working on the process of final editing and assembly of this issue, in addition to working on other articles in development. One in particular has been a bit of a labor of love in getting everything together to properly showcase a forgotten yet revolutionary concept for a video game that would have an entire genre unknowingly follow it. A couple of those should run in the next issue, which will also be our last of 2021 - how the time really does fly. November will also feature our annual Holiday Gift Guide in what has become our yearly tradition, something I always look forward to publishing.

Thank you once again for reading The Retrogaming Times. We'll be back on November 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](mailto:trt@classicplastic.net) or check out the submission guidelines on the main page. Submit an article today and join a great retrogaming tradition!

See You Next Game!



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