

The Retrogaming Times

THE BIMONTHLY RETROGAMING HOBBYIST NEWSLETTER

THIRTY-SEVENTH ISSUE - MARCH 2022

EXPLOSIVES HALT ECOLOGICAL DISASTER!

The Retrogaming Times
- The Bimonthly Retrogaming Hobbyist Newsletter -

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Thirty-Seventh Issue - March 2022

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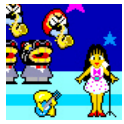
Prepare to Qualify

by David Lundin, Jr.

As noted in the previous issue, this September will be the 25th anniversary of the original Retrogaming Times and as we reach that quarter of a century milestone we will be publishing our final issue. If you or ANYONE you know has written for ANY "Retrogaming Times" family newsletter over the past 25 years, [PLEASE e-mail me!](#) I'm going to attempt to get as many alumni as possible back to write for that final issue, to write a very special article in addition to anything else they would like to contribute. I want us to go out with a grand celebration. In the next couple weeks I will begin to reach out to as many people as I can from our history but as the digital world has changed so much since 1997, finding contacts that are still active can be difficult. PLEASE put the word out for past Retrogaming Times, Bit Age Times, Retrogaming Times Monthly and The Retrogaming Times staff to [get in touch with me](#) and take part in celebrating a **quarter century** of our incredible newsletter! With that, we have four wonderful issues left including this one. That means there are three chances remaining for any of you, our readers, to contribute to the newsletter and join a great retrogaming tradition!

The adventure begins this issue with a descent into the depths that lie below, as Merman explores Rogue and the Commodore 64's assortment of Roguelike games in More C64! Donald Lee takes a look back at a fan-favorite column of his from years ago as Vectrexenstein takes a seat at Don's Desk. Bomberman is a series that has been going strong for almost forty years and is fondly known as an excellent multiplayer game. However Hudson once attempted something different with an almost forgotten single-player action spinoff, Bomber King / RoboWarrior, that explodes as this issue's cover story. Classic board and strategy games make the jump to the Sega Master System as Mateus Fedozzi shares gaming memories, both electronic and tactile. As the roster in each modern Smash Bros. game grows larger and larger, Dan Pettis takes a look at his top ten character picks for the future with a retrogaming twist. The classic video game movie The Wizard finally receives a deluxe collector's edition release and we'll detail why it is the definitive version of the polarizing film. The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles go portable in their first Game Boy game, a very popular title that helped define the early days of the hardware. ColecoVision may not be the most popular retrogaming console these days but it featured a diverse library of unique games. A chance encounter with that library of games over the course of one summer is remembered, as well as the friendship that it helped grow. 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! Of course article 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.](#)

NOTICE: Due to the ongoing COVID-19 situation, 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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KansasFest, July 19th - 24th 2022, Kansas City, Missouri, USA

KansasFest is the world's only annual convention dedicated to the Apple II computer that revolutionized the personal computing industry. KansasFest invites hobbyists, retrocomputing enthusiasts, and diehard aficionados to gather from all corners of the world.

KansasFest is about a computer and a camaraderie unlike anything else. The Apple II attracts people of a certain mindset and spirit who exhibit a rare creativity, resilience, dedication, history, and nonconformity. The Apple II has lasted for more than 40 years, and the friendships and memories made at KansasFest will last even longer.

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

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Classic Game Fest, July 23rd - 24th 2022, Austin, Texas, USA

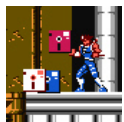
The biggest retro gaming event in Texas is back for its 15th anniversary! Enjoy 70,000 square feet of retro video games and fun at the Palmer Events Center. The annual summer event will feature all the expected attractions including special guests, live music, free play games, a massive vendor hall and more. Ticket information will be available soon.

For more information, visit <https://classicgamefest.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. 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!



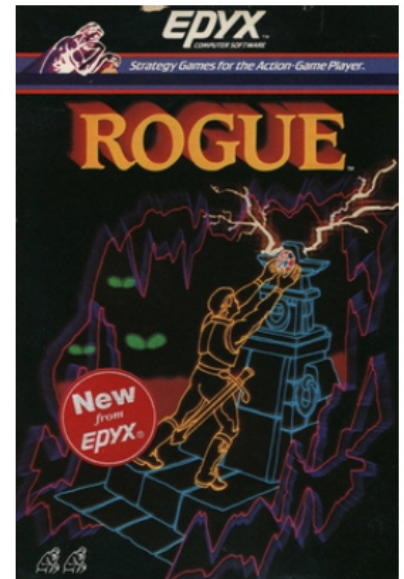
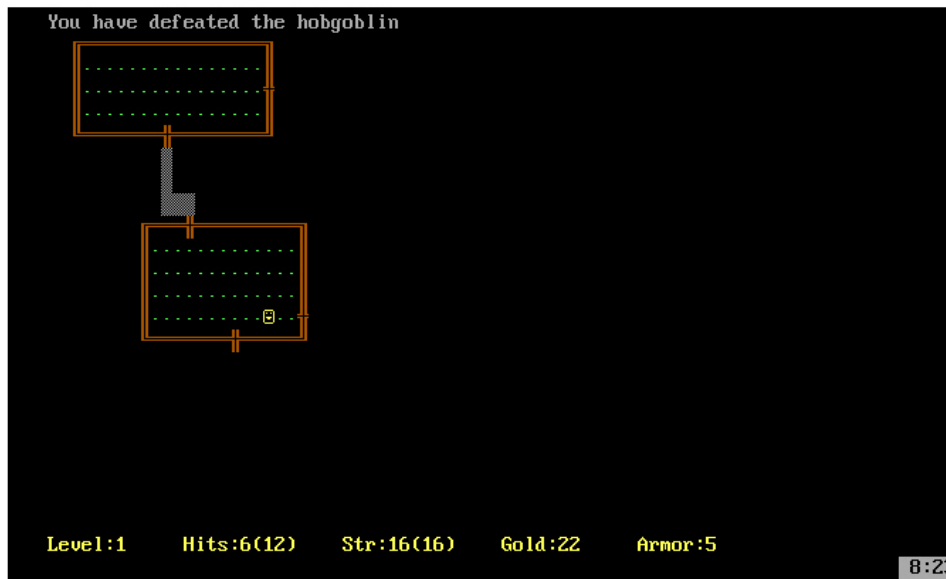
More C64! - Going Rogue

by Merman

Rogue and Roguelike games have been a major fad recently and can trace their roots all the way back to 1980. The Commodore 64 has also had its fair share of Rogue games in recent years, and so Merman explores them.

ROGUE (1980, Mainframe)

The original Rogue was developed on the University of California, Santa Cruz mainframe by Michael Toy and Glen Wichman, using ASCII graphics to represent a dungeon and its inhabitants. Monsters were shown as a capital letter, such as Z for a zombie. The player had to fight their way down to the bottom level of the dungeon, retrieve the Amulet of Yendor and then escape. Potions, armour, weapons, and scrolls could all be found to help (or sometimes hinder) the player. The key features of the game were the random generation of the level layouts and the permanent death of the player's character. The original Rogue split its levels into rooms connected by corridors, with line-of-sight rules governing what would be shown to the player as they moved. Ken Arnold at UC Berkeley would also help develop and improve the original Rogue, with offshoots including Hack, Moria and Angband following.



The MS-DOS version of Rogue and the cover of the Epyx version.

Epyx published official home computer conversions of Rogue in 1985, but there was no C64 version at this time. Rogue had influenced other Epyx titles - including the Apshai trilogy and Sword of Fargoal. (Jeff McCord had released his Gammaquest II game for Commodore PET in 1980, written in BASIC and with random dungeon generation around the same time as Rogue. The earliest commercial Rogue-like game was Beneath Apple Manor in 1978, drawing on an even earlier mainframe game from 1975 known as DND).

Play the MS-DOS version at the Internet Archive: https://archive.org/details/msdos_Rogue_1983

ROGUE (1988, Mastertronic)

This was to all intents and purposes an upgraded version of the original Rogue, replacing the ASCII letters with redefined graphics. The same line of sight rules and random generation are in play, with rooms connected by corridors. After the hi-res bitmap for the loading screen, the actual title screen is quite clunky - with rotating coloured text and the option to input your name spoiled by poor keyboard response. In game, you move the arrow and point to a square to move - or select objects from the inventory box on the right side of the screen. Oddly, this then requires you to use keyboard inputs to select what you want to do with that item (W to wield a weapon, D to drop, and so on). Moving up and down stairs requires you to select the option from the menu bar at the top of the screen. There are also options to REST and SEARCH here, below the status bar that shows your character name, amount of gold and dungeon level.

At the bottom of the screen are your HIT POINTS, STRENGTH and ARMOUR value (the higher the better). Text appears below this bar describing what is happening, including what is happening when you encounter an enemy monster - attacked by walking into it. Another major flaw is that there is no death animation; the game simply stops and displays your rank (based on the experience and number of enemies you have killed).



Rogue's Mastertronic loading screen and starting out on level 1.

The ZZAP! reviewers Paul Glancey and Gordon Houghton were extremely critical - comparing it to Gauntlet and similar arcade maze games rather than a traditional adventure (or indeed the original Rogue). Maybe it was down to the younger age of the reviewers, who had not had the experience of the mainframe version? Despite the bugs (see below) and jerky scrolling, a final review score of 10% was very harsh. (The German magazine Power Play gave a slightly higher 27%, comparing it unfavourably to Hack - the 1984 offshoot of the original Rogue, still being developed today.)

In 2017, Hokuto Force released a special updated version of Mastertronic's Rogue, fixing bugs in the original. You were unable to use scrolls and potions properly, and it was impossible to climb back up the stairs and complete the game. Worse still, you could

not actually collect the Amulet of Yendor to win! As well fixing other bugs and glitches, music by Linus was added (which can be switched on and off by pressing M).



Choosing what to do with the mace - and dying as a journeyman adventurer.

Bug-fixed version by Hokuto Force, 2017: <https://csdb.dk/release/?id=156806>

TROGUE: DRAIN OF DOOM (2019, wbochar aka Wolfgang Bochar)

In the 1980s zombies invaded a small mining town. A daring hero lured the undead creatures into a mine, blocked the trogue (a type of drain) and flooded the levels. Unfortunately, an alarm has recently gone off - somehow the trogue has been removed and the water has drained. The player must enter the mine, activate the eight water pumps, and flood the mine once more.

After the opening bitmap and series of information screens, the player starts on level 1 of 64. You are equipped with some basic items to help. Medpacks will heal your wounds, oxygen tanks will help you move through flooded levels and the Holy Hand Grenade will damage anything in its explosion radius. More of these items can be found as you explore, along with the crowbar that will do more damage to enemies.



Troque's bitmap - and the Holy Hand Grenade refers to the classic film Monty Python and the Quest for the Holy Grail.

Enemies are fought by walking into them. You can also advance the turn by pressing Space, meaning the enemies move and you don't. This can move them out of the way or put them in an easier position to attack. At the top of the screen is shown your current level in the mine, and the score. Function keys select the current item used by pressing Fire (shown in the box at the bottom). Your supplies are shown by the series of numbers bottom right, the hearts show your health level and the rank your experience level (increased by killing enemies).

Activating a pump increases the water level, shown by the blue lines in the border. If you are on a flooded level, each few steps through the water will cause health damage. This is reduced by having oxygen tanks, but these gradually deplete and are used up. Find your way to the stairs to climb up to the next level, trying to reach level 64 and the top of the mine.

This is nicely presented in hi-res graphics, with a clever "animated" disk directory and intro bitmap. Needing to use the function keys can be a little awkward at the pace of the game, but you get used to it. The game has multiple difficulty levels and saves your highest scores to disk. It is quite challenging by Rogue standards, with the water level forcing you to move quickly.

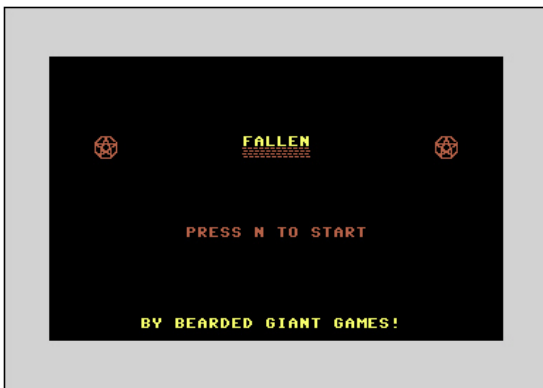


You need oxygen tanks to walk through this flooded level - but fighting this low-level toad should be easy.

Official website and download: <http://wbochar.com/troque64/>

FALLEN (2020, Bearded Giant Games)

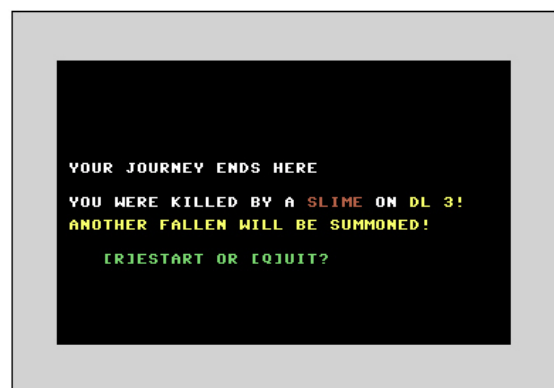
Here is a unique idea - a type-in game released as a PDF. The free version contains a black & white version of the PDF. Paying for the premium version gives access to the longer colour PDF, source code, development notes and a PRG file of the complete program. Control is by keyboard only, and because it is a BASIC listing there is quite a long delay when the game first starts as it sets things up and then generates the dungeon layout. (There is a similar delay between levels as the new layout is generated).



The title screen - and fighting a bat.

At the top of the screen display are your stats - HP (hit points), ATK and DEF (attack and defence), and FOOD (one unit consumed for each square moved). At the bottom of the screen is your character's LEVEL, XP (experience points, earned to increase your level) and DL (dungeon level). You explore the dungeon, collecting treasure and attacking enemies. Finding the stairs allows you to go up or down a dungeon level. As with all classic Rogue games, you only see the parts of the maze in your line of sight, revealing more of each level of the dungeon as you explore. Pressing . will climb down the stairs when you find them, and M will meditate to regain HP (at the cost of Food).

The original preview had black & white graphics, but the final type-in has improved colour graphics and some limited sounds. Compared to the other games here it moves quite slow and can be cumbersome in terms of movement, but it has an enjoyable atmosphere of its own and is worth trying out.



This time you are fighting a snake - dying leads to this game over screen.

Free download (premium version \$2.99): <https://zapakitul.itch.io/fallen-a-basic-roguelike-for-the-c64>

KATABATIA (2020, malcontent aka Jeffrey Oullette)

Eight years after the first preview, the full game arrived - followed by the v1.1 update, released on GitHub under an MIT license. Control is from a joystick in port 2, holding down Fire to access the in-game menus. After the PETSCII title screen, you get a choice of character class - Warrior, Rogue and Magician. Next you select a God to worship when you encounter an altar, with each God helping a particular attribute. Finally, you enter your character's name. The in-game display shows your name, HP (hit points), SP (Spell Points for casting magic), C (for coins) and number of Arrows.



The well-drawn PETSCII title screen and accessing the in-game menus.

Combat happens when you walk into a monster, with the commentary scrolled up by pressing Fire. Status effects such as Pois(oned) and Conf(used) are shown at the top of the screen. Gold coins are picked up automatically, but other items must be picked up via the menu system. In the menus, you can Throw / Shoot an item (such as arrows), check your Inventory (to use potions), and look at the Options. These are Status (showing your attributes and how many experience points you need to go up a character level), Quit Game (you get a chance to confirm or cancel), Sound Toggle and Cancel (to go back to the game). Praying at an altar requires a sacrifice of gold but will boost your attributes based on the chosen God. Potions are described with an adjective but have a random effect; you do not know what it will do until you use it. You can also encounter shops, such as the Fletcher who will sell you extra arrows.

Finding the staircase and entering the menu gives you the option to Use Stairs to change level of the dungeon. This submenu also gives you the chance to Save Game. The small graphics are effective, especially the "dots" showing your torchlight/line-of-sight. There is background music that can be turned off. I particularly enjoyed the "dripping blood" effect on game over. The random generation gives some very twisty level layouts, and it feels like a good challenge.

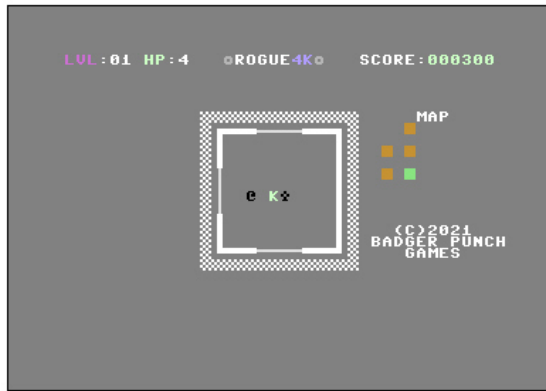


Worshipping a god at an altar can have a positive benefit, while you gain experience for each defeated enemy.

GitHub repository with latest update: <https://github.com/x0rcy5t/Katabatia>

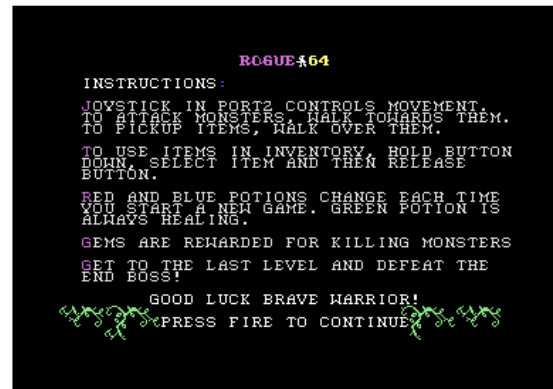
ROGUE64 (2022, Bitmap Soft & Badger Punch Games)

Rogue64 started out as an entry to the Cassette 50 Coding Competition, cramming a Rogue-style game into less than 4K. Badger Punch Games took the decision to enhance and improve on that 4K version, publishing a physical cartridge version through Bitmap Soft in early 2022.



The original Rogue4K plus the contents of the Bitmap Soft cartridge version.

After the introduction with speech and logos, the main menu offers you the choice of Start Game, Instructions or Credits. The instructions give a brief description of how to play. Starting the game generates a random dungeon. Each level of the dungeon is based on a 5x5 grid of interconnecting rooms, gradually mapped out as you travel around. Each screen is made of 10x10 squares, with a randomly generated selection of objects and enemies, and doors on the walls where you can leave to enter the next screen. Somewhere in each level is a key that will open the stairs to the next level. You will also find Chests containing gold. Most actions will boost your score, shown at the top of the screen.



Rogue 64's main menu and instructions.

Your character has a Health Rating (starting at 5) and a Strength rating (starting at 1). Killing enough enemies will drop a Gem, giving a permanent +1 to Health (refilling it) or Strength. Hearts and Green Potions will also refill your Health bar. The Blue and Red Potions have a random effect chosen at the start of each run, which will be the same until you die. These could include a temporary boost to Strength, a "Reveal Everything" potion that shows where all the rooms on the current level are, a Time Freeze potion that freezes enemies and leaves them vulnerable, a Monster Blast that wipes out all the monsters currently onscreen or Strong Ale that reverses the controls for a brief time.

Potions and the key are stored in your inventory, shown on the left of the screen under your Health and Strength bars. Holding Fire enters the inventory, left and right moves to an item and releasing Fire activates an item. You will be told if it cannot be used there, or you can move back to the X to leave the inventory. Monsters will freeze while you access the items, giving you a chance to use a potion on them.

Although the graphics are small, they are quite well made and the randomly-generated levels give the feeling of a big dungeon. The enemy names are funny. The difficulty curve is well designed, with monsters getting stronger as you progress. Although there is an element of luck with the potions, it adds to the variety. The music adds to the atmosphere, with simultaneous sound effects that work well. Having all the control on a single joystick makes it easy to pick up, and the challenge of getting a high score draws you back.



You won't know what a runny potion does till you use it, but the gem will increase either your Health or Strength permanently.

The physical cartridge version comes with a glossy instruction booklet, stickers, and special gifts including a gem and a miniature sword! Demand has been very high, with the first batch of 50 selling out quickly and the second batch being sent out in February 2022. Check the website for availability before ordering.

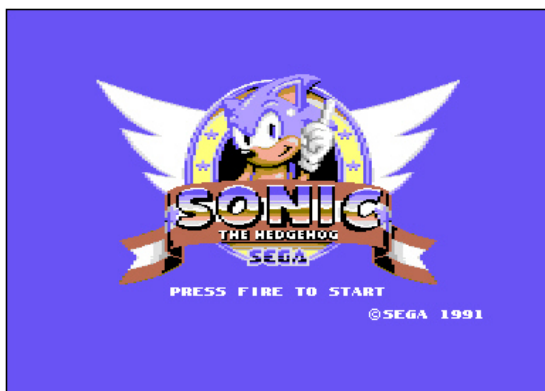
Cartridge version, £35 plus postage: <https://www.bitmapsoft.co.uk/product/rogue-64/>

Digital download, \$4.99 or more <https://badgerpunch.itch.io/rogue64>

The original Rogue4K is available at: <https://badgerpunch.itch.io/rogue4k>

Note that Rogue 64 is NOT fully NTSC compatible, although the digital download now has a fix that allows the .crt image to run on NTSC machines.

We climb the stairs and leave the C64 Dungeon for another issue. I hope you have enjoyed this adventure. But a quick mention for a completely different game.



The brilliant title screen, and Sonic taking on Robotnik at the end of Act 1.

In December 2021, an incredible new release for the C64 happened. Andreas Varga (Mr. SID, the coder behind the C64 conversion of Prince of Persia) announced **SONIC 64** - with music by Mikkel Haastrup and graphics by Oliver Lindau. This is a conversion of the Sega Master System's Sonic The Hedgehog. It requires a RAM Expansion Unit of at least 256K; this can be emulated in VICE and by the 1541-Ultimate cartridge. Not only does the REU help create smooth full-screen scrolling, with enough memory the whole game can be installed to the REU to speed up access between levels. It is a truly astounding technical achievement and a great version of Sonic too. Visit <https://bit.ly/sonic64> for access to the latest version.



Don's Desk - Vectrexenstein Revisited

by [Donald Lee](#)

About a week or two ago, I suddenly got the urge to reread some of my older articles I had written for Retrogaming Times Monthly back in the earlier days when I started writing. There wasn't anything in particular I was looking for, I just wanted to see some of the stuff I had written before. So I was just clicking through the archives that Editor David Lundin, Jr. had put together. It was cool to see some of my old interests. I had forgotten I had wrote several columns on the Vectrex gaming system. Since it's been quite some time, I thought I would revisit the Vectrex.



Alas, the first and most disappointing thing is the original emulator I used (ParaJVE) never got updated beyond 2010. I had used the emulator on my old iMac computer for a while. When I tried to download the emulator and run it I was told it required an older version of Java, so I think the old emulator may be toast. I found a more modern one but there wasn't a lot of instructions included and I didn't really want to spend a lot of time trying to figure things out at the moment (maybe in the future). I had a thought that maybe I should search for some resources for people interested in the Vectrex and include them here. With that being said, here's some things I discovered:

Packrat Video Games, LLC - Homebrew games for Vectrex and more:

<https://www.packratvg.com/vechbrews.html>

List of Vectrex emulators (all platforms):

https://emulation.gametechniki.com/index.php/Vectrex_emulators

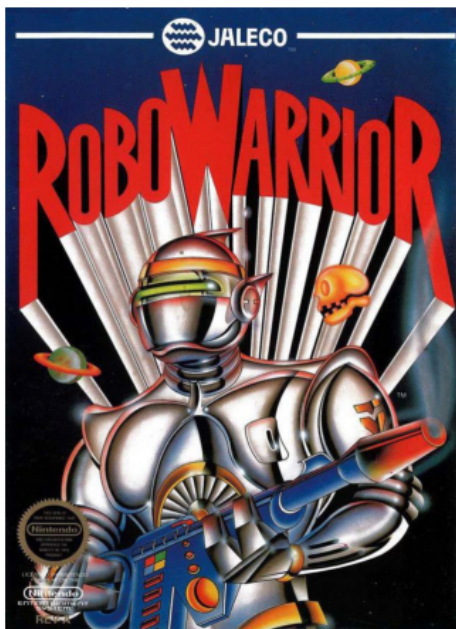
Lastly, out of sheer curiosity, I went to eBay to see if anyone was selling Vectrex systems. Indeed there are quite a few people selling used Vectrex systems for several hundred dollars. If emulation doesn't work for you, maybe get a real system instead. In any case, that does it for now! See you next issue!



RoboWarrior (NES) - Hail to the Bomber King

by [David Lundin, Jr.](#)

I tend to have a rather eclectic taste in my favorite games for any given platform. While a couple mainstream classics sometimes make their way into a spot here and there, more than often said lists are made up of games people haven't heard of or are generally dismissed by the masses for one reason or another. One game that has always held a place on the shortlist of my favorite Nintendo Entertainment System games is RoboWarrior, the often overlooked spinoff of Hudson's Bomberman series. My fascination with the game actually began just prior to owning an NES as a kid, when I saw the game briefly covered in The Game Player's Guide To Nintendo magazine sometime in early 1988. Shortly after that I saw an even larger feature in an issue of Game Player's Nintendo Strategy Guide. Something in those screenshots resonated with me - the game was so colorful and weird and had crazy boss enemies and just so much going on that it permanently embedded itself in my mind. At that point I had only seen Nintendo on a couple television commercials, in toy stores, and briefly at a classmates house (as detailed in our previous issue). I was used to Atari 2600 and arcade games and this looked like something different than either of those. After receiving an NES that Christmas I would finally buy RoboWarrior sometime in 1989.

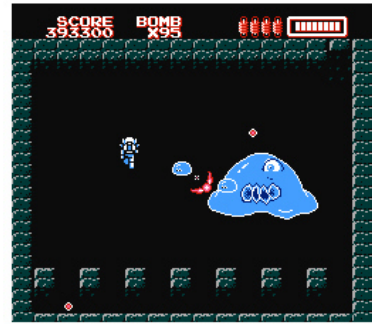
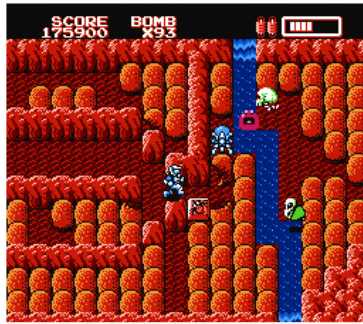
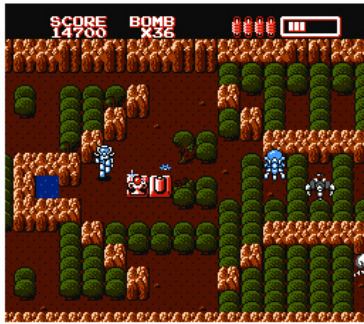


RoboWarrior for the NES (left) and Bomber King, the Famicom game it was localized from (right)

RoboWarrior's origins lie with a Famicom game titled Bomber King, released in 1987 as a pseudo sequel and spinoff of Bomberman. Bomberman was actually first released in 1983 for Japanese computer systems but didn't gain its more familiar cutesy visual style until a 1985 Famicom conversion, which quite literally exploded in popularity across Japan. At the time the Bomberman games were still in their early days and designed to be primarily single player affairs, with the multiplayer component becoming more prevalent as time went on. It's following in this style that Bomber King was developed, taking the concept of bombing through an enemy-filled maze of destructible walls and expanding it into an arcade style run-and-gun. When planet Altair's climate control computer hurls the planet into environmental chaos, the combat android Knight is dispatched to investigate the cause and remedy the malfunction. When Bomber King was released on the NES as RoboWarrior in 1988 the story was changed slightly, with the player controlling a cyborg named ZED. ZED is sent to planet Altile to defeat the Xantho Empire, which under the command of its leader Xur has invaded and begun to terraform Altile for colonization.

RoboWarrior is played from a three-quarters overhead perspective with environments that are scrolled by the player's movements. Unlike a Bomberman game, movement is not confined to a grid. ZED is able to freely move in eight directions, with movement being very smooth and responsive. The A Button fires an arm cannon with endless ammunition that is used to attack both standard enemies and bosses. The B Button releases a bomb, up to two at a time, which can be used both as an offensive weapon against enemies and to destroy terrain. Active bombs are colored red and will detonate a few seconds after being placed by ZED. Destroyed enemies will leave behind neutral blue bombs that ZED must collect to replenish his bomb stock. ZED always fires on his right side, no matter the direction he is facing. Although this means his shots are always to the right of center, the hitbox for his shots is very generous. This generous hitbox also extends to item pickups, especially blue bombs. In addition to his cannon and bombing capabilities, ZED can collect a vast array of power up and utility items. These are activated by pressing the Select Button, selecting the item, then returning to the action screen and pressing the B Button. Most important of these utility items are energy tanks that fully replenish ZED's energy meter. While taking damage from enemies or bomb blasts will deplete the energy meter, it also slowly drains over time as ZED uses power.

The objective of each area, referred to as a Period, is to find a key at the end of the environment to open the door to the exit. Many areas in RoboWarrior will actually wrap around endlessly, never coming to an end, unless ZED locates a special Chalice item hidden within the area. In fact Period 1-1, the very first area in the entire game, requires uncovering and collecting a Chalice to reach the end. This can make the game extremely confusing if you don't know what you're looking for or haven't read the instruction booklet. Even with the instruction booklet, the illustrations for items contained within look nothing like the icons in the game, typical of early NES documentation. After obtaining the Chalice the area will eventually come to an end, where a key must be uncovered and collected before the door to the next area will open. It is impossible to know what areas will require finding a Chalice and what areas will naturally come to an end without prior play and I can understand how this frustrates some players. Additionally every area has underground passages that are uncovered by bombing specific parts of the terrain. The underground areas are completely dark, requiring a candle or lantern to illuminate them, but are chock full of powerup and utility items lying out in the open. While the varying types of solid ground can't hurt ZED, he will sink like a stone in water after only a couple moments. The only exception being areas known as a Well of Hope, which are usually single squares of water contained within destructible walls. Stepping onto a Well of Hope will double ZED's inventory of all special items, which is everything except the super items: Life Vests, Lamps, and Megaton Bombs.

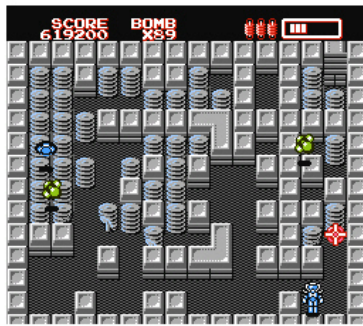
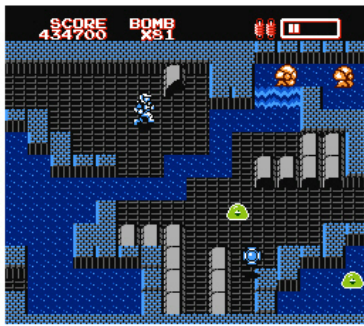


ZED prepares to collect the Chalice and visit a Well of Hope (left), the Hudson bee randomly awards a special item (center), fighting the first boss (right)

There are a lot of nuances to the game that are either misunderstood or overlooked by many people who then write it off as poorly designed or too difficult. First and most importantly is not realizing that uncovering items is a key mechanic of the game. Yes, there is a ton of terrain to bomb through and tons of items to pick up and you'll spend most of the game chewing through solid walls. I don't know why this would come as a surprise - after all, the game is derived from Bomberman! Keeping an eye on energy depletion, especially early in the game, is also especially important. An alert will sound when ZED is down to his last energy pod but by then he's already hanging on by a thread. A mechanic often missed is that increasing score builds levels, which builds defense and makes the game easier. There are actually eight levels of defensive power, which can be checked on the inventory screen, that naturally build as points are earned. Building a couple levels early on allows ZED to better survive being caught in a bomb blast or pummeled by a homing enemy. Similarly, uncovering and picking up Power Balls increases the range of ZED's cannon, shown on the inventory screen as the range statistic. At full range, ZED can fire clear across the screen and fire more rapidly as well, allowing him to better manage enemy threats. Another key is to never leave an area without a full stock of 99 bombs, which can be quickly farmed by destroying flying enemies at the end of a stage before exiting. This only takes a minute and will make ZED far better prepared at the start of the next area. Lastly are medals, which serve as currency for the shops that ZED visits at the end of an area. Medals are reasonably limited in number so every one you can find counts. Equally as important is spending medals wisely, as they should only be spent on the rarest items - Lamps or Megaton Bombs. It's also important not to die in the game, especially early on, as death halves all inventory upon continuing and resets ZED's cannon rage to level 1. So much of the game is based upon building inventory throughout the journey, particularly with the super items, that a great run can be totally decimated by a single mistake at an inopportune time.

Even with all the quirks of the game in mind, a common complaint that I often see is that it's far too easy to die in RoboWarrior and the constantly draining energy meter only compounds the problem. My response is that the draining energy meter is actually a replacement for the timer in Bomberman and it makes RoboWarrior easier than Bomberman, as it allows for more than a single hit. The Japanese version, Bomber King, is actually far more difficult to begin in as bombs cause more damage to the player. A single bomb hit at the starting defense level will kill you immediately in Bomber King, even with a full energy meter. This was adjusted for the USA release, actually making the NES version easier for a change. In RoboWarrior at the starting defense level, ZED can take two direct bomb hits with a full energy meter and survive, as the damage bombs cause to ZED has been reduced. Regardless of the version, the higher your level, the more damage you can negate. By level 8 (obtained at 1,200,100 points) you can absorb nearly three times as much damage than at the start of the game, making the mechanic of earning points for defense a critical aspect of the game. That all said, RoboWarrior is a very difficult game that requires real strategy and planning to get anywhere in. My general strategy is to build up my inventory so that when I get to the Well of Hope at Period 6-3, I can double up to near maximum inventory of most items - usually everything except candles and the super items that the Well of Hope doesn't increase.

Without a doubt my favorite aspects of RoboWarrior are the boss designs and the soundtrack. There are a ton of bosses in the game, and while they are all large and detailed, a few of them are extremely large with very impressive animation. The first boss, Globula, is about six times bigger than ZED and is a perfect sample of what to expect going forward. Globula has animated movements, its mouth and eye both go through different expressions as it attacks, and it spits out tiny versions of itself that hop around the screen. The serpent dragon Virpides is my favorite of RoboWarrior's bosses and is extremely impressive. Virpides pops out of a large well at the center of the screen, moving around the entire screen as its segmented body stretches out. The individual segments follow the head as it breathes fire and pursues ZED, while lightning bolts rain down from above. Pretty insane for a summer 1987 Famicom release! With the beautiful colors and very detailed sprites featured throughout the game, this really looks like something a generation ahead, like a PC Engine / TurboGrafx-16 game rather than a Famicom release. As for the soundtrack, it is excellent, featuring what may be the catchiest main theme of any 8 bit video game. Incredibly enough, the main theme actually has lyrics - which are displayed on the screen in a karaoke mode that shows up as a "Theme Song" option after continuing in Bomber King. The chorus "Go for break out! Go for break out!" perfectly represents the core gameplay. I'd say this Hudson's best audio work on the Famicom / NES, and is as good as or better than Capcom's Mega Man tracks. The boss theme and the flourish that leads into it are also something else and really get the blood pumping.

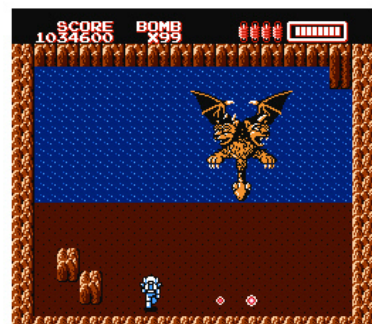
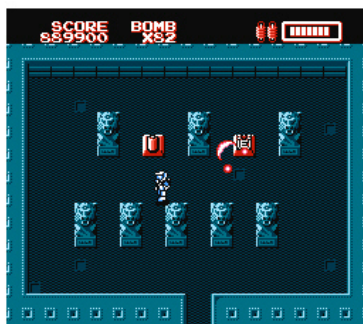


Navigating a flooded area presents a new challenge (left), a single-screen area reminiscent of Bomberman (center), dodging the attacks of Virpides (right)

Admittedly there are a few things I don't like about the game but they are few and far between. The game does exhibit slowdown and some flicker when there are a lot of objects on the screen but generally it doesn't impede gameplay or input. Truthfully I'm surprised it doesn't happen more often, given how large the sprites are, how everything moves at different speeds, and how much animation everything has. This tends to happen most when there are a lot of blue bombs and enemies on the screen at the same time. Some enemies move very fast, especially those that home in on the player, giving little time to react. This can lead to some cheap shots but is more of an annoyance than anything. I also have some issues with the Life Vest item, which allows ZED to walk on water for about twenty seconds. When it wears off and ZED begins to sink, the inventory screen cannot be opened to activate another. This means you either get to dry land in a step or end up drowning. The area of water beneath ZED will begin to flash when the Life Vest is starting to expire but it can sometimes be hard to see and it's often easier to just activate another after about fifteen seconds or so. When I die on a run it's often because of this.

I've read that some consider Bomber King part of the Baster Master series rather than a spin-off of Bomberman, mainly due to the overhead areas in Blaster Master having a passing resemblance to some of those in Bomber King. Additionally the lone Game Boy sequel, Bomber King Scenario 2, was released in the USA as Blaster Master Boy and in Europe as Blaster Master Jr. However the sequel, as well as the Blaster Master games, were Sunsoft developed or published titles and had no involvement from Hudson, although Aicom may have been involved with both Bomber King games. Makes sense that the Game Boy sequel would be marketed as a Blaster Master game outside of Japan, as that game had far more brand recognition internationally than "RoboWarrior" ever did, and Sunsoft could triple dip and publish it directly across all regions. However the bundling of Bomber King with Blaster Master has more to do with a narrow focus on how the games were released and branded in North America, rather than their original development and publication origins. Heck, the in-game character artwork for Scenario 2 essentially grafts the cutesy Bomberman aesthetic onto the more detailed Bomber King style. Granted, Blaster Master is a bit of a mess in this regard, with the series backstory and narrative moving all over the place due to how popular that series became outside of Japan. If anything, it's possible that the creators of Metafight (the Famicom game released as Blaster Master on the NES) were familiar with Bomber King and were inspired by its gameplay. This wouldn't be unheard of as Hudson was one of the most successful and popular game developers in Japan at the time.

Bomber King had an MSX port that attempts to straight up convert the Famicom game to the MSX platform. While it makes a commendable effort to convert the game for the MSX, it's ultimately a pretty big mess and not very fun to play. What is interesting to note is the box art for the MSX game uses the NES Bomberman cover as a base, then adds enemies from Bomber King to it. Looking at those illustrations, it's clear that the NES Bomberman cover art is based on adapting the aesthetic of Bomber King. Yet by 1990 the more familiar cutesy Bomberman art style had established itself as the series norm and there was no looking back. All of these aspects should solidify that Bomber King is most definitely a spinoff of Hudson's Bomberman series.



Terrain often deforms in relation to bomb proximity (left), bombing statues to uncover items in a Room of Idols (center), a boss fight with limited room to move (right)

As mentioned earlier, I was smitten with RoboWarrior from the very first time I saw blurry screenshots of it in those earliest issues of Game Player's magazine. I can remember finally seeing the game and picking it out at Home Express, a long defunct big-box retailer that always had the best selection of games and accessories. Although Toys "R" Us and Kay Bee Toys were also sources of video games at the time, Home Express was by far my favorite place to go for games. Games at Home Express were displayed in very distinct security cases that were essentially tall metal cages with the games hanging on peg hooks within. No matter when we would visit, there would always be tons of people standing at the cages talking with the attendant, watching what people were buying, and discussing Nintendo with other customers. After waiting your turn, the attendant would open the case and take a game out for you to look at, putting you on the spot. Others waiting or browsing would usually take a look at the game as well over your shoulder, and dare I say there was always a bit of pressure in that moment as a kid, but that was half the fun. The weekend evenings were especially busy and it was on one such evening I left with RoboWarrior.

Funny story, once I got home I never read the instruction booklet other than quickly flipping through it maybe once. I played the game a ton and loved it but as a kid I never got past Period 1-1 as it scrolled on endlessly. Watching the attract mode showed a bunch of different areas and even a boss fight, so I figured I just had to keep going and eventually the first area would end. I went into the underground areas, discovered the Room of Idols bonus zones, opened up the Well of Hope... but never found the Chalice. I finally pulled out the old Game Player's magazines and read through the strategies, where it specifically explained the mechanics and even featured a screenshot showing exactly where the Chalice in Period 1-1 is located... and still I never put two and two together way back then. It wouldn't be until many years later, when I was in high school and on a FuncoLand-powered NES buying frenzy, that I finally sat down and learned the mechanics of the game. The deeper I got into the game the more I enjoyed it, as if it had always been one of my favorite games, even though as a kid I had only barely scratched its surface.



The NES cover art for Bomberman (left) is reused with a few changes and additions for the MSX conversion of Bomber King (right)

My love for RoboWarrior / Bomber King has never wained since, as it continues to be one of my absolute favorite video games. It also tends to be one of "those" NES games that a lot of people know but don't care for, considering it to be overly difficult or lacking depth. To that end it has become the NES game that I can sit down and marathon for someone, showcasing the strategies and nuances that often lead to them having a higher opinion of the title. There are a few other NES games that I like more but RoboWarrior has become the NES game that people know me for championing. RoboWarrior isn't a fast or easy game to complete, and it definitely does have areas that are a slog with wall-to-wall barriers to bomb through, but I still find it to be a ton of fun. I've always thought it would have worked well as an arcade game as it straddles the line between arcade style action and console style depth. Perhaps if the inventory penalty after death was removed and some of the longer areas trimmed down a bit it would flow well in an arcade setting. It has also been a hope of mine that Bomber King would be featured on the Japanese retrogaming show GameCenter CX since it seems perfect for the show format: a Hudson Soft game, brutally difficult learning curve, a giant dragon boss (the show host is infamously fearful of fighting dragons in games), and a karaoke mode. It'll probably never happen but hey, a guy can dream. If you've dismissed RoboWarrior in the past I implore you to give it another try but be sure to read through the manual or at the very least check out the game mechanics in a strategy guide. I guarantee you the game will still be challenging with a couple taxing tricks here and there but for games of this vintage that's to be expected. Go for break out!!



SMS Memories: Capitalism and Warfare Tabletop Games Go 8-bit

by [Mateus Fedozzi](#)

Those of you who follow The Retrogaming Times and read my SMS Memories column may remember when I wrote about my uncle and how he influenced my liking of Sega games. But video gaming wasn't the only passion he taught me to pursue. He is a fan of gaming in general, including board gaming. Among his many board games, one easily impressed kid can find War II, the sequel to the Brazilian version of the famous Risk.

The original War was released by Grow Jogos e Brinquedos in 1972, with modified Risk rules. Grow was founded by four college students who wished for more mature board games than what have always been staples in the Brazilian market, mainly Banco Imobiliário (Brazilian version of Monopoly) and simple roll and move kids games. The defense is much stronger in War, and the map is different - but it is mostly the same old Risk game with its dependency on luck and long play sessions.

When the 80's arrived, Grow decided to update the game. They called upon famous Portuguese designer Mário Seabra to fulfill this task, who completed the game with the help of his son Carlos Seabra and fellow designer Fernando Moraes Fonseca Junior. War II is a faster game, thanks to its use of aerial warfare, and new dynamic objectives for the players. Cuba was added to the map, so the armies can have a second option to march across the Americas.

Both War and War II became favorites of mine after my uncle first unveiled the second game to me and my cousins, in a hot summer afternoon of 1991/92. They stand proudly among my collection of board games and... Oh, yes. Video games! This is an article about the Sega Master System, right? So, for this edition of The Retrogaming Times, I'll write some words about my two favorite board game adaptations for the Sega 8-bit machine: Monopoly and Chess (you guessed, the SMS doesn't have that many options on the genre).



SMS **Monopoly** is interesting as a history piece, because it was the first console game ever made by Sega of America, the company which is still around nowadays, still bringing amazing Sega goodness from Japan. Mind you this is a different company from the original Sega / Gremlin, which went down with the video game crash. Some people were common to both versions of the American Sega, among them Steve Hanawa - the guy who programmed Turbo, Monster Bash and Monopoly itself.

Speaking of the game, it's a nicely programmed (as any Hanawa game is) version of the classic, with cute graphics that resemble its board and its pieces but still have the Master System flavor so typical of the console. Sound is neutral, and for a board game neutral is perfect. Up to ten players can take turns on the capitalist action of trying to monopolize the real estate market. The AI is OK, mainly because Monopoly depends mostly on luck. Players can interact buying or selling properties between them. The number of rounds may be customized, but longer sessions can be saved on the battery backup. Although it's a simple game, Monopoly is always a treat when all the human players are in the mood.



Sega Chess was programmed by the people at Probe, one the most prolific Master System developers from Great Britain. Never released in US territory, the game should work fine on an NTSC machine. I really enjoy this game's graphics. They're a no-nonsense rendition of the board game, but the cart opens with the image of a knight carrying a Sega flag, which kind of creates a cool medieval atmosphere so fitting of the chess theme. Chess was created in Europe during medieval times, and the word itself probably is an ancient word for "king."

On the Master System, Chess can played either on a 2-D or a 3-D board. Both are very clean, as are the voice effects that permeate the game. There's music in the intro, there's silence during the match, which is always the correct choice for board games. The best part is the many options one may choose for its AI adversary, from the time it spends thinking to the many levels of difficulty it can be set to. You can even fight an AI that adapts to your style. Besides the main game, the player can also try to solve chess problems. It's difficult to imagine how chess could be better implemented than this on the Master System.

And that's it, dear fellow (retro)retrogamers of the world. While there's nothing original like Anticipation for the NES or the dozens of exclusive and very creative board games for the Famicom, and obviously nothing that comes close to Mario Party, one can still kill some time with Monopoly or Chess on the Master System. Especially when they can find few or no friends around, and that's what virtual board games are mainly designed for, aren't they?



Top Ten Retro Characters For The Next Smash Bros. Game

by [Dan Pettis](#)

The latest Super Smash Bros game really did live up to its name as the Ultimate incarnation of the franchise. The game did a fantastic job of adding tons of new characters from all corners of the gaming universe to the roster. There truly was someone for

everyone, featuring crossovers galore, and including lots of characters old school fanatics have been clamoring for. Characters like Ridley, Simon Belmont, Sephiroth, Banjo-Kazooie, Kazuya, and King K. Rool all broke the Internet with their typically incredible and hilarious introduction videos.

With the recent addition of Sora from Kingdom Hearts as the seemingly final downloadable character for Ultimate, hard working director Masahiro Sakurai can finally rest, with a complete and diverse lineup of nearly ninety fighters. But wild rumors and speculation can never rest, and there are still plenty of intriguing options from the world of retro gaming to join the battle as soon as a new Smash Bros. installment comes out... whenever that may be. With that in mind, here are my choices for the top ten old-school cool characters who should join the fight for the next round.

10. Mach Rider

Ever since Melee expanded the size of Smash rosters exponentially, there's always been at least one incredibly random old school character revived from the dead by Nintendo and added to each game's lineup. Forgotten and odd characters like the Ice Climbers in Melee, ROB in Brawl, the Duck Hunt Dog in the Wii U version, and Piranha Plant in Ultimate, have been added. So there surely will be another rando in the mix that the kids of today are unfamiliar with added to the next game. So how about the dystopian motorcyclist from the original NES era Mach Rider?

This rad racer first appeared in a self titled launch game for the Nintendo Entertainment System, riding a motorcycle through a dystopian wasteland of rock power trio Rush's favorite year 2112. For his moveset I think the way that this futuristic hero rides a bike could be used in a similar way to how Wario's motorcycle is used. It could be called on as a special move when needed or they could permanently keep Mach on the bike. Or if Nintendo wanted to go the route they've gone before, they could take Mach Rider off of the bike and give him a variety of guns and blasters. It worked wonders when they pulled the same move for series favorites Star Fox and Captain Falcon. The rider has appeared as a trophy in Melee, and as a Spirit in the last game, so he has been on the minds of the Smash production team before. I don't know if it's highly likely that ol' Machy makes an appearance in the next game, but it would be much appreciated by fans of deep cut Nintendo games like myself, and could help bring some much needed attention to the character's only solo game.



Geno and his introduction in Super Mario RPG: Legend of the Seven Stars, deep within the Forest Maze.

9. Geno

Memories of the beloved game Super Mario RPG live on in the hearts and minds of anyone lucky enough to have played the Super Nintendo classic as a kid. Mario's first move into the role playing realm expanded the scope and scale of the Mushroom Kingdom, featuring tons of memorable original characters. It also opened the door for the other beloved Mario role playing franchises Paper Mario and the Mario & Luigi games. Perhaps the coolest of the crop of new characters introduced was Geno, a child's doll come to life, and once he joined your party this game got really good really quick.

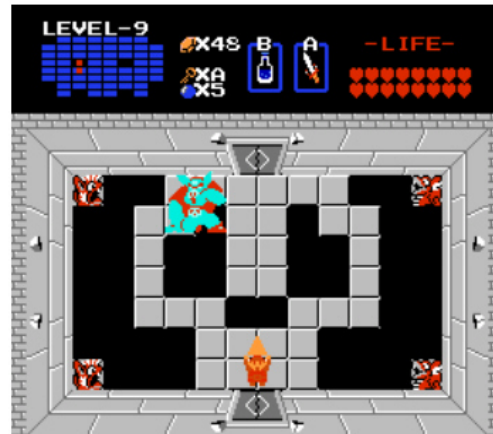
To be a little blunt, Geno is kind of a badass. He displays a brash confidence and an "it" factor that makes him much cooler than the other new main Mario RPG character, the marshmallow-like character Mallow. He has pretty high powered moves, a small stature, and lots of speed, which would surely make him a fan favorite in tournaments where speed is a prized attribute. His self named Geno attacks like Beam, Blast, and Flash, would all make great additions to his attack repertoire. Despite a very public breakup with Nintendo back in the day, Square has been making nice with Nintendo again over the past few year. Having both Cloud and Sephiroth in Smash Bros. Ultimate is a very good sign of their current working partnership. With Geno's outfit featured as a Mii Fighter costume in the recent games, it's a very good sign that it could soon be time for this star from Star Road to shine again. I think that it's time to take the strings off of this Pinocchio style character, and bring him to life by adding him into the roster as a fully playable character next time around.

8. Ganon

The Zelda franchise has a proud history in Super Smash Bros. and a pretty good amount of representation with several characters, stages, and items. But as one of Nintendo's two most premier franchises, there's always more room on the roster for Link and his colorful cast of supporting characters. For my next pick, I'm taking the original final boss of the Zelda games - the big bad blue pig himself, Ganon.

Ganondorf, the human-esque form of Hyrule's most wanted has been playable in the series since Melee, but playing as his original boss pig form would be a real treat for fans of the monumentally classic original adventures. To do it right, I think his look should

be based on his original blue pig based appearance and also take some visual cues from his upgraded look in A Link to the Past. That or perhaps his look as his final form from the boss battle in Ocarina of Time. He should also obviously be one of the heaviest characters in the Bowser sized weight class. Gannon appeared as a gigantic boss character in Smash Bros. Ultimate's story mode and fighting against him was a thrill. He'd have to have his size reduced a little bit to fit to scale with the other characters, but what worked so well before for Metroid's gigantic flying purple baddie Ridley, can definitely work again with this blue snout faced baddie.



Ganon as he appeared in A Link to the Past and his original reveal at the end of The Legend of Zelda.

7. Gengar

The smash gods have been a little skimpy on Pokémon as playable characters in Smash Bros lately. Frankly, I don't know why that is, with Pokémon fever spreading as rapidly now as it did back in the '90s. They have added lots as assist characters inside of the Pokeball items, but since most serious Smash players keep the items off, they are not seen and enjoyed by a large percentage of gamers. There are so many fantastic retro first generation Pokémon that deserve to make the cut for the next Super Smash Bros. Game. Pokémon like the haymakers Syther, Electabuzz, Hitmonchan, Machop, the legendary birds Zapdos, Articuno, and Moltres, Mew, and many more can make an excellent case that they deserve to be playable. But instead, for a really grave good time, in Smash Bros 6, the ghostly purple evolution of Gastly, better known as Gengar, is my pick.

Recently appearing in the epic Switch game Pokémon Legends Arceus, and already having proved his perfect fit for a fighting game on the Wii U in Pokken Tournament, this spooky specter deserves the chance to Smash. His long disgusting tongue could be put to good use in his moveset, with a variety of licking tongue based attacks. His ability to disappear, poison, and hypnotize unsuspecting foes could also be put to good use with fancy moves. So please Nintendo, give us more playable Pokémon. I choose you, Gengar!

6. Dixie Kong

For my money, King K. Rool was one of the highlights of the batch of new characters introduced in Super Smash Bros. Ultimate. He stomped his way into my heart with his golden gut, blunderbuss, and toss-able crown. With that said, I think Nintendo needs to dig again into the DK barrel and pull out another monkey, one who has appeared in many other Donkey Kong games. It's time for Dixie to step back into the limelight and out of the shadow of Donkey and Diddy once more. Dixie Kong was more than just Diddy's girlfriend, in her early playable appearances, she was a revolutionary fun character. Sailing around the colorful stages of Donkey Kong Country 2 and 3, floating around with her trademark blonde banana shaped ponytail, was a true retro gaming delight. Developer Rare also gave her some true '90s 'tude, with a backwards pink beret and having her wailing away on her guitar with a rockin' memorable guitar solo every time she finished a level. This happened countless times in the SNES in my childhood home, as she was my household's go-to Kong.

To diversify her Smash Bros moveset from Donkey and Diddy's, the animal allies could also ride in and help out. The parrot Squawks could be used for air assists and jumping as well. A ramming charge attack from Rambi could send other players flying off the screen, and there are plenty more animal helpers from the series to choose from. Her ponytail and hovering moves also could be put to good use. Also to be honest, I'm simply dying for another proper Donkey Kong game, and hopefully this could be a way to drum up more public interest for one. As I'll get into very very soon, there are other worthy Kongs that could also make the next Smash Bros. roster but I think it'd be a crime to skip out on this beloved, historical Kong.

5. Funky Kong

I'm going to make a double dip into Kong Country for my next pick. I'm picking the ape who is practically '90s style personified: the one, the only, Mr. Funky Kong. In the three Rare developed classics, he was one of the most valuable Kongs to pay a visit to between stages of killing Kremloings. The jams he blasted as you rode his flying barrel plan will stick with you forever. I'm sure those of you who played the first game can hear that song playing in your heads right now. His floating surfboard he commonly rides on unlocks many interesting possibilities for smooth movement and attacks. His barrel plane could also be used for his jumping and special aerial moves. There could also be some creative moves made of the items he's sold in other games like the vehicles he sold to Diddy and Dixie in DKC3.

There's a seemingly vast amount of nostalgia on social media for his appearance in Mario Kart Wii as one of the best and toughest

to acquire unlockable drivers. The character also made a recently buzzed about and meme worthy return appearance as a playable character in the Switch port of outstanding Wii U game Donkey Kong Country Tropical Freeze. So Nintendo clearly still sees some value in the character. I think this Kong would be the perfect character to bring the funk to the Smash roster.

4. Paper Mario

Fun fact: the Paper Mario franchise has made an appearance on every home Nintendo console with a brand new game since its initial appearance on the Nintendo 64. Although often seemingly quickly forgotten after release by the mainstream players of video games, it's a long running, critically acclaimed series with a passionate fan base. I'm sure they would love to see this paper thin version of the plumber make the leap to everyone's favorite 2D platform fighter.

Paper Mario has so many moves that'd be fun to play around with in Smash, and plenty of ways to make him more than just a clone of normal Mario. I'm mainly curious to see all the fun ways Nintendo could use his trademark hammer and rhythm based moves. A final smash move featuring Mario calling in help from his many companions from throughout the series, including Goombella, Peach, Bowser and more could make for an all time epic move. Nintendo has already perfectly pulled off a paper thin character before with the inclusion of Mr. Game & Watch in Super Smash Bros. Melee. This long-running franchise deserves more recognition from the gaming community at large and including Paper Mario as a playable character would be a perfect way to start. If Dr. Mario can make it into the mix, than how about a much more currently relevant variant of Mario?



Toad's modern design compared to his first playable appearance in the NES version of Super Mario Bros. 2.

3. Toad / Toadette

Despite being one of the four selectable characters in Super Mario Bros. 2, Toad has mostly been relegated to the sidelines lately in the modern era. Ever since the first Mario Party on N64, he's mostly functioned as the referee or rule reader of most of the Mario get togethers. Sure there was Captain Toad Treasure Tracker, but that was a spin-off of the enjoyable adventures of Captain Toad, not the true Mushroom Retainer. In Super Smash Bros. he's currently shamefully wasted as a simple projectile blocking move for Peach, screaming for dear life as he absorbs the blow meant for the Princess. But I think it's high time for Toad to get a little more respect and to make the jump to the big leagues and become a fully playable character.

A move set involving Toad providing himself with his own power ups or using his mushroomy head (it's not his hat) as a battering ram could be lots of fun. They could also utilize Toad's speed, and make him one of the faster characters as he was easily the fastest produce plucker in Super Mario Bros 2. For a stage idea you could even have everyone fight inside of one of his trademark power-up houses from Super Mario Bros. 3. I'm also thinking that a dually playable character with a Toadette skin would be nice, especially since the female version of Toad is really old school in her own right, first appearing in Mario Kart Double Dash twenty years ago. So come on guys and make Toad playable, oh boy!!

2. Knuckles

The red Echidna made huge waves with his first appearance in Sonic The Hedgehog 3 for the Genesis. He originally appeared as an antagonist for the blue blur, opening the game by stealing Sonic's hard earned Chaos Emeralds after Dr. Robotnik tricks Knuckles into thinking Sonic was a villain. With his awesome looking red dreads and oversized fists, it wasn't long until Knuckles became playable in the revolutionary follow up game Sonic & Knuckles, featuring lock-on technology to add him to Sonic 2 and 3 as a playable character when you stuck those games on top of the cartridge. Just like Boba Fett, Wolverine, Venom, and most of the best bad guys, he soon became an official part of Sonic's good guy gang.

As a big fan favorite making his live action debut in the next Sonic movie, now would be a perfect time to add him to the Smash ranks. His giant mittied fists and especially his floaty, immensely fun hovering ability would be an fun translation to a Smash Bros move set. I mean his name is Knuckles, fighting is pretty much in his DNA. I think that logically, Tails the fox will probably make the cut for the Smash Bros. roster, given that he's been a rumored addition since Super Smash Bros. Melee, with many gamers of that era tricked into believing he and Sonic were in the game due to some tricky photoshop jobs. This was way before the cries for Knuck-Man to be added to the team began. But Sonic's multi-tailed foxy sidekick could easily be folded into Sonic's character in an assisting Duck Hunt Dog sort of way for jumping. So in my humble opinion, I think the red yin to Sonic's blue yang deserves to be featured as a playable character instead of Tails ASAP.

1. Waluigi

Oh you didn't think I'd forget about the rest of the Internet's seemingly number one, possibly semi-ironic choice of a character did you? If Nintendo truly wants to make an attention grabbing move, and give a majority of the fans what they truly want, they'll include the dastardly rascal Waluigi as playable in the next Smash Bros. game. While Waluigi might seem like the new kid on the Mushroom Kingdom block to many long-time Mario players like me, he's actually been hanging out with the Mario gang for over twenty years, making his debut in the N64 classic sports game Mario Tennis. I have to admit I was skeptical of Waluigi at first, reading about him in Nintendo Power weeks before playing the game, but over the years he has won me over with his twisty mustachioed appearance and his bullying, trolling attitude. As the polar opposite of the cowardly Luigi, Waluigi is brash, confident, bold, and just a bit naughty. Along with Wario, he adds a much needed dose of attitude to the otherwise overly cheery Mario cast of core characters.

He already has the distinction of appearing as an assist trophy character in Smash Bros., messing up the battlefield whenever he makes a randomly generated appearance, but the time has come to promote him to the big leagues and make Luigi's evil counterpart fully playable. Using a variety of rackets and golf clubs and pranks, Waluigi could become a true fan favorite character in Smash and a real wildcard at tournaments. If Nintendo really wants to appease the Waluigi Stans and move a boatload of extra copies of Smash Bros 6 in the process, they'll get this guy in the next game for sure.

Honorable Mentions: Chun-Li, Crash Bandicoot, Skull Kid, Ryu Hyabusa, Tails, Mr. Dream, & Mega Man Zero.



Caught On Film - The Wizard Shout Select Collector's Edition Blu-ray

by [David Lundin, Jr.](#)

Video game movies generally have a reputation of being poorly conceived or emotionless cash grabs, whether they are adaptations of a game, framed around playing games, or a combination of the two. For every truly solid video game film, there always seems to be a terribly made one to counteract it. Critics tend to dislike them regardless, box office returns notwithstanding, and this can effectively cause a film to develop a poor reputation. Thankfully home video, and these days instant streaming, often gives these films another chance to find an audience. This is the case with a lot of video game movies, which go on to achieve cult status even with everything working against them. Released during the peak of the Nintendo Entertainment System in late 1989, The Wizard is one such film. Regarded by mainstream film media as little more than a feature-length commercial, the movie was a very modest success on its Nintendo connection alone but quickly faded away from the mindset of the general public.



Corey Woods is a typical teenager with an atypical family, living with his father Sam and older brother Nick, while isolated from his younger half-brother Jimmy. After his former stepmother and her new husband decide to institutionalize Jimmy due to constant wandering off, Corey is determined to sneak Jimmy out of the home and embark on a road trip together. Jimmy often expresses a desire to travel to California and that's exactly where Corey plans to bring him. While attempting to purchase a bus ticket, Corey makes an amazing discovery - Jimmy is naturally adept at playing video games. Along the way they run into Hailey, a teenager traveling west herself. After Hailey loses a bet that she could outscore Jimmy in a game of Double Dragon, the three become stranded together. Realizing that Jimmy could be one of the most skilled video game players in the world, Hailey proposes they enter Jimmy in "Video Armageddon," a video game championship taking place at Universal Studios Hollywood. Her reasoning is that they could split the \$50,000 prize money in exchange for her streetwise assistance in getting them to California. As the three

kids make their way from state to state toward Hollywood, Jimmy's mother Christine and stepfather Mr. Bateman hire Putnam, a child bounty hunter sent to recover Jimmy. Not liking Putnam's attitude and realizing that no one else would look for Corey, Sam and Nick also head out in pursuit of the boys. Hitchhiking and hustling in arcades and restaurants across the American west, Corey, Hailey, and Jimmy get in and out of trouble, including a confrontation that reveals more about Jimmy's tragic past. Eventually they meet Lucas, another video game master with skills that rival Jimmy's, who is also heading to the championships with an entire entourage in tow. As all paths converge at Video Armageddon, the stage is set for not only a video game showdown but a last attempt to reconcile torn dreams and shattered homes.



The new Collector's Edition artwork (left) can be reversed to display the theatrical poster art (right)

The Wizard was released on home video a number of times, including on VHS and LaserDisc throughout the 1990's. Showing the power of the rising home rental market, it made back what amounted to its production budget in rentals alone by the mid 1990's. While not a blockbuster by any stretch, people were obviously interested in watching the movie. Into the 21st century The Wizard was finally DVD bound but not in North America. I believe it was a German release under the localized title "Joy Stick Heroes" and was something I attempted to purchase at the time but never quite made the right connection. Eventually a bare-bones North American DVD hit shelves in 2006, with an almost equally bare-bones Blu-ray over a decade later in 2018. After fan demand and continual pressure to give the film the Blu-ray release it deserved, Shout! Factory released a special Collector's Edition under their Shout Select imprint in 2020, essentially acting as a 30th anniversary release. This release includes a new 4K remaster, full audio commentary with director Todd Holland, a documentary that details the making of the film, a couple of featurettes, post screening Q&A panels, and an extensive photo gallery. However the big feature of the Shout Select release is the inclusion of nearly 40 minutes of deleted scenes that had never been released before.

Strangely enough, I never had a chance to see The Wizard during its theatrical release. I can recall seeing a few commercials advertising the movie and of course a feature in Nintendo Power but not much promotion aside from that. I honestly can't remember ever asking to go see the movie and don't remember it ever coming up in discussion among my friends. I went to the movies quite a bit as a kid, heck I was in the audience for the first test screening of Back to the Future, so perhaps The Wizard had a very limited run in the area. I first saw the movie once it was broadcast on network television sometime in very late 1990 or early 1991. My grandmother had recorded it for me and I watched that TV edit over and over again for years, until picking up one of the later VHS releases and eventually stumbling upon a LaserDisc copy. I always really enjoyed the movie, not for the video game parts, but for the notion of a group of kids just getting up and going out into the world on an adventure.

I think a problem with the film's initial reception is that nearly everyone went into it **expecting** a big video game commercial, non-stop game talk, people playing games at every turn - for better or worse, I believe that was the assumption. That is absolutely not the movie that we got nor was that the movie that seems to have been planned from the start. Critics couldn't let go of that assumption and saw only the video game portions of the film. Kids went in expecting to see games and got a well-crafted family drama instead. That's what The Wizard is, a family film that involves video games, which were just about the most popular thing kids were into at the time. Either way, The Wizard is not a popcorn movie but I don't believe it was ever advertised as such. Just look at the tagline on the poster: "They're on a cross-country adventure to the world's greatest video championship. But for these three, it's more than a game... It's the chance of a lifetime." This is a kid's road movie, a genre that was once very popular, where video games become a plot point but never completely the focus. I've also heard a lot of comments over the years that the dialogue is poorly written and that the kids talk like stereotypical 80's businessmen. The thing is, kids don't talk like kids when they're around other kids - I think this is something that's missed by a lot of people, whether they don't remember when they were kids themselves or simply don't want to admit it. Also, you know, it's a movie!



Jimmy (Luke Edwards), Hailey (Jenny Lewis), and Corey (Fred Savage)

The cast is pretty incredible, with Fred Savage as Corey, right at the start of his exploding stardom from *The Wonder Years*. Jenny Lewis (who I had the biggest crush on as a kid) plays Hailey and absolutely holds her own opposite Savage. The film also features Christian Slater, Beau Bridges, Sam McMurray, and Frank McRae. Will Seltzer is amazing as Putnam, who just drips with absolute sleaze. The standout performance however is Luke Edwards as Jimmy Woods. Edwards plays Jimmy so effortlessly and realistically, with expressions and looks and mannerisms that don't ever come across as acting. An adult actor couldn't have pulled that role off any better, let alone a child actor. I believe critics looked past his performance, figuring that it was just how he was, that he was differently abled. Luke Edwards deserved an Academy Award nomination for *The Wizard*, without a doubt, his performance is so subtle and nuanced. The only character that really doesn't seem to fit is Christine, Jimmy's mother. Wendy Phillips, who portrays her, is a fine actress but her performance as Christine just never feels like it matches the tone of the rest of the film at any point. She is simply always despicable, even more so in the deleted scenes where she comes across as bigger villain than anyone else in the movie. Any time there's ever a flicker of redemption for her character, she tosses it away a moment later, with seemingly no motivation to do so other than to create friction.

Of course the real gem of the Shout Select release is the inclusion of over 40 minutes of deleted scenes, many of which are totally completed. Most of these take place early in the film, showcasing Corey, Nick and Jimmy's home life just prior to where the narrative begins in the theatrical release. This serves as an entire first act that was essentially cut to bring the run time down, and their inclusion would have definitely slowed the pacing of the film at the start. While they are great to see, the majority are made unnecessary by shorter scenes and tighter dialogue in that covers the same information in the theatrical film. Additionally in many of the deleted scenes Jimmy has encounters with, and even plays, video games both in an arcade and at Corey's house. While this shows that he has a curiosity and aptitude for video games, foreshadowing that they're going to be an outlet for expression, it greatly reduces the impact of the *Double Dragon* scene later in the film. The way the film is cut theatrically makes it appear that Jimmy's first exposure to video games is when Corey sets him up at *Double Dragon* and honestly that reveal of his skill couldn't have been done better. The rest of the scenes take place throughout the film and are of varying length. Some of the dialogue sheds a bit more light on events in the film but most of them ultimately stall the narrative or were implemented differently for better flow in the final cut. Additional scenes with Christine only further have her come across as absolutely despicable and truly the biggest threat to Jimmy's mental health. It's a good thing most of these were cut, as they would have made the final parts of the movie feel so sour in retrospect.

Aside from two scenes that were cut, I think editing the rest down was the right choice as it keeps the story moving and focused on the road trip aspect. As for those two scenes, the first involves Jimmy looking at a logo just after Hailey misses her bus and is a very clever bit of foreshadowing that would give a direct payoff at the end of the movie. It must also once again be said what a stellar performance Luke Edwards gives in this brief sequence, acting only with his eyes and body language. The other scene has to do with Nick and his dad having it out on the road. This is really where the wall between them starts to come down, as Nick lays everything out on the line about how tense home life with Christine was for all of them, even prior to Jimmy's trauma. Perhaps it was cut due to making Christine out to be some kind of villain but that's not the focus here. Instead it's about a father and son beginning to reconcile their differences and heal. Of everything cut from the final film, I feel this is the one edit that removed something that would have benefited the movie, as it fills in some missing narrative without slowing the film down.



Video Armageddon gets underway, the production design of this set is honestly pretty amazing

Looking back over thirty years later I still really enjoy *The Wizard*, in fact I enjoy it more now than I did as a kid. When I rediscovered the movie in high school, I was struck by how *The Wizard* had some passing allusions to *The Who's Tommy*. Tommy at its core is about hypocrisy in organized religion but his story begins with a broken home, where witnessing the accidental murder of his father causes him to seal himself off psychologically as a result of being brainwashed by his family. After being told he didn't hear anything, won't ever say anything, and didn't see anything - that's exactly what happens, as he becomes "deaf, dumb, and blind." Tommy finds his outlet and salvation through his ability to play pinball, something very popular at the time. However Tommy isn't really about pinball, just like *The Wizard* isn't so much about video games, they're simply a cultural phenomenon to frame the narrative around. *The Wizard* in this case being about kids going on an adventure together to rise above the cards they were dealt.

Yet also over thirty years later *The Wizard* continues to find it hard to shake the notion that it was nothing but a 90 minute commercial for Nintendo and how buying their games and accessories will fix everyone's problems and bring families together. If you're still in that camp there's probably little that will pull you out of it at this point but I still say you should give *The Wizard* a fresh viewing. Other than the finale and the montage that leads into it, there really isn't all that much game footage. Interestingly there is way more game footage in the deleted scenes, with more of a push that video games are going to be the catalyst to the film's narrative. Truthfully there's more of a commercial for Nintendo in those cut opening scenes than anywhere else in the entire film. However I can agree that the film could have really used one more technical pass to better match game footage to the dialogue and clean up the terminology a bit. The worst of these is a deleted scene with Corey talking about Jimmy playing *Super Mario Bros. 2*, where he says how Jimmy got to World 7-3, which doesn't exist. Matching up the game footage to the dialogue (*Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* and *Zelda II* being the biggest standouts) would make some scenes sit better with the Nintendo maniacs who were obviously in the initial audience. However there's only so much time to get a film together, especially with child actors, and the scenes are so quick they don't upend the pacing.

Be sure to pick up the "Collector's Edition" from the Shout Select imprint, not an earlier Blu-ray release. Many retailers are still selling old stock of the 2018 standard Blu-ray which does not feature any of the special extras or deleted scenes. The Collector's Edition can be ordered directly from Shout! Factory:

https://www.shoutfactory.com/product/the-wizard-collector-s-edition?product_id=7300

While ordering it direct will ensure that you're getting the Collector's Edition, in my experience Shout! Factory has extremely slow order processing and shipping, in addition to unresponsive customer care. I love their products but I hate ordering directly from them. I purchased my copy of *The Wizard* Collector's Edition from Amazon. The initial release featured an outer slipcover that now appears to be out of stock but is otherwise the same as what is currently shipping, including a reversible cover insert.



Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Fall of the Foot Clan (Game Boy) - Gaming by the Slice

by David Lundin, Jr.

I can't think of a pop culture franchise that remained as evenly popular from the late 1980's into the late 1990's more than *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. Comics, cartoons, live action movies, tons of merchandise, music tours, and of course plenty of games. After a very successful and slightly strange NES game was followed up with an equally successful coin-op arcade game, Konami did what everyone else was doing and thought small for the next release. One year after the NES and arcade outings, Konami brought *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* to the portable market under their Ultra Games label in the first of what would be a trilogy of games on the original Game Boy.



Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Fall of the Foot Clan takes a page from an earlier era of side scrolling beat 'em ups and actually plays a bit like Irem's Kung-Fu Master. The game is broken up into five stages with the option to select any level individually for a quick play, however the only way to complete the game is to begin at stage one. Stages are always advanced to the right but some areas do have a bit of platforming and vertical movement, although the eventual objective will always be to make it all the way over to the right side of the stage. All four turtles are present and have their signature weapons but unlike the NES game they all seem to have equal range and attack prowess. In addition to their melee weapons, holding down and pressing the attack button will cause your turtle to toss an endless stream of throwing stars. Pizza is sometimes left behind by certain enemies or can be found floating around boxed in specific areas. Picking it up will replenish the life bar, with larger quantities of pizza recovering more units of health.

For the most part enemy encounters are the usual foot soldiers and mousers, with other mechanized enemies and hazards here and there. One stage also takes place almost completely on scrolling logs, which must be jumped from one to the next to prevent falling into enemy infested waters. There's some decent variety in this style, such as a level set atop a convoy of trucks, but they really don't change up the core "move to the right" mechanic that exists from beginning to end. At the end of each stage the player will encounter a boss based off popular enemy characters from the series. These include Rocksteady, Bebop, Baxter Stockman (in his Baxter the Fly incarnation), Shredder, and Krang in his exosuit. Each boss has a different attack pattern that must be learned but as with the platforming, nothing is very complex and after a couple moments they can be figured out easily. On subsequent playthroughs one will probably be able to defeat every boss in the game without taking a single hit.

Fall of the Foot Clan was a mid 1990 release for the Game Boy and looks excellent for being such an early game. The visuals are all nicely detailed and hold up well to this day, with very large sprites that are clear representations of familiar characters and enemies - especially in monochrome. Sprite animation is limited but there are enough frames for each movement, with things like Michelangelo twirling his lead nunchaku during his walking animation adding a nice touch. The backgrounds are extremely detailed for a title of this era with both background and foreground objects that create depth without getting in the way. Larger indestructible enemies that scroll by as obstacles can seem static and dull due to lack of animation but they usually move by so quickly that one wouldn't think much of it. Those larger sprites do come at a price however, as a couple of them on the screen will cause flicker and breakup to both themselves and any other sprites on the same horizontal plain. End of stage bosses are wonderfully detailed with multiple animations and do justice to the original source material, featuring some of the best spritework seen on the Game Boy. There are also high resolution cutscenes sprinkled throughout the game that were extremely impressive when this title was released and are still striking to this day.



Michelangelo navigates the sewers (left), Donatello faces off against Rocksteady (center), static cutscenes still look great to this day (right)

Sound effects are nothing interesting with the usual explosions when enemies are destroyed and standard jump and attack sounds but they fit the action. Music on the other hand is really good with an original soundtrack composed of a few pieces of music, that while recycled through each stage, perfectly fit the environments where they are used. Of course the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles theme song is present and used early in the game, as well as towards the end on the final rush through the Technodrome. Thankfully the sound effects don't obscure the music and the over all audio package is exactly what one would want from a Turtles

game on the go. The only slight drawback I've always had with the game is that directional control input can be just a bit sluggish, especially when there are a lot of moving objects on the screen. Interestingly jumping and attack controls remain fast and responsive regardless of any other slowdown, so worst case your turtle should be able to slash their way out of trouble. The attack and jump buttons can be swapped in the starting configuration menu, a level of customization rarely seen in an early Game Boy game, especially a beat 'em up. Jump height is controlled by how long the jump button is held down, just like with the Turtles NES game, but is much more predictable here.

Unfortunately there isn't a lot of replay to be had and the game is very short and reasonably easy to complete inside of twenty minutes or so. On one hand this makes it a perfect portable game that can be quickly run through in its entirety, while on the other it makes for a game that can easily become boring after repeated plays. The only variety comes from a few secret areas that can be found early on where one of three bonus games can be played to replenish the life meter. Finding where these are located may add a bit of extra incentive to come back again but they're not all that well hidden and don't add much time to a full run. It's strange, as the five individual levels don't seem short or light on content when being played. The level design is actually really good for a simple beat 'em up, the game just could have used a few more of them.

When I think back to the days of the original Game Boy, especially those first few years, Fall of the Foot Clan always comes to mind. I truly seems like a game that everyone who had a Game Boy then had a copy of. Honestly it's a shame there wasn't some kind of two player link cable support in the game, as the opportunity to play Game Boy head to head was a rarity since my friends and I all tended to have different games - but we all had this one. Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Fall of the Foot Clan is easily one of the best games of the early days of the Game Boy and it still holds up well, simple as it may be. It may only be a twenty minute romp but it will hold your attention for that entire twenty minutes, not bad for a 32 year old handheld game. It may be a little bit of a platformer and a little bit of a beat 'em up but it's a good game on both accounts. If you're a Turtles fan and you somehow missed this one, order a pizza and give it a play - you'll be done before the delivery arrives at your door.

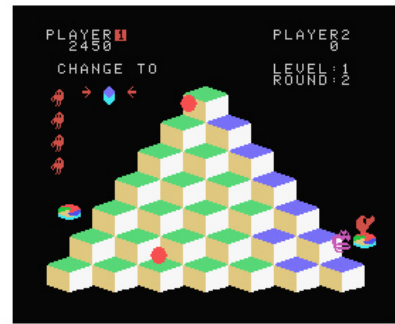


ColecoVision Summer

by [David Lundin, Jr.](#)

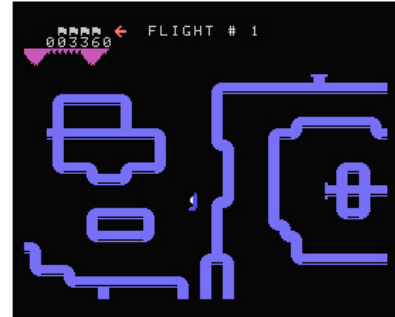
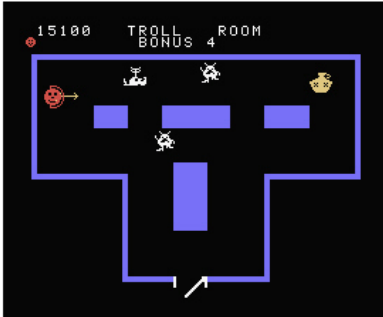
At the end of an article last issue I mentioned Zack, my childhood best friend and cohort during the years of peak NES mania. While we both received NES systems for Christmas of 1988, we first met one another and became friends about half a year earlier. At the time I was playing a lot of Atari 2600 as it was still in a bit of a value renaissance, with plenty of games available in stores throughout the area. Zack was a year younger than me and didn't have video games at home, so while we would play Atari together it wasn't as regular of a thing for him. Back then most of the time we hung out together was spent building Ghostbusters equipment out of Construx, playing with diecast cars, or riding bikes and skateboarding. That summer Zack's dad brought home a ColecoVision system that a relative had packed away in storage years before. Thinking back it's clear that his relative had gone all in on ColecoVision as it was a full setup - console, extra controllers, Atari 2600 expansion module, driving expansion module, battery eliminator for the driving module, and tons of both ColecoVision and Atari 2600 games. I had never seen a ColecoVision before, as being born in 1981 it was just before my time in gaming. The ability for Zack to play Atari 2600 games at his house via the expansion module meant that for the first time ever I could borrow and lend games with a friend. However it was the much more exotic ColecoVision and its library of unfamiliar games that piqued our interest most. Many of them were home conversions of reasonably obscure arcade games a generation removed, in addition to unique experiences specific to the hardware. Over the course of that summer Zack and I became well-versed in those no longer obscure games - right up until that Christmas, when we became Nintendo fanatics and the ColecoVision faded away and disappeared. Those ColecoVision games still made a pretty big impact on me, with many of them becoming the gateway to discovery of some of my favorite early arcade games.

Carnival is a simple shooting gallery game developed by Gremlin / Sega and released to arcades in 1980. The player controls the left and right position of a gun at the bottom of the screen with the objective to clear racks of scrolling targets before running out of bullets. Targets are stationary rabbits, owls, and ducks in addition to bonus letters and extra bullets. Once a duck makes it to the lowest row it will spring to life and fly down toward the player, eating some of the reserve bullets if it is not shot before reaching the bottom of the screen. There are also rotating clay pipes at the top of the screen that reduce in point value the longer they are left in play. Bonus stages feature bears that run back and forth across the screen, changing direction and increasing in speed each time they are shot. I remember Zack's dad being really good at Carnival, especially the bonus stages. I never saw Carnival in an arcade and have only ever played an arcade cabinet at an arcade show but this was always a favorite on the ColecoVision. There's not a lot to **Cosmic Avenger**, and the arcade original from 1981 wasn't very well-known, but the ColecoVision version was a pretty popular game in its day. A very early horizontally scrolling shooter, what kept Zack and I coming back was the ability to throttle up and careen through enemy ships and projectiles at high speed. The sound effects were also strangely enticing. It wasn't just the obscure that ColecoVision introduced me to, as believe it or not that summer was the first time I had ever played **Q*bert**. Gottlieb's isometric pyramid platformer continues to stand out as one of the more unique arcade games from the golden era. Players guide Q*bert around a pyramid of cubes with the goal to change the surface of each into a target color while avoiding obstacles and enemies. It can be a very challenging platform puzzler that requires a slightly different skill set than pretty much any other game. The ColecoVision version is really good and what lead me to jump on the NES version a few years later and continue to enjoy Q*bert to this day.



*Spelling out BONUS in Carnival (left), flying through a searchlight in Cosmic Avenger (center), baiting Coily to jump off the pyramid in Q*bert (right)*

Exidy was one of the earliest American arcade game companies and had a few years in the sun just before golden age hit. A few of their best known games received very accurate ColecoVision conversions. My favorite of these is **Venture**, an action game in which the player controls Winky, a smiley face armed with a bow and arrows. Winky must infiltrate three dungeons and recover treasures from twelve rooms. Each dungeon is shown in a large overview, where Winky must avoid indestructible Hallmonsters and make his way into the treasure rooms. Once inside Winky can dispatch the monsters within using his bow and arrow or attempt to avoid them and grab the treasure and flee. Touching a monster, even a dead monster, will kill Winky. As dead monsters take a moment to decay and will regenerate when shot, they can often block Winky's path. Spending too long in a room will allow a Hallmonster to make its way inside, with avoidance the only course of escape. Venture is just crazy fun, with good visuals, outstanding sound, clever enemies, and addictive gameplay. Another Exidy game that was a favorite of Zack and I's on ColecoVision was **Mouse Trap**. Mouse Trap plays like Pac-Man with the difference being sets of colored doors throughout the maze that can be opened or closed at will by the player. Guide your mouse through the maze, eating all the cheese contained within, while avoiding the cats that patrol the hallways. The mouse can pick up bones, which allow it to change into a dog temporarily and eat the cats, sending them back to their starting points. To mix things up even more, a hawk will give the player chase and can only be avoided by heading to the center of the maze and escaping. Mouse Trap was my first encounter with a game that used more than just one or two buttons, as in addition to joystick movement for the mouse, each set of colored doors has a corresponding button to manipulate them, and a fourth button to eat a bone and turn into the dog. I would later get the Atari 2600 versions of both Venture and Mouse Trap. While they are fine games for the hardware, neither are anywhere as good as the ColecoVision versions. Although I saw them a few times in arcades when I was very young, it wouldn't be until adulthood when I would finally be able to enjoy Exidy games in their original arcade form. There is always outstanding representation of Exidy at the California Extreme arcade show and every year I spend quite a bit of time playing Venture, Pepper II, Hard Hat, Mouse Trap, Teeter Torture, Tail Gunner 2 and more.

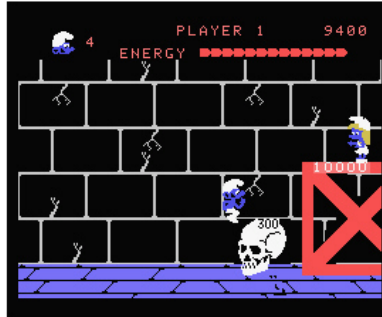


Clearing a path to a treasure in Venture (left), plotting a route in Mouse Trap (center), climbing through the pipe area in Looping (right)

Easily the most obscure game that I grew to love by playing it on ColecoVision is **Looping**. Looping is an odd hybrid between a plane shooter and what I suppose could be considered an aerobatics game. The player must fly a small plane through an obstacle course to an ending point, shooting enemy objects, navigating passages, and avoiding terrain. What makes Looping challenging is only the pitch of the plane can be controlled, hence the title, allowing for only climbs and dives. The plane's speed can be increased by holding the secondary fire button but aside from that, control is all up to finesse. High scores are primarily built up by flying around in an area filled with pipes, which really plays up the idea that this game is supposed to be about aerobatics over anything else. I won't say it's a great game or anything but I think the notion of just how strange it was is what sparked my attention initially. Years later when I realized it was originally an arcade game I began to play it a lot more via emulation, and finally on an original cabinet one year at California Extreme. Certainly not a game for everyone but I still really like it. Zack also had a couple games for the driving module including the pack-in **Turbo**. I had actually played Turbo a few times in arcades but then, as now, I much preferred Pole Position. We still had a lot of fun with it on ColecoVision just the same but a lot of that had to do with steering wheel, pedal, and using a controller as the shifter. The game we played most with the driving module was **Destructor**, a very odd and obscure action / driving game. In Destructor the player operates a little vehicle called the Ram-car, which must ram into neutral insects, transforming them into energy crystals. The crystals must then be taken back to your starcruiser, filling a quota to complete the stage, all the while avoiding enemy insects and Destructor, their master. I found the game really interesting as it took place in what amounted to a large open world, at least compared to what I had seen in video games up to that point. It also felt as if the enemies were actually patrolling and had some intelligence.

While not exclusive to the ColecoVision, I first played **Mountain King** over that summer and to this day consider it my preferred version. An exploration game with a difference, Mountain King uses sound as a crucial gameplay component. The player controls an explorer navigating a vast diamond mine, as he attempts to recover a Golden Crown, sealed away in an ancient temple deep within. There are a number of objectives that must be completed to allow access to the temple, beginning with obtaining the Flame Spirit. The Flame Spirit will only be released after a thousand diamonds are collected and even then it remains in the

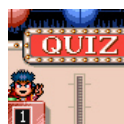
shadows. This is where sound comes into play - literally. When the player gets close to the Flame Spirit a musical cue will begin to play, getting louder as the player gets closer. Additionally the Flame Spirit will flicker from time to time. Using the flashlight will reveal the Flame Spirit in shadow and allow the player to collect it. The player can now descend to the temple where the Skull Spirit guards the entrance, allowing passage only after being offered the Flame Spirit. Once inside the temple the Golden Crown can be collected and the final phase of the game begins. The player must now exit the temple and ascend to the top of the mountain where the Perpetual Flame burns. However it's not that easy, as the many cave bats that inhabit the mine can steal the crown right off your head, requiring the process to start all over again. The game famously features melodies of two pieces of music from Edvard Grieg's Peer Gynt Suite, *Anitra's Dance* (played when searching for the Flame Spirit) and *In the Hall of the Mountain King* (played when escaping with the Golden Crown). I remember that Zack's dad had a CD sampler that had some of Grieg's compositions on it and we would sometimes put the music on and jump around like we were in the game.



Approaching the crown in *Mountain King* (left), jumping up to Smurfette in *Smurf: Rescue* (center), hopping along turtles in *B.C.'s Quest for Tires* (right)

Many say that Donkey Kong was the game that defined the ColecoVision but strangely enough I can't ever remember playing it back then. I don't know if Zack didn't have a copy of it or what but Donkey Kong wouldn't be a favorite of ours until the NES release of Donkey Kong Classics. In my mind the defining game of the ColecoVision is **Smurf: Rescue in Gargamel's Castle**, which we both played quite a bit. Smurf is a very basic and simple platforming game in which the player guides a Smurf through meadows, forests, and caves on a journey to rescue Smurfette from Gargamel's Castle. While not very complex, Smurf does require some precise control input and timing to accurately hop over obstacles and avoid dangers. Nice visuals and good sound round out the package and I still think this is fun game for a quick play. Another game we played a lot was **B.C.'s Quest for Tires**, although neither of us were very good at it. Based on characters from Johnny Hart's B.C. comic strip, the game is a side scrolling test of reaction and obstacle avoidance, as the player guides Thor atop his prehistoric unicycle on a journey to rescue Cute Chick from The Dinosaur. If you haven't read B.C. in awhile, or ever, that probably doesn't make sense but the game plays almost like a driving platformer. It can be very difficult and very touchy, requiring absolutely precise moments and input. Again, no idea why why played it so much as we were both terrible at it. Perhaps the strange character designs and a desire to see what still lied ahead were what attracted us.

I tend to really enjoy obscure games and I suppose one could say that began with my exposure to the ColecoVision in the summer of 1988. Unfortunately I never got back into ColecoVision full force later in life. This isn't because I wasn't interested in doing so, quite the opposite. What prevented me from pursuing ColecoVision was the unreliability of the hardware. I have owned many ColecoVision systems over the years and no matter their condition, totally beat up to factory fresh, they all develop problems and require maintenance. When they were relatively cheap and reasonably common to find this wasn't anything more than an annoyance but as prices climbed my desire to mess around with problematic hardware lessened. That isn't meant to be a knock on the system, after all it was released almost 40 years ago! While I generally like to play on original hardware, ColecoVision is one system that I am perfectly satisfied with using emulation for. I do wonder whatever happened to that old ColecoVision that Zack had. I recall a few years later when he came to visit me after I moved out of the area, that his dad was surprised to see that I still had all my Atari stuff. I remember him mentioning that he would have given all the Atari and Coleco stuff to me if he had known. I suppose it could have went back to the relative where it came from but more than likely it got donated or tossed. The same fate I'm sure a lot of ColecoVision collections met in the wake of the NES.



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:

12/31/2021 - WEEK 244

Question: What is the only game to star Nintendo Power mascot Nester?

01/07/2022 - WEEK 245

Question: Turtle, Bear, Horse, Rabbit, Bobcat, and Cheetah are all characters in what NES game?

01/14/2022 - WEEK 246

Question: What was the first Atari 2600 game to feature voice synthesis?

01/21/2022 - WEEK 247

Question: What is the maximum number of players the arcade version of Michael Jackson's Moonwalker can accommodate?

01/28/2022 - WEEK 248

Question: Who is the first enemy that Taro Yamada fights in Rent-A-Hero?

02/04/2022 - WEEK 249

Question: The Sega Mark III game Anmitsu Hime was reworked into what Master System release?

02/11/2022 - WEEK 250

Question: Who is the star of Donkey Kong 3?

02/18/2022 - WEEK 251

Question: Exidy's 1981 arcade game Venture features how many different rooms?



Unfortunately Nester's Funky Bowling is only funky in name (left), Taro faces off against his father at the beginning of Rent-A-Hero (right).

Answers:

Week 244 Answer: Nester's Funky Bowling (Virtual Boy).

Week 245 Answer: Stadium Events / World Class Track Meet.

Week 246 Answer: Quadrun.

Week 247 Answer: Three.

Week 248 Answer: His father, in a Godzilla suit.

Week 249 Answer: Alex Kidd: High-Tech World.

Week 250 Answer: Stanley.

Week 251 Answer: Twelve, repeated in three sets of four.



The Sega Mark III game Anmitsu Hime (left), was later reworked with new character designs and dialogue but little else as an Alex Kidd game (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.](#)

It's no surprise to anyone these days that the needle that defines an era of video games as "retrogames" is constantly on the move. Sure, the late 1970's into the early 1980's will always be the vintage era of gaming - the time of the Atari VCS, Intellivision, ColecoVision, Channel F, Odyssey 2 and their lesser contemporaries. Aside from those however, the notion of what retro is and represents continues to scale forward, always a few steps back from what is considered current gaming. Some of that is tied to when one's entry into gaming was. Often this revolves around what someone first played as a child but not always. In both the NES and original PlayStation eras there were plenty of adults getting into gaming for the first time, as the explosion in popularity of the respective platforms, during their respective eras, made playing games trendy and popular for everyone. Interesting thing about those two eras in particular - if you started gaming with an NES, it would have been considered retro by the time you were spinning up a disc in a PlayStation. In the same way, if you started with a PlayStation, you may have considered it retro by the time you were in the heat of an online multiplayer battle on an Xbox 360. Depending on how long they are commercially viable, it seems two to three generations behind the current is where the edge of retrogaming resides. Even this newsletter uses that two generation formula as a general guideline.

I bring this up as just about a week ago I purchased a PlayStation 3 after thinking about acquiring one for quite a while. For the most part that was a generation that I skipped, even though it was also an era of which I was deep in the retail sales trench for. I say "for the most part" as I did buy a slightly used Wii from my brother, specifically to play Punch-Out!! and few other specific games. Aside from that I really didn't have the time to go full in to what was then the current generation of gaming. Additionally I was spending my gaming money on expanding out some of my retrogaming interests, and with moving back to Silicon Valley at the same time there wasn't a lot of it to go around. A few years ago I got back into current generation gaming with a PlayStation 4 and slotted right back in without missing a beat. So I suppose the questions are: Why did you want a PlayStation 3 and why buy it now?



It's true that a lot of really great games originally released on PS3 have been remastered or remade for PS4, where they are superior in almost every way (Yakuza 3 is a prime example). However there are some games that never left the platform such as Metal Gear Solid 4 and 3D Dot Game Heroes. The online marketplace is also entering its waning days, so the opportunity to make legitimate purchases for what is still available looks to be passing. Case in point, the 2012 arcade accurate conversion of Sega's Daytona USA. I absolutely love Daytona USA and have since first playing it in arcades in 1994. Almost thirty years later, there is still no other arcade racer that is its equal in my mind - nor is there another game that has held up as well over the years. Daytona USA machines (if you can keep them maintained) still make money, still draw crowds, and still bring smiles. It's also the game that cemented Toshihiro Nagoshi (hey, another Yakuza reference) as a modern-day Yu Suzuki and made sure arcades always had big Sega games for decades to come. I will say it was a complete hassle to jump through all the hoops to legitimately purchase a PS3 PlayStation Store game with how they've crippled the online marketplace over the years but I still got it done. Also with official support more than likely coming to and end soon, it'll be a fun console to softmod and explore. We all have that missed gaming generation I suppose, I'm glad I was able to fill mine in recently. What generation did you miss? Drop me an e-mail and let me know!

Thank you once again for reading The Retrogaming Times. We'll be back on May 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!

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Assembled and published by David Lundin, Jr. on March 1st, 2022 at ClassicPlastic.net
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