

## THE BLUE SCREEN

Who's making it to  
Season Two?

by Nathan Kozlowski



## READER'S SURVEY

Send your survey answers to:  
[ColecoNation@yahoo.com](mailto:ColecoNation@yahoo.com)

Winners of the drawings will be notified by email and will be published in ColecoNation #7.

Television shows often end their season by knocking off one of their cast members, but here at ColecoNation pianos won't be dropped on anyone. However, we will be taking cues from how shows start their new seasons by making some changes to the way things run around here. The most noticeable difference will be us going from a monthly to bi-monthly schedule. Now before you all go thinking that this is the beginning of the end for ColecoNation, let me assure you that we're not going anywhere. The publishing change will allow us to put out larger and better issues that will actually come out on time. It will also add new articles and enable writers to maintain regular contributions to the webzine. Most importantly though, it will allow me to actually play the ColecoVision from time to time. Since starting ColecoNation, I've had little time to play my favorite console. The bi-monthly routine will ensure a long existence for this webzine and allow me to continue to goof off as well.

Expect to see all your favorite features return in 2006 as well as some new additions. We want to make the second season of ColecoNation as great as possible, but we'll need your help to be successful. Please take the time to complete our reader's survey below and let us know what we're doing right, what we can do better, and what we're forgetting. Plus, your participation in the survey ensures you the chance to win some free Coleco stuff. Check out the survey below for more details, enjoy the holiday season, and join us next year for more Coleco-insanity!

Email us your answers to the following questions and you'll be entered in a drawing to win one of three Coleco Head-to-Head video games (courtesy of River West Brands): Electronic Baseball, Electronic Football, or the plug-n-play Video Game System. You can also submit your survey answers on the AtariAge forums, but only email participants will be eligible for the drawing.

### 1. How much of ColecoNation do you read each month?

- a) The whole issue.
- b) Most of it.
- c) Some of it.
- d) I like the pretty pictures.

### 2. Which of the following articles do you OFTEN read every month?

- a) The Blue Screen
- b) This Just In...
- c) Coleco Chat
- d) In Play
- e) CV Tactics
- f) Roving Reporters
- g) In Print
- h) Miscellany

### 3. Which of the following articles do you RARELY read every month?

- a) The Blue Screen
- b) This Just In...
- c) Coleco Chat
- d) In Play
- e) CV Tactics
- f) Roving Reporters
- g) In Print
- h) Miscellany

### 4. What do you want to see MORE of in ColecoNation?

### 5. What do you want to see LESS of in ColecoNation?

### 6. What are we MISSING that needs to be in ColecoNation?

### 7. How interested would you be in contributing to ColecoNation?

- a) Very interested.
- b) Maybe interested.
- c) Just leave me alone and let me read the latest issue.

### 8. How often do you play games on your ColecoVision?

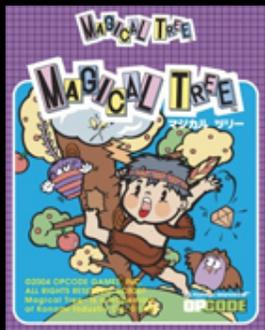
- a) Daily
- b) Weekly
- c) Monthly
- d) What's a ColecoVision?

### 9. How long have you owned your ColecoVision?

### 10. How many of the new homebrew ColecoVision games do you own? [2]

## THIS JUST IN...

Send your news items to:  
[ColecoNation@yahoo.com](mailto:ColecoNation@yahoo.com)



Magical Tree [Opcode]

## Opcode Sightings At AtariAge!

If you've visited the ColecoVision store over at AtariAge recently, then you've probably noticed the new arrivals. Opcode games are now available from the online retailer. Space Invaders Collection is currently available with more titles coming soon. You can still get the games directly from Opcode (for the same total cost), but the shipping time will be noticeably shorter when ordered from AtariAge.

## Magical Tree Release Imminent!

The packaging is being printed as we write and it shouldn't be long before you'll be able to get your own copy of Magical Tree. Opcode Games is working hard to get this product out and it's been reported to have a late-January release date. Stay tuned for more details as they develop.

## Big Sale At AtariAge!

The majority of games at AtariAge are on sale through the month of December. ColecoVision games that are listed as ten percent off include: CVDrum, Deflektor Kollection, and Reversi. This could be a great chance to make all the ColecoVision fans on your Christmas list happy and save a few bucks in the process. Or, you could make yourself happy and buy all the games for yourself. Either way you look at it (we don't judge around here), make sure to check out the sale. A free gift is included in purchases that are over fifty dollars.



Maze Maniac [Boyer]

## Maze Maniac Makes A Low-Cost Debut!

Mathieu Boyer officially released his newest creation last month and it's free for everyone. Maze Maniac is an original game made exclusively for the ColecoVision which challenges the gamer to a series of mazes with some added twists. The game has a number of variations to choose from, including: normal mode, endurance mode, and cooperative mode. It also has the option to submit your high score and show off your skills to the world. Maze Maniac (with full instructions) can be downloaded for free at the official website for play on your favorite emulator. A very small number of cartridges were made of the game, but Maze Maniac was always intended to be released as a rom for emulation. If you're interested in picking up a hard copy, head on over to Mathieu's website and send him an email to see if there's any left.



Get Booty [Wick]

## 2005 MiniGame Competition Concludes!

The annual MiniGame Competition has finally wrapped up and there were a record number of ColecoVision submissions to the 2005 contest. Daniel Bienvenu created a two-player space combat game titled Space Trainer. Guy Foster's Space Hunter is an arcade-style space shooter, while Dale Wick submitted a pirate-themed skill challenge named Get Booty. All three games (along with a bunch of others) are available free for download at the MiniGame website. Go check them out and see which ones you like the best.

## Colecoshop Closing In On A Grand Opening!

With a beta version already up and running, Colecoshop is close to becoming officially "open for business." Colecoshop hopes to be the place to go for all your ColecoVision needs. The website plans to have forums on all pertinent topics, from programming to playing, as well as plenty of resources related to the different aspects of the ColecoVision. Colecoshop also plans to carry the latest games and programming tools and hardware for purchase and download. Check out the site's progress and be sure to stay tuned for its big debut. [\[3\]](#)



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# ColecoNation

## IN PLAY

**ColecoVision Game Pack #2**  
by Nathan Kozlowski



programmer: Daniel Bienvenu  
publisher: Good Deal Games  
packaging: Francis Meunier  
release: 08.2004  
players: 1-2  
controller: Joystick



Treasure Game



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ColecoVision Game Pack #2 made its debut at the Classic Gaming Expo in August 2004. As with #1, Game Pack #2 was created by Daniel Bienvenu, published by Good Deal Games, and features a collection of twelve games for your ColecoVision. The majority of challenges found on the cartridge are puzzle and brain games, but a few simple arcade games are also hidden within.

After playing a few of the games, you'll start to notice that many are variations of the classics. Memory Match and Treasure are two games that will test your memory skills and are related to the classic memory card game that we've all played. Gomoku and Tetrad are similar to the game Connect Four, with Gomoku having fewer restrictions to where you can place your pieces. Tiouk Tiouk seems to be a distant cousin of Checkers, with Minesweeper and Reversi being easily recognizable games. The final two, Explosion and Isola, don't appear to be related to any commonly known games.

Game Pack #2 makes the claim to be the first ColecoVision game with advanced artificial intelligence. Technically, I really don't know if that's true, but I do know that the computer is tough to beat in any of the nine brain games. All allow you to choose between two computer skill levels and, for many, the easiest level possesses a big enough challenge. If you get tired of playing the computer, you can also take on a fellow human since all but Minesweeper allow for two players.

Initially hidden on the cartridge are three arcade games that were originally programmed for the Commodore Vic-20. Tank vs UFO, Rocket Command, and Killer Comet can all be accessed by first playing a game of Treasure and/or Memory Match, Isola, and Reversi (respectively) and then pushing "0" to play one of the three. Tank vs UFO is your basic air and land combat game, but the other two are pretty unique. Both Rocket Command and Killer Comet require the use of only one action button, but still pose unique challenges. In Rocket Command you have a row of missiles that you consecutively launch from the ground at passing planes. With every wave, the planes and missiles increase in speed and make the end goal, of hitting as many planes as possible, difficult to accomplish. Killer Comet is the best game of the twelve, even though it's really only a minor game. The pace starts off slow enough, but soon the speed and your blood pressure increases to intense levels. Essentially it's a stationary version of Asteroids, where the comet slowly approaches you by traveling across the screen. The comet takes a good amount of hits to completely destroy and every successive comet comes towards you at a more frantic pace. I always admire games that have very limited and simple gameplay, but are still exciting and fun to play.

While the games themselves are quality programs, the sound and graphics of Game Pack #2 are fairly simple and plain. One of four tunes repeatedly plays during a challenge and the constant music often gets annoying. With brain and puzzle games, the player requires a certain level of concentration that is sometimes difficult to achieve when the included music is playing. It would have been better to have limited sounds to only those that denote moves and actions. If specific players still wanted to play along to music, they could always listen to the radio. Purple and pink are the dominant colors used in most of the games and this proves to be an odd combination. A rotating set of colors would have helped break up the monotony of the visuals and create more dynamic graphics. While these issues exist with Game Pack #2, they are very minor considering that these type of games rarely require outstanding graphics and sounds.

If you enjoy the mental battles from time to time, then you would definitely want to pick up Game Pack #2. The diversity of games and gameplay options will ensure you many hours of challenging diversions. If you like more action in your games, then this probably isn't for you. However, the games found within this cartridge are from a genre that many people enjoy playing. If you've got a certain someone that you'd really like to play more ColecoVision with, then Game Pack #2 might be the successful choice to get them interested in your favorite console. [\[4\]](#)

## IN REVIEW

**Coleco Head-to-Head Games:  
Electronic Baseball  
Electronic Football  
Video Game System**  
by Nathan Kozlowski

publisher: River West Brands  
developer: Techno Source  
release: Fall 2005  
players: 1-2

There has been much discussion over the new Coleco products from River West Brands and Techno Source. River West Brands is the current owner of the Coleco and ColecoVision trademarks and they have teamed up with Techno Source to put out new electronics bearing the Coleco name. Most of the classic gaming talk regarding these products has been on the negative side (to put it nicely) and we here at ColecoNation thought we'd give them a workout to see what all the hubbub was about. We tried out two of the handheld electronic games (baseball and football) and the plug-n-play video game system for this review.

How are these new products like their predecessors? That's the big question which is asked when one sees new items from a twenty-year dormant company. We all have personal connections with the original Coleco products and it's only natural to expect the new ones to be related to the originals. Concepts, designs, and gameplay are all elements that we expect to see integrated between new and old and all three need to be analyzed to determine the success of the new Coleco products.

"Head-to-head" is a key concept in the new products' identity that was also tied to the originals. The new games are much more enjoyable when played with a partner, but the 2-player focus is a big reason why they suffer when played alone. During solo play on the handheld games, you are restricted to playing offense for both teams. Only with a friend will you be able to play defense, thus if you're competing against the computer, you're competing against yourself. The video game system is a collection of twelve games, with many of the contests quickly getting old when you're resorted to playing alone. With a friend, some of the games become more enjoyable and you can take turns making fun of the other ones.

Physically, the new handhelds share some similarities with the originals. The new casing's form looks like the original, but has different detailing that appears to be at the low end of the quality spectrum. The original handhelds used a LED display, while the new ones have a LCD screen. LCD is not as viewer-friendly as the bright red lights of a LED screen and the quality of lighting plays a big factor in how easily the new handhelds games can be viewed. The video game system is made from the same plastic and materials and has no connection whatsoever to any original Coleco electronic game. The controllers use a directional pad for movement and two buttons for actions. Issues with construction quality could mean that these products may have short life spans if not taken care of properly.

From my knowledge of the original Coleco handhelds, the new products seem to share similar gameplay traits with the old ones. In football, you decide if the play will be a run or pass and then are faced with similar obstacles. In baseball, you choose between bunting or hitting, running, stealing, or staying. Of the two sports reviewed, football was the more enjoyable game. Baseball just seemed too easy. All the handhelds had two skill levels to choose from, but I had no problem racking up ten runs in the first inning against the most difficult computer level. On the other hand, the video game system's twelve games have nothing to do with any game made by or for Coleco. The video game system is essentially a collection of original games with the Coleco name pasted on it. There's a set of sport games that share similar game mechanics with the handhelds. The system also includes knock-offs of Space Invaders, Pong, Missile Command, and Breakout. Most games pose fairly rudimentary challenges, with Boxing and Wall Breaker being the most enjoyable of the lot (especially with two players).

River West Brands is obviously using the name and history of Coleco to sell their new electronic products to the classic gaming audience. However, in the end they're giving us games that, while marketed to classic gamers, are made to appeal to our children. By themselves the games are average, but by associating them to a historic company they are negatively affecting the reputation of their products. River West Brands has alluded to also producing new ColecoVision-related products. Let's hope that if they do, they'll take the time to do their research and make a product that the ColecoNation will be proud of. [\[5\]](#)



Coleco Electronic Handhelds



Coleco Electronic Football



Coleco Video Game System

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# ColecoNation

## ROVING REPORTERS

Festival Arcadia [11.04-06.05]  
by Daniel Bienvenu



## REFERENCES

Visit these links for further info on this month's articles and topics.

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The first Festival Arcadia took place on November 4th to 6th in Montreal at the CEPSUM. The festival included all the latest games and hardware for the X-Box, Playstation, and Nintendo, but it also had the Flashback Zone where I had the pleasure of helping visitors discover the games and consoles from the past. The Flashback Zone was sponsored by Atari and created and run by the CCJVQ and CGCC, two video game collector groups based in Canada. It was setup to look like a basement from the 1980's, with brown and orange furnishings and dated lamps, televisions, and couches. It really looked like a teenage hangout from 20 years ago. The Flashback Zone was the most visited area by the medias. Atari Canada even dropped off some Atari Flashback 2's for us to display and try out.

People were attracted to the ColecoVision and decided to try it out, but it was not so much because of the console as it was for the games that I demoed on it. This was apparent when I plugged in Atarisoft's Pac-Man and drew the attention of many. Some visitors never played a video game with a joystick before and had some difficulty with the ColecoVision controller. Many used the controller like a gamepad with their thumb on the joystick or like a paddle by spinning it.

No ads or banners were made to announce the ColecoVision homebrew games, so I left various games running (Bejeweled and Penguin Land, for example) to see what people's reactions would be. Many were attracted to the visuals of the games, but their unfamiliarity with them kept people from trying them out. Most visitors asked for games that they remembered from their youth, so the newer and more obscure games were often neglected.

I also had the opportunity to talk with some people that knew about the classic gaming scene and the new games available for older systems like the Atari 2600 and ColecoVision. Some had already known about websites like AtariAge and Blue Sky Rangers. I was able to show them all the ColecoVision homebrew games that I brought to the festival and they were very impressed with the work of today's programmers.

In my opinion, the Festival Arcadia was a great success. Approximately 10,000 people visited the event and about half of them passed through the Flashback Zone. I can't wait to come back next year and talk with the growing number of classic gamers living here in Canada. I'm sure the community will be larger than ever in 2006.

## READER'S SURVEY

AtariAge Forums > ColecoNation Reader's Survey [www.atariage.com](http://www.atariage.com)

## THIS JUST IN...

AtariAge [www.atariage.com](http://www.atariage.com)

Opcode Games [www.opcodegames.com](http://www.opcodegames.com)

Maze Maniac [www.mazemaniac.com](http://www.mazemaniac.com)

2005 MiniGame Competition [www.ffd2.com/minigame](http://www.ffd2.com/minigame)

Colecoshop [www.colecoshop.com](http://www.colecoshop.com)

## IN PLAY

Good Deal Games [www.gooddealgames.com](http://www.gooddealgames.com)

## IN REVIEW

Coleco [www.coleco.com](http://www.coleco.com)

Techno Source [www.technosourcehk.com](http://www.technosourcehk.com)

## ROVING REPORTERS

Festival Arcadia [www.festivalarcadia.com](http://www.festivalarcadia.com)