

THE BLUE SCREEN

Survey Says?

by Nathan Kozlowski



Welcome back to a new season of ColecoNation! We hope everyone's had a great start to the new year and is ready for another round of ColecoVision goodness. When last we chatted, I was bugging everyone with a survey. Thanks to everyone who took the time to answer its questions, because it proved to be a helpful resource in improving our humble webzine. Articles have been removed and added based on your comments and some interesting facts have also become apparent to us.

One overwhelming opinion is that many of you would like to see the older games featured more in each issue. Whether it's reviews or stories of original games, photo archives of products and their documentation, or history on Coleco and the people who brought the ColecoVision to life, you want to read more about the "good old days." We understand your interest in the past and we'll never ignore it, but our main goal with this project is to focus on and support the new developments of the ColecoVision. We feel that the past will always be there, but if we don't support the present then the future will never get a chance to exist.

However, as you'll notice with this issue, we've started to address the classics while not impeding on the new. Check out the new column "Same As It Ever Was?" to read a roundtable review of your favorite ColecoVision games. Each issue we'll discuss our past and present experiences with the originals and give you readers the opportunity to voice your opinion. Also, this year we hope to have some interviews with those who were involved with the ColecoVision and its development. Lastly, as ColecoNation evolves, we can see it becoming a resource similar to what AtariAge is for the Atari 2600. We don't want to completely abandon the webzine format, but we want what you want and that's to see that the ColecoVision's legacy never be forgotten.

It's also come to our attention from this survey that many of you own little to none of the new homebrew games that have come out over the last few years. If you happen to be one of the guilty (and you know who you are), you need to go out and buy one today. What you don't realize is that you're missing out on some of the best games to ever be made for the ColecoVision. Some of the newest homebrews include, Magical Tree which will be available from Opcode Games by early March and Maze Maniac (reviewed this issue) which is free to download at the game's website.

Finally, an unrecognized demographic has been discovered from the surveys: the life-long ColecoVision fan who presently doesn't own a ColecoVision. It seems that there's a small group of readers out there that don't own a ColecoVision anymore, but are still very interested in reading about their favorite console. While all ColecoVision fans are welcome, we need to strongly guilt-trip these individuals into buying one again and then picking up Atarimax's new 128-in-1 Flash Multi-Cart (also reviewed this issue) so that they can play all of their favorite ColecoVision roms on the real deal.

We've put together a great issue for you and we believe the two-month wait was well worth it. Along with the articles I've already mentioned, inside you'll also find an interview with Daniel Bienvenu (a pioneer in ColecoVision homebrew programming), a regular column on the repair and inner-workings of the ColecoVision console and its accessories, and all the latest news and developments. This year proves to be the biggest yet in the life of the ColecoVision (post-Coleco) and we plan to do our part to keep the Vision alive. Enjoy!

Congratulations to Luc Miron, Pontus Oldberg, and Robert Frycklund. They were the winners of the drawing for the Coleco Head-to-Head games. The lucky three should expect their prizes to be in the mail any day now. Once again, thanks to everyone who participated in last issue's survey. You're the best! [\[2\]](#)

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ColecoNation

THIS JUST IN...

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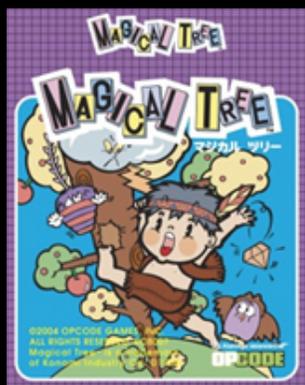
Portable ColecoVision [Heckendorn]



GP2X



128-in-1 Flash Multi-Cart [Atarimax]



Magical Tree [Opcode]

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Man Shrinks ColecoVision! www.benheck.com

Known for his experiments on the Atari, Benjamin Heckendorn has recently shrunk down the ColecoVision to a more portable size. Sporting a custom designed case, the Portable ColecoVision features a 5" screen and the connections necessary to display your games on a television screen. The system includes a thumb-pad, four buttons, and a spinner (for super action compatibility) and the complete number pad with room for the overlays. It was a custom job and unfortunately Ben has no desire to build another one. However, you can check out more pictures of Ben's latest creation at his website and let visions of mini-ColecoVisions dance in your head.

GP2X Now ColecoVision-Friendly! users.adelphia.net/~bsturk

You won't be playing the ColecoVision on a custom handheld any time soon, but Brian Sturk has made it possible to still play your favorite system in handheld format. The GP2X is an handheld gaming system that plays video games, music, and videos. MESS is an emulator that plays many game systems' roms including the ColecoVision. Brian decided to port a version of MESS to the GP2X so that he could play his ColecoVision games on it and he wants you to do it too. You can download the emulator at his website and then play Donkey Kong in a hot air balloon.

Multi-Cart In Production! www.atarimax.com

Tons of ColecoVision Multi-Carts are being produced as we speak and Atarimax is taking pre-orders for their newest item. The Multi-Cart holds up to 127 roms for play on your ColecoVision console and easily connects to your computer through the USB port. No roms are included with the product, but all games can be easily found on the internet. Now you can finally play all those rare and hard-to-find games the right way on the original system. The ColecoVision 128-in-1 Flash Multi-Cart is currently on sale for \$129.99 and runs on Windows 98 and up. Check out our review of the Multi-Cart in this here issue of ColecoNation and also Atarimax's website to get more information on Steven Tucker's nifty little cartridge.

ColecoVision On A Chip... With Salsa! home.freeuk.com/fpgaarcade/index.htm

Arnim Lauger has created a program that recreates most of the circuits that are found on the original ColecoVision console PCB including CPU, RAM, video and sound generation. This means that putting the ColecoVision on a chip (and into a self-contained game system) is now possible. The future of new ColecoVision products is uncertain, but now there's a chance we could find ColecoVisions in cars, on refrigerator doors, and as watches. Mass-produced electronics are wonderful!

New Planet Discovered: Colecoworld! www.colecoworld.com | www.revival-studios.com

A large, heavenly body has been recently spotted and it's not your aunt from Boise. It's Martijn Wenting's newest website, Colecoworld. He plans on making Colecoworld the place to go for info and items relating to the ColecoVision. The ColecoVision FAQ has also received an update and can now be found on the website. Revival Studios, a classic game developer and publisher, is Martijn's other project and he plans to have two ColecoVision games ready sometime this year.

Magical Tree Found Growing In Seattle! nwcge.org

It's finally here folks, Magical Tree will be making it's world debut at the NorthWest Classic Games Enthusiasts Expo in Seattle, WA. Eduardo Mello and Opcode Games put in overtime to get their latest MSX translation on to the ColecoVision and it was worth the wait. The game comes with a box and manual and will be available online at AtariAge shortly after the NWCGE Expo. Originating in Japan, it made its way to Europe and became one of MSX's most popular titles. Pick the game up and find out if a Magical Tree makes a sound when it falls alone in the forest.

Check out the Expos! nwcge.org | cinciclassic.org

Two classic gaming shows are approaching us. The NorthWest Classic Games Enthusiasts Expo will be held at the Sea-Tac Hilton Inn in Seattle, WA on February 25th and 26th. The 2006 Cinciclassic Classic Gaming show will be at the Fairfield Banquet and Convention Center in Cincinnati, OH on April 7th and 8th. [3]

COLECO CHAT

Daniel Bienvenu

by Nathan Kozlowski

Daniel Bienvenu's ColecoVision
Website www.geocities.com/newcolecto

Dacman [Bienvenu]



Breakout [Bienvenu]



Dacman [Bienvenu]

Daniel Bienvenu has been programming on the ColecoVision for almost ten years now and his body of work shows it. His research and documentation of the programming process has made it easier for many to create new games and now he's given us the chance to ask him some questions.

Nathan Kozlowski_ What's your story as a video game programmer?

Daniel Bienvenu_ I have no programming experience in the video game industries, but I programmed my own video games in BASIC, ASM, and C languages since I got my first computer, a Commodore Vic-20. I programmed my own tools before programming ColecoVision projects. I started 1996 and based my graphic editor on John Dondzila's Purple Dinosaur Massacre and his graphic programs. My tool was a bit different because it included sprites and mouse support. I then discovered Marcel de Kogel's Coleco library in 1998. After 2000, I started to reprogram my tools in VisualBASIC (for Windows) and today I have more tools than I really need for my projects. The only missing tool is a music composer, but I will try the software made by Philipp Krauss to see if it can be adapted for the sound driver included inside Marcel's Coleco library. My first game, Breakout, was done in a few hours in February 1999 based on tests and Marcel's demo source codes.

NK_ What's your background as a video game player?

DB_ I'm a real classic video game fan. I don't really enjoy the next generation games. I don't like reading instructions before playing.

NK_ You live in Canada, right? How is the classic gaming scene up north?

DB_ Yes, I'm living in Canada, in the province of Quebec. Some people think I'm living in Europe because of my public email address. My Yahoo email account is based on the France service because I wanted a service in French and the French Canadian service of Yahoo wasn't available at that time. I think the classic gaming scene in Canada looks like the US with a few exceptions.

NK_ Are you involved with any classic gaming groups or conventions?

DB_ I'm a member of many groups, but I only meet in person with the members of these groups: C.C.J.V.Q.: <http://www.ccjvq.com/> - C.G.C.C.: <http://www.cgcc.ca/> - AdamCon: <http://www.adamcon.org/>

I contribute to these group by showing and selling (for a special low price) new ColecoVision games, talking about Coleco programming, and being an active member. I also give my help when it's time to test and make cartridges for ColecoVision games made by members of these group. Some members said to me they are programming ColecoVision games because of my help and that may explain why about half of the new Coleco programmers are members of these groups.

NK_ When did you first get a ColecoVision system?

DB_ It was my brother's Christmas gift. I got a Commodore Vic-20 at the same Christmas.

NK_ What are some of your favorite ColecoVision games?

DB_ Donkey Kong is special for me because it was the first one I played on this console. Some others are: Antarctic Adventure, B.C.'s Quest for Tires, Beamrider, Bump'n Jump, BurgerTime, Congo Bongo, Donkey Kong Junior, Dukes of Hazzard, Frenzy, Gyruus, Lady Bug, Mouse Trap, Mr Do!, Pepper II, Pitfall!, Pitstop, Q*Bert, Roc'n rope, Rocky Super Boxing, Root Beer Tapper, Smurf Rescue in Gargamel's Castle (the best multi-screen platform game for this console), Slither, Space Fury, Star Wars, TimePilot, Turbo, Venture, Zaxxon, Zenji, and most of the new games.

NK_ What game systems do you currently play on and/or collect for?

DB_ My video game interest is mostly ColecoVision and Commodore 64. The most recent video game systems I bought are a Sega Dreamcast and a Game.com. [\[4\]](#)

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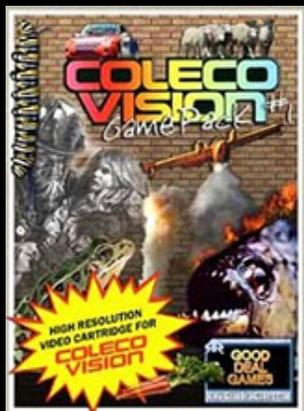
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ColecoNation

COLECO CHAT

[continued...]



Game Pack #1 [Good Deal Games]



Jeepers Creepers [Bienvenu]



Matrix graphic demo [Bienvenu]



Air Battle [Bienvenu]

NK_ You have a strong interest in Coleco's history. What are some interesting facts that you've discovered about the company through your research?

DB_ By looking at video game magazines from the years 1982 to 1985, you can find many interesting facts and speculations about companies and games like the announcement of a Pink Panther game for the ColecoVision, a system pay-per-play developed by The Source (the internet of that time for the US) to plug-in in the cartridge slot, and much more. By reading some recaps about Consumer Electronic Show of that time, we learn that Coleco Industries had a non-conventional presentation, but I've never seen a picture of the Coleco booths that shocked some critics.

NK_ You're also very active in the Adam computer community. How are you currently involved with the Adam and its programming?

DB_ Because one part of the Adam computer system is the ColecoVision, I see this computer as a boosted version of the console more than a computer. The Super Games promised long ago for the ColecoVision are almost all done for this computer. Based on Dale Wick and Steve Bégin's developments, it's possible to detect and use the Adam possibilities from a software in a ColecoVision cartridge. For example, it's possible to program a racing game to be in a cartridge and give the ability to play new circuits from a tape or floppy disk, to save and print hi-scores, to use extra RAM for an improved gaming experience, to add a circuit editor and much more. The Adam computer is not easy to find in good shape, but the Adamcon group is there.

NK_ What are all the games that you've programmed for the ColecoVision?

DB_ Small game projects: BreakPad, BreakOut, Canadair, Carotte (carrot), Chenille (caterpillar), Chien Berger (shepherd dog), Circuit 24, DacPong, Diamond Dash, Explosion, Gomoku, Grenouille (toad), Icebergs, Incendie (firefighter), Isola, Killer Comet, Maitresprit (brainmaster), Memory Match, Minesweeper, Missiles, Nim, Piranhas, Not One, Racing, Reversi, Rocket Command, Slalom, Smash, Space Trainer, Tank vs Ufo, Tetrad, Tiouk Tiouk, Treasure, St-Valentine.

Big game projects: 421 (printing dices and playing sounds part), Amazing Snake (about half the work), Bejeweled (Mathieu Proulx helped me for the arcade part), CVDrum (rush of debugging), Double Breakout (also know as Deflektor Kollection), BUSTin-Out, Dacman, Game Pack 1 and 2, Jeepers Creepers, Ms. Space Fury, Reversi, Reversi and Diamond Dash, Spectank.

Abandoned projects : Air Battle (a kind of biplane combat), Ataka (Ataxx clone), Catch the Letters (educational game), Chess, DacMan 2, Dynamite, Goldorak, GunFight, Le chateau du dragon (dragon's castle) a text based adventure, Lunar Lander, Skiing (based on the Coleco game), Pressure Cooker, Super Pong, Tron.

Misc: 120 colors, 3D Cave, JukeBox, Movie Coleco Player, SoundFX vol.1 and 2, VGM Coleco Player.

NK_ Which of these games were put on to cartridges?

DB_ All the big projects listed above except Spectank and Jeepers Creepers, which only are prototypes.

NK_ Are there any easter eggs or bugs in your games that you want to reveal?

DB_ Almost all the easter eggs have been revealed to the public. The only easter egg not revealed that came to mind is how to access the mini-game Space Trainer that's included in Deflektor Kollection (not in Double Breakout). About bugs, the first Dacman batch released during the CGE2K had a bug of logic when counting the dots left after being caught by a ghost. Beta-tests didn't reveal this problem because the players were too good to be caught by the ghosts. Fortunately, this bug was quickly fixed in the actual version released right after the CGE2K. One of the most famous well-known bugs I did is in Ms. Space Fury. When finishing all the levels in two player mode: the player's character stays on screen after the game. [5]

COLECO CHAT

[continued...]



Bejeweled [Bienvenu]



Le chateau du dragon [Bienvenu]



Bejeweled [Bienvenu]

NK_ The bulk of your games seem to be puzzle and strategy challenges. Is there a reason for this dominance?

DB_ As far as I know, I always liked puzzle and board games and it's more easier to program a game you like than a game you don't. When the action is too fast and the camera is going crazy, I hate that. It's why I don't enjoy some movies and next generation games. That may also explain why I prefer puzzles. I try to program a game project that would represent a nice challenge, not one that's an impossible mission. Puzzle games need time to develop an appropriate AI and it's more challenging to program this than gradually increasing a counter for the amount of enemies to drop on screen. I'm trying to program all kind of games as you can tell from my projects list. As you may see, I tried to program an educational game and a text-based adventure, but these projects didn't go too far in the development process. Sometimes, time decides which games to program. Sometimes, I want to start a game project when programming another and I then have to make a choice. I try to program games from my imagination, but it's not always possible.

NK_ Most classic gaming programmers tend to focus on arcade games, why has this not really been true of you?

DB_ I try to be original, to not program the same kind of game, to experiment with all the possibilities. Also, if all the programmers only do arcade games, the collectors will certainly notice that something is missing. The ColecoVision games library has plenty of holes for game types not exploited yet. Of course, the arcade games are always big hits and it's more true for arcade classics because of the proof of time and nostalgia. However, I think it's important to be more artistic and start doing something else, maybe not exactly what the gamers have imagined, but certainly worthwhile. This could create a more complete Coleco programming experience for the collectors and the average fans too.

NK_ What was your first game that was widely-produced on cartridge? When did it come out and how was it received by the classic gaming community?

DB_ My first game in cartridge was Dacman. It wasn't widely-produced, but was certainly appreciated by those who wanted to play a Pac-Man game for the ColecoVision. My first major game would have to be Miss Space Fury, because it was a huge batch of cartridges and the surprise was that they sold out before its official release during the Classic Gaming Expo 2K in Las Vegas. The classic gaming community received it as one of the best homebrews made for the ColecoVision.

NK_ Roughly speaking, how many cartridges do you think have been made of your games over the years?

DB_ I don't have an official count, but it's certainly more than 500 cartridges. Approximate counts: 30 Bejeweled, 70-80 BUSTin-out (vol1, vol.2 and also a few rare vol.3), 10 Dacman v1.0, 80 Dacman v1.3, 40 Double Breakout, 20 Deflektor Kollection, 10 Game Pack, 50 GDG Game Pack #1, 10 Game Pack #2, 50 GDG Game Pack #2, 2 personal Game Pack #2, 5 Jeepers Creepers prototypes, 100 Ms. Space Fury, 20 Reversi, 40-50 Reversi & Diamond Dash.

NK_ Where are your games sold?

DB_ When I receive requests by email for one of my old games, I try to find a solution like producing a few more cartridges of the game when it's possible. Actually, you can find many homebrew Coleco games, including mine, on the net and sometimes available during classic gaming events.

NK_ Do you plan on making more of your games available through publishers like AtariAge and Good Deal Games so that more people can enjoy them?

DB_ I'm not planning long term anymore. I try to do my best to answer demands, but it's not always possible (limit of resources, missing original art design label, box, etc.). I wanted to publish a new version of Dacman to celebrate the 5th anniversary of my first Coleco game on cartridge, but it wasn't the right timing with the release of Pac-Man Collection and I had to make a choice. [\[6\]](#)

ColecoNation

COLECO CHAT

[continued...]



Ms. Space Fury [Digital Press]



Reversi [AtariAge]



Monsters [Bienvenu]



Ms. Space Fury [Digital Press]

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NK_ Will your currently not-for-sale games be made available to the public?

DB_ Some of them may be made available to the public in cartridge format if I have the opportunity. For now most of them are available on the internet to play on an emulator. I don't suggest putting them on cartridge yet (they're not tested enough).

NK_ Please describe the process that you go through in programming games for the CV. Is it fairly consistent or does your approach change depending on the game?

DB_ First, I close my eyes and imagine what the game will look like based on the graphic chip possibilities. Then, I do a few sketches and put the graphics into a project skeleton. At this time, I feel more like an artist than a game designer. After the graphics, I try coding step by step the functions needed to make the game playable. I finish the project by adding sounds, bonuses, and title screen. Also, every time I started with the title screen, I never finished the project. Whatever the game project, the last step is always testing, tweaking up, and debugging. It's easy to start game projects, but it's hard to finish one.

NK_ From a programmer's perspective, what types of games interest you? What types of games do you enjoy creating?

DB_ All the types that can be programmed small, without need of instruction to start playing. Some types can be fun to program because of the challenge. The best example is a type that needs a lot of memory space like the role playing games.

NK_ What types of games do you think most interest today's classic gamer?

DB_ That's easy to answer: the arcade games are the big hits, even more popular when it's based on the classic. The reason is nostalgia and proof of time, which is difficult to have with a brand new game.

NK_ Do you receive any help/guidance as you program?

DB_ Marcel de Kogel is the one who coached me to program ColecoVision games in C language. But soon, I developed my own style and toolkit to make the programming experience more easier. There is a good relationship between the programmers. It's helpful when the programmer documents his work through technical reports and specific information based on his experiences. There's still work to do, but no one has free time to do it.

NK_ What are you currently working on?

DB_ I continue writing docs and programming tools, but not as fast as I would like.

NK_ Any ColecoVision games that you are currently working on?

DB_ I concentrate my effort on updating my Coleco programming stuff, when I have the time. I also proposed Jeepers Creepers to Digital Press for a possible special anniversary game release, but for now nothing's completely for certain. I'm not currently programming games, but I've got plenty of unrealized ideas waiting to be developed.

NK_ How would one go about programming a ColecoVision game? Any tips, helpful resources?

DB_ Of course, there are technical documents about the video and sound chips, but no real documentation about ColecoVision programming except mine and one by Coleco industries which is very hard to find.

NK_ What do you think the future holds for the ColecoVision in today's classic gaming community?

DB_ We are starting to see recent technology integrated into ColecoVision related projects. Some projects will soon need extra memory and video capacity. The ColecoVision games library still has plenty of room for new games, even arcade games. That's enough to keep the interest in the ColecoVision game system going for a long period of time. The excitement around the ColecoVision experience is not going to end any time soon. [7]

IN PLAY

Maze Maniac

by Nathan Kozlowski



programmer: Mathieu Boyer
 release: 11.2005
 rom size: 32k
 players: 1-2
 controller: Joystick
 website: www.mazemaniac.com



Title Screen [Boyer]



Stage 1 [Boyer]

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Have you been meaning to check out some of the new games for the ColecoVision, but haven't found the cash to buy one? Well, then Maze Maniac might be what you're looking for. Released publicly in November 2005, only ten cartridges were made of Maze Maniac. However it's creator, Mathieu Boyer, also made the rom freely available at the game's website for the world to download and play. Other notables at the website are the instructions for Maze Maniac, as well as the official high-score board where the top players are immortalized for centuries to come.

In Maze Maniac, you're a little smiling head that is trying to finish the mazes in the shortest amount of time while avoiding fires, green holes, and sometimes ghosts. The game consists of twenty four different mazes and seven variations to choose from that determine how you'll have to navigate through them. When you first turn on the game, you're limited to only three options. Once you successfully complete one of the first three, then a fourth option appears and is required to finish before unlocking the others. The initial challenges are Normal (good for beginners, because it gives you multiple lives), Endurance (you only have one life to get through the mazes), and Cooperative (team up with another player). Time attack (similar to Endurance), No Turning Back (allows you to reverse your movements through the mazes), Competitive (another two-player game, but now you're racing against each other), and Bomber (introduces the use of bombs to make your own way through the mazes) are the four game options that need to be unlocked in order to play.

I've always enjoyed maze games, one of my favorite Atari 2600 games is still Maze Craze. Thus, it's no shocker that I enjoy playing Maze Maniac. Maze Maniac has kept the two-player option (which is a must for maze challenges) and has made the one player games more interesting. Adding the various obstacles and bonus items creates different strategies and challenges within the same maze. My two favorites are No Turning Back and the two-player games, because they both exemplify how the same mazes can be played repeatedly and not get old. It's just a shame that one needs to devote a good chunk of time to reach these specific games. Every time you turn on the game, you have to complete the initial modes before unlocking the unique maze games. It would have been nice to have created a way to bypass this lock with maybe a code. Difficult to do on the ColecoVision, but not impossible.

The integration of the game with its website is another way that Mathieu has successfully made Maze Maniac a two-person challenge, even when one is playing the single game options. By creating a system of passwords that record scores and allows them to be posted online, the player is always involved in a two-player match and constantly has the motivation to try and improve his results. This intergration shows that the programmer cares about his creation and is committed to thinking of unique ways of making the final product more enjoyable.

While Maze Maniac does a admirable job of making twenty four mazes interesting even after they are solved, this lack of randomness is the game's greatest weakness. A person instinctively looks to solve a maze by finding the end. Once this is accomplished, the same maze holds little interest to him/her. Maze Maniac initially asks the player to solve the mazes, however once that is finished, the game then asks the players to master the same mazes during the rest of the options. The die-hard gamer may be up to this challenge, but your average person will likely tire of this new task and lose interest in the game. A way of randomly generating mazes would have helped increase Maze Maniac's gameplay value. If there is ever talk of a sequel, then I strongly suggest simplifying the sound and graphics even more to make room for randomness in the maze construction.

I encourage everyone to try and play Maze Maniac on the ColecoVision. The emulators do a fine job, but you don't get the sense of urgency or need to think as quick when playing on the computer. The ability to pause, and thus solve the maze before you even take your first step, makes this game quite easy to master. Mathieu Boyer's first ColecoVision game is a great rookie effort and needs to be appreciated on the console that it was created for. [8]

IN REVIEW

128-in-1 Flash Multi-Cart by David Harley

Atarimax www.atarimax.com

Still searching for that "impossible-to-find" multi-cart? The search is over! Atarimax has available a ColecoVision 128-in-1 Multi-Cart which uses flash memory. You now have the option to install any of your own ROM or BIN format games onto it. If you get tired of the games you installed on the cart, just replace them with others. This is the most flexible multi-cart made for the ColecoVision yet.

The package includes a professionally produced cartridge, a USB cable, and the Coleco Studio software on CD. The multi-cart is a standard sized ColecoVision cartridge. The main differences between a regular cart and the multi-cart is the USB port and reset button on the top of the multi-cart. The USB port is used to synchronize the PC and multi-cart. The reset button functions as a return to menu. Past multi-carts required a system power off/on to return to the game select menu.

First thing you must do is install the Coleco Studio software. The install program starts automatically after inserting the CD and is straightforward. Only a Windows version of the software is included. A Linux and OSX command-line version has been announced for sometime in the future.

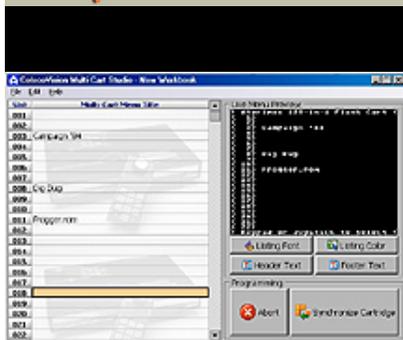
With the drivers installed, the multi-cart is ready to be plugged into a USB port. It's compliant with USB v.1.1 specifications and does not benefit when connected to a USB v.2 port. The multi-cart does require all 5 volts of power from the USB so it's suggested to plug it directly into the PC and not a USB hub. A hub can be used once the cartridge has been loaded with games and minor maintenance is needed.

Installing games into the multi-cart is easy. You simply drag ROMs (or BINs) from Explorer to Coleco Studio. The games are automatically recognized and titled but can easily be renamed. There are options allowing you to alphabetically sort the menu and compact the menu removing blank spaces between titles. Arrange the menu by dragging the games from position to position. The Live Menu Preview shows you exactly what you will see on the TV when the cart is plugged into the console. With full control over the menu header, footer, text color, and font, customize the menu appearance to your liking. Once you have the menu as you want it, connect the multi-cart to the PC and click on the Synchronize button. There is an alternative, non-intuitive way to perform some functions. You simply right click on a slot to display a pop-up menu.

The amount of games you can install on the multi-cart is 127. It is called a 128-in-1 because of its design. Built with a 4mb flash chip which does not require external power or batteries, there are 128 segments of 32k. The game select menu consumes 1 segment leaving 127 free segments. Slot #128 is part of the menu and will run a system diagnostic program. The largest ROM that will work on the multi-cart is 32k. Currently every game, original and homebrew, in existence fits within this limitation. The synchronize process is relatively quick. It takes 6.5 minutes to load 127 games into an empty cart, 10 seconds to change the menu font and/or color, and 17 seconds to replace one game with another in the same slot. Generally, a synchronize process will take less than 1 minute.

For all intended purposes, the multi-cart is a standard cartridge once loaded with games. All expansion controllers work normally. Game play is exactly as it has always been and all games work perfectly. The multi-cart never needs to be connected to a PC while playing; only to change games already on the menu. Maintenance is the same as with all other cartridges. If the multi-cart does fail to work, Atarimax will fix it under its lifetime warranty.

This multi-cart is for you if you are a developer or just tired of pulling out carts to play games. With about 190 games in existence, it may be a challenge to select 127 of your favorite ones to put in the multi-cart but remember, you can change them at will. The only downside to the multi-cart might be the \$129.99 price tag which many may consider a little high. I did not hesitate in ordering one and am super pleased with it. You will be also. [9]



Diagnosing the ColecoVision by Michael Dullum

Viking Video Games
www.vikingvideogames.com

The ColecoVision is my favorite video game system of all time. I'm not quite sure why I have such an affinity for the console, but it's because of this affection that I started modding and upgrading the ColecoVision. Originally I started off trying to perform an A/V output and an "Intro Skip" BIOS mod. The A/V mod allowed me to abandon the use of the RF output signal for superior picture and sound qualities, while the "Intro Skip" BIOS swap allowed me to skip the 12 second title screen delay on Coleco games. After complete successes with both modifications, I decided to offer my services to the public. Since my start with ColecoVision refurbishing and upgrading over a year-and-a-half ago, I've started a website and have developed several new upgrades and modifications of my own that I now make available to anyone who's interested in enjoying a better ColecoVision experience.

So if you're reading this, you probably own a ColecoVision, but chances are that your hardware may not perform quite as well as you'd like it. Have you ever sat down with the idea of playing a couple hours worth of Donkey Kong on your ColecoVision and thought to yourself "it's too much work trying to get a game to work?" Lucky for you most of these problems are fairly easy to repair or replace. The bulk of hardware issues that I encounter are simply a result of over 20 years of dust, dirt, and electrical corrosion collecting on the contacts within the console, the cartridges, and/or the controllers.

The three most common problems that afflict the ColecoVision console are its cartridge slot, On/Off switch, and power supply. Troubles with any one of these three can lead to poor audio or video quality, and/or affect its working capacity. The easiest of these to attempt to remedy is of course the cartridge slot. There are many methods and techniques for cleaning a cartridge slot, the most common being standard rubbing alcohol. With your ColecoVision unplugged, rub a small tool such as a cotton swab soaked in rubbing alcohol over the slot's contacts repeatedly in an effort to remove any dust, dirt, or corrosion that is inhibiting proper contact with the cartridge's contacts. After the alcohol has evaporated, plug your console back in and look for improvement. A slightly better method is to perform the same steps with an electrical contact cleaner. Contact cleaners are specifically developed for electronics and undoubtedly perform better than rubbing alcohol. Depending on the contact cleaner chosen, it may be possible to perform these steps with your hardware energized (plugged-in) which will allow you to check for results quicker. Obviously these cleaners will cost a little more than alcohol, but will yield far better results.

The method I've developed is slightly more expensive and complicated, but yields the best results that I've encountered. First, with a fiberglass eraser (or burnishing brush) burnish (sand) the contacts in the cartridge slot. This will remove 90% - 95% of all dirt, dust, and corrosion that has built up. After that use compressed air to blow the debris out of the slot, then apply a small amount of a de-oxidizer to each of the electrical contacts and let it sit for approximately 5 minutes. Next, wipe the contacts clean and apply a contact conditioner to each of the contacts. Let the conditioner remain on the contacts for approximately 5 minutes and then wipe off the excess. This will help fill in all of the fine scratches on the contacts, help promote connectivity, and prevent corrosion from recurring.

The ColecoVision's On/Off switch can encounter all of the same problems as the cartridge slot and can be tackled in any of the aforementioned methods. Access to the On/Off switch is a bit harder and does require disassembly of the console housing as well as de-soldering and re-soldering of the On/Off switch. These simple cleaning methods can help bring new life back to your temperamental ColecoVision.

The ColecoVision's power supply can also cause you headaches. Power supplies in general have an inclination to break down over time, causing less than adequate amperages available to be pulled by your console. The most common symptom of this is that your console simply won't work. There are options out there however if you are having power supply problems, but you'll have to wait until the next issue to find out what they are. [\[10\]](#)

ColecoNation

SAME AS IT EVER WAS?

Donkey Kong

Send your reviews to:

ColecoNation@yahoo.com



Ramp Screen [Coleco]



Rivet Screen [Coleco]



Elevator Screen [Coleco]

Donkey Kong was the featured member of the ColecoVision family and has the honor of being produced more than any other cartridge for the system (it was the pack-in game after all). Also, it's safe to say that everyone played or wanted to play Donkey Kong on the ColecoVision when it was released in the fall of 1982. What were people's opinions of the game once they finally played the home version? How do people rate the game today when they plug it in and give in a whirl?

Nathan Kozlowski ~ I was one of those lucky kids that got a ColecoVision, fresh from the store, and thus was one of the many who became instantly enamored with Donkey Kong. I remember it being such a challenging game that required all my concentration to successfully complete the three stages. Learning the speed-up trick on the ladders was gratifying, while trying to outrun the barrels was always frustrating. Today, the old challenges of Donkey Kong just don't seem to be as menacing. Even on the highest difficulty setting, I have no problems clearing each stage. The game is still one of my favorites, the strong concept and nostalgic connections continue to make it interesting for me. However, new goals (such as, speed and play duration) have evolved for me from this classic game.

David Harley ~ Before the ColecoVision, it took plenty of quarters for me to get my Donkey Kong fix. Playing it on the console was a godsend for me. The graphics blew away all the other consoles and the game play was great. It was just as good as playing the arcade game and I was able to save all my quarters. Playing the game today is just as fun today as it ever was. The difficulty of playing DK on the console is gone as it is on the arcade version also. It does not matter. If I am not playing DK on the arcade, I am playing it on the ColecoVision. The game has not lost its luster after all these years.

Daniel Bienvenu ~ My history with Donkey Kong is very personal and special even though I didn't enjoy it by playing. After watching my older brother play Donkey Kong on his brand new ColecoVision, I wanted to program video games and especially ones for this great console. My childhood dream came true after years of studies and researches and it was the accomplishment of a lifetime. This classic is the best example of a great video game not based on spaceships or blocks.

Joe Blenkle ~ Donkey Kong was always one of my favorite arcade games. I don't know how many quarters I sunk into that game, but I found it to be very addictive - not to mention hard - I could never get past the first screen. When this new-fangled Coleco machine game out, I was delighted to find it would include Donkey Kong. I remember originally being blown away by the graphics, although the gameplay was a little difficult with the standard Coleco controller. I was disappointed it wasn't "exactly" like the arcade game with Donkey Kong throwing barrels at you rather than just rolling them down the girders, but it was close enough. Today, the graphics don't seem quite as good as when I originally saw Donkey Kong on the ColecoVision (everything looked good back then!!!), but it's still one of the classics for the system. It's ColecoVision's signature game and will always be fun to play.

Scott Huggins ~ I played Donkey Kong for the first time in January 1983. I owned an Atari 2600 at the time and my neighbor got his ColecoVision for Christmas one month earlier. I left his house depressed because he had this awesome new console. It was so much better than anything I'd ever played. Today, however, I'm not that fond of Donkey Kong on the ColecoVision. It's okay, but knowing a little about the capabilities of the console makes me think a much better version could be made that would show off the ColecoVision's capabilities.

Next Issue: Lady Bug

Did you try out Lady Bug when it debuted on the ColecoVision way back in 1982? Have you been known to play it once and a while even now? Well we'd like to read about your experiences with this classic, back in the day and today. In 125 words or less, write a past and present review of Lady Bug and let the ColecoNation know what you think. The deadline's April 1st and it's first come first served, so get going!