

Mario Bros.: How The Ports Stack Up

RETROCADE MAGAZINE

VOLUME 1 | ISSUE 1 | WINTER 2012

BY CLASSIC GAMERS FOR CLASSIC GAMERS

Computer Space: The Genesis of Coin-Op Video

HIGH SCORES ARCADE

DESTROYING THE RINGS

UNLOCKING THE CAGE ON
DONKEY KONG JUNIOR

FULL CHAPTER EXCERPT FROM
TRON AND ROBOTRON

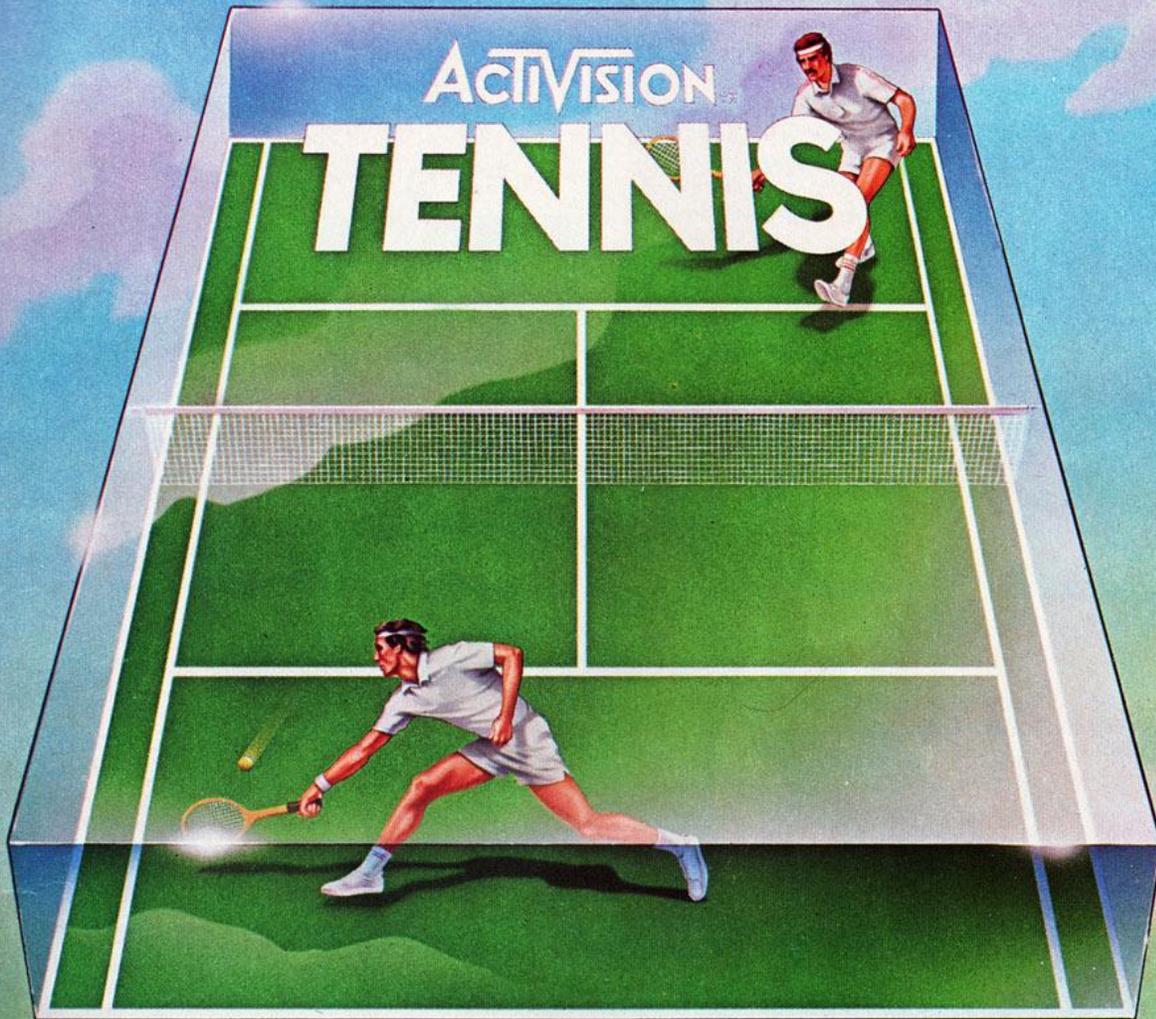
VECTOR PILOT & MOON CRESTA:
TWO **HOT** HOME BREWS REVIEWED!

PLUS: SCOREBOARDS, REVIEWS, EVENT COVERAGE & MORE



RETRO AD

**DON'T JUST RESERVE A COURT.
OWN ONE.**



If you had the choice, wouldn't you rather own the court? And play absolutely anytime you like. For as long as you like. Sure you would. And with Tennis by Activision™, you can.

It's played on your Atari* or Sears video game system.

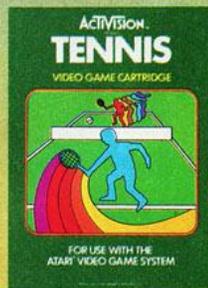
But, don't expect an ordinary video game. Tennis by Activision is something else.

It's remarkably realistic. Capturing the speed, strategy and finesse of real tennis.

With no reservations necessary.

And that's one bit of realism we know you won't miss.

Tennis by Activision. Own one.



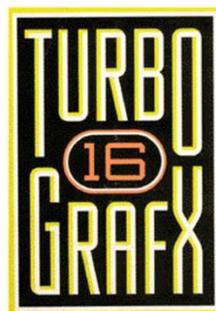
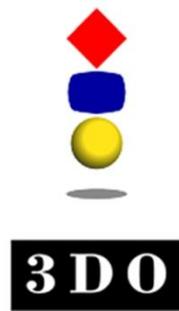
ACTIVISION™

© 1981 Activision, Inc. *Atari Inc. is not related to Activision, Inc.

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Out of the Womb

by Rob Maerz

A couple of years ago I wrote a few articles for a classic gaming periodical. Along the way I met some interesting people, attended some classic gaming events and caught a bug for writing. It was fun and educational while it lasted.

By the summer of 2010, I began brainstorming a new magazine venture after having not produced anything for almost a year. I put some feelers out there to see if there was any interest from others to join me on this project. I didn't get much of a response, so I shelved the idea.

By summer 2011, my creative juices were overflowing and I decided that the magazine will happen. It is an active classic gaming community today that warrants a dedicated periodical: a true classic gaming publication covering the golden age of gaming from its inception to the middle 1980s and the community that keeps the spirit alive.

This is Retrocade Magazine – a magazine by classic gamers for classic gamers. A group of talented individuals have joined me in producing the premiere issue of the magazine that takes you back to the era where video games were gushing of imagination.

The mission of Retrocade Magazine is to promote the arcades, players, developers, vendors, authors and other personalities that make up this great community. And in this issue we have delivered.

With this being the premiere issue of Retrocade Magazine, it was only fitting that the very first coin-operated video arcade game should grace the cover. It was also a statement: that this *is* a classic gaming magazine.



Send your questions, comments and concerns to Retrocade Magazine and we'll address them in the next issue:

contact@retrocademagazine.com

Don't worry we won't publish your email address!

RETROCHARTS

Popularity Charts

Most Popular Coin-Op Video Games

Rank	Game	Manufacturer
1.	Donkey Kong	Nintendo
2.	Asteroids	Atari
3.	Centipede	Atari
4.	Robotron:2084	Williams
5.	Time Pilot	Konami
6.	Galaga	Namco
7.	Defender	Williams
8.	Donkey Kong 3	Nintendo
9.	Bubble Bobble	Taito
10.	Tempest	Atari

Most Popular Video Game Cartridges

Rank	Game	Platform	Manufacturer
1.	Subroc	ColecoVision	Sega
2.	Galaxian	ColecoVision	Atari
3.	Solar Quest	Vectrex	GCE
4.	Squish 'Em Sam	ColecoVision	Interphase
5.	BurgerTime	Intellivision	Data East
6.	Yars' Revenge	Atari 2600	Atari
7.	Scramble	Vectrex	GCE
8.	Frogger	Atari 2600	Parker Bros.
9.	Star Castle	Vectrex	GCE
10.	Space Fury	ColecoVision	Sega

Source: Retrocade Magazine Popularity Charts Survey at RetrocadeMagazine.com

Reader Surveys

Best Home Port of Pac-Man

Pac-Man Collection (Atari 7800)	40%
Pac-Man Arcade (Atari 2600)	20%
Pac-Man (Atari 8-bit)	20%
Pac-Man Collection (ColecoVision)	20%

Best Home Port of Donkey Kong

Donkey Kong (NES)	43%
Donkey Kong (Atari 8-bit)	43%
Donkey Kong (Commodore 64)	14%

Favorite Game In the Donkey Kong Series

Donkey Kong Junior	45%
Donkey Kong	36%
Donkey Kong 3	18%

Favorite Game In the Defender Series

Robotron:2084	45%
Stargate	27%
Blaster	18%
Defender	9%

Favorite Game In the Pac-Man Series

Ms. Pac-Man	60%
Pac-Man	20%
Jr. Pac-Man	20%

Favorite Game In the Galaxian Series

Galaxian	56%
Galaga	22%
Galaga '88	22%

Preference of Arcade or Console Gaming

Arcade	70%
Console	30%

Better System: Atari 5200 vs. ColecoVision

ColecoVision	78%
Atari 5200	22%

Better System: Atari 2600 vs. Mattel Intellivision

Atari 2600	57%
Mattel Intellivision	43%

Better System: Atari 2600, 5200 or 7800

Atari 2600	43%
Atari 7800	43%
Atari 5200	14%

Source: Reader Surveys On the Retrocade Magazine Forums (retrocademagazine.com/forums)

RETROBOARDS

Atari 2600

Adventures of Tron

Difficulty: B

69,600 James Randall

Alien

Difficulty: Left B / Right B

62,758 James Randall

34,345 Rob Maerz

Amidar

Difficulty: A

5,955 Rob Maerz

Bank Heist

Difficulty: Left B / Right B

199,978 James Randall

38,043 Ed Kelly

Barnstorming

Game 1

32.90 James Randall

Battlezone

Game 1

425,000 Chuck Ostrowski

83,000 Nick Reymann

81,000 James Randall

43,000 Rob Maerz

Berzerk

Game 3

228,840 Christian Keilback

6,230 Ed Kelly

4,980 Rob Maerz

Centipede

Standard

77,147 Michael Allard

66,062 James Randall

57,200 Rob Maerz

45,043 Nick Reymann

Cosmic Ark

Game 1

22,980 James Randall

Cosmic Commuter

Level 1

508,851 James Randall

Crackpots

267,050 Christian Keilback

82,380 James Randall

Crystal Castles

Difficulty: B

123,057 James Randall

13,239 Rob Maerz

Dark Cavern

Difficulty: B

319,000 James Randall

Demon Attack

Game 1

Difficulty: B

432,485 James Randall

9,790 Mattias Stjernefeldt

8,630 Rob Maerz

Donkey Kong

139,800 James Randall

67,900 Mattias Stjernefeldt

49,400 Rob Maerz

Donkey Kong Junior

Difficulty: 1

950,600 James Randall

Double Dragon

Game 1

80,890 James Randall

Dragonfire

Game 1

68,130 James Randall

Dragster

Game 1

5.77 Dean Hagerman

5.84 James Randall

The Earth Dies Screaming

35,425 James Randall

Encounter At L5

Game 1

Difficulty: Left B / Right B

4,719 James Randall

Enduro

2187.9 Christian Keilback

1894.9 Chuck Ostrowski

1376.8 James Randall

Fast Food

13,484 James Randall

Fathom

20,662 James Randall

Flash Gordon

343,385 James Randall

Freeway*Game 1**Difficulty: B*

36 Dean Hagerman

32 Mattias Stjernefeldt

29 Rob Maerz

28 Ed Kelly

Frogger (Parker Bros.)*Game 1**Difficulty: B*

1,771 Rob Maerz

Gas Hog

23,420 James Randall

Grand Prix*Game 1*

29.73 James Randall

Gyruss*Game 1*

357,100 James Randall

H.E.R.O.*Game 1*

171,425 James Randall

Indy 500*Game 6**(Crash N Score I Time Trial)**Difficulty: B*

43 James Randall

33 Rob Maerz

Indy 500*Game 8**(Crash N Score II Time Trial)**Difficulty: B*50 (with 4 seconds left)
James Randall

38 Rob Maerz

James Bond 007*Game: Novice*

16,500 James Randall

Joust*Skill: Skilled*

274,650 Mattias Stjernefeldt

196,200 James Randall

143,850 Nick Reymann

Jr. Pac-Man*Toy Candy With 4 Ghosts*

57,360 James Randall

28,880 Rob Maerz

Jungle Hunt*Skill Level 1*

39,840 James Randall

Juno First

229,400 James Randall

50,800 Rob Maerz

Kaboom!*Game 1**Difficulty: B*

50,755 Chuck Ostrowski

16,572 James Randall

Kool-Aid Man*Difficulty: Right B*

81,300 James Randall

24,300 Rob Maerz

Kung Fu Master*Game 1*

71,500 James Randall

18,000 Mattias Stjernefeldt

Lady Bug*Novice*

419,040 James Randall

172,590 Rob Maerz

Laser Gates

70,701 Mattias Stjernefeldt

69,016 James Randall

Lock N Chase*Difficulty: B*

34,280 James Randall

25,300 Rob Maerz

Lost Luggage*Game 1**Difficulty: B*

609,300 James Randall

182,111 Christian Keilback

Midnight Magic*Difficulty: B*

654,570 Nick Reymann

126,860 James Randall

44,930 Rob Maerz

Missile Command*Game 3**Difficulty: B*

48,530 Nick Reymann

Moon Patrol*Game 1**Difficulty: B*

35,460 James Randall

Mountain King*Skill 1*

321,720 James Randall

Mr. Do!*Game 1**Difficulty: B*

45,950 James Randall

Mr. Do's Castle

33,280 James Randall

Ms. Pac-Man*Level: Cherries*

103,740 Michael Allard

95,290 James Randall

78,910 Rob Maerz

46,370 Virender Dayal

Phoenix

685,950 James Randall

274,340 Chuck Ostrowski

144,820 Nick Reymann

44,670 Rob Maerz

Pitfall!

109,795 James Randall

No Escape!*Game 1**Difficulty: B*

6,783 James Randall

Oink!*Game 1**Difficulty: B*

63,072 James Randall

Omega Race

68,000 James Randall

61,500 Chuck Ostrowski

57,000 Rob Maerz

Pac-Man Arcade*Level: Cherry*

109,350 James Randall

80,520 Rob Maerz

Pengo*Round 1*

311,310 James Randall

39,830 Chuck Ostrowski

Planet Patrol*Game 1*

18,880 James Randall

4,460 Rob Maerz

Polaris*Game 1*

20,400 Mattias Stjernefeldt

20,100 James Randall

Pooyan*Game 1*

2,665 James Randall

1,289 Rob Maerz

Popeye

63,000 James Randall

Pressure Cooker*Game 1*

296,845 James Randall

Quadrun

184,870 Christian Keilback

Racer*Game 1**Difficulty: A (no oil slicks)*

183 James Randall

96 Rob Maerz

Radar Lock

59,534 James Randall

Reactor*Game 1**Difficulty: A or B (sets ship speed)*

325,082 James Randall

93,044 Rob Maerz

River Raid*Game 1**Difficulty: B*

252,770 James Randall

River Raid II

653,850 James Randall

Road Runner

137,900 James Randall

114,400 Mattias Stjernefeldt

Robot Tank

68 Chuck Ostrowski

62 James Randall

Roc 'N Rope*Game 1**Skill 1*

59,300 James Randall

Sinistar

563,445 Rob Maerz

Skiing*Game 1*

32.78 James Randall

Sky Diver*Game 1**Difficulty: B*

97 James Randall

79 Rob Maerz

Sky Jinks*Game 1**Difficulty: B*

34.88 James Randall

Solaris

105,400 Chuck Ostrowski

27,200 James Randall

26,720 Rob Maerz

Spider-Man

39,280 James Randall

Spike's Peak*Left Difficulty: B**Right Difficulty: B*

99,750 James Randall

Spy Hunter*Difficulty: B*

184,150 James Randall

Stampede*Game 1**Difficulty: B*

8,756 James Randall

Star Trek

412,900 Ed Kelly

219,200 James Randall

Star Wars: Death Star Battle*Game 1**Difficulty: Left B / Right B*

34,680 Rob Maerz

Stargate

225,250 James Randall

65,200 Nick Reymann

57,850 Chuck Ostrowski

Starmaster*Level: Starmaster*

9,283 James Randall

Sub-Scan

11,080 Rob Maerz

6,260 James Randall

Super Cobra*Slow Speed*

24,210 James Randall

10,820 Rob Maerz

8,500 Ed Kelly

Tac/Scan*Game 1**Difficulty: B*

178,300 Rob Maerz

54,610 James Randall

Tapper*Difficulty: Left - A / Right - B*

127,425 Christian Keilback

90,825 James Randall

Threshold*Game 3**Difficulty: B*

19,640 Mattias Stjernefeldt

Time Pilot*Game 1**Difficulty: B*

51,000 James Randall

20,000 Ed Kelly

Tron: Deadly Discs*Difficulty: B*

61,795 James Randall

44,585 Rob Maerz

Tunnel Runner*Game 1*

21,308 Christian Keilback

7,557 James Randall

Turbo*Enhanced Prototype*

14,249 James Randall

Tutankham*Game 1*

3,618 James Randall

430 Rob Maerz

Zaxxon*Skill 1**Difficulty: Left B, Right B*

41,600 Ed Kelly

26,500 Christian Keilback

25,400 George Riley

14,800 James Randall

Atari 5200**Beamrider***Level 1*

27,136 James Nguyen

Berzerk*Game 1*

7,720 Virender Dayal

4,590 Rob Maerz

Centipede*Easy*

35,038 Michael Allard

Countermeasure

116,450 Brandon LeCroy

Defender*Easy*

172,200 James Nguyen

134,725 Rob Maerz

Frogger*Fast*

11,825 Virender Dayal

Frogger II: Threedeeep*Level 1*

49,114 Virender Dayal

Galaxian*Level 0 (Novice)*

30,440 Chuck Ostrowski

15,130 Rob Maerz

Galaxian*Level 9 (Very Difficult)*

14,210 Michael Allard

11,300 Chuck Ostrowski

Gyruss

257,900 Virender Dayal

49,050 Chuck Ostrowski

H.E.R.O.*Level 1*

133,780 Virender Dayal

Kaboom!*Game 1**Large Bucket*

26,958 Chuck Ostrowski

Mario Bros.*1 Player*

44,410 Rob Maerz

Miner 2049er*Level: 1*

159,580 Virender Dayal

Qix*Advanced*

87,228 Michael Allard

Mario Bros.*Standard*

58,480 Rob Maerz

Donkey Kong*Hammer Level*

175,200 Virender Dayal

Missile Command*Wave 1*

139,170 Chuck Ostrowski

56,345 Rob Maerz

River Raid*Level 1*

85,420 Chuck Ostrowski

Ms. Pac-Man*Cherry Level*

81,190 Virender Dayal

44,870 Rob Maerz

Frogger (Parker Bros.)*Fast*

12,555 Virender Dayal

Moon Patrol*Beginner*

48,900 Virender Dayal

27,200 Chuck Ostrowski

20,000 James Nguyen

Space Invaders*Game 1*

41,363 Chuck Ostrowski

39,800 Chuck Ostrowski

Frogger II: Threedeeep*Level 1*

72,127 Virender Dayal

Pole Position II*Fuji*

70,050 Nick Reymann

K-razy Shoot-out

13,020 Chuck Ostrowski

Ms. Pac-Man*Cherry*

117,460 Virender Dayal

26,420 Chuck Ostrowski

Space Invaders*Game 12*

2,326 Virender Dayal

1,776 Chuck Ostrowski

Pole Position II*Seaside*

65,450 Nick Reymann

Kaboom*Large Bucket*

53,604 Chuck Ostrowski

Pac-Man*Cherry*

114,270 Virender Dayal

32,180 Chuck Ostrowski

Wizard of Wor*1 Player**7 Lives*

20,700 Rob Maerz

Pole Position II*Test Track*

74,350 Rob Maerz

74,350 Austin Mackert

Kaboom*Small Bucket*

4,468 Chuck Ostrowski

Atari 7800**Donkey Kong***Standard*

50,700 Rob Maerz

Xevious*Novice*

83,760 Austin Mackert

Miner 2049er

117,295 Virender Dayal

20,775 Nick Reymann

Pole Position*Malibu Grand Prix**Laps: 4*

60,950 Virender Dayal

60,750 Chuck Ostrowski

54,600 Rob Maerz

Galaga*Advanced*

145,590 Rob Maerz

Atari 8-bit**Asteroids**

18,520 Rob Maerz

Missile Command*Skip 0**Bonus*

127,165 Chuck Ostrowski

Q*bert

27,965 Michael Allard

Jr. Pac-Man*Fast**5 Lives*

91,380 Rob Maerz

Centipede

148,194 Virender Dayal

49,349 Rob Maerz

Ms. Pac-Man*Cherry*

126,050 Virender Dayal

Oil's Well*Regular*

168,720 Virender Dayal

Burger Time*Skill 1*

51,000 Ed Kelly

Frogger*Fast*

10,660 Rob Maerz

Ms. Pac-Man*Lives: 5**Bonus: 10,000**Difficulty: Normal***Pac-Man***Cherry*

251,660 Virender Dayal

Centipede*Easy*

59,131 Rob Maerz

52,723 Ed Kelly

Galaxian*Novice*

36,070 Ed Kelly

31,540 Rob Maerz

45,280 Rob Maerz

Nova Blast*Cadet*

48,300 Ed Kelly

Preppie II

47,550 Virender Dayal

Chuck Norris Superkicks

194,300 Ed Kelly

Gyruss*Skill 1*

73,900 Rob Maerz

21,100 Rob Maerz

Robotron:2084*Level 0*

194,225 Chuck Ostrowski

Cosmic Avenger*Skill 1*

49,840 Ed Kelly

26,120 Rob Maerz

H.E.R.O.

33,405 Rob Maerz

Oil's Well*Regular*

24,690 Rob Maerz

19,030 Ed Kelly

Wizard of Wor*Lives: 7*

28,000 Chuck Ostrowski

4,490 Arik Maerz

Jungle Hunt*Easy*

24,030 Rob Maerz

Omega Race*Skill 1*

184,000 Rob Maerz

ColecoVision**Astro Invader**

7,070 Rob Maerz

Destructor*Skill 1*

48,620 Rob Maerz

18,540 Ed Kelly

Pac-Man*Lives: 5**Bonus: 10,000**Difficulty: Normal***Buck Rogers***Skill 1*

23,134 Rob Maerz

Donkey Kong Junior*Skill 1*

113,900 Ed Kelly

13,100 Arik Maerz

Looping*Skill 1*

209,175 Ed Kelly

23,350 Ed Kelly

Bump 'N' Jump*Skill 1*

155,328 Ed Kelly

60,636 Rob Maerz

Frantic Freddy*Skill 1*

6,060 Rob Maerz

Magical Tree

27,600 Rob Maerz

Pac-Man Plus*Lives: 5**Bonus: 10,000**Difficulty: Normal*

44,750 Rob Maerz

17,320 Ed Kelly

Frenzy*Skill 1*

20,518 Ed Kelly

8,748 Rob Maerz

Mario Bros.

88,060 Ed Kelly

85,830 Rob Maerz

Mr. Do!'s Castle*Skill 1*

22,380 Ed Kelly

Popeye*Game 1*

78,730 Ed Kelly

Q*bert's Qubes*Skill 1*

168,140 Ed Kelly

River Raid*Game 1*

21,390 Ed Kelly

13,460 Rob Maerz

Road Fighter*Stage A*

32,783 Rob Maerz

Roc'N Rope*Skill 1*

50,200 Ed Kelly

33,070 Rob Maerz

Sky Jaguar

43,600 Ed Kelly

23,510 Rob Maerz

Slurpy

32,135 Ed Kelly

Space Fury*Skill 1*

261,610 Ed Kelly

207,500 Rob Maerz

Space Panic*Skill 1*

10,030 Rob Maerz

Spectron*Skill 1*

5,690 Rob Maerz

3,570 Ed Kelly

Squish Em Sam*Level 1*

70,800 Rob Maerz

Star Trek*Skill 1*

331,075 Ed Kelly

Star Wars

2,462,901 Ed Kelly

SubRoc*Skill 1*

268,600 Rob Maerz

Tapper*Skill 1*

176,925 Rob Maerz

Time Pilot*Skill 1*

146,800 Ed Kelly

55,300 Rob Maerz

Turbo*Skill 1*

172,032 Ed Kelly

49,468 Rob Maerz

Venture*Skill 1*

183,800 Rob Maerz

War Games*Skill 3*

217,160,000 Ed Kelly

War Games*Skill 6*

388,250,000 Ed Kelly

War Games*Skill 7*

140,860,000 Ed Kelly

War Games*Skill 8*

108,650,000 Ed Kelly

Wing War

100,675 Ed Kelly

Yie Ar Kung-Fu*Famicom Version*

102,100 Ed Kelly

Commodore 64**Battlezone**

60,000 Chuck Ostrowski

21,000 Rob Maerz

Buck Rogers

45,200 Rob Maerz

Centipede

35,648 Rob Maerz

Clowns

17,670 Mattias Stjernefeldt

14,030 Chuck Ostrowski

4,690 Rob Maerz

Galaxian*Level: 1*

13,300 Rob Maerz

Jupiter Lander

17,000 Brandon LeCroy

Ms. Pac-Man*Level: Cherry*

24,590 Rob Maerz

Omega Race

107,150 Rob Maerz

87,200 Chuck Ostrowski

Pinball Spectacular

47,890 Rob Maerz

20,450 Brandon LeCroy

Wizard of Wor

1 Player Only (Yellow Player)

186,900 Brandon LeCroy

32,300 Rob Maerz

Intellivision

Astrosmash

Peak Score

756,410 Chuck Ostrowski

104,100 Ed Kelly

25,450 Rob Maerz

Atlantis

Easy

34,680 Ed Kelly

Bump 'N' Jump

31,234 Ed Kelly

BurgerTime

Speed: Medium

29,900 Ed Kelly

Carnival

Level 1

7,820 Ed Kelly

Centipede

43,758 Ed Kelly

Chip Shot Super Pro Golf

INTV Tourney

18 Holes

77 Ed Kelly

Commando

Skill Level: Regular

78,500 Ed Kelly

Demon Attack

Game 1

9,381 Ed Kelly

Diner

Level 1

353,800 Ed Kelly

Donkey Kong

Skill 1

82,700 Ed Kelly

Donkey Kong Junior

Skill 1

53,500 Ed Kelly

Dracula

Skill Level: Easy

23,225 Ed Kelly

Lady Bug

Skill 1

55,130 Ed Kelly

Lock 'N' Chase

Speed: Fastest

28,620 Michael Allard

Mouse Trap

Skill 1

219,900 Ed Kelly

PGA Golf

56 Ed Kelly

Popeye

Level 1

67,100 Ed Kelly

Space Armada

105,100 Ed Kelly

Space Patrol

Moon

678,750 Ed Kelly

Super Cobra

Level 1

22,248 Ed Kelly

Tron: Deadly Discs

Speed: Fastest

21,250 Ed Kelly

9,500 Dean Hagerman

Turbo

Skill 1

108,068 Ed Kelly

Zaxxon

Skill 1

33,400 Ed Kelly

NES

Burger Time

419,900 Eric Cummings

Elevator Action

12,950 Rob Maerz

Galaga

231,400 Austin Mackert

128,270 Rob Maerz

Mario Bros.

Game A

110,380 Rob Maerz

Millipede

Game A

120,066 Rob Maerz

Ms. Pac-Man [TENGEN]

Arcade

27,250 Rob Maerz

Pac-Man

32,920 Rob Maerz

Popeye

Game A

30,730 Rob Maerz

Rollerball

Skyscraper

1 Player

351,870 Nick Reymann

Odyssey 2

Attack Of the Timelord

422 Ed Kelly

UFO

173 Ed Kelly

Vectrex

Armor Attack

Game 1

106,200 Ian Nicholson

51,800 Helmut Mueller

32,000 Dave McCooley

31,300 Rob Maerz

29,400 Jasper Alto

Rip Off

Game 1

4,480 Dave McCooley

4,450 Helmut Mueller

4,320 Jasper Alto

3,180 Ian Nicholson

2,280 Rob Maerz

Scramble

Game 1

66,140 Helmut Mueller

37,900 Ian Nicholson

35,670 Jasper Alto

31,480 Dave McCooley

29,230 Rob Maerz

Solar Quest

142,750 Dave McCooley

138,900 Ian Nicholson

110,500 Jasper Alto

106,150 Helmut Mueller

103,950 Rob Maerz

Star Castle

Game 1

460,880 Brandon Ross

306,810 Rob Maerz

99,990 Dave McCooley

35,200 Jasper Alto

21,980 Helmut Mueller

8,610 Ian Nicholson

Web Wars

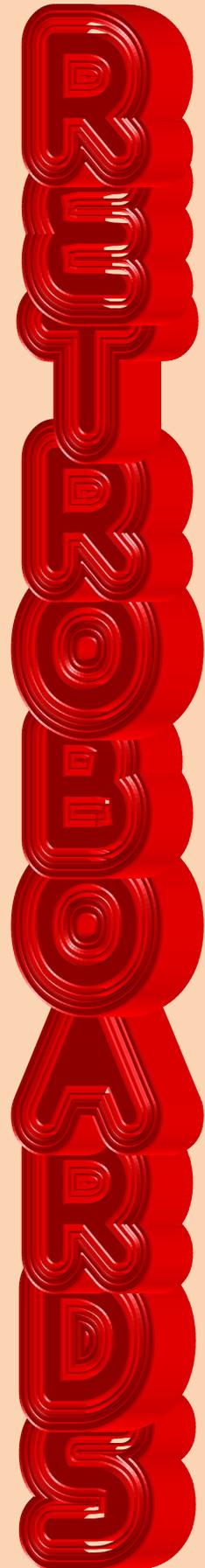
124,408 Jasper Alto

65,891 Helmut Mueller

65,890 Dave McCooley

22,990 Rob Maerz

Register with the Retrocade Magazine forums and start posting your scores today!

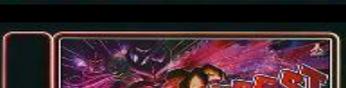
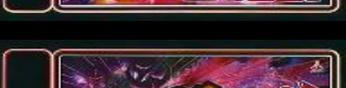
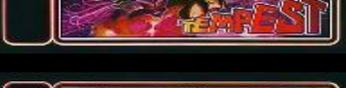


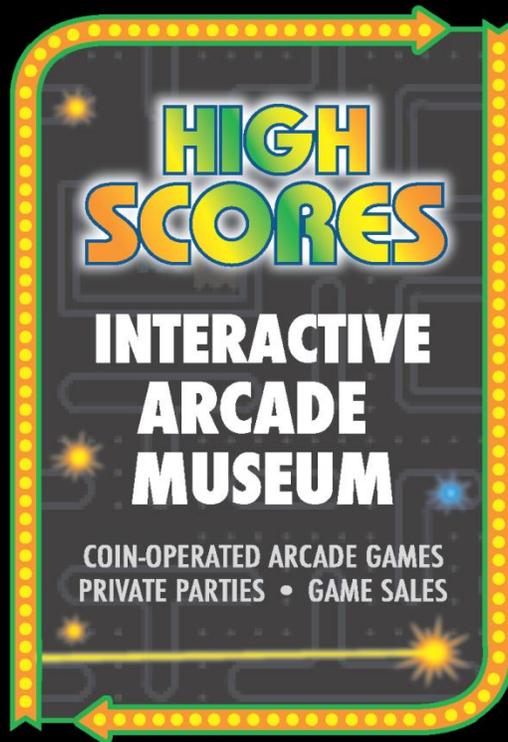
RETROCADE MAGAZINE

BY CLASSIC GAMERS FOR CLASSIC GAMERS

The Retroboard at RetrocadeMagazine.com

Whether fact or fiction, the Retroboard is an archive of forgotten scores published in various gaming magazines and newsletters from back in the day.

Game	Score	Player	Source
	11,999,978	David Plummer Regina, SK	AtariAge Volume 2, Number 1 (May / June 1983)
	9,911,772	Pablo Zaldiver New Orleans, LA	Joystik November 1983
	5,829,783	Lee Hedrich Naples, FL	Joystik September 1983
	5,084,247	Lance Layson Calhoun, GA	Electronic Games Magazine September 1983
	4,999,993	Ken Vance Las Vegas, NV	AtariAge Volume 1, Number 6 (March / April 1983)I
	3,086,355	Leo Daniels Wrightsville, NC	Creative Computing Video & Arcade Games Vol.1 No.1 Spring 1983
	1,697,634	Eric Clayberg Fredericksburg, VA	Electronic Games Magazine January 1983
	828,453	Tim Shea	BLiP February 1983
	674,437	Joe Ergo Baldwin, NY	Atari Coin Connection Vol. 6 No. 4 June 1982
	638,651	Michael Weisberg Philadelphia, PA	Atari Coin Connection Vol. 6 No. 2 March 1982
	512,674	Jay Nelson West Virginia	Video Games Player Fall 1982



Presents

RETROCADE MAGAZINE

Arcade Summer Showdown

Live At High Scores Interactive Arcade Museum*

348 High Street, Burlington, NJ

& On the Web at RetrocadeMagazine.com

**Sunday, August 7, 2011 - Monday August 22,
2011**

**during normal business hours*



Arcade/MAME Summer Showdown Results

Tournament Final Standings

1. Brandon LeCroy **80.64%**
2. Rob Maerz **78.94%**
3. Mike Daws **70.68%**
4. Pat Belair **39.67%**



1. 380,370 100% Mike Daws
2. 265,250 69.73 Brandon LeCroy
3. 257,370 Christian Keilback
4. 210,850 55.43% Rob Maerz
5. 169,410 44.54% Pat Belair
6. 29,030 Ed Kelly



1. 149,500 **100%** Brandon LeCroy
2. 123,900 **82.88%** Rob Maerz
3. 114,540 **76.62%** Mike Daws
4. 79,160 Nick Reymann
5. 63,190 **42.27%** Pat Belair
6. 21,150 Franka Maerz
7. 11,850 Emily Maerz



1. 41,423 100% Rob Maerz
2. 31,315 75.6% Mike Daws
3. 30,050 Greg Buggy
4. 27,747 66.98% Brandon LeCroy
5. 21,554 Arik Maerz
6. 9,264 22.36% Pat Belair



1. 29,720 **100%** Rob Maerz
2. 23,590 **79.37%** Mike Daws
3. 16,880 **56.8%** Brandon LeCroy
4. 13,100 Mike Brey
5. 5,810 Nick Reymann
6. 3,870 **13.02%** Pat Belair



1. 21,780 100% Rob Maerz
2. 15,460 70.98% Brandon LeCroy
3. 10,080 46.28% Mike Daws
4. 7,630 35.03% Pat Belair
5. 4,050 Arik Maerz

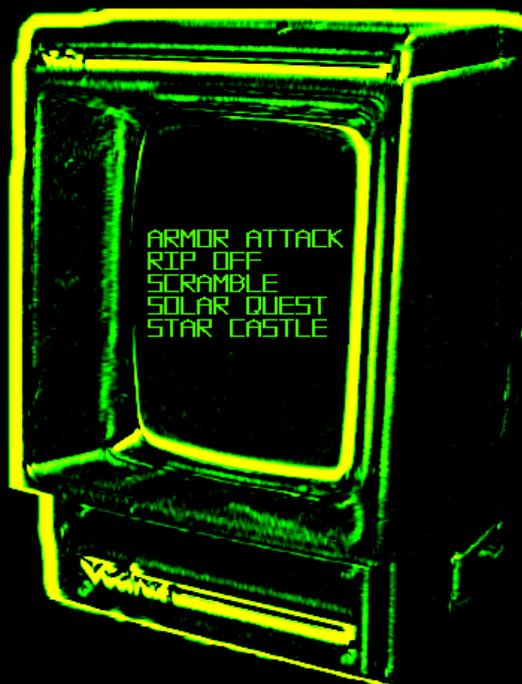


1. 814,150 **100%** Brandon LeCroy
2. 337,820 **41.49%** Pat Belair
3. 213,890 **26.71%** Mike Daws
4. 209,000 **25.67%** Rob Maerz



1. 235,600 100% Brandon LeCroy
2. 225,000 Nick Reymann
3. 212,500 90.2% Mike Daws
4. 208,700 88.58% Rob Maerz
5. 186,100 78.99% Pat Belair
6. 119,300 Arik Maerz

VECTOR WAR



TOURNAMENT FINAL STANDINGS

1.	Helmut Mueller	66.07%
2.	Ian Nicholson	65.74%
3.	Dave McCooley	62.85%
4.	Rob Maerz	59.48%
5.	Jasper Alto	53.62%

SEPTEMBER 1-22, 2011
RETROCADEMAGAZINE.COM

ARMOR ATTACK

106,200	100.00%	Ian Nicholson
51,800	48.78%	Helmut Mueller
32,000	30.13%	Dave McCooley
31,300	29.47%	Rob Maerz
29,400	27.68%	Jasper Alto

RIP OFF

4,480	100.00%	Dave McCooley
4,450	99.33%	Helmut Mueller
4,320	96.43%	Jasper Alto
3,180	70.98%	Ian Nicholson
2,280	50.89%	Rob Maerz

SCRAMBLE

66,140	100.00%	Helmut Mueller
37,900	57.30%	Ian Nicholson
35,670	53.93%	Jasper Alto
31,480	48.14%	Dave McCooley
29,230	44.19%	Rob Maerz

SOLAR QUEST

142,750	100.00%	Dave McCooley
138,900	97.30%	Ian Nicholson
110,500	77.41%	Jasper Alto
106,150	74.36%	Helmut Mueller
103,950	72.82%	Rob Maerz

STAR CASTLE

278,110	100.00%	Rob Maerz
99,990	35.95%	Dave McCooley
35,200	12.66%	Jasper Alto
21,980	7.90%	Helmut Mueller
8,610	3.10%	Ian Nicholson

The 2011 Classic Arcade Gaming (dot com) Contest at California Extreme

July 9, 2011

Photos and score data provided by Mark Alpiger



406,375	John Koolpe
213,225	Steve Thornock
198,850	Jason Spindler



250,700	Eric Ebel
150,900	Shane Pace
78,600	Eric Liddell



245,112	Franz Lanzinger
126,650	Hector Rodriguez
41,620	Jason Spindler



956,990	Eric Liddell
471,510	Buzz 'Raj' Morgan
276,140	Gary Hatt





Richie Knucklez Invitational Iron Man Invitational

Richie Knucklez Arcade Games

Flemington, NJ

July 30 – August 1, 2011

by Rob Maerz

“This is our third year and the tournament is for the Knuckie Trophy,” said arcade owner, Richie Knucklez. “We came back from Funspot in our first year and thought it would be a good excuse for our friends to converge on Flemington and have a good time with us.”

“If you enjoy the classic arcade gaming experience, we are the people to follow,” added Knucklez. “Anybody who’s *anybody* comes here to play now. I saw the movie **King of Kong** and they said Funspot was the place to go to set a record - now it’s my goal to make *my* place to go to set a record.”



Joel West marathons Frenzy



Donald Hayes on Centipede



David Cruz on Tron

Iron Man Invitational



4,933,702
Joel West



350,000
Zach Kaczor



3,328,000
Greg Laue



1,002,222,360
Rick Carter



317,350
Mark Alpiger



14,007,645
David Cruz

Richie Knucklez Third Annual Invitational



87,650

Bobby Wilson



132,900

Ben Falls



430,425

Bobby Wilson



5,617

Steve Wagner



266,754

Steve Wagner



297,760

Steve Wagner



65,750

Steve Wagner



184,190

Steve Wagner



52,510

Steve Wagner



53,804

Fred Ochs

Score data powered by Aurcade.com

2011 Classic Arcade Gaming (dot com) Tournament

Richie Knucklez Arcade Games

Flemington, NJ

September 16 – 18, 2011

by Rob Maerz

When asked how long he has been organizing these tournaments, Crystal Castles expert and **King of Kong** star Mark Alpiger replied “Five years of success.”



“This particular tournament, we took all the games that were in previous tournaments and made them eligible for players to pick and put them into the draw of games,” explained Alpiger. “We had 45 games possible for the players to vote on when they entered the tournament. By democratic vote, the most popular 22 titles were picked to go into this tournament. ‘For the player and by the player’ and that’s what CAGDC [Classic Arcade Gaming (dot com)] is all about.”



While some tournaments, such as the annual Main Tournament held at the famed Funspot in New Hampshire, require that you play all games in the tournament, the CAGDC tournaments require that you only play 7 games.

“In my tournaments I removed the handcuffs and said ‘why not let the players pick?’ We can have players on a different set of games yet make it comparable because you’re playing for a percentage on games *you pick*. If you hate a game in this tournament you don’t have to play it.”

Some gamers have questioned the use of threshold scores on each title. The thresholds are minimum scores that you must achieve on a title in order to submit a qualifying score.

“Why do I want someone turning in a 10 point score? I don’t,” explained Alpiger. “I don’t want to waste the ref’s time and I don’t want to waste the player’s time because they’re not going to be competitive. So, I said ‘here’s what you should be getting on a particular game before you turn in a qualifying score.’”



Tournament Top 10

Ben Falls	99.79%
Steve Wagner	99.55%
Jimmy Linderman	97.75%
Donald Hayes	97.44%
Bryan Wagner	93.22%
George Leutz	91.37%
Richie Knucklez	88.38%
Bill Holmes	87.46%
John Balsley	85.72%
Cliff Reese	78.01%



Tournament Top Scores



500,620
Steve Wagner



1,171,000
Cliff Reese



806,977
Donald Hayes



1,292,200
Steve Wagner



194,600
Ben Falls & Dwight Austin (tie)



103,100
Steve Wagner



448,700
Ben Falls



1,550,930
Jon Klinkel



56,610
Steve Wagner



1,052,870
Cliff Reese



1,805,050
Dwight Austin



101,400
Ben Falls



578,880
Bryan Wagner



9,220
Steve Wagner



606,340
Ben Falls



1,630,850
Jimmy Linderman



666,245
Richie Knucklez



400,220
Ben Falls



535,055
Donald Hayes



5,547,875
Ben Falls



279,300
Steve Wagner



2,396
Jimmy Linderman

Score data provided by Mark Alpiger of Classic Arcade Gaming (dot com)

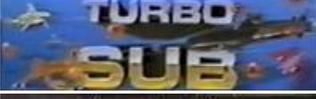
Classic Arcade Gaming (dot com)

A great source of unique and valuable information about the arcade games that were brought out during the classic era, Classic Arcade Gaming (dot com) is *the* resource for anyone interested in classic arcade gaming and everything that goes along with it.

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- The latest news
- New world record scores
- Tips and write-ups from world-class gamers
- Unique and rare documents, videos, magazine and newspaper article reprints and much more

Classic Arcade Gaming (dot com) Scoreboard

	2,699,120	Jimmy Linderman		522,825*	Zack Lubow
	353,943	Donald Hayes		30,075,000	Jimmy Linderman
	11,512,500	Bryan Wagner		1,735,270	Donald Hayes
	515,100*	J.J. Cahill		759,595	Richie Knucklez
	245,600*	Ben Falls		6,369,344*	Donald Hayes
	142,847	Mark Alpiger		15,190,500	Jason Spindler
	1,049,950*	Donald Hayes		1,218,300*	Donald Hayes

* denotes 1 hour time limit

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High Scores Arcade Scoreboard



360,120 Bill Holmes



205,539 Gary Heller



537,200 Steve Wagner



495,500 Mark Sellers



180,940 Ben Falls



7,860 Mike Welsh



9,999,999 Lonnie McDonald



23,770 Steve Wagner



52,600 Steve Wagner



6,500,578 Donald Hayes



440,480 George Leutz



85,410 Mark Sellers



1,200,000 Jimmy Linderman



999,977 David Cruz

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Gobles, MI

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269-628-4628

www.KlassicArcade.com

Klassic Arcade Scoreboard



705,966

Donald
Hayes



3,182,960
(Turbo)

Tye
McGothen



486,400

Joe
Galaviz



875,780

Donald
Hayes



299,990

Donald
Hayes



8,440

Fred Ochs



3,311,950

Jon Klinkel



1,867,592

Jason
Jach



56,780

Joel
Reinoehl



288,200

Jim Stark



427,800

Bryce
Zimmer



300,001

Fred Ochs



10,001,425

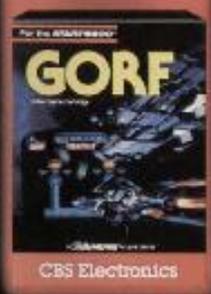
Lonnie
McDonald



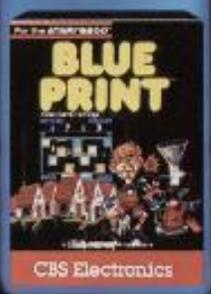
839,250

Donald
Hayes

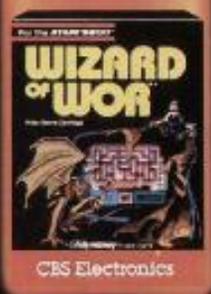
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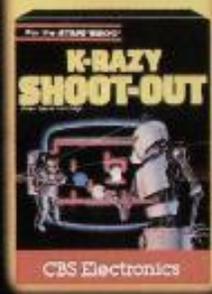
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Computer Space

COIN-OP FINALLY BEGINS

by Kevin Armstrong

What was the first arcade video game?

It is a question being asked more and more often these days, largely due to the video game industry today excelling in popular culture and finding itself as financially successful as music labels or movies. Ask this question to the average person on the street and they will likely say that Pong was the first arcade video game and they would be almost correct ... almost.



Pong certainly was the most famous and successful of the earliest coin-operated video games, and the machine most people remember from gaming antiquity. However, Pong was the second attempt at coin-op by the fledgling company Atari, its predecessor was Computer Space and Pong owed much of its success to the failures that Computer Space suffered.

Before Atari was created its founding members, Nolan Bushnell and Ted Dabney, had formed a partnership called Syzygy Engineering. Both men had worked together at Ampex, an American electronics company founded in 1944, which built many impressive machines over its history, including electric motors, tape recorders, and motion picture sound systems. In his youth, Nolan Bushnell had supported himself during summers by working in an amusement park and had always been intrigued by the amount of money being earned by traditional coin-op such as pinball machines and electro-mechanical games. He discussed at length with Ted Dabney his idea to bring Steve Russel's popular Space War game from university computer labs to a coin-op business model and Dabney engineered a circuit that would work.

This was no small feat. Space War ran on a PDP-1 mainframe computer in the labs at M.I.T., a computer that cost \$120,000 (in 1960 dollars). Nolan Bushnell knew that duplicating what Steve Russel had accomplished would be prohibitively expensive.

Bushnell had come up with an idea of paring down an expensive computer to the minimum that was affordable. This reduced central processor would attempt to run multiple sessions of a game similar to Space War, which spanned across a number of gaming cabinets. Unfortunately, he soon discovered the processor was running out of cycles unless the game played on only four terminals, and that would not earn enough money to pay for the investment of the central processor. Ted Dabney engineered a circuit with no processor at all. He had developed a technique to move objects on screen and create a display that would run on a standard television set, using only TTL (transistor-to-transistor) logic.

The result was the game Computer Space. A variant on Space War, it was housed in a curvy Plexiglas cabinet (manufactured by a nearby swimming pool company) and sported a control panel that would look very familiar to anyone who played Asteroids many years later. However, to a coin-op game player of the early 1970's, it would prove to be too complicated to control.



In fact, the first version of the control panel, seen in the game flyer, used a molded lever for directing the player's rocket ship, but Ted Dabney confessed many years later that kids kept breaking that controller off; hence the control panel was redesigned with push buttons for thrust, rotation and missile firing.

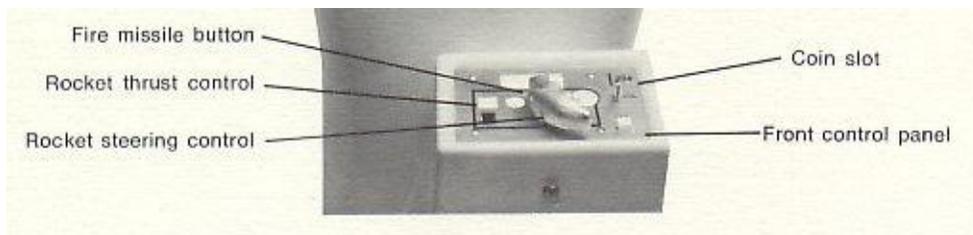


Image used with permission from [Arcade Flyer Archive](#)

Steve Russel's Space War would also be the inspiration for yet another different coin-op video game machine, one that preceded Computer Space by only a couple of months. An engineering student, Bill Pitts and his high school friend Hugh Tuck, had developed a machine called Galaxy Game at Stanford University. Both men had enjoyed playing Space War during their time on campus and they formed a company called Computer Recreations in June of 1971 with the same notion as Nolan Bushnell and Ted Dabney. Unfortunately, Pitts and Tuck did not have a cost-effective design for Galaxy Game: their cabinets ran games off the new low-cost PDP-11/20 machine kept on the university grounds. They had made something very much like Computer Space, albeit for \$20,000. Unfortunately, Galaxy Game was housebound to Stanford and it also suffered from the ill-fated operating decision to run for a dime per play as opposed to a quarter. As a result, not surprisingly, Galaxy Game did not make much money. Despite this game being first out of the gate, it did not succeed.



Unfortunately, neither did Computer Space. Even though this new Syzygy game was being built commercially and over a thousand machines would find themselves rolling off the assembly line from Nutting Associates, the game was too erudite and too complex for the average patron of an arcade or billiard hall. The cabinet definitely drew people's interest. In fact, the machine can be seen in two major Hollywood movies of the time: Soylent Green in 1973 and the block buster Jaws in 1975. Alas, once the game was played, few people came back to it and today many units have been found in abandoned warehouses or basement storage units.

So why did Nolan Bushnell and Ted Dabney try a second time with Pong? How did the failure of Computer Space lead to Pong's success?

Behind the games, there was a lot of business to handle between Syzygy Engineering and Nutting Associates. Nolan Bushnell was trying to negotiate with Nutting to acquire actual ownership of this new video gaming venture, a move that Nutting was not interested in. They wanted Syzygy to create more games and Nutting would put them into cabinets. Nolan Bushnell decided it might be time to finish their relationship with Nutting Associates, especially since other companies such as Bally were interested in working with Syzygy.

And so, in 1972, Nolan Bushnell and Ted Dabney formed a new company. Initially, they wanted to remain as Syzygy, however a candlestick making company in California had already incorporated with that name. Bushnell and Dabney then looked for inspiration for a new title. As it turned out, both men were avid players of the board game Go and several terms used in that game sounded attractive for a company name. Hane, Sente, and Atari were phrases used in Go and all three were submitted to the California Secretary of State for the purpose of incorporating. It was actually the Secretary of State that settled on the name Atari for their new company and so the historic game giant was born.

Atari immediately began a contract for Bally to create one video game and one pinball machine. Ted Dabney began work on the pinball while Nolan Bushnell looked to their first engineering hire, Al Alcorn, to design the video game title. They still had Dabney's circuit for moving objects on screen, previously used in Computer Space, so Al Alcorn was assigned the task of creating a new video game using this circuit. But Bushnell advised Alcorn that the new game could not be very complicated. The lesson that had already been learned was not to make a complex video game. Computer Space failed because it was too difficult to understand, so the new game needed to be simple.

Al Alcorn was handed Ted Dabney's circuit and he began to investigate and tinker with the design to learn what had been achieved and what kinds of objects and motions could be created on the

screen. The other important issue that remained was what kind of game to create?

Nolan Bushnell had attended a presentation of the new Magnavox Odyssey console on May 29th, 1972 during an exhibition for engineers and he suggested Al Alcorn try to make the screen do what had been seen on the Odyssey: a basic tennis game. Two squares on either side of a white line could be controlled to bounce a dot back and forth on the Odyssey's TV display. Bushnell did not find the game very interesting. However, it would be a good exercise for Alcorn to attempt with Ted Dabney's circuit.

Alcorn's Pong contained several advances and differences over the Odyssey Tennis game. For starters, where the player touched the ball on the paddle would influence the rebound angle. Alcorn also added increasing ball speed during game progression as a way to increase the challenge and fun potential. Nolan Bushnell had recommended further enhancements such as a cheering crowd and perhaps rotating tennis racquets but Alcorn could not design that level of complexity out of the circuit. The turning racquets never made it into the game and the closest he could get to a cheering crowd was the infamous bleeps and bleeps heard for scoring.

Bally, who had paid Atari \$24,000 to create this new video game, rejected it immediately upon seeing it. They had no interest in such a basic tennis game. According to Ted Dabney, the only solution left to Atari was to manufacture the game themselves and release it under the Atari label. Since Computer Space had been tied up with Nutting Associates, Nolan Bushnell and Ted Dabney did not want a repeat of that situation.

In a risky business move, Nolan Bushnell acquired warehouse space and cabinet assembly teams while Ted Dabney sought television sets by the hundreds and they launched into full manufacturing on their own. Pong was to be a huge financial gamble for both men.

What occurred next is considered a bit of video game history lore.

The first Pong machine was set up in Andy Capp's Tavern in September of 1972 and after only a few days of operation it began malfunctioning. Al Alcorn was called in to service the machine and to his delight he discovered that the reason Pong was not working was due to too many quarters having been inserted into the game which were interfering with the circuit and internal workings. Pong was a hit!

The success of Pong was arguably the single most important event in the birth of the coin op video game industry. It spurred a wave of copycat machines (including a clone from Nutting Associates called Computer Space Ball) all vying to capture some of the lucrative earnings Pong brought in. From this one game, Atari was able to create more titles, expand its operations and become the industry powerhouse it is now famous for. All of that success and the booming video game industry that followed were due, in part, to learning from the mistakes and failures of the first coin-op machine created: Computer Space. 🇺🇸

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RETRO AD



by Rob Maerz

George Riley Takes On Junior and the King of All Kongs

The organizers of the The Grassroots Gaming Expo must have had a hunch that George Riley wasn't attending – they added Donkey Kong 3 to the list of tournament games.

George Riley is undeniably the greatest Donkey Kong 3 player on the planet. Period.

And while the rest of the classic gaming world goes gaga over another Donkey Kong kill screen and its world record changing hands (yet again), his accomplishments on the less glamorous, black sheep of the Donkey Kong series goes unheralded in contrast.

Riley's current marathon record of 3,538,000 is almost 1,000,000 points better than Dwayne Richard's second place score.

George also holds the DK3 tournament settings world record with a score of 857,200 that was set in June 2010. *That* score is almost 400,000 points better than Dwayne Richard's inaugural score of 473,400 achieved in October of 2005.

With George Riley submitting MAME scores to MARP and sitting numero uno in not only various Donkey Kong 3 ROM sets but also Donkey Kong *Junior* ROM sets, one can only suspect the man is serious in gunning for the Donkey Kong Triple Crown.

And why should expert Donkey Kong Junior players care that he's putting up great scores in MAME? Because he learned Donkey Kong 3 in Java.

So, before George's future accomplishments render him inaccessible, I nabbed him for an interview with *Retrocade Magazine*.



When did you first get into classic gaming?

Riley: Maybe Rip Off was the first one I really remember. I think I actually have a picture of me playing the game. Maybe the picture helped me remember that time more clearly.

My first home console was the Commodore 64 which I got when I was 10. Unfortunately a few months later it was stolen when we moved. I have no idea what happened to it, but I did get another Commodore 64 years later.

You are also a classic console collector. When did you get into the hobby and any significant finds in the wild?

Riley: If you want to get technical, I guess I was a collector when I got my first Atari 2600 at the age of 17 in 1992. I would go to thrift stores from time to time and pick up an Atari 2600 game. I would only go for the popular games that I knew of though. Boy, if I had insight about the fact that the rare games would be worth a ton one day I may have tried to pick those up as well. I started actively collecting for the Atari 2600 in 2001.

I have had a few good finds in the wild from time to time. I found a Pengo loose in a thrift store for \$2 once and I also was able to find a Starpath game player for the Atari 2600 at Salvation Army about seven years ago. About three years ago I bought about 25 mint condition Atari 2600 boxes. Some were rare like Basic Math and they also had around 4 different gatefold games. I also have found Sears and Atari Heavy Sixers in the wild along with a few Atari Joystick Heavy Sixers. It is easy to get Heavy Sixer Joysticks where I live. I don't think anyone besides me really knows what to look for in my area.

I believe you had an Atlantis II up for sale. Do you still own it and how was it acquired?

Riley: I actually had two different Atlantis II carts at one time. It was a freaky coincidence. Both were loose, but one had extensive documentation. I posted on AtariAge (a site for classic game

collectors) about this auction with great documentation. The seller had a reserve that was insanely high. I mentioned how I had bid that up to \$2,000 and it still had not broken the reserve.

Later on someone had posted about how he would sell his Atlantis II for \$1,500. It was loose but had the box sticker stuck to it. I jumped at the opportunity and bought it.

The guy who had the Atlantis II with docs had his reserve super high and no one had a high enough bid. He tried again with no success. Then, out of the blue, he contacts me with a second chance offer through eBay for my original \$2,000 bid. I decided that although this was going to hurt me financially it would be worth it. Through the years I sold both of them: one was for college and the other to go after the Donkey Kong Junior record.

You are currently the record holder on the Atari 2600 translation of Galaxian. How would you compare the quality of the 2600 translation of this classic against the arcade game itself along with the other ports released to e.g. the Atari 5200 and ColecoVision?

Riley: Personally, I prefer the Atari 2600 version. Usually arcade ports are nothing compared to the original, but this title seems to be an exception. First the colors are livelier on the Atari 2600 and for whatever reason the sounds are not as annoying. And finally I am just good at the Atari 2600 version while the arcade version rips me apart. It is fun to play games that are challenging yet still allow you to dominate it.

If I recall, you first broke Todd Rodgers' 2600 Galaxian record and then subsequently broke your own record by doubling up Todd Rodgers' score.

Riley: Yes, that is 100 percent correct, except I also broke the record live with a 1.955 million game. I just was not able to send that one into Twin Galaxies.

How much playing time was spent on Galaxian until you broke the record? What were your average scores on the game before you went on the run to break the record? Did you have a "breakout" moment in your game progression that built your confidence in knowing that you could break the record?

Riley: AtariAge has a high score game of the week contest - they so happened to have Galaxian as one of their games of the week three different times.

At first, I really was not that good at this game - I would get scores of around 25,000 to 35,000. Then, the first time they had it as a game of a week I found out I was really adept at it and got a third place score of 89,000+. Then the second time they had it as a game of the week I had a score of 201,000+ which was good enough for first place.

I noticed that some *really* good players were having trouble with this game. I am talking about a player who would regularly break Atari 2600 world records could not even get 100,000 points on this game. They had the contest a third time and I had a score of 217,000+.

About a couple of months later I saw Steve Wiebe play Donkey Kong at E3. It was during the summer time of course. And I thought that the idea of going after a record for a short period would be a fun thing to do. It was an easy choice for me to pick: Galaxian. I am a substitute teacher and I'm single so I have more time on my hands than the average person. So I thought to myself, what the heck? Why not go for Todd Rogers' record?

Of course, his record was 1,343,700 points. Like I said, my high was around 217,000 points so I really did not think I even had a shot. So, I posted that I was going to give myself two months time to go after this record. I decided I was only going to play three games a day at first, because I did not want to burn myself out. At first the progression was slow but at a steady rate. Soon 300,000 was hit, then 400,000 and then 600,000.

At first I had no intention of submitting this tape, but soon enough people started posting how that was a dumb thing to do and no one would ever really

know you did it unless you submitted a tape. At first I thought you needed a camcorder, so I used that as an excuse. Once I found out though that they accepted VCR submissions, I decided to go for it. At the time I hit 600,000 I decided to actually send in the score. At first I did not use a printer and just used a hand written copy of the agreement.

I actually sent the 600,000 tape to the world record holder Todd Rogers himself. I could have sent it into Tom Duncan at first but, I just wanted to write to Todd telling him how I really thought he was probably the greatest game player out there and that he was really an inspiration to me. For whatever reason, that game was never verified and so I sent my next tape into Tom Duncan. I found him extremely quick in verifying - I mean within a matter of a couple days. So, from then on I stuck with him.

As far as when I thought I had a legit shot at getting his record was probably when I hit the 800,000 mark. I was now at an area where I was only a few hundred thousand away. Another time I really knew I had a shot was when I flipped the game, and actually got another extra man at 7,000. In fact I took that game up to 30,000 points of the record. So, I was definitely on the doorstep when that happened.

In the game that you broke Todd Rodgers' record, was there any anxiety when approaching the record score? What about during the game after you eclipsed Rodgers' score?

Riley: For me there was a ton of anxiety. I had come close to Todd's score and then for two straight weeks I did not even come close to his record. I was suffering a mental block or a slump and it was really getting me down. Then I had my run.

It was actually the day before my deadline of July 31st. I knew if I did not do it *this* run I would not be able to do it by the deadline. I was about to drastically cut down on my game play to only one game a day instead of three or even more like I was pushing myself the final two weeks. As I broke

it, a huge smile came on my face and I was able to push it 300,000 points further.

I am a man who very rarely cusses. But, for that one time I actually decided to unload the F-bomb to express my excitement and said "I F'ng broke Todd Rogers' record!" And I used caps with all big letters in bold to express it.



Was there any difference in your performance when you broke your own record? Was it relaxing knowing that you were just improving upon your own record with really nothing to lose?

Riley: Well yeah, once you break the record, then a lot of the doubt fades away. When I first broke the record the main obstacle was freaking out, making the wrong move and dying right away after I just had died. When I doubled Todd's record my main challenge was no longer of fear but of focus.

Galaxian, as far as the game is concerned, does not let up. It is a constant barrage of enemies one after another - there are only 3 seconds between levels. There are no bathroom breaks because

there is not a continual giving of men like other games. You get 3 men to start, another man 2 minutes later and then you have to wait about 2-1/2 hours before another man is given. So, because of the constant barrage you need to be always focused on what you are doing.

At about the 5 hour mark I noticed I was actually starting to get mentally fatigued. I was starting to miss ships that I usually can get easily. For most marathon games the game play is at a level where it is not that mentally taxing. Galaxian is very mentally taxing. And so concentration was the biggest thing.

Later on after I set the record I found out that Twin Galaxies seems to allow for a person to park their ship or character in a safe spot and take 5 minutes off per hour if the game is over 6 hours. My game was 7 hours so I could have used this trick and possibly reached a much higher score. Most likely the person who will break my record is going to use safe spots and take time to rest in order to break the record.

As far as doubling Todd's score: at first my goal was not 2,696,100 (which is a little more than double Todd's record) but to get 3,000,000 points for the year. When in less than a week I got to 2,696,100 (it took me 7 hours to get that score), I realized that I could be spending a ton of time just to increase the score another 300,000 points. So, for me that was good enough and it was time to go after bigger and better things.

That score has been very good to me. I was able to have it featured on Twin Galaxies Parade of Champions and the score was featured in the Guinness Book of World Records: Gamer's Edition. Heck, I even signed a couple of books as autographs which was a pretty cool experience.

The Donkey Kong 3 record is, at this time, the one you are most famous for. What is it about DK3 that makes it special?

Riley: Well, for me, it has to be the multi-tasking that goes on in the game - from spraying the worms, Donkey Kong and bugs to defending the

flowers and dodging Donkey Kong's coconuts - there simply is so much you have to do all at once. If you let one thing go everything falls apart. Most other classic games from this era are not multi-tasking games.

If memory serves, you were playing DK3 on a Java app before you purchased a DK3 machine, is that right?

Riley: OK, yes, I went the extremely unusual route of playing Donkey Kong 3 on Java. I found that this really helped later on.

One main reason is I could not rely on any sound clues - it was all on visual clues. Sound plays a very important part of the game. Also, I was using a keyboard with Java. I decided to then search for a Donkey Kong 3 machine in the area but there was none.

But, I did find an Ultracade. I found that playing with a joystick was way easier than playing with a keyboard. Within a week I was getting to 3,000,000 on easy settings. At this time I knew that if I could get a Donkey Kong 3 machine I would be able to have a great chance at breaking the record. I took a leap of faith because I had no idea how the game would play on Twin Galaxies settings.

I looked around and found nothing. So, I went online and decided to enlist help. I offered \$50 to the person that could find me a Donkey Kong 3 machine. Shortly after, someone posted about this party supply place in L.A. I called them, and they offered to sell the Donkey Kong 3 machine for \$775 shipped. I knew this was overpaying, but I was desperate and believed I could break the record. So, I took the plunge and bought the machine.

Upon receiving the machine the joystick played a tad bit stiff and the monitor was not perfect. But, I gladly paid and went about going after the record. I soon found out the joystick was really bad and deteriorated. I still could play but I had to put effort in moving the joystick and it was starting to put blisters on my left hand. Soon the monitor was also having problems and would go out of whack if played too long.

How was your score progressing? And at what point did you breakout, giving you the confidence in breaking the record?

Riley: I had no clue as to what Twin Galaxies settings were going to be like. I decided to put the machine on 5 man settings first which is the Twin Galaxies Tournament Settings (TGTS). On the third try I broke the TGTS record without even recording. At that point I knew that I would eventually be able to get the Tournament *and* Marathon records.

I felt so confident about the Marathon record that I actually told you I was going to go after the record for the AtariAge Memorial Day weekend tournament. I think within two days of the tournament I broke the record. Then I just gradually moved up that score until I hit the 3,000,000 mark.

Some feel that Donkey Kong 3 has nothing to do with the Donkey Kong series: it's missing Mario and it's a shooter instead of a platform game. What are your thoughts on that and does it have anything to do with the perception that DK3 does not get the attention it deserves like the previous two titles in the series?

Riley: I always point out one thing: Shigeru Miyamoto was the lead programmer for this. Among Nintendo fans this man's name is extremely revered and just bringing his name up in an argument is pretty powerful.

Well, if you think about it Donkey Kong Junior was also extremely different. I mean you are playing as neither Donkey Kong nor Mario but as Donkey Kong Junior (another character that disappears after that game). True, it is a platformer, but there are no hammers - just fruit.

Most people who are really, really good at Donkey Kong and Donkey Kong Junior are primarily platform gamers. I think the biggest problem with DK3 is that it is a shooter first and foremost and a very hard shooter at that. So people don't really want to spend the time needed to become really good at the game for so little glory. Dean Saglio is the current record holder for Donkey Kong on MAME and has also been dabbling with Donkey

Kong 3. I saw a game he played on Donkey Kong 3 just a couple of days ago and unlike the other games he was playing, he really seemed extremely frustrated. He even said words to the effect of "this game is going to be hard to get good at."

For me, that is probably one of the greatest compliments I have ever been given: the world record holder on the most highly competitive game admitting that *this* game was hard to get good at. I have seen this man play Donkey Kong, Donkey Kong Junior and Zookeeper. The man completely owns these games and does things that are simply amazing.

You discussed that you discovered a "blue screen" in DK3 - can you discuss what that is and how you discovered it?

Riley: The Blue Screen: basically that is where the game repeatedly gives you the same blue screen over and over again. Strangely enough, I was just playing around with Java one day and was able to get to it. I decided to see if the same thing happened on my arcade machine and sure enough it did.

As a side note, Donald Hodges later found out with save mode that the game actually loops back to board one on board 257. As a challenge I decided to see if I could do that with Donkey Kong 3 on default settings in MAME which, ironically enough, are the easiest settings. I was able to do that and I achieved a score on MARP of 6,689,400 on Easy settings. I also found out that the game does not give out extra men after you loop the boards. I was really hoping this would happen because then the game can be marathon'd for a very long time. But alas, that was not the case.

Do you think that your DK3 record is one that could stand for ten years or more due in part because of it being less popular than DK, DK Jr. and the fact that your score is so high?

Riley: Well, some very high profile names have tried to go after this record or have had the record. Dwayne Richard and Shawn Cram are usually

mentioned among the greatest gamers of all time and they were the former world record holders. John McAllister also toyed with the idea of going after the Donkey Kong 3 record. So did Steve Wagner, Justin Knucklez and Brian Allen. And like I said Dean Saglio has been trying his hand at this game as well.

Yes, the game is less popular than the other games, but some very big names in the arcade world have had their go at this game. One thing I have learned is that no record is safe. At the moment I am sitting pretty, but someone out of left field could come and knock me off my perch. Heck that is what I did to Dwayne Richard. Also, let it be noted that the Donkey Kong and Donkey Kong Junior records changed hands a bunch of times in 2010. So, I believe that no Donkey Kong record is truly safe - even the Donkey Kong 3 record.

What attributes do you possess that allowed you to crush the DK3 record?

Riley: I think the biggest thing for me is the fact that I love to play this game. I mean I really, really enjoy what I do in the game. I really believe that in order to become great at something you need to have the love.

But besides that, I also think you need to have a chess-like mind. You need to be able to see three or four moves ahead at all times. The ability to constantly focus is also a must. And lastly I think you need to have a strong will. This game will at times kill you off a couple of times very quickly. It can be really mentally discouraging if you let it get to you. The key for me is to mentally stay in the game when this is happening.

How are you progressing on Donkey Kong Junior? Do you foresee yourself being the first gamer to achieve the Donkey Kong Triple Crown?

Riley: I have been stuck at 1,161,100 for about a month now. I have had a couple of games that were within 10,000 of that mark in the past week. To be honest, my highest official goal really for this

game was 1,000,000 points which is something I have far exceeded. I think 1,200,000 is possible for me.

My goal really isn't to get the Triple Crown with these three games. My goal is to be the *all around best* on all three games. A lot of Donkey Kong and Donkey Kong Junior players do avoid Donkey Kong 3 like the plague and the ones who play Donkey Kong 3 generally don't go super hard after Donkey Kong and Donkey Kong Junior. So, basically what this means is that my competition in being the all around best is not that huge.

I believe if I can get 1,000,000 on Donkey Kong then I will have the title wrapped up. I am almost done now with Donkey Kong Junior. In about a month and a half, I will move onto Donkey Kong as my primary game and I understand the commitment this is going to take. Unlike Donkey Kong Junior where I devoted a year of my time to this game, I will devote two years of my time to Donkey Kong. Based on most people's experiences, it seems that the learning curve is about two years of hardcore practice in order to become an elite player.

Now of course if somehow I stumble upon all three records than obviously I would be on cloud nine for a very long time.

I had Space Jockey back in the day and it's currently in my VCS collection. Some may view it as a terrible VCS title. What are your thoughts on the game itself and what was enticing for you to break the Space Jockey world record? How long was the game play to achieve the score?

Riley: OK, I will admit that this is by far my least favorite game of any of my records.

After I got the Galaxian record, I really had this thought that I did not want to be known as a one trick pony. So I searched for the game I had the best chance at breaking a record with. Sure enough, Space Jockey fit the bill. The only thing I really needed was an 8 hour tape instead of a 6 hour tape because the game play was going to take at least 6 hours to break the record. As far as the game it took me 7 hours and 45 minutes to set. To be honest it was pure torture to play.

It felt like this was pure hell on earth to play. The game is super easy and super repetitive. There is only one screen and it kept going on and on and on and on and on. I would rather be on a road trip with a couple of kids "saying are we there yet?" every 10 seconds than to play that game.

By the way, two of the previous record holders have also stated their disdain for this game. Most games are a game of endurance or skill. This is a game of tolerance for such horrible game play.

Have you considered going for 1,000,000 on Laser Blast?

Riley: Thankfully, Laser Blast stops at 1,000,000 and thankfully enough people have done it - like ten or so where the relevance is meaningless. If Laser Blast did not stop, I might think about it. Same goes for Megamania. I love that game, but ten or so have maxed that game out as well. 🤖



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UNLOCKING THE CAGE ON



The Mysterious Lost Triumph of Calvin Frampton

by Catherine DeSpira

When 19 year-old Calvin Frampton walked into the Riddlemaster Arcade in Pleasant Grove, Utah on September 20, 1983, there were few things on his mind at that moment except Donkey Kong Junior. Like many arcade gamers at the time, his plans that day were to beat his highest score of 935K, put in his high score initials ACE and perhaps see if he could beat a couple more scores on some other games. What he didn't plan on that day was making history.

Riddlemaster Arcade opened in 1981 in an old mechanic's garage as an answer for a much needed youth community center so kids could do something more productive than hang around the streets causing trouble. Working with little overhead, Jim Carter, co-owner and operator in partnership with his mother, built a floor in the space, cut out an entrance in the old wooden garage door and then painted a sign. A local vendor supplied the games.

"We started at a 30/70 split, with 30 percent going to the house... so we were really on a budget," said Jim Carter, affectionately remembering the early days. "When we got established after a year of being in business, he raised us to 40/60 and began to bring in first run consoles - games that had not seen play anywhere else. That is the condition we received Donkey Kong Junior. The game still had the shipping labels from the dock in L.A."

According to Jim Carter, Calvin Frampton came to the arcade from the very beginning - a tall, lanky kid with a shy and contemplative demeanor. Carter noted immediately his instant prowess at achieving high scores, noting, "Because of his competitive nature, his signature "ACE" became prominent at the Riddlemaster and around the valley at other arcades. Being pretty competitive myself, I began to find myself competing with Calvin on many games and through that competition we became friends."

Somewhere around the beginning of summer, 1983, the friendly competition between the two young men heightened when Carter scored 720K on Donkey Kong Junior, prompting the ultra-competitive Calvin Frampton to try and beat it.



"I remember very well the day Calvin creamed my Donkey Kong Junior score of 720K," Carter recalled. "I was amazed at his 935K score! We posted it everywhere! But this was not to be the end of the story by a long shot."

On September, 20, 1983, armed with nothing but sheer intent, Frampton entered The Riddlemaster Arcade, stepped up to Donkey Kong Junior and in less than three and a half hours ended the competition once and for all.

"It was cool when it happened. I was not focused on obtaining a world record when I started this game or any other game," said Frampton. "I was aware of some records through the video game magazines I read, but never looked at them with an obsession to beat any of them. The DK Jr. score came as a surprise."

"I can tell you that it was hard to see someone keep killing my best scores but it was a joy at the same time." Carter admits. "My best score that week had been 400K and I was not shocked to watch Calvin blow by that and then overtake his 935K run. But the excitement became very intense as he drew near 1,000,000. The crowd was not very big: six to ten people in the arcade was a normal afternoon. We did not know what would happen if he hit 1,000,000 as none of us had ever seen anything like this. Calvin seemed not to notice the score. He was lost in the flow. And when the game ended at 1,259,300 everyone was excited. "

That is, except Frampton. "I died for no reason and was mad as hell. I didn't know what happened. It just ended."

It is not without a doubt one of the most poignant aspects of this story, but certainly not the last: that Frampton did not know he had reached the kill screen nor did any of the people assembled, including Jim Carter, a skilled Donkey Kong Junior player himself. For if they had known, the name Calvin Frampton would be more widely known in the Gaming world. Even publisher Marcella Walker from The Pleasant Grove Review, the newspaper who interviewed Frampton after his incredible game, did not mention the "sudden death." In all likelihood, she was to be included in the majority of people whose knowledge of kill screens was restricted to a mere less than 1% of the gaming population at the time.

Carter sums it all up like this, "Was there a kill screen? First of all, I will make the statement I did when I first was told (in 2009) about the possibility of Frampton's 1983 Kill Screen: 'Kill screen? What's a 'kill screen?'"

It's curious that all we ever know in life, no matter our age, is still infinitely less than all that remains unknown to us throughout our lives. For unbeknownst to Frampton and the people watching the game, Frampton had indeed reached the kill screen: the Promised Land of Classic Arcade Gamers, the point where the game runs out of memory and abruptly ends with the player's man suddenly dying. It's an achievement that marks the extreme ability of a player.

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Calvin Frampton sets possible world record on video game at Riddlemaster

Calvin Frampton, 19, son of Howard and LaVeda Frampton, set a possible world record last Tuesday in Donkey Kong, Jr. at the Riddlemaster Arcade in Pleasant Grove.

Calvin, married and the father of one, racked up a score of 1,259,300 in a three and one-half hour ordeal in which the tension grew right along with the score.

The game was witnessed by Annette Carter and her son, Jim plus several unnamed individuals. The score is higher than those recorded in the latest video game magazines. Calvin will submit the score, with witnesses signatures, in hopes it will prove to be a legitimate world record.

Calvin said he came to the Arcade on Tuesday with his mind made up that he was going to try to break the record for Donkey Kong, Jr.

In the past few days he had been playing the game frequently in preparation for the attempt on a world record. He enjoys playing video games when he has the time and the money. The highest score he had attained on Donkey Kong Jr. before his Tuesday score was 935,000.



CALVIN FRAMPTON

He noted that as the record breaking score came closer he became more nervous and was losing turns. Calvin enjoys playing basketball in his spare time, too.

Like the majority of players from that era having never seen or even heard of a kill screen, Frampton was baffled as to why the game ended. Certainly some knowledge of kill screens (referred to as a "split-screen" on Pac Man) was known. In 1983 Walter Day, of Twin Galaxies International Scoreboard, took The US International Video Game Team on a tour of the East Coast to visit video game players who claimed they could get through the split-screen/kill screen level on Pac Man. Not one single video game player could demonstrate this ability. Today, due to the underground success of The King of Kong (2004) (not to mention 30+ years of dedicated studies on game play by gung ho aficionados), there is a tremendous amount of knowledge of kill screens and play patterns with most professional players on the Donkey Kong Series (as well as Pac Man) who are well-practiced in the skills needed to achieve this event.

But for Calvin Frampton, kill screen or not, the score was remarkable and at that time the highest known score ever achieved on Donkey Kong Junior in the world. It appeared in every video game magazine in print, often under Twin Galaxies' postings of recognized high scores, as well as in Italy, in Videogiochi, published by Riccardo Albini, Twin Galaxies' International Video Game Scoreboard partner. The postings were taken from composites of Twin Galaxies data. In comparison with three other known scores recognized by Twin Galaxies at the time, as Frampton's was, the difference in points is astounding:

Calvin Frampton 1,259,300 9/20/83
Riddle Master Arcade, Pleasant Grove, UT

Tim Williams 999,200 8/11/83
Mr. Bill's Arcade, Moscow, ID

Billy Mitchell 957,300
Twin Galaxies, Ottumwa, IA
Score originally listed 1983 in Joystik magazine
Later listed again in 2004 as a recent high score

Matt Brass 951,100 1/20/83
Montana University, Bozeman, MT

File: AIVA SCOR. V637	Pagina: 1	File: AIVA SCOR. V637	Pagina: 1							
Progetto: MEG I		Progetto: MEG II								
GIOCO	REC. ITAL.	NOTE	GIOCATORE	C. ACCR. AIVA	CITTA' (PR)	DATA	TWIN GALAXIES PLAYER	STATE	REC.	
AMBUSH	591.150	F	ALBERTO ZIN		GRADO (GO)	9 Giu 84			VG 13	
AMIDAR	3.323.980	C	ROBERTO CARNIATO	LAS VEGAS	TREVISO	29 Dic 85	18.201.000	JOE BARRET	USA	VG 11
BANK PANIC	9.999.999	C	ALESSANDRO GIURTIATO	LAS VEGAS	TREVISO	5 Mar 85				
	9.999.999	C	ANDREA MARCHIORI	LAS VEGAS	TREVISO	1 Ott 85				
BARADUKE	34.460	C	FLAVIO PINTONELLO	PUBLIGAME	MEJANIGA CAD. (PD)	30 Dic 85			VG 36	
BEN BERO BEH	397.210	C	ALESSANDRO FASCINA	PUBLIGAME	MEJANIGA CAD. (PD)	20 Dic 85				
BLASTER									VG 20	
BOGGY 84	435.350		LUCA MOGNI		PAVIA	8 Set 84			VG 18	
BOMB JACK	66.896.260	F	ENRICO ZANETTI	CHIP'S GAME	LEGNANO (MI)	3 Gen 84			VG 19	
BOOMERANG	84.140	R	STEFANO BRUSASCA		TORINO	8 Set 85			VG 31	
BUCK ROGERS	624.884		DARLO DURANTE		BRESCIA		1.016.495	KELLY REENAN	USA	
BUGGY CHALLENGE	163.843		PAOLO RUBAGOTTI		BRESCIA	15 Ago 85				
BUMP'N' JUMP	2.429.540	F	MARCO DONADIO		ROMA	5 Ott 84	1.971.000	MIKE TERNASKY	USA	VG 5
BURGER TIME	4.326.100	C	N MASSIMO COLOMBO	CHIP'S GAME	LEGNANO (MI)	8 Mar 85	5.882.950	DARREN KENNEY	USA	VG 15
CARNIVAL							221.780	DAVID SCHOOLING	USA	VG 2
CENTIPEDE							16.384.547	JIM SCHNEIDER	USA	VG 8
CHEVYCHE	6.335.550	C	LUCA DOSSENA	NEW YORK GAME	MILANO	10 Ott 85				
CHINESE HEROE	2.828.000	C	ALBERTO ZANETTI	CHIP'S GAME	LEGNANO (MI)	5 Lug 85				
CIRCUS CHARLIE	999.990		ALESSANDRO LAINI		BRESCIA	4 Dic 84			VG 14	
	999.990	F	MAURILIO PINTUS		ORISTANO	6 Nov 84				
	999.990	C	LORENZO GRANDE	LAS VEGAS	TREVISO	25 Mar 85				
	999.990		GIUSEPPE STRANGIO		REGGIO CALABRIA	12 Apr 85				
CITY CONNECTION										
(POINTER)	899.800	C	N MARCO CALONI	CHIP'S GAME	LEGNANO (MI)	30 Gen 86				
(RUNNER)	7.505	R	MAURIZIO MICCOLI		MILANO	30 Set 85				
COMMANDO	2.001.700	F	FABRIZIO CARTECHINI		P. S. GIORGIO (AP)	12 Ago 85			VG 32	
CRAZY RALLY	280.250		STEFANO MUFFOLINI		BRESCIA	20 Apr 85			VG 31	
CRUSH ROLLER	2.514.100		GIUSEPPE FIORIDO		S. VITO TAGL. (PN)	27 Giu 84	2.123.840	THOMAS CARRIER	USA	VG 10
CRYSTAL CASTLE	842.427	F	ANTONIO MERLINO		S. GIOV. ROT. (FG)	29 Mar 85	846.547	ERIC GINNER	USA	
DEFENDER							79.976.975	CHRIS HOFFMAN	USA	VG 7
DIG DUG							4.129.600	KEN ARTHUR	USA	VG 6
DIG DUG II	1.469.700		PAOLO SALTARELLI	STREET GAMES	FORLI'	5 Nov 85				
DOG FIGHT ACROBATIC	1.445.050	F	ANTONIO COLANGELO	NEW YORK GAME	SENAGO (MI)	17 Lug 85				
DONKEY KONG	2.200.710	F	LUCA DOSSENA		MILANO	24 Ago 84	874.300	BILL MITCHELL	USA	VG 1
DONKEY KONG JR.	309.600	F	ANDREA VICENTINI		BOLOGNA	17 Giu 85	1.259.300	CALVIN FRAMPTON	USA	VG 2
DONKEY KONG 2	460.100	R	ROBERTO TAMMARO		TORINO	1 Feb 85			VG 21	
	460.100	R	VITTORIO MANGIAFICO		MILANO	1 Feb 85				
DRAGON BUSTER	4.035.250	C	FAUSTO DIROLA	CHIP'S GAME	LEGNANO (MI)	26 Dic 84				
DRAGON'S LAIR	996.499	F	N LUCA SANTORSOLA	NEW YORK GAME	MILANO	8 Mar 86	558.724	JUD BOONE	USA	VG 17
ELEVATOR ACTION	104.750		ANDREA MUSUMECI		BRESCIA	4 Ago 85				

Yet for some reason, accidental or otherwise, there was an oversight of both Frampton's and Williams' scores. In fact, almost immediately after Joystik Magazine published the scores from Twin Galaxies composites in 1983, the scores disappeared from Twin Galaxies data base altogether - never once being heralded as the World Records they were. One could surmise an explanation for this by proposing that many scores were lost during Twin Galaxies boon period between the years 1982-1984 simply due to the fact that so much was going on at Twin Galaxies that keeping track of every single score was next to impossible. Yet another could be the

fact that Frampton himself failed to chase the glory, instead hoping Twin Galaxies would do right by the score during a period when their attentions were taxed by other more pressing circumstances. But, that doesn't explain why previously verified scores were suddenly ignored and disappeared altogether. In fact, when one considers the following it weighs heavy with suspicion.

It is rather compelling to note that two months prior to Williams and Frampton achieving their highest scores on July 25, 1983, The US National Video Game Team was being assembled in Ottumwa, Iowa by Twin Galaxies Intergalactic Scoreboard under supervision of Walter Day. Initially consisting of Billy Mitchell, Steve Harris, Jay Kim, Ben Gold, Tim McVey and Cat Cabrera, the USNVG Team was considered by many to be the best gamers in the country and those who were able to consistently achieve the highest scores. On November 15, 1983, less than two months after Frampton's amazing score, Walter Day designated Riccardo Albini/Videogiochi as the sole organizer of the Italian Team slated to face the Americans in a World Championship. Curiously enough, Frampton's "lost verified score" appeared in the first roster of high scores Albini received and published in Italy, although Bill Mitchell's much lower Donkey Kong Junior score was the only one Twin Galaxies published in The United States.

What is important to note regarding these two events: having known and recognized Frampton's score previously and knowing it was the highest score ever achieved on Donkey Kong Junior, why was Frampton not contacted about his world record score? His information was widely distributed thus readily available, especially to Twin Galaxies, who had recently reported the score to Videogiochi. So why was it not reported as the World Record it clearly was?

It's not a far stretch to guess that the USNVG Team perhaps noticed that most of the highest scores being made in America were not by members of their own team, which reportedly represented the best in the country, but by individuals outside the Twin Galaxies clique in arcades across the nation. It would have definitely been a concern to a fledgling competitive team to be representing themselves as "the best" when the scoreboards in gaming magazines were indicating otherwise. Perhaps postponing the celebration of individuals, like Frampton, was a way to build the team's reputation or that of a certain celebrity player first before awarding the real high scorers with the

fanfare they deserved. The USNVG Team certainly did this later on by adding additional high score players in the following years. In an age before home computers, it's also likely that Frampton's score was misplaced as it sat in a box of papers, awaiting recovery. But for almost 30 years? That is a long incubation for something considered merely "misplaced". In a country rich with creative and whimsical opportunities, the wildest dreams often hatch quicker than that. Calvin Frampton lost an opportunity of a lifetime. And he is well aware of that.



We may never know the answers as one can never be certain about facts in history. After all, to know the truth of history is too often realize its ultimate myth and its inevitable ambiguity. Nonetheless, to this day Calvin Frampton, now a Life and Relationship Coach, remains optimistic if not a bit concerned about the mysteries surrounding the event.

"When I got the score, I did not race to get recognition. If anything, I was embarrassed of all the attention I got. If I was concerned about recognition I would have made damn sure it did not take almost three decades to get my name in the Guinness Book of World Records, Wikipedia, and Twin Galaxies. If the record was verified by Twin Galaxies, as it appears to have been, then it should be noted as the record. If it is then, that is cool. If it is not because of "conspiracy", jealousy or ego, then that is unfortunate. All I know is that it must have been important enough to them to ignore the score."

Which is what makes it all the more important for us to remember it. 

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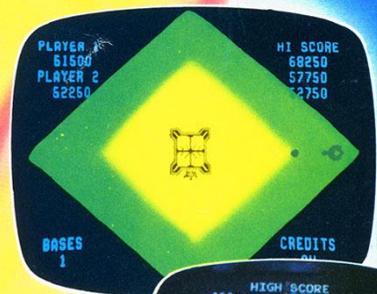


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GALAXIAN

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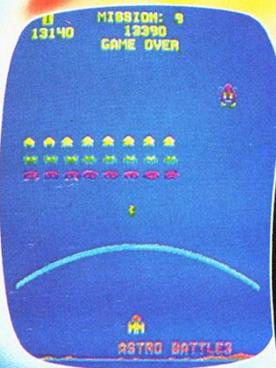
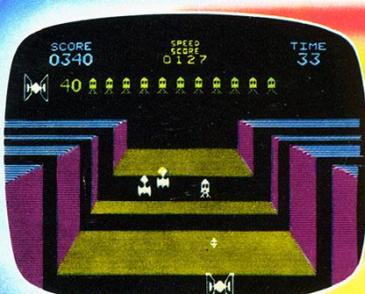


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The 5 Missions of GORF



FLAG SHIP

HIGH SCORES ARCADE

by Rob Maerz

In the spring of 2010, Meg and Shawn Livernoche purchased an early 18th century building located at 348 High Street in Burlington, NJ. In August of that same year, the husband and wife team opened the doors of High Scores Interactive Arcade Museum in the city's historic district.



Meg works in the pharmaceutical industry while Shawn is an 8th grade Language Arts teacher and musician under the name ShawnLov. They live upstairs and the arcade, which is located downstairs, is open to the public on weekends.

I first met Meg and Shawn in March of 2011 at the Classic Arcade Gaming (dot com) Donald Hayes Challenge, a tournament organized by Mark Alpiger and hosted at High Scores Arcade with Meg and Shawn officiating. Their hospitality was outstanding and the tournament was a huge success.

On the eve of the arcade's first anniversary, I ventured back down to High Scores to not only play some more Star Castle, but to also catch up with Meg and Shawn on their first twelve months in the arcade business.

Shawn, some may not be aware that you once appeared on the Jenny Jones show.

Shawn: That was a period of time between 1997 and 2000 when I was desperate to gain some exposure. So, I called the Jenny Jones show and fabricated this story about being picked on when I was little. I had my buddy Sean say that he hadn't seen me in a couple of years and when they called him on stage he said "yeah this guy's a dork" and this and that.

But that was a period of time where I would go barge in on record labels in New York and do anything I could: guerilla tactics just so I could get some exposure music-wise.

What got you interested in classic arcade games in the first place?

Shawn: I've been a classic gamer my whole life. And Meg, too - she had an Odyssey2 when she was little. I wanted to get an arcade cabinet and I hate to say this because it's such a cliché answer: but, when I watched King of Kong it reignited the passion I had when I was a kid and it made me want to realize that again.

Meg: I'm a really competitive person so I think that's what really bit me. We got the first cabinet, then the second cabinet and I can be egged on pretty easily.

Shawn: When the first machine came in, which was Donkey Kong, Meg wasn't into it since she didn't like Donkey Kong. But, when I got a Centipede cabinet that's when Meg started getting excited.

Meg: Donkey Kong Junior was the second cabinet and I started to catch onto that. But, once we got Centipede...We tried to fit that in the back of a Toyota Camry.

Shawn: I brought Donkey Kong Junior home in a Volkswagen Golf!

Meg: Ill advised!

Shawn: Even when we had Donkey Kong with that one machine I felt like I owned an entire arcade. I was like "Holy Crap! I got this machine." I'd go to sleep at night and I would know that the machine

was there almost like it had this presence. I'd be at work and teaching these kids is not a picnic. They're busting my chops at 7:30 in the morning while in the back of my head I know that the machine's at home and I can't wait to get home and play it.

Meg: We got introduced into the world of auctions - most of time in South Jersey at the Cherry Hill Armory. That gets addictive because you see these games that are pretty cheap in working condition.

So, it started with showing up with my Toyota Camry and buying a game and saying "Oh - we got to get this home." But, the next time we got hip to it and showed up with a cargo van.

Shawn: So when you rent money for a truck you're like "screw it, I'm here I'm going to buy four games." "This game here is \$90 nobody else wants it - mine." Then there's another "I could fix this" and then before you know it your whole house is filled with games.

Meg: I think the last auction we went to was at the Cow Palace auction down in Baltimore and we got about six games. We got Joust there, Spanish Eyes and then we got home and we were like "wait a minute we have to sell our dining room table!"

Shawn: We *actually* sold our dining room table. But, you know a lot of people will hear this and think it's financially reckless to do this kind of stuff but these machines have determined value. When you see a particular game and the condition that it's in you have a ballpark of what you can sell it for. If I buy a Donkey Kong machine for \$400, I can sell it for \$500 and all the quarters getting pumped into it in the meantime is like earning interest on that investment. So, we didn't buy these machines before being ready for it. Our next mortgage payment isn't absolutely dependent on our next quarter.

Was the purchase of the house in any way based on opening an arcade or housing the collection?

Meg: It started out house hunting. We'd see these cute, first timer kind of houses and we would look at the basements first to see what would fit because at the time we had about 12 or 14 games in the apartment. We'd sit down and try to bargain with each other and I'd say "what if we got rid of this game," and he'd say "no." Then he'd say "what about this game" and I'd say "no." So, it became apparent that we weren't willing to part with any games in our collection.

We tried *not* to buy this building as it was one of the first we saw on Craigslist

Shawn: By having this arcade open we've not only instantaneously become part of the community but overnight become a pillar of the community. All the businesses surrounding us, with the exception of three or four on this street, are failing or not attracting anyone new. On Fridays and Saturdays we can hang out casually with our friends or acquaintances just by opening our doors. In the meantime, we have people throw a couple of quarters at our investment.

Meg: Ultimately, by deciding to make a business out of it we've met so many cool people just in the last year. We meet people that travel to play the games and we meet people that live around the corner. It's really got a social vibe about it.

You opened the arcade in August of 2010. When was the decision made prior that you would open an arcade?

Shawn: We started working on the arcade as soon as we moved in April of 2010. We really had it in mind ever since we came here and saw the store front. We were searching for a reason *not* to do it and we couldn't find one.

Meg: The house has a lot of charm and technically we could say America's oldest arcade (laughs). The whole property just has a vibe about it – it's asking for something fun.

What were the biggest obstacles you had to overcome in getting this arcade off the ground?



Meg: Perception: the historic district and the perception of an arcade. We submitted our business application in April (of 2010) and it just kind of dragged. It was originally zoned as a gallery so we had to go for a land use zoning change. Man, they made that as hard as possible because people were saying "we

don't want an arcade here," the whole "drug dealer on the corner" and "what kind of riffraff is an arcade going to bring in." So, we had to educate the whole town that the people that love these games are generally the older crowd and not the 12 or 13 year olds that are going to be causing trouble. We had to get a waiver signed by every land owner within 200 feet of us and basically we had to make our case to every single one of them that we weren't going to bring trouble in.

Shawn: That was our biggest obstacle in getting people to accept us. And by scrutinizing our business idea they also began to scrutinize *us*. In a tightly knit community like this it gets annoying - especially for me teaching kids everyday and I got these guys looking at me like I'm a thug. They were frowning on us so much but throughout the course

of this one year the highlight of High Street has been our shop. After all that negativity we actually did give this community a shot in the arm.

And then their perceptions changed?

Shawn: Absolutely. They started observing us, seeing that we're not drugged out "20-somethings," seeing me getting up at 7 o'clock in the morning with my tie on and that their whole perception about us when we moved in was wrong. I'm glad that we've been publicized on such a level that the community has to recognize.

Meg: We have Mark Alpiger of Classic Arcade Gaming (dot com) to thank along with Donald Hayes, you and everyone that came down for the competition. That put us on the front page of the Burlington County Times and that brought a lot of people in because of that. As a result, WPVI (channel 6 out of Philly) did a feature on us for the morning news so that opened us up to a whole new group of people.

Shawn: We really have Mark Alpiger to thank for that. He did us a favor in the sense that he put hours and hours of time into the competition he had here. It's only someone like Mark that could do something like that for us because his passion and dedication forms a lot of the events that are necessary to keep some lifeblood flowing in the culture.



Would the use of swipe cards or charging a flat fee into the arcade make it more profitable?

Meg: We talked all about that: per person cover, swipe cards and that kind of stuff. Yes, it could be more profitable but at the end of the day it also takes the charm away.

Shawn: We would never do that – that just takes it all away. The quarters are part of the experience. It would be more convenient and more profitable but we're going to go against the grain and keep quarters.

Why would anyone want to start an arcade?

Meg: Easy question for us: we don't pay commercial rent – it's all a part of our mortgage. So, we have the safety of our low mortgage and our full-time jobs and this is very much a labor of love. We have that luxury where we can stay open

and not dependent on the economy or on how many people come in.

Shawn: We're humble in the sense that we're not great with the machines and we don't have all the money in the world. But, we also know that we have a lot of power in the sense that we're never going to close and that we're always going to be here.

For the uninitiated why should anyone care about these old cabinets?

Meg: What we see is that these kids come in here and there all cocky - "these graphics suck." But, once they start a game of Donkey Kong, Shawn

has this game he likes to play where he's got this stopwatch and he bets any kid that comes in here that's never played Donkey Kong that they won't last a minute. Then they realize that there's more to it than 2D graphics and it's about pattern recognition, memorization and real skill. That's the angle and what's interesting about these games. It may not be the same as sitting in front of your HDTV but it's a lot harder.

gaps and other kids can't. I've seen a 12 year old kid come up to one of these machines and *get it*.

Meg: When I was growing up and I only had an Odyssey and shit you're talking about imagination - the race car games were just squares.

What I like about the arcade cabinet is the competitive and fun element of the whole machine. You're playing Star Wars, you got the blinders on, you're in the game and it's a totally different



Shawn: I can see everything 3D perfect pixilated – it's wonderful. You get everything but you lose the imagination, the idea and the excitement that comes with *not* having everything like in these old games: the idea of a construction site in Donkey Kong and the maze idea in Pac-Man. With the new games everything is going to be rendered in perfect graphics but the imagination disappears. The kids that grow up on these new games don't develop the imagination that you or I might have when we were kids and I think that cripples them in a sense. The imagination has disappeared from gaming. Some kids can play one of these machines and fill in the

experience.

Classic arcade games are not just about the games. When people walk into our place and see Garbage Pail Kids hanging up, the black lights and the 80s music it's more than just the games - it's about the environment. People come in and there like "oh man it's bringing me back!" whereas playing a PS3 in a buddy's living room isn't going to be nostalgic. The classic games are part of a larger scene. 🎮

The Old Warehouse At TNT Amusements

by Rob Maerz

In business since 1986, TNT Amusements is a retail arcade showroom with pinball machines, video arcade games, jukeboxes and much more. Their showroom is also available to rent for private parties.

The photos shown were taken at TNT Amusement's former 10,000 square foot warehouse in Southampton, PA in March, 2009.

"Over the years, we have purchased from closed arcades all around the area," said TNT Amusements President Todd Tuckey. "We traveled down to North Carolina one time to purchase a tractor trailer load of about 50 machines. Those days are now history. Most of these arcades have been cleared out long ago. Arcades are becoming very hard to find and locating a stash of games is becoming more and more rare. Recently, we came upon a load of games in a barn in Lebanon, PA where the home was foreclosed on. A bankrupt vendor lived there and the games left were late 80's fighting games and many empty carcass cabinets. Nothing you could really retail - just good for monitors and MAME cabinets. The classics were already gone!"



"Problem is, people want an empty cabinet from \$50 to \$100 these days!" Tuckey explained. "There is no one that will want to keep a supply of \$50 cabinets in valuable warehouse space these days. Cheap warehouse space is not in nice neighborhoods. Our company is surviving the rapid downsizing of this industry by owning our own warehousing. We now outright own 10,000 square feet and are currently renting another 3,000 square feet for \$1100 a month. By the end of this summer, that rental space will be gone, too. TNT will be lean and mean with only the classics in storage and the undesirable stuff long dumped!"

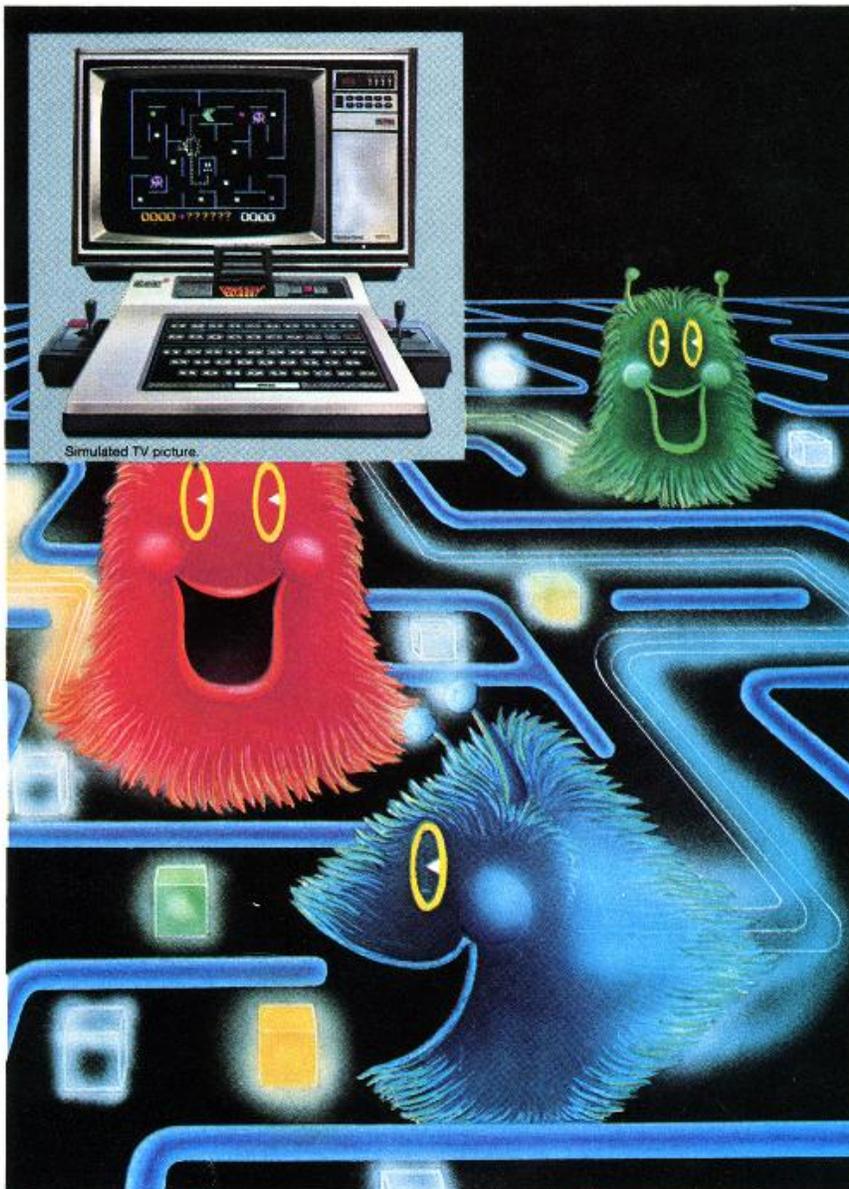
"We are watching the business of arcade machines that used to have *three* full pages of Yellow Pages ads drop to a small part of one column," Tuckey added. "The coin-op industry is going the way of the Dodo bird. However, there will still be some free standing fun centers and specialized arcades that will remain."



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Out of the Box

Rudy Ferretti's Vision for the Electronic Athlete

by Rob Maerz

Say what you will about motivational coach Tony Robbins. While his teeth may hypnotize you into buying hundreds of dollars worth of DVDs and printed material, he did manage to write a good book called *Awaken the Giant Within*.

In this book, Tony teaches that all great ideas emanate from one's ability to think outrageous. Therefore, if you have a vision of man travelling to Pluto, you have to think impractical. From there, you develop a comprehensive plan that will achieve your goal - in this example, perhaps utilizing technology that does not yet exist.

Enter Rudy Ferretti - a classic console multi world record holder and New Yorker who transplanted to Nevada. He's been lobbying for the electronic athlete – a *paid* electronic athlete with full benefits.

As you can guess, Rudy has his naysayers. They believe that Rudy's vision is merely a pipe dream and will never come to fruition.

But, when you consider the modern technology we take advantage of and television oversaturated with "reality TV" and cooking shows, is it that difficult to wonder that maybe he's right?

You began gaming in 1985 at the age of 6, right?

Ferretti: The first two games I ever recall playing was *Pitfall II* for the Atari 2600 and *Beauty and the Beast* for Intellivision. Both were my family's consoles as we always had the new and popular systems. The Atari 2600 I played first and I was so excited to play *Pitfall II*. I knew right away even at six that this was the hottest game for that system. I was always getting pushed into the water by the rat yet I always had a belief you could get past the rat.

Beauty and the Beast for Intellivision was much like *Donkey Kong*. You can get temporary invincibility and things can be thrown out of windows at you. I had come close to breaking the high score on it years back. Those two games were in fact the first two I can clearly remember and how and where I was playing to date. We had a game room with brown carpet, the TV was to the left of the doorway and we always had junk food parties and gaming with friends. Ah - the good ol' days!

Are you an avid classic console collector?

Ferretti: Well, years back I was not into it as much. I have to thank my Dad for that one as he got me started in 1996 after I had a huge fire and lost everything. We started to go to garage sales where I got all kinds of stuff over the years for pennies on the dollar. I'm sure we could have gotten more, had I known what I know now, and I'd have a small fortune from collecting and selling.

I *do* collect, however I'm the type who collects and plays. Certain things I have are sealed but I keep my stuff well in order. My most valuable game is *The Flintstones: Surprise at Dinosaur Peak* for only \$4.99 shipped and it's worth well over \$200. I got that when FuncoLand was changing into GameStop. I was always a fan of mysterious games so I was reserved until a place would have a clearance or going out of business sale. Again, I should have bought more but who knew?

What is the historical significance of classic gaming?

Ferretti: Classic gaming paved the way, it put gaming on the map and the classic games have so much more variety and fun factors than today's games. The only difference is the graphics. Classics are still valuable and popular to many people today and without it you would not have anything like Wii, Xbox or PS3. That is why you should care about it. Without *Commando* for Atari 2600 there is no *Metal Gear* for NES - it's a timeline.

The same thing we're doing now would have been done 30 years ago - we just did not have the technology. There would have been just as many people online playing *Commando* for Atari and other games as there are today. The new era is missing out and should go pick up an old system games. They are a lot of fun to play and they are basics for you to develop into an all around gamer.

You have numerous *Twin Galaxies* world records spanning several console generations. Are there any that stand out more than others? Which of these would you say was the most difficult or frustrating to achieve? Lastly, which one would you consider the easiest achievement?

Ferretti: Every time I set a record or score it's special in itself. I can honestly say nothing was easy and no score was ever done on one try. *Castlevania 3* on the NES was very frustrating over the years. *Lethal Weapon* on the NES was crazy and the hardest ever to achieve was probably *A Nightmare on Elm Street* for the NES or *Splatterhouse* on the TurboGrafx-16.



Though I will say I have a special score on each system and I've learned over the years "some you keep and some you lose." I think the easiest to achieve was probably *Monster In My Pocket* for NES - it's like a training type version of *Castlevania*.

What attributes do you possess that enables you to achieve these high scores?

Ferretti: It's a combination of skill, heart, and talent. Talent you're born with so that can only take you so far. Skill is development - I think anyone can get good at anything to an extent. And heart: that is psychological in your mind. As you gel the three together, in any sport of competition, you get your end result: finger speed, reaction time, calculations of timing both offense and defense, figuring out how fast you can beat the game or what is needed to obtain a hard to beat score in a particular game. You have to have it all to get it but you don't have to be the *best* - just one of the best.

The secret is how bad you want the score and what amount of time will you put into it. That is nothing you're given or born with and that is the special unique person in you *and* you only.

What do you consider to be your biggest achievement thus far?

Ferretti: Years ago not only did I suck at gaming, but I can remember using cheat codes and the Game Genie. Today, I'm now third if not arguably the second best all around NES player today in the world. I hold the most max-outs and perfect scores on the NES to date - talk about coming out of nowhere in 2003.

You are one of the players that have performed the Laser Blast 1,000,000. Personally, I stopped at 600,000 because I couldn't take it anymore. What were your thoughts during the game and then after you reached 1,000,000.

Ferretti: That's a great question and I'm glad you asked. The game is easy but even at 100K I was like talk about repetitiveness. I was ready to scream and after I hit the million I threw down the controller and said I'll never play it again.

Why do people view you as a controversial figure in the gaming community?

Ferretti: Years back I was mistreated and lied to by many big and small names in the community. When I finally tried to fix things many others were biased and spread false rumors which hurt my name and my submission status. I went on a rampage to clear my name, prove my points and I have no regrets because it was all preventable.

And what were the issues?

Ferretti: Multiple gamers, senior and chief referees taking word of mouth to ban me, tampering with the database and my scores, promises broken and not kept, score challenges not taken seriously even though I knew I was correct all along. There was retaliation such as misspelling my name in a book or not leaving a space for an autograph, excuses to why I was not part of something I should have been part of and verbally bashing my image and name. That is just a brief summary of why I have done what I did in the past and present.

I did some wrong things. I was vocal and cocky at one time but now I'm just fed up with what I see and what continues to be said about me. Unlike others, I won't sit back and take it. Also, I'm very passionate and have a vision of what I want for myself and others. But, like I said, others think they know me and my story but they have no clue. Although I'm not quiet, I'm a good person that means well and sometimes I come across as bad when it's just my New Yorker strong personality. One day I will release my story book and/or documentary as my story will be told one day.

The damage has cost me interviews, money and parts in films.

If you could fix one thing in the classic gaming community today, what would it be?

Ferretti: The bias and politics - there are great gamers whose names and accomplishments are not treated equal. All gamers need to be respected and given their recognition, fame and their turn to

shine for what they do regardless of the title or who they are.

You have been vocal recently in regard to gamers being paid to play. How is this supposed to work?

Ferretti: I keep seeing TV shows of the dumbest things and I said to myself "why not?" If cooking and bowling can be this big then why not gaming?

First off, we need all games and systems to form a league. Second, obviously we need someone or a group of people who are rich and say "hey, let's take a chance on this." I can see it being on any sports channel being watched by the gamers, casual gamers and collective gamers.

We need sponsorships from ESPN, NBC, USA, Spike, G4, Sony, Nintendo etc. Competitions could be held at arenas or stadiums. Millionaire programmers and rich people who love gaming could help us get sponsored to pay our salaries.

I had a plan eight years back with other gamers to form a league. We could have console players against arcade players in hopes of an upset, timed competitions, most points in 45 minutes and things like that. I think FPS need to be involved but the right way - not five on five but one on one cage matches which is the true test.

Other major league sports could help us out. Alex Rodriguez earns 28 million a year to bat .120 in the playoffs. *Really*, can you imagine how good I and others could be getting paid for this? I feel a fair salary is \$250,000 a year for any sports person - not millions with potential to earn bonus.

Just like any sport, you have to be one of the best to be considered a professional. You have to throw, pitch, hit, run and catch to be a pro ballplayer. You don't have to be the best at all positions but you have to know them all. Gaming is the same: you've got to play it *all* to be a pro. Period. And that is my vision.

I'm really shocked that it's not a reality yet. I'm feeling like gaming is stuck at the NCAA levels with no future. We should get paid because we are the

best gamers in the world - electronic athletes. We *are* the companies, we make the scores and we play so it's time we're taken care of. If we stop, there is no gaming, no money and no players. Do you think pro sports players will play for free? Never!

There are the naysayers out there who believe that getting paid to play just isn't realistic, especially at \$250,000 per year. First, do you understand how others may see this as a fairy tale and secondly how do you convince them that this can be done?

Ferretti: I can understand why some would see it as a fairy tale. Many people in this world see things black and white, are closed minded and all the other leagues have failed or are failing. It's just like science: it's only what we have done and know not what we can do and learn.

If I would have told you 150 years ago that baseball players will get paid millions whether they win, lose, suck or shine you know you would laugh. We should get paid because just like any trade, talent or skill we are electronic athletes. We spend just as many hours, years and days on end to be the best and develop like anyone else including heath and injury risks. For us to perform and show the world our greats we should be rewarded and compensated for all we do. If Bobby Flay can get paid to cook and eat at a throw down, and Alex Rodriguez can bat .120 in the playoffs (and still get paid), then why should gamers not be paid to entertain the world?

People say it will never happen - well it should happen. Maybe not \$250,000 a year to start but at least \$100,000 a year with full benefits and bonuses. The games and companies make so many gazillions of dollars, so why not give a billion to start up a league and televise it? That will pay for itself. If people watch food cookers and bowlers they *will* watch gamers. Do the league one year - just one and I know it will be around year after year. And if not - we tried, right?

Not everything is realistic but anything is possible. It can all be altered - it's called making history and

breaking the barrier of the impossible and improbable. People said we would never have a black president and the casino odds were 5000-1 in 2007 and 500-1 in 2008. But, he won and won in a landslide.

I had the Idea of a professional kickball league in 1993. I was laughed at and made fun of yet since 1998 WAKA (World Adult Kickball Association) is a reality. I did not create it but I came up with the idea first I'm sure. I will never stop believing - it can and will be a reality someday. We work just as hard as anyone else in sports so it's time we make it our time. I hope before I'm gone it's a reality so gamers can be just as lazy as the rest of the athletes, make money, not have to work a regular job and instead have a dream job. I think gamers are worth even more money than the \$250,000. If we come together it can and will happen. 🎮

The RetroBlog

Retroboards Score Updates

Colecovision
Astro Invader: 7,070
Bump 'N' Jump: 155,328
Burger Time: 51,000
Centipede: 52,723
Chuck Norris Superkicks: 194,300
Cosmic Avenger: 49,840
Donkey Kong Junior: 119,900
Frantic Freddy: 6,960
Frenzy: 20,518
Frogger: 10,660
Galaxian: 36,970
Gyruss: 79,900
H.E.R.O.: 33,405
Jungle Hunt: 19,560
Looping: 209,175
Magical Tree: 27,600
Mario Bros.: 88,060
Mr. Do's Castle: 22,380
Ms. Pac-Man: 45,280
Ol' Well: 24,690
Pac-Man: 23,350
Pac-Man Plus: 44,750
Poppye: 78,730
Q*bert's Qubes: 166,140
River Raid: 21,390
Road Fighter: 32,783
Roc'N Rope: 50,200
Sky Jaguar: 43,600

Tournament Updates

Vector War Final Results	
Tournament Final Standings	
1. Helmut Mueller 60.07%	
2. Ian Nicholson 65.74%	
3. Dave McCooey 62.85%	
4. Rob Maerz 59.48%	
5. Jasper Alto 53.62%	
Armor Attack	
1. 106,200 Ian Nicholson 100%	
2. 51,800 Helmut Mueller 48.78%	
3. 32,000 Dave McCooey 30.13%	
4. 31,300 Rob Maerz 29.47%	
5. 29,400 Jasper Alto 27.68%	
Rip Off	
1. 4,480 Dave McCooey 100%	
2. 4,450 Helmut Mueller 99.23%	
3. 4,320 Jasper Alto 96.43%	
4. 3,180 Ian Nicholson 70.98%	
5. 2,280 Rob Maerz 50.89%	
Scramble	
1. 66,140 Helmut Mueller 100%	
2. 37,900 Ian Nicholson 57.3%	
3. 25,670 Jasper Alto 33.93%	
4. 31,480 Dave McCooey 48.14%	
5. 29,230 Rob Maerz 44.19%	

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Review

Tron and Robotron: Thirty Years of Electronic Gaming (and Counting)

By Jeff Spega, 2011. Reviewed by Rob Maerz.

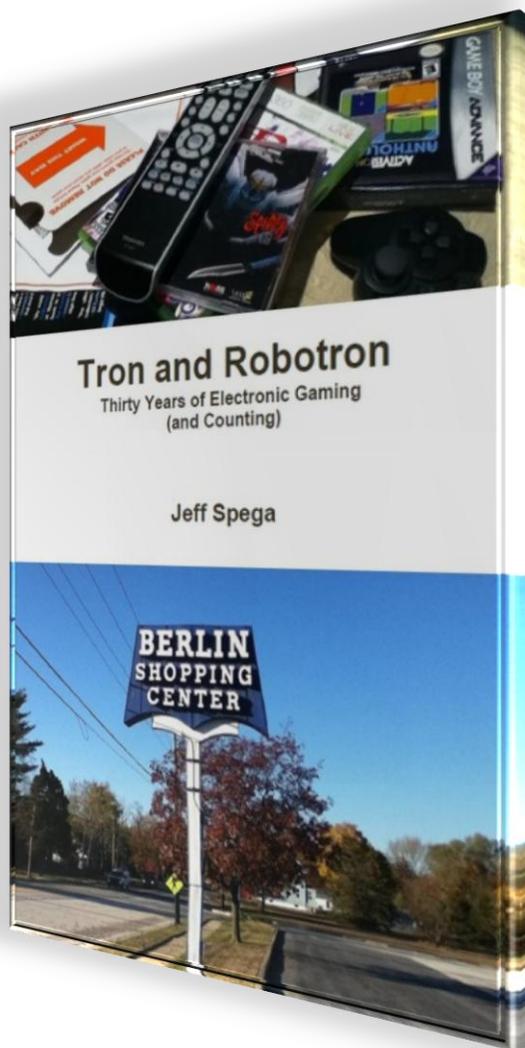
Jeff Spega is currently the editor of the Digital Press Fanzine and a lifelong gamer and collector. Spega takes you on a journey through 30 years of electronic gaming and its juxtaposition of his life as a child, teenager, college student, father, 40-something and the possible roads that lie ahead. Familiar experiences over the decades are recounted from 1970s arcade gaming in the supermarkets to classic console dumpster diving in the 21st century.

This is an autobiographical look at life (and the interference of life) seen through the eyes of a gamer and collector in concurrence with the history of video gaming. Life, gaming and collecting experiences intersperse with historical and factual video game industry information.

Included in the book are reviews of the author's favorite game releases and reference material in the appendices.

If you grew up with the video gaming industry like I did in the 1970s, this book will jog memories of your own personal experiences inside and outside the realm of gaming. For others, the book provides an insightful look at the boom and bust of the classic gaming era and the gaming generations that followed from a player's and collector's perspective. This book is a humorous, nostalgic and entertaining page turner to be devoured. 🦿

Ordering information can be found at www.jeffspega.com



What follows is an excerpt from the book containing the entire text of Chapter 3. Enjoy!

An excerpt from
Tron and Robotron:
Thirty Years of Electronic Gaming (and Counting)
By Jeff Spega

Tron and Robotron is the story of Jeff Spega's journey from the 1970s arcades of coastal New Jersey to today's (graying) classic gaming community. This is the first ever street-level view of the history of electronic gaming, observed with the humanity students of the field have been waiting for. If that sounds a little too "Oprah Book Club" for you, ***Tron and Robotron*** also serves as one of the most comprehensive guides to games and consoles ever published, as delivered by a living, breathing video game database. Albeit a cranky, snarky, obsessive database.

For ordering details, please visit www.jeffspega.com.

CHAPTER 3

**The Berlin Acme... Grocery Store,
or Video Game Capital of the World?**

It's hard to describe to a young person today the ubiquity of arcade video games in the early 1980s. When I was ten years old, there was not a single retail or recreational facility without an arcade game. Arcade cabinets were in every supermarket, convenience store, pizza parlor, restaurant, hotel lobby, movie theater, Laundromat, shopping mall, strip mall, dry cleaners, ice cream stand, gas station, warehouse, farmhouse, henhouse, outhouse, and doghouse.

As a very young child I played arcade games here and there such as *Pong*, *Atari Football*, and *Surround* in various hotels and restaurants. Those games were primarily two player affairs in which I would use my younger brother as a virtual punching bag, or simply play against myself.

My first experiences in a real arcade were undoubtedly in Cape May, New Jersey, otherwise known in those days as "down the shore". My first indication as a child that our annual two hour drive to Cape May was complete happened when I saw that beautiful Taj Mahal-like structure on the boardwalk with the huge letters "A R C A D E" spelled out on its facade (it's still there!).

My lifelong love of video games was born in those Cape May days, but the primary arcade attraction at that time was skee-ball. Skee-ball was kind of like a mini bowling alley, but instead of knocking down pins you rolled the ball into little buckets at the end of a ramp. Ten cents for four balls, twenty-five cents for nine. If you scored over 100, the machine spit out little tickets that you could redeem for prizes. My favorite skee-ball

strategy was to quarter up three lanes, then throw all twenty-seven balls down a single lane, amassing a huge number of tickets and ultimately scoring a bunch of spider rings, super balls, and mini water pistols.

Until I reached the age of eight or nine, the Cape May arcade was primarily composed of skee-ball lanes, pinball machines, shooting galleries, and various electronic novelties such as horoscope machines and “sex testers” (which would evaluate one’s sexual prowess based on how enthusiastically one gripped its joystick). There were a few mechanical arcade games, including a really neat racing game in which you steered a metal car down a cellophane track until you crashed into something, producing a huge red cellophane explosion. But the first real video game I remember in the place was *Death Race*.

Death Race was a stand-up arcade game like *Pong* (the other video games I was familiar with, *Surround* and *Atari Football*, were built into glass tables). *Death Race* had two authentic steering wheels and gear shifts. The marquee portrayed two skeletons driving cars. The goal of the game was to run people over. *Death Race* was simply five and a half feet of bad-ass. I was so young when I played it that what actually takes place in the game is barely memorable to me, but I have little doubt that the seeds of my later gaming adventures were sown in those forgotten *Death Race* sessions.

Also appearing in the Cape May arcade were *Space Invaders* and *Star Fire*. I ignored both. They looked too hard and seemed like a waste of skee-ball quarters. To this day I have not warmed up to the *Space Invaders* arcade game. In my opinion the Atari VCS version will never be surpassed as the ultimate slide-and-shoot video game. As for *Star Fire*... eh. I thought a better job could be done of ripping off *Star Wars*.

So while other children spent their summer days in the sunshine of the Cape May beach developing their physical fitness and athletic abilities, I loitered in a darkened, air-conditioned arcade hoping an intoxicated teenager would drop a quarter or leave a credit in a pinball machine.

Then Atari came out, and suddenly arcade games were everywhere. I found myself actually wanting to leave the house and go places with my parents. My father was already accustomed to handing me quarters at the conclusion of a grocery shopping expedition. We shopped at the Acme in the Berlin Shopping Center of Berlin, New Jersey. The Acme had a TV machine near the exit on which for the low, low price of twenty-five cents one could view the adventures of Woody Woodpecker. Never mind that the same cartoons could be viewed for free on television at home. For fifty cents you could put money into a machine that would spit out a two-inch replica of a random NFL team’s helmet... more often than not, the hapless Cincinnati Bengals.

Probably because I was the only kid in the world putting money into the Woody Woodpecker machine (which had a retractable curtain so one could watch in privacy), the Acme replaced it with an *Asteroids* game. Man! I thought *Death Race* was the coolest arcade game in the world until I saw *Asteroids*. For starters, they took the throbbing bass of *Space Invaders* and multiplied it by ten... I would put quarters in it without even playing the game just so I could hear this impossibly low electronic pulse. The graphics were just straight white lines stretched over a black background, the missiles leaving a glowing phosphorescent trail. For a nine year-old, the game was pretty much impossible. But man, that sound. Playing *Asteroids* made me actually want to visit the grocery store, an occasion that had previously been boring and tedious (although I did enjoy pressing my thumbs into raw ground beef).

Restaurants also suddenly became more attractive to me once they began housing video game cabinets. There’s nothing a boy hates more than getting dressed in uncomfortable clothes and dragged to some hoity-toity restaurant not called McDonalds, but when arcade machines started showing up in every dining

establishment in the world, I suddenly developed a keen interest in going out to eat. One Sunday night in 1981 my parents took me to this place in Voorhees called The Library. According to Mom, in this "Library" one could walk up to these massive bookshelves, remove any volume, and bring it home. I loved books so it sounded pretty cool.

The Library didn't quite live up to what I had imagined. While it was true that you were allowed to take a book home for free, what Mom failed to mention was that all these books were about 300 years old. As a nine year-old my primary reading interests were *Daredevil* comic books, magazines with pictures of Darth Vader, and the adventures of *The Hardy Boys*. None of these were included in the numerous volumes of The Library. Half the books I touched felt like they were going to fall apart in my hands.

Then a beautiful thing happened. I heard this wonderful electronic noise from around the corner. It sounded like a combination between the *Space Invaders* and *Asteroids* arcade machines... very cool. I persuaded my father to accompany me to investigate these sounds during our two or three hour wait to get a little food out of the lousy place.

Around this corner were two arcade video games. One I don't remember. The other was *Defender*.

Just by looking at *Defender* for seconds, I could tell it was better than *Space Invaders* and *Asteroids*. *Defender* was in color. It had a joystick. And mother of God, SEVEN buttons.

Every video game I had ever seen consisted of a single field of play. In *Defender* when you moved to the edge of the playfield it moved with your ship. I would later learn this was called "scrolling". *Defender* had a radar at the top of the screen to show the player which enemies were congregating in areas that were not currently being accessed. I was trying to adjust to this concept that there were abstract sections of the playfield that couldn't be viewed at once... this game had a RADAR showing these areas. And a smart bomb button that blew everything that happened to be on the screen at the time to screaming hell. And astronauts that could be plucked from alien ships and dropped off on the planet's surface. And aliens that, when shot, turned into six little red aliens that blitzed your ship.

But for me the best part of *Defender* was watching my own ship get destroyed. After being hit by a missile or ramming an alien, the player's starship burst into ten tiny points of light that scattered all over the playfield, froze in space, then gradually faded away. The graphics in *Defender* were so advanced, every other game I'd ever played before it just looked ridiculous. I remember begging my father for quarters to put in the machine, just so I could watch my own ship explode.

It turned out that, along with the 900 year-old books, the food at The Library was not up to snuff either. Since I had been whining pretty much non-stop up until my encounter with *Defender*, my parents made it clear on the car ride home that we would not be returning. Luckily, in those days if you encountered an arcade game in one place, you were nearly guaranteed to see it again somewhere else. I spent the next day at school writing "Defender" on every piece of paper I could get my hands on.

Eventually another arcade machine was added to the lobby of the Berlin Acme, but unfortunately it was not *Defender*. The game was called *Pac-Man* and my brother and I had no idea what to make of it. It was as if an arcade machine had been dropped off from another planet. There were no space ships, no aliens, no explosions, or anything else that I could identify as being a normal part of a video game. There wasn't even a fire button. I wanted nothing to do with *Pac-Man*, and cheerfully continued to drop quarters into the *Asteroids*

machine so I could hear that throbbing bass for about twenty seconds until all three of my ships were destroyed.

Then one day my father came home from work and rushed me back to his car to go check out this new arcade machine he had just encountered. It was in this kind of 70s swank little restaurant in Cherry Hill, which was a bit of a drive from Winslow. I imagined this game had to be awfully good.

So he rushes me into this darkened place and there is a man standing there playing *Pac-Man*.

"Oh, it's *Pac-Man*," I said.

"You've seen this?"

"Yeah, they have it at the Acme."

Although I had checked out the Acme *Pac-Man* a few times, I hadn't played it or watched someone play it. The "problem" with *Pac-Man* (actually its genius) was that it was completely abstract. In every other video game I had ever played you were an astronaut, a fighter pilot, a circus acrobat, a baseball player... you were SOMETHING. This *Pac-Man* to me just looked like a bunch of random colorful junk in a blue maze. What were you supposed to BE?

"Have you played it?" Dad asked.

"No, it's too abstract," I said. Okay, I didn't actually say that. I probably just said it sucked.

"At lunch time today you couldn't even get this close to it. There was a LINE, Jeff. There was a line of people waiting to play this."

The poor gentleman we were standing right on top of having this conversation explained the game to us. *Pac-Man* is a yellow circle with a mouth. You move the yellow circle with the joystick. Your goal is to push the mouth toward the dots in the maze, so *Pac-Man* will "eat" the dots. When all the dots are gone, you start over. The enemies are four "ghosts" that roam around the maze. *Pac-Man* dies if he makes contact with the ghosts. Just like in *Asteroids* and *Defender*, you have three "lives" before the game ends.

I was not impressed. It just looked like a bunch of nonsense. My father gave me a couple of quarters to play. I barely lasted thirty seconds. There was no offense. You didn't shoot anything, and nothing exploded. You ran away from the ghosts until they caught you and you died. Yay. I would rather have collected another Bengals helmet.

I continued to enjoy *Asteroids* at the Berlin Acme. The *Pac-Man* machine was butted up against the back of it, and it was never unoccupied. Lines would form. Soon players would place quarters in the corner of the marquee glass above the monitor to claim their place. There was an air of anxiety in their desperation to play the game. After a month of this, a little shrimp such as me couldn't even get near that *Pac-Man* machine. I began noticing the same group of teenagers was always there.

Finally, human nature kicked in (it takes some time with me). Restricted access to the game made me want to play it, even though I had previously rejected it.

My lucky day arrived. My friend John had a birthday party at a local roller skating rink. Such parties were commonplace in those days. You would just abruptly slap on a pair of skates, roll yourself out onto this

slippery hardwood, and risk life and limb “skating” in a circle to the sounds of Duran Duran, Men at Work, Naked Eyes, and all the other garbage they played on the radio (magically with the passage of time these songs have become classics, just like those wretched “oldies” my parents listened to).

My mother had given me a couple dollars to spend at the party. I was supposed to purchase something called “food”. In fact, I predicted I would be needing some extra “food” and asked for a little more money. I collected three or four dollars to spend in the skating rink’s arcade.

I had little interest in skating and neither did my friend John, so we rolled ourselves right to the arcade (a sturdy pinball machine is excellent for regaining one’s balance on skates). The *Pac-Man* machine was unoccupied. We stopped and stared for a moment, as unrestricted access to the cabinet was quite a sight. John challenged me to a two-player game, and introduced me to a few of the game’s finer points.

I found that *Pac-Man* was quite a bit easier than *Asteroids* and *Defender*. It was actually a kid-friendly game. It even played a song when you started, and had little cartoon breaks in between levels. If you weren’t overly aggressive in trying to eat all the pellets, you could last quite a while.

Pac-Man machines began to appear everywhere. We would go out to dinner and I would ask the host or hostess, “Is there a *Pac-Man* machine here?” Usually the answer was yes. There was a *Pac-Man* in the pizza parlor across from my elementary school. I would fantasize about sneaking out of the recess area to go play.

The Berlin Acme was still king though. It was good for a visit or two a week. I no longer needed to beg quarters off my father. I would come with one quarter. I became good enough at *Pac-Man* that I could last the duration of our shopping visit on a single game.

One night we were at home watching TV and a commercial aired for a go-kart racing complex called “Malibu Gran Prix”. I was not interested as I thought go-karts were for morons, so I ignored it.

“Did you see that?” my brother asked.

“See what?” I responded, annoyed that I had to look up from my *Daredevil* comic book.

“They have an arcade there,” Mom said.

Whoa. The commercial aired again an hour later. Twenty-eight seconds of it was the usual go-kart nonsense. Then at the very end: “AND VISIT OUR ARCADE!” and a two-second glimpse of heaven. It looked like there were over fifty games in there!

Naturally, I wanted to go to Malibu Gran Prix immediately, but had to wait a weekend or two. The place was in Marlton, about a half-hour drive. When the day finally arrived, my pockets were stuffed with every form of currency I could get my hands on. It turned out the games didn’t work on quarters. You had to buy these gold tokens. The cool thing about it was if you bought them in quantity, the price was reduced. I think my father bought 100 tokens for twenty dollars.

He handed me so many tokens I had to carry them in a plastic cup. Then I was unleashed. The place had multiple *Pac-Man* machines, but I figured I could always play *Pac-Man* at the Acme. This was a day to expand my horizons. I can still see this in my mind’s eye: for the first time ever I played *Tempest*, *Centipede*, *Berzerk*, and *Wizard of Wor*. It’s likely I played twenty different games that day, but those are the four I remember clearly.

Except for *Pac-Man*, *Tempest* seemed to be the most popular game in the place. There was something futuristic about its color vector graphics, angular cabinet, and dial controller. Even more so than *Pac-Man*, *Tempest* was abstract and unintuitive. You had to watch other players to learn the game, but once you got over the initial learning curve it was one of the easier games around.

Centipede had a “trak-ball” controller like *Atari Football*, but it was a stand up game. *Centipede*’s trak-ball resembled a billiards cue ball, which was amazing to me for some reason. The object of the game was to shoot insects and clear out fields of mushrooms. I hated insects, so naturally this was right up my alley. I still enjoy games in which insects are the enemy.

The game I played the most that day was *Berzerk*. Visually sparse and concrete, no learning curve was involved; the goal of *Berzerk* was to shoot robots. Hey... when there are robots that need to be shot with lasers, I am there. There was nothing particularly “berserk” about the game, in fact it was quite slick and calculated.

Wizard of Wor was right next to *Berzerk*, probably because they were both “talking games”. *Berzerk* had a few phrases such as “Chicken, fight like a robot”, “Get the humanoid”, and (my favorite) “Coin detected in pocket”. To this day I could not tell you what *Wizard of Wor* was supposed to be saying. It just sort of barked at you electronically. Gameplay-wise, it was clearly the weakest of the four games, but there was just something charmingly idiotic about it.

As much as I enjoyed going to the arcade and playing the games in supermarkets and diners, there’s no place like home. *Defender*, *Berzerk*, and *Centipede* were eventually released as Atari cartridges. Since arcade machines ran on superior computer hardware and custom control mechanisms, these home versions typically suffered from severe graphic and gameplay compromises. But somehow, time and again, the wizards at Atari made these titles just as much fun as the arcade originals.

This streak was about to come to an end.

Doyburger™

By Troy Stanwyck



Destroying the Rings



With No Vectrex Referee at Twin Galaxies, Star Castle Masters Wage War on Alternative Battlegrounds

by Rob Maerz

Saturday, October 1, 2011 was the submission deadline for contributors of Retrocade Magazine. I started writing this article on Monday, October 3, 2011 because an interesting situation developed over the past weekend.

I had planned on having a couple ice cold Yuengling Lagers while playing some ColecoVision Friday evening, September 30. But, I had forgotten that my wife was going out with her friend who was visiting from out of town. So, plans were changed as I was alone “watching” the kids that evening. On a whim, I decided to play Star Castle on the Vectrex.

A couple of weeks prior, I had scored 278,100 on Star Castle in Retrocade Magazine’s Vector War tournament. I had to end my run in part because my fingers were aching and I also did not want to run up the score in the interest of future competition and live game play video streams. That score topped the high of 172,350 logged on Vectrex.co.uk’s web site - a site chock full of Vectrex information including a high score table for player score submissions.

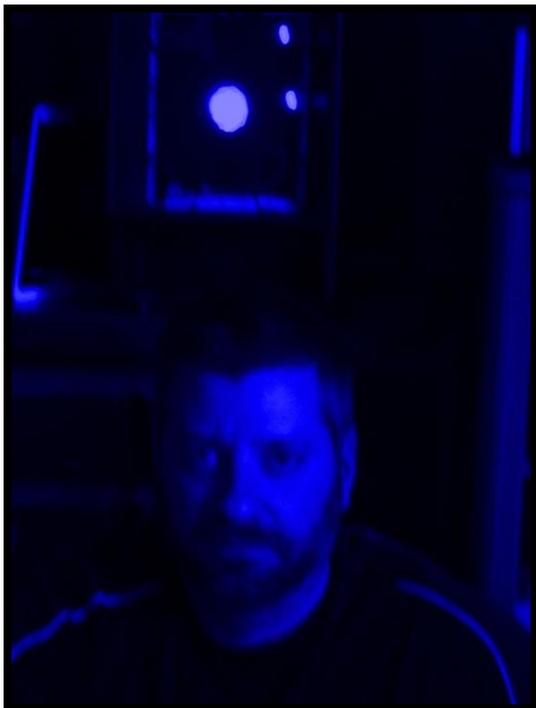
The first Star Castle score I posted in the Vector War tournament was 24,890. I made several weak attempts at breaking through Jasper Alto’s high score of 34,220 before I came to realize that in order to have a breakout game I needed to change *how* I was playing. But first, let me tell you how I got here in the first place...

I cut my teeth on the Star Castle *arcade* game. Back in the early ‘80s, one of the local department stores had this Cinematronics vector classic in the rear next to the snack bar. I was drawn to the game’s vector graphics and booming audio effects. I never figured out how to excel at the game but I really just enjoyed flying the ship around and firing away.

My interest in the game was renewed at Funspot XII in June, 2010, where Star Castle was one of the titles in the tournament. I used the “ring bounce” strategy but for me that only goes so far. Later on that year, I watched

John McAllister's [the current Twin Galaxies record holder with a score of 29,800 on arcade Star Castle (Hard Chip)] Star Castle performance video online to learn any techniques. After watching the video, I decided I needed a MAME cabinet with the same arcade controls in order to practice.

Since my home arcade was pushing capacity, I purchased a gutted Trivia Whiz mini-cabinet to save space and converted it to a dedicated MAME-powered Star Castle cabinet. I installed a spare computer and mounted a 13" color television I had in storage. A keyboard encoder was purchased along with a replica Star Castle marquee and control panel overlay. After sanding the Bondo I applied to cover all the previous punches in the metal control panel, I then drilled holes for the buttons, wired the buttons to the encoder, configured the computer and it was ready to go. After practicing on the cabinet for a few months, my average score was around 15,000. I carried that 15K average with me to the Classic Arcade Gaming (dot com) Donald Hayes Challenge held at High Scores Arcade in March, 2011. By the end of the first evening of competition, I had a score of over 17,000.



Yours Truly

I was able to watch Donald Hayes, arguably the best classic gamer in the electronic sport today, play some Star Castle the following evening. His technique was similar to John McAllister's, however (at least that evening) Donald would only fire from the 6 o'clock position whereas McAllister fires from both the 6 and 9 o'clock positions. So, I took a little of Hayes' technique and a splash of McAllister's and placed a third place score of 19,590 in the tournament. Since then, I have boosted my average Star Castle score to 21K with my personal high being 27,260.

So, flash forward to the Vector War tournament held online in September. How did I get 278,100 on Star Castle? On the arcade game, players can survive by thrusting full-time and flying a pattern that allows you to shoot from the 6 o'clock position and the 9 o'clock position. In order to do that, I had to change the way I was using the Vectrex controller.

Previously, I had been using my right thumb to alternate between thrusting and firing. The change I made was to use my index finger to thrust full-time (button 3 on the Vectrex controller) and my middle finger to fire (button 4). Therefore, I was able to fully translate the technique I have used on the arcade game to the Vectrex.

The top score recorded on Twin Galaxies Electronic Scoreboard (as of this writing) is 48,710. So, when I was scoring 34,000 on Star Castle I figured I was doing OK. But, as I said earlier, the Star Castle high score on Vectrex.co.uk was 172,350. After some practice, I was able to place the top score on Star Castle in the Vector War while topping the Vectrex.co.uk record at the same time.

Comparing the Scoreboards: Star Castle (Vectrex) Top 3					
Twin Galaxies		Vectrex.co.uk		Retrocade Magazine	
48,710	Terence O'Neill	172,350	Future Primitive	460,880	Brandon Ross
44,260	Ron Corcoran	68,090	Future Primitive	306,810	Rob Maerz
26,460	Mike Spudman	35,010	Desfeek	99,990	Dave McCooley

Score data as of October 3, 2011

So, on the last day of September, 2011, I decided it would be a good time to up the ante on Star Castle. But this time I was going to stream it live on my UStream.tv channel, "The Retrocade." Two and one-half hours later, I finished my run at 306,810 after intentionally killing off my remaining ships at the 300,000 mark.

I haven't submitted a score to Twin Galaxies since May of 2010. At that time, I had amassed six hours of Atari 2600 and 7800 game play on VHS and mailed it off with about a dozen signed score submission forms. Those scores were never verified. Since then, I have resigned myself to submitting live arcade tournament scores to Aurcade and Mark Alpiger's Classic Arcade Gaming (dot com).

Starting July of 2011, I introduced the Retroboards to the classic console gaming community for which gamers can submit photographic proof of scores on hundreds of select titles. If certain titles contained game variations where photographic proof would not be feasible, then members of the Retrocade Magazine forums can have their scores submitted and verified via streaming media.

Despite all that, I thought I would give Twin Galaxies another shot. I filled out a score submission form online for my Vectrex Star Castle score and in the comments section I entered the URL of the archived live stream that they could use for verification. A few moments after submitting the score, I received an email confirmation and tracking number for the submission. The bottom of the email read as follows:

Instructions on where to send:

No Referees are assigned for this game, please contact us at: contact.us@tgi-cares.info directly to find out where to send your tape.

A few minutes later, I went on the Twin Galaxies forums and posted a thread asking if it was necessary to print, sign and mail the submission form given that the stream was available online for viewing and there was no tape to send in.

A reply was posted by a Twin Galaxies referee, that as far as they were aware, "Twin Galaxies doesn't accept streams as submissions, generally due to the quality of the stream itself."

I then replied posting a link to the archived stream and stating that the classic gaming community can view the stream to determine "who the *real* Star Castle Vectrex champ is."

The responses were a mixed bag. Some community members stated that Twin Galaxies should, in a sense, "get with it" and accept streaming video as a medium for score submissions. Even if streaming video were accepted, members were divided as to whether my score should be accepted based on the quality of the stream.

Admittedly, the camera I used was an el cheapo \$20 Logitech Webcam. It can't even zoom – just focus. However, I did manage to get the entire console in the video per Twin Galaxies Vectrex submission requirements. The score was not crystal clear as some numbers were easily discernible than others. I showed the Vectrex controller twice in the video during game play to prove I was indeed using a Vectrex controller (only Vectrex controllers are allowed for score submissions). I zoomed in on the final score at the end of the run (per Twin Galaxies submission guidelines) and reset the system twice for the Vectrex to display the high score for good measure. All of these actions should have been enough proof for a well educated Vectrex referee (if there was one) to accept for verification. Lastly, there is no grain of evidence that the video was altered – because it wasn't.

But honestly, from the onset I never expected that the score would be verified and accepted. Therefore, I did not make much of a fuss about it on the Twin Galaxies forums given my prior score submission experience. I posted my score on the Vectrex Retroboards with a link to my live stream and sent an email to Vectrex.co.uk to add the score to their scoreboard.

Continued on page 73



ATARI® **7800**™ VIDEO GAME
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MOON CRESTA



MOON CRESTA

**THE HOT NEW HOME BREW
FOR THE ATARI 7800!**

Moon Cresta

Platform: Atari 7800

Released by: Bob DeCrescenzo, 2011

by Rob Maerz

Thanks to Bob DeCrescenzo, Nichibutsu's Moon Cresta has finally been ported to a classic gaming console (it had been ported to classic computers like the Commodore 64). The arcade classic, released in 1980, has been credited with being the first multi-level space shooter.

When I was a young whippersnapper, my arcade had Moon Cresta's ugly clone named Eagle which was released by Centuri. Eagle has slightly different graphics yet distinguishable abrasive audio effects compared to Moon Cresta. Additionally, the collision detection in Eagle is horrible and I've seen many players punch the control panel, curse the machine and then never set foot near it again. Moon Cresta, however, is more polished in all aspects.

Moon Cresta is a slide-n-shoot where you face multiple waves of aliens, a wave of meteors and two waves of spears (some call them icicles) with two docking missions per each level. When you clear the last wave in each level, the game repeats the wave sequence at increased difficulty.



Instead of the typical space shooter where you begin the game with 3 lives total and receive a bonus ship after hitting a threshold score, you have three ships (identified as "I", "II" and "III") that can

be docked and used simultaneously thus increasing fire power. Ship I is single fire power and ships II and III give you double fire power. Therefore, if you are successful on the first docking mission, you will have triple fire power. If you dock successfully on the second mission, you will have five times the fire power using all three ships (that is, if no ships are destroyed before hand).



Not only do you receive the additional fire power, a sizable chunk of bonus points are awarded on the docking missions so it's important to complete these missions successfully. Your chances improve if you center your ship at the end of each wave preceding the docking mission but you can always thrust upwards and then move left or right to center your ship.

Any time you lose a ship, you will progress to using the next ship (if you are commanding a single ship at that time) or you will continue on with the ship that was *not* destroyed (when commanding multiple ships). The game ends when you lose all three ships and continues when you have reached 30,000 points.

When you complete each level, you will begin each level with one ship and the ship used will be the lowest numbered ship remaining. For example, if you complete a level with all three ships, you will begin the next level with ship I.

The cartridge can be played by one or two players and there are three difficulty levels to choose from: Easy, Normal and Hard. Moon Cresta is a game that demands concentration and precision. Some may mistake the game as having collision detection

issues but the fact is that you must direct your fire to the center of the object in order to kill it off.

This game can be brutal even on the Easy setting. Having said that, you may want to consider starting out on the Easy difficulty setting to learn the alien's fixed flight patterns. The final three waves (meteors and the two icicle waves) are noticeably easier on all three settings – not only compared to the arcade game but within this game itself. You'll notice that you'll cruise right through these waves as you cycle back to the first wave.

This game is not arcade perfect - but it is close. There are minor differences in the audio effects due to the 7800's limitations but they hardly take away from the gaming experience. Additionally the game controls are spot on.

Visually, this game is impressive. Many elements of this game look arcade perfect from the aliens to your spaceship to the docking mission screens. Therefore, this port looks like an arcade game instead of an arcade game simplified for a console.



Despite the aforementioned flaws, this is an otherwise faithful translation of Moon Cresta that plugs a gaping hole in the lean 7800 library. This game should see plenty of time in the cartridge slot as it's a dynamic challenge that will entice gamers to master it. "Simple to learn, hard to master."

For ordering information, see the official thread in the Atari 7800 forum on AtariAge.com.

Grade: A-



Destroying the Rings

continued from page 70

Then, on Monday morning, October 3, a post appeared on the Vectrex Retroboards with the following in the subject line:

New Star Castle High Score: 460,880

So, who submitted this score?

Brandon Ross.

With the absence of a Twin Galaxies Vectrex referee, the players that have mastered Star Castle will battle it out on both the Vectrex.co.uk scoreboards and Retrocade Magazine's Retroboards. You can keep track of the latest scores on Star Castle and other console titles on the RetroBlog at RetrocadeMagazine.com. 

Retrocade Magazine's Review Grades Defined

A	Excellent - a must buy for your collection
B	Good game to add to collection
C	Average
D	Not recommended
F	Total rubbish, avoid



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by VectrexMad!, <http://www.vectrex.co.uk>

Review of Vectrex homebrew Vector Pilot by Tutstronix

Vector Pilot is a new homebrew released for the Vectrex. The game is inspired by the original arcade game Time Pilot from the 80s, and boy what a perfect vector conversion of that old raster favourite this is!

Produced by homebrewer Kristof Tuts, this game has been in the making since 2007. After much beta testing involving several testers, and many feature updates, the game is now finally available for purchase.

Although homebrew, everything about Vector Pilot just oozes quality, the game, the accompanying overlay and the packaging all resemble a product that one could easily mistake to have been produced by a commercial software company. True, cost wise, at 40 Euros (approx 54 USD) plus the additional shipment cost, Vector Pilot is more expensive than other recent Vectrex homebrews, but this is most likely due to the cost of the overlay and the packaging.

Not many homebrews are accompanied with overlays and the Vector Pilot overlay being professionally screen printed (not something created on a transparency and printed on with an inkjet printer) is a beautiful result. The overlay really does add to the colour ambience of the game. In a darkened room you can quite believe you are seeing coloured vectors. Kristof is offering three different overlays to choose from. In this review I use overlay 1 which primarily comprises a transparent red background.

The accompanying game manual (a single A4 page folded in two to form a double sided colour printed booklet) describes the idea of Vector Pilot:- "Time to fly! Get 'up there' and shoot your way through different time-periods in aviation history and future! All levels are included 1910, 1940, 1972, 1984 and 2001."



The game itself occupies a full 64K of memory on the supplied game cartridge. To get an idea of the level of sophistication in this game, the built in Mine Storm Vectrex game uses just 4KB.

With its excess of memory, Vector Pilot includes a multitude of menu options, different music and sound effect accompaniment, a demo mode when the game is left alone, and a 3D rendered animation during the hidden level.

Beginning the Vector Pilot game (after power on) you are welcomed with a simple title screen as is typically seen at the beginning of all Vectrex games. The title is shown together with a serial number corresponding to the cartridge number. Kristof has produced exactly 300 cartridges for purchase. After a short pause a dedication appears. Interestingly, the dedication doesn't pay homage to a person but to the Canadian fighter jet – the Avro Arrow. In fact this plane is piloted by the player throughout the game. It is a fitting choice because in the original Time Pilot, a futuristic fighter jet is used to attack the enemies, and what better for Vector Pilot than the Avro Arrow which was well ahead of its time when it was developed.

The Avro Arrow Jet Fighter

The Avro fighter jet was a Canadian delta winged inceptor aircraft which was years ahead of its time and could travel 1,307mi/hr. Not long into its test flight programme the Avro was controversially cancelled before the project review had taken place. All production planes and parts were subsequently scrapped in 1959 for reasons of classification and secrecy. Rumours abound of a single remaining prototype but there is no concrete evidence to back this.

After the dedication, a more fancy and animated title screen is presented accompanied by sound effects and music. Clouds scroll across the screen background and the player is ready to do battle.

Press the fire button and the player's fighter jet is flying in the period 1910. Hordes of enemy biplanes

fly to attack the player. The player must steer the jet to avoid these aircraft.

But when fellow pilots are seen parachuting through the sky the player must pick them up with their fighter jet in order to rescue them and gain extra points.



In the original Time Pilot game the joystick acted in quadrate mode i.e. the joystick handle can be rotated over the complete 360° angle and the player's vessel follows this rotation angle. This is the default option for Vector Pilot too. However, for those Vectrex players more used to the Mine Storm joystick control, where moving the joystick either left or right results in corresponding rotation of the player's ship, this is available as an option. In fact the controls are highly configurable and you can change the button mode as well as the joystick modes.

The player's fighter jet is armed with a gun which can be used to destroy the flying craft. It takes more than a few blasts of the gun to destroy an enemy aircraft. The more aircraft that are shot the more points are earned. What I found particularly satisfying in the Vector Pilot game is the "pat pat

pat" sound of the player's air plane gun and the resulting explosions of the unlucky enemy planes.

Once enough aircraft are cleared for a given level, you have to shoot and destroy an associated mother ship from that time period. For 1910 the mother ship is a large blimp. Destroy that and your ship is transported in history to a later time period. Visually, the represented time transportation is almost hypnotic, especially in conjunction with the overlay.

You are then faced with aircraft types from that particular era. Each time period represents a harder game level. The enemy aircraft become more intelligent and also fire upon you. This follows exactly like the original Time Pilot arcade game. For 1940 your enemies are WWII monoplanes and a B-25 bomber plane. For 1972 your enemies are helicopters. For 1982 they are fighter jets and a B-52 bomber. For 2001 they are UFOs. Kristof has made great use of the Vectrex sound chip. The approach of each mother ship into the game screen area is accompanied by a suitable sound. When you hear the sound you know the mother ship is approaching even if you can't see it at first.

Beyond 2001 are some interesting enemies to contend with and for which I shall not spoil the surprise.

Game play can be quite hectic with all manner of aircraft flying in the air at once. Multiple pressing of the fire button by the player is a must to survive, and is particularly necessary against formations of enemy aircraft.

It is quite easy to lose track of progress because you end up being so busy shooting at all the enemy aircraft. However, a progress bar at the top of the screen shows how many enemies are left. As you kill enemy planes the bar gets shorter in length. It works very well with the overlay which has an area segmented in different colours above the position of the progress bar. Red means lots of attacking enemies, green means that most of the enemies have been cleared.

Need to take a rest? Fortunately, a pause button feature is also included.

Kristof is also the author of the game Vectrexians - another awesome Vectrex game. I reviewed that in 2007 and gave the game a score of 4.5/5. What made me keep hold of the half a point was the fact that high scores were not saved, and the screen calibration data was not stored. The lack of high score feature I could live with, as this is just icing on the cake. But when there are a lot of graphics on the Vectrex, a screen calibrated Vectrex is a must. Being able to save the calibration data, so that the calibration process does not have to be repeated after each Vectrex power on is then a necessity.



Concerning the display of the vector lines on a Vectrex, this is achieved using analogue electronics. This and the fact that these machines are now over 30 years old, entail that the graphics behave in slightly different ways on different machines. Typically, the offsets need adjusting and you can do this by adjusting pots inside the Vectrex. Alternatively, like Vectrexians, Vector Pilot includes a software calibration function which allows the user to manually control some aspects of the screen using the joystick controller. For Vector Pilot you can calibrate the player's vessel centre position and the progress bar's position and size. Unlike Vectrexians, the Vector Pilot games

cartridge includes non volatile memory. Vector Pilot saves this calibration data, so you only have to perform the calibration setup sequence once for a given Vectrex console.

The non volatile memory is also used to save high scores and the game configuration. You then have a permanent record of your best gaming efforts like that of a game in a real arcade, and nine high scores are saved. These scores are presented at the end of each game and are accompanied by a musical rendition of the theme tune of Top Gun!

Unlike the majority of Vectrex games Vector Pilot has gaming longevity. Vector Pilot contains several hidden features that influence the game behavior: e.g. play in reverse or in tail gunner-mode. When you go beyond the 2001 time period you unlock and earn extra vessel-types which are also stored in non volatile memory.

The demo mode, shown when there is no player interaction, hints at the different possibilities for the player's aircraft. Different player vessels are shown including all the enemy plane types and the fighter ship from Mine Storm.



In conclusion the game is up there with the Vectrex homebrew greats like Protector and GravitrexPlus. I would even venture to say it is at the very top. Yes, this game is more expensive compared to the usual Vectrex homebrews- however, treat yourself, as the extra cost is definitely worth it and the game is a must have. After seeing this game in action it will make you crave for a Vectrex if you didn't already own one. VectrexMad!

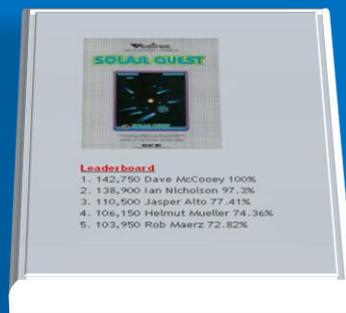
Grade: A+



For more info and ordering details visit Kristof's site at <http://www.kristofsnewvectrexgames.com/li.com>

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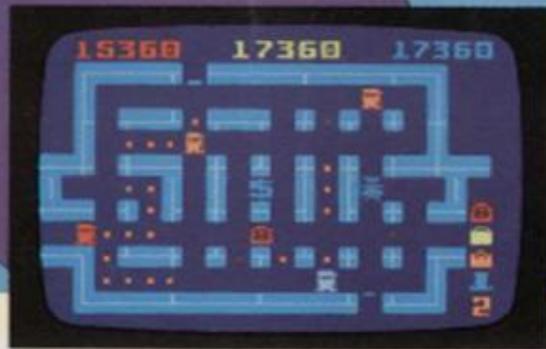
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**RETROCADE MAGAZINE COMPARES THE
CONSOLE PORTS OF THIS ARCADE CLASSIC
TO SEE HOW THEY STACK UP**

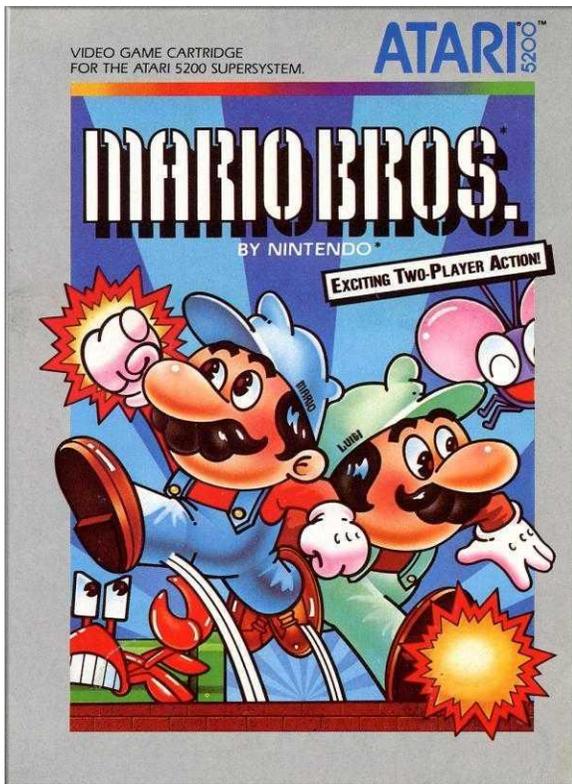


Mario Bros.

Platform: Atari 5200

Released by: Atari, 1983

by Michael Allard



The 5200 has lots of Namco titles in its game library along with hit titles from Taito, Williams and Activision. Thrown in the mix are some games from Parker Bros., CBS Electronics and Sega. But there is only one title in the 5200's library that carries the Nintendo brand: the arcade port of Mario Bros.

The game is a single-screen platform that pits Mario and Luigi against turtles, crabs, bugs and slime that are clogging their water pipes. A simple concept by today's standards but nevertheless an impressive and challenging one.

The game is made up of platforms at multiple levels similar in most respects to Joust. Mario and Luigi start their extermination at the bottom platform and game play begins when pests start coming out of the pipes at the top and march their way to the bottom. When they reach the bottom pipe, they return to the top pipe opposite of the side they entered. Aiding our dynamic plumber duo is a POW switch located in the middle of the screen.

Our brothers' job? Flip the pests over and knock them off. The pests are flipped over by hitting the platform they are on from underneath. They can also be flipped over by hitting the POW switch. Once they are flipped over, Mario and Luigi can kick the pest away by running into them. You better do it quick because the pests will stay turned over temporarily. If you wait too long the pests will flip back over and move faster than before. A round is completed when the last pest is kicked off the platform.

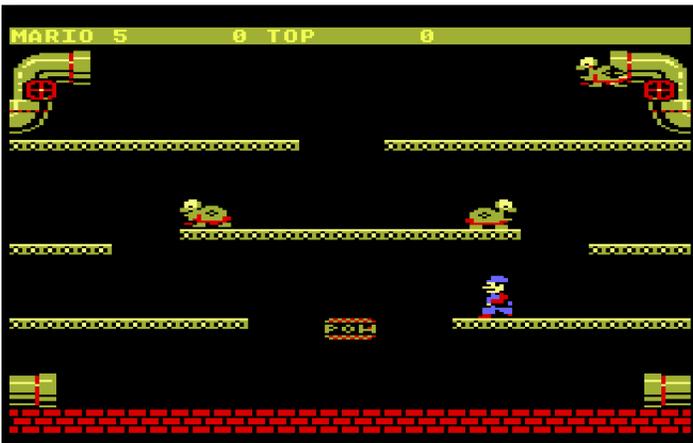
As the player progresses through the rounds, they will encounter different pests and each pest has its own strategy for defeating it. Shellcreepers are easy: simply knock them over with a single bump and kick them off. The Sidesteppers require two bumps with the first bump making it mad. The Fighterfly pest can only be knocked over if it is touching the platform. Other game characters to watch out for are fireballs which come out at random and if touched will cause the player to lose a life. They can be eliminated the same as a pest if they touch a platform. But they are most difficult of all to try and eliminate.

Each pest that is successfully knocked off may come with a bonus coin. Collecting the coin before it reaches the bottom pipe will give the player who catches it some bonus points. The game has a bonus round after a few normal rounds have been played. The bonus round consists of nothing but coins and a timer. The player tries to get as many coins as they can before the timer runs out. If they collect all the coins before the timer runs out then some major bonus points can be collected. Once the bonus round is complete, it's back to exterminating pests. Bummer, huh?

The player can be eliminated several ways with the most obvious being touching a pest that has not been turned over first. The occasional fireballs flying around can fry the player making Mario or Luigi want to jump in the water puddle under them. A lost life results in either player returning to the game from the top. They can stay there indefinitely until a path is cleared for them to jump back into the game. That is, unless a fireball decides to target them first. Each player starts the game with 5 lives

and the game is over when either player loses all their lives.

The 5200 port of Nintendo's arcade hit is a good one in some areas and not so good in others. The characters in the game are well animated and colorful. However, their movement at times can appear to be sluggish and there are times where performing a jump to another platform is not registered properly or at all. The platform has a monochromatic feel and the flooring is not as thick as the arcade.



Sounds in the game are close to the actual arcade sounds. The sounds of Mario jumping, the fireball flying around and the POW switch being hit come together nicely to finish out the arcade port.

The most interesting feature of the game is the time that was obviously spent in creating the game's characters. Mario is in his blue overalls with a red shirt and Luigi is a copy of Mario in his usual green. Shellcreepers are very well made and probably the most animated character of them all. If a Shellcreeper is left for too long on its back after knocking it over, it will crawl out of its shell, kick its shell back over, crawl back in and continue on its way.

The Sidesteppers are an amazing red hue and after the first bump it will show its anger. All the pest characters change their colors depending on the number of times they have been kicked over and not knocked off in to the water puddle below. All these details make up for the otherwise lack of detail on the platforms.

The scoreboard could have used a little more appeal other than simple text on a colored

background but it is effective and informative. It would have been nice to see something more impressive as found in the arcade version. But, this was probably eliminated from a lack of space after animating the game's characters.

So is this a fun game? Most definitely! It pales in some elements as mentioned before but it fits the meaning of why the 5200 came to be. It's also one of few 5200 games that offer two-player simultaneous play in an arcade format. The two-player mode can be a laugh-out-loud riot. There's nothing more hilarious than directing your character to knock off a pest only to have your teammate hit the POW switch knocking the pest back over. And while the 5200 has analog controls that are not ideal for 4-directional games of this nature, they work and work well.

Overall, Mario Bros for the 5200 is one game that shouldn't be missed. Many hours can be spent on the game and the elements I mentioned that could have been better will soon be forgotten once a player becomes involved in the game.

Grade: B+

Mario Bros.

Platform: Atari 2600

Released by: Atari, 1983

by Rob Maerz

When you insert your 2600 Mario Bros. cartridge you're greeted with an attractive looking text of "Mario Bros." flashing in the top center of the screen.

There are 8 game variations to choose from (all even numbered games are for two players - Mario & Luigi):

Games 1-2: 5 lives with fireballs

Games 3-4: 5 lives without fireballs

Games 5-6: 3 lives with fireballs

Games 7-8: 3 lives without fireballs

So far, so good. Let's hit reset and see what happens.

You'll see the first mistake as soon as you hit the reset switch: fireballs immediately! Now, maybe this is wrong in the traditional sense of Mario Bros., but Atari has been known to put a spin on 2600 arcade ports by ramping up the difficulty (play the relentless Jr. Pac-Man on the 2600!).

When you buy an arcade port for the 2600, you have to expect that the graphics are going to be simplified and this is no exception. POW is represented by a simple rectangle towards the bottom center of the screen and the pipes look like green Tetris pieces. Mario and Luigi are multi-colored and look respectable. The coins are multi-colored squares (i.e. they don't look like coins) but oddly enough they appear as blue coins in the bonus stages. I suspect that this is due to the limitations of the system given that the coins on the bonus stages are stationary.



The bad guys are rendered in single colors. While the Shellcreepers and Sidesteppers look ok, the Fighterflies look like rabbits and the Slipice look like frowning wedding cakes.

It may be the funniest looking port of Mario Bros. I've played, but it's a fast paced game from the onset. The sound effects are simple scratching sounds when our Bros. are running around and boop sounds when hitting a bad guy.

One of the annoyances I have with this game is not being able to jump on POW. Also, you cannot hit a pest just as he reaches the ledge of the platform so

he can tumble down to the platform you are standing on – they just sit on the ledge.

Despite all these flaws, you still can enjoy playing Mario Bros. on the 2600. It's fast-paced, challenging and you can select various difficulties of play for one or two players.

Grade: C+

Mario Bros.

Platform: ColecoVision

Released by: CollectorVision, 2009

by Rob Maerz

Here are the flaws of this release:

- It's easier than the arcade game
- The fireballs do not generate sound
- The pests are rendered in one color

Despite those flaws, CollectorVision has released a magnificent port of the Nintendo classic in an attractive red box and cartridge. What this game demonstrates is the "what could have been" had Coleco not dropped the ball in the early 80s by dumping their resources into the albatross known as the Coleco ADAM.



Continued on page 85

FIVE QUESTIONS WITH COLLECTORVISION FOUNDER JEAN-FRANCOIS DUPUIS

Why port Mario Bros. to the ColecoVision?

Dupuis: At first, Opcode was supposed to make it. But in 2008, Eduardo Mello announced that he was quitting the homebrew scene (which he didn't do). So, I decided to make Mario Bros. because I *did* want to see this title on the ColecoVision since the 80s.

What were some of the challenges faced in developing and porting this title to the ColecoVision?

Dupuis: Flickering! *That* was the biggest challenge. We did our own flicker engine to manage all those sprites on the screen. At first we were supposed to use a 32K board but the game could simply not fit in 32K so we ended up using the MegaCart. A prototype of the 32K version exists. We took almost two full years to make Mario Bros. That is our biggest involvement in the homebrew scene.

How does the CollectorVision release stack up against other console ports of Mario Bros.?

Dupuis: We have all the intros which are missing in most if not all console ports. I also think that our version is much closer to the arcade version than any other ports.

I read that you have some type of cartridge that is being released that includes the Mario Bros. ROM?

Dupuis: Mario Bros is distributed free with the Atarimax SD Cart. But, we also have developed a multi-cart PCB which we'll soon use for some projects.

Will there be another production run of Mario Bros?

Dupuis: We'll have another batch soon and with a lower price. I'm just too much busy right now with new and upcoming releases. But, rest assured Mario Bros. will be back in stock soon.

COLECOVISION WORLD RECORD HOLDER ON COLLECTORVISION'S MARIO BROS.

by Tom Duncan

Editor's note: I asked Tom Duncan, whom I consider an expert ColecoVision player, for his opinion on CollectorVision's port of Mario Bros. for which he kindly obliged.

This game would have to be one of the better homebrew releases as of late. The graphics and sound are a 9 or 10 for sure - not sure what could have been done better.

The game play is excellent with outstanding response and again would be a 9 or 10.

The difficulty ramps up slowly and maxes out around screen/phase H1. At this point it takes a couple of strategies to clear the hardest screens and get the game to loop back to Phase 1. I won't go into details about clearing them, but I will say that the screen can be cleared from *any* position you find yourself in on *any* platform level. It has been said that the game has a kill screen which is not true.

Arcade accuracy is close, but it doesn't have falling icicles. Also, an extra barrel level was added to the game. To reach the level you must clear the coin bonus level. Once you figure out a pattern on how to clear it, it is simple and it never gets harder. Also, the original Donkey Kong theme music was added for a nice twist. Another difference is that you can earn unlimited men.

I would rate this ColecoVision release a 9 or 10 overall. It is one of the best ColecoVision games ever released.

Mario Bros.

Continued from page 83

This port has an authentic looking title screen and stage instructions to boot. Mario, Luigi and the platforms look great.

The sound effects and familiar Mario Bros. music haven't been left out and are rendered to the best of the ColecoVision's abilities.



The controls in this game are spot on even with those lousy ColecoVision controllers. Although the game play is easier than the arcade game, it just means that you'll enjoy your gaming session a bit longer. And if you advance far enough into the game, you'll be in for a special treat!

Mario Bros. is a must have for your ColecoVision collection.

Grade: A

Mario Bros.

Platform: Atari 7800

Released by: Atari, 1984

by Rob Maerz

You are greeted with an attractive title screen followed by a demo of the game play in this version of Bros. Mario and Luigi. The graphics are very nice with the exception of the Slipice who look like wedding cakes only this time worse than the 2600 version (believe it or not!). The coins are recognizable although rendered an orange color with no hint of shine. So, for all you know you're collecting worthless old Lincoln pennies.



The bane of the Atari 7800 is its sound and this game is no exception. The music sounds like a symphony of flatulence and armpit noises. But, remember folks: it's all about the game play!

You have three selections of skill levels: standard, advanced and expert and of course this is a one or two player game.

The game plays as it should. Fireballs arrive on the scene when you do not quickly clear the board and the pests tumble down the platform when you hit them on the edge of the platform above.

This is a must have for your 7800 collection. The sound effects and minor graphical flaws keep this game from getting a top grade.

Grade: A -

Mario Bros.

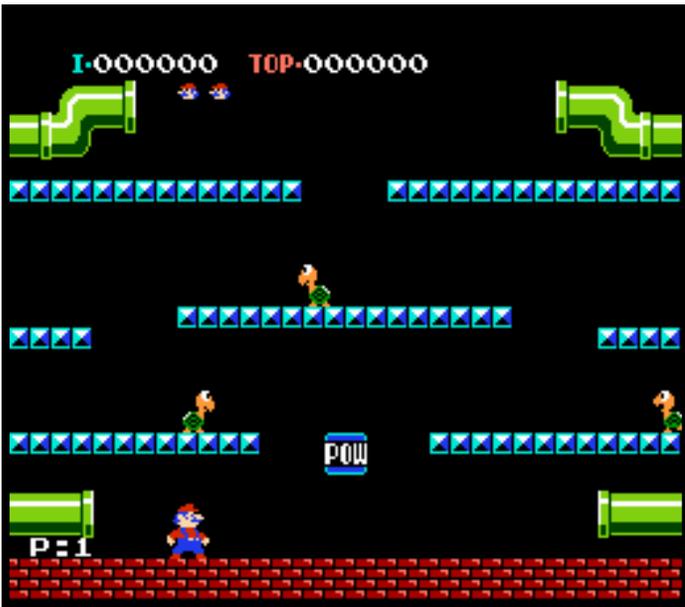
Platform: Nintendo Entertainment System

Released by: Nintendo, 1986

by Michael Allard

It's not too much of a surprise that Nintendo would release some of its arcade hits on their 8-bit home console – the NES (Nintendo Entertainment System). But how well does it stack up against the arcade version?

Nintendo put everything they could from the arcade into the NES version. The title screen is the first sign of how well this game was ported as it is almost identical to the arcade version. The only real difference is that “Insert Coin” has been replaced with Game Type variations for 1 or 2 player style games – it wouldn't make much sense to have to pay-to-play for a game which was purchased.



Selecting a mode and playing the game brings the look and feel of the arcade version closer to home. But there are still a few differences that are minor. The first sign is the HUD display. The arcade version has fancy text for Mario and Luigi's name and the score only has three digits showing until it needs more. The NES version has all six digits visible and the character's names are replaced with Roman numerals I and II.

Also missing from the NES port are the red valve wheels seen on the arcade version and other console ports of this game. Some of the characters are missing a small amount of detail which is especially noticeable with the Shellcreepers who are smaller than their arcade cousins. The final visual difference is with the round information at the bottom left corner of the display. The arcade version has an artistic method of presenting what round is being played while the NES sticks with standard font notation.

Animations of the characters are spot-on but there is a real disappointment in that the Shellcreeper does not kick his shell back over after being knocked down - he just simply flips over. Everything else is here and accounted for, however, making this port about as close as one can get to the arcade.

Going from a joystick to a D-pad style controller actually makes it easier to rack up points in the game. Just like in the arcade game, however, a quick turn and jump too soon to try and reach a higher platform can cause Mario or Luigi to jump in an almost slow-motion style.

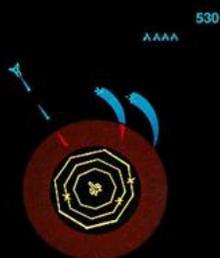
All the sounds one would expect from the arcade are perfectly recreated for the NES port. Truth be known, there probably wasn't much of a change needed to put the music and sounds in the NES version. It seems that most of Nintendo's arcade games made before the NES were perfect additions to the NES' game library. And Mario Bros for the NES is no exception. Lack of some animation and character sizes keeps this one from receiving a perfect score...but it comes really close.

Grade: A-



Reviews

Whether it's home brew or old brew,
Retrocade Magazine's got it covered!



Space Frenzy

Platform: Vectrex

Released By: Classic Game Creations, 2006

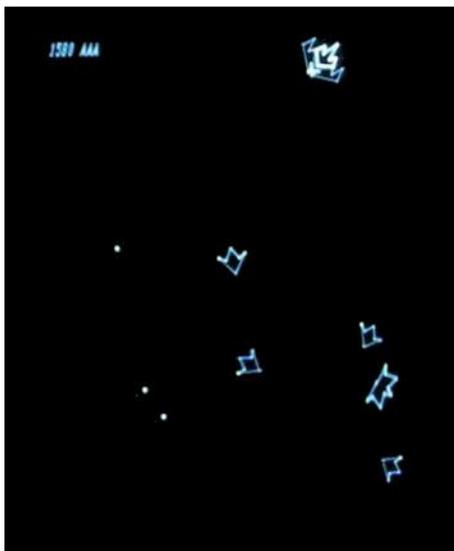
by Rob Maerz

Space Frenzy is a home brew port of Sega's 1981 Space Fury programmed by John Dondzila. Porting this vector arcade classic to the Vectrex is a no-brainer and I'm glad someone picked up the ball and ran with it.

The game play is a twist on Atari's legendary hit Asteroids. You control a spaceship whose mission is to destroy alien cruisers – obviously they're mission is to destroy you. Segments of alien ships fuse together to create a complete cruiser and you can shoot off the ships before they complete a cruiser or destroy what will either become a partial or entire alien cruiser. When a cruiser is created, they will shoot fireballs in order to annihilate you. After each round you will be able to dock and receive extra fire power.

When you fire up this game on the Vectrex, you have the option of playing the game with or without digitized speech. If you choose the former, the alien Cyclops appears on the screen and taunts you by saying "so, a creature for my amusement, prepare for battle!" If you choose the latter, the text of his taunts will appear on the screen instead. It's been said that the digitized speech does not work on all Vectrex systems and sadly mine was one of them. I had to turn up the volume full blast in order to hear it.

The graphics in this home brew are outstanding. The alien head looks fantastic as well as all elements found in the game play.



The difficulty level starts low and then ramps up as you progress whereas the arcade game's difficulty is merciless from the onset (that's why "Fury" is in the name). It's when Space Frenzy ramps up the difficulty that it can be an enjoyable gaming experience. I say "can be an enjoyable gaming experience" because there are flaws in the game play that take some of it away.

There are minor flaws that are forgivable. For example, when you dock for extra fire power the game goes into an unusually long pause state. The other minor flaw is repeating the docking process after the third round is complete. This eliminates the strategy of selecting the dock at the 9 o'clock position for the ultimate firepower for the remainder of the game.

But, the biggest flaw of this game is that your ship can be destroyed by an alien ship before it becomes a cruiser, unlike the arcade game. I even had my ship destroyed at the beginning of a round because the alien ship appeared in the center of the screen – the same place my ship appears. That's just not right!

Whenever I've played the arcade game, I've always felt the playfield was small compared to the size of the objects on the screen giving you a sense of claustrophobia. Space Frenzy is no exception in that regard which exaggerates the flaw of being destroyed by alien ships.

In any event, I do recommend this for your Vectrex collection. And if it weren't for the major flaws in this game I would give it an A.

Grade: C+

Space Fury

Platform: ColecoVision

Released By: Sega, 1983

by Rob Maerz

That Connecticut Leather Company was famous for releasing less than popular titles for the ColecoVision library and Space Fury could possibly qualify as one of them.

There are four skill levels to choose from in this translation of the Sega classic. Skill level 1 is the easiest, skill level 3 is considered the arcade equivalent and skill level 4 is the most difficult. Skill level 3 is what this review will be based on.

But first, I want you to free yourself from the Coleco controllers, plug in the Roller Controller and use that instead! The trackball allows you to rotate with precision and the placement of buttons 1 and 2 on the Roller Controller make thrusting and firing much easier.

The game opens with the obligatory trash talking alien. He looks like an alien but not *the* Space Fury creature. Fans of the



old English translations of Japanese Godzilla movies should feel right at home as the alien simply moves his lips while the text of his smack scrolls across the screen. “Fanfare For the Common Man” plays in the background for some reason.

The spaceship you command is the common Asteroids triangular ship that appears in the center of the screen. Just like the arcade game, the alien ships fuse together to form the cruisers and your ship cannot be destroyed by the alien ships. Cruisers will then chase you down in a deadly collision or destroy you with their fireballs.

When the round is over, you choose one of the three docks for extra fire power and receive bonus points – just like the arcade game.



After you complete another round, you dock a second time and after another round you dock for a third and final time – just like the arcade game. The strategy for most players is to dock in the 9 o'clock position to obtain ultimate fire power for the remainder of the game.

There are compromises made translating a vector arcade game with raster graphics. For example, there are alien ships that resemble paper clips. The alien with the varicose veins found in the arcade game looks more like a one-eyed Creature From the Black Lagoon. Overall, the graphics won't knock your socks off but they work in this translation.

Like the arcade game, the action is fast and furious. And as advertised on Coleco's box for this game, it “Plays Like The Real Arcade Game.”

Grade: A

Star Castle

Platform: Vectrex

Released By: GCE, 1982

by Rob Maerz

My favorite arcade game used to be Galaga. Then, it was Sinistar until I came to terms with the fact that the game cheats. Now, I can profess my love for Cinematronics' 1980 vector classic, Star Castle.

And what better system to port this brutally difficult arcade game than the Vectrex?

The Vectrex translation features two difficulty levels with game 1 being the most difficult and the default level of play. The cartridge was also bundled with an attractive overlay with blue tint and red ring and yellow circle in the center to colorize the rings and cannon. The overlay really makes the game look sharp (especially when you play in a dark room!).

Like most deep space shooters, your ship rotates left and right (using the joystick or controller buttons) along with thrust and fire.

The bad guy is a cannon that rotates in the middle of the screen surrounded by three rings rotating in opposite directions. Aiding our foe are three sparks that will free themselves from the rings and chase you around the screen. Colliding with these sparks is fatal.



The object of the game is to destroy the cannon by shooting the ring segments (but do not shoot all the segments of a ring or they will regenerate) for points in order to create a gaping hole. Once there is a path cleared through the rings to the cannon, you need to kill or be killed. Whenever you destroy the cannon, you are awarded a bonus ship, you repeat the process of destroying a cannon and the game ramps up in difficulty.

The difficulty is in the game's speed. The deeper you advance in the game, the faster the sparks travel and the faster the cannon rotates to keep aim on your ship. In the latter stages of the game, you have no option but to stay on full thrust and firing at the same time.

The Star Castle arcade game featured some great audio effects such as the drone of the rotating rings and the thundering destruction of ring segments. The drone has been recreated well on the Vectrex although the sound of ring destruction resembles that of two brawling wooden coat hangers.

Graphically the game is spot on and there are no flaws to speak of.

The Vectrex version of Star Castle is easier for this reason: the sparks never wraparound the playfield. With that, you can always wraparound the playfield to avoid collisions. Nevertheless, the sparks increase their speed to a profound level much like the arcade game.

Star Castle is arguably the best game in the Vectrex library and is a must have for your collection.

Grade: A

Star Fortress

Platform: ColecoVision

Released By: Classic Game Creations, 1997

by Rob Maerz

This is the home brew version of Star Castle ported to the ColecoVision by John Dondzila.

You command the familiar looking Asteroids type ship while you blast away the rings to destroy the cannon in the center.

You can use the two buttons on your controller to fire and thrust and your joystick to rotate left and right. You can also push up on the joystick to thrust which I have found is much easier. I dabbled playing this game using the Roller Controller but I found the Coleco controller to be the better option.

Graphically, the game looks great. Although the star field is static backdrop it's something you'd miss if it wasn't there. The sparks flicker but that may have been done intentionally to mimic the effect in the arcade game.

I like the audio effects in this translation. The drone



of the rotating rings hasn't been left out and the other effects are vintage ColecoVision: the game looks and sounds like it could have been released back in 1983.

There are two flaws I found in this game. The first is when you attempt to bounce off the rings: at times you will go through a missing segment and get trapped between two rings.

The second flaw is the lack of acceleration for your ship. When you thrust from a dead stop, for a second your ship stutters like it's running on fumes before it actually accelerates. In this type of game you need full acceleration.

Between arcade, Vectrex and this version I'd have to say Star Fortress is the most difficult. The cannon watches you like a hawk and more often than not when he unloads on you it's certain death.

The nostalgia has been captured in this release; however it would be more enjoyable if it weren't so difficult.

Grade: C+

Yars' Revenge

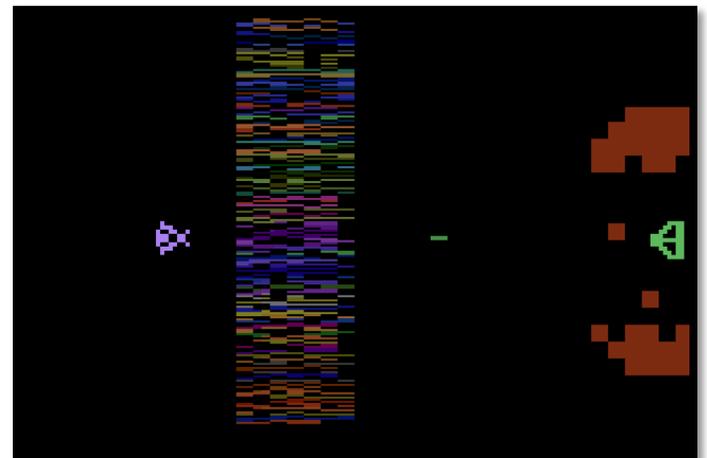
Platform: Atari 2600

Released By: Atari, 1981

by Rob Maerz

A programmer at Atari was asked to develop a port of Star Castle for the Atari 2600. He said it couldn't be done "but, here's Yars' Revenge."

You are Yar (Ray spelled backwards – as in Ray Kassar), a fly that must destroy the Qotile (the equivalent of the cannon in Star Castle) that lies behind an energy shield on the right side of the screen. You must chip away at the cells in the energy shield by shooting them or nibbling away at them. All the while you are being chased by the guided destroyer missile (equivalent to the sparks in Star Castle) in your attempt to tunnel a path through the energy shield. Once you have a path through the energy shield, you can then launch your Zorlon cannon from the left side of the screen to destroy the Qotile on the right.



In the middle of the playfield is the neutral zone where you are invincible to the destroyer missile but not to the swirls blasted off by the Qotile. Additionally, you cannot fire from within the neutral zone.

As you kill off more Qotiles, the destroyer missile increases its pace and Qotile's swirls are launched more frequently. As you advance further in the game, there will be a couple of boards sans neutral zone.

None of this stuff makes sense but that's the imagination that makes games from the classic era great! This is definitive Atari 2600 of the early 80s.

Graphically, Yar looks pretty good as a cosmic fly and the Qotile looks like some kind of demonic cannon that constantly changes hues. Machine code was used as graphic representation of the neutral zone and the destruction of the Qotile. All this action is set to the sounds of the Qotile swirls, Zorlon cannons and an insect drone as the backdrop.

From a game play standpoint, this is one of the finest titles in the 2600 library. It's one of the few moments in Atari's history where they made the *right* decision in that they released a title that was *influenced* by an arcade port instead of releasing a blocky flicker fest masked inside seductive box art and calling it Star Castle.

Grade: A+

Gulkave

Platform: ColecoVision

Released By: Team Pixelboy, 2010

by Rob Maerz

Gulkave is a 1986 Sega horizontal space shooter ported from the SG-1000 by Eduardo Mello and released by Team Pixelboy. This game is another example of "what could have been" had Coleco not snubbed the ColecoVision in favor of the disastrous ADAM.

In a nutshell, you pilot a spaceship called the Zaiigar that shoots anything that moves. Your adversary is the Gulbas Empire who throw everything but the kitchen sink to see you destroyed. Your goal is to destroy the eight fortresses of the Gulbas Empire. Pretty easy, right?

Wrong! This game is tougher than tough. There are no cookie levels in this game – it's an onslaught from the onset.

Your Zaiigar ship is protected (temporarily) by a shield barrier that loses energy with every hit you

take. When you run out of energy on your shield barrier, the next hit you take means you lose a ship.

There are thirty levels known as "acts." When you complete an act, you earn bonus points for any energy remaining on your shield barrier and you move onto the next act. The eight Gulbas fortresses that you are to destroy are located at the end of acts 2, 6, 10, 14, 18, 22, 26 and 30.

Along the way you can receive power-ups for weaponry upgrades, and of course, you lose the additional fire power once you lose a life. Some of the weaponry is pretty awesome like the "Screen Eraser Blaster" that shoots five beams so you can give the Gulbas thugs some payback.

The cartridge features a high score table, a game demo screen and (thankfully) the ability to continue the game. Music plays throughout which is typical for this genre of games of the mid-1980s.

The graphics are superb and if you didn't know it you'd swear that this wasn't a ColecoVision title. On the first act your ship is flying over nicely rendered ice capped mountains with a sparkling star field in the background.



The level of difficulty has its positives and negatives. The positive is that it can entice you to explore the game further by using the continue feature (if needed). The negative is that there are players that would have preferred, at a minimum, two difficulty levels (e.g. Novice and Standard) for the purpose of practicing and discovery of the

game at higher levels without having to use a continue.

Players that seek a challenge of this magnitude in the genre of horizontal shooters will enjoy this game. It's a hit or miss for players that don't.

Grade: B-

Life Force

Platform: NES

Released by: Konami, 1988

by Rob Maerz

I remember my local bowling alley getting this arcade cabinet in their game room. I played it several times back in the day and to this day I find it to be a bizarre horizontal space shooter.

Konami ported their 1986 arcade release to the NES in 1988. The game can be played by one or two players simultaneously with one piloting the Vic Viper and the other the RoadBritish Space Destroyer. Like many games in this genre, you can power-up your weaponry throughout the game.

The space monster Zelos has gone on an intergalactic buffet. Zelos needs a whooping in the digestive tract from the star fighters to save civilizations. Along the way you battle enemy defenses and bosses to your ultimate goal of destroying Zelos' heart and soul.

At the onset, this game looks like same wine, different bottle. You'll see similar enemy craft travelling in similar flight patterns as in Gradius. After that wave, things get interesting.

You travel through caverns facing enemy Death Hands, Belbeims (which look like ribs or horns – take your pick) and other universal scum. When you finally plow your way through all the obstacles it's time to face the first boss.

Golem is a brain with Death Hands and an eye protruding from his frontal lobe. I've found that you can simply do circles around him avoiding the Death Hands and just start wailing on his eye.

I like the dynamic of this game. Once you get to Terror Zone II, the game turns into a vertical scrolling shooter and that's pretty neat!

Graphically this game looks good and at the same time bizarre – appropriate for the story line. The music doesn't fit the game, however – I would've chosen a jingle to the tune of Public Image Ltd's "Albatross."



There is no randomness in this game so you basically have to do repeat plays and memorize the patterns. It's still a challenge, nonetheless.

This is a highly addictive game – one you can play for hours on end.

Grade: A

Scramble

Platform: Vectrex

Released by: GCE, 1982

by Rob Maerz

If you were too busy pumping quarters in Ms. Pac-Man, Donkey Kong and Galaga back in 1981, then you probably missed this great shooter released by Konami that same year.

Cited as the influence for the Gradius series, this horizontal shooter puts you at the controls of a cool looking space ship dodging missiles, destroying bases and bombing fuel tanks through various terrains. There are five terrains to get through

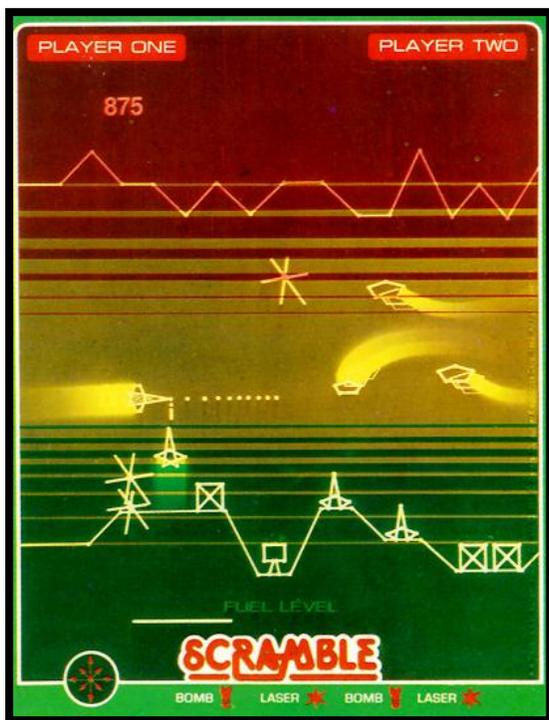
before you meet the objective of bombing the enemy base on the sixth level.

So, how does this all translate to vector graphics on the Vectrex?

Pretty darn good!

I was skeptical about how this would play out on the Vectrex, but was pleasantly surprised.

The terrain drawn up in vector graphics looks sensational. Your space ship actually looks more like a vector version of the Cosmic Avenger craft, but that's just nitpicking. Explosions appear as large asterisks on the screen and sometimes I crash my space ship accidentally on purpose just to see it break into pieces.



There are some collision detection issues in this release but they seem to work in your favor. You can dip your wing into the terrain without losing a life and I've even went through a missile without dying!

Aside from that, the game play is "all that." Maneuvering through the tight spaces takes some practice and that's even on the easiest of three skill levels.

It's all about the fun factor and this port of Scramble delivers.

Grade: A

Super Cobra

Platform: Atari 2600

Released by: Parker Bros., 1982

by Rob Maerz

Konami released Super Cobra to the arcades in 1981 as a follow-up to Scramble.

This time you pilot a helicopter through 11,000 miles of terrain with the objective of invading a base and carrying away the booty.

If you've played Super Cobra, you know that there are two buttons: fire and bomb. If you've played the Atari 2600, you know that there is only one fire button. More on that later...

The terrain in this VCS release is drawn up in brown horizontal lines. I actually think it looks better than if they had filled in the terrain with a solid color because it would exaggerate the blocky appearance.



The multi-colored helicopter has been animated well with moving rotors. The game even begins with an excerpt from the William Tell Overture.

But, that's as good as it gets.

Parker Bros. decided that we can use one button to do the work of two. So, whenever you want to fire, a bomb is dropped (more like “plopped”) and whenever you want to bomb you’re firing instead.

Hitting the fire button alternates between bombing and firing and it just doesn’t work. I’ve missed too many targets because of this feature.

The game is choppy from the scrolling to the movement of the helicopter. For example, when you push up on the joystick the helicopter moves about an inch in that direction.

There’s also a mishmash of colors used in this game. The top portion of the screen is aqua while the bottom portion is green. The terrain is brown against a black background. Throw in all the different colors used for scores, mileage and the fuel indicator and you have something that wouldn’t even qualify as refrigerator art.

Grade: D-

Super Cobra

Platform: ColecoVision

Released by: Parker Bros., 1983

by Rob Maerz

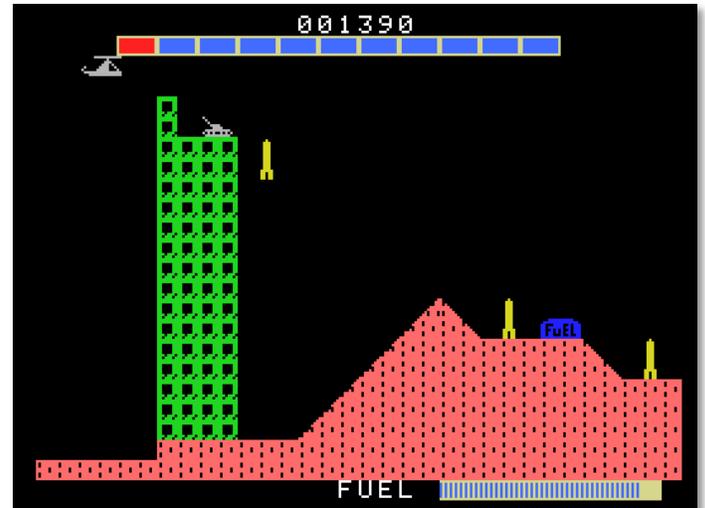
Parker Bros. cleaned things up in the ColecoVision release of Super Cobra. Most importantly, you get to use two buttons: one to fire and the other for bombing. Too bad the solid white helicopter pales in comparison to that found in the VCS version.

The audio effects feature the William Tell Overture along with the sound of helicopter rotors and a more pronounced effect on explosions.

Graphically, the game has been simplified from the arcade version in all facets, most notably the straight lines in the terrain. However, the scrolling in this translation is silky smooth. The scoreboard along with the gauges for fuel and mileage are well-groomed.

The collision detection is suspect in your favor. Often times a bomb will take out a missile or fuel tank without a direct hit.

There’s only one skill level in this release unlike most ColecoVision titles. But, the game does allow continues.



Unfortunately, there’s not much in the fun factor department. It’s one of those titles I’ll pop into the old Connecticut Leather box once in a while to mix things up. For the most part, it makes a good dust collector.

Grade: C-

Super Cobra

Platform: Odyssey 2

Released by: Parker Bros., 1982

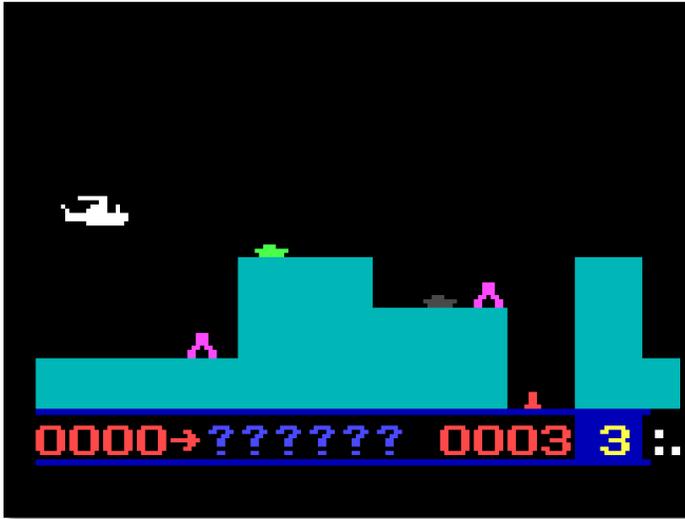
by Rob Maerz

Super Cobra fanatics will undoubtedly cry blasphemy after kicking the tires on this translation.

The helicopter is done up in white with moving rotors and the missiles are animated with flickering red flames which are all nice touches.

What is missing is a sitting duck painted on the side of the helicopter.

There is no scrolling in this game. When your chopper moves from the left side of the screen to the extreme right the game pauses to slide the next board onto the screen from right to left. You will hear an awful chromatic tune and then play resumes with the chopper returning back to the left hand side of the screen



After this abominable sequence, your helicopter typically smashes into a wall using up one of your ten lives. Since you have no idea what the next board looks like, often your helicopter begins the board with its nose pressed up against the wall.

The one improvement over the 2600 version is that you can choose whether to bomb or fire: to bomb you hold the fire button momentarily and to fire you just tap the fire button.

Do you remember those huge interconnecting blocks that weren't Lego's? Well, the basic elements of Super Cobra are here, but it's just not the same.

Grade: D-

Sinistar

Platform: Atari 2600

Released by: *Unreleased*

by Rob Maerz

Sinistar on the 2600 – you've got to be kidding! Can you say "flicker fest"? The 2600 just can't handle this!

In 1982, Williams Electronics released Sinistar to the arcades in both upright and cockpit cabinets and has been regarded as one of the most difficult arcade games of the classic era.

You pilot a space ship that mines crystals by firing at planetoids and collecting them. Each crystal converts into a Sinibomb for you to unload on Sinistar and it's the only method for which you can destroy him. The maximum number of Sinibombs you can store at any one time is 20 and it takes 13 to destroy Sinistar.

While you are mining crystals, there are Sinistar's Workers who are stealing them for which they use to build Sinistar. It takes 20 pieces for Sinistar to be completely built and at that point he will hunt you down and destroy you by sucking your ship up like a vacuum. At this point, your defense against Sinistar is your Sinibombs and with 13 successful strikes Sinistar will be destroyed. You will then advance to the next zone which will be much more difficult than the previous zone.

Thrown in the mix are the Warriors chasing you around bombarding you with turret fire. At times you can be completely surrounded by Warriors and the only way to survive is to stay on auto fire while circling around them – even better if you can get a planetoid in between to use as a shield.

So, how does this action packed game look and play on that console tank from 1977?

Fantastic!

Since you only have one fire button, auto fire is on by default which frees up the button to be used in launching Sinibombs. One quirk with the auto fire is that it's not a *rapid* fire.

Along with your score at the top of the screen, the number of Sinibombs available is on the left, the number of lives on the right and the scanner in the middle. The scanner indicates your current sector location, the planetoids in grey and Sinistar in yellow.

Although simplified from the arcade game, the graphics look great despite flicker (which I have seen worse in other games – Mouse Trap comes to mind). The Workers are rendered in red and they almost look like the real deal! Warriors are c-shaped with tiny squares in the center representing the turret. At first I thought Sinistar was a purple blob, but then I got a good look at him where I could see the details of his eyes and jaw.



As you can expect the game play is easier than the arcade game. At first I couldn't figure out how it was possible to destroy Sinistar since the Sinibombs never gravitated to center. But, really all you do is unload at least 13 Sinibombs in succession to destroy him. However, as you progress in the game, Sinistar is built faster than the previous level, so don't take this game for Big Bird's Egg Catch.

When you destroy Sinistar, the screen flashes through all sorts of colors and there's a chorus of explosive sound effects. Then you hear some menacing rhythmic notes followed by a jingle that sounds like something out of Bump 'N' Jump.

As you can guess, there is no speech in this game indicating when Sinistar has been built completely. So, instead of "Beware I Live" there is a pulsating sound effect that clues you in on the imminent attack.

It's too bad that this game was not released in 1984 due to the industry market correction at that time. Under different market conditions, Sinistar would have been a hit.

Grade: A

Sinistar

Platform: Atari 5200

Released by: AtariAge, 2010

by Rob Maerz

AtariAge (atariage.com) released the Sinistar prototype cartridge in 2010. Naturally, I had to pounce on this one.

There are four difficulty levels to choose from (listed easiest to most difficult): Coward, Survivor, Warrior and Immortal. If you want arcade difficulty, choose the Warrior level. You can turn auto fire on or off and select 3 or 5 starting lives. The 5200 controller has multiple fire buttons to accommodate manual fire and launching Sinibombs simultaneously although it's best to choose the auto fire option.

This is one of the rare instances where the 5200 stock controllers work very well. You need to make circular movements around the Warriors and Sinistar and the stock controllers excel in that regard.

Most elements of the arcade game have been translated. The missing pieces are most of Sinistar's speech, although "Beware I Live" has been preserved to indicate when he is completely built.

One issue I have with the graphics is that it is difficult to differentiate the crystals from the stars in the background. If the star field would have been rendered in flickering reds, blues and yellows the crystals would have been distinguishable.

Additionally, the colors are washed out and do not have the vibrancy as found in the arcade game. Despite all that, objects are multi-colored and detailed. For example, the planetoids appear as

three dimensional rocks instead of two dimensional paper plates.

The game was never completed, so there are bugs in the game with the most noticeable being your score and text breaking up in bits and pieces as the game progresses. Because of that, you need to power-cycle the 5200 after each play.



I would love to see this game polished up one day. In its current state, it's not a title you can enjoy playing over and over again since you have to power-cycle the unit after each play. Additionally, the collision detection needs to be tweaked as your bullets go right through the Warriors and more often than not you have to place the ship right next to them for the kill.

There's no doubt, however, that under different circumstances this could have been one of the top sellers in the 5200 library. The cartridge is more geared towards collectors and Sinistar fanatics.

Grade: B-

Star Wars: Death Star Battle

Platform: Atari 2600

Released by: Parker Bros., 1983

by Rob Maerz

This is a game that I had sitting in a storage tub for quite some time before it ever met the cartridge slot. A few times I would give it a go, didn't "get it" and put it right back in the tub.

One day I decided to read the manual.

You pilot a Millennium Falcon and the objective is to destroy the energy core of the Death Star. To meet that objective, you must first destroy a number of Tie Interceptors on the first screen to create openings in the Death Star's energy shield. At that point, you need to wait for the shield's grey energy band to deactivate before you can slip through one of the openings where you'll hyperspace to the Death Star screen.

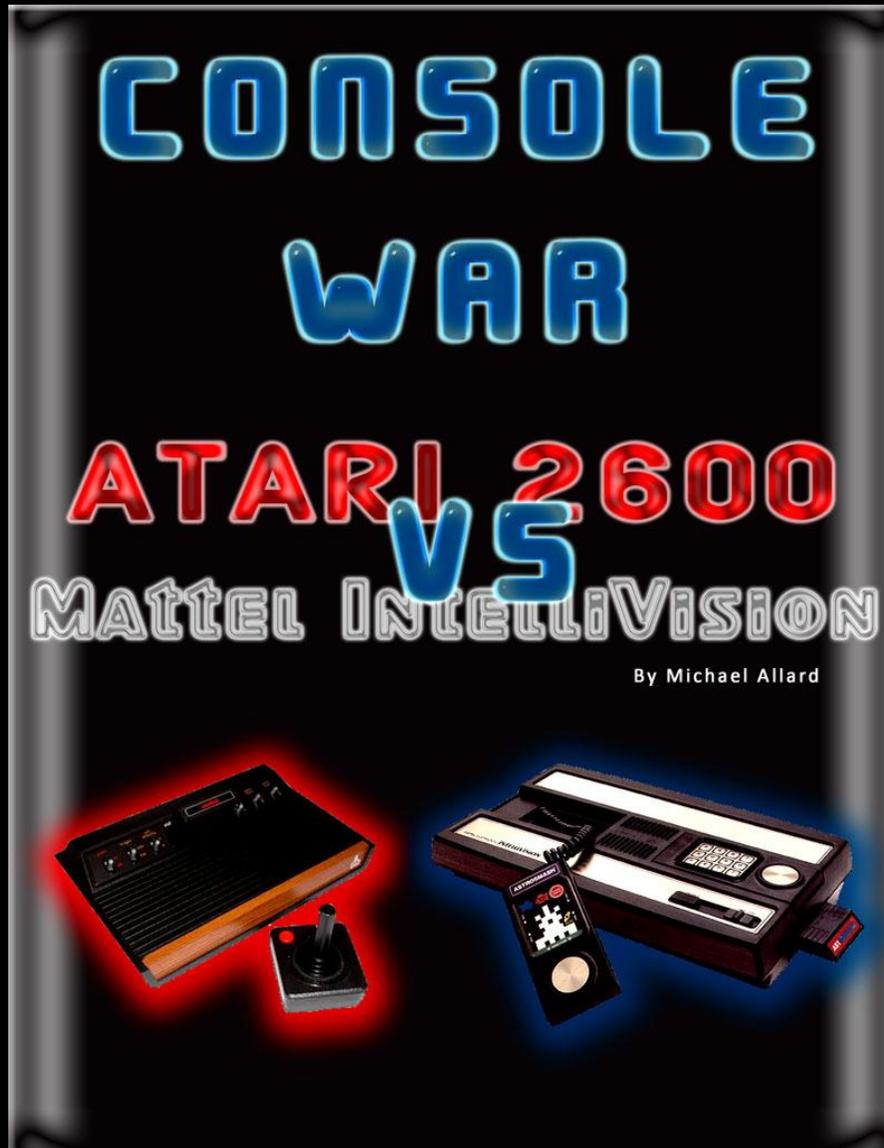
When you advance to the Death Star screen, at the top you will see the Death Star which is rebuilding piece-by-piece with the energy core in the middle. You pilot your Millennium Falcon at the bottom of the screen firing away at the Death Star to create a pathway in order to blast the energy core. In the midst of all this, your movements are tracked by the Death Star's Death Ray which will destroy you if the Tie Interceptors, who are circling and firing at you, don't do it first.

Every so often, you'll see the green Imperial Shuttle enter the playfield. He moves horizontally in a straight line and if you collide with him you are destroyed. However, if you manage to fire with precision, you can pick up a hefty 3,000 points. You must fire at the Imperial Shuttle's upper body which can be challenging.



Once you successfully hit the Death Star's energy core, numerous fireballs spray out in all directions. The longer you survive without getting hit the higher the bonus.

.continued on page 105



While Atari was busy producing 2600 hardware and software during the late '70s, Hot Wheels toy manufacturer, Mattel, moved two of its employees responsible for making handheld electronic game devices into an engineering department. Their job? To begin designing a gaming console that will bring much of Atari's success into Mattel's hands. By 1979, Americans would be face-to-face and properly introduced to Mattel's Intellivision. The first ever console war had started.

It was an amazing time. Atari was busy with developing and marketing new games to play on their wood grain console; many of which were ports of arcade hits. Mattel, on the other hand, brought the Intellivision to market and quickly began taunts to try and take away Atari's customers and make them their own. Intellivision's side-by-side comparison commercials are without a doubt brave and memorable with a concept that has not been repeated.

This article is going to relive that era and time when both consoles were battling each other for dominance. This war will be based on titles that were made for both consoles. So, let's begin shall we?

We will first look at what was included in the package for each console as if they were bought new and then it will be on to the games. Let the battle begin!

THE HARDWARE



Out of the box, the 2600 came with the console, 2 controllers, 2 paddle controllers, an AC Adapter, TV Switchbox, and Combat game cartridge. Oddly enough, unless a separate game is purchased to make use of the paddle controllers they are worthless. I question the reason why Atari would include these without including a game that supports them.

Everything is detached except the RF cable coming from the console. Everything else plugs in to dedicated ports on the rear of the console with the exception of the game which plugs in the front between the 4 console switches. Simple enough; but some assembly required. Not only that, I have to make room or find another unoccupied outlet to accommodate the AC Adapter.

The console, as a whole, misses the mark by including controllers that cannot be used right out of the box.

PROS: Console has a design that is friendly to kids and adults alike. Easy to use console switches to work the console and games. Controllers feel solid and comfortable.

CONS: Controllers have only one fire button. Includes paddle controllers but no game included to support them.



Let's see what we have in here: console, game, switchbox, and instructions. That's it? The plus side to the Intellivision is the simple fact that the console houses not only the controllers but the power supply as well. All that's needed to bring power to the console is to plug it in just like you would your toaster or coffee pot. Simple enough.

The controllers are permanently attached to the console but, hey, at least there won't be a need to search for a controller when I'm ready to play again. The controllers do feel kind of odd when compared to the Atari 2600 standard joystick and may fatigue the hands quickly. We'll give it time. Only downfall I see: should a controller break a replacement won't be as easy as replacing a 2600 controller. Hmm. Only thing left to do is connect the console to the TV.

The included game looks like fun and can be considered two games since it has Poker and Blackjack. Nice! I like the colorful overlays as well.

The console has a nice design to it combining a similar wood grain texture on black plastic as the 2600. There are metallic bands on the top of the console, the controller keypads and main circular control. There are only two buttons on the console itself: power and reset. The seemingly flat top design is attractive. The cartridge slot on the side is unique but may pose a problem if the unit will remain in a small space during use like on an entertainment center shelf. Then again, the controllers don't seem to reach that far so it may have to be set on the floor during use.

PROS: Virtually self-contained, sleek design, easy to use, controllers stay with console and offer more functions.

CONS: Controllers are permanently attached to the console.

GAME LINE-UP

Atlantis

Released By: Imagic (1982,1983)

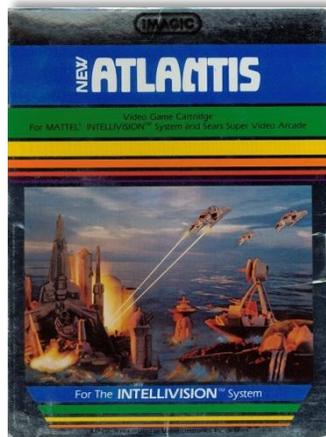
Genre: Shooter

Atlantis is a shooting game that appears similar to Atari's Missile Command. The difference is the player is protecting their city from alien spacecraft attacks. The player has three bases that are used to blow the enemy's spacecrafts out of the sky. If the enemy spacecrafts get too close to the city, they start attacking in an attempt to destroy the city of Atlantis. Unlike Missile Command, the player has unlimited ammo.

The 2600 version of this game actually looks good. The game is full of colorful game elements. The multi-colored game characters are impressive and make the 2600 do what it wasn't designed to do. So kudos goes to Imagic for that defeat.



The game is easy to play; pressing left or right on the joystick while pressing the fire button will cause the left or right base to fire. Not moving the joystick in either direction while pressing fire signals the base in the center to fire.



Enemy craft come out at various speeds and numbers. There are some spacecraft that come out flying at a high rate of speed. And as the game advances, there are more enemies that appear on the screen.

The 2600 version looks good, plays very well, and keeps a night-time setting. Controls are easy to use and respond quickly. Sounds are actually impressive and not of an annoying nature. It is an arcade challenge in every respect that is fun to play for all ages.

Now, the Intellivision version...

Imagic took advantage of the Intellivision's graphic powers. The player's city looks more realistic with multi-colored mountains. The player's city elements, however, are single colored sprites. Even the enemies are single colored.



The most interesting aspect of this version of Atlantis is the fact that this game has multiple screens that switch from day to night. It's a nice step-up from the 2600 version that keeps a night time vision. However, the Intellivision version uses the same point and shoot system found in Missile Command. While it isn't a bad idea, I found it somewhat clumsy at times and missed a lot of enemies that I should have hit otherwise. The sounds in this version are spot on and make good use of the console's abilities.

This game is great on both systems with each one having unique features that are specific to each console. The 2600 version has the upper-hand with good graphics and easy-to-use controls. The

Intellivision version, while it is impressive graphically, falls short with a point and shoot system. Maybe the game requires a little more time to adjust to on the Intellivision and that it is time I couldn't spend with the game. Until then, the 2600 version wins this comparison.

Atari 2600 Grade: A-

Intellivision Grade: B+

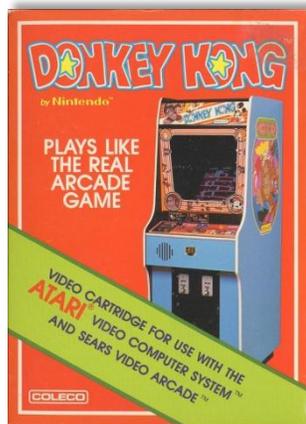
Donkey Kong

Released By: Coleco (1982)

Genre: Platform

Donkey Kong is probably one of Nintendo's most popular arcade games. So, it's no surprise that attempts were made to bring it to the 2600 and Intellivision consoles.

The 2600 version is a fun adaptation. Although the sounds are simplistic in nature, they *are* memorable. Controls are OK but there are times that Mario doesn't immediately respond to player movement making it somewhat of a challenge to reach Pauline.



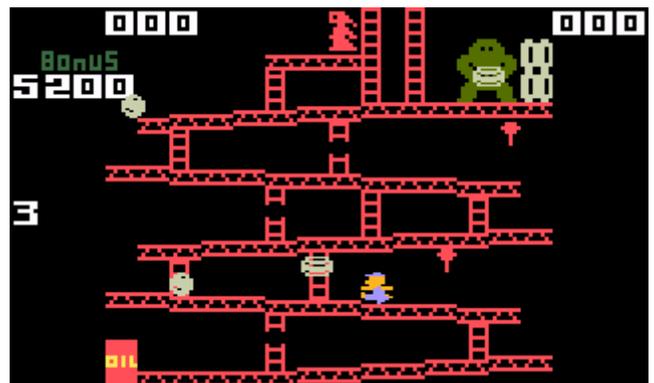
Graphically, the game misses the mark by having the girders and Mario in almost identical colors. The barrel movement is actually impressive. The second level, however, doesn't come close to the

arcade version. And there is only one enemy Mario can use the hammer on as the other enemies stay on the platform they start on.

The Intellivision version is a step up having better controls but looks like the game is being played from a mirror. Donkey Kong is on the right side of the screen instead of the left side so those thinking about using this game for practicing beating the arcade scores might want to look elsewhere.

Second stage looks remarkably close to the arcade which is where the 2600 version failed. Controls are little more forgiving in this version opposed to the 2600 version.

My hat goes off to the Intellivision version of Donkey Kong. While it does suffer from design differences when compared to the arcade version, it doesn't lack in game play. I also like the fact that Donkey Kong moves to throw the barrels. About the only thing that the 2600 version has going for it is that Mario at least looks a little more detailed.



The Intellivision Donkey Kong wins this one for being more colorful and a more accurate second stage. It does miss the mark as the collision detection needed more work. There were times in the second stage where the rivet was not removed when it should have been.

Atari 2600 Grade: C

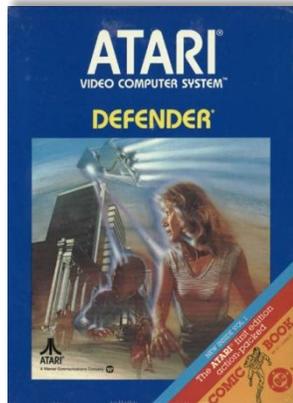
Intellivision Grade: A-

Defender

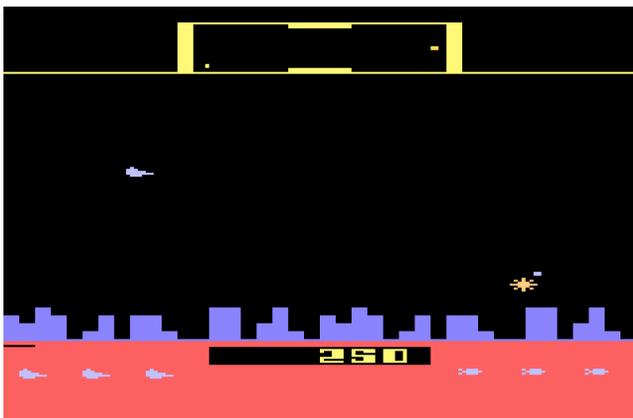
Released by: Atari/Atarisoft [1981 (2600), 1983 (INTV)]

Genre: Side Scrolling Shooter

Atari ported the Williams arcade-hit Defender to the 2600 and has done a remarkable job. The game uses solid graphics instead of the arcade's single-line graphics to represent the environment but it still works and looks good. Sounds are OK with some close to the arcade and some being completely different.



The 2600 actually makes great use of the otherwise function-lacking joystick controller. The only real difference is that the player must move to the bottom of the screen to use smart bombs. Other than that, the game is fun and challenging. Explosions sound good and are animated fairly well.



It does have flicker issues that can make it hard to locate and destroy enemies but that still doesn't keep this game from being fun to play.

Interestingly, Atari also ported Defender on the Intellivision console under the AtariSoft label and they didn't hold anything back.

The Intellivision actually gets an impressive port of the same game and is closer to the arcade version than the 2600. The game presents the same style graphics as those in the arcade with similar sounds. The most impressive feature of this game is the title screen - it's simply beautiful.



Sounds are closer to the arcade compare to those on the 2600. Graphics are animated and presented well even on a single-color basis and the explosions are well crafted. And with the controllers being difficult to get use to in previous games, Atari manages to make them work well to finish off the entire package.

This one is a tough call for me as I like both versions. Each is amazingly fun in its own way. Graphics are just as impressive, even if more simplistic on the 2600. But, I think I'm going to have to pick the Intellivision version mainly because of how much closer it relates to the arcade hit.

Atari 2600 Grade: A-

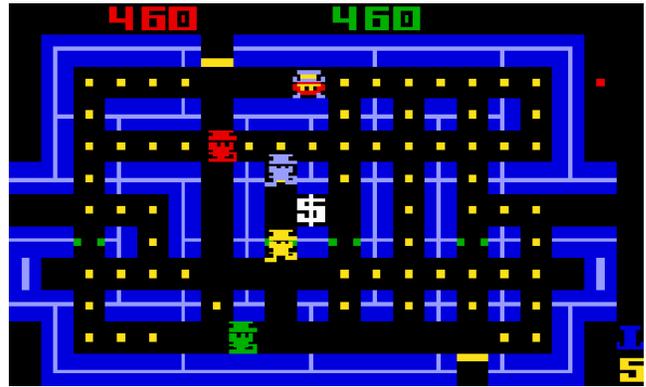
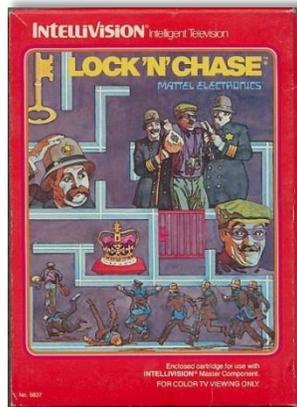
Intellivision Grade: A

Lock N Chase

Released by: Mattel (1982)

Genre: Maze

Data East's arcade game was ported to both the Intellivision and the 2600 by Mattel - creators of Intellivision. It was only fair to see the comparisons of a title that Mattel made for both consoles since there was a game covered that Atari did for both consoles. So get ready!



Both games are fun to play. Sadly, the 2600 version fails with a design that is mostly of a monochrome visual. It would have helped the game to have the enemies colored the same as the Intellivision's version. However, both games are fun to play with the Intellivision version being closer to home. But, the constant sound in the Intellivision version can be annoying at times.

Atari 2600 Grade: B

Intellivision Score: A –

The 2600 version is a fun game to behold. While it isn't graphically impressive as some of the previous games mentioned, it keeps the game play factor. Sounds are limited making this game more like a silent movie. And the animation is limited to the somewhat appearance of the characters' walking motion. But the controls work well and the game does keep the fun factor the arcade is known for.



FINAL VERDICT

Both consoles are quite remarkable. The 2600 with its limitations are impressively surpassed by some games while other games just seem to be slapped together overnight without any attention to details.

The Intellivision has the upper hand in terms of graphics and sounds. But the lack of being able to purchase additional controllers, even factory replacements, should either controller fail to work could pose a serious issue.

The controllers on the 2600 are simple to use and do not require an encyclopedia to learn. The Intellivision controllers, while offering more gaming functions, can be a hassle which can frustrate the player. But, it's all about the game playing experience as a whole so I'm going to look at a few more factors.

Atari has more arcade ports, even if some are not visually perfect, than the Intellivision. And Atari actually did an impressive job porting some arcade

hits to their competition – they didn't hold anything back. The 2600, however, is a fun console with loads of games to chose from with some being exclusives and in-home developed. But, not including a game that supports packed-in hardware leaves me with items I can't use right out of the box.

Mattel has an impressive console. It pretty much keeps to itself and is self-contained. Controller storage doesn't require a cubby hole in an entertainment system, dresser drawer, or old box. But the controllers can be uncomfortable to use and in some games are almost impossible to come to terms with. It is definitely one console that can take time to learn but it is time well spent.

A larger library of arcade ports and the ability to use controllers other than those supplied goes to the 2600. But, the Intellivision has an impressive library of games that push the console's power with sounds to match. I just wish they would have done something different about the attached controllers.

Atari 2600 Final Grade: B+
Intellivision Final Grade: A-



Star Wars: Death Star Battle

continued from page 98

Rinse and repeat.

Gamers that are fans of Sinistar and Star Castle (like me) will enjoy this game as it combines elements of both. The building of the Death Star parallels the building of Sinistar. Chipping away at the Death Star to destroy the energy core is akin to chipping away the rings to destroy the cannon in Star Castle.

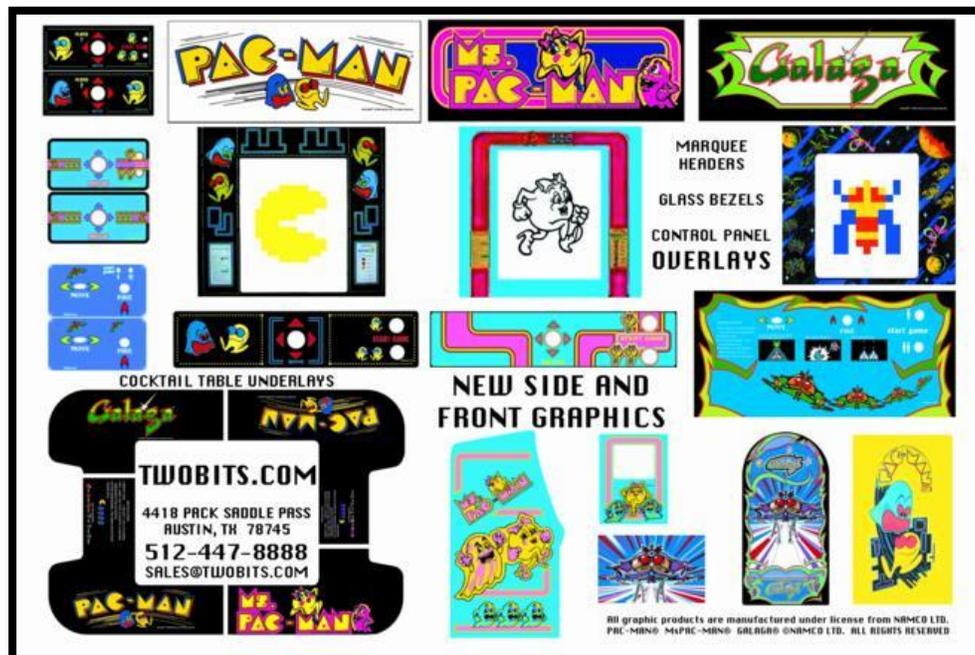
Since the playfield wraps around, the strategy for destroying the energy core is to bounce side-to-side. This will allow you to chip away at the Death Star while avoiding getting hit by the Death Ray.

I like the graphics on the first level. The energy shield changes colors and has a sense of depth. The Death Star can be seen being built in the distance while you battle the Tie Interceptors.

The only problem with this game is the abrasive sound effects used for the bad guys zipping by. However, other effects like those used for the Death Ray are a nice touch.

For me, learning how to play by doing something basic (reading the manual) allowed me to discover a fantastic and addicting game.

Grade: A





ATARI 2600 VS. ATARI 7800

COMPARING THE ATARI CX40 AND PROLINE JOYSTICKS

by Forrest Hodges

When I received my Atari 2600 on August 2, 2011, it didn't have original joysticks. It had Atari 7800 joysticks with it - can I just say wow?

They are smooth, and have very easy movement. They fit in your hand perfectly due to their shape, and the joystick is easy to move. One bad thing is that you have to hold it one certain way to play games easily or else the controller can slip and move around in your hand. The Proline joysticks feature two fire buttons allowing you to play games like Rampage on the 7800 and they will work with both systems.

Why do I use my 2600 controller? Originality and it doesn't slip, it is more comfortable, and some games just aren't games unless you use a 2600 controller.

The Atari 2600 is the grandfather of gaming. The most symbolic controller in video gaming history is the Atari joystick. I've seen it on shirts, on wallets, on key chains and even in other video games. It's everywhere.

8 out of 10 Professional Classic gamers have said that they prefer the Atari 7800 joystick for its comfort. Every time I would go into my game room, my brother played my Atari and he would use my 7800 controller.

When I opened my joysticks up, the Atari 2600 chip was bulky and ugly. The cone that the stick pivots on kept coming loose and the button kept falling out of place. It took me a good 2 hours to put it back together. When I opened my 7800 joystick, it was a beautiful chip. It was well put together and just used what was needed. But the buttons on my 7800 controller were worse than my 2600; they kept popping out while I was trying to put it back together.



JOYSTICK SHOWDOWN SCORES:

Every time I go to a classic game store, I see tons of 2600 sticks with no rubber boot: point for 7800 joystick.

The 2600 had a rubber stick, which was comfortable to grab: point for 2600.

The 7800 had a great size and shape for comfortable holding: point for 7800.

The 7800 could play two different systems' games: point for 7800.

2600 joystick is original: point for 2600.

Yars' Revenge was for the 2600: point for Yars' Revenge and the 2600 Joystick. The 2600 joystick came with the 2600 system.

2600
3

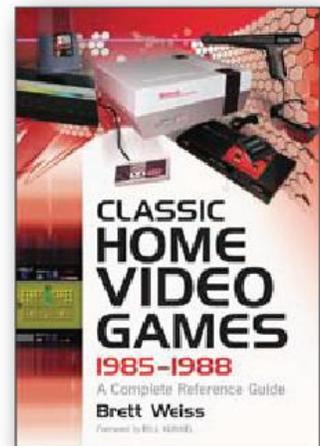
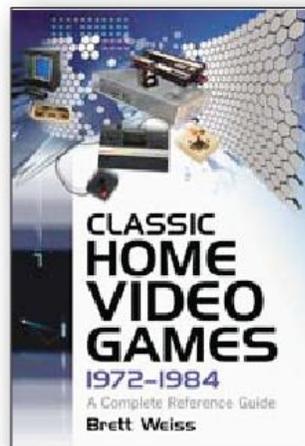
7800
3



Although this is a dead tie, the Atari 7800 joystick is better. I would recommend it to everyone with a 2600 and anyone who has hurt their hands using the stock 2600 joysticks. 🎮

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