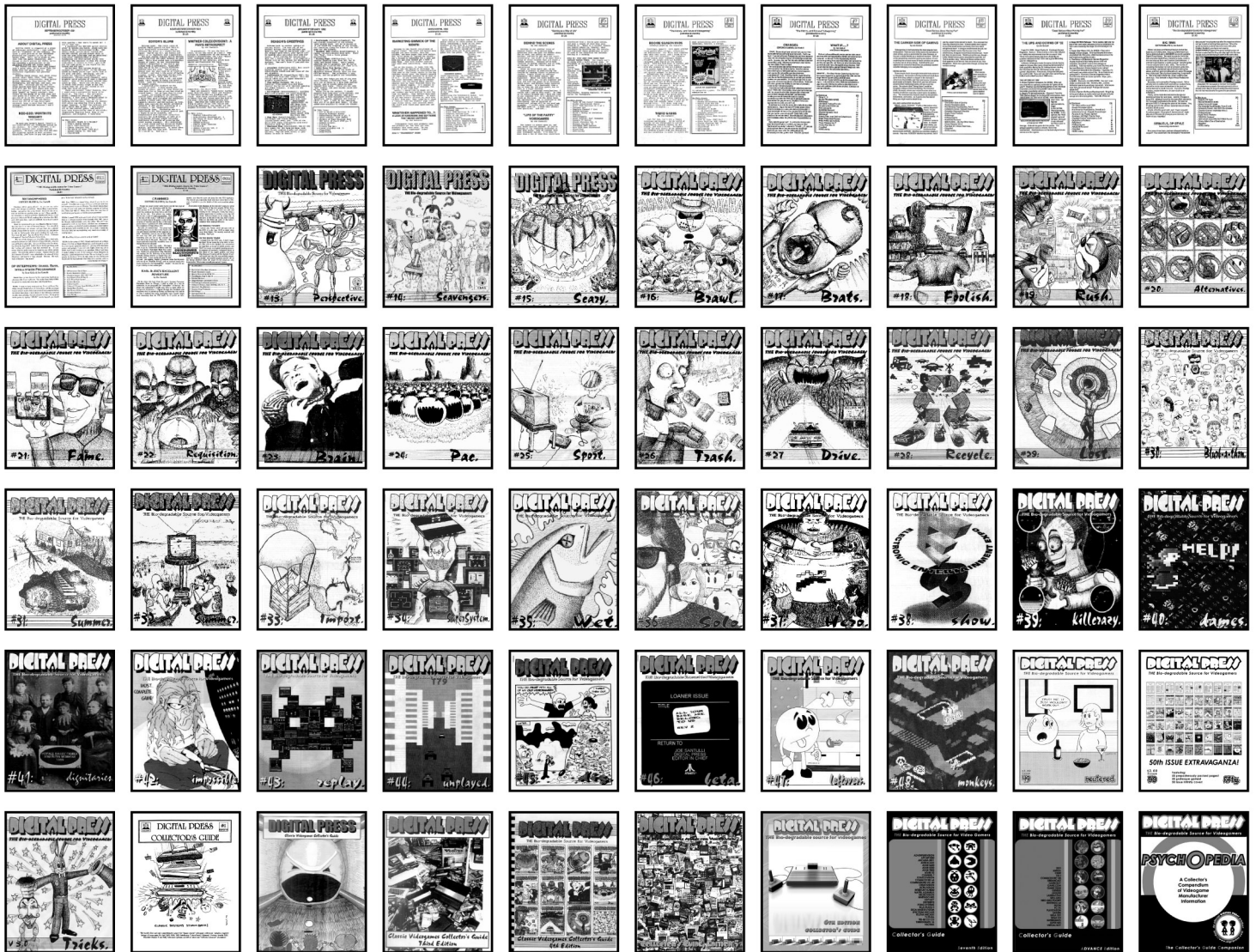# DIGITAL PRESS

THE Bio-degradable Source for Videogamers

50th ISSUE EXTRAVAGANZA!
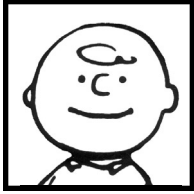
Featuring:
50 preposterously packed pages!
50 grotesque games!
50 issue infinity cover!

fifty.

Fifty.
Editor's BLURB by Dave Giarrusso

Whew!

We made it. Fifty issues and no end in sight. This month's issue marks a milestone so big, no theme could possibly contain it. So the theme this month is simply "fifty."

WAY back in 1991, two gamers who shared a common dream, a common hatred of Sssnake and a bag of potato chips founded what you have all come to know and love as Digital Press.

In celebration of our 50th issue, I suppose I could sit and reminisce about how we got to this point, detailing a list of our accomplishments and so forth.

But you know what? You already know what we've done. You were there.

So instead, let's talk about where we're GOING. Fifty issues from now, we'll have an even hundred issues under our belt. One-hundred issues of Digital Press. Wow, now THAT'S something!

In addition to that, we're constantly updating and improving our website. We've recently added five new web-exclusive columns, including The Kunkel Report by industry legend Bill Kunkel (more of that in these very pages); Pressed for Time by the Lovely Laura Truchon Tisdale; MAMExpose by Jumpin' Jess Ragan; Did YOU Know by Groovy Greg Wilcox; and Middle School Gaming by Joltin' Jessen Jurado.

We've also got big plans for our series of Collector's Guides. By now you should be all up to speed with the Seventh Edition, and if you haven't already done so, log on to DP online and download the FREE Advance Edition of the Guide. You'll also want to make sure to download the other freebies while you're there, including the extensive psychOpedia and all the updates we've compiled that just missed being published in the Seventh Edition.

All this good stuff is just the tip of the iceberg, gang. We've got plenty more in store for you as the year goes on. So stick around. We really are just getting warmed up.

Game ON, brothers and sisters!

ON THE COVER
50 Issues and No End in Sight
by Joe, Nick and Dave

This month's cover is a quick snapshot of Digital Press history. Collectors listen up: it can also double as a checklist! You might want to look over this month's cover and note any gaps in your own DP library. We do still have a limited supply of some of those classic issues from days gone by. Wow, classic issues. This thing really has come full circle, huh?

USA 37¢ READER RETALIATION

Pushing 50

Hi Everyone at DP,
Are you guys planning anything special for your 50th issue? How about a parade?. - Stan

Well, Stan, we HAD originally planned on a parade, but Larry fell a little behind on the DP float and it wound up looking like this:

We decided that it was best to skip the parade for now, but stick around. We'll definitely be having a big celebration when we hit the 100th issue.

I Can't Drive 25

Dear Digital Press,
My first CGE show was this past year, CGE2K2. I really couldn't believe how great the show was, and how many great people I met there. I was very impressed by everything, but what imporessed me the most was your booth. With all the games and other great items you had for sale, I almost overlooked the stacks of back issues that you had for sale. Luckily, I found them before I left and bought 25 issues!

It was great catching up with all the issues I missed over the years. I had temporarily quit the game collecting scene, but started up again recently after I read Joe's column in Tips & Tricks magazine. What a great column!

Here is my question: can I order more back issues from you? I need about seventeen more issues and I should have a complete set. Just tell me how much they cost and where I should send payment. Do you accept PayPal? I could PayPal you the money right away, I just need to get my Digital Press fix, and soon! You have a great magazine.

Thanks for helping me out, I really look forward to your next issue, Maybe some day I could write an article for you to put in Digital Press? - Gertie

Thanks for the kind words Gertie, cranking out Digital Press for the last twelve years has been a tough job, but one that we really love. You might even say that it's a "great" job. If you like, you can log on to our website (also great) at http://www.digitpress.com. While you're there you'll find the answers to all your questions about back issues and where and how to send payment, but in short, we do accept PayPal and we do have a limited supply of back issues, just let us know which ones you still need to fill the gaps in your DP library.

While you're online, you'll also probably want to sign up on our message boards, THE place to go to chat with other die-hard gamers from around the globe. We think you'll agree that our website is great too.

Have a great year!

Five... Four... Three...

Dear Digital Press,
I hope you can help me out with

game program™
MISSILE COMMAND™
Use with Joystick Controllers

a problem. One summer a long time ago, I used to play this really cool game at my neighbor's house. I think it was for the Atari (the one with the woodgrain on it) and you had to shoot these zig-zagging lines that attacked you from the top of the screen. I think you

were defending cities or something at the bottom. You had to position a "minus-sign" on the screen to shoot the attacking lines. Can you tell me the name of the game? Help!
- Wendy Tuttle

Hi Wendy, looks like you came to the right place. The game you're looking for is none other than Missile Command for the Atari 2600. Hopefully you've managed to land a 2600 console, as we've sent you a complimentary Missile Command cartridge in the mail. Thanks for writing and enjoy the game!

The Big One

Dear Digital Press,
Do you guys really get all those ridiculous e-mails, or do you just make them up to fill space in your rag? You can admit it, you make them up, don't

Don't worry "Fred", Ianoid is a figment of our imagination.

you. They're too funny to be real. Well, that's all I have for now, I really like your zine and your website is really good too. Take care, and happy new year. P.S. are you actually gonna make good on your promise to get six issues out this year? My bird's cage could really use the extra paper. Thanks! - Fred

Hi, "Fred" if you do in fact exist. No, we don't make up anything on the Reader Retaliation pages, all those wacky letters and e-mails that we print are 100% real. Everything else, however, that appears in each issue of DP is completely bogus. P.S., we'll definitely have six issues out this year. Your bird should be plenty happy, too, since this issue (#50!) has lots of extra pages, almost twice as many as the regular issues.

Got a gripe? Thinking of thanking us? Cooking up a question? Send all your screamin' e-mails to us at digitalpress@email.com. If we respond to your letter in a fantastic future issue, you'll be able to brag to all your friends and family!

A Salute to Video Game Update

Title: VIDEO GAME UPDATE
Dates: Jan'82 - July'90
# of issues: 100 + 1 index and 1 special edition
Name Change: COMPUTER ENTERTAINER (Apr'84)
Publisher: same as title

VGU wasn't exactly a fanzine, even though it was independently produced. It was an average of 16 pages of professionally done and somewhat unbiased info about the latest video game products. It started out as an informational newsletter to customers of a mail order company called Video Game Takeout. It had a surprisingly long run for an independent b/w publication. VGU survived the Crash of '84 and continued into the Nintendo era. It saw the intro of Sega and the first signs of CD-Rom games. It added a computer games section when they gained in popularity. I found VGU to be a great source of information, reviews and listings during the early days of video gaming. They were notable for their programmer interviews, CES (pre-E3 industry convention) reports and annual best game awards. I got my name in an early issue as the discoverer of the "Easter egg" in Desert Falcon (2600). New games were rated separately for graphics followed by game play.

A regular feature was a complete listing of all soon to be released games.

This list was constantly being updated to reflect delays in release dates, cancels, name changes and additions. A lot of titles wound up as vaporware and never got past the prototype stage. VGU ended rather abruptly and I still don't know why. If anyone knows what happened, please email me. Celeste Dolan, if you're still out there, I would love to hear from you again. One of my user friends clued me into VGU and I managed to get several gems for my game collection. In this issue I would like to reprint some of those articles strictly for nostalgia purposes. The companies mentioned most likely no longer exist.
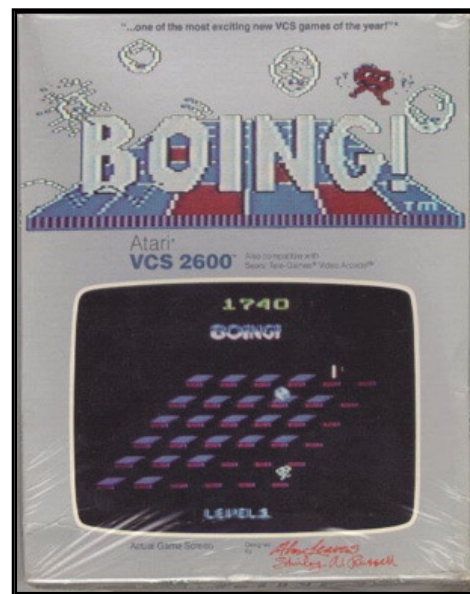
2600 Boing! "Not recommended" by Video Game Update but went on to be one of the most sought after Atari 2600 carts. Figures.
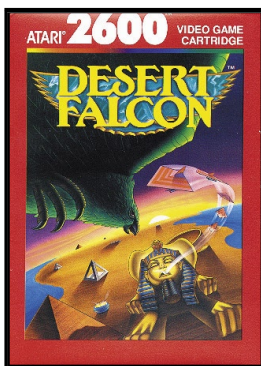
Al's discovery in Desert Falcon was printed in Video Game Update.

BOING! (★ ★ ★ / ★ ★½) is a hopping game with a diagonal playfield in which the player controls a Bubble that must avoid contact with the Pin and the Bubble Eater. Initially the playfield appears as a parallelogram filled with 36 horizontal lines. Each time the Bubble lands on a line, it is "turned on" and becomes a flattened cube. The Pin starts randomly at the top of the field, hopping downward in an attempt to burst the Bubble or the Bubble Eater. The Bubble Eater starts at the bottom and follows the Bubble around. The game comprises six levels of five waves each. The higher the level, the faster everything moves, and the process of turning on a cube and having it stay turned on becomes more difficult.

BOING! is a fast-moving game that is inevitably reminiscent of Q*bert because of the diagonal hopping action. BOING! suffers by comparison, unfortunately, because the play action is not as varied, even though it's a faster game. Graphics are uneven: some screens are nicely clear and crisp, while others appeared a bit fuzzy. (Solo Play)
Not recommended.
(MSR $21.95)
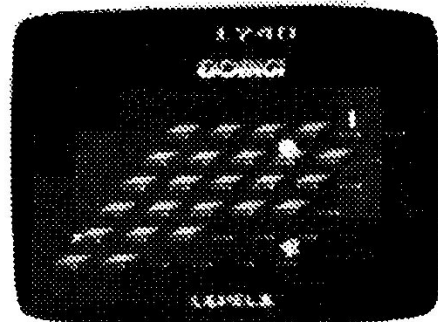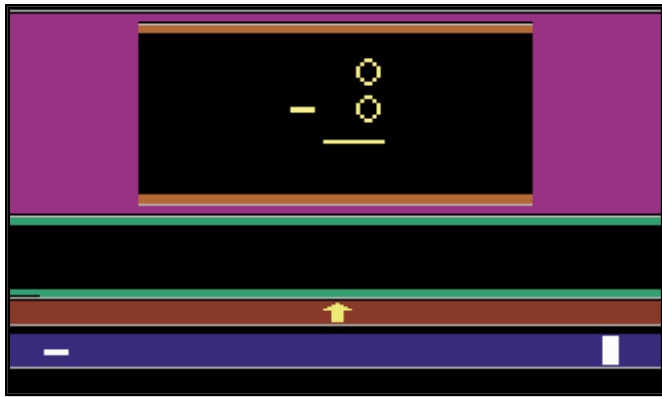
Video Game Update even reviewed the elusive 2600 cart, Eli's Ladder, giving it a 3-3.5 star rating.

ELI'S LADDER (★ ★ ★ / ★ ★ ★½) is an educational program providing drills in addition and subtraction for ages four to adult, although it is most useful for grade school children. "Eli" of the title is described as a space traveler from another planet. He can be helped to climb the ladder to his spaceship by providing the correct answers to eighteen or more of twenty addition or subtraction problems which appear on a chalkboard screen. The student moves the joystick to highlight the correct answer in a group of four numbers appearing below the chalkboard, pressing the firing button to indicate the choice. If the student makes the wrong choice, the correct answer is given. A correct answer is rewarded by showing Eli moving up one rung on his ladder. The parent can control advancement from one problem to the next, or the student can work alone at any of ten difficulty levels for each arithmetic operation. (In the lower difficulty levels, the student can enter a counting mode on any problem. The problem is then shown in numbers and graphically, with a display of red and green apples. The parent's firing button controls the counting of apples.) Three types of games can be played at each difficulty level: Practice, in which the student works at his or her own speed; Pacer, in which a symbol moves across the screen, allowing two to sixteen seconds to work each problem; and Phantom, which blacks out three of the four possible answers in addition to employing the pacer. With sums, minuends and subtrahends from zero to 99, depending on level of difficulty, the program covers a wide range of skills in these basic arithmetic operations.

Designed by a Teacher

The content of this program was designed by a teacher with more than twenty years of classroom experience—and that experience shows. ELI'S LADDER is an entertaining substitute for flashcards with its bright colors and musical sounds that appeal to children. However, its educational value has been given more importance than its game value, which parents should appreciate. The game aspect is used as a motivator, but purposeful drill is the centerpiece of the program. Additional motivation can be provided by the included "Spaceship Award Chart" and Eli stickers which the parent gives the child for especially good performances. ELI'S LADDER is exactly the sort of program that many parents want for their children: one that clearly teaches needed skills in an entertaining manner. This cartridge is available directly from the manufacturer, Simage, at 15 Leveroni Ct., Novato, CA 94947. (Solo drill; Parent-directed drill; Pause.)
Recommended. (MSR $29.95)

CRITICALLY SPEAKING..ATARI 2600-COMPATIBLE

TESTING A COLOR BAR GENERATOR

The task of reviewing what the "technicians" of the world regard as "service" or "test equipment" is a challenge. After all, how does one go about FINDING a color bar generator for comparison purposes and justify you shelling out $20.00 to see nothing but colors, lines, and dots? It's not even a game! Well, the popular "pattern generators" for the professional television market costs about $1500-$2000. At best, you'll be able to generate what are called "color bars". For years, owners of Apple computers have been able to test their color monitors with a program that comes packaged with the Apple Disk Operating System   Even *that* costs a few hundred dollars for the disk drive and basic program.

All You Need is a VCS

Now *VideoSoft of Santa Clara, California* has come up with the answer. HOW the Color Bar Generator works isn't important. Upon insertion into your 2600 VCS, you will be able to perform 14 separate functions, maneuvering forward with the "game select" switch, or backward with the "reset" button. Now, let's give it a go! Item –1 is a totally GREEN screen, followed in succession with a blue and then red screen. These are the obvious primary colors in your games. You are also able to generate the NTSC standard color pattern. This gives you the ability to align YOUR set with the national STANDARD. Once you have completed the set-up, you will be able to adjust those colors which can be crucial in some games where you have blue meanies, green meanies, etc. and you just can't get the adjustment right. This cartridge will help you make the adjustments in seconds. If you've had a problem before because someone misaligned the color knob or the "tint" control...you have the perfect solution.

Testing, Testing

Our first test was to make sure the colors were correct on our testing monitor. The first screen was green as stated in the pre-manual documentation. The next screen was blue, not red as indicated in the directions. After some trial-and-error, we found that the manual had interchanged these two. We're sure by the time the manual is printed, this point will have been corrected. A simple look at the standard color bars is the single best thing you can do for your TV set. By "tweeking" the tint control on your TV, the bottom colors will eventually line up to the very dark green block, followed by white, blue, and black blocks on the bottom of the color bar. On the top is a grey bar followed by yellow, cyan, magenta, red, blue, and black. ONCE THESE COLORS ARE SET IN CORRECT ORDER, all you need to do is adjust the color control on your TV set for intensity!

Adjust Your Big Screen TV

Other features such as CROSS HATCH PATTERN, DOT PATTERN, HORIZONTAL LINES, VERTICAL LINES and CENTER CROSS are very helpful to check out your TV(S) for linerity and alignment of convergence. In other words, straight lines are straight, boxes are boxes, etc. These features are especially helpful in aligning big screen TVs where the alignment is critical for a sharp picture. There are many other useful reasons for our readers with 2600s or 2600-adaptors for any system to buy this cartridge (Then, as an added bonus, you can check out the networks and local TV to see if THEY are on the ball). Planned availability is February, 1984 only direct from VideoSoft, 1700 Wyatt Dr., Suite 10, Santa Clara, CA 95051.
Recommended (MSR $19.95)

Note: only adjust controls withhin reach of fingers (such as color, tint, vertical hold, horizontal hold, btightness, contrast). DO NOT ATTEMPT any adjustment with a screwdriver or open your TV set.

Once upon a time, Video Game Update reported on the Color Bar Generator (left and above) for the 2600.

ON THE PROWL

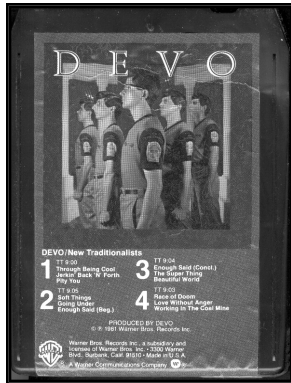with Ian Baronofsky

NOW and THEN

"Yesterday, I traded all my 2600 carts away…"
-the Pac-Beatles

Just about every collector I know has told me how much has changed since they started out in this hobby. They tell me they don't find as much as they used to. eBay prices have really gone up. All those collectors are selling out! There's so much more SPAM on the newsgroup. There are too many new people in the hobby. I just don't buy it. I always pooh-pooh their comments. Sure, things have changed- but not that much. GOOD GAMES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN HARD TO FIND IN THE WILD. People have always tried to get more for the stuff they paid $30 for back in the day. Vendors have always scammed and resold. eBay always cost too much.

Being a hunter myself, I constantly relate with my collector friends about our local finds. I must admit, I saw a lot more classic stuff in 1996 when I started collecting. I still see classic stuff now and again, though much of it is replaced by neo-classic stuff. The time line is similar. It's about 10 years past its late heyday, just as 1996 was a little more than ten years past the classic heyday. And when I say classic, I'm talking pre-1986 Atari, ColecoVision, Intellivision and the like. Video games, like all POP CULTURE MASS-PRODUCED CONSUMER FODDER, will be passing between hands in volume for years. As long as

Oh no! It's DEVO! On 8-track. Those wacky New Traditionalists. Trade ya a Quadrun for it...

you see 8-track tapes wherever you hunt, you have a chance of finding some classic games. Why do you see so many more 8-tracks than 2600 carts? Simple. Less people are picking up 8-tracks - A FORMAT THAT SIMPLY DOESN'T WITHSTAND THE TEST OF TIME very well. Not to mention the hideous artists you see accumulating. The Hendrix 8-tracks don't sit long. Collectors and aficionados snap them up. We all know how stiff the competition is amongst bottom feeding video game history buffs. Classic carts in resale situations don't sit anywhere too long. That's the main thing that has changed- quicker turnover of classic items that you do see out there. And if you can accept the availability of neo-classic stuff in substitute, things are still pretty good hunting wise.

The fact is, video games have never been easy to find dirt-cheap (I'm talking a quarter you cheapos.) You have to work very hard, and if your time is worth anything - because you are paid reasonably, because you have a family, because YOU DETEST THE HUNTING experience, or because you have a dust allergy - just hit the well known sources (the internet) and don't waste your time scrounging around like fools like me. The really amazing finds are few and far between and the dry days are frequent. They always have been. I remember driving for 6 hours shopping

The Pac-Beatles first (and only) album. If you see one of these LPs at a thrift store, don't pass it up, no matter what the cost!

around the Bay area and finding a few token space age polyester shirts and nothing more. It's a desert out there folks! But there are rivers of scores out there if YOU CAN HANDLE THE HEAT. I've had the hunting bug since well before I collected game carts. If it wasn't CDs it was wacky kitschy shirts or old bar paraphernalia. Since I ran out of closet space and realized I wasn't really that serious about mixing drinks, I've stopped looking for that crap. Now it's on to the black plastic, and now silver discs. In order to keep finding stuff, I have had to diversify. I did something I meant never to do- I started collecting CD based software. Since Sega got out of the hardware business, disc based software seems all the more interesting to me. And it makes me feel like things just haven't changed - I can still find new titles for my collection in the wild.

Prices have climbed a little. They are worse in some areas. eBay has affected the market outside of eBay.
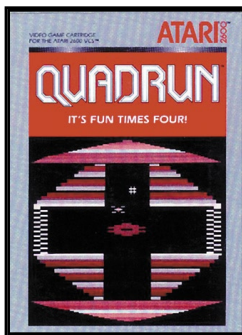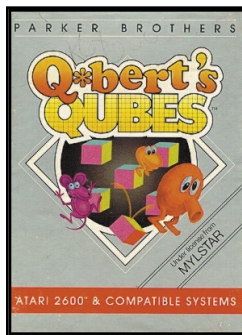
No doubt, in the silliest way. The fact is that people have always had bad prices that we have to walk away from. I don't think it's anything new. I walked away from a $35 Vectrex during my first year of collecting, because I just felt like it was too much. I walked away from some Timex 2068 carts new in box back in the day, too- since the lady wanted $8 apiece. Would I walk past those items again? NO CHANCE. But, those were excessive prices for their day. And to most of my more discriminating friends, they still would be. Prices have never been what you wanted - way too cheap. We all come across something here or there that we think is a score. Someone on the other end felt they had a score too - some sucker wanted to buy their junk! Everybody wins. And eBay wasn't even a factor 6 years ago. Prices still can suck.

I've always had pet peeves in collecting. These could fill another article altogether. And they probably will soon. What I must bring up is the flea market (and now eBay) vendors that scour the market (or eBay) in the early hours for stuff to buy and resell at a profit. Being a bit of a purist, for some reason, I see this as a painful thing. The jerky vendor who buys games for $0.25 and sells them at a booth 25 yards away for $7. Of course, these things don't sell for their initial offering (hopefully), but it's so pathetic that I have to feel a tinge of frustration. Since the dawn of eBay, people have bought stuff there and resold it in auction for more. Is this so bad? It shouldn't be, but IT IRKS ME that someone else who personally wanted stuff for his collection could have gotten a nice deal on stuff that would stay in his house as a proud piece of his collection - and a proud deal at that. After seeing a crazy $800 2600 bundle go to a vendor on eBay, to be resold for more than triple that, it's a little depressing. Even more so as I was the second highest bidder. It's not like there were a few **Quadrun**s in the bundle - we're talking stupid import

crap. Anyway, I've since recovered, but the profiteers keep on gobbling up the scores, artificially raising prices, and making things a hint less fun for most of us. This hasn't changed either.

It seems like every month an RGVC regular is purging his collection for whatever reason. This has been happening since RGVC started. We can't all do this forever. It's no surprise that most of us want to go out with a bang - and pay for something major in the process. If your house is too crowded with gaming stuff to open the door to your bedroom or THE WIFE IS ABOUT TO WALK, something's got to go. People have been selling out since day one. We can all act surprised that COLLECTOR X (man, that's a good handle - you'll have to credit me on that) dispensed of the collection he spent 10 years building. And all the power to him for making a buck or more on years of combing flea markets. The part that kills me nowadays is the limited number of eBay heavy hitters who drive up prices and then try to resell with Buy It Nows at their inflated splurge price. It's no surprise you can't make your money back! You're the only idiot who would pay that much (at this time) anyway!

INFOGRAPHIC: Average Cost of Atari 2600 Games

Games in Atari 2600 library available for MORE than $20: **10%**

Games in Atari 2600 library readily available for $20 or LESS: **90%**

SOURCE: Ianoid, 2002

Expect to shell out a lot of cash if you ever run across any of these two games. All qualify as "Top 10%" on the patented Ianoid scale. Brought to you by the letter "Q" and the number "4."

If you bought your entire collection on eBay, plan to lose money when you sell it, unless you're a truly discriminating buyer. And sorry sluggers, I see a lot of guys out there who bid like Atari stock is about to split. Keep your checkbooks in your pants, boys.
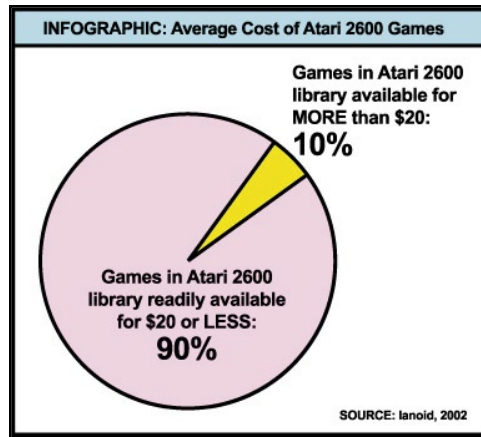
eBay prices. That's a paragraph in itself. You are already thinking about those two words. And don't grind your

teeth down to a nub. Stick this in your maws and chew on it: eBay prices haven't risen. Shock of all shocks! They have changed, but mostly for the cheaper. The average prices are the same. Of course, if you are a big money spender, you may be stuck with some mighty big Visa bills if you want the really unique stuff. The fact is, you always would have paid a premium for premium bits. The heaviest 2600 collectors know this- unfortunately I know this. There are legendary deals from the first years of eBay. ($400 Adventurevision? That's not that cool. Most of us would pass this up at a flea market - out of self-respect.) So what? Many of the solid rare games you might have paid $40 for two years ago can be had for half that or less with a little care and eBay hunting. Really cool 2600 titles like **HERO**, **Montezuma's Revenge** and **Time Pilot** will always demand more money for their popularity as titles, rather than their rarity or playability (as is the case with Time Pilot 2600.) Some things won't change. Getting $8 for **Pitfall** - a really common cart - isn't a surprise. It's worth $10, because who's kidding who, it's a great game. But 90% OF THE 2600 LIBRARY is available for $20 or less, and mostly in the $2-$5 range. If you buy bundles, you can make your average price $1. It's a ripe time to pick up classic bits. When it comes to premium items, those will always demand too much, especially if you must have it sealed and blessed by the pope. Drop the snob attitude and get 'em in reasonable shape - prices are too reasonable not to!

Chant it: SPAM! SPAM! SPAM! SPAM! SPAM! SPAM! SPAM! It's always been burying us. The names have changed, but the volume has not. EVERYONE'S TRYING TO MAKE A BUCK HERE - whether it's off of you or, (as the seller hopes), off of someone less educated who doesn't read Digital Press or have THE Guide. Deal with it or automatically screen for it. It's here to stay. I don't pay it much mind unless it's

someone I know or it's really eye catching. I hate to admit it, but sometimes that's the only way I know something exists. The occasional exotic may come to the block by a newsgroup regular, so I kind of appreciate the SPAM in this instance. For the most part, it's the noise you must ignore if you're an internet user.

The dusty game collecting hobby has grown, just as video gaming has grown in general. The fantastic deluge of CLASSIC COMPILATIONS for every system satisfies appetites of most of the GAMING THRONGS. That, I am thankful for. But there are always a few newcomers every week who want a bit more of the authentic experience to recapture their childhood enjoyment. Or perhaps they want a SWEET ACCESSORY to add to their home décor. Fortunately for the endless supply of eBay vendors, these people want to spend their hard earned euros on a setup or a console. Nostalgia is growing like a plague in some unnamed cycle of pop culture. And our woodgrain corner of the world is bound to be invaded now and again. A few of these dabblers is bound to be charmed more OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVELY and take to the field. This is growth. For every few that come, there are a few that leave. Not everyone is as senseless as we are in the quest for the ultimate cart. It's a slow growth, thankfully, and the really serious collectors who come into the hobby anew are few and far between. Many of the big spenders that you fear on eBay are old time collectors who just bit the bullet to complete some collections. Or they are the hyperfocused psycho NEWBIE SYSTEM BUILDER who won't be deterred by sensible pricing. In the end, there is a constant slow influx of growth. This hasn't changed, and I can't see why it would. And why would we want it to? Some of us are happy to make a living off of classic gaming (shoot me if I ever try.) And some of us can use the money from selling common stuff to buy more esoteric games (guilty!) But

in the end, the growth and popularity has been steadily rising since I started. I know it was intimate before I came around, and trading was the only way to get anything, but it was never that way since I started collecting.

Nothing's changed. Everything's changed. IT DOESN'T MATTER THAT MUCH. Remember you're just a gamer or a collector. It's supposed to be fun!

"The more things change, the more they stay the same."
-Alfonse Karr via Rush; also,
-Snake Plisskin, Escape From L.A.
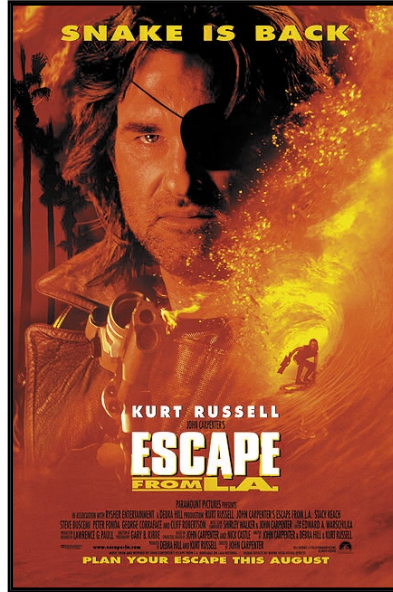
The more things change, the more they stay the same. Right on, Snake.

A DIFFERENT KIND OF PAC-MAN MACHINE

It's a bird! It's a plane! Nope, it's the Pac-mobile. If anybody out there has one of these sweet rides, please let us know, we'd love to hear all about it. It's the car. Chicks dig the car.

TIMEWARP!

by Joe Santulli

Join us gang, as we travel back in time to an issue of Digital Press from twenty years ago, the January/February 1983 issue of DP to be precise…

(original writer's deadline: 12.20.1982)

The TOP 10:
Advanced D&D Cloudy Mountain (Intellivision)
B-17 Bomber (Intellivision)
Burgertime (Intellivision)
Dragonstomper (Atari 2600)
Escape from the Mindmaster (Atari 2600)
Ladybug (ColecoVision)
Megamania (Atari 2600)
Solar Fox (Atari 2600)
Starmaster (Atari 2600)
Towering Inferno (Atari 2600)

Ladybug (ColecoVision) buzzes onto this year's "Top Ten" AND buzzes off with the "Best Sleeper" award.

Best System:
What a year it was! Vectrex, Commodore 64, and ColecoVision... our nod goes to the ColecoVision. C64 may win out in the long run but not in 1982.

Best Sleeper:
ColecoVision **Ladybug**. This Universal coin-op was so rarely seen in the arcades, but Coleco saw something in it. Rightly so, the game is brilliant, and just the change of pace maze game fans were looking for.

Best Graphics:
Super Zaxxon (C64). Mmmm... dragon boss.

Best Soundtrack:
Who can forget the finger-snapping, toe-tapping beat of Mattel's **Snafu**? Hands down best music of the year, and the sound effects are pretty memorable too.

Best New Character:
Bounty Bob (**Miner 2049'er**) over Pitfall Harry by a nose. Pitfall Harry will probably go on to be the more recognized character by 1990 but damn if Bounty Bob can't do it all. He's got offensive powers, jumping skillz, and he can operate heavy machinery! We love him.

Best Developer:
Activision. What a track record! **Barnstorming**, **Grand Prix**, **Megamania**, **Pitfall!**, **River Raid**, **Sky Jinks**, **Starmaster**... all in one year! Head and shoulders above the rest here.

Best Peripheral:
Arcadia/Starpath SuperCharger showed us what the Atari 2600 could do with just a little help. And... WOW.

Worst Game of the Year:
This game might be heralded some day as "worst game EVER"! That's right, it's Data Age's **Sssnake**. What the hell? Is it a **Centipede** clone? Am I being attacked by a snake or a locomotive? Why can't I move freely inside this block and what exactly is holding me back?

Worst New Character:
Either the gopher or the farmer from **Gopher**. You want to kill both of them!

Most Disappointing:
Tough one. Both are Atari

headscratchers, and we're torn between the much-hyped and much-maligned (and much boring) **Swordquest** series. Neither **Earthworld** nor **Fireworld** held our attention for very long, even with the promise of a priceless piece of jewelry as incentive... And then there's **E.T.** ... well, it's not a terrible game but it's not what we expected. I wouldn't be surprised if it fails miserably this holiday season and ends up in a landfill in the desert!
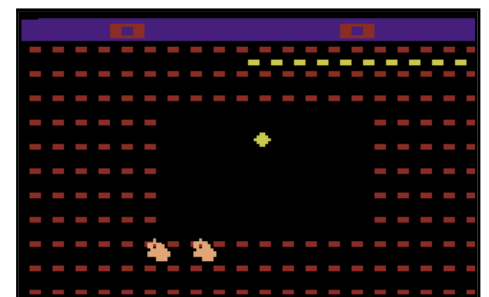
What the hell IS this crap? Chinese Checkers on the 2600? Video Loose-Leaf Paper Games? The Declaration of Independence? Nope, it's Data Age's Sssnake.

We look on as Dave Giarrusso fires through his own shield...

Element	Dave	Joe	Fry
Graphics	10	10	10
Sound	9	8	9
Gameplay	10	10	10
OVERALL	10	9	10

Features:

- TWO arcade ports!
- Arcade authentic play
- Tricks and easter eggs!

Thump, thump, thump, thump…

You KNOW that sound. It's the sound of approaching doom. Of terror from above. It's the sound of… **Space Invaders**, a game that is without a doubt, one of the most influential videogames ever designed.

So much has been written about Space Invaders that to try and come up with something new to say about it is an almost impossible task. You've heard all the stories before. Coffee shops turned into Space Invaders arcades, quite literally, overnight. Home versions or knockoffs of Space Invaders have appeared on every console since the dawn of time. A former NYC arcade once had ten Space Invaders machines hanging, upside down, from its ceiling. And perhaps most recently, the Fox television show *Futurama* devoted and entire segment to videogames, capped off with a fantastic nod to Space Invaders.

So. If everything's already been said about Space Invaders, then what's all this stuff? Much ado about nothing? Or is there something new to discuss after all?

Eudardo Mello, our good friend from Brazil, has put together a brand spankin' new ColecoVision cartridge: **Space Invaders Collection Pack**. It includes pixel for pixel perfect renditions of the original Space Invaders AND Space Invaders Part II! At long last you really can, for the first time ever,

ColecoVision's opening splash screen never looked this good!

recreate the honest-to-goodness arcade game experience on your ColecoVision. AND you can even choose between black and white or full color versions of Space Invaders. Nice.

The games look exactly the same as the original arcade games. They sound a teeny, tiny bit different, but… They play exactly the same as the originals. They contain the same intermissions, the same tricks, and the same glitches. And knowing Eduardo as well as we do, we'd bet that he's included a few extra goodies in his first ColecoVision cart. He's always got an extra trick up his sleeve, or so it seems.

So here's what you're gonna want to do. Write down Eduardo's e-mail address and set aside some cash. Because when this game hits the street, you're simply going to NEED to buy it. Yes, this cartridge IS that good. If you

Space Invaders Collection Pack is a virtually flawless port. Compare the arcade version (left) with the ColecoVision version. It's simply a must have cart for your ColecoVision library.

were impressed when the emulated version of Space Invaders was released for the SNES almost ten years ago, then you're REALLY going to be impressed

They're back. Again. And this time, they're on the ColecoVision.

when you see that Eduardo was able to recreate the same games. On. The. ColecoVision. It's just outta sight.

But hey, you don't have to take our word for it. Check out these screenshots. Gaze upon the intro screen. Eduardo has replaced the familiar "C O L E C O V I S I O N" startup message with a wonderful animated, multicolored ColecoVision logo, and a beautifully rendered Space Invaders bonus ship that flies by overhead. Look at the side by side comparison of Eduardo's Coleco version and the arcade version. Aside from the obvious differences in the screen aspect ratios, Eduardo's version is spot on, right down to the colors. Sure, he had to shorten "score" to "sc" in order to make it fit the horizontal screen on your TV, but hey, you simply couldn't ask for a better home translation of Space Invaders on a classic console.

Thanks, Eduardo. We're already anxiously awaiting whatever you might have in store for your next ColecoVision game pack. Game ON.

Eidos PS2 XBox 2002

HITMAN 2
SILENT ASSASSIN

Tony Bueno hooks up with the agency, uses piano wire

Element	Tony	Dave	Léon
Graphics	8	7	5
Sound	8	7	5
Gameplay	7	6	5
OVERALL	8	7	5

Features:

- Many different "tools"
- Ability to save mid-mission
- Improved graphics

Last year's **Hitman: Codename 47** was an uneven playing experience. While graphics, sound effects and music were all top-notch, at times gameplay left something to be desired. The latest entry in this franchise, Hitman 2: Silent Assassin, rectifies many of the woes left by its predecessor and is subsequently a far more enjoyable tactical murder simulation.

In the weighty and preposterous prologue, we learn that the title protagonist has managed to escape his dangerous profession and has settled down in a Sicilian monastery. Naturally, the priest who has served as a benefactor and mentor gets kidnapped by a group of mafia thugs.

Hitman 2: Silent Assassin features guns and other essential "tools" of the trade.

Fortunately, Hitman's former contacts from "the agency" are more than happy to reinstate the contract killer to his sordid life of crime and degradation so he may exact revenge.

Hitman 2 presents a wide variety of unique situations in many exotic (and some not-so-exotic) locales. Your tasks include the infiltration of a mafia mansion, political assassinations of unscrupulous Russian officials, a hit on a middle-eastern dictator-type, amongst others. Each level requires patience and a fair amount of problem solving skills, which stands in sharp contrast with most modern "one-man army" shooters like **Duke Nukem**, **Max Payne**, **Halo**, or **Medal of Honor**. One must make critical judgments as to which tools of the trade are optimal given the task at hand. For example, piano wire might work best for one particular job while a pistol, rifle, shotgun, knife, or car bomb would make a better choice for another. Another plus is that there are several different ways to complete each mission, and players are given grades based on stealth, aggression, and effectiveness at the end of each successful contract. Additionally, the ability to save in the middle of a mission is a feature that is much appreciated and was sorely lacking from Hitman 1.

It's obvious that a great deal of effort was put into Hitman 2's aesthetics. Characters, buildings, architecture, vehicles, clothing, facial

Anyone up for a game of golf? FORE!

features, ambiance, and shadows are all extremely well done. However, for some inconceivable reason, the close up shots of the individual weapons had much greater detail in the original. Music and sounds augment the action perfectly, and even the voice acting isn't that bad.

On the negative side, it is sometimes tedious to be required to walk such long distances in certain levels, and enemy AI is at times a bit inconsistent. While the first title gave the real names, manufacturers, and background information on many of the firearms, for some reason this one gives different but strangely similar titles to the guns' real life counterparts (i.e. a Desert Eagle is called a Deagle, and AMT Hardballer becomes Silverballer). The storyline is downright awful, but then what are most video game storylines if not a feeble attempt to explain the action depicted onscreen?

While definitely not for all tastes, Hitman 2 is recommended for fans of crime-based games and for those who rightly felt the original never quite lived up to its potential.

RANDOM REVIEWS

MORTAL KOMBAT DEADLY ALLIANCE

**Midway
PS2/GC/XBox
2002**
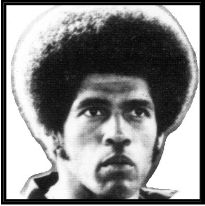
Dave G writes this review in three different styles and then finishes it

Element	Dave	Shang Tsung	Quan Chi
Graphics	9	9	9
Sound	7	9	9
Gameplay	8	9	9
OVERALL	8	9	9

Features:

- 21+ badass characters!
- Kool training mode
- Vomit and blood galore!

I'm a Mortal Kombat fan. Ever since I first laid eyes on Sub Zero's fatality in the original game, I've been hooked, much like one of Scorpion's unfortunate foes. A short history of the series (in this fan's humble opinion) is as follows: **MK1**: great. **MKII**: Fantastic, improving upon the original game in every way. **MK3 / UMK3**: Letdown. Gameplay slips a notch and fatalities are uninspired and too similar to one another (read: exact same exploding limbs and bones animation every time). **MK4**: First entry into the 3D fighting genre, not a bad game, but a rather dull MK game with dull character models and sluggish weapons based play. Worth mentioning that Quan Chi has the coolest fatality in this game. So with the last two games leaving fans (this fan included) disappointed, would anyone care about the next installment?

Enter MKV: Deadly Alliance. The first Mortal Kombat game in the series not born in the arcade (**Mythologies** and **Special Forces** don't count, gang), MKV corrects many of the mistakes of the previous two installments and delivers a fun game that will most certainly keep players coming back for more.

For starters, the game simply looks FAN-fuh-reakin-TASTIC. Models are nicely colored and detailed, the physics of the clothing are on par, and the character designs are just awesome. Check out Shang Tsung, Sub Zero and Quan Chi. These guys are Badass Mofos to the nth degree. And how 'bout those ladies? New blood (haha – blood!) in the MK series, Li Mei is hotter than Scorpion's

skull, and is one of the more playable characters to boot. The only real gripe about the female characters is (and I can't believe I'm writing this, but it's true) that they all appear to be based on a live-model who had a freakishly bad boob job. Like really, painfully bad. Ladies, when they look painful, like a tiny balloon stretched over a grapefruit, then I really have to wonder what is running through your heads. Anyhoo, note to Team MK: BIG boobs are just fine, but please, make the next go-round look more natural, m'kay? The in-game boobs look much nicer than the artwork, although they flop around a bit too much to be believable. But hey, in the end, it's a minor grievance.

So the game looks great, but how does it play? It plays wonderfully. Each character has a slew of "regular" moves that are supplemented by the obligatory "special" attacks and combos. Both "dial-up" combos and those of the regular variety are included here. The "run" button is gone, but the overall gameplay is pretty quick and tight, so it's not terribly missed. New to MKV is the ability to switch fighting styles on the fly. Each character has two distinct fighting styles, and a third weapons based style. Swapping between each of the three is where the game really comes into its own as

a great 3D fighter, as skillful players can begin a combo in one style, and finish up the combo in either of the other two. And again, as with the character designs and the overall art direction, each character's different style looks damn good.

For the most part, characters are well balanced, BUT the game loses a few points for some decidedly UNbalanced elements. For example: SOME, but not all characters have an "impale" move that allows the character to impale the opponent with their weapon. If successfully executed,

Quan Chi and Shang Tsung: Badass Mofo poster boys. Their alliance proved deadly for Shao Khan, can YOU stop them?

the weapon cannot be removed and continues to drain the victim's energy until the round ends. Likewise, SOME, but not all characters have a "reversal" move that allows an attack to be thwarted leaving the opponent open to some serious ass kicking. Although a little tougher to pull off than the impale moves, there's simply no reason to have not given the reversal move to everyone.

Still, these complaints are minor in the grand scheme of the game. Players can still match their skills with two reversal characters or two impale characters if you want to really harp on the issue.

Backgrounds: simply the best backgrounds of the MK series, bar none. They're just beautiful, particularly the Lin Kuei temple stage. Snow falls on the icy ground, ice stalagmites dot the arena area, reflections are glassy and smooth, it's just gorgeous. Each backdrop also has a smattering of "interactive" elements, like the aforementioned stalagmites, but also stone statues and other groovy junk.

Howsabout the trademark MK violence? MKV offers up a new level of cartoony/realistic violence. This time out, characters sport real time damage, much like another Midway favorite, **Ready 2 Rumble**. We're also treated to blood-dripping wounds during play. Bust Kano in the chops and watch the blood spatter and drip down Kano's face, down the front of his outfit, and into the ground. Now that's just kool. The blood also remains on the arena floors – walk through it and you'll track it all around.

Well, what about the fatalities? Are we gonna talk about the fatalities? Sure, this game IS an MK game after all.

"I will hurt you with my skull." "HA! I'd like to see THAT, you're all the way over there... Uh-oh..."

With a game that's as good as this one is, and with the MK series really being known for its imaginative and over the top fatalities, it's worth mentioning that the fatalities in this game are, overall, quite boring. They're primarily either A) things we've already seen in the other installments of the franchise (Kano, Sub-Zero borrowing from Kano, Sonya, Reptile, Frost borrowing from Sub Zero, Kitana, Raiden, Shang Tsung…) OR B) they're just dull and uninspired (Kung Lao, Bo Rai Cho, Kenshi, Quan Chi, Mavado…) Honestly, some of the in-game moves are more grisly and interesting than most of the fatalities, and that's really saying something.

To put it another way, in the old days, players absolutely relished performing the fatality moves, they were even better than the proverbial icing on the cake. With MKV, most players I know skip the fatalities because they're boring and waste precious time that could be spent starting up a new game. Mind you, they're not ALL bad, but for a game that is otherwise quite good, there's just no excuse for the design team to crap out on the fatalities. It looks like they just got tired and cranked these out at the end of a long day.

So what's left then? Well, the game has a really great "Krypt" where players can spend their hard earned "Koins" (earned during play) in order to unlock additional characters, game

Quan Chi busts newcomer Li Mei in the jaw and then has the nerve to tell her she'd better "put some ice on that."

art, behind the scenes nonsense, and all kinds of other fun stuff. It's set up quite nicely, and offers players yet another reason to keep coming back to the game. MKV also contains a very nicely done training mode, one that is suitable for both novices and seasoned veterans alike. There's a ton of other kool stuff in this game, almost too much stuff to mention, but here's a quick sample. In each match, after a player is Kod, the energy bars refill while the downed player stumbles to his or her feet. It's a perfectly brilliant way to make players ignore the real reason for the delay – disc loading. The characters taunt and mock each other, particularly Scorpion and Jax. Speaking of Jax, his gunfire move leaves empty shells strewn about the battleground. Projectiles leave a vapor trail. Load times display wonderful artwork. "Test Your Might" makes a triumphant comeback and for the


The character modelling is most impressive indeed. Almost like a 3D MKII. "Outstanding."

first time we have "Test Your Sight," a variation on the old shell game previously seen in another Midway coin-op, **Tapper**.

All told, Mortal Kombat V: Deadly Alliance is easily the best bang for your buck since the stellar champ of the series MKII appeared way back in 1992. It's got tons of personality, exceptional graphics and design, fantastic sound and voices, and most importantly, very good gameplay. While the fatalities are lacking, it's probably good that the design team has some room left to improve, because now that they've effectively resurrected the MK franchise, gamers are going to be chomping at the bit for MK6. And next time, maybe they'll get the fatalities right too.

RANDOM REVIEWS
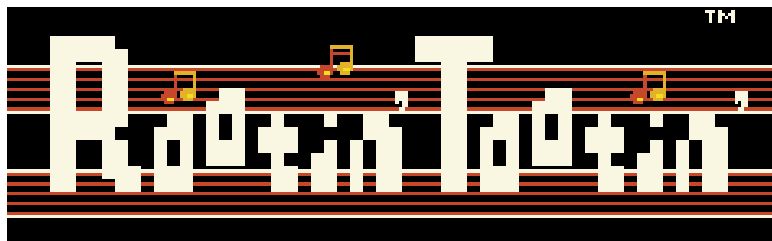
Rootin' Tootin'™

DECO Arcade 1982

Chuck Mangione sings the praises of this game, and it feels so good

Element	Chuck	Dave	Dizzy
Graphics	7	8	3
Sound	7	7	3
Gameplay	8	6	3
OVERALL	8	7	3

Features:

- Musical theme
- The flugel horn
- Clever artwork!

Rootin' Tootin' is a fun little game that Data East manufactured as part of their ill-fated DECO arcade series. The idea behind the system was good, but the execution was decidedly ungood. In the DECO system, micro cassettes containing the game programs are easily swapped out, thereby converting Burgertime to Astro Fantasia in a matter of seconds. The idea was that arcade managers would save time and avoid the expense of a new dedicated game. Unfortunately, the cassettes took a very long time to load, and often bombed out while loading. Fortunately for gamers, some of the better DECO titles (eg, **Burgertime**) were transferred to regular, reliable board sets. Unfortunately, some of the cassette games that never saw production on actual motherboards were still quite fun. **Angler Dangler**, **Peter Pepper's Ice Cream Factory** and Rootin' Tootin' are all winners in the gameplay department. But, brothers and sisters, since music is THE thing, I'm here today to rap at ya about Rootin Tootin'.

Rootin' Tootin' is a whimsical, musical maze-game. It's closer to a **Mouse Trap** clone than a **Pac-Man** clone, but lacks the Exidy hit's color coordinated doors. In Rootin', you control one of the loves of my life,

Everything onscreen plays into the music theme. Even the maze - it's an interlocking staff!

Waiting for the cassette tape to load does NOT feel so good.

a flugel horn, as you navigate your way through a variety of patterns in an attempt to clear out all of the musical notes on screen.

The hapless horn is stalked relentlessly by headphones, cymbals, pianos, guitars and triangles. Pressing the button temporarily allows the horn to pass through its enemies, but clearing the mazes of the musical notes is the "key" to the game.

Each time the horn passes over a note, the note goes sailing off the board. If the player manages to knock over an enemy instrument with the note, the instrument is defeated and the player scores points. Knocking off more than one enemy with one note leads to more points, so make sure to play all the right notes, hep cats.

Every so often, a rest appears on the board. If the player can grab the rest with the horn, the enemy instruments temporarily turn into G-clefs and can be scooped up by the player for additional points.
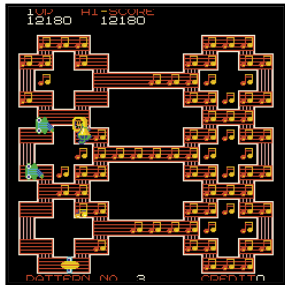
If it sounds like a so-so maze game at this point, please allow me to describe the audio and the visuals. The audio is a little annoying, to tell the truth. Instead of a laid back, smooth sounding contemporary adult track, the designers have given us something just this side of a clock radio alarm. It's more annoying than cute, the only real low point of the game. Ironic, as the

Ah, the 80s. A magical time when even the flugel horn could be the star of its very own video game.

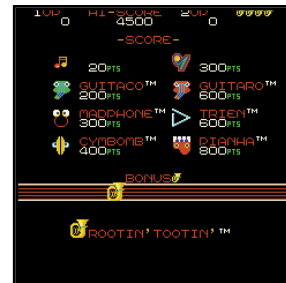game's theme would lead a player to believe that a wonderful musical experience awaits.

The visuals are where this little number really shines. Everything, and I do mean everything, (well, everything EXCEPT for the music) is musical. The player, the enemies, the boards, the bonus icons EVERYTHING is music-related.

Boys and girls, if you're looking for a new spin through the 80s maze game genre, then by all means do yourselves a favor and hunt down Rootin' Tootin'. If you like the game, you can always play it with the sound turned off and listen to one of my albums through your headphones. Because playing video games and listening to music feels so good.
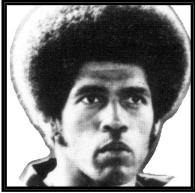

Mr. Mangione at the Digital Press publicity shoot. He put on a helluva show for our 50th issue bash! Thanks again, Chuck!

Konami Arcade 1983

Dave G writes this review by repeatedly head-butting the keyboard

Element	Dave	Tony	Stu Dent
Graphics	6	7	5
Sound	5	3	5
Gameplay	8	3	5
OVERALL	7	3	5

Features:

- Head-butts galore
- Student beatings
- Timeless love story

Listen to this idea for a new game: you're Mikie. Kick your classmates out of their seats and grab the love letters (to you, from your girlfriend) that were hidden there. The love letters are hearts. Beat up the class and grab all the hearts. Keep an eye out for Teacher or you'll lose a turn. If he gets too close, hide by sitting down at a vacant desk, or kick his ass with a teeth-rattling headbutt. After you collect all the hearts, run out of the room.

Seriously, that's how to play **Mikie**.

Mikie is a truly silly arcade game that people almost instantly love or hate. It took me about two seconds to realize that I love this game.

As Mikie, you run around like a maniac in a steroid rage while rounding up all of your girlfriend's scattered love letters. One wonders how the love letters got blown around the school in the first place, but let's just presume that the whirling Tazmanian Devil of Warner Brothers cartoon and Atari 2600 **Taz** fame stormed the halls of Hi-School just before 8AM.

Mikie begins his quest in Hi-School. Not "High-School," but, right out of a *Berenstein Bears* story, Hi-School, as in "Hi, School! How are you today my friend?" Mikie wanders the school in search of love letters (hearts) from his girlfriend (cheerleading bimbo) that have been carelessly left underneath other students' seats, in lockers, and around the gymnasium where the other cheerleading bimbos perform only the most spasmodic aerobics.

Mikie has three methods of gathering hearts. He can A) kick the students out of their seats until they land on the floor in a crumpled heap and then pick the hearts up, B) smash open lockers or glass jars with his forehead and then pick up the hearts, or C) just pick up the damn hearts. Like I said, I loved this game right from the start. Not despite its absurdity, rather, BECAUSE of it. Anyway, the sheer absurdity and mirth of the play mechanic in this game is just funny, and I would no sooner headbutt a real teacher than I would freeze someone before borrowing their skeleton via a punch to the back. Got that, all you vapid, blame-shifting senators and bored Xanax-popping soccer moms?

After collecting all the hearts in the classroom, Mikie must make a quick exit – opening the door requires a second button. Now Mikie is wandering the hallway, and - gasp - without a hall pass!

The hallway portion of the game is equally entertaining. Opening a door other than the one marked "IN" will reveal anything from a boring classroom, to a towel-wearing babe and some bonus points, to a punch in the face. The janitor wanders the hallway in a vain attempt to terrorize Mikie, but a simple headbutt will put him out of commission long enough to see what's behind all of the doors. If you're particularly talented, you'll manage to open a door with a boxing glove lying in wait just as the teacher or

Take THAT, innocent student! Mikie kicks a girl out of her chair. So why can't we stop laughing?

janitor walks by, thereby punching one of them in the face and down the hall for still more bonus points.

Dawdling too long in the hallway causes another unseen-until-necessary janitor (like the skull tossing Sea Hag in **Popeye,** or Grampa on *the Simpsons*) to hurl buckets of water along the floor, a la the giant pucks in curling, Canada's dullest of the dull sports. There are also bonus objects that look a lot like six packs of soda, or maybe dynamite, except that six packs of soda in a hallway don't really make sense. Six packs of dynamite in a school hallway make even less sense, but who the hell knows what the design team was thinking? I don't know what they are, but by all means, grab them for an extra 1000 points. Maybe it's the janitor's forgotten stash of beer? In a school like this, he'd need something to calm his nerves.

The next stage in the game is the locker room. Here, Mikie must outrun the teacher, the janitor, and a chef, who has evidently lost his map to the cafeteria (restaurant). The hearts are scattered about the lockers, which Mikie must open by using his head. As with the previous screen, gather up all the hearts, make like a tree (and leave), and you're on your way to screen three.

After tromping through the hallway again, perhaps stopping by an air vent to dine on a nice juicy hamburger,

RANDOM REVIEWS

HOME RUN
VIDEO COMPUTER SYSTEM

**Atari
2600
1978**

Bat Boy steps up to the plate and takes one for the team

Element	Bat Boy	Al	Joe
Graphics	1	2	1
Sound	0	1	1
Gameplay	0	3	3
OVERALL	1	2	2

Features:

- Hitting!
- Pitching!
- Snoring!

SCREEEEECH!!! Hello, video game fanatics! It is I, Bat Boy, here to let you know all about SCREEEEEEECH!! **Home Run** on the Atari 2600.

Let's be blunt. It's times like this that I almost wish I was as blind as my namesake. This game has got to be one of the worst games ever designed. There's really no trick to making a good baseball game, but somehow the folks who put together this garbage did a mighty fine job of making a big stinker. For starters, it's pretty much one-on-one baseball. SCREEEECH!!

The graphics are just inexcusably bad. I'm not able to tell if I'm looking at people who are square dancing, or guys who are trying to club each other in some sort of absurd hazing ritual. Either way, it's not at all clear that they're supposed to be playing baseball. Perhaps that's why they decided to call this game Home Run instead of Baseball. All I know is that I wanted to RUN HOME and hide in my cave after playing this game for ten seconds. SCREEEEEECH!!

Atari's horrendous Home Run even scares the living-dead daylights out of Bat Boy!

THIS is baseball? Exactly what the hell is going on here?

The gameplay is as bad as the graphics. Use the joystick to swing the bat. Press the red button to STOP running before you reach a base. Right, nice intuitive move there Atari, way to write an instruction manual after a three martini lunch. Swing the bat and if you're even close to hitting the ball, you'll probably get on base since the pitcher is the only guy actually pretending to play defense. Of course, even if he's not it doesn't matter. The other optional outfielders all move in tandem anyway which effectively makes them nothing but an ineffective decoration. Players are slow and confused, and even the old LED games of the day surpass this pile of dung in the accuracy department. At least in those games the outfielders could act independently of one another.

Home Run is a game that, presuming you insist on actually making the effort to store this petrified dog turd, will almost certainly never leave your shelf to be played. SCREEECH!!! Listen folks, I sit around all day long playing games and even I never plug this one in. Well, except for this one time. In order to write this review. I guess the staff at Digital Press thought it would be funny to have a Bat Boy review a baseball game. Yeah, good one guys, we get it: Bat Boy = batboy. Chuckle chuckle. Or maybe they thought that this game was a horror on cart, enter: BAT BOY, reviewer of horror games. Regardless, do yourselves a big favor and forget that you even own this cart. SCREEEECH!! I'll see you next time if these guys give me a good game to review. Otherwise, don't bother waking me up. I wasted precious sleeping time playing this piece of crap. Bat Boy out.

Take me out to the ballll-game... Seriously, take me out to the ballgame. I don't even like to watch baseball, but it's still better than trying to play this cart.

RAIDERS of the LOST ARK™

STARRING
YOU!

It doesn't matter who you are—
when you play Atari's sensational *Raiders of the Lost Ark* cartridge, you're transformed into Indiana Jones, one of the great swashbuckling heroes of all time!

This adventurous new cartridge recreates the entire pulse-pounding world of *Raiders*. You find yourself in Egypt, land of enchantment ... and treachery! Your mission—find the fabled Lost Ark of the Covenant. There are mysterious clues and dangerous obstacles around every corner. It's not going to be easy—not even for you, Dr. Jones!

Play *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and you enter another world—a world of Sheiks and Temple Gods, treasure and secret messages, action and surprise. You have everything Indiana Jones had in the movie—your trusty whip and revolver, your uncanny strategy and cunning—plus several magical objects which provide mysterious powers, *if* you can find them. And you'll need all the help you can get, between the thieves and the giant spider and the deadly snakes ....

"Snakes! Why did there have to be snakes ...?!"

Raiders arrives in November—
Order Now and Get It *As Soon As It's Available* at your *Special Club Member Price!!!*

Item Code C65 Regular Price $37.95

Your Price only $33.95

ATARI 2600

RAIDERS of the LOST ARK

**ORDER TODAY!
CALL TOLL-FREE
1-800-345-8600**

(PA Residents Call 1-800-662-5180)
or use the convenient Mail Order Form

DOUBLE FEATURE SAVINGS OFFER

Order RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK or E.T. and ANY OTHER cartridge and take $5.00 OFF your total order!

RANDOM REVIEWS

Half the calories, same refreshing reviews!

Lite

DIGITAL PRESS
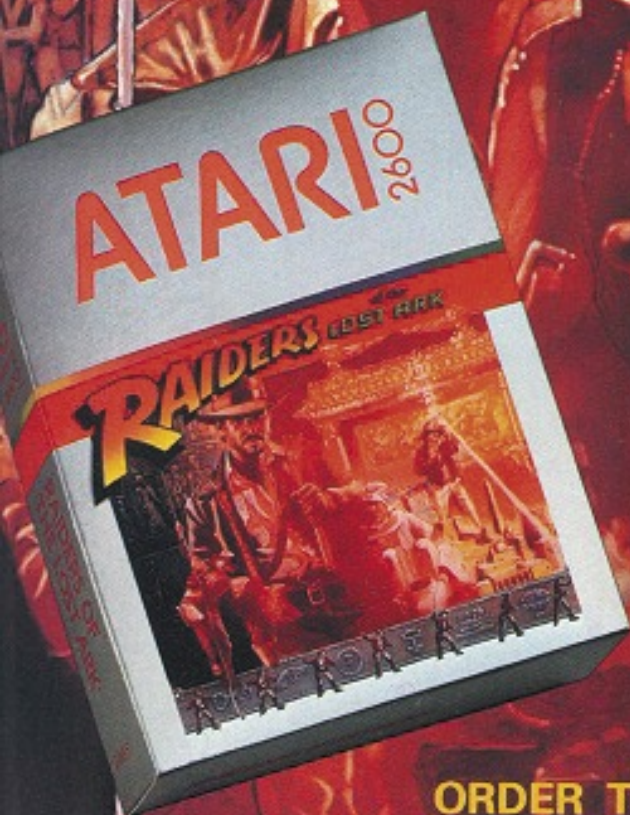
THE Bio-degradable Source for Video Gamers

BUST-A-GROOVE 2
Enix for Sony Playstation
Disco-vered by Dave G

Did you like the first installment of the **Bust-a-Groove** series? You did? Well, then you'll LOVE **Bust-a-Groove 2**. Go buy it already! If you already bought it, feel free to compare notes with me below.

Bust-a-Groove 2 is the sequel to the hit Playstation game, Bust-a-Groove (which began its life as **Bust-a-Move** overseas but for legal reasons, the name was slightly altered). It's a dancin' good time game where the object is simply to out groove-bust your adversary.

File this game under the "love it or hate it" heading. People without rhythm almost always dislike PLAYING the game immediately, since their ultra-uptight jivin' prevents them from doing much more t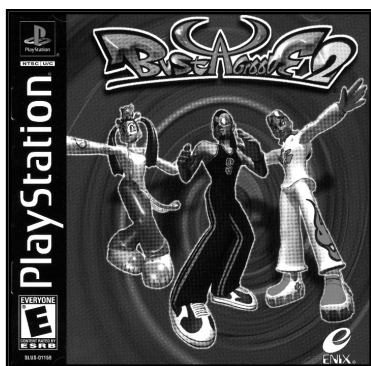han wandering around the screen in a drunken stupor. It should be pointed out, however, that even the frustrated folks who can't get their dance on usually realize that they like the game even though they don't want to play it. Bust-a-Groove 2, like the first installment, is definitely fun to watch. Peeps what gots some rhythm and can bust some mad grooves for the house, well, they almost always love this game.

Sequels are interesting: if they're too much like the original (**Rampage**

series) they are often given unfairly negative reviews (I really dig **Rampage World Tour** and **Rampage Universal Tour**) for allegedly failing to break any new ground. On the other hand, if they stray too much from the original concept (Hasbro's miserable **Frogger** remake) then they're wholly different animals (or amphibians) and catch a lot of flak as a result. Or in the case of Frogger, they catch flak because they just plain suck, on top of straying too far.

Bust-a-Groove 2 should satisfy everyone though. In "normal" mode, the basic play mechanic is identical to the original: press the X or O button on the fourth beat after entering a series of commands on the directional pad. Two new modes have been added as well: "easy" (only press O on the fourth beat) for the rhythm-impaired, and "mix" (adds buttons square and triangle on the fourth beat) for the smoothest muthas around. In normal and mix modes, the R1 and R2 buttons are now used to block/attack and reverse attack.

The scoring system has also been improved, and now offers…POINTS! Golden-age games always had points, but once the fighting game craze took over the free world, a lot of games began dropping a real "score," opting instead for a simple winning streak as a measure of success. I like to see points on the board and am very happy that we now have an easy way to keep track of how we're faring on the dance floor.

BAG2 has revamped its cast of dancers as well. Gas-O, Hamm and Pinky didn't make the final cut, but Kelly was given a hot makeover (cop uniform) and new additions to the cast include Comet - sister of the artist, Frida, and Bio - father of the original game's Gas-O. Eighteen characters in all provide more than enough variety, though fan favorites are likely to be the

Bustin' a groove with Shorty, Strike and Heat. Don't pass this game up!

fun loving Shorty, Kitty-N, and Comet.

All new stages grace the screen as well in this sequel. In the final stage the player dances in a helicopter against the ultimate fifty-story high dance-a-tronic fiend: Robo Z Gold!! C'mon everyone, shake your body down to the ground. And then go buy this game.

METROID PRIME
Nintendo for Gamecube
Unmasked by Tony Bueno

Samus in PRIME time, baby. Check out the cool cover art.

Space Hunter Samus Aran, who previously starred in two of the Big N's most memorable and innovative space adventures, is back for more in this latest installment of the series. As 2-D side scrollers are now long passé, Nintendo has graced us with a new and improved first person shooter, albeit with enough old school play mechanics and new innovations to keep players across the board happy.

Investigating a derelict spacecraft, Samus discovers that her longtime nemeses, the Space Pirates, have been up to their old evil ways, still capturing, experimenting with, and augmenting malevolent alien beings to further their own agenda. Unfortunately, it isn't just Metroids this time, and Samus arrives just in time to reveal a much larger conspiracy that gets a little too convoluted at times with the game going a little overboard with a lot of technical space mumbo jumbo. This doesn't hurt the game too much, however, as gamers will soon find themselves engrossed by the same exploration and problem solving elements that have made the Metroid series such a success.

Although the first person shooter genre is arguably (read: almost certainly) over saturated, the unorthodox and surprisingly novel control setup for MP works amazingly well. Interaction with computers,

hieroglyphics, and even enemies is achieved by entering scan mode, with a separate combat viewpoint for engagement. Nintendo has blessed players with a target lock on feature that, while not perfect, is DEFINITELY appreciated as aiming with two thumbsticks has NEVER been an optimal control scheme. Not all of the game is first person, however, as the viewpoint does enter the third person perspective when the morph ball is employed. Sounds confusing, but the whole thing is done very well and the transitions between the two are about as smooth as they could be.

Audiovisuals are above average but not outstanding. The monsters, caverns, corridors, and such are well depicted with fluid animation and a decent frame rate, or so it would seem. The sounds are also adequate, but really nothing about which to write home. As with most if not all fps, the overall appearance is way too dark, even with the brightness cranked all the way up. Do space station designers have some kind of aversion to overhead lighting or something? Some may appreciate this as another level of ambiance, however, so feel free to disregard this complaint if it suits your taste.

Overall, Metroid Prime is a winner. It's wonderful to see that game companies still honor classic characters and series with modern updates. Now if only the Big N would make a GC title starring Stanley the pest exterminator…

TV PLAY POWER
TechnoSource, 2002
Played with power by Dave G

You've seen those "controller/game console all in one units", haven't you? Remember the last time you ventured to the local flea market and saw **Super Mario Bros**. being played with an N64 controller? But then it turned out that it wasn't an N64 controller at all? Instead, it's a knockoff N64 controller with anywhere between 100 and 10,000 "different" games hidden away in its innards. More often than not, these Taiwanese ripoff "consoles" merely repackage bootleg NES roms.

The TV Power Play is no exception. Also known as the "Handy Boy" according to the screen when the unit is turned on, TVPP contains eleven allegedly different games (10 games + 1 bonus game! screams the package) most, if not all of which appear to be graphics hacks of existing NES carts. In reality, there are only ten different games: GP Race and Racing Pioneer are hacks of the same NES game. The unit could easily pass for a cheap third party PC or Dreamcast controller, and is powered by four AA batteries. An equally cheap, eight-foot long A/V cord is packaged with the unit and connects to the A/V ports on the TV.

So what games are included? **Balloon Boy 2**, **Big Racing**, **Block Shock**, **GP Race**, **Jewel Master**, **Jump Car**, **Omega Zone**, **Race One**, **Racing Pioneer**, **Space Castle**, and finally, **Ultra Doggy**. Ultra Doggy is identified as the "bonus game." And now the part you've ALL been waiting for… a rundown of game descriptions.

Balloon Boy2 is simply a graphics hack of Nintendo's own **Balloon Fight**.

Big Racing is a candidate for the "might NOT be a hack of an NES game" award. However, even if it is an "original," the game is clearly trying to be a strictly top down (as opposed to isometric) version of **RC Pro Am**. In this one, "DJ Jungle" lifted the opening sounds of RC Pro Am, but slowed them down in a clever attempt to fool the consumer. Way to go Jungle!

Block Shot is another NES graphics hack. This time, DJ Jungle has hacked Taito's **Arkanoid** cart for the NES.

Jewel Master is a **Columns** clone.

Jump Car is a graphics hack of the NES version of **Bump N Jump**. Except here, DJ Jungle has transformed everything into a river/boat setting where you jump over land. So, someone remind me, why's the game called "Jump Car"?

Omega Zone is a graphics hack of the NES version of **Galaga**. DJ Jungle has turned everyone's favorite outer space shooter into a submarine (the Galaga ship) vs. octopus (enemy ships) battle.

Race One is another potential "non-hack" game. It wants to be a futuristic racing game, but doesn't even make it to the dizzying heights of 2600 **Night Driver**. Technical note: this

game is the only one that requires the player to use the "analog stick" (it's not really an analog stick, but for lack of a better descriptive term) portion of the controller.

Racing Pioneer AND GP Race are BOTH hacks of the NES version of **Rally Bike**. In Pioneer, you drive a car, and in GP, you control a motorcycle. Who is DJ Jungle trying to fool?

Space Castle appears to not be a hack of a preexisting NES title, but is instead an extraordinarily poor **Space Invaders** clone. Too slow, and way too lame.

Ultra Doggy is a bad **Frogger** ripoff that may or may not be a graphics hack of an existing NES game. Based on the fact that all or nearly all of the other games ARE hacks, I'd bet that this one is too. Slow pacing and bad control wreck this one, kids. And by all means, if Ultra Doggy, Race One and Big Racing ARE hacks of existing NES games, please let us know!

Is the thing a complete waste of time? Almost. It's not like you wouldn't expect this kind of crap from a sweatshop game manufacturer. And if you dig Balloon Fight, Arkanoid and Galaga and have absolutely no other means of playing the original games, this little unit might work just fine. Until it breaks, which judging by the level of craftsmanship, might be shortly after opening the package.

Recommended only for those gamers who have an affinity for obscure, odball-ripoff video game items.

The ATARI Advantage

COLLECT GAMES • WIN PRIZES

DIGITAL PRESS PRODUCTS

THE WACKY WORLD of... ALAN MILLER

interview by Al Backiel

Join Al Backiel as we pick up where we left off last issue with Part 2 of his interview with Alan Miller...

DP: What was the main reason for the exodus? Did it shake things up?

AM: I think the main reason for us leaving Atari was that within a year of Warner's purchase of Atari, senior management had entirely changed over to new people who didn't understand our business, nor did they seem to even respect it. They didn't have any understanding of the technology underlying the business or the creative aspects of making interactive games.

Our desire to receive credit for our work and obtaining greater compensation was the tip of the iceberg of fundamental discontent with the senior management and the direction they were leading the company.

DP: Weren't you guys worried about the uncertainties of starting a whole new company?

AM: Even though I was absolutely convinced the interactive game industry had a great future, I was worried about our chances of success. We only received a $650,000 commitment from our investors, Sutter Hill Ventures. They also required a substantial personal financial commitment from each of us, in the form of a cash investment in the company and that we take a cut in pay. I had to take out a second mortgage on my condo to make that investment. Had the company been unsuccessful, it would have been a
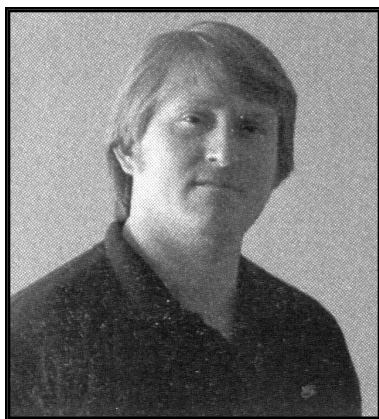
significant financial blow.

DP: How did the brass at Atari take the news when you dropped the bomb on them? Tell us about that day.

AM: It didn't happen like that. There was no bomb. There wasn't even a murmur. We made no announcement that we were leaving to start a competitor. We didn't even leave together. As I remember, Larry Kaplan quit several weeks before the rest of us did. I think David and I quit about the same time. And I think Bob quit a few weeks later. Our departure wasn't that unusual.

Alan Miller, from the days of Robot Tank. Activision instructions added that extra personal touch.

Several of Atari's best engineers had left or were leaving. Joe Decuir, whom I thought was the single most valuable person at Atari, had left without any fanfare whatsoever.

Remember that Atari senior management fundamentally didn't understand the business. They didn't seem to know much about or care about the engineering group. I can remember that during our negotiations my boss' boss told me that he could hire several engineers "off the street" who could do what I did for the amount of money I was asking for. He was essentially clueless about the intricacies of programming the VCS and the creative challenges of designing good games. There was

no recognition of the fact that despite Atari's three year effort to build up a capable in-house game design group, very few of the people they hired were ultimately successful at creating and implementing popular games.

DP: Were there any repercussions legal or otherwise from Atari?

AM: Yes, after we started Activision, they sued us three times, every six months, both personally and as a corporation. Their total damage claim as I recall eventually stood at $26 million. It was sheer harassment. There was no basis for their claims and it was eventually settled for nothing. Activision was funded by one of Silicon Valley's most prominent and experienced venture capital companies. In starting the company, we did everything perfectly properly, under the strict guidance of our attorneys and investors.

DP: Have you ever granted an interview for any other fanzines?

Alan Miller designed the Atari 2600 and Atari 8-bit versions of Basketball.

AM: I've done hundreds of interviews with games magazines and other publications over the last 25 years and dozens of video interviews. I can't recall giving an interview specifically to a video game fanzine, but it's entirely possible. When I talk with a writer, I don't pay much attention to what publication they're writing for. I just try to answer their questions. Sorry that I can't be more definitive on this point.

DP: You were one of the interviewees on the Stella at 20 videotape series that

took place at Nolan Bushnell's estate. What was it like to be reunited with your former co-workers?

AM: I enjoyed it. We were a bunch of hard working and talented engineers who helped change the world.

DP: I see from the videotapes that you play a mean game of Kaboom. What tips can you offer us mere mortals?

AM: Go with the force, Luke. Don't look at the bombs, look through the screen. Allow your instincts to guide your hands . Don't think.

DP: Have you ever hidden any "Easter eggs" inside your games? If so, which ones and how do you get at them?

AM: No. At Atari, I followed company policy about putting no hidden features or personal mention in the games. At Activision, we were given credit on the box, manual, and cart, which was all I wanted.

DP: One of my personal favorites is Starmaster, which is a great adaptation of a computer classic. How long did it take you to complete?

AM: Probably 4-5 months. **StarMaster** was similar in concept to **Star Raiders**, which Doug Neubauer programmed for the Atari 400/800. Doug was a chip designer who worked on the custom LSI chips inside the 400/800. After his chip design work was completed, he created this wonderful game for the computer. I sought to replicate that feeling of flying through space on the much more limited VCS.

*DP: I play a lot of **Robot Tank** also. Once I managed to score a total of 81 tanks destroyed. I was curious as to what was the maximum in this game?*

AM: I can't exactly remember. It's been a long time. But that sounds like a very high score.

DP: Who came up with the idea to award merit badges for high scores?

AM: It was probably Jim Levy. He was a brilliant marketing guy. Most of the Activision games awarded some patch or certificate for achieving certain score levels. We wanted to encourage players to develop a relationship with the company. It started with our first game, David Crane's **Dragster**. I still have the first certificate ever awarded for that game. Eventually we were receiving over 10,000 letters a week from fans and we had about 25 employees whose sole job was to respond to fan mail and phone calls.

DP: Honestly, do you ever tire of signing autographs?

AM: No, but I'm hardly ever asked to do so, except at the Classic Gaming Expo.

DP: Are you surprised or not at the attention that classic video games is getting?

AM: I was a little surprised at first. But after thinking about it, it's not much different from the attention given to early movies, television shows, records, and other forms of entertainment. The games were an enjoyable part of people's lives. I'm proud of the work we did at Atari and Activision. We worked hard to pack a lot of fun into those tiny carts. But I only spent about 7 years of my 25 years in the business at those two companies. I'm equally proud of the entertainment software I was later associated with at Accolade and Click Health.

DP: I was wondering if there was any interaction amongst rival companies? Does Atari and Intellivision still feud or have they buried the hatchet?

AM: I don't think there's any ongoing feud. At Activision, we developed games for both of those systems, as well as others. It turns out independent publishers have to put their successful games on as many systems as is possible, in order to maximize revenue from the games. Except for the hardware manufacturers, game publishers are all pretty much hardware agnostic.

Additionally, it's actually a pretty small industry and many of us have worked together in the past, which I think minimizes feuding. Larry Probst, Chairman of Electronic Arts came out of Activision, as did Greg Fischback, Jim Scoroposki, and Rob Holmes who started Acclaim. Don Mattrick, President of EA Studios, developed several games for us at Accolade. Also at Accolade we did North American distribution for Bruno Bonnel's Infogrames for several years, which eventually purchased Accolade. Scott Orr's first company, GameStar, was acquired by Activision. Scott went on to be a very successful sports producer at EA. I have a lot of respect for these individuals, who have all been very successful.

DP: What do you think was the major factor in the collapse of the video game market in '84?

AM: I think there were two important factors. First of all, it's natural for the video game business to have its ups and downs. It has proven to be a cyclical business. The oscillations are driven by the introduction of new, more capable hardware systems. We're in the fifth cycle since the introduction of the Atari VCS in 1977. This current cycle will peak in 2003 or 2004. The general length of each cycle is about 5 or 6 six years.

The down period of 1984 - 1985 was particularly intense because neither of the dominant players, Atari nor Mattel, had introduced a next generation console that embodied sufficient improvements over its previous system to become successful. At Activision, we were waiting and waiting for Atari to introduce a great new machine. We had heard they were spending $100 million a year on R&D and we
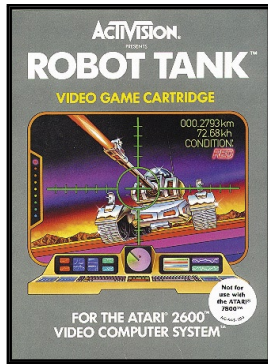
Many fans of the 2600, find Miller's Robot Tank superior to Battlezone.
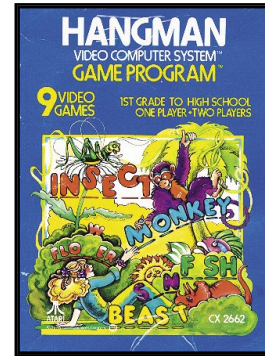
Guess who designed this 2600 game. Here's a hint: _ L _ _ L L _ _.

expected something truly great. We were extremely disappointed by their 1982 introduction of the 5200 system, because it was a poor rework of the 400/800 system, originally designed in 1978-79. In order to have a relatively smooth transition to the next generation consoles, a new and much improved machine, like the 7800 should have been introduced in 1981 or 1982, to allow the installed base to grow and take up the slack in sales from the dying VCS and Intellivision systems.

I wasn't close to Mattel, but I knew that the most important people in Atari's engineering group had all left. Senior management didn't understand the importance of the contributions that had been made by Bob Brown, Director of the Microelectronics group, which included all software development, and Joe Decuir and Jay Minor, who did the systems design and custom chips for the VCS and 400/800 computer. Atari's only decent console after the VCS was the 7800 and it was designed by an outside contract group.

The second factor, in my opinion, was that Atari, the dominant player in the business and larger than everyone else combined, was publishing a lot of terrible quality games and shoving it into the sales channel. Consumers were obviously disappointed in the quality of much of their work, particularly expensive major license such as **E.T.**, **Pac-Man**, and **Raiders of the Lost Ark**. Too many junk cartridges were sitting at retail and prices dropped dramatically.

DP: Were you at Activision until the bitter end? What was it like behind the scenes at that time?

AM: No, after five years, Bob Whitehead and I left Activision in late 1984 to start another game publisher,

Accolade. We fundamentally didn't like the direction that Activision was taking at that time.

At Accolade, I created one game for the Commodore 64, Law of the West, but after that entirely devoted myself to management. I initially served as Vice President of Product Development and then as Chairman and CEO.

DP: Was forming Accolade at that time another risky venture or born out of necessity?

AM: It didn't seem risky to me, but still, we couldn't attract any investment in the company. Remember this was in 1984, in the depths of the first down cycle in programmable games. So Bob and I entirely funded it ourselves. Our additional five years of experience at Activision had given us a much better insight into the market. We had extreme faith in the continued acceptance of personal computers. We were profitable after our first year of development and continued to grow and be profitable through my ten years there.

We were puzzled why Activision couldn't make a profit. They had tens of millions of dollars in the bank and a great reputation, but we watched them take 17 successive quarters of losses and burn through just about all their cash before making a change at the CEO level.
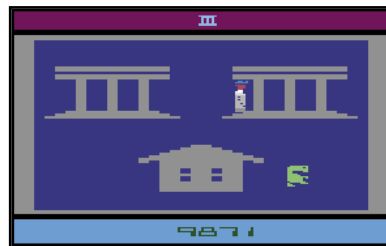
DP: Another company that you helped found was Click Health. This was an educational software company. Was this a big transition from producing only pure entertainment software?

You may remember Phil Hartman from such commercials as Activision Ice Hockey, an Alan Miller game.

E.T. disappointed consumers, but look at it this way: people are STILL talking about it almost twenty years later.

AM: The marketing and distribution were entirely different, but implementation of the products was very similar. I got into this venture because I was convinced video games could be used to change people's behavior and improve their lives. I had noticed changes in my behavior after playing car racing games and also after playing violent games. I had grown quite concerned about the negative impact that violent games might have on children.

Click Health created and sold enjoyable Nintendo carts and computer CD ROM games that were designed to improve children's health care behaviors for diabetes and asthma. The concept of doing this was initially developed by Steve Brown and his company, Health Hero Network. I had met Steve several times and admired what he was trying to accomplish. In late 1997, Health Hero decided to go in a different direction and so Steve and I started Click Health to continue the health education effort. Our clinical trials proved that playing video games can change children's behavior.

DP: Did you have to have a number of educators on your staff?

AM: Click Health was another company that couldn't attract investment, so we operated on a shoestring. Debra Lieberman, Ph.D. was our VP of Research. She was very experienced in the use of interactive technology for health education. The games were developed in conjunction with leading psychologists and medical experts, many from Stanford University.

The games were extremely successful in clinical trials. In a trial with Kaiser and Stanford University diabetes patients, urgent care visits declined 77% for children who used our Nintendo cart, Packy & Marlon, compared to a control group. Our anti-smoking game, Rex Ronan, was recognized by the Centers for Disease

Control as an effective product and is an interactive exhibit in the Global Health Odyssey museum at CDC headquarters in Atlanta. Yet, despite the clinical successes, we could not make the company commercially successful. After four years of trying, I closed it in September 2001.

DP: What would you say is the video game accomplishment that you are most proud of?

AM: I'd like to mention four of which I'm particularly proud. In chronological order, they are:

- To have been a part of the team that developed the operating system for the Atari 400/800 computer.
- To have co-founded Activision, the first independent video game publisher, a company committed to the highest quality interactive entertainment.
- To have co-founded Accolade in 1984, in the depths of the first down cycle of programmable games and to watch it grow and prosper for ten years.
- To have co-founded Click Health and be a part of a pioneering effort to use video games to improve children's health.

DP: Today you are a VP at Skyworks, which sells online games for company websites. Java language I assume? How do you feel about commercializing your talent? Are you still involved in the coding aspects of video games?

AM: It's a pleasure to be working again with David Crane and Garry Kitchen at Skyworks. We're creating games that appeal to just about all ages and genders, much like we tried to do in the early days. Our games are generally developed in Shockwave and are downloaded from websites and run in Internet browser programs like Internet Explorer and Netscape Navigator.

We've been commercializing our talent for 25 years. I don't see this as being any different. Skyworks games are fun and can be played for free. In exchange for receiving this free

entertainment on our clients' websites, consumers are exposed to commercial messages, much like broadcast television, but the advertisements are less blatant. Americans watch approximately $40 billion of television advertising each year. We feel the future for advertising supported interactive games is just as promising.

In answer to your last question, I haven't personally written a game since **Law of the West**, which was published in 1985. Since 1985, I've devoted myself to corporate management, marketing, and distribution issues. I don't delve too much into the technical implementation details. I rely on people who are skilled in those areas to do a great job.

DP: According to an interview that you did for the 01-18-83 Wall Street Journal*:*
"Mr. Miller wasted about two months trying to come up with a three-dimensional game using red and green-lensed glasses. 'It didn't work this time,' he says, 'but I don't regret doing it. Trying something new makes it fun. And we all pushed ourselves to the limit each time out.'"

What was the 3-D game that you were working on at Activision? Why did this project get scrapped?

Alan Miller's Checkers was almost the first 3-D Atari 2600 game.
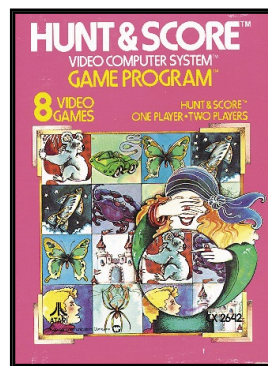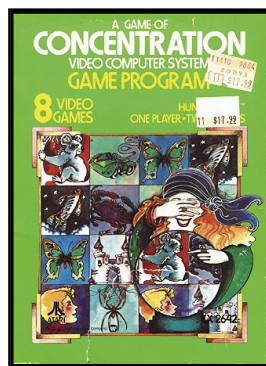
A Game of Concentration, or Hunt & Score? Either way, it was designed by Alan Miller.

AM: The game was **Checkers**, my first Activision game, which was published in early 1980 without the 3D display. It just didn't work well enough on the 2600.

As I recall, there were two main

problems with using the red/blue glasses (anaglyph) on the 2600. The first is that the 2600 is only capable of 160 pixels of horizontal resolution. This didn't allow much precision in the horizontal offsets between left and right eye needed to position objects in 3D space.

Secondly, television sets of that era didn't consistently render the colors. So the blues and reds in the display wouldn't exactly match the blue and red eye filters. On many sets, this caused a serious ghosting problem, in which each eye would still see a ghost of the other eye's image.

I'm still extremely interested in the use of 3D display for interactive and passive entertainment. With today's computer and CRT technology, it is now possible for that to happen, if the user can accept wearing "shutter" glasses that momentarily alternatively block each eye. This needs to occur at a minimum rate of 70 or 80 times per second for the effect to be acceptable (in my opinion), which precludes it from happening on NTSC televisions.

Alan Miller Bio

Alan Miller is one of the country's most experienced entertainment software executives. In his 25 year career in the interactive entertainment industry, Miller co-founded two leading game publishers, personally designed several million unit selling games, and managed the development of over 100 original entertainment software titles for approximately 20 different video game and personal computer platforms.

He graduated from the University of California at Berkeley in 1973 with a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering and computer science. After working in Silicon Valley for a few years, he responded to a help wanted newspaper advertisement and joined Atari Corp. as a game designer and senior programmer in February 1977. There he developed the **Surround** and **Hangman** cartridges for the Atari Video Computer System prior to its launch in the Fall of 1977 and then he designed
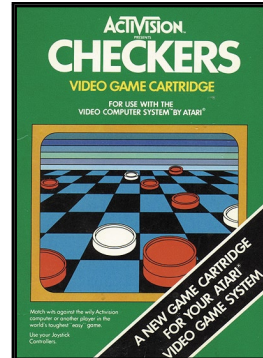
Hunt and Score, a.k.a. **Concentration**, and **Basketball** in 1978.

In September, 1978, after the failure of the first operating system effort for Atari's already announced personal computer, Miller joined with David Crane, Larry Kaplan, Gary Palmer, and Ian Shepard to co-author the operating system for the Atari 400/800/1200 personal computer. His last game at Atari was the **Basketball** cartridge for the 400/800 computer.

In 1979, Miller co-founded Activision, Inc. with David Crane, James Levy, and Robert Whitehead, the first independent video game publisher. Activision grew to achieve $160 million in annual revenues in four years, making it the fastest growing venture capital-backed company in American history (at that time). Miller served as Activision's first Vice President of Product Development and he also designed and developed a number of best selling game titles, including **Checkers**, **Tennis**, **Ice Hockey**, **StarMaster**, and **Robot Tank** for the Atari VCS.

In 1984, Miller and Whitehead co-founded Accolade, Inc., a leading entertainment software publisher for personal computers and game console systems. In 10 years at Accolade, Miller served initially as Vice President of Product Development and rose quickly to the position of Chairman and CEO. Miller personally designed only one game at Accolade, **Law of the West** for the Commodore 64, which was also ported to several other popular personal computers of that era. Under his leadership, Accolade developed many well-known video game brands, including **Hardball**, **Test Drive**, **Jack Nicklaus Golf**, and **Star Control** to name but a few.

In 1997, Miller co-founded Click Health, Inc., a pioneering company in the use of interactive edutainment software to educate children about proper care for diabetes, asthma, and other conditions. As Chairman and CEO, Miler managed the development, sales, and marketing of video game cartridge and computer CD-ROM games for this unique application. Clinical trials conducted at Stanford University and Kaiser documented a 77% reduction in urgent care visits for children with diabetes after playing the company's health education games.

In 2001, Miller joined Skyworks, Inc., which was co-founded by David Crane and Garry Kitchen, and serves as Vice President of Business Development. Skyworks is the leading

[signature: Alan Miller]

Continued from page 15

Mikie makes his way into the restaurant (cafeteria). Grab the hearts, smash open the glass container that holds one heart captive, and get out, pronto. In addition to the janitor and the teacher, three chefs terrorize Mikie in this screen, and one of them is busy hurling meat at our hero. Yes, really.

Mikie makes a hasty retreat from the restaurant only to wind up in the danceteria. I'd been wondering when Adrian Zmed will show up in a game, and this was the most likely place. Still, no Zmed. Grab the hearts, but stay away from the **Renegade**-looking female gym teacher ("givin' up already?") or it's lights out. The teacher from the first screen is still stalking Mikie, and the real challenge here is to keep Mikie's raging hormones under control – if he gets too close to one of the dancing cuties, he flips his lid and is rendered motionless for a second from too much rubbernecking. Sure, it nets him 100 points, but if that teacher catches up to him, is it really worth it?

Miller's Law of the West, with help from Doggett and Bogas, the duo who also pitched in on Accolade's Hardball.

Mikie's final task is to collect the love letters left wafting in the breeze out in the garden. Three football players menace our hero, but since they're both slow and stupid, Mikie can easily out maneuver them, grab all the hearts, and finally catch up to his girl. The two kiss and jump into their waiting roadster, then drive off into the sunset…

Or do they? Now Mikie is magically transported back to the locker room stage where history repeats itself until the player gets bored. Sure, the screens are tougher, and in a different order than the first time through, but, it's that whole **Gumshoe** thing again: win the game and you're greeted with, "Later, that same day…"

I dig this game for lots of reasons. It's got a lot of goofy touches that make you chuckle – the football players are stronger than the regular students in the classroom, and they fight for chair position with Mikie as he tries to unseat them. The teacher constantly chases after Mikie, unless Mikie has the sense to sit down in an empty chair – now ol' teach' can't see Mikie! The first screen plays the Beatles' "Hard Day's Night." The teacher who chases after Mikie (and looks an awful lot like my middle school Spanish teacher) often tires out and must pause to catch his breath. And who could forget the nearly nekkid towel-babe in the hallway? Remember to open ALL the doors!

Mikie is a forgotten game from yesteryear, but one that even casual gamers should look over. Returning to "Hi-School" might not be your cup of tea, but in this case, you're sure to get a "kick" out of it.
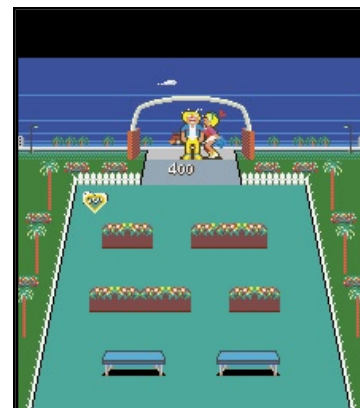
He head-butts teachers, he beats up his classmates. And in the end, Mikie still gets the girl. Bastard.

ROMPAGE

Featuring John Hardie

Sean's tag team partner John Hardie was scheduled to contribute the column this month, but as you can see from this photo sent in by undercover DP spies, John was away on a "business" trip. We later found out that the kid seen here had the last laugh on John - the quarter John paid him with for that Atari 2600 cart turned out to be worth $7500 to a coin collector. Way to go kid! Just watch your back.

John or Sean will return next month to bring you up to speed on the latest happenings in the world of the ROMPage. Stay tuned for further developments as they happen.

Video Madness, Memoirs from the Golden Age of Electronic Gaming

Some of my fondest memories come from my enjoyment of the wonderfully original coin-operated arcade games of the 80's. The era from approximately 1980 to 1985 was truly a player's paradise, a magical time when playability and fun factors took precedence over audiovisual fluff. The arcade craze of this period stood in sharp contrast with the overall atmosphere of self-indulgence, greed, avarice, and the general nihilistic attitude epitomized under Reaganomics. As game designers and arcade operators scrambled to capitalize on what would eventually become the most important entertainment innovation of the last quarter of the 20th century, the rest of us simply had the time of our lives merrily surrendering quarter after quarter for a few brief moments of innocuous electronic bliss.

Controls and play mechanics, like the times themselves, were much simpler. These games were easy to learn, difficult to master, and you didn't have to be an expert player or longtime gaming veteran to get into them. A joystick, maybe one or two buttons, and readily understandable gameplay made classic coin-ops far more approachable and enjoyable than their modern counterparts.

Perhaps the most popular category from the Golden Age were the platform titles. The physics of classic platform games were based on two-dimensional playfields where gamers must outwit, outsmart, or vanquish opponents to accomplish specific level objectives. Future Nintendo icon Mario's first appearance in **Donkey Kong** had our portly protagonist traverse construction-type settings to rescue his girlfriend Pauline from the clutches of the evil title character. As in other titles such as **Burgertime**, and **Kangaroo**, ladders and scaffolds provided the player with a means of avoiding enemies. Individual goals and gameplay elements are different with each game (sometimes for each level within a game), but the basic physics generally remain the same.

Unfortunately, the 2-D platform genre (and, indeed, about 99% of all other 2-D games) is, for all practical purposes, dead and buried. Gone are the games that utilized this simple yet amiable and readily accessible format. It was only a matter of time before the current influx of polygonal graphics and 3-D rendering would allow players to immerse themselves in computer-generated virtual worlds. These types of environments have long since replaced the uncomplicated yet undeniably clever and charming 2-D platform games from the past. Poor camera angles, inscrutable control schemes, polygonal break up and graphical disappearances amongst other annoying glitches are the price we now pay for a more wholly interactive gaming experience.

Traditional maze games, once another main staple of 80's game rooms, are another now-obsolete novelty from those bygone days, although one could argue that those games have evolved or been otherwise usurped into the aforementioned category of 3-D exploration adventures. For a brief time during the very early 80's, maze games were all the rage. **Lock 'N Chase**, **Hangly Man**, **Ladybug**, **Mousetrap**, **Piranha**, and **Amidar** are but a few notables that attempted to cash in on this trend. In spite of (or perhaps because of) this sudden saturation, the market for overhead **Pac-Man**-inspired maze titles vanished almost as quickly as it appeared. This was truly a shame considering the clean, wholesome fun they once provided, and the fact that these games are ideal for both young children and newcomers just learning the ropes of electronic gaming. However, finding **Ms. Pac-Man** machines in bars, restaurants, or hotels is not terribly uncommon to

Speaking of monkeys... it's DONKEY KONG!

Kangaroo, Sun Electronics/Atari. Keep punchin' those monkeys!
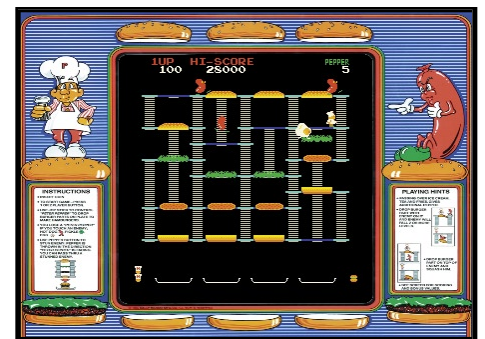
Peter Pepper planned to pick a pack of pickled players, and he did, with Data East's classic, Burgertime. Mmmm... burgers...

this very day. Additionally, every now and again a company like Namco treats us to a new homage/update maze game for a current console, so I guess calling maze games completely outmoded would be something of a misnomer.

There are some classes of games, such as shooters, which will always be around despite having undergone dramatic changes as well. Sophisticated light gun shooting galleries and stunning aerial dogfight and sci-fi space simulators have replaced the **Galaxian**, **Space Invaders**, **Zaxxon**, and **Duck Hunt** machines of years gone by. Whether or not this is for the best is, of course dependent upon one's individual taste and preference. Still, for many who grew up on the first and second generations of coin-ops, nothing will compare to the simple joy of beating one's high score on **Centipede**, achieving perfection in a challenging stage of **Galaga**, or making it all the way to the invisible stages of **Tempest**.

Regretfully, the originality and innovation that made playing the classics such a pleasure are practically foreign concepts to designers of modern coin-ops. Sure, there were plenty of rip-offs back in the day, but at least the majority of companies producing arcade titles made an attempt to either create something which hadn't been done before, or add their own unique spin on a pre-established formula. **Joust**, **Dig Dug**, **Tetris**, **Q*Bert**, and **Paperboy** were all shining examples of the freshness and imagination of 80's programmers. Virtually none of that spirit has carried over into the 90's and today, as companies (and, perhaps, alas, the majority of gamers as well) are seemingly interested only in the superficial gratification derived from trite, repetitive, and clichéd money makers such as racecar match ups

or yet another depiction of a fighting competition.

Another element that is sadly missing from modern gaming is the art of arcade game mastery. Truly skilled players of the classics could play for extended periods of time on one quarter. A skilled **Robotron:2084**, Pac-Man, or **Crystal Castles** player could play for hours at a time without spending a fortune. But even the most skilled players today would be hard-pressed to find a modern coin-op that could be played indefinitely. This is due to the fact that all modern games are either finite and end upon completion of a last level, end after the time allotted has expired, or worse, are designed specifically to require players to continue playing game after game (and thereby requiring more and more credits) against an onslaught of foes who would otherwise be invincible. Even the poorest of players could potentially beat a game if he or she continued enough times. The fact that completion of most modern games is dependent upon ad-nauseum continuing ruins the very essence of what made v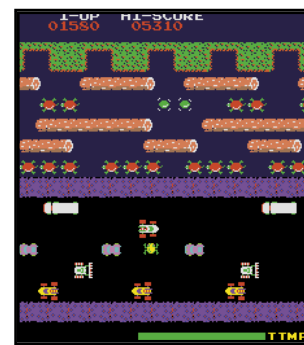ideo games so challenging and engaging in the first place. It also means that any high score obtained is absolutely meaningless in games when infinite continues are allowed and scoring is cumulative. This insidious trend grossly undermines the spirit of competitive gaming and severely undercuts the efforts of players who attempt to maximize their point values based on skill.

Images and recollections of classic arcade games are as embedded

in our collective national psyche as radio, television, movies, or the internet. Nearly everyone has either played or enjoyed watching others play them at one time or another. At least modern designers have acknowledged this and have released numerous classic compilations for modern consoles. Still, as wonderful as those packages are and as sophisticated and realistic as many modern games have become (I may be contradicting what I said earlier, but even I must admit that many new titles are downright awesome) nothing will ever quite replicate the wonderful experience of visiting an arcade, pizza parlor, tavern, bowling alley, skating rink, or hotel game room to enjoy our favorite classics. Hell, how many of us haven't reveled in trying our luck at Pac-Man, Donkey Kong, or **Frogger** at one time in our lives? So significant was this phenomenon that an image of a child playing a video game is even featured on one of the United States Postal Service's commemorative stamps from the 1980's. The mere mention of some of these titles brings a nostalgic smile to the face of most of us, and their impact on American culture is simply too important to be ignored or glossed over.

Crystal Castles is simply stunning. Can YOU make it to "The End" ?

Q*Bert: foul-mouthed star of the arcade, classic consoles, current consoles, television, and even kids' activity books.

Frogger even made its way into primetime TV via the Seinfeld show. Who are these people that play Frogger?

Classics like Space Invaders will be around forever. And that's a good thing.
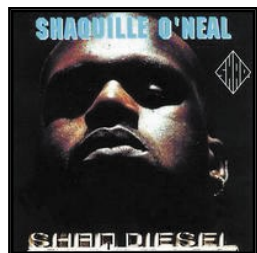
50 AWFUL GAMES

by Team DP

You know 'em, and there's a good chance that you hate 'em, but one thing's for sure, you've played 'em at least once. Now that we've reached the 50th issue marker here at DP, we figured it was a good time to revisit some of the worst games we've had the dis-pleasure of playing. The games are in no particular order, but make no mistake, they're ALL bad.

Shaq Fu, EA for Genesis
Shaq needed his own video game like, well, like Shaq needed his own starring role in a movie (*Kazaam*) or his own rap CD (*Shaq Diesel*). You ever listen to that CD or watch that movie? This game is just as bad. No, scratch that, it's even worse. While the graphics are passable for their time, the gameplay is more stiff than Shaq's horrid acting. Stay away from this cart at all costs.
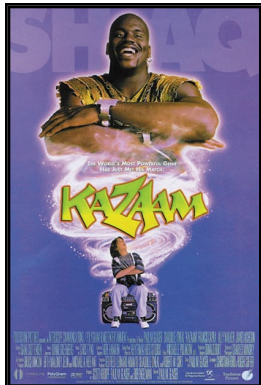- Dave G

Even Kazaam is better than Shaq Fu, one of the worst games EVER.

Shaq Diesel. Still, it's better than Sssnake.

ALL Mythicon games, Atari 2600
These three titles were amongst the first "value" games to appear for the 2600, at a time when the console didn't need anything else that would make it look bad. What's terrible about these three games is that they're all the same; change the sprites in a couple places, and you have a new game. $9.99 retail was WAY too much for these horrid clones. - Larry Anderson

M.U.S.C.L.E., BanDai for NES
I actually collected these figures back in the day. Never played the game

until years later, and it's probably just as well. These graphics are amongst the worst the NES has ever seen, with the audio to match. Moves are nearly impossible to successfully pull off, and what moves the player might manage are a result of pure luck. Bizarrely, a TV series based on this franchise has been resurrected on Fox just recently. The show is not much better, I'm afraid.- Tony Bueno

Jaws, LJN for NES
I'd rather be bitten clean in half, much like Captain Quint in the movie, than play this game ever again. You explore a tiny area and kill some fish while the title character stalks you. In the end it's you or him. Tediously dull, like watching the tide rise.
- Joe Santulli

Double Dragon, Activision for 2600
An utterly horrid piece of trash, to this day only one gamer has ever managed to complete the game without cheating. My hat is off to you, for this game is simply unplayable. Using this game as a hockey puck is ultimately more satistyfing than actually trying to play it. Worst. Control. Ever.
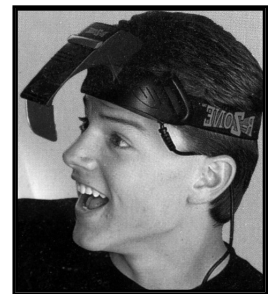- Dave G

10-Yard Fight, Nintendo for NES
Having never had the pleasure of plugging in Atari's **Football**, this has got to be amongst the worst sports sims of all time. If I ever had to play this one again… couldn't you just give me a gun and show me the way to the bathroom? - Tony Bueno

EVERYTHING, Tiger for R-Zone
Why Tiger even bothered to pass this crap off as a game "system" is simply beyond anybody's grasp. Essentially an interchangeable-cart version of their crummy LCD handheld games of the late 80s, the R-Zone is a ridiculous device that certifiably insane gamers

would have strapped to their heads (provided they were still lucent enough to FIND their heads). A tiny screen attached to the headband was then positioned in front of the

R-Zone Guy, the R-Zone's biggest, and only, fan.

players' eyes like that doctor thing gone wrong. An NES style control pad plugged into the whole mess, but nobody cared. Nobody, except for R-Zone guy, the way-too-excited poster boy seen on all the packaging for this failed gameplay experience. - Dave G

Zaxxon, Sega for Intellivision
You'd think that a system capable of putting out cool isometric 3-d games (like the Congo Bongo translation Sega themselves did and Diner) would've gotten a kick-ass Zaxxon. Well, it didn't; Sega had licensed the title to Coleco, and while the Colecovision translation was nothing short of awesome, no brain power was left for us poor Mattel devotees. Two levels, horrible graphics, and slow, slow, SLOW movement. At least the box art is kinda cool.
- Larry Anderson

The box says "Zaxxon." The cart says "Zaxxon." This Intellivision screen is supposed to be Zaxxon? Thanks, Coleco.

Dash Galaxy in the Alien Asylum, Data East for NES
With a name that long, the game must be good, right? And check out the

great box artwork! Plus, it's published by Data East, the company who gave us plenty of fun arcade games in years past. Sadly, this game is chock full of crap and completely devoid of fun. Sluggish controls ruin what little gameplay there is, and the graphics aren't so great to boot. Will have even the most patient players screaming at the TV in a vain attempt to make something happen. - Dave G

Taboo, the Sixth Sense, Rare/Tradewest, for NES
The aroma of a lit crack pipe must have been strong at Rare headquarters during the afternoon that this dung heap was slapped together. As if Ouija boards aren't lame enough, someone actually felt the need to convert Ouija into videogame form? And all the while curling and badminton have yet to turn up on a console. What a world. There's simply no game to even PLAY here, something that we at DP headquarters are 100% against. Plus, if the game worked at all, they could have used the prototype to figure out that nobody in their right mind would ever spend a dime on this turd. - Dave G

Astron Belt, Sega for Arcade
First Laserdisc game, first to overlay computer graphics on top of a laser image… and first incredibly boring rail shooter. From a rather questionable targeting system, to the most annoying laser sound on the planet (fingernail scratching on the chalkboard bad), a 2 year delay of this game's US release didn't help it out any. What may be even worse is that they tried to salvage the operators' investment in this bad hardware with a follow-up (Galaxy Ranger) that wasn't any better! - Larry Anderson

Sea Hunt, Froggo for Atar i2600
Here comes a strong statement. Sea Hunt is the worst video game I've ever played. I still can't believe Sea Hunt was ever made. The funniest thing of all is that the manufacturer of this game didn't even program the thing.

They bought the rights to it and resold it. It's the same game as Skin Diver (by Sancho) and Scuba Diver (by Panda). Can you believe it? The worst game I've ever played was manufactured, re-packaged under a different name, then re-packaged AGAIN?
- Joe Santulli

ANY Swordquest game, Atari for 2600
A reader in one of the classic magazines once wrote, "This isn't a game at all, but a pointless, frustrating torture chamber." Took the words right out of my mouth. Do you know ANYONE who has played this and said they enjoyed or even remotely understood it?- Tony Bueno

SwordQuest: Fireworld. Pointless, random torture for the low, low retail price of $29.99.

Tag Team Wrestling, Data East for NES
This game just might be the worst wrestling game ever made. The arcade version didn't exactly bowl anyone over with state of the art graphics, but at least you could play the damn thing. Here we have two teams, the Ricky Fighters (worst. name. ever.) and the Strong Bads. The graphics look like a sick cat threw up on the orginal version, and you have exactly one move. Awful, awful game best remembered as the inspiration for beloved Homestar Runner character, Strong Bad. - Dave G

Gilligan's Island, Bandai for NES
It's kind of funny that someone thought this 60s sitcom would make a good video game. The game, however, is anything BUT funny. Unless you consider losing a toe in a freak garden weasel accident funny. Here, you get to guide Gililgan and the Skipper around the island maze, looking for other castaways and hopefully a way out. One thing's for sure:

Bandai's Gilligan's Island should be stranded on an uncharted isle.

playing this game to the end is as about as likely as seeing an episode where the castaways get back home. - Joe Santulli

Time Killers, Black Pearl for Genesis
The Time Killers arcade game was meant to be a funny, over the top spoof of the **Mortal Kombat** series. Chainsaws, for example, are used to chop off the other player's limbs, instead of merely punching and kicking an opponent to death. Sounds better than it plays though, as the fighting system is arguably the worst on the planet and the art and sound aren't very good either. It was only a matter of time before then-dreck masters THQ decided that a Genesis port of this dud game would be a perfect addition to their lineup of farm-fresh crap. The Genesis cart was almost finished when even THQ realized how much it sucked, and the uber-crappy game was shelved. However, in the dying days of the Genesis, Black Pearl managed to get their hands on the cart and went ahead with its release. The Genesis Time Killers cart is a shining example of how to make a bad thing worse, and how NOT to make a game. - Dave G

Sneak 'N Peak, US Games for 2600.
The worst game I've played, hands down, bar none. Hide in a freakin' hidden spot on the screen while your opponent closes his eyes. Poor execution, minimalist graphics, only the basest music and sound effects. This is as bad as it gets. - Tony Bueno

Tony's pick for worst game ever, Sneak 'N Peak. When REAL hide and seek just isn't an option, you can play it on the 2600. Better yet, just hide this cart. At the bottom of the ocean.

Hudson Hawk, Sony for NES
You thought the movie was bad? The game is much, much worse. When Bruce Willis is in a movie, you're guaranteed to see one of two things:

either a mega-hit (*Pulp Fiction*, *Die Hard*) or a total disaster (*The Jackal*, *The Fifth Element*). *Hudson Hawk* is one of Willis' worst flicks, and the game follows suit. In that sense, it's a successful conversion of the movie, but as a game, it's one of the worst in a long, long line of bad movie conversions. In the days of the Arcadia or the Channel F, we could have let a game this bad slide, but there's no excuse for this mess in the 8-bit era. Rent the mess of a movie instead.
- Dave G

Amidar, Parker Brothers for 2600
What happens when you take a stellar coin-op like Amidar and then suck all the fun out of it? This game for the 2600, that's what happens. Fans of the arcade game angrily marched on Parker Brothers headquarters and they were right to do so. They didn't gain anything from the experience, and neither will you if you ever waste ten seconds of your life to play this game. Slow gameplay with horrid graphics, practically no sound, AND tons of onscreen flicker to boot? We'd rather hurl ourselves down a flight of stairs into a flaming pit of molten lava while listening to an endless loop of Michael Bolton tunes. It would be much less painful than playing this atrocity of a game. - Dave G

Fighting Street, NEC, Turbo Grafx-16 CD
This game (along with Monster Lair) was one of the first titles available for the supremely expensive ($299 retail) Turbo CD add-on... and it's no wonder it was a commercial flop. This game barely taxed the capabilities of the hardware; the entire purpose of the CD was to treat you to some rather poorly done kung-fu style voice acting.
- Larry Anderson
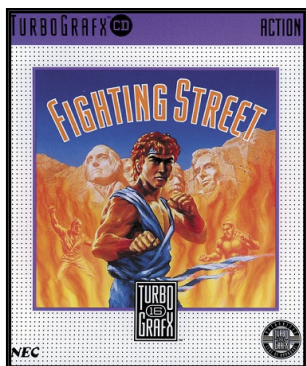
Fighting Street for the TGCD. Trust us, you'd have more fun punching yourself in your own head.

The Irritating Maze, SNK for arcade
Back around 1998 in Dallas, there was a laundromat which had an arcade game titled "The Irritating Maze". Being a semi-masochistic individual, I had to

give this 50 cent (!) game a try. Nearly identical to **The Irritating Stick** for PSX, this seems like one of those bad games that potentially sucks the player in. Now I may appreciate this phenomenon with movies, but I'll pass when it comes to games.
- Tony Bueno

KAO the Kangaroo, Titus for Sega Dreamcast
Dear Titus Software: Why? How? Why would you rush a piece of garbage like Kao out to a stellar platform like the Dreamcast knowing full well that nobody is interested in playing your horrible, horrible game? The graphics are insultingly bad, the camera is quite possibly the worst ever, and there's almost nothing to do or see in the game (a "me-too" 3D platformer no less) at all. And HOW the hell you managed to ruin something with so much built in appeal (game featuring a kangaroo) is beyond us. - Dave G

ECW Hardcore Revolution, Acclaim for Sony PlayStation
Yet another example of how NOT to make a game. First off, there's about a 25% chance that any move the player executes will actually work. Second, even if the move DOES work, it usually happens the day after the player executed it. Third, the graphics are about as blocky as a Channel F reject. Fourth, the game even tries to warn unsuspecting players with a blurb right on the back of the case: "...ECW Hardcore Revolution takes you to Hell..." It sure does. And there's just no excuse for this kind of hardcore rubbish.
- Dave G

Shadow: War of Succession, Tribeca for 3DO
The graphics in this game are so badly animated that actual contact between two characters isn't necessary to score a hit. Promise to warn anyone you meet with a 3DO to steer clear of this one. - Joe Santulli

If you ask Tony, Irritating Maze is nothing if not properly named. So much so that he put it on this distinguished list.

Populous, Acclaim for SNES
I never had the instructions when I rented this one, so I really can't say I got the full gaming experience. Having said that, I cannot fathom how on earth anyone could stand to play this one for any period of time whatsoever.
- Tony Bueno

Scavengers of the Mutant World, Interstel for PC
Back in the late 80's, this had the coolest cover art of all time. Sort of a Mad Max meets Dungeons and Dragons, this is the perfect example of a wonderful premise ruined by the poorest possible execution. Graphics sucked, gameplay sucked, sound sucked, combat system sucked, in fact, there was not one aspect of this game (aside from the box art) which DIDN'T suck. This game not only sucked, it swallowed. Even worse than **Drakkhen**, if that's possible.
- Tony Bueno

Wiz, Taito / Seibu Kaihatsu for Arcade
A waste of space in the arcade, and a waste of a perfectly good quarter to anyone to anyone who played. An attempt at a **Super Mario** knockoff, this one has inscrutable action, near useless bonus items, and no discernible goal. Oh, and the graphics and sound are no good, either.- Tony Bueno

Wiz. Not only is this game total garbage, they've stolen "Orko" from "He-Man" and used him as the main character.

Sssnake, Data Age for Atari 2600
Second in "blocky-ness" only to Pac-Man on this system. It seems to have been left in the hands of those professionals who show you a picture of an inkspot and then leave the rest to your imagination. Believe me, what you see on the screen here is strictly a matter of personal interpretation. It could be a "hunter" in the middle,

shooting at "wild beasts," including a ferocious "snake." Or it could be an 8-bit representation of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Your call. Also notable for its abbreviated scorekeeping. If you manage over 99 points (very easy), you go back to zero. Kevin Oleniacz names this "THE worst video game ever made." High honors indeed.
- Joe Santulli
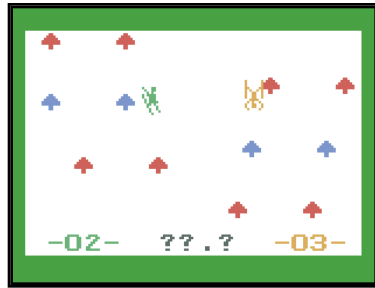
Alpine Skiing. So bad, it hurts.

Alpine Skiing!, NAP for Odyssey2
The early skiing titles all have something in common. They suck. There is very little difference between playing Magnavox' skiing game and having your own toes lopped off in an industrial accident. Both leave you wanting more. Blocky graphics and practically non-existent sound make matters worse. - Joe Santulli

Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom, Tengen for NES
Never before has Atari 2600 emulation worked so well on the NES! I just don't think that's what Tengen was trying to do here. Abysmal. - Joe Santulli

Honestly, Temple of Doom on the NES is as bad an arcade conversion as Parker Brothers' miserable **Amidar** on the 2600. Contains nothing that made the original coin-op a joy to play. Crappy graphics, crappy sound, and crappy game play make this game an utter pile of uber-crap. Avoid like a stray turd on the sidewalk. - Dave G

Drag Strip, Fairchild for Channel F
An absolutely painful idea of what a video game is. You expect the graphics and sound to be bad for the Channel F system, but watching two capital "I"s race across the screen? This forces the question, "What's worse, playing Drag Strip on the Channel F or losing a toe in an industrial accident?" If you get a thoughtful look, don't be surprised, just add: "...and it was smashed, not just cut clean off." - Joe Santulli
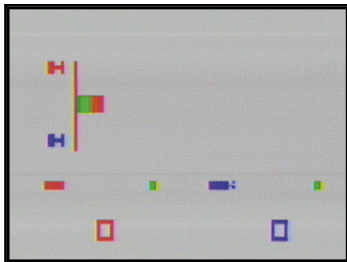
Primitive PC board schematics? Nope. It's Drag Strip on the Channel F. No, really.

Smurf Racer, Infogrames for PSX
How hard is it to rip off Mario Kart? If Smurf Racing is any indication, it must be damn near impossible. In fact, there's barely a game here at all.

There are graphics, though they're so bad you'd swear you were playing an old throwaway public domain Commodore 64 game. There are sounds too, but not racing sounds, just random, canned sounds. The game is presented in a split screen, but since there's no urgency, no thrill, you simply don't care. I kept wishing that Gargamel would suddenly appear and crush the entire village. He didn't, so I threw this game out into the street. It bounced into a neighboring yard where a little orange cat immediately crapped on it and buried the entire ugly ordeal. True story. - Dave G

It's Only Rock N Roll, Xonox for ColecoVision
A mess of a game done entirely in text. Defies definition, but the idea is to start up a band and make a million dollars. Warning: Do NOT use this game to turn a friend on to the ColecoVision.
- Joe Santulli

Video Olympics, Atari for Atari 2600
It was called "Pong" at one time, and these "olympics" include hundreds of variations on Pong, basically. I guess they couldn't do a Pong version of track and field events, and who can forgive them for leaving out the equestrian or bicycling? The heartless bastards! - Dave G

Checkered Flag, Atari for Jaguar
Sega had a pretty big hit on their hands with their Virtua Racing game, and had modest success with their home versions on the 32X and Genesis. Even the Genesis version managed to capture the flavor and the feel of the original coin-op. Therefore, the Jaguar take on the same theme

should be 4 times better, right? Wrong. Not only does the game look like it was made on the 5200, it plays like a reject from the Channel F. Literally bad enough to make you immediately rip the cart from the console and run it over twenty thousand times. One of THE worst. Games. Ever. - Dave G

Jag Checkered Flag. Even the box art sucks, and it's the best thing about this game.

Kasumi Ninja, Atari for Jaguar
Kasumi Ninja was Atari's failed attempt to cash in on the **Mortal Kombat** craze. Not only is this game among the worst ever manufactured, it's even worse than other fighting games on this list, like, **Time Killers**. To add insult to injury, they included a free "ninja headband" with the game. The hell? A ninja headband? Gamers who were forced to play this abomination by sadistic parents who actually shelled out fifty bucks for it cleverly wore the headband over their eyes to help ease the pain. It didn't help much. - Dave G

What could be worse than Time Killers on the Sega Genesis? Kasumi Ninja on the Jaguar.

### Back to the Future 3, LJN for Genesis
Three games in one, each one worse than the last, and the whole cartridge worse than the two before it.
- Joe Santulli

Karateka, Atari for 7800
It worked so well on the Commodore 64, you have to wonder what

happened on the way to the Atari console. Few will ever see the ending because the controls - which are bad enough - are hampered by poor response. - Joe Santulli
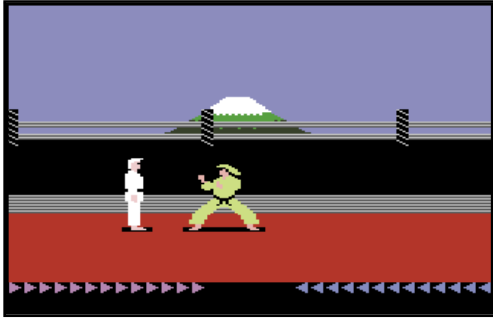
Karateka works on the Commodore 64 but simply does NOT work on the Atari 7800. Ugh.

Simpsons Wrestling, Activision for PSX
You thought **Smurf Racer** was bad? You thought Smurf Racer was a painful waste of a license? Well listen up, Jack. The Simpsons Wrestling takes the atrocity that IS Smurf Racing, craps on it, kicks it into a pit of raw sewage, then sets the entire mess on fire. The design team figured it would be best to make the worst wrestling game of all time and then slap badly drawn and poorly animated Simpsons characters on it - the ultimate F-you to Simpsons fans worldwide. There's just no rhyme or reason to anything in this game. Marge is as strong as Groundskeeper Willie. Not that you'd care, this game is a horror. So unforgivably bad and such an insult to the Simpsons franchise that I will never, ever buy another Activision game. Ever. - Dave G

Midway Arcade's Greatest Hits, Midway for Gameboy Advance
There are two levels of "suck" when it comes to bad video games. The first level is a game that's just utterly bad in its own right. A game completely designed and created from scratch without an existing premise, movie, storybook or whatever. Then there's the second level of suckiness. Games that ARE based on something, that have an existing template to match up to,

to use as reference and the only thing the designers need to do is recreate what's already there. This game falls into the latter category. It's supposed to contain emulated versions of some of the finest games ever designed. Instead, it contains absolutely shitty versions of some of the finest games ever designed. Put simply, there is NO excuse in this day and age for this kind of crap to A) get beyond the prototype stage, B) get mass produced and C) to wind up on store shelves without being recalled. None. - Dave G

Target: Renegade, Taito for NES
If standing knee-deep in quicksand while thugs pummel the living daylights out of you is your idea of fun, then you'll surely love this game. If that's NOT your idea of fun, don't bother plugging this cart into your NES. An insult to the Renegade franchise. - Dave G

Bill Laimbeer's Combat Basketball, Hudson Soft for SNES
For those of you who don't remember Bill Laimbeer, he was a mediocre basketball player who was most well known for his stint with the Detroit

Comic Book Guy declares Simpsons Wrestling the Worst. Game. Ever.

Pistons in an era where they were almost championship material, and teammate Dennis Rodman hadn't yet discovered tattoos, piercings, and ultra-insane behavior. Laimbeer's claim to fame was t hat he wa a loudmouth crybaby who basically made a living fouling other players. So he was almost the perfect guy to lend a name to this horrible Combat Basketball game. Trouble is, nobody ever liked Laimbeer in the first place. An even worse use of a name than Sega's **Buster Douglas Boxing**, and a much, much worse game to boot. - Dave G

Battle Chess, Data East for NES
Originally a PC game, but it quite honestly doesn't belong HERE. Other versions moved much quicker. Ack! The movements and battle sequences on the NES are SO slow, it makes an already slow motion game appear to be moving in reverse! - Joe Santulli

Prize Fighter, Sega for Sega CD
How bad is Prize Fighter? Well, as bad as it looks, it plays even worse. In fact, you might want to turn on a real boxing match on TV and try and play that instead. You'll probably get more out of the experience and wind up with one less broken game. - Dave G

Frogger, Hasbro for PSX
An unplayable update of a fantastic classic game. Not only are the graphics and animation awful, the camera refuses to move along with the action. What that means to anyone masochistic enough to try and play this disaster is that you'll be spending lots and lots of time screaming at the screen in a futile attempt to make the game remotely fun. Avoid at all costs. - Dave G

### Activision Classics, Activision for PSX
This game is currently used in college game design courses as a textbook example of how NOT to emulate and package a set of old games. There is NOTHING good to say about this ill-conceived pile of crap. Simply seeing used copies at your local game shops will send you into a blind rage. It's just that bad. - Dave G

Donkey Kong, Coleco for Intellivision
Yes, it seems third party developers had some problems getting the most out of the Mattel console's 16-bit technology. It really shows here. The familiar looking game looks strangely unfamiliar on Intellivision, with odd sounds, slow-motion action and horrific controls. Coleco got better with Ladybug and Turbo later on, but this early effort just plain sucks. - Joe Santulli
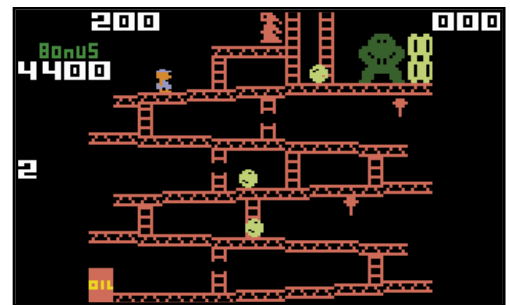
Once again, Coleco puts the screws to Intellivision owners with this crummy version of Donkey Kong. That green skull in the upper right corner is allegedly the famed ape. Nice.

Cliffhanger, Sony Interactive for NES

Did the world really need the *Cliffhanger* movie? I dare say no. Which makes the game based on the movie even more perplexing. Certainly there were other more worthy movies to license? *Plan 9 From Outer Space* immediately comes to mind. This game is a complete loser. Indescribably bad graphics, animation and sound don't even give the player a chance to see how truly awful the supposed gameplay is. If you ever see this game, throw it off a cliff. Playing it will only make YOU want to jump off of one. - Dave G

So where's the *Over the Top* video game?

Racquetball, Apollo for Atari 2600

Racquetball, the REAL sport of racquetball, is one of the fastest, most physically demanding sports around. Why Apollo attempted to turn it into a 2600 cart is beyond human comprehension.

I know it looks like it might almost be boxing, but it's Apollo's Racquetball.
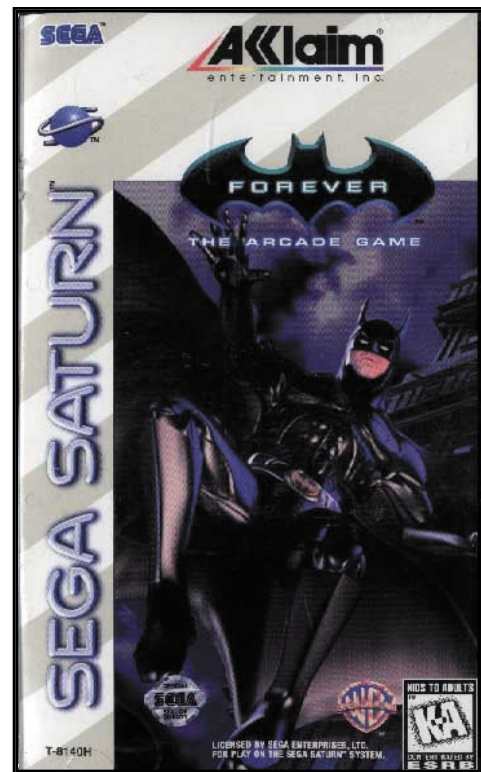
Suffice it to say that this cart is not only infinitely slow and dull - the antithesis of racquetball, it's nearly impossible to even tell WHERE the ball is. Let me put it this way. If you've ever played racquetball in "real life" and gotten hit directly in the face with a ball travelling at well over 150 miles an hour, you have some idea of how painful this 2600 game is. - Dave G

Batman: The Arcade Game, Acclaim for Sega Saturn

This game is a complete mess. It's impossible to tell where your characters are, what they're doing, or who they're supposed to be fighting. And everything seems to happen completely at random. Sometimes you'll pull off a super move, sometimes you won't. Now I know the instructions explain why these things happen, as a result of accumulat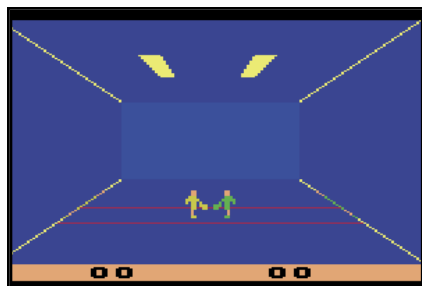ing various icons, etc., but since you can't really EVER see what's on the screen, it's a moot point. You can easily get through the entire game by mashing buttons as fast as you can. Not fun, not pretty, and certainly not what you'd expect from a game. A complete disaster. - Dave G

As if the game isn't bad enough, they went and put a shot of Batman's codpiece on the cover. You've been warned.

Ever been to a White Sox game? In addition the same old tobacco, beer, audio, hot dog and cola advertisements, you may have caught a glimpse of what is arguably THE best Astrocade game, The Incredible Wizard. Sure, it's really Wizard of Wor, but don't tell anyone at the old ballgame. Unless you like trying to explain video game history to the guy in the nacho hat...

RESIDENT EVIL (2002)*(Milla Jovovich, Eric Mabius) A genetics lab has a security breach and a virus is deliberately unleashed upon mankind. The lab is owned by a mega-corporation that is so powerful (Enron?) that they can get away with anything. The area is immediately sealed shut and every employee is either gassed or drowned to avoid the spread and allow for decontamination. A team of commandos is sent out to assess the damage and most of the movie is a tedious search and destroy mission. All employees and even the animals have turned into a population of zombies. The best way to destroy them is to shoot them in the head. Like vampires, if you are bitten you eventually wind up on their team. If that wasn't enough, the commandos have to face a not so user-friendly computer that handles security. Sounds familiar. Also there is a hallway with a laser beam that acts like a giant meat slicer and makes for some of the grossest scenes. Also thrown in is a time limit of one hour before lockdown. I wish that applied to the whole movie!! As bad as it was, it still opened in second place having been frozen out by **ICE AGE**.

Survive the horror. Stay home and play the game instead.

eXistenZ (1999) ** (Jennifer Jason Leigh, Jude Law, Willem DaFoe) – This sci-fi thriller opens with the beta launch of a new video game (eXistenZ), by the "world's greatest game designer",

Allegra Geller. To play her interactive virtual reality game you need multiple players, each fitted with a "bioport". This is an input device surgically implanted at the base of your spine that allows you to download the game via a "game pod'. The game pod is also your controller and is composed of living matter and connected via umbilical cords. Still sound like a cool game? The plot thickens with assassination attempts on the life of Geller. Who is trying to do her in? A rival game company? A misguided user? The marketing rep who is supposed to be a bodyguard. When is the game not a game? Watch for the surprise ending. A future cult movie perhaps.
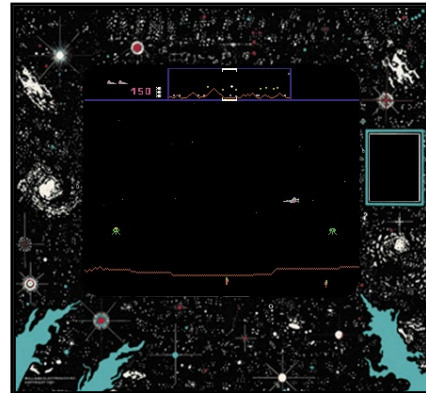
BIG (1988) ***1/2 (Tom Hanks, Elizabeth Perkins) – The movie opens with Tom at a computer console playing a text adventure. He gets killed, but later on in the film, advances. At a carnival Tom walks past **Pac-Man**, **Defende**r, **Solar Quest** and other arcade games. When he checks out two dealers while looking for a Zoltar machine, there is a **Ms. Pac-Man**, **Pole Position II**, **Spy Hunter**, and some cocktail game. Tom takes delivery of a pinball machine off a truck that has three other arcade machines on it. At the Sea Point Park in NY, there is an **Outrun** and one other

machine that looked familiar.

CLOCKERS (1995) ** (Harvey Keitel, Mekhi Phifer, John Turturro). This is a street savvy Spike Lee movie centered on the death of a drug dealer. There are a number of scenes where this young kid is playing a VR game called **Gangsta** with special glasses. This is allegedly a Sega game, but it looks contrived. A **Virtua Fighter** machine is in Rodney's Place and can be seen just before he gets busted.

Defender stole a scene or two on the BIG screen. Ha! Get it?!

GROSSE POINTE BLANK (1997) **1/2 (John Cusack, Minnie Driver, Alan Arkin). Cusack is a professional hit man in town for his high school reunion. When he re-enters a convenience store, the clerk is busy playing a **Doom II** machine. He is so preoccupied with the game (he also has a headset on) that he doesn't even hear the real gun battle going on between Cusack and a rival hit man. The rival plants a bomb in the microwave and exits through the front door while still firing away. Cusack sees the bomb and has to drag the clerk away from his **Doom II** game before the whole building blows up.

***Maximum Overdrive** just might be the only movie to feature a cameo by Time Pilot 84. And there's no other reason to watch the movie.*

MAXIMUM OVERDRIVE (1985) no * (Emilio Estevez, Pat Hingle) - Stephen

King film in which machines take over the world. In the game room of a truck stop, a black dude gets zapped by a short-circuiting **Solar Quest** machine. There is a **Time Pilot '84** not far away.

NO SMALL AFFAIR (1984) ** (Demi Moore, John Cryer, Meg Tilly). There is a **Star Wars**, **Pole Position II** and one other machine in the school cafeteria. Meg can been seen playing **Ms. Pac-Man** on the wharf. She is also seen in an Atari Adventure arcade at the airport. I was able to make out two **Q*bert** machines.

THE ACCUSED (1988) *** (Jodie Foster, Kelly McGillis). The game room of the bar where the infamous gang bang takes place contains several arcade machines. **Street Football**, **Lock N' Chase** among them. When the assistant DA comes to check out the crime scene she sees that "KEN" got a high score on the date of the incident. That coupled with the fact that witnesses said they saw a college kid playing that game when the rape was going on, and a college yearbook, enabled her to find the key state's witness.

Mega-hit Punch Out!! shows up in Better off Dead. Proof that life really IS worth living after all.

BLINK AND YOU'LL MISS IT DEPT.

THE ADVENTURES OF BUCKAROO BANZAI ACROSS THE 8TH DIMENSION (1984) ** (Peter Weller, John Lithgow). Lithgow, as a mad scientist manages to short circuit a **Buckaroo Banzai** arcade machine (mock-up) on his way out of the insane asylum.

AIRPLANE II:THE SEQUEL (1982)**1/2 (Robert Hays, Julie Hagerty, William Shatner)
Young lad sneaks onto the console of an air traffic controller and plays the screen like a video game, until he crashes a plane. Oh, well Game over.

THE BAD NEWS BEARS (1976) *** (Walter Matthau, Tatum O'Neal). The is an arcade scene, but since this was 1976

only one unidentified driving video game can be seen. The rest are all pinball machines.

BETTER OFF DEAD (1985) **1/2 (John Cusack, David Ogden Stiers, Kim Darby) There is a **Punch Out** and some others in a supermarket. There is a **Robotron:2084** and something else in the dining room of the burger joint.

BIG BULLY (1996) *1/2 (Rick Moranis, Tom Arnold) – When Rick comes in out of the rain, his kid is sitting on the sofa playing something on Game Boy.

BLOODSPORT (1987) ** (Jean-Claude Van Damme, Leah Ayres) – The "Muscles from Brussels" challenges a guy to **Karate Champ**, and wins of course.

BOOMERANG (1992) ** (Eddie Murphy, Halle Berry, Robin Givens) There are a few arcade games in the back of the pool hall, but they are too out of focus to be identified.

BUSTIN' LOOSE (1981) *** (Richard Pryor, Cicely Tyson). Richard Pryor gets sucked into driving a busload of problem kids cross-country. A few of them escape to the nearest arcade where they are caught playing **Sprint 2**.

CHARLIE'S ANGELS (2000) **1/2 (Cameron Diaz, Drew Barrymore, Lucy Liu). When Drew falls naked through the window, she lands in the backyard of a house where she finds two kids who are playing some game on a Playstation.

THE CROW (1994)*** (Brandon Lee, Ernie Hudson)- Based on the dark comic. Some out of control hoods vandalize an arcade, hard to make out the

details. One of the hoods walks into a convenience store past two arcade games??

DAWN OF THE DEAD (1976) ***1/2 (David Enge, Ken Foree). Zombies are loose in a shopping mall. A group of the living manage to take some time off from fighting the undead to play a few video games: **Qwak!** (duck hunt), **F-1** (racing), **Night Driver**, **Gun Fight** and some other shooter. **Sprint 2** is in the background.

DUDE, WHERE'S MY CAR (2000) no stars (Ashton Kutcher, Seann William Scott). The climactic scene take place in Captain Stu's Space-A-Rama arcade. Several games are shown, but not in close-up. I was able to make out a **Tekken3**, **Daytona USA2**, **House Of The Dead**, and some bowling game.

ELECTRIC DREAMS (1984) **1/2 (Lenny Von Dohlen, Virginia Madsen). There is a nostalgic look at an old Imagic display in the computer store. The focus of the story is about a computer that becomes jealous of a nerd's love life and causes chaos. It plays its own twisted versions of **Pong**, **Boxing** and **Pac-Man** at times.

FERRIS BUELLER'S DAY OFF (1986) **1/2 (Matthew Broderick, Alan Ruck, Mia Sara).
Principal Ruck thinks he has caught a truant Ferris playing **Karate Champ** in a restaurant.

"Baby Ruth... Pole Position... Cliffhanger! Heyyy yoou guys!" Game on, Sloth.

FOOTLOOSE (1984) ** (Kevin Bacon, John Lithgow)– There is some dude dancing at an arcade machine in the hamburger joint. There is another scene with two of the girls at a diner where workmen are busy unloading and loading arcade machines.

THE GLASS HOUSE (2001) ** (Leelee Sobieski, Diane Lane) – Foster parents try to win over two orphans with video games and other gifts. The boy got a bunch of PS1 & N64 games like **Pokemon Snap** and **Ape Escape.** He can be seen later on playing some

cartoon adventure, a motocross game and something on Game Boy.

THE GOONIES (1985) **1/2 (Sean Astin, Josh Brolin, Corey Feldman). There is a police chase near the beginning of the movie. They fly past an arcade that has what looks like a **Cliffhanger** game (by the cabinet) and a **Track & Field** upright. Later on, some kids find a treasure map in an attic. One of the kids remarks, "1632? What is that, a date or sumthin'?" Mouth (Feldman) answers sarcastically, "No, it's your top score on **Pole Position**". Roloff DeJeu notes that the DVD has a few out-takes, one of which shows an **I, Robot** machine by Atari.

GREMLINS (1984) ** (Zach Galligan, Phoebe Cates, Hoyt Axton). When the Gremlins swarm all over the local pub, one of them takes up a game of **Star Wars**. An earlier shot shows that there are at least two coin-ops present. One may be **Air Force Liberator**. In the boy's bedroom the Gremlins can be seen playing a Coleco **Donkey Kong** mini-arcade tabletop.

THE GRIFTERS (1990) *** (John Cusack, Anjelica Huston, Annette Bening). Cusack gets punched out by a bartender and staggers out past a **Ms. Pac-Man** machine.

HIGH SCHOOL HIGH (1996) ** (Jon Lovitz, Tia Carrere)- Jon Lovitz unknowingly accepts a teaching position in an inner city school that is very tough. How tough is it? It is so tough that the teacher's lounge has two arcade machines – "Homeroom Homicide" and "Classroom Carnage". Totally bogus games.

HONEYMOON IN VEGAS (1992)*** (Nicolas Cage, James Caan, Sarah Jessica Parker)- Cage gets into an argument with Parker in a casino arcade, after he tells her that he lost her in a poker game. There is an Atari sit-down driving game,

a **Race Drivin'**(Atari) cockpit, a **Time Traveler** (Sega) holographic console and a lot of others. In an early scene, a kid is playing with a Game Boy in the schoolyard. Worth checking out the "Flying Elvises".

HOUSE ARREST (1996) **1/2 (Jamie Lee Curtis, Kevin Pollak). The kid's room has a SNES console and even cooler still, the outside hallway has a **Centipede** upright. Nintendo is mentioned by name once.

JAWS 2 (1978) ** (Roy Scheider, Lorraine Gary). The sheriff's kids are playing a **Pong** game on the TV. There is a scene in a teenage type bar where the camera pans across two arcade machines: **Death Race** (Exidy) and **Dominos** (Atari).

JINXED! (1982) ** (Bette Midler, Ken Wahl, Rip Torn). There is an employee lounge with some arcade machines outside the casino boss' office.

KOYAANISQATSI (1983) **** (Documentary). Views of American life and landscapes set to music and a lot of time-lapse photography. Video games are represented by: **Turbo**, **Ms.Pac-Man**, **Q*Bert**, **Popeye**, **Donkey Kong**(?), **Defender**, **Stargate** & **Robotron:2084**. The title is a Hopi Indian term meaning 'Life Out Of Balance'.

MAGNOLIA (1999) *** (Tom Cruise, William H. Macy, Julianne Moore, Henry Gibson) - You can just about make out the marquee of a **Frogger** machine in back of Macy & Gibson, who are sitting and bullshitting at a bar.

Steve Martin and Ron Howard are a couple of bad Hollywood dudes.

And the award for Best Supporting Video Game in a movie goes to... Ms. Pac-Man!

Mario Brothers, an over the top game that makes you feel like a truck.

ME, MYSELF & IRENE (2000) ** (Jim Carrey, Renee Zellweger). Jim is sitting on the sofa watching Gomer Pyle on TV with "his" kids. There is a Coleco Super Action controller on the shelf above the TV.

MR. MOM (1984) **1/2 (Michael Keaton, Terri Garr) While Keaton is playing poker, his kids are in another room playing something on an Atari 5200.

NEXT OF KIN (1989) *1/2 (Patrick Swayze, Liam Neeson, Helen Hunt) There is definitely a **Pac-Man** and maybe a **Donkey Kong** in the warehouse lunchroom. Also a video poker machine gets shot up. I couldn't make out the arcade game in the scene in the black bar game because it was so out of focus.

OVER THE TOP (1987) *1/2 (Sylvester Stallone, Robert Loggia). Sly's kid arm wrestles a bully on top of a pinball machine. There are two Nintendo arcaders on either side, one of them is **Mario Bros**.
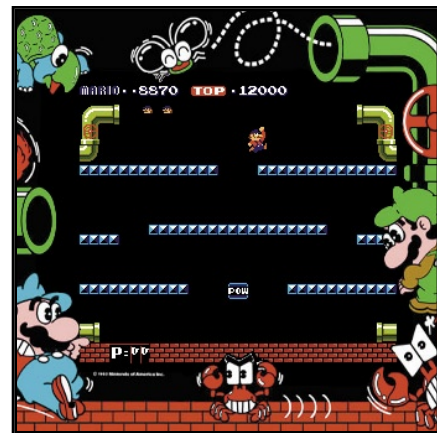
PARENTHOOD (1989) ** (Steve Martin, Mary Steenburgen). Contains a scene where father and son are bonding over a game of **Bad Dudes**. Other games(?) are present.

PIRANHA (1978) *1/2 (Bradford Dillman, Heather Menzies). Heather is killing time at the airport by playing **Shark Jaws** by Atari.

PLANES, TRAINS, & AUTOMOBLLES (1987) **1/2 (John Candy, Steve Martin) - Right

next to where Steve Martin is making a phone call in the bus terminal is a **Galaga** machine and another one that I couldn't make identify.

THE PRINCESS BRIDE (1987) **1/2 (Cary Elwes, Fred Savage, Robin Wright). The movie opens with Fred Savage playing some baseball game on the TV in his bedroom. Can't tell exactly which game, but definitely Nintendo era.

PSYCHO II (1983) **1/2 (Anthony Perkins, Meg Tilly, Vera Miles). Norman Bates is released from the insane asylum and gets a job in the kitchen of a diner. He is a little too busy to take advance of the **Battlezone** and **Ms.Pac-Man** machines in the dining area.

REVENGE OF THE NERDS (1984) ** (Robert Carradine, Anthony Edwards, John Goodman) Wormser is playing **Spacemaster X-7** on the b/w TV in the gym. At first glance it looks like Reactor. In the house scene, when they get the invite from the Tri-Lambdas, he is playing another video game that is too far away to identify.

ROBOCOP 2 (1990) *1/2 (Peter Weller, Nancy Allen)- Robocop gets into a fight in an arcade. I was able to make out: **Bad Dudes**, **Midnight Resistance**, & **Sly Spy**.

ROMEO MUST DIE (2000) **1/2 (Jet Li, Aaliyah) – Two black mobsters are playing a football game on a PlayStation until they are interrupted by their boss.

RUNNING SCARED (1986) **1/2 (Billy Crystal, Gregory Hines) – A cop buddy movie. There is a full size **Battlezone** in Billy's apartment. Hard to see but there are side views of **Tempest** and **Centipede** in the front of the tattoo parlor.

SPECIES (1995)**1/2 (Natasha Henstridge, Ben Kingsley, Marg Helgenberger). The alien creature in humanoid form escapes from the lab. Hops a freight train. Jumps off, then walks past **Centipede** and **Missile Command** in the train station.
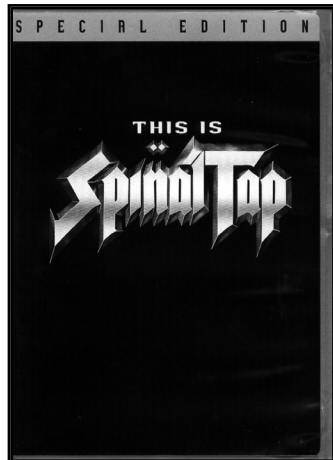
STUART LITTLE 2 (2002) *** (Geena Davis, Hugh Laurie, Jonathan Lipnicki). The stepbrother and his friend are playing a PS2 Soccer game when they are interrupted by Stuart's first solo flight.

SUPERMAN IV: The Quest for Peace 1987) ** (Christopher Reeve, Margot Kidder, Mariel Hemingway) Criminal mastermind Lex Luthor, has at least one arcade machine(?) in his office.

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES (1990) ** (Judith Hoag, Elias Koteas). The hideout of the local bad boys has a **NARC** machine, some basketball game and others.

THE TERMINATOR (1984) ***1/2 (Arnold Schwarzenegger, Linda Hamilton). There is a very quick glimpse of an arcade near the entrance of the Tiki Motel. Only one arcade game (??) is actually noticeable.

TERMS OF ENDEARMENT (1983) ****(Shirley MacLaine, Debra Winger, Jack Nicholson. You will have to sit through almost this entire tearjerker movie to reach the point where MacLaine picks up her keys in the hotel lobby. She then strolls past **Donkey King Junior, Wizard of Wor**, **Pac-Man**, **Defender** and **Asteroids**.

THE THING (1984) *1/2 (Kurt Russell, Wilfred Brimley, Richard Dysart) – An

How do Antarctic researchers unwind? By playing Asteroids Deluxe, of course!

This Is Spinal Tap. This movie goes to "eleven" on the hilarity meter. And it has video games.

Asteroids Deluxe unused in the rec room of the Antarctic research station.

THIS IS SPINAL TAP (1984) *** (Rob Riener, Michael McKean) – When the band is shown on their tour bus, the keyboard player is playing a space shooter on the computer.

TERMINAL VELOCITY (1994) *** Charlie Sheen, Natassja Kinski, James Gandolfini. Gandolfini (the future Tony Soprano) and is interrogating Sheen in the office of the skydiving school. A **Turbo** arcade is visible as he hits the Coke machine.

TWILIGHT ZONE-THE MOVIE (1983) **1/2 (Dan Aykroyd, Vic Morrow, John Lithgow). Series of short stories based on the TV series. In one episode, a school teacher runs across (literally) a young boy vigorously playing **Tempes**t in a diner.

VERY BAD THINGS (1998) ** (Christian Slater, Cameron Diaz, Daniel Stern). Slater gets in a game of **Mortal Kombat** while the minivan is getting washed.

Mortal Kombat shows, and shows up IN *Very Bad Things*.

**WAYNE'S WORLD** (1992) ** (Mike Myers, Dana Carvey, Rob Lowe)- **Pong**, **Pac-Man** and **Ms.Pac-Man** are mentioned. There are also some funny bits with the sleazy arcade owner who is sponsoring WW.

THANKS to: Craig Maloney for possibly identifying the arcade games on the second floor of the firehouse in **GHOSTBUSTERS**. Craig was able to determine that they are most likely **Star Castle** and **Missile Command**.

DVD de jour
by Robert deNiro
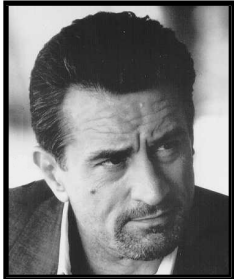
Signs

Distributor:
Touchstone
Pictures, 2002
Director: M. Night
Shyamalan
Aspect ratio: 1.85:1
Sound:
Dolby digital 5.1
(Region 1 disc was reviewed here)

Plot

A buncha ugly, unfriendly, goofy-lookin aliens are on their way to earth to harvest humans. Right, I'm shakin' in my boots over 'ere. Look fellas, you can travel through time and space, but come on. Even Richard SImmons could kick your butts. So anyways, dese aliens are tryin' to have their way wit' us and we don't like it one li'l bit. Dey start markin' up da earth wit' a buncha stupid signs, like crop circles and dat kind thing, sos dey can tell da other aliens where to find us or somethin'. Too bad fer da earth, Mel Gibson is a preacher struggling with his faith. If he was like, da way he was in *Mad Max* or *Braveheart* or somethin' like dat, he mighta kicked some ass and I mighta liked dis movie.

Extras

Listen up folks. The extras included on this disc ain't nothin' to write home about. We got a coupla lame deleted scenes totalling 'bout seven minutes. There ain't even a commentary track, I guess even Night Shyamalan wasn't none too enthused 'bout this picture after he got a good look at it. Look, I ain't sayin' it's the worst picture out there, but when youse get right down to it, it's really a remake of *War of the Worlds* with less logic and more plot holes. But I'll save dat stuff dere for youse people to figure out.

Picture

The anamorphic transfer doesn't look too good, tell you the trut'. Either they started out with a crummy print, somethin' dat's hard to believe in this day and age, or they used too much compression on the disc. The whole freakin' film here is uneven - dark shots look like bad jpegs wit' a ton of artifacts and the brightest shots are just mediocre. You've seen better transfers on other flicks, like, *Cape Fear*.

Sound

The 5.1 soundtrack is decent, but the sound doesn't play a very big role here, excepting the scenes where the humans try to listen in on those scumbag aliens. I'll tell you dis much, da sound is a helluva lot better than da picture.

Overall Feel

Look, I gotta tell ya, this movie ain't bad, but there's no excuse for the crummy digital transfer on this disc, or for the lousy casting. I mean, Rory Culkin? Come on, Night, you coulda got a much better kid than dat friggin' Culkin kid over dere. Tell ya what, folks, if you ain't seen dis movie yet, rent it. Wit'out any extras, there's no real reason to purchase this disc. Bobby D predicts that they'll re-release it as a super duper special edition. Save your cash or better still, spend it on *Taxi Driver* instead.
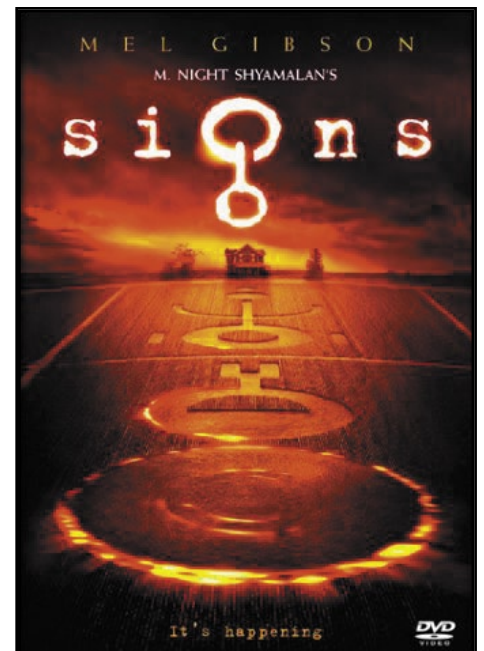
Mel Gibson, Jaquin Phoenix and Rory Culkin star in Signs. It's not the worst movie around, but you'll definitely be looking for the "EXIT" or "RETURNS" signs after watching this one. *Unbreakable*, or *The Sixth Sense*, this ain't.
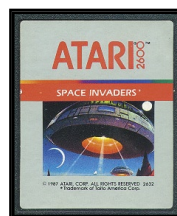
Sorry gang, there aren't any video games in this movie. But really, when you think about it, the entire MOVIE is one big video game: Space Invaders. Aliens are threatening earth, humankind has to defeat them, and you can even fire through your own shield!

The movie isn't half bad, but it isn't too great either. Rent it before you buy it. Or if you really need an M Night Shyamalan fix, pick up The Sixth Sense *or* Unbreakable *instead. Both movies are much better than* Signs *- they just don't feel as contrived and as conveniently written as* Signs *is. Pity, it could have been a much better film.*
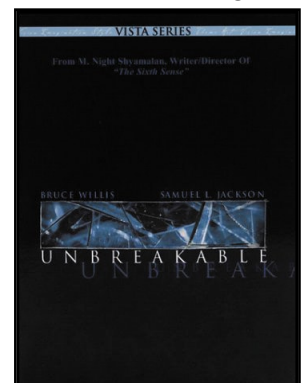
Digital Press Funnies

What better way to celebrate our 50th issue than with a pair of Pac-Man cartoons. The first is by worldwide comic sensation, Rodney "Buzz" Johnson. His website will be up and running very soon, but in the meantime, check out his strip. You'll be glad you did.
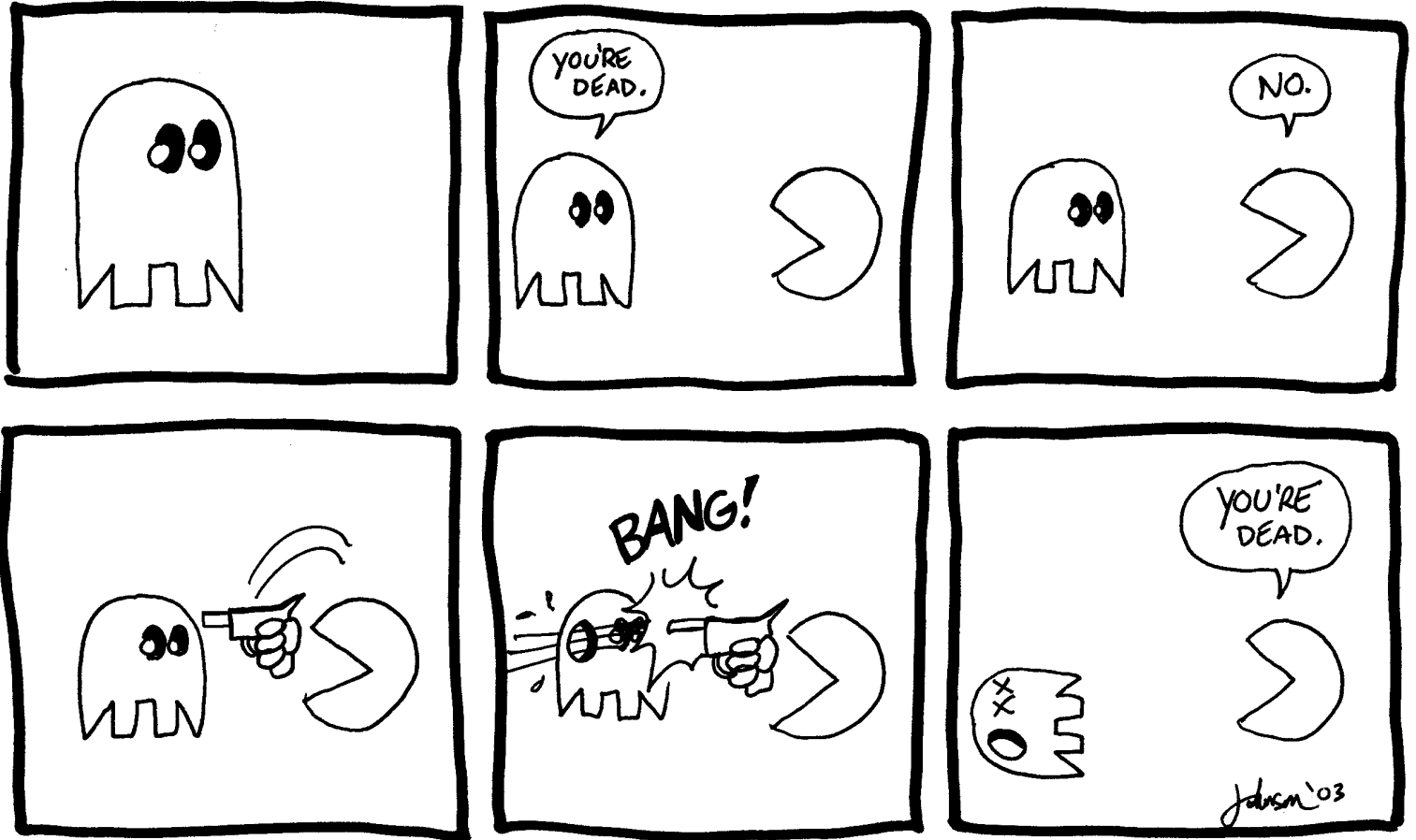
ARCADE ANTICS

© 2000 DAVE GIARRUSSO

DP MEMORIES

by Team DP

MY FIRST INTERVIEW

Back in early 1986, the video game market was undergoing a revival led by Nintendo in the wake of the infamous Crash of '84. A few of the ex-Activision programmers formed a new company called Absolute Entertainment not in California, for a change, but in New Jersey. Oddly enough, their offices were at 251 Rock Rd. and my house was at 253 Rock Rd. We were 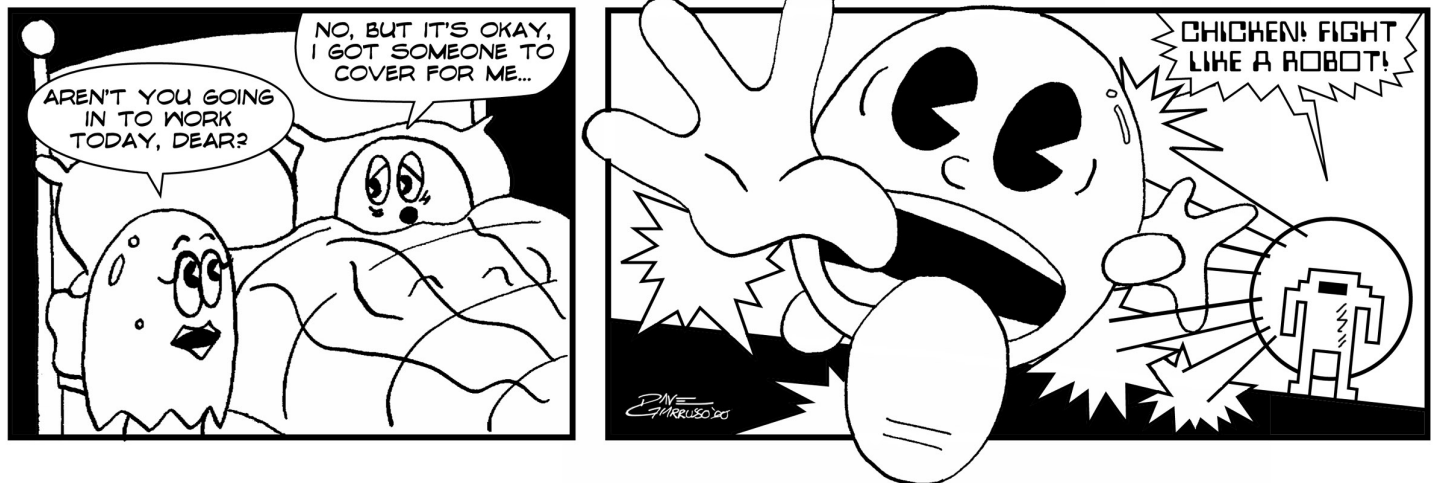not next-door neighbors, even though it was the same street. I was in Ridgewood and they were within walking distance in the next town of Glen Rock. Absolute began releasing new games for the venerable Atari 2600 such as **Skateboardin'**, **Title Match Pro Wrestling**, **F-14 Tomcat** and **Pete Rose Baseball**.

It was in early 1991 when I finally summoned up the courage to ask them for an interview. I met Dan Kitchen and gave him a few sample copies of the *2600 Connection* and left. They got back to me and we set up an appointment. I had hoped to do an interview with Dan, but something came up and he was unavailable. Alex Demeo offered to give me an interview instead. Alex was the author of **Pete Rose Baseball** and was a team member on a number of others. To make a long story short, the interview with Alex went well and was published in the 2600 Connection (Summer 1991 No. 5). He even gave me a line on some unfinished games that they sold overseas such as **My Golf**. The interview was a big deal for me at the time. As far as I know this was the first time a classic game programmer had granted an interview to anybody that did not represent a major publication……the first for a fanzine anyway. This was before there was a "Digital Press" or the wide spread use of the Internet and World Wide Web. Over the years, I went on to land a few more exclusive interviews. Being that I was a mainframe programmer who wrote business applications, I secretly yearned to write video games instead because it seemed like it would be more fun. - Al Backiel

A line begins to form, both on screen and off.

ON LINE FOR KUNG FU MASTER

When I was very young back in 1984, my family and I made frequent trips to the Presidio of San Francisco's PX, where an amusement center was situated in a mini mall, along with pizza and hot dog stands, barber and beauty shops, a dry cleaners, and other such businesses. It was a nice little place which sadly closed back in spring of 2002. This was the place where I first played many arcade classics for the first time, but the one that stands out the most is **Kung-Fu Master**.

We waited in line to play this one, probably much to the chagrin of the other players trying to play **Bump 'N Jump**, **Front Line**, **Star Rider**, and the others. There was always a crowd

Bump N Jump got boxed out by gamers standing on line for Kung Fu Master.

around this one, and we'd look on with awe and admiration to anyone who could actually save the girl and flip the game. Arcade mastery amongst crowds really gave me the feeling accomplishment, something I probably wouldn't have had in other areas growing up, as I was never a part of any winning sports teams, never a great academic achiever, and never involved with any extracurricular activities. - Tony Bueno

MY PROUDEST MOMENT IN GAMING

I was lucky enough to win the complete Starpath library from *Electronic Fun* magazine a long time back, and my goodness was it cool... But years later I'm wondering how long those tapes were going to hold out... I began giving serious thought to getting them burned onto CD to preserve them, but knowing how many copies I'd have to make to get a reasonable price, I figured that it would have to be done legitimately. After some research I actually got ahold of somebody who could grant me permission to do this, and for only a small licensing fee. The problem was, I still couldn't afford to get all the CDs made, and so the project went on the back- burner for a couple years. But then I got back on the net, and in the newsgroups I found some other people who were interested in doing the same thing, and doing a professional job of it. So, I joined up with Glenn Saunders, Dan Skelton and Jim Nitchals (sadly now deceased), and though it took a while longer than we'd initially expected it to take, there came a day when I held the finished product in my hand, and it was glorious. I felt quite happy to have had a hand in its production, and see my name in the credits. - Russ Perry

THE SEGA DREAMCAST.

I can't remember when a system made me as giddy as the ColecoVision or the 2600. Sure, I loved the NES, the Genesis, the PlayStation… but there's just something about that Dreamcast that makes it an instant classic game machine. With an extensive library of top quality games, the Dreamcast covers an equally extensive variety of game genres. Fighters, Shoot-em-ups, 3D, 2D, Light Gun, Sports and just plain Wacky games are all well represented. Anyone and everyone can find something to love on the Dreamcast. And it's a platform that, like the classics of yesteryear, always keeps me coming back for more.
- Dave G

The Dreamcast is a dream come true for gamers everywhere.

GAUNTLET PARTY

My friend Larry and I were partying at my apartment in Dallas. I guess it must've been payback for all the times I schooled him at **Street Fighter** or something. **Midway Collection 2** just came out, and we started a 2-player **Gauntlet** game. I should have known to pick the elf. This was the dirtiest 2-player "cooperative" play I've seen in my life. At every opportunity, the swift and crafty elf deftly stole food, potions, treasure, and keys from the hapless wizard. Worst of all, I was the one who fought all the enemies on the frontline, with the elf pushing the wizard into the ghosts at one point. In disgust and frustration, probably augmented by the fact that we had been partying earlier, I turned to my "friend" and said with a completely straight face, "You're nothing but a little bitch, Larry, that's what you are!" He was laughing his ass off, and I sat there shaking my head.
- Tony Bueno

Warrio. Needs food. Badly.

A BRUSH WITH GREATNESS

One of my favorite games was **Adventure**. My siblings and I played it a lot, and eventually mapped the game including the secret dot we'd read about (in fact, if we'd only gotten to mapping it sooner, I'm sure we'd have found it ourselves). Years later, I began to track down old game designers, and I was actually able to reach the game's creator, Warren Robinett. And moreso, he was willing to let me interview him. It was cool just sitting there, hearing the stories, and despite some difficulties with the tape recorder making it difficult to transcribe the interview, I think it turned out pretty well. It's funny reading more recent interviews and seeing the information that I heard so many years ago coming up again. I'm pleased that Warren was kind enough to talk to me, and continues to talk to others who are also fans of that game.
- Russ Perry

THE INTERNET.

Why do I have the internet in an article about DP gaming memories? Simple: the internet is a powerful tool, and has really helped advance the knowledgebase of videogame lore, facts, and research. Ever heard of M.A.M.E.? Where would we have learned of it without the internet? Would that project ever have been started without the advent of cyberspace?

The internet has helped bring together a pool of extremely talented designers, programmers, historians, authors, and a countless list of people who helped to shape, preserve and continue the hobby of videogaming. It's hard to imagine life as a gamer without the 'net. - Dave G

OBSCURITY LOVES COMPANY

Gods, I love obscurity… No matter how much I love my Atari 2600 and other popular systems, it's the obscure stuff that has a special place in my heart. I love coming across somet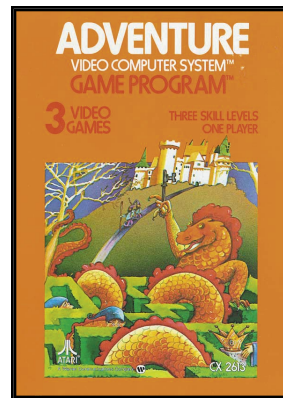hing from the fringe of the videogame industry that most people don't know about. Some of the fun is because the thing is so cool that it's surprising that it never caught on, some of it because it's just so ill-advised or awful that you can't believe they even tried, and some of it is just funny. As such, I grant the most mystifying but awesome name to the Mega Duck. Sure, most people have never heard of it, and it's just some stupid Gameboy clone with games that don't play any better than Supervision games, but how can you deny a system named after an aquatic fowl? - Russ Perry

Russ discussed microdots, magic and mischief with Adventure author Robinett.

MORTAL STREET KOMBAT

Back in 1992, when there were four **Street Fighter II** machines and two **Mortal Kombats** at the local arcade, a group of kids were playing, with one being a beginner, the other mentoring. Somebody had gotten Sonya down to about 5% health when the other player gets desperate and wins using four leg grabs in a row. I guess the other guy hadn't learned to block that particular move, or just got too cocky. Either way, it was an absolutely amazing comeback, and the loser shouted "FUCK YOU!" so loud that the arcade attendant asked him to refrain from using such language. Absolutely hysterical. - Tony Bueno

THE CGE EXPERIENCE.

If you're even remotely like us, then you know what an awesome spectacle the Classic Gaming Expo is. If you've never attended the premiere classic gaming show, then you're really missing out. New classic game releases. Exclusive games. A museum of classic gaming items the likes of which has never been matched. Classic arcade games as far as the eye can see, all set on free play. Classic game designers from around the world. Folks, it just doesn't get any better than this show.

To say that it's a bit overwhelming

is an understatement. Ask anybody who's been there each year and they'll all invariably come back with the same response: "It feels like I was just here yesterday." Wow.

For me, it's as much about the people as it is about the games. CGE is a great time to catch up with friends from all over the globe, people with whom you may "speak" to almost every day through e-mail, the web, or the telephone, but who you rarely have the pleasure of hanging out with. You might virtually "talk" to all these guys and gals every day, but when else do you have the pleasure of matching your **Robotron** skills against theirs (on an actual, dedicated machine no less) all the while talking trash? Not often. Not often enough for sure.

I'll be there each and every year. It's just that damn good. - Dave G

CLASSIC VACATIONS

My vacations to Harvey's Lake Tahoe back in the mid-1980's. This place had the best overall arcade back in the day, complete with a light gun gallery and ice cream parlor right outside. While my parents were upstairs gambling, I spent roll after roll of quarters on **Karate Champ**, **Yie Ar Kung Fu**, **Dragon's Lair**, **Afterburner**, and **Marble Madness** to name just a few. - Tony Bueno

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD, BUT FOR WHOM?

There was a time when newsletters were in great abundance, and I was known in both the classic and current systems fandoms, mostly due in part to doing a lot of writing -- not articles or reviews, but rather letters. In fact, it eventually prompted Chris Bieniek, editor of Tips & Tricks, to call me "ubiquitous" in the pages of that magazine. I had actually managed to get letters in a bunch of magazines (even got one in Videogaming Illustrated back in the Atari era), but I could never crack Electronic Gaming Monthly. Perhaps it was because my letters were usually negative

-- correcting some inaccuracy they'd printed the month before. I didn't mean any disservice, since I recognized that Steve Harris had grown the magazine from a much smaller newsletter he'd started out of nothing to a big glossy impressive pile of pages;

but still, I thought I deserved to get in its pages. At some point another fan-ed got Steve Harris to do an interview with him, and upon mentioning something controversial to Steve, the fan-ed could only think that he'd heard me say that, and when Steve asked "who says that?", gave my name. This led Steve to say -- and be quoted -- that it wasn't true, and "don't listen to Russ Perry Jr!". So, I never did get a letter published in EGM, but at least I got Steve Harris to say my name, and on record too. - Russ Perry

COMBAT-TY

I had gone to my parents' house during one of my off periods at college. My old room was set up pretty much the same way it was back in high school, minus the SNES and other favorite things I brought along with me to the dorm. Back at the house, I still had all the classic systems, and the Atari 2600 had been set up on the ancient large TV in my room. My sister and I sit down to a game of **Combat**. Neither has played this title since 1983 or something. The end result was a total embarrassment, like 8 to 1 points in the "ping pong" tank variations. It absolutely boggles my mind to think that after playing so many games for so many years that I still cannot hold my own in a simple game like Combat. - Tony Bueno

ROBOTRON: 2084

Simply put, Robotron: 2084 really is the best game of all time. It's a fact.

Okay, so maybe it's really just my opinion, but dammit, I'd be willing to wager that if you took an old fashioned straw poll, you'd find that more people than not agree with me.

Combat, plug it in for a minute, play for hours.

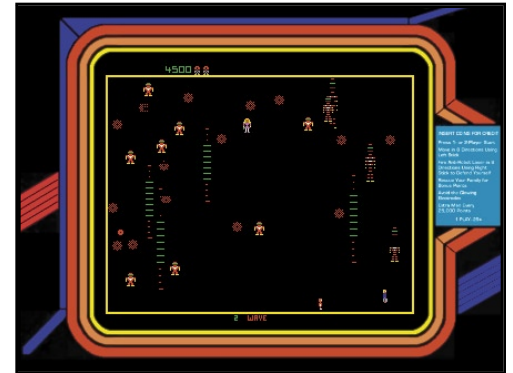Mr. Do! 20 years, 22 levels and Tony is a little bit shaken. But not stirred.

Eugene Jarvis is the ultimate game designer. I remember reading a quote of his somewhere along the way:

"The only legitimate use of a computer is to make videogames."

Those might not be his exact words, but they're close enough to give you the drift at least. And a guy that's THAT passionate about game design is a hero in the world of videogames. One need only look at his game resume to see the list of hits, and realize that he's something special. And that we're lucky that he didn't become a boring old scientist. - Dave G

Robotron: 2084. Best. Game. Ever.

MR. DO! CLOSURE

Sometime in Spring 2002, after 20 freaking years of playing this game lousily despite all the research and effort I put into this series, I actually reached the final martini/cocktail treat on level 22 in **Mr. Do!** I mean, I've seen other guys reach level… Christ… 60 something. They do this weird trick where they stop at precisely the right moment while digging to make their pursuer pause and mutate while they calmly walk away. I can almost never get that technique right, so with the few semi-advanced apple trap maneuvers and old-fashioned playing skills, I reached the final treat at last. If anybody deserved to reach that goal, it was me. Not to put myself on a pedestal or anything… - Tony Bueno
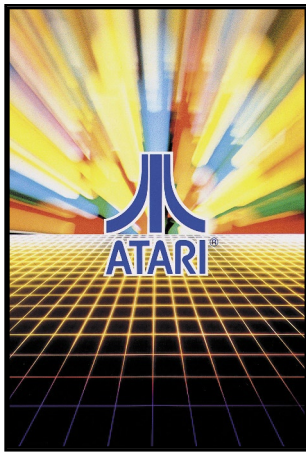
ATARI.

What else can you say? For years, Atari was SYNONYMOUS with

"videogame." "Wanna play some Atari," friends would ask, referring to any videogame within a ten mile radius. It might have been Odyssey, Intellivision, or plain old vanilla Pong, but you knew what they meant. Because Atari, like Kleenex, became the product instead of the brand name. And despite all the advancements in technology, it hasn't ever happened since then. Wow. - Dave G

Wanna play some Atari? Have YOU played Atari today?

LONGEST RUNNING GAME ZINE

Back in 1988 or so I was looking for fellow videogame enthusiasts, and one I ran into was Tim Duarte. At the time I mentioned that I had a list of 2600 games, but it wasn't in a nice format or anything. Since I had access to computers though, I promised that I'd let him know when I had it in a nicer form. It took a little while, but I finally gathered it together and sent him a copy. At that pointed, he mentioned that he'd been thinking of doing a newsletter. We swapped some ideas, and I wrote some articles to get him going. The first issue came out in the summer of 1990, and has been going on ever since (Tim ran it for a wonderful 50 issues, and I for a further "always late" 23). I haven't decided if I should retire after doing another 50 and pass it on to someone else, but I certainly hope it lasts at least that long. - Russ Perry

WARNING! CLASSIC GAME SPOILERS BELOW! READ AT YOUR OWN RISK!
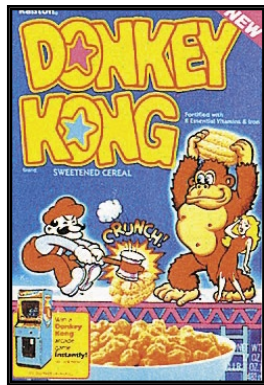
CLASSIC ENDINGS

Many cool or unexpected game endings have provided me with some of gaming's most memorable moments. I will never forget the end of **Super Mario Bros. 2** for some reason. The largely animated Mario snoring in bed was something I'd never conceived I'd see on the old 8-bit machine. The ending of **Contra III** on

the hard setting really makes the player feel like a winner. Sagat in **Street Fighter Alpha** had one of the neatest prequel storylines I've seen. In a nutshell, I remember him getting revenge on Ryu, at which point Mike Bison confronts him and tells him about "psycho power" while a helicopter in the background contains Balrog and Vega, who have also recently been recruited. Who could forget the revelation of Samus' gender from the original **Metroid**? But my favorite ending of all time is the bad karma ending for **Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee**. Kill as many of your friends and/or leave them imprisoned until you reach the ending. The ones you didn't save, now shaved, scarred, abused, and experimented on, exact their own measure of justice. Now that I think about it, it reminds me a little of that classic B-movie *Freaks* from the thirties. You have to see this one to believe it! - Tony Bueno

VIDEO GAME CEREAL

So, right. Video game cereal. From **Donkey Kong** to Nintendo Cereal System, there were quite a few game related cereals out there over the years. There was even a Kaboom! cereal, but we were angered when we discovered that it had been around prior to, and subsequently was not based on, the Activision game of the same name.

Perhaps ironically, the one cereal I think of most often as being a true video game cereal was the General Mills favorite, Lucky Charms. Back in the 80s, Lucky Charms was offering a deal where you'd send in 4 proofs of purchase (or something like that) from boxes of Lucky Charms and in return, you'd receive one of four Parker Brothers 2600 carts. The choices were **Empire Strikes Back**, **Reactor**, **Sky Skipper** and something else - possibly **Jedi Arena**. I mainly remember that we ate enough cereal to order the three games

Not even Donkey Kong cereal could compete with Lucky Charms.

we needed, and spent many sugar sweetened cereal mornings in front of the TV with Reactor. Must have been a combo of the sugar and that rockin' soundtrack. - Dave G

KOOL-AID, MAN

Speaking of those mail-away for free video games... As kids, soda was not a mainstay at our house (an inequity not rectified until we entered adulthood). Instead, perhaps based on a tip from the Kool-Aid Advisory Board, we had Kool-Aid on hand to quench our thirst on those hot summer days. And for once, it seemed that fate was smiling upon us. For when Kool-Aid announced that a new video game was available "for free" by simply mailing in "Kool-Aid points," we thought that we could certainly put away enough Kool-Aid to satisfy the requirements.

Oh YEAHHHHHHH! The "thirsties" run from our pal Kool-Aid Man.

And then we found out just what the requirements were. It was like, 600 some odd points or something. Now, for those households that used the larger, pre-sweetened packs or cannisters of Kool-Aid, it would have taken about three or four purchases to collect the required number of points. Our household, however, only bought the small, unsweetened packs (you had to add your own mountain of sugar) of Kool-Aid. And those packs had only ONE POINT each. There was simply no way we'd ever amass enough points at the rate we were going. Or was there?

For once, mom's habit of saving bar codes and the like was helpful. For she had already saved up almost all the points we needed. We still had to waste an entire afternoon cutting them out, and it was another week before the dye would wash off our hands, but in the end, we got our game.

And was it worth it? We ordered the 2600 version, but if only for the opening wall-smashing sequence, it WAS worth it. "Hey Kool-Aid!" - Dave G

If you haven't been to the DP website lately, (http://www.digitpress.com) you may want to stop on by in order to catch up with all the latest web-exclusive DP content. We now have five all new web-only columns: Pressed for Time; MAMExpose; Did YOU Know?; Middle School Gaming, and The Kunkel Report. In order to whet your appetite for all the great things to come, here's a little taste of The Kunkel Report.

You may remember Bill Kunkel from his gig with Electronic Games Magazine in the 80's, Sega Visions in the 90's, or his work with dozens of computer games over the past 20 years. He's an insider through and through but one who enjoys sharing his experiences and insights. "The Kunkel Report" will re-live some truly memorable experiences through the eyes of one of gaming's most prolific personalities.

An Answered Prayer, Part I
From Dream Project to Dark Knight-mare, As Told in Two Parts
By Bill Kunkel
PART ONE: THE DREAM

They say there is an ancient Chinese curse that condemns its victim to attain their heart's desire.

Truman Capote explored a similar subject in his years-in-the-writing final work, "Answered Prayers." In that book, Capote related the stories of his fabulously famous and wonderfully wealthy friends, all of whom had seen their wildest dreams far surpassed, only to be left empty and miserable by the experience.

We humans are goal-oriented creatures, after all. Most of us grow up wanting to "be" something – a cowboy, a soldier, a ballet dancer,

You may remember Bill Kunkel from EG magazine in the 1980s.

a movie star, a cop or a crook. And even if we wind up as plumbers or businessmen or doctors, there will always be a part of us that yearns, even in retrospect, for that childhood prayer to be answered.

Me, I wanted to be The Batman.

You know who The Batman is, of course (hell, if it weren't for videogame ads, DC and Marvel would've gone out of business by the mid-90s). They let the "The" part of the Darknight Detective's name slide for a few decades but Caped Crusader editor and scribe Denny O'Neil fixed all that in the early 70s when most of the classic DC characters were given long-overdue makeovers. With the aid of artist Neal Adams, and a string of brilliant stories such as "Night of the Reaper" and "The Joker's Five-Way Revenge", "Batman" once again became "THE Batman" and would not require further cosmetic surgery until Frank Miller picked up the scalpel almost two decades later.

I hail, however, from an earlier time period. I became a comic book fan around the age of nine, which would have been 1959. You may remember this time period if you ever watch "Leave It to Beaver" or "Happy Days" reruns. It was a time so primitive that Marvel Comics hadn't even been invented yet and Stan Lee (nee Lieber) was writing terrible romance stories and monster comics with titles like "Blarghh! The Thing That Ate With Its Hands!"

As for superheroes, they all lived in mythical, unrealistic-looking urban areas with names like "Metropolis" and "Central City". And all I knew for absolute certain was that I wished to join their ranks. Even blatantly second-rate super teams commanded my interest (you have to want to wear the

The glorious 1950s. Starring Hugh Beaumont, Barbara Billingsley, Tony Dow, and Bill Kunkel as "the Beaver."

mantle of superhero pretty badly to yearn after membership in the "Legion of Substitute Heroes," the inadvertent inspiration for "Mystery Men" and dozens of other superhero goofball squads).

But as I enumerated the various difficulties I faced on the road to joining the long underwear crowd, they seemed more formidable than I had first considered. First off, there was that matter of my not having any super power. Forget The Flash – I was closer to the slowest kid in my class than the fastest. Also I couldn't fly, see through women's clothing or even cloud men's minds. The list of superguys upon whom I might model myself grew increasingly thin. It began to look as if the only way I would ever acquire a super power was via one of those inexplicable lab accidents that allow the lucky victim thereafter to burst into flame at will, read minds or see through women's clothes.

But in The Batman, I found a physically normal human being who relied upon his mind as well as his fists to Fight Evil. True, Bruce Wayne had several advantages over me. For one thing, his parents had been brutally gunned down before his terrified teenage eyes, giving him the motivation to lift all those weights and invent all those utility belt weapons. For another, those same dead parents were absurdly wealthy, giving Bruce his very own Stately Manor (complete with Batcave – and I bet THAT was never mentioned in the real estate specs) in which to give birth to his new persona.

Nonetheless, the Caped Crusader was my dawg, as they say. I didn't just read his comics, I studied them,

as if each saga were part of a larger manual on the subject of How to Be the Batman.

*   *   *

Time passed and – let me end the suspense right now – I never did become The Batman. I did, however, become a comic book writer, working at DC (writing Lois Lane, The Private Life of Clark Kent, Vigilante, romance stories, horror stories and Jor-El only knows what all else), Marvel (where I got to script Spiderman, Captain America, The Falcon, Wonder Man, Dr. Strange and some fill-in stories that may still be sitting in the office files) and Harvey (where I spent a year writing Richie Rich).

But never Batman. There were several near-misses, but even then, all the writers enjoyed scripting Batman because, as a mortal human, he was far more interesting than that invulnerable Boy Scout, Superman (and, for those pre-Wolverine times, Bats was pretty damned psycho, as well). By the time my opportunity at the Cowl would arrive, I was gone from DC, writing the continuity pages for the European editions of Marvel Comics. I had actually begged Denny O'Neil to give me a recommendation for a tryout at Marvel, where a talented and generous man named Archie Goodwin did just that and hired me.

But that's another story. Two years later, I was splitting my time between Richie Rich and writing about

Archie Goodwin (above) agreed to hook Kunkel up with Marvel Comics.

From Wonder Man to Richie Rich, Bill scripted scores of comics during his years with Marvel, DC and Harvey.

electronic games for Video magazine. It looked like my shot at Batman was going to be a regret I would carry with me into old age.

Fast forward to 1989 and the arrival of "Batman" on the big screen. As with any fanboy, I had my gripes with the storyline. Making the Joker the killer of Batman's parents is not only gratuitous; it seems to put closure on Bruce's crimefighting career. Then there was the improbable casting of Michael Keaton and all, but still, it was a pretty good comic book movie.

Word filtered out soon thereafter that a sequel, "Batman Returns" was being planned for release in 1992. Burton at the helm again; bigger budget, the whole sequel trip. Konami picked up the computer game rights and the development job was assigned to Park Place. I knew the people at Park Place very well – it was a hot development group with several hit sports games in its resume. And someone, somewhere, decided that it might be a good idea to bring in actual game designers on this project. My background as a comic book writer helped Subway Software (Arnie Katz, Joyce Worley and me) score the gig.

In fact, this was not even Subway Software's first comic book project. When Arnie, Joyce and I branched out into game design in the mid-80s, we churned out design documents on a monthly basis for a Brit software firm called Tynesoft. Somehow, Tynesoft acquired the rights to produce a computer game based on Superman (called Superman, Man of Steel and later published in the US by Capstone) and again, given my history, I took the lead in creating the

design. And while the C64 version is an unplayable mess, I will tell you that the Atari ST and Amiga versions are among the finest design work Subway Software ever produced.

Bill wanted to be THE Batman, not necessarily 1989's Keaton-Batman.

And now I was getting my shot at Batman! At THE Batman! The rest of the process was a marvelous blur, full of contract signings, fat checks, and even a trip to the Hollywood studio where the film was being made. It was during my visit to the vast soundstage that I got to walk across the wintry rooftops of Tim Burton's ultra-noir Gotham City. Of course, this being Hollywood, the rooftops were constructed about a foot-and-a-half off the ground, but still, it just… looked… great!

I stood atop a vaulted cathedral ceiling and stared up into the black rigging and raised a silent fist to the stars.

My long-time prayer was being answered – I was going to design the greatest Batman game the world had ever seen! We would take an entirely different approach, let the player become the Caped Crusader as never before!

And it didn't even require that my parents be brutally slain before my horrified eyes.

And I guess that's when the super villains started to show up…

In Part II, the inevitable tragedy begins to unfold as our hero receives the film script, gets "helpful input" from Warner's movie minds and Park Place fades away before our eyes. Be here next time out for the sadder-but-wiser conclusion to Bill Kunkel's "Answered Prayer".

Log on to http://www.digitpress.com to find out how this tantalizing tale turns out! You won't want to miss this one folks!

And while you're there, don't forget to check out the other four brand spankin' NEW web-only columns. Game ON!
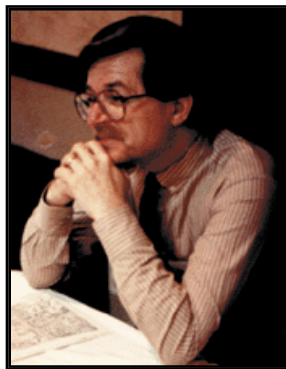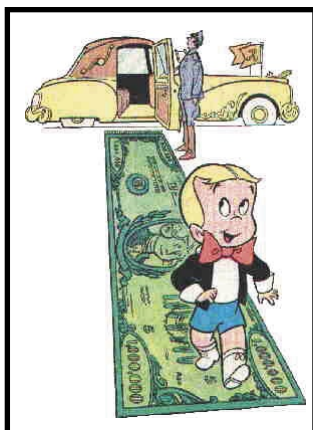
COLECO VISION™

PRESENTS

HIGH RESOLUTION VIDEO GAME CARTRIDGES
SPORTS GAME SERIES

#2436 SKIING

This unusual skiing game actually gives you the skier's perspective—seeing the course right through his goggles! The skier must race down the snow covered slopes, negotiating the sharp curves with precision and avoiding the treacherous moguls, trees and other obstacles. His goal is to traverse the course and reach the finish in record time! Go for it!

© 1982 Coleco Industries, Inc.

#2423 HEAD TO HEAD™ BASEBALL

In this realistic two player sports game, authentic baseball action is at your fingertips. Play against an opponent! Get up to bat and use all your major league skills—swing away—hit and run—steal! In the field, catch fly balls, line drives and grounders and throw runners out! The ball's shadow helps you position your fielders. The scoreboard keeps track of all the statistics!
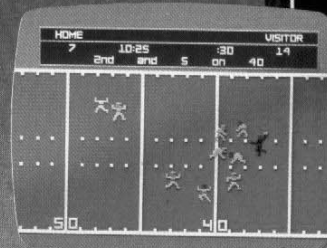
© 1982 Coleco Industries, Inc.

#2422 HEAD TO HEAD™ FOOTBALL

In this action packed sports game, you and your opponent compete in on-the-field action like never before! You call the plays, set the formation. You can even control how fast your player moves by using the speed controller. On offense, use it to speed up your running back or receiver. On defense, use it to increase the playing speed of your linebacker or safety! The faster you spin it, the faster the player moves! The offense can call a play—sweep left, go for the bomb, run a draw play. The defense can blitz the quarterback, tackle, and intercept. It's just like being on the field!
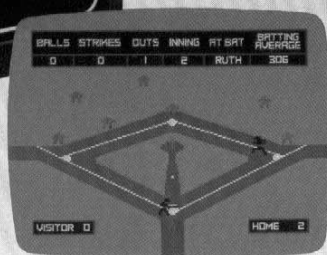
© 1982 Coleco Industries, Inc.

WHY ATARI IS #1.

The most games, the best games are only from Atari. Atari makes more video game cartridges than anyone else.

Adventure games, arcade games, educational games, our new RealSports™ games.

And they only work in the ATARI 2600 Video Computer System.™

No other system gives you nearly as much choice.

Or nearly as much fun.

Atari brings the arcade classics home. Only Atari has home versions of Space Invaders,* Pac-Man,** Missile Command,™ Asteroids,™ Breakout,™ Defender‡ and Berzerk††

The greatest arcade hits of all time.

If you have an ATARI system, you can play them at home.

If you have some other system, you can't.

You don't need two people to play ball with an ATARI 2600. All the best ATARI games can be enjoyed by a single player.

Including our new RealSports games. To play an other system's sports games, you need another person.

DEFENDER
YARS' REVENGE™
HAUNTED HOUSE
CIRCUS ATARI™
BERZERK™
STAR RAIDERS™
VIDEO PINBALL™

11300

Simple, straightforward controllers. With some systems' controllers, learning a new game is about as much fun as learning to type.

That's why Atari gives you easy-to-use joysticks and paddles.

Because it's the games you're out to master, not the controllers.

All for about $100 less. For the price of other game-playing systems, you can buy an ATARI 2600 and still have about $100 left over.

Enough to start your ATARI video game library with hits like Pac-Man, Asteroids, and Defender.

Which, by the way, you can't play on other systems at any price.

ATARI

A Warner Communications Company

NOTE-WORTHY

NEW Classics Created on Current Consoles!

Got a PS2, a GameCube a GameBoy Advance or an Xbox? Then you'll surely want to round up the new crop of classic games redux: Metroid Prime (reviewed inside), Shinobi, Rygar, Namco Museum, Metroid Fusion, Sonic Collection, Pac-Man World 2, and Pac-Man Fever, just to name a few. Whaddya waiting for?

DP Online Offers Prizes o' Plenty for Notable NEWS!

That's right, gang! You can now submit news directly through the Digital Press homepage at www.digitpress.com. If you're the first to report a particularly interesting, newsworthy, or just plain off the wall scoop in the land of videogaming, you could win a fabulous prize! Whaddya waiting for? Get out there and report!

Much more of DP Spokesmodel Janice!

While you're at the DP website, you just might want to check out Janice's latest DP pictorial. Unless you're afraid that she's too hot for you. Come to think of it, she IS too hot for you.

Digital Press is dedicated to the memory of my best friend and DP co-creator, Kevin Oleniacz.

Kevin's spirit will be with us through every homing missile fired, knockout punch delivered, UFO destroyed, and finish line crossed.

Play recklessly. Think positively. Live EVERY moment to the fullest.