classic CONSOLE ™

RETRO VIDEO GAMES MAGAZINE

ACTIVISION

110 METER HURDLES

1978 19:19

---

from the Editor...

Happy New Year! This time of year evokes a lot of feelings for many people. Many look forward to starting over fresh in a new year and letting go of hardships from the year previous, as others look to keep themselves honest and stick to a resolution that they have made.

For us here at Classic Console Magazine, we have begun the process of making some changes in an effort to make the magazine the best possible publication it can be. Due to that, you may have noticed that we were very quiet during the month of December. For that we apologize, but it isn't without good reason. We have some new exciting announcements coming very soon that we cannot wait to share with you!

One of those announcements has to do with print issues of this magazine coming very soon. Don't worry digital will still always be free, but for a small fee which covers the cost of printing a small-run publication and shipping, you can hold in your hands a physical copy of this magazine very soon! We are still working out a few small details in this regard and will have more to announce very soon in an email that will go out to subscribers. Part of the plan is to gauge interest in a print run by sending out a survey to all of our loyal subscribers. We ask that when you receive that email you do 2 things: A) Respond to the survey! B) Be truthful if you feel that you would actually subscribe to a print edition. Don't say yes if you have no intention of ever purchasing a copy. In the email we will detail the price structure so you will have some idea of what the cost will be. Don't worry if you say yes with all good intentions and for whatever reason ultimately cannot do it. It isn't a contract by any means, just a gauge to see what the demand is. We all know that life sometimes gets in the way and dictates that we can't purchase or do things we initially planned. We feel the demand will be pretty high however just based on email requests we have received. See you guys next month!

Josh LaFrance
Editor in Chief

Reader Mail

One question we pose to all of our subscribers on the website is the following question: "Is there anything you want to see in a future issue of the magazine?" Below is a collection of responses we have received from YOU, our subscribers!

Some features based on old Genesis RPG's like Rings of Power, Warriors of the Eternal Sun, Shining Force II, Myth and Magic II, Phantasy Star IV etc.

-John M.

Extensive story about the peak of the PS1 between 1996 to 1999

-Jeremy M.

Just lots of retro goodness. Lots of info on consoles from 75-85. Perhaps some retro pc goodness?

-Mike D.

All time classics, eBay's most precious retro games and prices.

-Ozgur D.

Arcade-only titles, pre-crash, 8-bit comparison ports, Japanese imports, Japanese exclusives, lesser known games (especially on things like the Game Boy or Game Gear, which rarely get "hidden gem" coverage), PC games from the 80s and 90s (please cover these when they offer a superior game than their 8bit/16bit port...like Doom, Wolfenstein3D, Ultima, etc.).

-Chris W.

I like reading about obscure games.

-Cesar G.

Possibly focus on lesser known classic games. Anything related to 2600, Colecovision or Intellivision.

-Derek G.

Maybe some interviews with game makers, both old and new, from offical to homebrew. Possibly interviews from game film makers, and even maybe people like me and my friends who compete and have world records on these games. Very cool mag already, and thank you for all the work that's already been done :)

-John P.

Advertisement features are always fun, and cheesy to read.

-David N.

Emulation is always an interesting topic.

-Games Freezer

What's in this Issue...

The Pac-Man /
Rubik, the Amazing Cube Hour

By Josh LaFrance

In last month's edition of Gamer Memories, we began to take a look at the state of video game inspired children's cartoons, examining a show known as Saturday Supercade.

There were many other gaming related options on the television and one such program was Ruby-Spears Productions' Pac-Man / Rubik the Amazing Cube hour on American television network ABC in 1983. (Pac-Man aired with Little Rascals and Richie Rich in 1982.)

Pac-Man follows the adventures of the Pac-Family, consisting of the head of the family Pac-Man, his wife Pepper, their kid Pac-Baby and their two pets Chomp-Chomp the dog and Sour Puss the cat. Later episodes brought along additional characters such as Super-Pac and Pac-Man's nephew P.J.

All of the Pac-family's adventures take place in the magical realm of Pac-Land, where everything is brightly colored and shaped like a sphere.

Just like in the arcade games Pac-Man must protect himeslf and his family from the ghost monsters Blinky, Inky, Pinky, Clyde and Sue. However, unlike the games where the ghosts act alone by their own volition, in the cartoon adaptation things differ.

Enter Mezmaron the mysterious, evil genius. His sole purpose in life is to discover the source of the all powerful Power Pellets. He believes that with their power harnessed correctly he could take over the world. He will stop at nothing to posess the Power Pellets, using the ghost monsters as his pawns to do his bidding.

Pac-Land's Power Pellets are essential to the city's survival, serving as it's primary food and power source. So, in each episode Pac-Man is not only fighting for his survival, but the survival of his neighbors and friends.

Pac-Man's cartoon is probably more well known for it's special episodes: the Halloween Special and Christmas Comes to

Pacland, the latter being a cult favorite and one still shown on TV each year.

In Christmas Comes to Pacland, Santa Claus crash lands in Pac-Land on Christmas Eve after his reindeer were frightened by the presence of the ghost monsters. Pac-Man and his family must find a way to help Santa get on his way and deliver presents to children all over the world.

Although panned by some as one of the single worst Christmas specials of all time, I can't help but keep returning to watching it year after year. Sure, it isn't ranked up there with such classics as Rankin/Bass Productions' Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer, but to many gamers it remains a classic none the less.

Pac-Man lasted 2 seasons and ran a total of 44 episodes. During it's run it inspired numerous other television series, as well as serving as the inspiration for last month's featured cartoon series "Saturday Supercade". The 1984 arcade game Pac-Land was based after the show, as it was set in the same universe.

Pac-Man was released on DVD in 2012 in two sets, Set 1 includes all of Season 1 and Set 2 includes all of Season 2 and the holiday specials.

Next let's take a look at Rubik the Amazing Cube. Although not necessarily video game related, I think most gamers have at one time in their life owned a Rubik's cube. You know, that insanely frustrating puzzle game where you have to match up all the colors on each side to be the same? I personally also have memories of playing Atari Video Cube for

the VCS, which was basically a digital Rubik's cube.

So the premise of the show is as follows.. Rubik is a magical being, a Rubik's cube with a face, arms and legs. He was created by an evil magician who wanted to use his powers for evil and world domination. (don't the villians always want that?)

Rubik's life changes when he falls out of the magician's stagecoach and is left on the side of the road.

He is discovered first by the Rodriguez children, Carlos, Lisa and Reynaldo. They discover his magical abilities which consists of being able to fly, amongst other things. (also the fact that he is a living puzzle game probably came as quite a shock as well!)
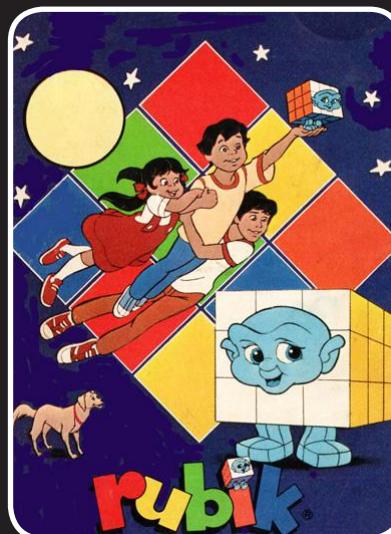
Rubik's powers don't come without challenge however. During many episodes of the show Rubik would be hit or knocked over, resulting in his colors being scrambled. In order for him to come back to life and use his powers the Rodriguez children must re-order his colors and solve the puzzle, most occasions just in the nick of time to prevent disaster or get out of a sticky situation.

As comic relief in many episodes the Rodriguez' pet dog will chase after Rubik, thinking of him as a play toy. Many times

Rubik will get scrambled as a result of the dog.

In 2014, internet blog io9 listed Rubik the Amazing Cube amongst it's list of twelve 80's cartoons that don't deserve remembrance. They challenged the ridiculous notion of a children's toy coming to life and called Rubik's face a "creepy blue baby head".

This is one show I did not watch on TV and in research for writing this article I had to resort to YouTube to watch an episode of the show. Unfortunately as of right now, the show is not available on DVD. The only version found was a VHS copy on Amazon for $50.

I for one enjoyed watching the episode I saw, but I could see where the premise of the show would become old after a while. For this reason, Rubik only lasted 1 season and 18 episodes.

We are almost to the end of our initial series reflecting on video game inspired cartoons. There is no doubt in future months we will examine other cartoons, but for now our series will take a break after first examining next month The Super Mario Bros. Super Show!

The Super Mario Bros. Super Show lives in infamy as not only a well known cartoon but also a live action show with Mario played as none other than WWE Superstar Lou Albano. Stay tuned next issue.

In the coming months we will be taking a look at video game inspired comic books, movies and toys. However, we always welcome feedback and suggestions as to what you want to see covered in future editions of Gamer Memories.

You can contact us via email at classicconsolemag@gmail.com, at Facebook.com/classicconsolemagazine or on twitter @cconsolemag.

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 2

BY BRANDON POE

I remember when I first heard about Sonic the Hedgehog (in an Electronic Gaming Monthly Magazine). I thought of how cool it would be to control a blue hedgehog with incredible speed. I think what fascinated me the most was the ability to zip through a stage in seconds.

I recall when I was able to get Sonic for my Sega (unfortunately I did not get the first installment but I did however the second one) and I literally could not put that game down as a kid. I played it so much and with each fast paced death I learned something new, until I had every stage locked into muscle memory.

I also believe the other reason why I played it so much was because it was the era before memory cards so saving games were hit or miss back then.

The blue blur took me through stage after stage of fast paced jumping and spinning. On some stages I moved so fast I got dizzy and lost track of the little guy, which only excited me more. Each stage was a puzzle which took strict timing to complete without losing any speed. At some points it was inevitable to be slowed down but at

other points you could blow through and feel so much accomplishment because nothing was able to stop you.

I thought to myself this has to be the best game ever, and my childhood felt like it had purpose. I had to stop Dr. Robotnik at all costs; I mean look what he had done to the woodland creatures!

Sonic the Hedgehog 2 was a 2D platformer which featured a "co-op" mode where someone with the second controller could control Sonics' sidekick Tails. It featured in my opinion (according to my memory) some of the best graphics to date (back in 1992 that is). The game gave a sense of urgency in that the faster you completed the

stage the higher your score, which also was affected by the amount of rings you collected by the time you made it to the end of the stage.

Now let us talk about the special "secret" that everyone knew about, which is Super Sonic. I remember learning each special stage to get the ever elusive and rare chaos emeralds. Let's back up for a second and discuss these colorful pieces of treasure. If Sonic collects fifty rings and reaches a checkpoint he gets the opportunity to enter a special stage and get a chance at getting a chaos emerald. If by chance you collect all seven chaos emeralds (which was tough for my fragile little mind back then) you get to turn into Super Sonic and OH MY GAWD!!! that is when the fun happened. Super Sonic made it seem like a completely different game. If Sonic was fast then Super Sonic was outright "speed of light" I mean you literally out ran the screen as Super Sonic, it…. was….amazing.

Now fast forward 20 something odd years, I decided to play Sonic the Hedgehog 2 again. I fired up my old Sega and as soon as it came on I immediately shed a lonely tear at the

little blue guy zipping back and forth and then the sound of "Segaaaaaa" ringing out. I immediately started spamming the start button to get into the game immediately.

Now would be a good time to say that when I talk about my memories of video games, I only talk about what I remember, and how I remember Sonic or any game is completely different from my present experience with the game. I get into the game and find out that I had forgotten completely about it having a multiplayer mode. I called up my friend and jumped into the multiplayer action and I have to admit it was very exciting.

The multiplayer is simple, beat the other person to the end of the stage. Of course, my friend and I think Tails is complete sidekick trash so neither one of us wanted to play as him so we flipped a coin and I lost. As I mentioned there was nothing special about it, but just racing my friend to the end of the stage was more fun than I initially would have expected. The reason I

had forgotten about this feature was because I was a lonely little kid and had no one to share that experience with (another lonely tear).

The single player campaign was freaking epic; I mean zipping through the stages was exactly like I remember it, only difference is that I was not that good at it this go round. I think I hit every baddie on the first stage and by the end of it I banked out with 3 rings (disgraceful). The more I played the better I got and the easier it was to get my timing back and in 20 minutes I was my old self and everything was familiar again.

I face rolled stage after stage until I got to the end. It was time to face my old nemesis Dr. Robotnik and avenge all the woodland creatures he harmed and the one's I had not been able to set free. I was drawn in at this point and was committed to save my land from his tyranny. We had battled many times before at the end of each act, but this time it was for keeps.

The stage music for our final showdown was amazing and set the mood perfectly for what was about to happen and what needed to be done. The battle was intense as he attacked me in his giant mech suit and I dodged from side to side and counter attacked, all while thinking of all the times he tried to kill me, which only fueled me even more. Finally, the final blow was struck and I had won.

I celebrated and rejoiced but something felt off, almost like I had forgotten about something very important. Then it hit me, "Super Sonic", of course I had to play through the game again and this time I would fight Dr. Robotnik in my final form. Collect fifty rings and reach the checkpoint, that was my goal, doing it seven times I might add, all betting on the chance that I could complete each chaos trial in one go. Would I have the skill to do it? I was confident, I mean all my old skills had resurfaced at this point and I was on fire. I collected fifty

rings and hit each checkpoint I could find on each stage, with each special stage getting more and more difficult to complete. I was on a roll. When I hit the 4th stage I was on the final stage to get "Super Sonic".
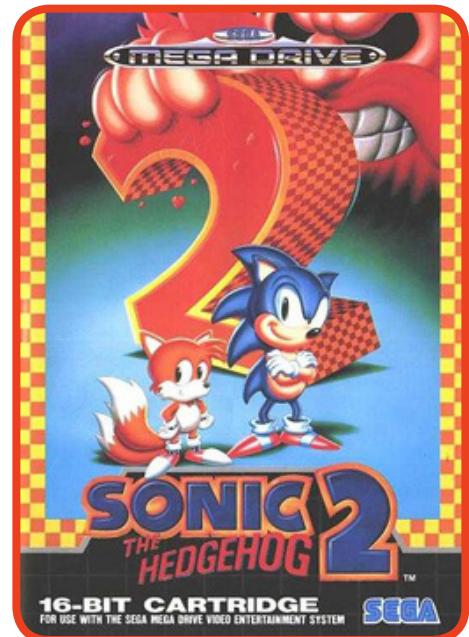
It had to be done, and I did it! All seven stages had been one-shotted. In my eyes god mode was unlocked as I completed every stage from that point as Super Sonic. Dr. Robotnik we meet again, but this time I have a surprise.. then I realized that after all my hard work I could not transform into Super Sonic because you could not meet the requirement on the final stage to transform, which was to collect fifty rings. (Bittersweet womp womp womp)

Sonic the Hedgehog 2 was an awesome game in my youth and going back to play it in the present it still holds up even against some of today's modern games. I enjoyed it just as much today as I did when I was a kid, well at least what I can remember. Praise that little blue guy and the many hours I spent saving his little world.
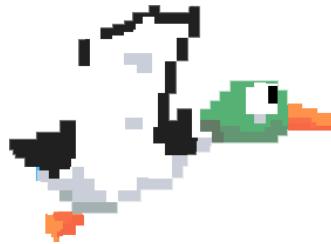
DUCK HUNT

By Amy Trinanes

Good old Duck Hunt, it never failed to make my after school days much brighter. What could be better than shooting that awesome NES Zapper and well, murdering ducks? Okay, maybe a lot of things could have been better, but as a child of the 90's, back then Duck Hunt was the best. To be honest I give this game credit for my awesome aiming skills as an adult, and it's also why we keep that old box TV around. (NES Zapper is not compatible with LCD or Plasma screen TVs.)

Duck Hunt was released in Japan in 1984, then was released in the US in 1985 as a launch game for the NES.

Duck Hunt did receive some negative feedback, saying that the game was boring and needed more levels, or variety. I disagree because in the game you do exactly what the title says, you hunt ducks. I'm not sure how you could make that more entertaining.

You start off in the main menu with three choices. Game A where only one duck appears on the screen at a time, Game B, 2 ducks, and Game C, clay shooting.

Game A allows a second player to control the movement of the ducks with a regular NES controller. For those who grew up knowing this secret and playing with friends that didn't, you could really wreak some havoc on your unsuspecting buddy!

So, in a nutshell you're out in a field with your trusty companion, a blood hound. You have three shots per duck, and 10 ducks per round. Watch out for your trusty companion though, he'll laugh at you if you miss the ducks. When you manage to shoot a duck, the dog will go and grab him for you. You gain points for every duck you shoot, and if you are a pro and shoot all of them, you get extra points. As you advance to higher rounds the ducks fly faster and the game becomes more difficult.

If you get bored with shooting ducks, you can switch it over to game c, where you shoot at clay targets. Just like in Duck Hunt you have 10 targets per round, except you get 2 singles in a row and one double. Although the clay targets don't move around like the ducks, they do move faster and are moving away from you. You must react quickly before they get out of range of your zapper.

Duck Hunt was only meant to go up to level 99. If you beat this level you end up at "level 0" and the ducks pretty much go frantic on you. It's known as the "Kill screen". This is due to a glitch in the programming, where code only allowed for a 2 digit level. Once rolling to 100, the game only sees the last 2 digits which is double zero, hence the game thinks you are on level zero and it breaks the game.

Maybe reading this article will inspire you to dig out your old zapper and go shoot some ducks...have fun.

SUPER TRASH TRUCK

"It's the year 20XX and video city is overrun with trash"

VIDEO GAME CARTRIDGE
FOR THE ATARI 2600 VCS™

ATARI 2600®™

super Trash Truck

@#!!!
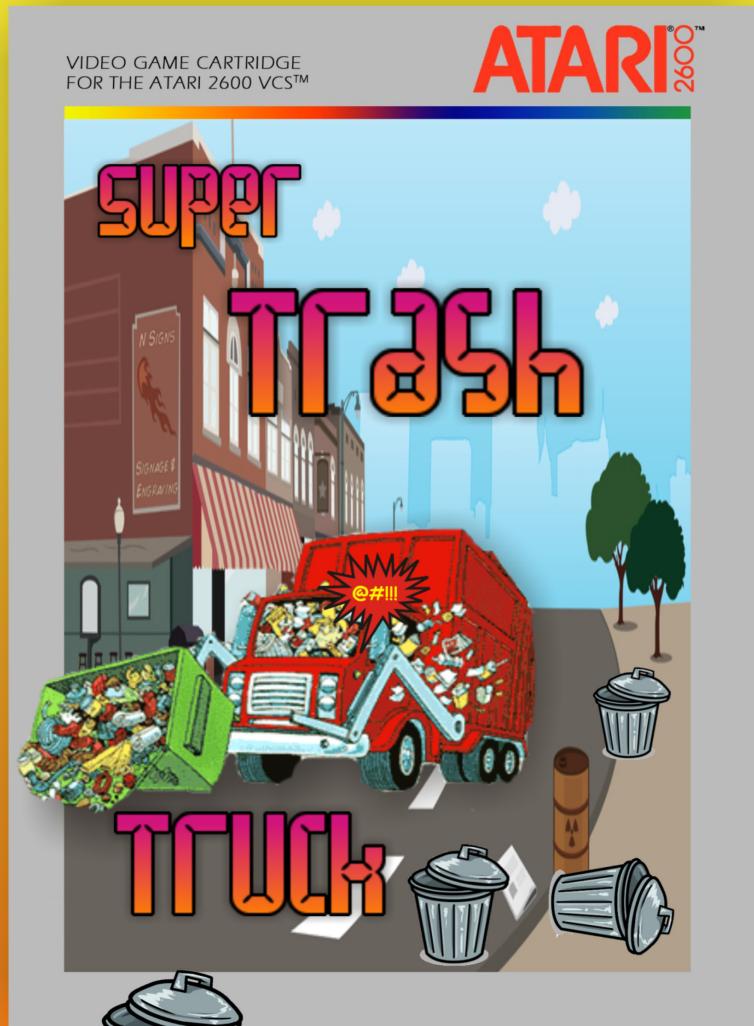
The once idyllic streets of video City have become overrun with TRASH, the mayor can no longer afford the extortion rackets and the streets are filled.

Its up to you.......
Johnny Badbody one time boss of BADBODY Cleaning to jump into your 2000HP Super Trash Truck and clean up these filthy streets.

The #1 smash hit arcade game from SAIDAI games corporation is now on your ATARI 2600 home system, bringing great graphics, great sound and all the amazing gameplay.... No quarters required!

@#!!!

SAIDAI
GAMES CORP.

MANIC MINER

GAME STATS:

Format:
ZX Spectrum
Developer:
Matthew Smith
Publisher:
Bug-Byte
Release Date:
1983
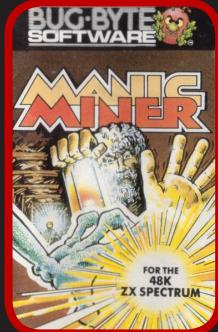
Manic Miner is the first game in the "Miner Willy" Series and a true classic for the ZX Spectrum, later being ported to a variety of computers and video game consoles.

Having taken some inspiration from the Atari 800 game Miner 2049er, Manic Miner follows the adventures of Miner Willy as he endeavours to collect several objects on each level before he runs out of air. Several enemies attempt to prevent him from his goal, including spiders and robots.

At the time the game stood out for it's colorful graphics and fantastic sound effects. The game was designed with the system's hardware limitations in mind and is the first game for the Spectrum with in-game music.
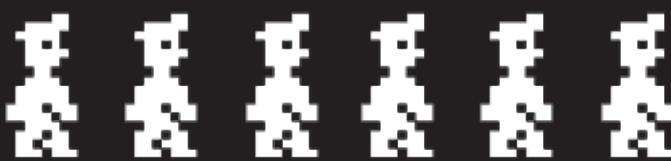
Stunt Car Racer

GAME STATS:

Format:
Amiga / Atari ST
Publisher:
MicroProse
Release Date:
1989
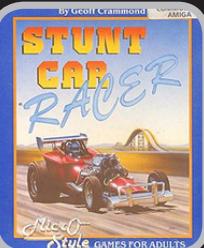
There are many racing games on the Amiga, but Stunt Car Racer stands apart from the pack.

Featuring jumps, obstacles and the unique game mechanic of being able to drive off the elevated race track, this 3D racer is still fantastic fun all these years later.

PEPSI INVADERS

GAME STATS:

Format:
Atari 2600
Developer:
Atari
Release Date:
1983

Released in 1983 at Coca-Cola's Sales Convention, Atari created Pepsi Invaders by modifying Space Invader's code. A cartridge containing the game along with a brand new console was given away to 125 sales executives, making it one of the rarest VCS games of all time. One copy sold on eBay for $2125.00

Additional Info:

The game featured unlimited lives but a 3 minute time limit. The letters P-E-P-S-I replaced the first 5 aliens.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER GOING BERSERK?

STERN SEEBURG

FRENZY

The game that made Stern Electronics famous has gone one further...

WHAT'S NEW?

NEW ROBOTS—The object of the game is to have the humanoid shoot as many robots as possible and escape from the maze before Evil Otto collides with him. Robots have two forms... Skeletons and Eyeballs.

TOTALLY NEW JOY STICK—The player has tighter control than ever before as he can move the Humanoid in eight directions with precision and accuracy. Either fire button can be used for shooting.

NEW EVIL OTTO—Now, he's truly indestructible. Evil Otto will pursue like crazy. Three bullets will stun him, but he can't be killed.

NEW WALLS—There are two types. The purple walls can be shot away to create an easy exit. The white walls are reflective so the player can be killed by his own ricocheting bullet.

NEW ROOMS—Within the maze, one of four rooms produces different obstacles at different game levels:

First Level MAMA OTTO. If Evil Otto is shot, Mama Otto frowns and sends four Baby Ottos to the attack. If they score, she smiles.

Second Level POWER FACTORY. Shoot the power factory and the robots stop attacking.

Third Level COMPUTER ROOM. Same as the Power Factory. Shoot it, and stop the robots.

Fourth Level ROBOT FACTORY. This nasty little plant produces robots by the dozens who emerge attacking.

305 ★★

STERN

STERN SEEBURG

FRENZY

For those who enjoyed the 1980 arcade hit Berzerk, Frenzy was very much a highly anticpated game. 1982's Frenzy, released by Stern Electronics took the gameplay and mechanics of it's predecessor and added to it.

Although a great game in it's own right, Frenzy failed to find the same level of success as the original. Many credit this to the fact that the game is in fact even more difficult than Berzerk which was a diffcult enough game on it's own. The game was ported over to ColecoVision and the Sinclair ZX in 1983.

Frenzy is a continuation of the story which takes place in Berzerk. You must navigate the hero through a maze filled with killer robots. Just like in the original (and most arcade games of that era) there is no end in sight, just the constant onslaught of the enemy. Keep playing your way through wave after wave of robots trying to set a high score. The game ends when the player runs out of lives.

Your character has a laser blaster with which to destroy the enemy. If you are lucky you can sometimes trick the robots to take each other out, aided by the help of the reflective walls.

This brings us to one of the biggest differences between the sequel and the original. In Berzerk you could not touch the walls as they were electrified and one touch by your character brought death.

In Frenzy not only are the walls not electrified, which allows the player to touch them without consquence, but there are also distinct variations of walls throughout the maze. There are two variations of walls, "dot" walls and solid walls.

The dot walls are destructible. Blasting your way through a dot wall makes the wall disappear and opens up unique new strategies in game play. Trapped with enemies on either side? Blast a new path to escape!

Solid walls are reflective so any laser shot will now bounce off of the walls. Robots can be tricked to take each other out as previously stated, but you can also bounce your own shot off the walls to eliminate enemies in creative ways. (Quick Note: doors are not reflective and will absorb your shot)

As in the original, the most dreaded event any player faces is the appearance of "Evil Otto", the super villain who can pass through walls of the maze and move at a very quick pace. The only way to avoid Evil Otto is to move quickly and work your way through the maze
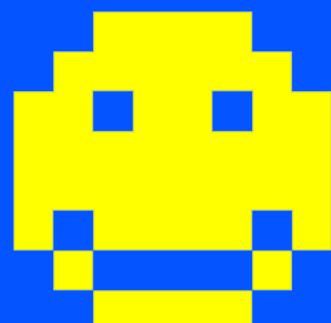
on each level. If you linger too long in a room, Evil Otto appears.

In 2010, Evil Otto was ranked 78th by IGN in a list of the Top 100 Video Game Villains of all time. The most terrifying thing about Evil Otto is that not only is he a cold blooded killer, but actually a giant smiley face. Nothing induces gamer rage quicker than being obliterated by a smiley face. It is almost like he is mocking you just by looking at you..

In Frenzy, your one advantage over Evil Otto (also called in this game Crazy Otto) is you can now kill him, unlike the original game. Shooting him once turns him into a face that isn't smiling, and shooting him again turns him into a frowning face. The next shot after the frown will kill Evil Otto. The strategy of killing him should only be employed if you are looking at quickly escaping to go to the next map, as each time he re-spawns he gets quicker and quicker. He re-spawns almost instantly, so once he appears you are better off just running to safety.


The robot enemies now consist of 2 different types, skeletons and tanks. Both robots behave in the same manner, however due to the different sprites the skeletons are a little more challenging to hit as they are smaller in size.

The 2nd biggest difference between Berzerk and Frenzy is in the varied levels. Every 4 levels, a level with interactive elements appear. The levels

consist of: Big Otto, Power Plant, Central Computer and Robot Factory.

In the Big Otto room, a giant statue of Evil Otto is in the middle of the screen. Killing Evil Otto causes four more Ottos to spawn on the screen, all moving at the game's maximum speed. In other words, don't kill Evil Otto in this level. Also, shooting the statue has no effect whatsoever.

In the Power Plant room, there is a giant power plant (hence the name) in the center of the screen. Shooting that however will destroy it. Once destroyed, all robots stop moving.

Next is the Central Computer level. This room consists of the computer which contols all robots. When you destroy the computer by shooting it, the robots will begin to act erratic and move all around the screen. Once in this state the robots can run themselves into the wall and be destroyed.

The Robot Factory room consists of a machine that continues to spit out robots. No matter what you do they will continue to be created. Your best bet in this level is to move as quickly as you can to safety by exiting the room. There are some slight variations in the ColecoVision port, with the largest being the fact that you can destroy the Robot Factory by shooting it. In doing so, the endless stream of robots comes to a halt.

Speaking of the ports, both are pretty faithful recreations of the arcade game. The only major difference is in the

graphics which obviously are not as crisp as the original arcade version.
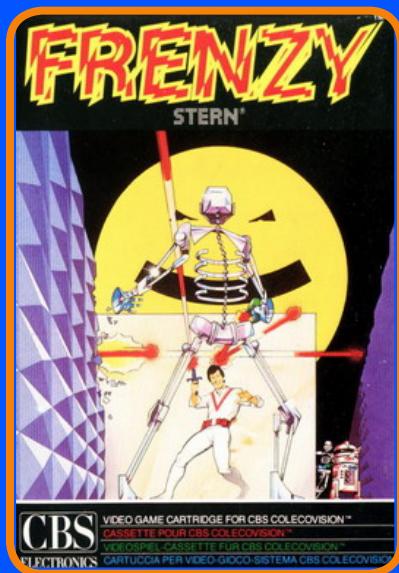
So what is the final verdict on Frenzy? We highly recommend you give it a try, whether it is an original cabinet or emulated on MAME, it is a fantastic game. Be prepared for a serious challenge that tests your reflexes as well as your brain. The abundance of multiple strategies to navigate the maze gives this game great replayability compared to some of it's peers from the same era.

Frenzy Facts:

1) It is harder to die in Frenzy by touching the robots but still possible. Try to shoot and eliminate them before they get too close.

2) Unlike the original game Berzerk, the robots talk far less in Frenzy:

The robots say "Robot attack" whenever Crazy Otto appears, "Charge attack to kill destroy!" when Crazy Otto is killed and re-spawns, "The Humanoid must not destroy the robot!" when entering the Big Otto room, 'The Humanoid...' when shooting the Central Computer, and "A robot must get the humanoid" or "A robot, not a chicken" when the Robot Factory spawns a new robot.

SHOWDOWN-5th Generation Game Consoles

Everyone Knows the Playstation and the N64, But What About the Best of the Rest?

The fifth generation of video games took place from 1993 to 2001. It was an era of transition from the 2D sprite based games of all previous generations to the 3d graphics of modern generations. The industry took a huge leap in making the transition from cartridges to optical discs, chiefly the CD-ROM.

Let's take a quick detour for a moment to talk about CD based gaming. One of the biggest arguments amongst gamers at this time was whether CD based game consoles or cartridges were superior. There is no doubt that CD based systems were more powerful and could pack more data such as video and higher quality audio, but gamers were not the only ones questioning which one would ultimately make more sense. In fact, many companies in the video gaming landscape were having the same arguments internally around that time.

The Sony Playstation in fact can partially be attributed to Nintendo who entered into a very short lived agreement to work with Sony, who were the industry leaders in the CD field, to create a CD based system. Nintendo ended up exiting the agreement to go on to work with Philips on a project creating a CD based add-on for the Super Nintendo that also never came to fruition. Sony was so upset about what had taken place that they decided to take their technology and enter into the game industry on their own with the release of the Playstation. As everyone knows, Nintendo ultimately ended up waiting until the tail end of the 5th generation to release the Nintendo 64.

It was a time of great change and upheaval within the industry. Anytime a transition takes place in a form of media there is likely to be a few clumsy missteps along the way. The 5th generation is no exception, as it ushered in some short lived video game formats such as FMV interactive games and digitized sprites.

The first 5th generation console to be released was the 3DO Interactive Multiplayer. Released in North America on October 4th, 1993, this CD-ROM based console was quite pricey. It's price on release day was $699.99. That would be over $1100 if released today!

The 3DO was ultimately considered a commercial failure, with the high price point being one of the biggest contributing factors. Another issue was the launch lineup, the 3DO launched with one game. Yes you read that right, ONE game! People could not justify buying a system which seemed to not be supported by most of the video game publishers. (although it eventually got decent support from EA as well as a few others.) Unfortunately it was too little too late and the 3DO was discontinued in 1996.

The 3DO is also known as a system with a few different models made by several manufacturers (Panasonic, Sanyo and Goldstar) which certainly makes it unique from others being released at this time. The 3DO company designed a specification of console and left other manufacturers the option to release their own versions. The thought was for the 3DO to be a tech specification just like how VHS, DVD and now BLU-RAY are industry standard formats not made by a particular manufacturer.

One of the best reasons to buy a 3DO at the time was for the amazing ports of arcade and PC games. Many of these games would not be playable on other consoles because of the limitation of cartridges.

The 3DO is also famous for the number of FMV games it had. These were like interactive movies where gameplay relied on the player hitting a particular button on the controller at a given time. Some of the more famous FMV titles were Night Trap and Mad Dog McCree.

The 2nd console released during this generation was the Atari Jaguar, which was released on November 5th, 1993. This was far more affordable than the 3DO, only costing $249.99.

Atari chose to go with a cartridge based system with their release, which ultimately appeared to be a safe bet, although a CD add-on was released in 1995.

The Jaguar was also known as a commercial failure and is widely referred to as the reason Atari left the home console market. However, the Jaguar lives on today through a dedicated fanbase and the yearly release of new homebrew games.

The Jaguar boasted a library of great arcade ports and PC ports such as Tempest 2000, Doom and Wolfenstein 3D.

Although discontinued in 1996, the Jaguar has had an interesting life after it's cancellation. In the late 90's Atari was bought by Hasbro Interactive. Hasbro decided to declare the Jaguar an open platform which allowed for many smaller third party developers to create new software for the machine long after Atari declared it dead.

UK retailer Game sold new Jaguars and titles right up until 2007, which means the Jaguar had a 2nd life of over 10 years!

The third release during this generation was the Sega Saturn, which was initially released on November 22, 1994.

The Saturn was a great system but was ultimately doomed by it's poor launch. Poor decisions by management during it's development and general confusion amongst the gaming public about the Saturn led to less than anticipated sales. Sega made the unwise choice to release an add-on for the Genesis, the 32X, at the same time as the Saturn which really meant they were competing against themselves for the same market share.

The Saturn is known for fantastic arcade ports of such SEGA staples as Daytona USA, Sega Rally Championship and Virtua Fighter.

Strong support from Capcom with ports of Street Figher Alpha 3, Darkstalkers 3 and Marvel Super Heroes vs. Street Fighter also helped the system gain a strong fanbase.

Saturn was also known as a very powerful system for it's time, boasting 8 seperate processors. However this made programming for the system very difficult.

One little known fact is that the Sega Saturn boasts a very robust library of around 600 games.

3DO

Launch Price (USD):
$699.99

Release Date:
October 4, 1993

Media:
CD-ROM

Sales:
2 Million

Best-Selling Game:

GEX

JAGUAR

Launch Price (USD):
$249.99

Release Date:
November 15, 1993

Media:
Cartridge

Sales:
250,000

Best-Selling Game:

Alien VS. Predator

SEGA SATURN

Launch Price (USD):
$399.99

Release Date:
November 22, 1994

Media:
CD-ROM

Sales:
9.5 Million

Best-Selling Game:

Virtua Fighter 2

CAUTION

ARMED BEAVER ON DUTY

JUSTICE BEAVER
正義ビーバー

JUSTICE BEAVER

JUSTICE BEAVER

Coming Soon

CollectorVision
THE ARCADE QUALITY VIDEO GAMES

you'll get old waiting for someone to top SEGA CD.

SEGA CD has over **100** outrageously **great games** — and **no waiting!** Sports, Action, Fighting, TruVideo,™ Adventure, RPG — what more could you want? (Alright, we'll even throw in Sewer Shark.™)

SEGA CD has **32-bit** compatibility (if you're wise enough to add a Genesis 32X™).

So it has the technological muscle to deliver the kind of intense, epic, **next-GENERATION** gaming experiences you've been waiting for — on CD!

SEGA

The Most Unofficial and Unauthorized Nintendo Documentary Ever!

NINTENDO QUEST

30 days. 678 games. 10,000 miles!

ARE YOU GAME?

A Film by Rob McCallum

THE NES CLUB

1 MAN. 30 DAYS. OVER 700 GAMES TO FIND!

A FILM BY Rob McCallum
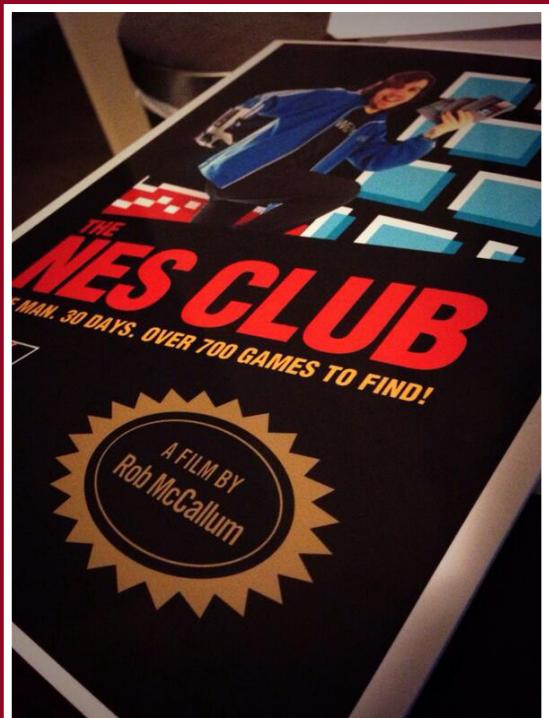
NINTENDO QUEST: THE INTERVIEW
BY IAN N.P.U

Nintendo Quest began life as a kickstarter project and its original working title was "The NES Club".

This was later changed to Nintendo Quest.

Nintendo Quest is an original idea and concept by Rob McCallum of Pyre Productions. Rob, a passionate gamer and film producer, got together with his lifelong friend, Jay "The Video Game Rockstar" Bartlett, and issued him a challenge: collect all 700 officially released NES games. This in itself is a daunting task, but where this story gets really crazy is that Jay had to buy all games in person, whether in stores or from collectors, there was to be absolutely no online purchases.

Oh yeah, and he had just one calendar month within which to complete his quest - 30 Days!

Rob and Jay also host a bi-weekly podcast for The NES Club entitled "GamerCast." They are joined by another close friend Mr. Glenn Stanway. Glenn's initial involvement was as the show's producer but over time he has become as involved with the discussion as both Rob and Jay and he's created quite a following.

Together they are the three pieces of the Triforce that forms The NES Club.

CC: Rob, Jay and Glenn, a big Classic Console Magazine welcome. How long ago did you hatch the idea of Nintendo Quest and did you always have Jay in mind as the natural focus for the movie?

Rob: 'Nintendo Quest" came right away after I finished my previous sci-fi adventure movie 'Unearthly", which is a low-budget, fun, Indiana Jones/Jurassic Park romp but we really never had the budget to pull off what was in the script. Budget limitations aside, I now wanted to make something smaller and more contained and I've been making short documentary's for a while. In fact, a precursor to 'Nintendo Quest" is a short called 'Fanboys' that I made about collectors and why they collect and showcasing their collections - this film also featured Jay. Knowing I wanted to make a doc, next it was a question of subject matter; Jay was almost guaranteed the lead no matter what it was about because there was something cool about making a doc with your friend, and the road trip element was always present in early discussions, mind you, it was never as prominent as what eventually happened in 'Nintendo Quest". After deciding it was going to be a film about video games and specifically Nintendo culture, with the NES as our starting point, we began to gather resources and the game show-like elements started developing with Jay, being the contestant and Rob, more or less, the ring master or Bob Barker-like persona.

CC: Now that this huge task is completed, what is your favourite memory of making this movie?

Rob: There's no particular memory that stands out, mainly because all the days run into one another and my mind blurs that whole summer as one big mess - but there was some alcohol involved so that could be part of it too ? hey, it's a road trip with friends, cut me some slack! Honestly, it's cool to look back and see that we said we were gonna road trip for 30 days, with friends, and fill our entire lives with video games from the second we woke up to the second we crashed. Nothing else got in the way that wasn't related to gaming in some capacity.

Jay: Getting to travel across North America and meeting amazing people. Some were heroes of mine I've looked up to my whole life. Some were just regular people, but they all became friends.

CC: Did you have any big reservations about doing the movie before you started, where there any points where you felt unsure as to whether or not you were going to pull this off or if it was a good idea at all?

Rob: No reservations. I was betting big on Jay as a lead that he would have the determination to make it through the 30 days, in terms of physical and mental endurance. You also have to remember we're best friends and never worked together before in this capacity, so we had to develop a working relationship, where I was in charge of what happened during the day and Jay was in charge of the choices he made for the quest. I'd also constantly question Jay on camera about certain decisions - not that they were 'wrong' but just to let the audience know what he was thinking. Jay learned a lot about filmmaking , and with every learning experience, there's a curve; so as the filming came to a close, he knew how we were gonna set up the shots and what kind of info I'd need from him to tell the story of that day or event.

Jay: When Rob approached me about the film I already knew we were going to do a collecting documentary but when the 'final' version of the idea was hashed out yes I was nervous, but I also knew I wanted to do something that nobody had ever done to my knowledge. People have had goals of completing game libraries, but never heard of it being done in 30 days. It was a bitter sweet feeling during the shoot. I was so excited everyday like Christmas Eve, but also money was a huge factor, it wasn't like I had unlimited funds and could buy everything I came across.

CC: Once filming was underway and you were committed, did you ever feel like maybe you had bitten off more than you could chew?

Rob: At no point during filming did I think I was in over my head and that's mainly because I'm really organized. I knew where we were gonna be every single day and within the day, so as long as we stayed on schedule, we'd be fine. That's not to say we didn't deviate from our road map but we had certain landmarks to hit, both figuratively and literally. Now, when it comes to editing, and you're staring at 450 hours of footage, you begin to wonder what you've got yourself into !

Jay: I knew the odds were stacked against me, I've also been collecting video games my whole life so I know what games are worth and which ones would be the hardest to get, in short, no. lol.

CC: Its obvious that you two are very good friends but did 30 days on the road with each other get tough at any point?

Rob: The road didn't strain the friendship at all. Like I said before, we had to learn to work together but that even became fun once we knew how to communicate what we each needed. The road trip actually strengthened the friendship to be honest because living 3000 miles away, we don't get a lot of time together. So in addition to spending the summer together making the film, we now do a lot to support the film including managing a few Facebook pages **(Facebook.com/theNESclub)**, hosting our GamerCast **(www.nesclub. podomatic.com)** and Hangouts on Google+. We always stayed in contact on a weekly basis but really talk for an hour or so twice a week now. Like the film, it's all about choosing to make the effort for something you want.

Jay: Frustration set in many times during the shoot but it wasn't from Rob or the crew. It was wrestling with very tough choices. Do I pass up on rare game 'x' hoping I can find it down the road cheaper or do I not take the chance and get it while I see it. This kind of thing was an everyday occurrence.

CC: What is your greatest memory of gaming across any era or system; what really sticks out in your mind as a great moment shared or experienced?

Rob: Not to sound lame or like a cheap plug, but making 'Nintendo Quest' was the best moment shared or experienced when it comes to gaming because I got to 'game" for an entire summer with my best friend and play hundreds of NES games, talk about other games, and it's spurred more gaming initiatives.

Jay: My greatest game memory comes from May 2000 when Rare released 'Perfect Dark" on the N64. Rob and I were so excited we made a pick up video for it, now this was before pick up videos were the norm, people in the mall looked at us like we were fools. It didn't matter all that mattered to us is that we were recording this memory and would have it to watch forever.

Glenn: I talked about this on a recent Gamercast episode. Playing the original NES 'Tetris' on Christmas Day with my grandfather hanging out with me is a childhood memory I really treasure. I also have great memories of the first time I played 'Super Mario World'. I was the first kid in my neighbourhood to buy an SNES and I remember being completely blown away.

CC: I know it's the Million dollar question but what is your favourite game of all time whether it be for the music, the game itself or the nostalgia that it brings you?

Rob: Ducktales for the NES is up there, for sure but so is Final Fantasy (NES). FF was my first introduction into a game that wasn't a high score monster or a platformer. it was special. It made me feel like I was in another world in ways that books could never create for me.
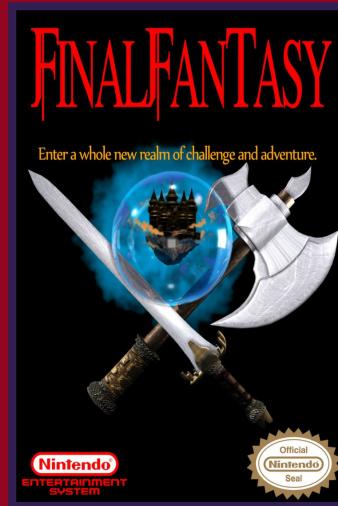
Jay: I have many favourite games, a top 5 if you will. But if you're going to make me choose its World of Warcraft. For the NES its Zelda 2, in my eyes it's the best Zelda game in the series and by far the most challenging. I love the way it makes me feel when I play it, it frightens me and I know the task ahead is gruelling when I pop it in, but that is why I love it so much. Few games make me have that feeling of fear.

Glenn: I have a really hard time settling on one, because I find that my list of favourite games is constantly changing. My default answer is 'The legend of Zelda: a Link to the past", I've played that game pretty much annually for many, many years. 'Super Metroid" is up there too, of course, and as much as its becoming a running joke on the gamer cast and I take a lot of flak over it, I really do love 'Metroid Prime". 'Eternal Darkness" on the Gamecube,

'Resident Evil 4" , 'Metal gear Solid", 'Half Life 2", and the original 'Bioshock" are all games I have a lot of love for.

CC: Growing up were you a Sega or Nintendo kid?

Rob: Both a Sega and Nintendo kid. NES first, then Genesis Then both after (N64, then Dreamcast, then GC, then Xbox, then PS3). Finally got my hands on a Saturn which was a long goal of mine. Not that it's an expensive system but as a kid I could never afford it and wanted the successor to the Genesis.

Jay: I am a fan and collector of all Video Games. Even as a kid I was one of the few who liked Mario and Sonic and didn't understand why people had to choose one or the other so I never did. I always had all the consoles.

Glenn: Nintendo kid full-stop. The Master System was never on my radar, ever, so most of my Sega experience came with the Genesis later on. As much as I liked a lot of Genesis games the Nintendo stuff always felt more polished to me. The games felt tighter, like they were somehow put together a bit better.

CC: What are your feelings of gaming now in 2014, are you a big fan of modern systems and if so which ones do you play/collect for?

Rob: The PS3 library continues to surprise and dazzle me with it's vast offerings. Same for the Xbox 360. That generation will go down as one of the greats. Current Gen, I'm playing some PS4 titles but usually solo (#PlayWithRob). Nothing has really stood out to me this gen but my fav experiences are on the Wii U. Fav game so far: Child of Light.

Jay: I love all new systems and have them all. Like I said above I've purchased all game systems through out my gaming career. If I want to play Uncharted that's on Playstation, If I want to play Halo that's on XBOX. I understand its an expensive hobby

and don't think everyone has to own all systems, that's just me. Besides my Star Wars collecting all my money has always gone to gaming. Gaming in 2014 is very different, I feel there are way too many sequels that are released the same time each year and offer little change over the previous year. I understand the video game industry is bigger than film and music, and I know money needs to be made. That being said there is still an over saturation in the market not unlike 1982-83 before gaming crashed on its self...

Glenn: Oh , yeah, I love modern gaming. I feel like I'm less harsh on the current crop of video games than Rob and Jay are, I sometimes feel like those guys are the grumpy old men telling new games to get off of their lawns, and I'm the guy saying 'hey, come on, these kids aren't so bad". I'm not really huge on the collecting angle myself, but I've got a gaming PC, a 360, a PS3, an XBOX ONE, a 3DS and a Wii U. Games definitely get a lot of love around our place. I tend to lean towards the XBOX stuff because of the gamerscore and all the buddies I have on XBOX Live, but in my mind, Nintendo still makes better games than pretty much anybody.

CC: Glenn you started out primarily as the producer of The NES Club Gamercast but over time have now become the fully fixed third wheel, is that something that was planned or did it just happen?

Glenn: It wasn't remotely planned. Jay and I had worked on a podcast together a couple of years ago before 'Nintendo Quest" was filmed, and I'd always had a lot of thoughts on improving the quality of the product, but things just sort of quietly ran down. I was very supportive of the film when the kickstarter campaign came around, because jay and Rob are friends and I thought it was a really great idea. When Rob decided to start doing the Gamercast to help promote the film and explore some of the themes a bit more deeply, I was very fortunate to have the guys approach me and ask

me to be a part of it. It's their show, and with me taking on more of a hosting role in recent episodes, I'm hoping we can get that spotlight back on them and get the guys interacting a bit more with each other. I've always maintained that if people like the show and they find it fun to listen to, that's absolutely the highest compliment I could receive.

CC: Glenn you have created a bit of a following whilst being on The NES Club Gamercast even to the point that a #SAVEGLENN emerged through social media in response to you not being mentioned on a Gamercast poster, How did that make you feel?

Glenn: I don't know how much of a following I really have, I think we have some great listeners who are very vocal in their support of me, and I appreciate it. It means a lot that people value my input and my voice enough to rock the boat like that, but again, my biggest concern is always putting out a product that sounds great and that people are entertained by. I will say I've been really overwhelmed by how welcoming the community has been to my presence beyond the Gamercast. I helped jay out with a convention booth recently, and that was just an awesome experience. There's been a lot of negativity surrounding the game community recently, so it's heartening to be reminded that by and large, the people involved in the community are good one's.

CC: The NES Club movie/Nintendo Quest has grown into quite a phenomenon and it's easy to see why. I personally became hooked from the moment I first saw the Kickstarter trailer, where are you at with the movie, when are you looking to release it and how can the fans see it?

Rob: 'Nintendo Quest' is 95% done. We're mixing all our audio and adding a few sound effects in. The music's done,

the picture's locked and all our visual effects and graphics complete. All this means is that we're really close to releasing the beast! We've got some film festivals that we've submitted to and hoping to hear back on those. All of the festivals in consideration have a pesky thing where they want a premiere status, meaning they want to be the first to show it in the world, country, or given territory. We'll hear back from those soon - and if we don't get in to any, then it means we can do our own screenings even sooner.

CC: There has become a trend is recent years with smaller movie productions garnering actual movie theatre screenings and premiers can we expect anything like this from the Nintendo Quest movie?

Rob: We hope to rollout the film in select venues across North America (sorry, Ian) for a limited time, all leading up to a September/October digital release that will coincide with the 30th anniversary of the NES in the USA. For the digital release, we're hoping to roll it out as a 'day and date' event, meaning you can see it at your favourite theatre for ONE NIGHT ONLY, the same day that it's available on iTunes and other digi platforms. While I'm sure most people will discover it on the digital platforms we hope people make the journey to their cineplex and see it on the big screen. AND depending on our distribution partner, we'll be selling discs online too.

Jay: We want people to see this film wherever possible. I am so excited to share my adventure with everyone.

CC: Are there any game systems that you don't own that you really want or any really special games that you have to get at some point?

Rob: I don't own a Super Nintendo yet, though I do have a Retron 3 and some SNES games. And I don't have an NES top loader. Those would be two great gifts if anyone is feeling generous.

Jay: Game systems.. no I have most. As far as games lol, I need to be careful how I word this. Until the film is released let's play it safe and just say I've always wanted a Donkey kong Arcade cabinet.

Glenn: I definitely want a PS4, and I'd love to have a second XBOX ONE, mostly so my girlfriend and I could play 'Destiny' together. The money's just not there, so it's a pipe dream for now. I've really been craving a Gamecube recently. We did a Google Hangouts session about our personal top five games, and when I was brainstorming that I realised how many games I truly love were released for that system. The collecting bug might have finally bitten me.

CC: Jay you've gained the moniker "The Rockstar" are you actually a Rockstar?

I'm a Rockstar yes. Music is a passion of mine and I've been playing music since I was 13 years old. I live everyday like it's my last and try to have as much fun as possible. My band is called Astoria and we are based out of my hometown of London, Ontario, been together for about three years. It's a great mix of 90's and classic 70's rock, very much in the vein of my all time favourite band the Foo Fighters. We have an E.P out, and a music video to boot! We play a million times a year which is my favourite part about the band, playing live.

CC: Jay I have heard you have a small Star Wars obsession, What is your favourite movie and what are your thoughts on the upcoming one?

Jay: There is nothing small about my obsession with Star Wars, It's a lifestyle lol. My favourite movie of all time is Return of the Jedi. It has, as do all Star wars films a very personal connection with me, I think people will understand why after they see Nintendo Quest. The Force Awakens looks brilliant to me. The teaser has been released and I've watched it a hundred times and try to piece together what I think it's

about. I'm a fan of all Star Wars even the prequels, in fact Revenge of the Sith is my second favourite Star Wars film. Things like green screen and CG have never got in the way of the story of Star Wars, which is the most important part.

CC: Finally which has been your favourite system of all time and why?

Rob: NES has to be my fav system of all time; Massive variety in the library and a willingness on the part of developers and publishers to take a risk only means good things for gamers. And those are the things missing from games nowadays.

Jay: My all time favourite gaming system is the Nintendo 64. The best memories with friends and timeless games that even still today hold up and can't be touched. Fav on the system is Majora's mask. Again a game that has an eerie vibe to it. Big fan.

Glenn: Gamecube, definitely. I think that the great games on that system were truly exceptional. SNES would probably be my 'Desert island" game system, though. Many, many great games to be had there.

CC: I would like to thank Rob, Jay and Glenn for joining us today its been a pleasure.

Be sure to catch the NES Club Gamercast twice a month for all the latest gaming topical discussion, it can be found on iTunes/Facebook.

And if you are yet to discover the Nintendo Quest/NES club movie then go check out the trailer.

Follow the 'NES Club" Team online for all of the latest updates on what they are up to.

nesclubmovie@gmail.com
www.nesclubmovie.com

LIKE THEM ON FACEBOOK ! ! !
www.facebook.com/TheNESclub
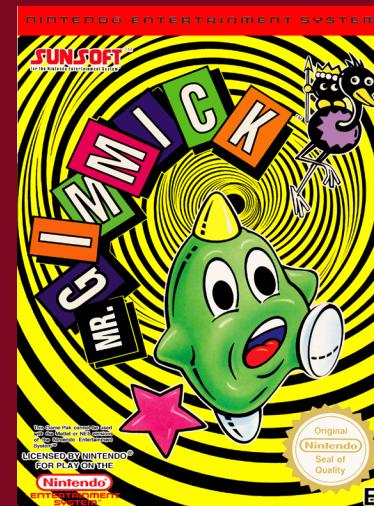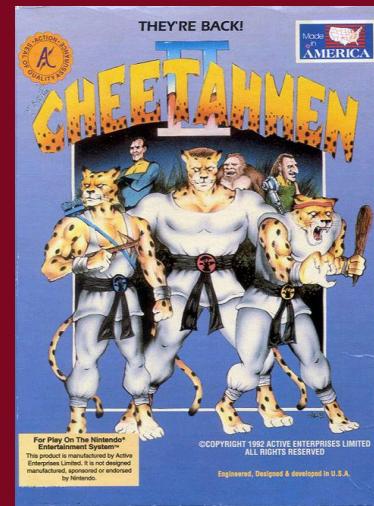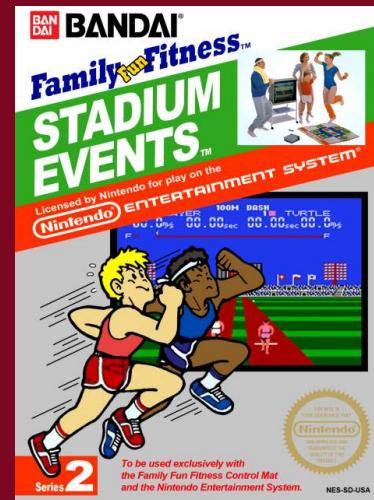
TOP 10 WORST VIDEO GAMES OF ALL TIME

10 CUSTER'S REVENGE

Horrible, horrible game. Bad collision detection and insulting story. The premise of the game is simple, avoid the arrows and make it across the playfield to assault the Native American woman.

09 PAC-MAN (Atari 2600)

If looked at as a completely different title, it would be mediocre a best. As a supposed Pac-Man port, this game is really really bad. Forget power pellets, how about eating power dashes??

08 TAKESHI NO CHOSENJO

Although creative, we are pretty sure someone was drunk when they created this game. One of the tasks given to players is to stare at a blank screen for an hour.. seriously.

07 BACK TO THE FUTURE

The writer of Back to the Future, Bob Gale, literally told fans in interviews to not buy this game. Enough said.

06 HOTEL MARIO

A weird 2D platformer / puzzle game. Worst Mario game of all time.

05 SHAQ FU

A fighting game with Shaq? We have to admit, it sucks, but we secretly like it just for the ridiculous factor. A new sequel is coming thanks to crowdfunding.

ATARI 2600, 1982

ATARI 2600, 1982

FAMICOM, 1986

NES, 1989

CD-I, 1994

SNES / GENESIS, 1994
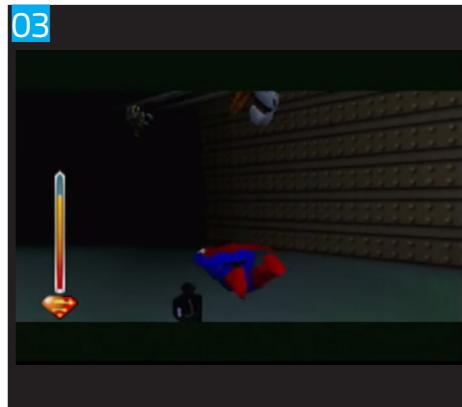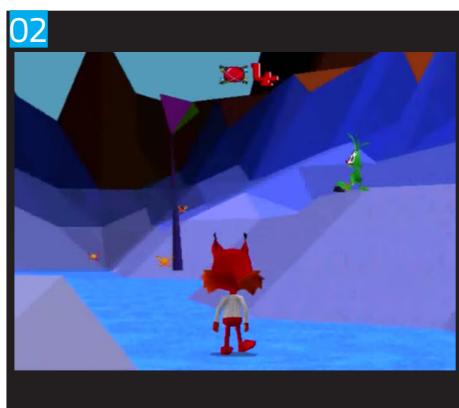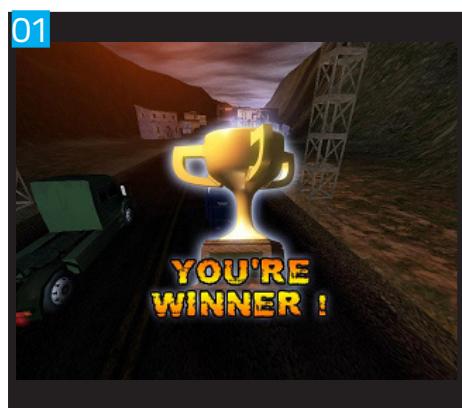
04 CATFIGHT

This would only be a good concept for a game if you are a drunk frat boy. Think Street Fighter meets mud wrestling with crappy controls.

PC, 1996

03 SUPERMAN

It's hard to do a good 3D Superman game when you can't see where you are flying due to short draw distances and horrible graphics.

N64, 1999

02 BUBSY 3D

The visuals in this game are bad enough to give you a migraine headache.

PS1, 1996

01 BIG RIGS: OVER THE ROAD RACING

Please forgive us for including a semi-recent game in our magazine, but we just had to. This game is literally the worst game ever. The game wasn't even finished upon it's release. Forget collision detection with buildings, there is none. Also, we have to include "You're Winner!"

PC, 2003
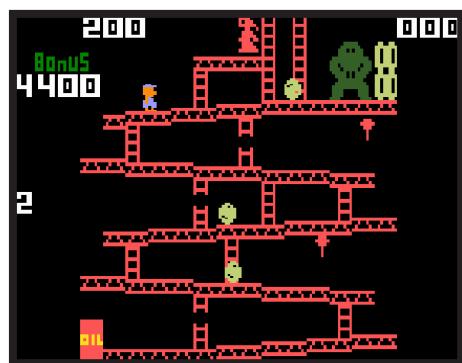
RUNNERS UP-

ET: THE EXTRA TERRESTRIAL

We knew you were expecting this so we had to. But is this game really all that bad? If you have the manual and know what you are doing it is ok. Not bad enough to make the top 10.

ATARI 2600, 1982

DONKEY KONG (Intellivision)

Fantastic arcade game, not so great port on the Intellivision. Fun to play but it is hard to tell what game it is due to weird graphics.

INTELLIVISION, 1982

The very talented Ross Sillifant brings us a great interview this month with prolific SEGA coder Jim Blackler. During their discussion we learn about what it was like to be involved with the creation of console games during the 1990s as well as some of the inner workings of game company Domark in the UK. This is the first in a series of many interviews Ross will be bringing us in the coming issues of Classic Console Magazine.

Right: Jim Blackler

Ross Sillifant: Jim Blackler, it is with great pleasure I get the chance to interview another prolific Sega coder like your goodself, could you please take a few moments to introduce yourself to our readers and just which games your best known for:

Jim Blackler: I am Jim Blackler, I was a game developer through the 1990s and 2000s. In my early days I worked on very small teams, usually solo, doing Sega console games. Later I worked on larger titles like This is Football (PC) and Warrior Kings.

RS: I'm going to focus on your sterling Mega Drive and MCD work to start with, so first and foremost, Prince Of Persia, which surprised many as the cartridge version (which I assume you worked on) turned out far better than the Mega CD version. This was a conversion to the Mega Drive, so was it your very 1st conversion? (and indeed MD game?) basically Jim, please just talk us through it. (For North American readers, remember Mega Drive and MCD are the same thing as Genesis and Sega CD.)

JB: Wow, thank you. Prince of Persia was my first professional title. The vast majority of the credit has to go to my colleague Richard Walker who was my mentor at the time at Domark Games and the

main programmer on POP. I arrived at Domark Software which was a relatively small British developer based in London.

I was 21, had just graduated from university and I was delighted to be working in games (previously I'd knocked up a couple of Commodore 64 games, only one of which, Microdot, was published). I was pretty clueless really and Richard showed me the ropes. He was only a few years older than me but he seemed like a total veteran in my eyes, because he had a large back catalogue of Acorn Archimedes games.

I was blown away to be working on a conversion of Prince of Persia because I had really enjoyed playing the PC version. Like so many others I was incredibly impressed by the quality of the animation and the game itself. Only when I'd started working on the conversion did I realize the true genius of Jordan Mechner's original design in other aspects. The way the game mechanics work is a thing of beauty. Anyway Richard had the game well underway with a from-scratch 68000 rewrite of the original, but there was tons to do and as is so often the case in

the games business, back-breaking deadlines. Richard left Domark before POP was finished so I had to take it through QA and submission with Sega and I can tell you that was a baptism of fire.

A few years ago I was at an exhibition of the history of video games at London's Science Museum and this game was on one of the exhibitions representing POP itself. I was very proud but my role in the thing was minimal.
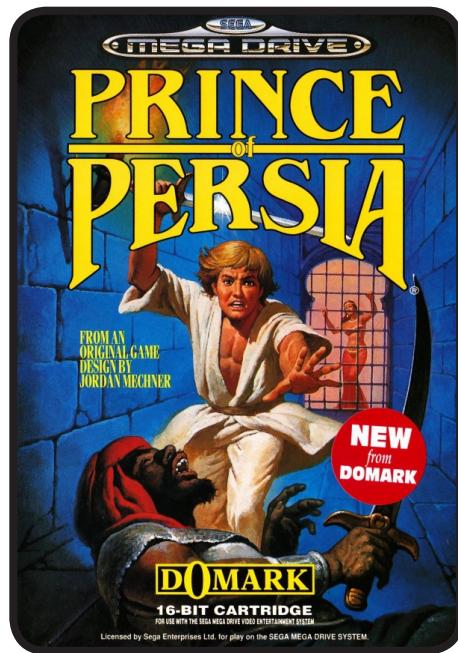
RS: Did you have a set goal to achieve? ie, given the PC/Amiga code and told to best fit it for the MD? Also, were you aware of the MCD version and wanted to better

it? Were you allowed any degree of 'freedom' in the conversion? by that I mean adding anything of your own?

JB: We had the original code on a floppy disk, in C, mailed to us from the US. We were rewriting the program from scratch but it was very useful reference.

I do remember the Mega CD version and admiring the work of the developers but thinking that we could have done a better job. I did some other Mega CD titles too, so that wouldn't have been too hard for me. One of those strange things.

One of my jobs was to produce some extra levels for our version and that was definitely the most memorable part of that title for me, because I'm not sure at that point that anyone other than Jordan Mechner had built any.

It was daunting to follow in his footsteps and I hope I did the title justice. If you play the Mega Drive version you will find some extra elements that I added, including a 'freeze time' potion which is funny if you consider similar elements cropped up in the modern versions and even the movie. I have no idea if anyone involved in those games knew about my additions.

RS: Sticking with conversions, you converted Theme Park to the MCD, now so many MCD games (like CD32 games) were simply 'tarted-up' versions of existing games, so FMV intro, CD based music etc, but were you able to use the extra power of the MCD in anything other than a cosmetic role?

JB: Frankly no. You had another processor and more RAM on the second system to use but the main system was rendered pretty useless because of lack of RAM. This meant just reaching parity with a cartridge game was difficult. What you could do is play audio CD tracks. It wasn't really a great platform.

RS: Bloodshot astounded so many of us, a FPS on the humble MD of all things and a bloody (no pun intended) impressive one at that. How on earth did you manage to achieve such stunning results and who thought the MD would be capable of pulling such a feat off? Also, what were your main goals for the game, technically? smooth frame rate? as full-screen as possible? responsive controls? what had to 'give' to allow one or more of the other factors to be achived?

JB: I am so happy to hear that. I remember being incredibly excited when I worked out how to do the wall effect. Of course I was aware of Wolfenstein 3D and that game had a huge influence on me. We were actually making a game for a low-budget British movie. I was desperate to try and get a Wolfenstein-like effect for it but the Genesis/Megadrive being a sprite-based console really wasn't designed to do anything like that.

You could draw certain effects using the character map but you didn't have anywhere near enough to fill the screen. Also, writing into the character map was very slow.

Two ideas made it possible. The first was to use palette tricks to flip the walls vertically with only slight differences between the two halves. If you think of a 3D dungeon scene generally it is mostly the same on the top half to the bottom half. We used sprites for some ceiling lights to disguise the symmetry. The second trick was several hundred K of pre-generated code to render walls of various heights. This enabled the number of CPU cycles to be reduced to the point where it was feasible.

When the movie was cancelled we didn't want to throw the code away so we made it into a game. Most of the design was mine working closely with an artist Joe Groombridge, and others. To answer your question we didn't have any goals, we made it up as we went along. There was something of a chaotic environment in Domark at the time.

To answer your other question there were a huge number of technical trade-offs needed to get the game to work the way it did. We were very tight for memory and the enemies were very restricted as a result, animation frames and so on.

RS: You also brought Bloodshot to the Mega CD, now this must have been a double-edged sword I guess, as suddenly you had an improved sound chip, faster CPU, lot more storage space, custom sprite hardware the MD lacked, but you had to balance this against loading times and limited Ram. Just how

much of the MCD hardware did you 'tap into' when doing Bloodshot CD?

JB: This was a load of work. You have to effectively port the game to the second system (the MCD system) and work with much less memory (750K as opposed to 2MB on the cartridge version). so we had these massive sections of pre-generated code that wouldn't work. Due to this I had to rewrite the wall renderer yet again. Fortunately the MCD had a faster CPU so that led to more options. And of course we could load the levels from the CD. This meant actually we could bring in things we'd cut out of the original for memory reasons. However I remember downsampling all the sound effects to fit everything in, which is why it sounded a bit raspy.

RS: You spent a good few years working for DOMARK, a publisher who on the Atari ST at least were a key supporter. They moved into the console scene quickly enough, supporting Sega, but do you know IF they ever looked at any of the Atari consoles (7800/Lynx/Panther etc) with regards of supporting?

JB: Oh yes we certainly did. We had the Atari folks in to pitch the consoles to us and we even started designing Jaguar titles. I think we had a devkit too. I recall seeing Lynx devkits about. But nothing ever came of it. I think the industry lost faith in Jaguar and it was obvious that the Japanese consoles were going to come out on top.

RS: Looking at your Saturn game, Crimewave, something which people either seemed to love (a flawed diamond) or all out hate (Edge etc seemed to maul it), it seems very much a game that looked fantastic in still screens, but really needed a lot more work in terms of ironing out the odd NPC A.I. and resolving the slowdown/ Jerky movement, that put many off. Would that be a 'fair' comment?

JB: You know making that game was so stressful that at one point I felt like just walking out of the office and never coming back. It wasn't everything I wanted it to be. It was actually supposed to be a quick game (I think we wanted to turn it around in 6 months, but it took four times that long). I was programming it entirely on my own (this is what I wanted) and that was naive to be honest. I frankly wasn't as good a programmer as I thought I was. I cringe at some of the techniques I used. I could probably speed it up if I had a chance to work

on it now. I still play it occasionally though and have fun so it can't all be bad.

RS: Also the game seems to of had a troubled development path, 1st annouced as multi-platform, but ending up as a Saturn exclusive. what happened to plans for other platforms?

JB: There may have been talk of a Playstation version but that wasn't going to happen. There were too many delays, the publishing folks lost faith over it. By the end of the game I just wanted to move on to something else and I strongly doubt anyone else would have wanted to convert it !

RS: The saturn itself took a lot of 'flak' for being an utter mess to code for, Sega keeping the best development tools in-house, not giving 3rd parties much technical support etc etc, but how did you get on with the hardware? Did you do any dual-processing work on any Sega platform? (MCD or Saturn) or was that too time consuming or created it's own issues in terms of bottle-necks etc?.How would you, as a coder, 'rate' the Saturn?

JB: Oh yes, I learned everything I know today about multi-processing from Saturn (and a little from MCD too). Sure it was a complex platform but I loved it ! The Playstations are all as complex in their own way too. If you didn't do multi-processing on the Saturn you wouldn't stand a hope in hell of getting any decent speed out of it. The PSX had this much faster polygon pipeline which the Saturn just didn't have. It was based on sprite-based hardware and had some really strange qualities to it such as no proper texture coordinates. I do wish I

could have done a second game on Saturn, but we all remember what happened to that platform. That's probably why I went to work at Sony.

RS: This I always ask, any 'lost/ canned' projects on any formats? any obscure formats coded for? (Konix Multi-system/Atari Panther etc).

JB: Funnily enough not until much later in my career; a game called The Final Option which was to come out on PS2, XBox and PC. But I witnessed some great stuff that didn't make it at Domark. There was a really interesting 3D space shooter that was started for Mega Drive, written by my colleague Paul Margrave. That was much more advanced than anything similar on that platform. But management didn't want to pick it up for some reason.

RS: You sadly seemed to disappear from the game industry and now work for Google on more serious based apps, do you have any plans to return? perhaps via a Kickstarter campaign or an Indie project? We'd love to see you back.

JB: I am touched. I have fiddled about in my spare time but never got anything really started. It takes a huge amount of effort to get to anything that meets the expectation of players these days. My son who is 11 is into games in a big way (his favorite is Little Big Planet which is possibly the closest to the game I would have most liked to make myself). I have a puzzle game that I have been developing on an off though. I have plenty of side projects just not games.

Classic Console Magazine thanks Jim Blackler for taking the time to answer Ross' questions. It was interesting for sure to hear from someone who was involved at the ground level with many SEGA console games. We will no doubt in the future do some "deep dive" looks at most of Jim's games.


GAME STATS:

Format:
Mega Drive / MCD
Developer:
Domark
Publisher:
Acclaim
Release Date:
1994

Bloodshot (Known as Battle Frenzy in unreleased North American version, finally released as homebrew in 2004) is a game created by Jim Blackler for Domark Software. Released in 1994 for Europe only, Bloodshot was a ground breaking game for the Mega Drive as one of very few first person shooters.

Consisting of 12 levels of shooting action, the game takes place in the year 2049. The earth moon base Yaz 67 is destroyed by an alien battlecruiser. Starfleet Command sends it's soldiers on a mission to board the alien ship.

In each level, the player has to destroy a node core located on that floor. Once the core is destroyed a self-destruct sequence counts down. Escape in time or else be destroyed.

WING COMMANDER

EPIC SPACE COMBAT SIMULATOR SET THE BAR HIGH FOR A CINEMATIC GAMING EXPERIENCE, WITH HUGE UNIVERSE FULL OF EXCITEMENT

By Josh LaFrance

For a Sci-Fi fan growing up in the early 90's nothing was more exciting than watching Star Trek: TNG on TV or one of my VHS tapes from the Star Wars trilogy. Although I did play a few Sci-Fi genre games growing up, (Star Trek: 25th Anniversary by Interplay and Space Quest were my 2 favorites at the time) I was truly longing for something to satisfy my cravings for a whole new universe to explore filled full of characters I had not yet met. That all changed the day I installed the 1st Wing Commander game on my PC.

Created by genius game designer Chris Roberts, Wing Commander was everything I had been looking for. It was a truly cinematic experience unlike anything I had experienced in gaming up to that point. It was like I was acting in my own movie, my success or failure during missions had a direct impact on the lives of the characters. I was hooked and it took me on a journey of playing through all of the Wing Commander games. I look back on the first Wing Commander game with great fondness as it was the one that started it all for me and countless other PC gamers.

The game begins set in a universe which resembles a cross between the 1940's and the futuristic universe

of a movie like Star Wars. This makes sense as creator Chris Roberts has stated in interviews that he wanted Wing Commander to be like World War 2 set in space.

It is the year 2654 and the human Terran Confederation are up against a great threat, the aggressive feline race of the Kilrathi. A great war has broken out as the humans attempt to stop the advance of the Kilrathi and drive them back from whence they came.

As the player, you take control of a pilot whose callsign you pick at the beginning of the game. Depending on how you perform you are able to advance through the various ranks, eventually taking on the roles of squadron leader and Wing Commander.

One thing that sets this game apart from the others is the lack of a linear story. Instead, at various points throughout the game depending on how you perform during combat missions, the story can branch off in several different ways. Eventually the Confederation is either able to take the fight to the Kilrathi resulting in a showdown that rivals the Death Star sequence from Star Wars, or has to withdraw from the system as missions become more and more defensive. Wing Commander is notable for having 2 completely different endings, as ultimately humankind's fate is decided.

GAMES OF THE WING COMMANDER FRANCHISE
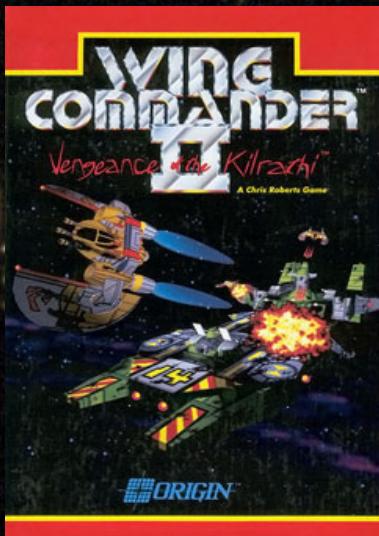
Wing Commander II- The Vengeance of the Kilrathi

Released in 1991, Wing Commander II continues the story where the first installment left off. There are some variations in gameplay however from the first. The storyline is less open ended and more structured. Events follow a more linear path, regardless of the player's actions. This installment of Wing Commander introduces the inclusion of voice acting in the game and with a greater emphasis on telling a story. There are various animated cutscenes throughout the game, placed in between missions and directly preceding key battles. In this game your player is court-martialed for negligence (although you truly are innocent) and you must battle your way back into favor after being stationed far away in a "backwater" system flying boring security details.

Wing Commander III- Heart of the Tiger

The third game of the Wing Commander franchise, 1994's Heart of the Tiger is notable for having been marketed by game developer Origin as one of the first in a line of games known as a "Origin Interactive Movie". Complete with live action cut scenes this game truly brought the drama and cinematics of the first 2 Wing Commander titles to a whole new level. Complete with Star Wars' Mark Hamill playing the main character, this game really made the whole universe come alive. One of the more interesting choices you must make as the protagonist of the game (at this point now known as Colonel Christopher Blair) is to choose a love interest during the game. Some people took this addtion as cheesy, but it really just existed to make the story come alive and seem more real.

Wing Commander IV- The Price of Freedom

The fourth title in the Wing Commander series, The Price of Freedom was released in 1996. This game is notable as being the first to take place after the end of the Terran-Kilrathi War. Wing Commander IV again utilized full motion video cut scenes filmed with live actors. Created with a budget of $12 million US dollars, (which was unheard of at the time) this game is huge. The MS-DOS version clocks in at 6 CD-ROMS! Although fun, this game is lacking something that the first 3 games had. Perhaps it is the story driven by a plot of hunting down rogue ships harrassing peaceful citizens, or the lack of having the Kilrathi as an enemy, but this game's story just seems a little more slow and plodding. For that, Wing Commander IV, although still recommended is our least favorite of the bunch.

SUPER TRASH TRUCK

Every month we here at Classic Console Magazine are given the awesome task of looking at some of the best new up and coming homebrew and independent releases for the Atari 2600. A large amount of games are being created by the retro gaming community. Some are of such high quality they surpass many of the original games that were released back during the golden age of the system's existence. Super Trash Truck is another such game.

Super Trash Truck, created by SAIDAI Games Corp. is an example of a game that would have been right at home with some of Imagic or Activision's best titles. A unique concept combined with great sprite artwork equals a title that many retro gamers would love to have the opportunity to play.

The story takes place in a location known as Video City. The mayor can no longer pay the extortion rackets and so the sanitation department stops cleaning the city. Trash fills the streets and disrupts the peace of what was once a beautiful little place to call home. This is where you, the player steps in. As Johnny Badbody, the one time owner of Badbody Cleaning, you must take your 2000 hp Super Trash Truck and clean up the streets.

This game is very deceptive. At first there was some concern with it being too easy, but boy does that change

quite quickly! The game cycles through daytime and nighttime and once it becomes a new day it is a new level. With each level the difficulty increases as the game speeds up, making it that much harder to avoid obstacles while picking up the various trash bags and gas cans scattered on your route. Day 3 is where one can really notice the difficulty picking up and it is quite brutal. The addicting thing about this game is that you want to keep playing it to beat your high score as the highest score is retained until the system is powered off.

For those interested in buying a physical copy of the game, go over to the AtariAge forums. They are looking at an official release sometime in the first quarter of this year. In the mean time one can also play the demo ROM on your PC via emulation or official hardware with a multi-cart.

There are other plans for this game as well, such as a possible release on an actual arcade cabinet. The mock-up of the cabinet that was sent to us is quite impressive.

ACTIVISION
BARNSTORMING

Designed by Steve Cartright and released in 1982, Barnstorming is one of the most beloved games in the Activision catalog. As a game for the Atari 2600, this game really stretched the limits of what was at the time thought capable by the home console.

As yet another example of the unique games that Activision was cranking out at the time, Barnstorming certainly stands the test of time.

Gameplay consists of guiding your bi-plane through the open doors of a series of barns, while at the same time avoiding obstacles

that stand in your way. Obstacles consist of weathervanes, geese and windmills. Gameplay is however a little more forgiving than what the original daredevils of the 1920's had to contend with. Instead of fiery death, crashing into an obstacle merely slows down your plane momentarily. The goal of the game is to pass through the level in the shortest amount of time possible.

What made this game amazing for it's time was the use of very colorful and impressive artwork. The sunset over the mountaintops in-game looks fantastic, as do all of the obstacles. It is very easy to see what each item in the game is supposed to represent. This game is a must for every collector of early Atari titles.

ACTIVISION

CLASSIC CONSOLE EXAMINES ONE OF THE MOST PROLIFIC 3RD PARTIES OF THE 1980'S

Prior to the creation of Activision, third party publishers did not exist. This is not just some statement thrown out to explain this publisher's importance, it is a literal fact.

Activision, formed in October 1979, was the first ever independent publisher to exist in the video game industry. This is very much a David vs. Goliath story, where the underdog comes out on top. As of 2007, Activision was the top publisher of video games in the United States.

Modern gamers know Activision well for it's involvement in the Call of Duty series of games. Retro gamers however view Activision fondly for it's creative releases for early home consoles such as the Atari 2600. Activision back then meant to gamers several things: Game designers who became celebrities in the gaming community, inspired gameplay mechanics and fantastic art. Activision games were known for their colorful backgrounds and well drawn character sprites and stood out from other games on the market for the same systems.

The beginning of the Activision

story really starts with the success of Atari's 2600 (then known as the VCS).

At that time, due to a lack of independent publishers, (as well as no industry unions) programmers, artists and game designers were really just hired guns for the game console manufacturers. Many within the industry felt they were not being paid a fair wage and Atari did not offer game creators any sort of royalty system. Even if your game sold thousands of copies and made Atari millions of dollars, you would receive no financial benefit! Also simple things like designers receiving credit on the box for the game they created was not allowed. The very people who created some of our most beloved games were nothing more than a cog in a giant corporate machine.

In May of '79 Atari programmers Bob Whitehead, Alan Miller, Larry Kaplan and David Crane met with then Atari CEO Ray Kassar to ask for their needs to be met. Seeing the millions of dollars that these men brought to their company, they felt it was fair for them to ask for appropriate treatment by their employer. The ultimate goal of these meetings was for programmers to be
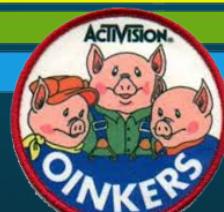
treated in much the same way that record labels treat their artists.

To say that the meeting went poorly is a great understatement. The message sent by the Atari brass was that anyone can make a game cartridge. Feeling disrespected and knowing that amongst them they possessed a group of some of the best and brightest in the video game industry at the time, they set out to control their own destiny by creating a company of their own.

The men were then joined by former music industry executive Jim Levy and venture capitalist Richard Muchmore in the creation of their new company. Atari did not take this lying down, in fact they were quite upset by the departure of the men who were responsible for over half of their game sales, and they tried to slow down or stop Activision completely through court litigation. These legal actions proved unsuccessful as it just became a long drawn out process ending shortly before the North American video game crash of 1983.

One rumor that persists online has to do with the name. According to Activision's wikipedia page (we all know how accurate that can be..) the name Activision was possibly picked so that they showed up in the phone book before Atari. This rumor has been debunked straight from the horse's mouth. Mr. Crane has stated in numerous interviews that their first choice of a name was Vsync until Jim Levy had an idea to combine the words "active" and "television" to make the name Activision.

Activision was a company driven by pleasing the gaming community, not just making money. They treated their programmers like the rock stars that they truly were and spent advertising dollars promoting the designers, not just the titles. This helped Activision attract the best and brightest upcoming programmers to work for their company.

As Atari continued to pour money into buying licenses to popular TV and movie properties, (which was a tactic that ultimately failed horribly) Activision decided to take a different path and give their creative employees the opportunity to craft unique, fun and groundbreaking games.

Some of the top selling games on the Atari 2600, Intellivision and Colecovision were released by Activision. Games such as Pitfall, River Raid and Keystone Kapers inspired whole new genres in gaming.

Activision also had a unique program in place with their series of patches that could be earned by players by taking a photo of their high score and submitting to the company. Gamers would receive a nice letter accompanying the patch in the mail. This personal touch endeared a whole generation of gamers to the amazing company known as Activision.

Ultimately, one of the major factors in the decline of video games around 1983 was the abundance of really crappy games (known as "shovelware") being released on to the masses by fly by night programming houses and shady publishers. One thing gamers at that time could take solace in was knowing that if it said Activision on the box, it would be something worth your time and money.

POPULAR EARLY ACTIVISION HIT GAMES

1981, Larry Kaplan
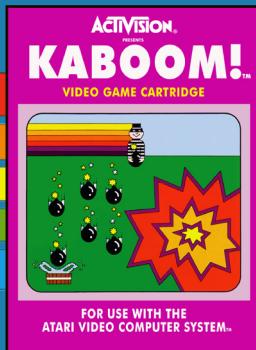
1982, Carol Shaw
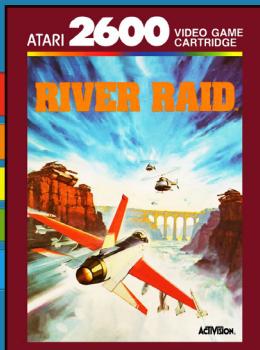
1982, David Crane
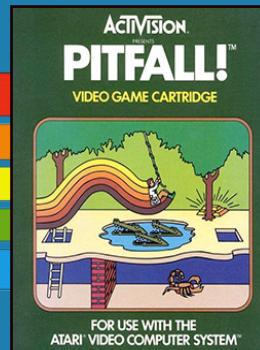
1983, David Crane
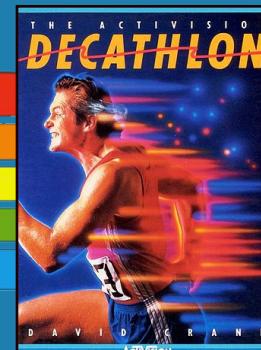
1983, Garry Kitchen
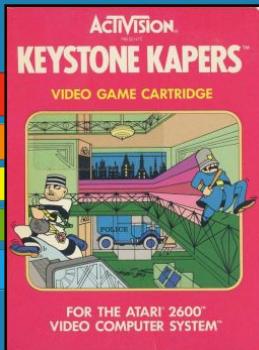
Playstation

20 YEARS

The road to Sony's involvement in the video game industry began way back in 1986. It is a story littered with broken promises, court cases and Sony almost walking away from ever being involved in video games. Eventually redeeming themselves with the creation of a system that certainly defines the 90's and disc based gaming as we know it today.

Sony was involved in talks with video game giant Nintendo. Sony at the time was well known for it's involvemnt in CD technology going back to the late 70's, but had never had any involvment up to that point with video games. Nintendo wanted to create an add-on for the SNES known as the SNES-CD, much like SEGA accomplished with the SEGA-CD. (Mega-CD in Europe) An agreement was reached and contracts were drawn up.

Sony also had plans to develop their own hardware as a stand-alone unit capable of playing the CD games and SNES cartridges. The device would be able to play music CDs as well and be more of a full entertainment solution, not just a gaming console. This clearly was an idea that Sony took to heart later as they worked on the Playstation and PS2.

Sony and Nintendo's new joint venture was to be known as the "Play Station" and be announced in North America at the 1991 Consumer Electronics Show. At the last minute Nintendo had a sudden change of heart. They worried that with the way the contract was written, Sony would have too much control over all of the CD based games,

as they then would own most of the rights. There also was the issue of Nintendo suddenly not being all that keen on the thought of another company making a game system capable of playing their games. Unfortunately, Sony was not made aware of Nintendo's decision right away. Hiroshi Yamauchi, Nintendo's President, made the decision to cancel the project without notifying Sony. The announcement was made to Sony at the same time the rest of the world found out, when Nintendo chairman Howard Lincoln introduced Nintendo's new partnership with Philips to develop

a CD based system of their own, one in which Nintendo retained the rights to all of the games.

Sony next tried to align themselves with Sega but was rejected again, as Sega was weary of the fact that Sony had never developed video game hardware or any software up to that point.

Sony considered throwing in the towel when it came to video games and began to wind down their development of the technology needed to make their system a reality. However in the 11th hour they decided to make a go of it with what they had developed up to that point for the Nintendo project.

Nintendo attempted to stop Sony from using what they had gained from their partnership by filing a lawsuit. They also sought to prevent Sony from using the name "Play Station" which they felt was their property. Ultimately, Sony won the lawsuit and began planning for the release of their console now known as the Playstation.

When it came time to choosing what design would be used for the Playstation, Sony's team took a look at what was hot in arcades at that time to draw their inspiration from, which was 3D fighters. They took that as a sign that they needed to develop a high performance 3D graphics chip. The move to 3D from the 2D games of the time and

the decision to include the ability to play audio CD's made the Playstation a full entertainment solution, not just a video game console. The Asian market console contained another function the Western models did not, the option to play video CDs.

The Playstation launched in 1994 in Japan and November 1995 in North America. The price at launch in North America was $299 and the launch titles consisted of Battle **Arena Toshinden**, **Air Combat** and **Ridge Racer** amongst others. The Sony Playstation instantly became a hit with gamers and critics alike selling over 1 million units of hardware in Japan and over 100,000 in the US. The American launch resulted in Sony taking in $45 million in sales in 2 days. The launch is Europe was equally successful, with UK's sales hitting 50,000 after 6 weeks.

One of the strong points of the Playstation is the huge library of titles, with 7,918 games released worldwide. Sony enjoyed great support from all major publishers.

The best selling game from the Playstation catalog is 1997's **Gran Turismo**, which eventually inspired a whole genre of ultra-realistic racing sims for gaming consoles.

Other notable titles of the Playstation's fantastic game library include:

1996's **Parappa the Rapper**: A quirky take on music rhythm games.

1996's **Crash Bandicoot**: The defacto mascot for the Sony Playstation has to be considered this little guy with a big attitude.

1995's **Twisted Metal**: This series is responsible for the best vehicular combat games of all time.

The Sony Playstation lives on as one of the greatest systems of all time 20 years after it's initial release.

If you would like to learn more about the fascinating beginnings of the PS1 please check out the upcoming documentary called Game Changer. Follow them on Twitter @PS1Documentary.

Intelligent Qube

By Josh LaFrance

As a young gamer in the 90's, no game struck as much fear in my heart as Intelligent Qube. This game literally is scarier to me than any game in the horror genre and at it's surface it really is just a puzzle game.

The premise of the game is simple. You control a character standing on a stage made up of rows of blocks. Somewhere around half of the rows then rise up from the stage and begin rolling toward you, very slow at first. In the first stage 3 rows of 4 are sent toward you, where in the last stage 14 rows of 7 are sent at you. Obviously as the stages increase, so does the speed in which these rows travel toward your player. The loud sound of the rows hitting the stage as they roll over, like stones hitting against one another is enough to make the most seasoned gamer sweat.

As the player your job is to avoid two things, being crushed by the rows of blocks or falling off the edge of the stage to your death. This is accomplished by activating blocks on the playfield which then triggers a small explosion of sorts, eliminating the block in question. If you are lucky enough (or skilled enough) to activate a green block known as an advantage cube, you score more points and eliminate more cubes at once taking out a 3x3 area. Activating a black block (forbidden cube) is a no-no and causes rows to fall off the stage.

Final Verdict: Although the graphics are a bit dated, this is one to check out for interesting gameplay alone.

THE BANDICOOT IS BACK

www.playstation-europe.com

DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF PLAYSTATION