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A Selected History of RPGs

By Todd Friedman

A role-playing game (RPG) is a game in which each participant assumes the role of a character, generally in a fantasy or science fiction setting that can interact within the game's imaginary world. Players take responsibility for acting out these roles within a narrative, either through literal acting, structured decision-making, or character development.

The first commercially available role-playing game, *Dungeons & Dragons* (D&D), was published in 1974 by Gygax's TSR. TSR marketed the game as a niche product. Gygax expected to sell about 50,000 copies. After establishing itself in boutique stores, it developed a cult following among college students and science fiction fandom.

The earliest RPG designed for console gaming was *Dragonstomper* for the Atari 2600 in 1982. The game laid the foundation for the tactical role-playing game genre, or "simulation RPG" as it is known in Japan. It was also an early example of a real-time, action role-playing game.

One of the most memorable innovations came in 1985's *Ultima IV: Quest Of The Avatar*, a game I would have happily eloped with at the time. Usually when establishing characters, you would assign points to various attributes and skill sets, etc. However, what *Ultima IV* did was ask you a series of questions and subsequently shape your character according to the moral leanings of your responses. This could make all the difference between starting the game as a shepherd or a druid, for example. It was a revelation.

The first title that inspired legions of imitators was *Dragon Quest*, also known as *Dragon Warrior* in America. It was revolutionary for its time, and its blueprint is evident in thousands of RPGs. You explore the game's overworld while trotting from town to town, selling goods and interacting with local residents until you're ready to hit your next locale.

Dragon Warrior presents players with a clear objective from the start and uses a series of smaller scenarios to increase the hero's strength in order to achieve the objective. The game begins in King Lorik's chamber in Tantegel Castle, where the hero receives information about the Dragonlord, whom he must defeat, and the stolen Balls of Light, which he must retrieve. After receiving some items and gold, the hero sets out on his quest. Much of *Dragon Warrior* is spent talking to townspeople and gathering information from them that leads to additional places, events, and secrets.

The green-capped hero of *The Legend of Zelda* wrote the book on action RPG gameplay, tackling the toughest dungeons with the aid of the equipment he found scattered around a massive-for-the-time open world. This non-linear style of game progression offered a vast alternative to the seemingly on-rails approach of some earlier RPGs and dungeon crawlers. The series also toned down many of the overt *Dungeons & Dragons* elements that had become standard RPG. With the exception of the first *Zelda*'s direct sequel, no other games in the franchise have displayed numbers or any other figures in combat. This non-traditional, action-oriented style has led to thousands of debates and Internet flame wars about what truly constitutes an RPG. Many purists believe that *The Legend of Zelda* series can't claim RPG status because of its focus on combat and exploration over level grinding and character customization. Others have argued that the game's innate sense of discovery and experimentation share a similar spirit with the RPG genre. Either way, Link's first adventure inspired a host of other action games that utilized role-playing elements to varying degrees.

Phantasy Star is a series of console role-playing video games and other supplementary media created by Sega. The series debuted in 1987 on the Sega Master System with *Phantasy Star*, and continues into the present with *Phantasy Star Online 2* and other extensions of the *Phantasy Star Online* sub-series. Each of the games in the series features

a science fantasy setting featuring a cross-genre combination of magic and technology. *Phantasy Star* was one of the pioneers of the traditional console RPG format, featuring fully traversable overworld maps, complete with interactive towns, and sprawling dungeons. The player engages in random enemy encounters, both on the overworld map and in dungeons, which saw a change from the top-down perspective to a first-person view. Unique amongst all games of the time was the faux 3-D graphics of *Phantasy Star*'s dungeons, a widely praised technological feature.

The Elder Scrolls is a series of action role-playing open world fantasy video games primarily developed by Bethesda Game Studios and published by Bethesda Softworks. The series is known for its elaborate and richly detailed open worlds and its focus on free-form gameplay. *Morrowind*, *Oblivion* and *Skyrim* all won Game of the Year awards from multiple outlets. The series has sold more than 50 million copies worldwide. The *Elder Scrolls* games are action role-playing games, although they do include elements taken from action and adventure games. In *Arena*, players advance by killing monsters (and thereby gaining experience points) until a preset value is met, whereupon they level-up. However, in *Daggerfall*, *Morrowind*, and *Oblivion* the series took a skill-based approach to character advancement. Players develop their characters' skills by applying them, and only level-up when a certain set of skills have been developed. *Skyrim* took a new approach - the more a skill is leveled, the more it helps to level the character. This shifted the focus away from character creation and more onto character development. The flexibility of the games' engines has facilitated the release of game extensions (or mods) through *The Elder Scrolls Construction Set*.

Chrono Trigger is a role-playing video game developed and published by Square for the Super Nintendo Entertainment System in 1995. Considered one of the greatest Role Playing Games of all time, *Chrono Trigger* features standard role-

playing video game gameplay. The player controls the protagonist and his companions in the game's two-dimensional fictional world, consisting of various forests, cities, and dungeons. Navigation occurs via an overworld map, depicting the landscape from a scaled-down overhead view. Areas such as forests, cities, and similar places are depicted as more realistic scaled-down maps, in which players can converse with locals to procure items and services, solve puzzles and challenges, or encounter enemies. Chrono Trigger's gameplay deviates from that of traditional Japanese RPGs in that, rather than appearing in random encounters, many enemies are openly visible on field maps or lie in wait to ambush the party. Contact with enemies on a field map initiates a battle that occurs directly on the map rather than on a separate battle screen.

In my opinion, the game that changed the console RPG world is Final Fantasy VII for the PlayStation 1. Final Fantasy VII, released in 1997, role-playing video game developed by Square for the PlayStation console. It is the seventh primary installment in the Final Fantasy series. The introduction of cut scenes and the exciting new battle modes, along with a gripping story line and soundtrack, made this a perfect combination for one of the greatest RPGs ever made. With the shift from the SNES to the next generation consoles, Final Fantasy VII became the first project in the series to use 3D computer graphics. Developers initially considered overlaying 2D sprites on 3D backgrounds but decided to forgo pixel art entirely in favor of polygonal models. Aside from the story, Final Fantasy VI had many details undecided when

development began; most design elements were hashed out along the way. In contrast, with Final Fantasy VII, the developers knew from the outset it was going to be "a real 3D game", so from the earliest planning stage detailed designs were in existence.

RPG turned to kids when Pokémon was released to the Gameboy. First released in 1996 in Japan for the Game Boy, the main series of role-playing video games has continued on each generation of Nintendo's handhelds. The games are commonly released in pairs—each with slight variations—with an enhanced remake of the games usually released a few years after the original versions. While the main series consists of role-playing games, spinoffs encompass other genres, such as action role-playing, puzzle, and digital pet games. As of November 24, 2017, more than 300 million Pokémon games have been sold worldwide, across 76 titles. This makes Pokémon the second best-selling video game franchise, behind Nintendo's own Mario franchise. The franchise's mascot is Pikachu.

Magic: The Gathering is a trading card game and a digital collectible card game. It was created by Richard Garfield. First published in 1993 by Wizards of the Coast, Magic was the first trading card game created and it continues to thrive, with approximately twenty million players as of 2015. Magic can be played by two or more players in various formats, which fall into two categories: constructed and limited. Limited formats involve players building a deck spontaneously out of a pool of random cards with a minimum deck size of 40 cards. With Magic: The Gathering Online or MTGO for short, Wizards developed and released a computer version of the game themselves that allows players to compete online against other players using

the original Magic cards and rules. Players purchase digital cards and are able to play online against each other using their digital collections. Magic: The Gathering Online is the closest to paper magic of the digital alternatives.

World of Warcraft (WoW) is a massively multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG) released in 2004 by Blizzard Entertainment. It is the fourth released game set in the Warcraft fantasy universe. World of Warcraft takes place within the Warcraft world of Azeroth, approximately four years after the events at the conclusion of Blizzard's previous Warcraft release, Warcraft III: The Frozen Throne. Blizzard Entertainment announced World of Warcraft on September 2, 2001. The game was released on November 23, 2004, on the 10th anniversary of the Warcraft franchise. As with other MMORPGs, players control a character avatar within a game world in third or first-person view, exploring the landscape, fighting various monsters, completing quests, and interacting with non-player characters (NPCs) or other players.

With Virtual Reality becoming more and more popular, there is no telling what the future of RPG gameplay will be and how interactive the world will become. The best RPGs embrace a rich storytelling tradition, as well as deep and engaging gameplay, to create universes that are as exciting to explore as they are thrilling to quest and do battle.



Todd Friedman Todd Friedman is heavily involved in the video game community. He currently writes for Old School Gamer Magazine, Little Player Magazine, Retro Player Magazine, RetroGaming Times and The Walter Day Collection. He has Co-Promoted the Video Game Summit in Illinois for the past 10 Years. Todd is an avid video game collector with over 3500 console games and 35 systems, One of his main responsibilities is keeping the Walter Day Trading cards alive. Todd holds over 60 world records on the Nintendo Wii game DJ Hero, and was a nominee for the International Video Game Hall of Fame, class of 2016 and 2017.



Role Playing Games

GETTING FROM HERE TO THERE

Jason Russell

to encounter examples that rely upon strategic movement systems or even action and jumping mechanics.

At one time, certain gaming elements such as character customization and the ability to level up with experience accumulated, were easy indicators of the role-playing experience. These days it isn't uncommon to encounter these systems in everything from party games to shooters.

So where then did the commonly accepted attributes of the role-playing game originate? Surprisingly, the answer is one of timing. The 1970s witnessed a surge in popularity of the tabletop or "pen & paper" role-playing game right alongside the advent of the home computing scene. It wasn't a far leap for fans of the tabletop game experience to begin integrating elements of their pastime into emerging university mainframes. Many of these early efforts were strictly text-based dungeon crawlers that had players solving puzzles, defeating monsters and avoiding traps much like their paper and dice counterparts. This witnessed the birth of turn-based tactical combat to mimic the dice roll system common in the tabletop counterparts.

As the mainframe computer evolved into the home computer, the RPG followed, benefiting from the integration of graphics and sounds to accompany the rich play mechanics that defined the early genre. Home consoles were quick to put their capabilities to use in the role-playing arena as well. As far back as 1982 the Atari 2600 received the role-playing game *Dragonstomper* after dabbling with elements of the genre in the form of *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and *Adventure*.

Arguably it was the NES that brought the role-playing niche' into the console spotlight through a library consisting of role-playing entries from many sources, including ports of earlier and contemporary Western-developed PC titles such as *Ultima* and *Wizardry*, first party developed action efforts such as *The Legend of Zelda* and *Faxanadu*, and Americanized versions of popular Eastern RPGs such as *Dragon Warrior* (*Dragon Quest* in Japan) and *Final Fantasy*.

Of course the NES wasn't the only home console to realize the potential of the role-playing genre as evidenced by the success of Sega's *Phantasy Star* series, *Shining Force* etc.

The role-playing movement became a firmly established genre within the video game hierarchy, whether examining PC, console or even mobile gaming. The

integration of networking capabilities throughout the years has made possible entirely new subsets of the genre like the Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game (MMORPG); which even by itself (PC) brought in \$30.7 billion globally in 2017.

As of 2016, role-playing games made up 12.9% of all video games sold in the United States, making them the third most popular genre behind shooters and action titles. To provide some comparison, sports games made up 11.7% and shooters 27.5%.

As far as popularity is concerned, one role-playing franchise has stood above the rest throughout the years, thanks in no small part to an affiliation with Nintendo, as well as pop-culture outlets in the form of everything from animated shows to feature films. *Pokémon* is the highest selling RPG franchise of all time with over 300-million video game sales since its inception in 1996.

As popular as the RPG has become, many of us consider those early days of dungeon exploring in *The Legend of Zelda* or forming a party of four Light Warriors with which to conquer the three continents of *Final Fantasy* to be the epitome of the role-playing experience. Sure, they pale in comparison to the complexity, graphical treatment and sheer scope of the role-playing games that would follow in subsequent generations, but the simple truth remains that not only did these games provide the first real taste of the RPG formula for countless gamers around the world, they did so on a scale that wasn't intimidating. They were simplistic enough for a beginner to play but challenging enough to keep advanced players grinding away.

We live in an era where polygon counts, color pallets and 3D graphics processors demand very little imagination from players but simple sprites and solid game mechanics have kept the classics relevant even after all these years. In fact, a strong argument could be made that these are the exact traits that make them timeless.



Jason Russell has been working in video game journalism since the early 1990s before the internet existed, the term "fanzine" had meaning and sailors still debated as to whether or not the earth was flat. He is responsible for the RETROSPECTIVE column on *Old School Gamer Magazine* and is currently collecting 8-bit titles as if it were 1987

It could be argued that most any video game is a role-playing game; what are we doing when we grab a controller and settle in to session, after all, if not playing the role of a sniper, a race car driver or mushroom-stomping plumber? Yet, throughout the years, the term role-playing game (or RPG) has come to describe a specific subset of video game; one usually centered around a fantasy-set war mechanic, building character attributes and saving the world from the rise of unspeakable evil

What makes things tricky is that while generalizing the specific criteria required in role-playing gaming, the borders of these classifications are hazy at best. Medieval fantasy settings are common, but role-playing examples are often set in a dystopian future, alien world or even contemporary environment.

Gameplay mechanics are no less helpful in establishing a solid criteria for classification. While turn-based combat largely reigns supreme, it isn't uncommon

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Nox Archaist

AN UPCOMING TILE-BASED RPG FOR THE APPLE II PLATFORM

Bill Lange



The word is out on Nox Archaist! On Twitter, Richard Garriott, creator of the groundbreaking Ultima series tweeted "I greatly look forward to exploring this realm!" And Rebecca Heineman, creator of The Bard's Tale III tweeted "I can't wait to play this game on my Apple IIs!"

Nox Archaist is a new fantasy role-playing game by 6502 Workshop currently in development for the Apple II (as well as the PC and Mac through Apple II emulation). It uses an old-school Apple II single HRES 2D game engine with modern updates where appropriate.

Mark Lemmert, co-founder of the 6502 Workshop and lead game engine programmer, gave a presentation on Nox Archaist at KansasFest 2017, an annual gathering of Apple II enthusiasts, where he demonstrated gameplay elements and provided a brief technical overview to attendees. Lemmert introduced Nox Archaist as a tile-based RPG with a "sword and sorcery" theme for original Apple II hardware and emulators. His talk included gameplay demos, a "behind the scenes" assembly language programming overview with Q&A, and several reveals. A video of the presentation can be found on YouTube.

The Nox Archaist project was made public in March 2016, with initial development work by 6502 Workshop going back at least eight months earlier. Progress on the development of the game and game engine has been covered in a series of articles in the Apple II related magazine Juiced GS, as well as on several Apple II and Retro Computing related podcasts.

The development team, 6502 Workshop, is a growing team of talented Retro Gaming enthusiasts who bring a comprehensive set of skills and experience in technology, art, business management, and other areas to the project.

What will the Nox Archaist game be like? Nox Archaist is based on the classic computer RPGs from the 1980s. The developers mentioned their influences for this game including the Ultima series, the Wizardry series, The Bard's Tale series, the 1986 release Wrath of Denethenor, and the 1987 release Deathlord. Mark Lemmert describes his vision of the game as being what tile-based RPGs may have evolved into if commercial development on the Apple II had continued past the end of the 1980s.

The name itself, Nox Archaist, is an amalgamation of "the Roman goddess of the night" and "the use of something old". It is expected to be a dark and serious game, with hints of "The Bard's Tale"-type humor infused into the robust storyline built upon a nonlinear fantasy world covering four double-sided (eight disk sides total) 5 ¼ floppy disks for the Apple II (or disk images for Apple II emulators).

The developers of Nox Archaist asked themselves, what could have happened if programmers kept working on 8-bit RPGs? What could have they created? What limits could they have broken? The game engine is expected to push the envelope of game development on the Apple II. Written in 6502 assembly language, but without the "marketing consideration" limits of the mid 1980s, it will feel like a classic Apple II RPG, with greatly expanded RAM, and potentially a less clunky UI.

Graphically,

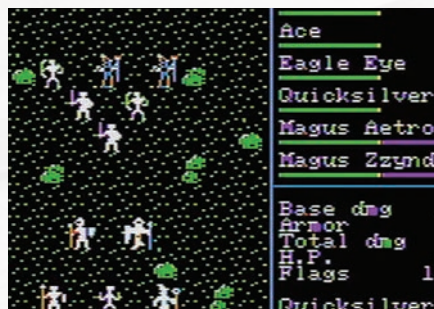
the game will use 14x16 pixel tiles, 17x11 tiles per screen, and 256 tiles per tile set (128 static, 128x4 for tile animation). Upwards to 1000 different tiles sets will be used depending on disk space. It will also use popup windows, as needed, for inventory lists, character stats and conversation dialog, leaving almost the full screen for map graphics.

The game engine is expected to handle typical RPG game elements such as multiple character adventuring parties, a large tile-based overworld, castle/town/dungeon maps, tile animations and line of sight visibility. The Nox Archaist engine is also expected to handle allowing characters (and NPCs) to hide in tall grass, horses that can traverse over difficult terrain, characters having the ability to swim, water tiles of various depths, battlements, towers, working canons, flickering wall sconces in dungeons, dynamic NPCs and advanced mob combat tactics.

The combat system will use an Ultima III-like combat screen with mixed character mobs using advanced combat tactics. Along with melee and ranged weapons, users will also be able to use magic. Spells, like fireball, can be focused on a single foe or spread out in an area effect to hit multiple targets. But watch out for friendly fire! Inter-party conflict is also a supported combat option.

Need supplies? The characters in the adventuring party can buy weapons, armor and other items, both magical and mundane, from merchants. However, you need to make sure you get to the various shops during business hours, as Nox Archaist also enforces time-based rules, such as store's business hours and the opening and closing of castle portcullises.

The Nox Archaist Collector's Edition is expected to ship old school with a game box, printed manual, cloth map and four double-sided 5 ¼ floppy diskettes. It may also contain other



feelies depending on which funding level is attained. For Mac and PC based Apple II emulators (AppleWin, Virtual II, etc.), the game will be a free download with additional instructions for setting up and running the game in an emulator. There may also be a copy protection scheme implemented on the physical Apple II 5 1/4 floppy disks for hackers to break as well.

A Kickstarter campaign to help fund the development of Nox Archaist was initiated in September 2017. Unfortunately, the initial Kickstarter campaign was ultimately cancelled early, as it didn't gain necessary traction to be successful. If you are interested in playing this new RPG, or just willing to help support new development for the Apple II platform, keep an eye on the Nox Archaist/6502 Workshop website at 6502workshop.com for the upcoming Kickstarter reboot later in 2018.

In early January 2018, the 6502 Workshop Development Team graciously took time to answer a few questions about Nox Archaist.

OSG: Why a new Apple II tile-based RPG?

6502: My first computer was an Apple II. I grew up in the 1980s playing games and learning programming on that platform. I always wanted to make games for that platform in my youth, but as happens to people so frequently, life got in the way at the time. So, to me, the Nox Archaist project is about finally making the game I always wanted to make. The fact that other people want to play it... well, that's just too awesome! All the project team members are like-minded about this. We all have roots in Apple II gaming.

OSG: Considering the obvious demand for this sort of retro game with the recent Commodore 64 RPG game *Unknown Realm* being such a success on Kickstarter, why do you believe the original Nox Archaist Kickstarter campaign fell short of its goal?



6502: In the 1980s/90s the Commodore 64 outsold the Apple II many times over. Additionally, a much higher percentage of the Commodore users were game players, whereas the Apple II was used as much more of a multi-purpose machine. As a result, the retro market for Commodore 64 games appears to be much, much larger than the Apple II. When designing our Kickstarter Campaign (which was the first of its kind for an Apple II game), we'd hoped that the accessibility of Nox Archaist on the Mac and PC platforms would attract 8-bit gaming fans in general, in addition to Apple II enthusiasts. We now know that isn't likely.

There's also the now somewhat well-documented problem that our previous marketing team consisted primarily of house pets. Seriously though, this time we've got a team dedicated to spreading the word and crafting our Kickstarter in a professional fashion. We are intending to reach a wider audience and engage more people who would be interested in a retro gaming project such as this.

To that end, two new gaming enthusiasts have joined the team who have a lot of experience in the area of crowdfunding and gaming community management. Jarrod Kailef and Chris Torrence are working diligently on the reboot while the rest of the team and I continue to move development forward on Nox Archaist itself. We have a wealth of data from the first campaign that we are using to craft the new one, prioritizing the things most important to our backers.

OSG: When do you think the rebooted Nox Archaist Kickstarter will begin?

6502: Given the part-time nature of our team, we haven't set a firm target date. My best guess is the reboot will begin in the next few months - by spring 2018. We will keep the 6502workshop.com website updated with the latest news.

OSG: When do you expect the Nox Archaist Collector's Edition to be released? With a name like Nox, it should be released on December 21, the longest night of the year!

6502: We're still shooting for a December '18 release of the Collector's Edition. We may even lock it down to that very date, but it's a little too early to say that with 100% confidence.

OSG: Have you thought about supporting other 6502-based hardware such as the Atari 8-bit and/or the Commodore 64?

6502: We think it would be a lot of fun to branch out onto other platforms, especially ones that obviously have a larger retro gaming fan base. That said, we aren't geared and staffed to do something of that nature at this time. So, while we're still definitely considering the idea, it's nothing more than an item on our "wish list" at this point. We can't really comment with anything new on this subject until the Apple II release is complete and we figure out what our next moves will be.

OSG: Have you considered creating a "development diary" type book outlining the hardware, software and development tools used, assembly language code snippets, game engine details, and tips on creating an independent development project, creating a team and Kickstarter campaign?

6502: Yes! I have taken many notes during this process and look forward to hopefully writing an e-book or series of articles on the roller coaster ride that has been developing Nox Archaist. We've learned a lot of very interesting stuff, both from our own discoveries and through contact with 6502 assembly language veterans from the 80s, and we would love to share this information. In fact, if there is interest, I'd like to see 6502workshop.com become a destination for 6502 game developers looking for information and tools.

OSG: Thanks for taking the time to answer my questions. For me, it is amazing just to see such a large-scale tile-based RPG game being developed for the Apple II. As someone who enjoyed the early games such as *Ultima I - IV* on my Atari 8-bit, as well as *Wizardry* and *The Bard's Tale* on my Apple IIc, I am looking forward to the Collector's Edition release of this game. 🎮

<http://www.6502workshop.com/p/nox-archaist.html>

Bill Lange - Bill is a software engineer. He designs and develops cloud based software solutions. He resides in NJ with his wife Lucy and their dog Yoda. In his spare time, he likes to tinker with game programming, 8-bit computers and the classic arcade machines of his youth.

CADASH

By Michael Thomasson



The game design model that shouldn't have worked in the arcade... BUT DID!

In an industry designed to capture a quarter every ninety seconds, the role-playing genre seemed nearly impossible to bring into the arcades. However, during the summer of 1989, Taito Corp. cracked the dynamic wide open with the introduction of Cadash. In one of the few action role-playing games to ever grace the arcade, Cadash played more like a sprawling side-scrolling, action-adventure title for a home console than the typical coin-op quarter-muncher. Mashing the platform genre with all the ingredients of a traditional RPG system, Cadash leveled up the arcade scene with statistics, ranks, magic, and an in-depth monetary system. Furthermore, the game awarded players with experience points for each enemy defeated, while advancing their character stats to gain more skills, health, armor, weapons or other benefits. Its ultimate goal was to lure you into dropping more quarters to build a better hero.

NOTHING-NEW NARRATIVE

In its most basic form, the plot is nothing new: a demonic wizard kidnaps the princess of the kingdom, and a team of heroes is dispatched to rescue her. The account becomes much deeper as the story unfolds during the game. It turns out that over a millennia ago, demons were cast underground, along with the wizard Baarogue, who was born of a human woman. Countless years later, the necromancer and his followers escape their exile, revolt, and bring the uprising from their subterranean prison to the kingdom of Dizir. They lay waste to most of the human world as Baarogue attempts to bind himself to the human king's daughter, using her bloodline to become all-powerful.

THE LAND OF DIZIR

Your adventure begins in a pleasant meadow just outside the walls of the castle, but you'll soon find yourself knee-deep in danger and intrigue traversing the kraken's cavern, getting lost within the forest maze, pushing deep inside the underground catacombs, and finally plundering within the dreaded castle of Cadash. While discovering the secrets hidden within this fantastical realm, you'll find the levels vast and varied. Some levels scroll horizontally, others vertically, while the labyrinth turns it all on its head - all designed to muddle your progress and prevent you from halting the profane ritual.

CHARACTER COUNTS

If you liked the four-player dynamic of Atari's Gauntlet, then Cadash should give you a thrill and then some. While each Cadash cabinet supported up to two players, two cabinets could be "linked" to accommodate a four-player simultaneous adventure! Each party member would play as one of the four classes: a fighter, a mage, a priestess, and finally a ninja; each with their own unique abilities and drawbacks.

The Fighter is just as you'd imagine, a muscle-bound, close-range "Conan-wanna-be" barbarian. The hunch-backed, silver-haired mage uses his magic staff to cast spells as he slowly limps through the levels. The priestess can perform defensive and healing spells in addition to attacking her oppressors. Finally, the mysterious

ninja uses long-range projectiles such as throwing knives and shurikens to make quick order of enemy combatants.

EVEN THE SKELETONS BLEED!

Of course, an adventure is only as good as its enemies, and in this endeavor Cadash doesn't disappoint! Pulling from both customary mythology and the vivid imagination of the game designer's minds, the roster of demons and abominations against nature include Skeleton spiders, were-pigs, swarms of wasps, metal porcupines, fire elementals, winged lions, and underground monkeys (who doesn't like monkeys??). These creatures accompany the predictable mix of trolls, ogres, dragons, and blobs of slime. Be prepared to roll your eyes when you first gaze upon... the rolling eyes! You'll even encounter the nefarious sounding Black Pudding, an unyielding zombie that continues to hound you even after its torso has been severed, as well as an utterly out-of-place ninja. If you are twelve, you might even get a thrill from the topless Harpy, a half-human and half-bird personification of storm winds straight out of the books of Homer!

Not everything that moves about in Dizir is evil. Villagers and benevolent creatures will sometimes aid you on your journey, providing tips and other relevant information along the way. Did I mention that there is a mermaid or two in the mix, as well?



KEEPING UP WITH CADASH

Since Cadash was designed to mimic a console title, it ported quite well to home consoles. The TurboGrafx-16 received the first adaption in 1991, which proved to be much brighter and upbeat than the original. Working Designs, the publisher famous for porting Japanese games to North America at the time, did its usual job on injecting subtle jokes and humor into the game, such as breaking the fourth wall with lines like, "Dead men tell no tales... unless, of course, they're in a game." They also toyed with player statistics and currency system to better balance game play.

The following year, Taito released its own version of Cadash for the Genesis. While it stayed true to the darker mood of the original coin-op, the Sega version altered enemy A.I. and had many omissions,

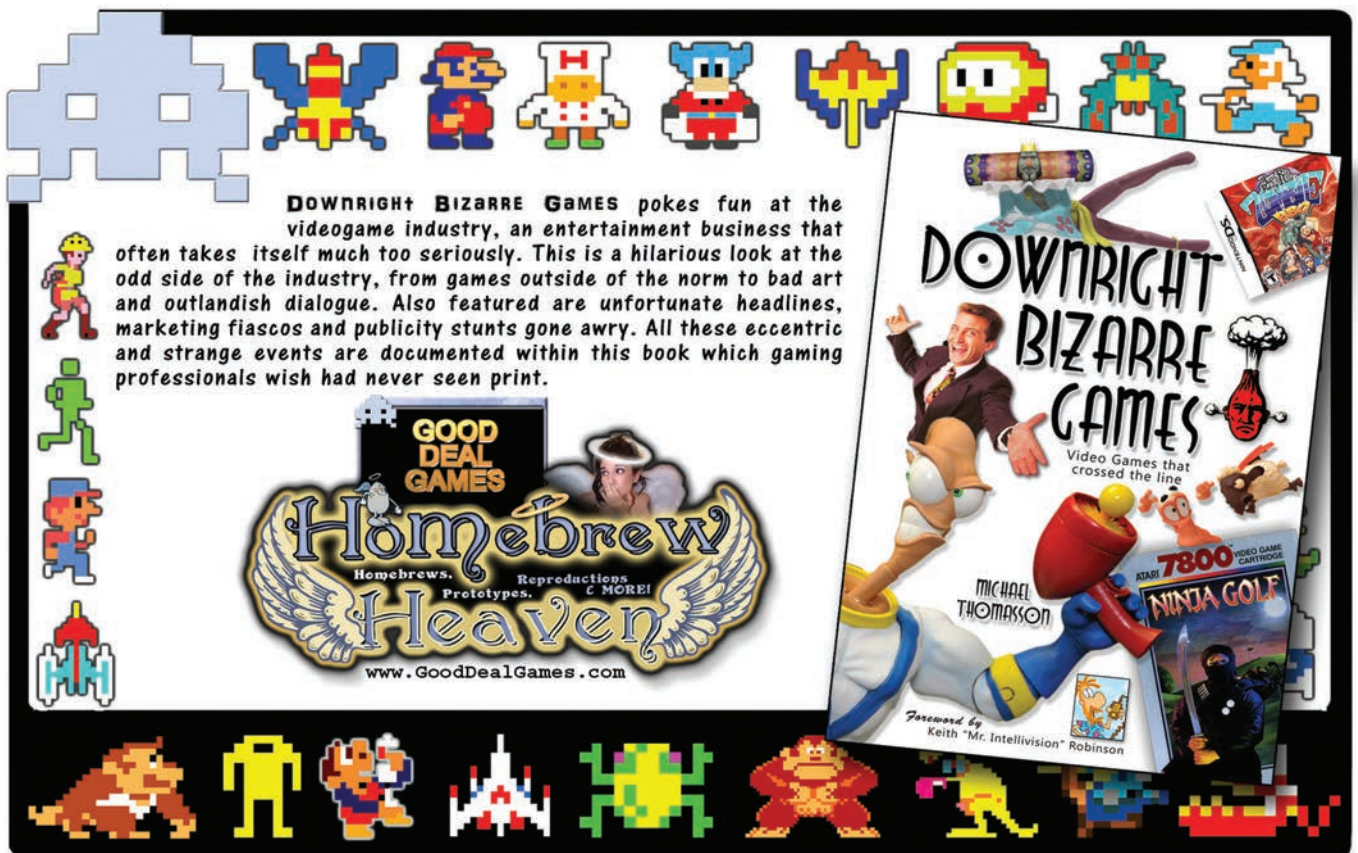
such as the man-eating Crawling Kelp boss, and sadly two of the four selectable characters! This version also tinkered around with item and shop dynamics, but in a totally different manner than the TG-16 version. As a result, all three versions of Cadash are unique and offer a different game play experience

The arcade version of Cadash landed in several compilations, but never stateside. Taito Memories Gekan for the Playstation 2 was released in 2005 exclusively for the Japanese market, and the 2007 Taito Legends 2 for the PC and original Xbox never left Europe. Taito Memories Gekan for the Playstation 2 was released in 2005 exclusively for the Japanese market, and the 2007 Taito Legends 2 for the PC and original Xbox never left Europe. 

OSG PRO GAMING TIP:

One of the more frustrating elements of the game has your player being knocked back when being hit by an enemy. This forces you to traverse the area again so that you are likely to take damage repeatedly - keeping you in danger longer. However, you can turn the programming in your favor! Just prior to being hit by an enemy, change the direction of your player as if you are turning back, and you'll pleasantly find yourself being pushed forward upon impact past the danger spot instead.

Michael Thomasson is one of the most widely respected videogame historians in the field today. He teaches multiple college level videogame courses, and has contributed to dozens of gaming texts and television shows including MTV's Video MODS and the highly-rated book Downright Bizarre Games. He has written business plans, managed a multiple game-related retail stores, and consults for multiple video game and computer museums. Michael has helped publish 100s of games on Atari, Sega and other console platforms. In 2014, The Guinness Book of World Records declared that Thomasson had "The Largest Videogame Collection" in the world. Visit www.GoodDealGames.com.



DOWNRIGHT BIZARRE GAMES pokes fun at the videogame industry, an entertainment business that often takes itself much too seriously. This is a hilarious look at the odd side of the industry, from games outside of the norm to bad art and outlandish dialogue. Also featured are unfortunate headlines, marketing fiascos and publicity stunts gone awry. All these eccentric and strange events are documented within this book which gaming professionals wish had never seen print.

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DOWNRIGHT BIZARRE GAMES
Video Games that crossed the line
MICHAEL THOMASSON
Foreword by Keith "Mr. Intellivision" Robinson

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JUNE 12-14

Los Angeles, CA • E3 •

JUNE 22-24

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JUNE 28-JULY 1

Sturbridge, MA • Pintastic • pintasticnewengland.com

JULY 14

Villa Park, IL • Video Game Summit • videogamesummit.net

JULY 21-22

Cleveland, OH • Classic Console and Arcade Gaming Show • ccagshow.com

JULY 26-29

Pittsburgh, PA • ReplayFX • replayfx.org

JULY 28-29

Austin, TX • Classic Game Fest • classicgamefest.com

JULY 28-29

Irving, TX • Lets Play Gaming Expo • letsplaygamingexpo.com

JULY 28-29

Houston, TX • RetroPalooza Houston • retropaloozahouston.com

AUGUST 4 -

St. Louis, MO • MoGameCon • mogamecon.com

AUGUST 3-5

Bloomington, MN • 2D Con • 2Dcon.net

AUGUST 10-12

Phoenix, AZ • Game On • gameonexpoaz.com

AUGUST 11-12

Garden City, NY • Long Island Retro • Expo.liretro.com

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Atlantic City, NJ • J1Con • j1con.com

SEPTEMBER 15-16

Secaucus, NJ • A Video Game Con • avideogamecon.com

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Arlington, TX • RetroPalooza • retropalooza.com

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Walter Day will be joining the OSG crew at one of our favorite events of the year.



FALL

Wiz(ardry) Talk

MEMORIES OF WIZARDRY

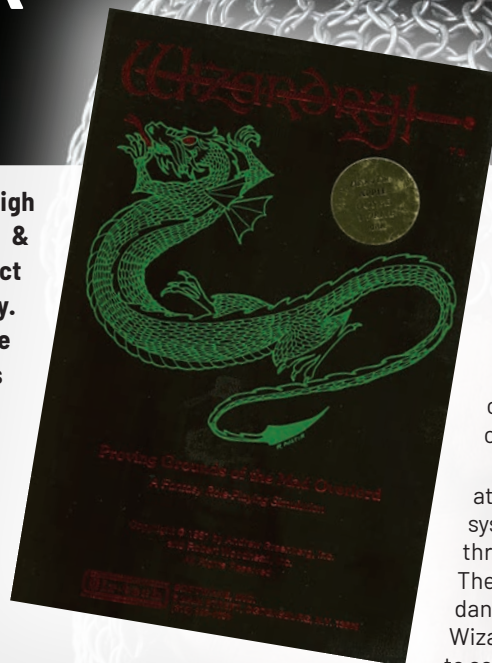
Kevin Butler

During my sophomore year in August, 1981, our high school was gifted a black ("Darth Vader") Bell & Howell Apple computer. These were given to select secondary educational institutions around the country. Additionally, our school purchased three or four more of the commercial beige Apples. Since PC's such as these were a totally new concept, a few of us took the plunge and tried to learn everything we could about them and what they could do.

About six months after learning what the Apple was capable of, I happened into a computer store and saw, on the shelf, a box with some very nice and brilliant artwork. Upon inspecting said box, I realized this was a game like no other. The front was adorned with the name "Wizardry" and a nice graphic of a dragon while the bottom of the box showed screenshots of the game in action. I knew then and there I had to have it. With all the money earned from mowing lawns, birthdays, and other sources, I purchased the game and a box of Elephant floppy disks.

Since I didn't own an Apple, I went back to the school and fired up the game. After making the scenario disk, I loaded it and created my characters. After all these years, I still remember the character names I created. My introduction, after I got through the Proving Grounds of the Mad Overlord, was to explore the first level of the dungeon. Being weak (due to being new to the game), and the monsters having no mercy, it took a few false starts and a lot of character recreations after the previous ones were killed. Finally, I got the characters to sufficient experience levels so they could survive a lot longer. Before long, the entire first level was mapped and the monsters weren't as challenging... time for the second level. The second level introduced me to enemy spellcasters plus creatures that could either poison or stone my party. Poison is easy to deal with, since all you have to do is go back to castle to be healed. Stoning, on the other hand, required a trip to the temple and some hard-earned gold to cure said affliction. I continued to grind and get my characters leveled up until I figured I was powerful enough to tackle the fourth level, where the elevator stops. To go to the lower levels, all one must do is take care of the monsters in the room labeled "**** TESTING GROUNDS CONTROL CENTER ****". Of course, this is anything but easy and it took a few attempts and a bit more leveling of my characters to finally overcome this room. My reward was the Blue Ribbon that I could take to the other elevator and to deeper depths of the dungeon.

After many hours of grinding, training, mapping, and other activities to get my characters prepared for the big battle with Werdna, I believed I was ready. But where do I find him? I finally



found the chute that took me to the tenth level. No stairs up, so this is for keeps. The first attempt doesn't work so well, since the rooms had an odd way for one to teleport to the next corridor.

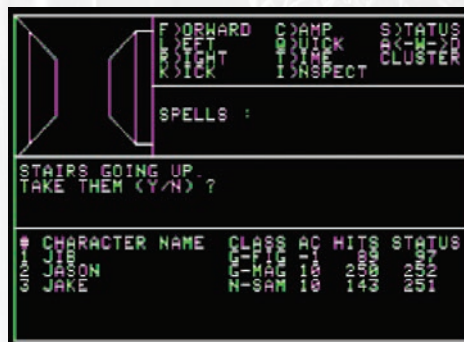
During my next attempts, I learned the system, but I still had to get through the six guardians. These guardians are the most dangerous and nasty monsters Wizardry had to offer. Needless to say, experience points flowed characters leveled steadily.

easily and

The final conflict was at hand and I entered Werdna's lair. It seemed he was entertaining some Vampires and a Vampire Lord. I sent my fighter, Lord, and Ninja after Werdna. My thief stayed back and the cleric uttered a Maliko while my magic user launched a Tiltowait into the room. Unfortunately, Werdna launched a spell first and it is a Tiltowait on my party. Fortunately, we took the damage in stride. My moves effectively eliminated Werdna, the Vampire Lord, and three Vampires (the other resisted the spell). The last Vampire missed, so round two. Needless to say, the Vampire was eliminated with the superior firepower of five characters.

After the smoke cleared, I had to head off to the castle for the reward. Trebor, of course, was very grateful for our help. Each character earned 50,000 gold and experience after this achievement. In addition, each character may now wear the chevron ">" to show the world of your crowning achievement. Although this is but a synopsis of the game, it took many hours to achieve victory.


Wizardry was created by Robert (Trebor) Woodhead and Andrew (Werdna) Greenberg but there is more history that led to the creation of this game. In the beginning, before the PC, people played games with paper and pencil. Enter Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson who developed what would become Dungeons and Dragons. They created an organized system so that someone could create a character, then go out and take care of the creatures in whatever world they were playing in. It was only a matter of time before the universities took a crack at this. The first dungeon crawls such as *pedit 15*, *dnd* and *Oubliette* paved the way. PLATO (Programmed Logic for Automatic Teaching Operations) made the ideal environment for these dungeon



crawls. PLATO was designed for education, which meant high-end graphics and the speed to match them. Since PCs were unable to do this, students created these games through PLATO. It was at this time, in the late 1970's, that Robert and Andrew got together and collaborated on Wizardry. Andrew was attempting to program the game in Applesoft BASIC which had many limitations. In the meantime, Robert was honing his skills with Pascal. Through a series of coincidences, the two men got together. Robert realized that if they wrote Wizardry in Pascal, it could overcome the limitations of Applesoft BASIC. Robert was in charge of the programming and creating the scenario editors that created the games database. Andrew was in charge of using those editors to populate the database.

One last hurdle remained, and that was to get the game to run on a 48K RAM Apple. This was a situation where the software outran the hardware and they had to wait for Apple to create the Pascal runtime system that would allow Pascal programs to run on 48K Apples. While waiting for Apple to come through, the game was extensively play-tested and tweaked so as to preserve the balance between party and monsters. The results show clearly that Wizardry proved that a CRPG (Computer Role Playing Game) could be made that rivaled those that existed on the mainframe computers. Although some aspects of the mainframe system (*multi-player, more races and classes, ability to explore town, e.g.*) were omitted, Wizardry allowed one to create six characters to guide through the maze. With 100 monsters to gain experience from and 100 items to assist them, players had a lot of freedom

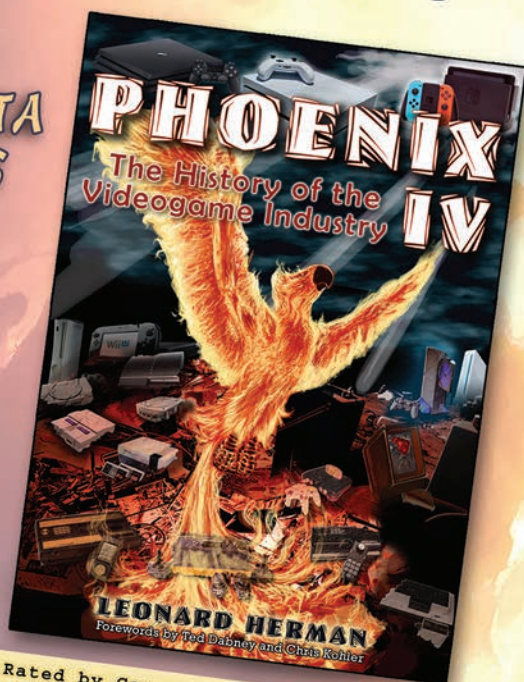
and choices to make.

With graphics (thanks to Apple Pascal) that were cutting edge at that time, Robert Woodhead and Andrew Greenberg proved that the age of the PC had arrived and it could generate high quality graphics that could rival the big commercial systems at the time. Due to Pascal being able to manipulate the code, you could actually have a game that was bigger than the system you were running it on due to innovative ways of managing memory and instructions. One big drawback, as noted by Robert, was the constant disk accesses to accomplish this. He was concerned one could wear out a floppy much quicker this way. Even with that negative, people responded positively and in the first nine months, 24,000 copies were sold making it the best-selling CRPG at that time. Over a three-year period, Wizardry would sell over 200,000 copies. Wizardry would also set the standard for multi-character parties which would be a legacy for such games as Bard's Tale and even the Phantasia series (although Ultima could also be cited as an influence). 

Kevin Butler – Since he played on the first Magnavox Odyssey in 1973, Kevin was bitten by the video game bug. From that point, he played many arcade and console games. In addition, he even learned to program the Apple II+ in the early 80's. Retiring from the navy in 2004, Kevin had already worked for Majicsoft and was doing FAQ's (mostly arcade) for GameFAQ's and contributing to the MAME project. He currently lives in Neosho MO with his wife and one son who is also a video game hobbyist.

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Evolution of Role-Playing Games In Japan

Antoine Clerc-Renaud



Dragon Quest may be the first Japanese Role Playing Game using mechanics still used today, but it's certainly not the first role playing game from the land of the rising sun. It was a trailblazer that inspired and led a charge by the Japanese but there were some interesting games before it.

THE DARK AGES

The period before the first Dragon Quest came out is commonly referred to as the Dark Ages of Japanese Role Playing Games. The titles that tried something new were clunky and difficult, at best, and unplayable and crazy at worst. Let's not forget that in Japan, from the 1970s and early 1980s, it was populated by computers made in Japan. There were a few consoles, that is Pong consoles, manufactured by a wide range of companies, from Nintendo to Mitsubishi. However, experimentations like the first few proto-JRPGs were on computers and only some artifacts remain.

Among the first publishers to catch the role-playing game train in Japan was Koei. Better known for its strategy games and Dynasty Warriors franchise nowadays, the Japanese publisher played an active role in the creation and popularization of role playing game in its home country. Moreover, Koei was accounting for half of the JRPG releases by the end of 1983. Their first attempt was titled The Dragon & Princess. A text-based game released in December, 1982, it was later updated



to incorporate graphics. Players typed their command on the keyboard in order to progress. The ingredients of the RPG were there: a team, a dungeon, monsters and equipment management.

Then a strange attempt was made with Danchi-zuma no Ywaku, or Seduction of Condominium Wives, in June of 1983. As a condom salesman, you go door-to-door trying to seduce the lonely housewives. This one incorporated a first-person view with vector graphics and colored character sprites. We can also include Spy Daisakusen (Mission: Impossible Japanese title) from Pony Canyon.

The Dragon & Princess is considered the grandfather of JRPG as it included many of the rules used today.

A FIRST HIT COMING FROM A DUTCH

The last pre-Dragon Quest game that marked Japan surprisingly didn't come from a Japanese developer but a Dutch one. Henk Rogers, who would later gain fame securing the rights to Tetris for Nintendo from the USSR in 1989, was an avid tabletop role-playing game player and had a knack for game design. Living in Japan for a few years, he noticed a gap in the Japanese market. At a time when Ultima and Wizardry were all the rage in the West, there was nothing like this in Japan. Rogers, therefore, aimed to create the best game for them. The Black Onyx was released in January 1984 and it bombed... big time. Only five copies were sold for the first two months. A first-person dungeon crawling, The Black Onyx was perhaps too different from what Japanese players were used to. Furthermore, the game relied heavily on Western fantasy aesthetics. But Rogers didn't give up that easily. Indeed, he insisted on meeting, along with a translator (as he did not speak Japanese), each and every PC Magazine editor. He sat with them, demonstrating the game to

hopefully gain some coverage...and it worked! Not only did the journalists finally understand the interest for a game

like this, but The Black Onyx would go on to be the first RPG hit in Japan! It sold 10,000 copies the next month and would go on to sell a total of 150,000 units a year later.

A FIERY DRAGON

But then it happened! After a contest held by the newly formed Enix, the development team was formed right then and there. A few months later a staple was born. Dragon Quest came out on May 27 1986 and was a game changer (pun intended). Drawing its inspiration from other games such as Wizardry, Ultima or Dragon Slayer, Dragon Quest offered a rich, long and intense adventure. Random first-person encounters established it as a rule for JRPG, as many others would use following the massive success of Enix's release. What made it so great was the fact that the developers chose the Famicom instead of the more obvious computer. Nintendo's system was on the rise and showing no signs of slowing down, which explains this choice. For the developers, it also meant fewer buttons. Therefore, they had to simplify everything from the menu to moving the character using a top down view. The result was crafted with such mastery that it sold over 2 million copies. The game eventually came out in the United States more than 3 years later, in August of 1989, under the moniker Dragon Warrior. To this day, Dragon Quest, or DraQue as the Japanese called it, is more successful in its native land than any other video game series.

Dragon Quest surprised everybody in Japan. Each and every instalment in the series is a success in its native land, much more than anywhere else in the world.



REVISED AND UPDATED

The next megaton in JRPG came out only one year after Dragon Quest. Hironobu Sakaguchi, a Tokyo-based developer at Square, was designing games for the Famicom. But he had enough of the fast-paced games and wanted to come up with something meaningful to him or he'd quit. Needless to say, he was impressed and envious of Dragon Quest's success. But he'd change a few things, and that he did. After months of work with a small team of developers, Final Fantasy came out on December 18 1987. Like its counterpart from Enix, it was a huge success. Easy to use with a compelling time travelling-based story, players loved Final Fantasy. It would eventually come out in North America almost three years later in May 1990. Then the rest is history and led to the best period in JRPG history.

Another iconic production from the second half of the 80s was Square's Final Fantasy creating a multi-billion dollars franchise with more than 100 games including spin-offs, remasters, and ports.

GOLDEN AGE

Following those game changers were a whole lot of titles from various publishers on just as many platforms. While the West was coming up with ideas of their own (and quickly facing a wall), Japanese developers used some western franchises that were losing momentum and applied some of their magic to make them popular in the land of the rising sun. This is how Wizardry saw a revival in Japan or how the Ultima series got Japan-exclusive episodes on the PlayStation. Sometimes using an anime style, sometimes with turn-based battles, Japan perfected the rules and applied this recipe to a whole lot of games either original or not leading to the golden age of JRPG occurring between 1991 (Final Fantasy IV) and 2004 (Dragon Quest VIII). The 16 to 128 bit era saw the best Japan had to offer in terms of role playing games. Most of them are now regarded as classics. Franchises such as Suikoden, Tales of, Star Ocean,

Persona, and Grandia were born during these years. Some were short lived like Chrono Trigger and Chrono Cross, Baten Kaitos and Baten Kaitos Origins.

But as the 6th generation of consoles was drawing to a close, and development costs were rising, the Japanese game development scene took a dive that would take a whole generation from which to recover.

The golden age of JRPG occurred mainly on consoles such as the Super NES, PlayStation and PlayStation 2, at a time of decent development cost when developers could take risks.

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES


The 7th generation of consoles or HD systems was a dark period for JRPG fans and developers alike. As the graphics were improving, the development costs skyrocketed. It was not uncommon to be in the double-digit millions of dollars. Whereas the previous generation allowed for smaller teams to develop games and take risks, it was not true or viable anymore for the newer generation of systems namely the PlayStation 3, Xbox 360 or even the Nintendo Wii. Teams needed to be bigger to tackle huge projects such as Final Fantasy XIII that would go on to be the first multiplatform game in order for Square Enix to recoup the costs. The world was changing - a faster internet was now available in most of developed countries. New parameters needed to be taken into consideration. As the costs were higher, it killed the medium-ranged projects, the so-called AA games that were numerous on previous generations. It was the survival of the richest, as the fittest needed resources in order to be able to launch a high scale project. Digital gaming was not there yet and mobile games, although they started earlier in Japan, were not available for everybody in the world just yet. Few notable JRPGs were released on the 7th generation, at least on the home console side. Among those, we have the Final Fantasy XIII trilogy, NieR, Blue Dragon and Lost Odyssey (both designed by Hironobu Sakaguchi and

partly financed by Microsoft in exchange of a console exclusivity).

The HD generation of system saw a few good JRPGs, but the Japanese industry was in a slump for the entire duration of the 7th generation.

REVIVAL

To the seasoned gamer and JRPG fanatic, it feels like since the release of the PlayStation 4, the Japanese video game industry was reborn. While we only had a handful of JRPGs for the previous generation, this current one is almost spoiled. Thanks to the rise of independent developers and mobile gaming, JRPG is back. Between Final Fantasy, Nier, Persona, Tales of, Star Ocean, there are numerous franchises aiming to bring the Japanese RPG to a wider audience. Even Square Enix launched a dedicated entity called Tokyo RPG Factory whose developers' goal is to create Japanese role-playing games. Their first two games, I am Setsuna and Lost Sphear, were charming. Let's not forget all the remasters and remakes—whether we like them or not—that allow younger players to experience works of art in high definition such as Kingdom Hearts or Secret of Mana. The Japanese RPG is definitely back on track.

Luckily, after a slow generation, the current one brings its fair share of JRPG. More of them are expected to come out and that's all we can wish for. 

Antoine Clerc-Renaud - Video Game Historian and Freelance Writer - Now living in Montreal, by way of France where he grew up and lived for 24 years, Antoine is a passionate gamer and a dedicated writer. Video Game History is a true mission for him and he's always on the lookout to learn something new or unheard of. He wrote, co-wrote or supervised several books on the subject including Coleco - The Official Book (self-published) and PlayStation Anthology (Geeks-Line). His love for writing allows him to fully immerse himself in research, interviews while filling blank pages that don't stay empty very long.

Lord British Meetup

DAVE AND BUSTERS WITH RICHARD GARRIOTT

Bill Lange



On Tuesday, April 3rd, 2018, Michael Sean Kane organized and hosted a Shroud of the Avatar Launch Review with special guest, Lord British himself, Richard Garriott. The event took place at the Dave & Buster's, a full-service restaurant and video arcade, on 42nd Street in Manhattan, NY.

There were a couple of dozen people in attendance, including members of the Ultima Dragons Internet Chapter, an internet-based social club whose members share a common interest in the Ultima series of computer role playing games by Garriott, as well as long time players of the pre-release versions of Shroud of the Avatar: Forsaken Virtues.


Shroud of the Avatar began as a Kickstarter project which successfully funded on April 7th, 2013. After almost five years in development, it was officially released on March 27th, 2018. Kickstarter and other early backers were able to get early access to prerelease versions of the game for quite some time now. While I was a Kickstarter backer way back in 2013, I just recently installed the released version and starting playing.

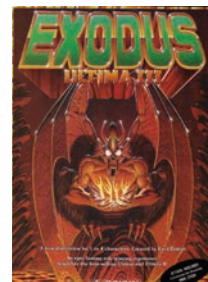
It was an incredibly fascinating night of conversation. Garriott was so generous with his time, spending almost five hours over dinner and drinks, discussing his company's (Portalarium Inc.) new game, his old games, his adventures aboard the International Space Station, his adventures diving down to the Wreck of the RMS Titanic, his recent book "Explore/Create: My Life in Pursuit of New Frontiers, Hidden Worlds, and the Creative Spark", and everything in between.

Many of the attendees spoke passionately about the new game. Not only did Garriott talk about Shroud of the Avatar, he listened to the attendee's comments and took notes to discuss with his development team for possible future game enhancements. Said Garriott about the event, "I too had a great night, chatting with friends who are also my...partners in this grand experiment. We should all be proud of what we have created together."

Garriott also took time to take photos with everyone as well as sign the multitude of books, Ultima manuals and cloth maps that people brought with them.

You can find out more about Shroud of the Avatar: Forsaken Virtues, which Forbes magazine recently called "... basically an Ultima game without the Ultima name ..." at www.shroudoftheavatar.com.

Look for more on Richard Garriott and his company's latest game, Shroud of the Avatar: Forsaken Virtues, in future issues of Old School Gamer magazine. 



shroudoftheavatar.com

A screenshot from the game Shroud of the Avatar. The top of the screen has a dark green background with white text that reads "REMEMBER YOUR FIRST ADVENTURE?" and "14 26 : 00". Below this is a pixelated landscape with green hills and brown trees. A small character is visible on the left side of the ground. The bottom of the screen has a dark orange background with white text that reads "DISCOVER THE PAST AT GOATSTORE.COM".

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

By Brett Weiss

Welcome once again to Brett's Old School Bargain Bin, where I point out inexpensive games worth playing. Great RPGs for retro consoles tend to be pretty pricey, so I have a different and historical angle for this issue's role-playing theme. We're traveling back in time to the advent of the pencil-and-paper classic, *Dungeons & Dragons*, which played a huge role (so to speak) in the formation of a crucial (not to mention highly collectable) video game genre.

Dungeons & Dragons, the popular, but widely misunderstood role-playing game, was born in 1974. It was the brainchild of Dave Arneson and Gary Gygax, friends who were fully immersed in the miniature war gaming scene, in which players would roll six-sided

dice and engage in tabletop battles using miniature figures, often of their own design. D&D, as it's commonly known, was an outgrowth of Gygax's own creation, *Chainmail*, a miniature war game set in medieval times.

Released by Guidon Games in 1971, *Chainmail* included a "Fantasy Supplement" that featured such fantastical creatures as dragons, elves, and wizards. According to expert war gamer Keith Veronese of io9.com, each miniature figure "proxies for 20 of a certain type of soldier, whether it be armored foot soldiers or a low-class horse rider. This system allowed for large battles between mixed classes based on the outcome of six-sided dice rolls with minimal 'on table' confusion."

Gygax wrote the rules for *Chainmail* with his associate Jeff Perren, but Arneson tinkering with the game is what led to the creation of *Dungeons & Dragons*. In an interview published on pc.gamespy.com in 2004, Gygax said: "Even when you're playing miniatures, there's still some role-playing aspect; you'll pretend to be the commander of the group, and so forth. The one-to-one rules tended to make that aspect more prominent. It was Dave Arneson, though, who started playing a *Chainmail* game where each of his players had just one figure on the table. That was the impetus for me to put together what eventually became *Dungeons & Dragons*."

Originally released as a boxed, three-volume rules set, *Dungeons & Dragons* takes place in a fantasy world



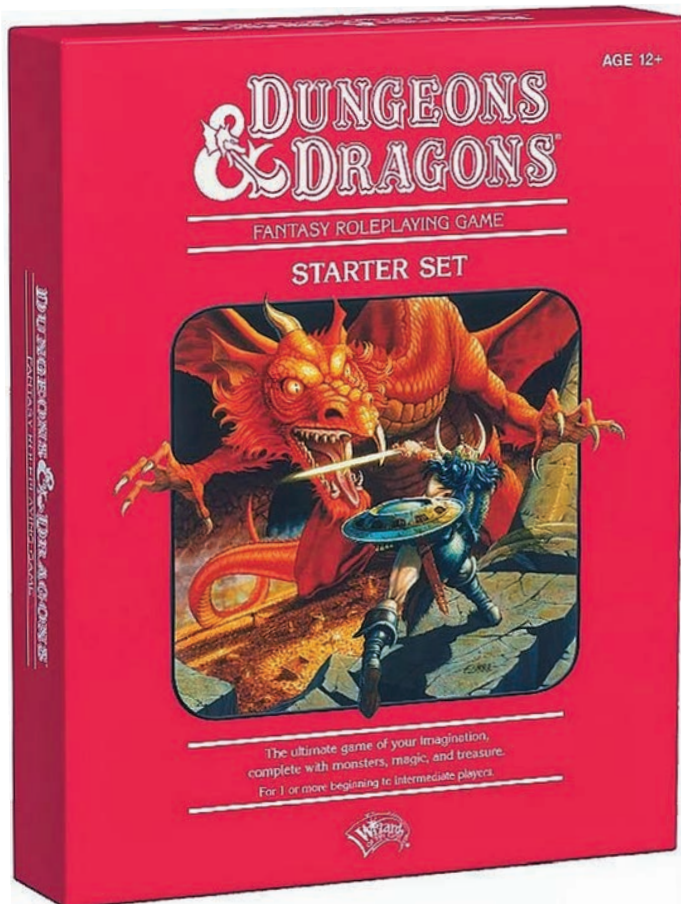
similar to that of J. R. R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, but Gygax has claimed he was inspired more by the works of Robert E. Howard, L. Sprague DeCamp, and Fritz Lieber when creating the monsters, magic, and scenarios for the game. The magic system is based on Jack Vance's 1950 fantasy classic, *The Dying Earth*.

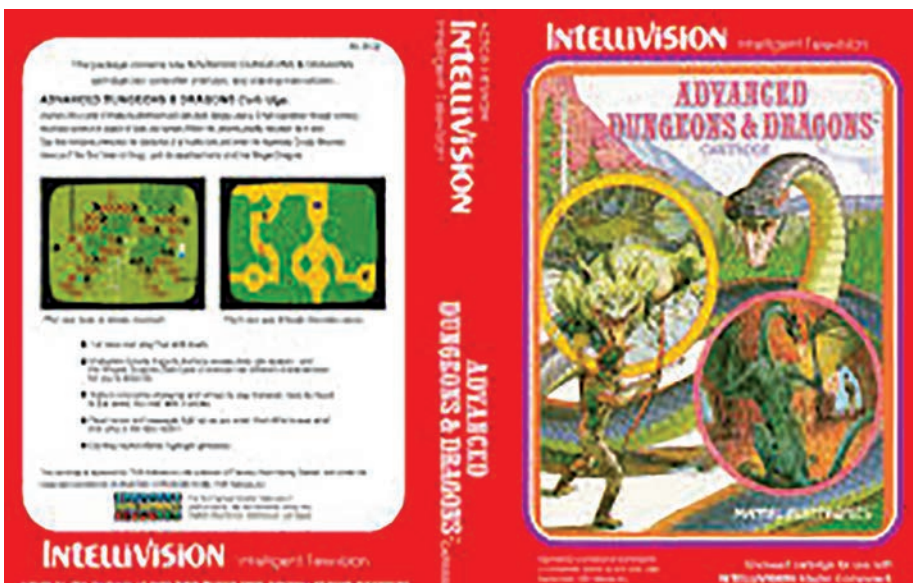
"I'm not a big Tolkien fan," Gygax said in the aforementioned interview. "I did love the movies, but I yawned through the books. I found them very droll and very dull. I still don't give a hoot about Hobbits."

A typical D&D campaign finds a group of six or so guys (and an occasional gal or two) sitting around a table, rolling dice, drawing maps, consulting rule books, leveling up their characters, and pretending they are battling monsters and circumventing traps while on a quest for treasure in a spooky cave or forest. One player is the Dungeon Master (DM) while the others are adventurers.

According to David M. Ewalt, author of *Of Dice and Men: The Story of Dungeons & Dragons and The People Who Play It* (2013, Simon and Schuster), the Dungeon Master's job is to "dream up a scenario, something like 'Archaeologists have discovered a pharaoh's tomb in the desert, and the players are grave robbers who have to break in and steal the hidden treasure.' He also has to sketch out the details; for example, making a map and deciding where the traps are, where the treasure is, and what monsters are guarding it. This act of creation gives players an unknown world to explore and keeps the game session different from the last."

An experienced DM can make things especially interesting for the explorers, as Ewalt explained: "He might decide the players should start out in a Bedouin near the tomb and negotiate with the sheik to buy a couple of camels. He could plan for them to be waylaid by desert raiders on the way to the tomb. And once they've found the pharaoh's treasure, he may ask them to make a moral choice: The treasure carries a curse, and if it's removed from the tomb, the region will suffer 10 years of famine. The players will have to weigh getting rich and letting thousands die against leaving empty-handed and protecting the innocent."





Left: Intellivision Licensed RPG - AD&D
Below: 1983-1985 Cartoon Series by Marvel and TSR



Unlike most other games, Dungeons & Dragons is competitive, not cooperative, a trait Ewalt believes is one of its biggest strengths.

"Players work together to advance the story and solve problems, not beat each other to the finish line," he wrote. "There's rarely a real 'winner' in a D&D game; no single player comes out on top. In fact, winning is something of an alien concept...It's more about the journey than the destination, to invoke that old cliché, and about developing your part in the story."

Like other D&D devotees, Ewalt believes the fantasy RPG enjoys distinct advantages over other types of games, such as Monopoly, where players "just push a premade plastic token around a board. Instead, they create a 'player character,' or PC, a unique persona to be

inhabited like an actor in a role, imbuing it with motivation, will and action."

Jordan Weisman, creator of the original Shadowrun role-playing game, concurs. He once told Game Informer magazine that "D&D changed the player's relationship with the game. For thousands of years, players were either not represented in a game at all (Mancala, backgammon), in the role of a commander of units on the board (chess, war games), or took on the 'role' of an existing token (Snakes & Ladders, Clue)."


Weisman, who has claimed certain intense Dungeons & Dragons sessions have made him laugh, pace, sweat, and even shed tears, said the RPG has been especially impactful on the video game industry. "I don't believe that it is an overstatement to say that all first-person and third-person games are descended in one way or another from D&D," he said.

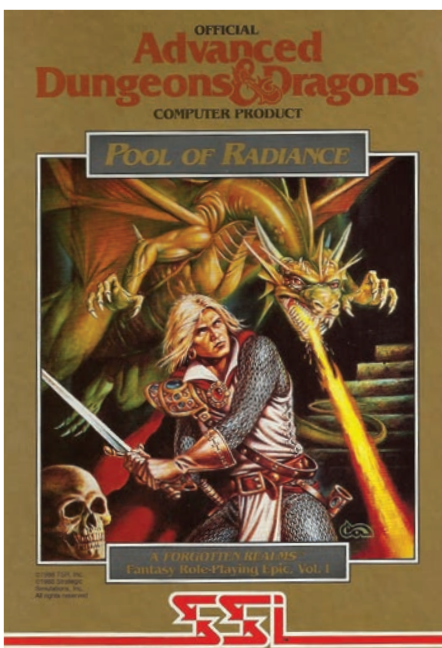
Speaking more broadly, Dustin Browder, game director at Blizzard on

StarCraft II and Heroes of the Storm, said, "Every game that lets you pretend to be someone else owes its core idea to Dungeons & Dragons."

In the 44 years since D&D was introduced, the game has gone through a number of changes and expansions, including new character classes, new rule books, monster manuals, players handbooks, supplemental modules, the late 1970's advent of Advanced Dungeons & Dragons (a revised, rules-heavy version of the original game), and the change of publisher from TSR to Wizards of the Coast (which bought the property in 1997). Tie-in movies, novels, comic books, toys, miniature figures, and a cartoon series were released as well.

And, of course, there have been video games, including Advanced Dungeons & Dragons Cartridge (Intellivision), Dungeons & Dragons: Warriors of the Eternal Sun (Genesis), Dungeons & Dragons: Eye of the Beholder (GBC, SNES), Dungeons & Dragons: Tower of Doom (arcade), and Dungeons & Dragons: Heroes (Xbox), among many others.

Next time you level-up your avatar, battle an onscreen orc, cast a magical spell, or slay a bitmapped dragon, know your roots and give at least a metaphorical shout-out to the late, great Dungeons & Dragons creators Dave Arneson and Gary Gygax. Without these inventive pioneers, the video game industry would probably look very different. 



Left, Above: AD&D "Pool Of Radiance" Box and Screenshot

Brett Weiss - Brett Weiss is the author of nine books, including the Classic Home Video Games series, The 100 Greatest Console Video Games: 1977-1987, and The SNES Omnibus: The Super Nintendo and Its Games, Vol. 1 (A-M). He's had articles published in numerous magazines and newspapers, including the Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Game Informer, Classic Gamer Magazine, Video Game Trader, Video Game Collector, Filmfax, and Fangoria.



G.O.A.T.s OF THE 21ST CENTURY

By Walter Day

Last issue's examination of the Golden Age greats roused a vocal outcry from the gamers of the modern era. They say: "How about giving recognition to the modern gamers who are just as good as the 'golden oldies,' but who, unfortunately, were born too late to get a shot at appearing in a LIFE magazine spread?"

Well, it's a worthy request and it is true that many of today's top gamers are just as good — if not even better than the gaming celebrities of yesteryear.

Looking over today's competitive field, we find champions who have mastered "golden age" titles as well as modern console games. Some dominating the high score tables on a single game while others beating all-comers in multi-game. Here are champions recognized by Twin Galaxies, Fun Spot, and Galloping Ghost. Could any of them be declared the G.O.A.T. of our modern era?

Andrew Barrow With 157 registered high scores on the Twin Galaxies Scoreboard, Andrew holds 75 world records, mostly in the home console realm. However, he distinguished himself recently by coming from his native Australia to win history's first-ever Galaga World Championships in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Martin Bedard With 299 registered records, Martin holds 102 world records on the Twin Galaxies Scoreboard and stands supreme on titles like Smash TV, 1942, Astro Invader, and Time Crisis. Over the years he has been a top contender on the annual Fun Spot classics tournament.

Greg Bond From New Hampshire, Greg Bond entered the limelight when he broke the world records back-to-back on both Mappy and Make Trax.

Jason Cram From New Hampshire, Jason enjoys 180 registered high scores on the Twin Galaxies Scoreboard with seven of them being world titles on classic arcade games. Among them are big titles like: Challenger, Congo Bongo, Lazarian, Crazy Climber, and Kosmic Kroozr. Jason has also been a top finisher in Fun Spot's annual classics tournament.

Lance Eustache With 206 registered high scores on the Twin Galaxies Scoreboard, Lance holds 19 world records, including a high water mark on the arcade version of The Real Ghostbusters with 425,900 points.

David Gomez Recognized Internationally as one of history's greatest Robotron players, David holds 8 first-place Twin Galaxies records on different Robotron tracks, and one of those is the modern era's longest 1-credit VERIFIED Endurance Marathon with a 180,022,000 score.

Pete Hahn With 128 registered high scores on the Twin Galaxies Scoreboard, Pete holds 84 world records on many important arcade titles, including Contra, Double Dragon, Marvel Super Heroes, Rush 'n Attack, Tekken 3, and Die Ar Kung-fu. Plus, his accomplishments at Galloping Ghost Arcade are even more impressive.

Donald Hayes With 203 registered high scores on the Twin Galaxies Scoreboard, Donald holds 46 world records on many very significant games, including Centipede, Millipede, Domino Man, Super Zaxxon, Pac-Man, Dig Dug and Satan's Hollow. He is a top contender in classic arcade contests around the USA and has won the Fun Spot classic tournament numerous times.

TriForce Johnson One of the rare players to have enjoyed a career spanning the golden age through modern times, founder of Empire Arcadia, is recognized by Guinness as the most documented tournament-winning team in gaming history. TriForce is also a successful competitor who has won countless tournaments in the fighting game genre. Additionally, he is an 8-time record holder with Guinness for games like Tetris, VS. Super Mario Brothers, and more. He was inducted into the International Video Game Hall of Fame as a member of the Class of 2016.

Richie Knucklez The co-founder of the legendary Kong Off, and star of the King of Arcades documentary film, Richie is a top competitor who has achieved world records on Monaco GP, Space Invaders, and the highest score ever recorded (and

filmed!) on Pole Position. He was also the first person to ever cross 1 million points on Phoenix and is the world record holder on Pleiades, Space Fury, and Stocker.

Pat Laffaye With 41 registered high scores on the Twin Galaxies Scoreboard, Pat holds two world records, including a monumental 124,120 points on the Middle Road of arcade Paperboy and a whopping 1,033,790 points on MAME Frogger.

John P. McAllister Not only does John have 318 ranked high scores with Twin Galaxies, but 71 are world records, including marquee accomplishments on Joust (107,301,150), Krull (496,190), Robotron (1,236,950), Asteroids (41,838,740) and Asteroids Deluxe (3,333,360). Placed in top 3 at the annual Funspot tourney 5 years in a row. 3 major marathons totaling around 150 hours on Asteroids, Joust, and Star Castle. Team member of the Kencade Battle of the Arcades being the winning team 4 years in a row. Placed 1st in the Arcade 3-minute challenge sponsored by Twin Galaxies. Placed 2nd in the Atari 2600 even. Placed 2nd in the Intellivision event.

Robert Macauley With 384 high scores ranked on the Twin Galaxies Scoreboard, Australia's Robert Macauley holds 112 world records on arcade, MAME and home consoles. his many world record scores on Twin Galaxies will attest to that! He was also one of the two Australian representatives for last years PAPA World Pinball Championships and IFFA World Pinball Championships in the USA.

Lonnie McDonald An expert at Joust, he has become a major leader of the gaming community who inspires competitive classic competitions wherever he brings his Joust Odyssey. He has turned over the score counter at 9,999,999 points on nearly 200 different Joust machines so far.

David Nelson From Laconis, NH, David has 333 registered high scores with Twin Galaxies and holds 105 world titles, including Astro Fighter, Blueprint, Ghosts 'n Goblins, Indy 4, Race Drivin', and Shooting Master. David has also been the

Grand Champion on Fun Spots' annual classics tournament numerous times.

Michael Sao Pedro With 82 registered high scores on the Twin Galaxies Scoreboard, Michael holds three world records, including top scores on Super Bug and Super Breakout. Plus, he has been a top performer in the annual Fun Spot classic championship numerous times.

David Race With 6 registered high scores on the Twin Galaxies Scoreboard, David holds 4 world records, including a "perfect Pac-Man score of 3,333,360 points as well as the "fastest completion" of a "perfect Pac-Man" game.

Steve Wagner With 19 registered high scores on the Twin Galaxies Scoreboard, Steve Wagner holds world records on 8 major titles, including Cliff Hanger, Kangaroo, Elevator Action, Snake Pit, Swimmer, Rally-X, Jungle Hunt, Monaco GP.

James White One of the top high score champions at the Galloping Ghost Arcade, James holds countless arcade world records and was selected the GGA Gamer



of the Year for 2012.

But, wait! Because of space restraints, our next issue will have more

modern gaming legends who we couldn't fit into this issue. Among them will be Justin Wong, Art Van Vliet, James White, Armando Gonzalez, Ken House, Jimmy Linderman, and many more.



Walter Day - As the founder of Twin Galaxies, the oldest video game scorekeeping and adjudication service in history, Walter Day is known as the creator of e-sports and has often been called The Patron Saint of Video Games. His remarkable efforts to find, verify and catalog video game world records has led to a decades-long partnership with The Guinness Book of World Records.



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A Few Minutes with Buck Stein of Retro Game Treasure

BY OLD SCHOOL GAMER

Buck Stine, of Retro Game Treasure, grew up as a Nintendo kid in the 1980s and got his NES for his fifth birthday. If you were to assess his NES inventory at Retro Game Treasure at any given time, he may have the largest collection of Nintendo games around. But his inventory rotates out every month as he ships out boxes of games to his subscribers.

BUCK: I went through Nintendo and straight to Super Nintendo, even though the Genesis came out. I mean, the Genesis was originally made to compete with the Nintendo, not the Super Nintendo. But I eventually got a Genesis. I loved my Sega CD, even though the games were always kind of poorly executed.

I went all the way up the gamut, right around, like PS1, PS2 and Gameboy Advance would have been playing when I was in college. And so, I played a lot of those, during my college years. I mean, I still play a lot of games now, too. I didn't always get every console, but I... eventually picked up all the ones that I was missing.

OSG: Tell us about the inception of Retro Game Treasure...

BUCK: Going back probably four and a half years ago, I was a subscriber of Blue Crate and the now-dead Third Block. Some of those were for me and some for the kids and stuff. And it all of a sudden hit me one day, like, oh man, I bet you there's a box out there that does, like -- there's a box that does everything. I bet there's a box that does retro video games and stuff. I would love to expand my own collection. I had about 200-plus NES games at the time and a bunch of others for other consoles. And I dug, and I dug, and I dug, and I couldn't

find anything. Could I do this? Could I build this? And so after six months of research and making friends with wholesalers and understanding how the business works, I created it!


OSG: Give us a little bit of a peek inside, if you could, the technology of keeping track of all these people's collections. And then the massive inventory you guys get in, plus making sure people don't get five copies of Madden whatever and Ken Griffey Baseball every year.

BUCK: At the beginning, it was very much doing a lot of things manually and getting feedback from our monthly subscribers. RGT was originally like a survey with a PDF and it was my brain and having to crosscheck and it took forever; but, of course, we didn't have very many subscribers at the beginning. And so it eventually evolved into a system where every subscriber has their own personal account. They put in all the games that they already own so that we know. They select what consoles they want to get games for. And they can change this on the fly. If one month you're in a PS2 and N64 mood and in the next month you're in an NES, Xbox, Sega CD mood, you can change it up. You pick up a new console, you can add a new console to your list of consoles that you have."

But we go a step further than that. Let's be honest, we all have different tastes, so when we make the joke about Madden, or sports games in general, yeah, there's a small amount of people that do want to get those. Let's face it. Games like Ice Hockey and Double Dribble, they were cool sports games. Those are good. We like those. It's the yearly sports games that are not quite as good. But still, some people absolutely love rumble games, love strategy games, but hate platformers. Some people love run and gun, love beat-em-ups, but they hate RPGs. There are people out there that don't like RPGs. It's crazy. But we want to

then go the extra step and cater it to the individual gamers as well, too. That's the beauty of the service. You don't just pick the consoles and then we kind of pick a haphazard mix for that console. You also get to pick your genres and sub-genres, and styles that you like, and it helps us build around that. If you're just looking to collect all the N64 games, you want to leave it completely open, you can check every box. We can help with that, too. We even go a little deeper into, like, accessories; you want to get an extra controller or a rumble pack, or a Gameboy camera, something fun like that, (we can accommodate).

RGT then works from the point of all of your requests and their vast inventory, recent acquisitions and starts packing the boxes. The plans vary from \$29.95 to \$34.95 depending on how many months you subscribe for, plus shipping of \$5-\$6 for US deliveries. In my discussions with Buck down at the Free Play Florida event last November, I saw the love that he has for the hobby, his business, and for all of the other collectors he serves.

And going to back to where we started this story, he still has the Rob the Robot from his original Nintendo, and probably a couple more of them! 

Retrogametreasure.com



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Interview with Video Games Monthly

by Jonathan Polan

Video Games Monthly is a monthly subscription service that delivers video games to gamers who own classic gaming systems from the 1980's-2000's. Play the past into the future!

OSG: Can you tell us about the origins of Video Games Monthly?

VGM: The concept actually came about one day when a few of us were sitting around and thinking how great it would be if we could collect video games and not have to leave our house? So, we took it one step further and decided it would be best if the games were just delivered to our door. Thus, Video Games Monthly was born and we gave retro and new gamers an opportunity to build and expand upon their gaming collection.

OSG: Is it true that you carry titles for systems going back to the 80's?

VGM: Absolutely! From the Atari 2600 up to the Wii U, there are over 20 systems to choose from! Plus, we are constantly adding new games and systems. In fact, make sure to stay tuned on social media for some big announcements in the coming month!

OSG: What kind of games can members expect to find in their boxes each month?

VGM: The games run the gamut! Are you a RPG lover? We got games for you! Racing? Fighting? Adventure? Got you covered! Whether you're about to embark on your journey through Hyrule or ride your first Warthog, you can be sure that the games in your box are tailored to your preferences. No two boxes are alike, which makes it even more exciting to see what members post on our social media pages each month! Also, you can be sure to never receive yearly sports titles!


OSG: What is the condition of the cartridges/discs that are sent out?

VGM: Every single game is tested prior to being shipped out. We pride ourselves on quality and ensuring that once your box arrives, it's ready to be played!

OSG: For those who have yet to sign up, how does the process work?

VGM: It's as simple as the Contra code! All you have to do is go to www.videogamesmonthly.com, pick a plan that suits your gaming need and then wait for the beginning of each month

to arrive to receive your box. Our plans range from 3 games a month up to 10 games! Plus, by selecting the systems you want games for and maintaining your library of games, you're sure to never get duplicate titles or games for systems you don't own. Now for the best part.... YOU KEEP THE GAMES!

Thank you again to Video Games Monthly for taking the time to share about their business. Make sure to sign up today! 

Videogamesmonthly.com

Jonathan Polan - Jonathan has been a gamer since the mid 80s when his dad introduced him to the Odyssey 2. Since then, there hasn't been a console missed, but his love always returns to Nintendo. So much that Jonathan has made it a personal mission to collect an entire U.S. library of Nintendo Switch games, plus some import exclusives! In addition to raising two future gamers, he also previously was the PR & Marketing Director/Interviewer for The Switch Effect and is currently the interviewer for Gaming Boulevard. His ultimate goal is to run Marketing & PR for video game developers to help promote and bring their games to market!





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I Have The Power!

ARCADE AND CONSOLE POWER SUPER RETRO-CADE

by Todd Friedman

Bring the power of an arcade to your home with the Super Retro-Cade plug and play console by Retro-Bit. Packed with over 90 popular retro games from Capcom®, Data East, Technos, and Irem, this stylish console re-introduces such gems as Mega Man 2, BurgerTime, Joe and Mac, Bad Dudes, Double Dragon, Strider, Super Dodge Ball, the Final Fight series and many more.

The two included gamepads have an angular, wing-like grip design and a SNES controller button layout. They're white controllers with red A/B/X/Y buttons and a direction pad on the face, along with black Start/Select buttons and red L/R shoulder buttons on top. The 10-foot cords attached are a huge perk for a system like this. Most wired retro systems have a 2 to 5-foot cord. The one downfall, in my opinion, is the utilization of the D-pad for the game action. Most of the games in the arcade require a joystick type controller to move your character more easily. I found some games rather difficult to move the characters as well as getting a little cramp in the thumb when playing. The box mentions support for third-party controllers, so you could find a USB controller that has a joystick to make it easier if you like.

The Super Retro-Cade has both standard Composite and HDMI video outputs. The HDMI cable included with the system makes the graphics a bit cleaner but not as "high definition" as one would expect. The interface is

best described as functional. It shows games in rows of five, enabling you to scroll to whichever title you desire. You can sort titles by alphabetical order, by genre, or by which system they originated. If you want to play fighting games, select fighting. If you want to see Genesis games, select Genesis, and so on. Each title has a brief description and you're able to load and save them as well. Again, the interface isn't flashy, but it gets the job done. One negative is the lack of a reset button. If you want to go back and play a different game or stop the game, you need to power off the unit and turn it back on. I feel as if that would have been a simple add-on during construction of this unit.

If you're looking for robust graphical options, you're going to be disappointed. You can't adjust filters or change the resolution like you can with other emulator consoles. The only thing you can do is change the image from Full Screen to Normal Size. In terms of the SD Card, I found that my 32GB card worked just fine. When you plug it into the device with the device on, it will prompt you to either search the SD Card or the Local Memory.

The Super Retro-Cade changes many of the wrongs that were present in the Generations from last year. It is still a worthy home game system for the price and with 90 titles to choose from, there is plenty of gaming to be had on this little system. It's nice to go back and play games from my childhood and share them with my children, who can experience the fun that was gaming in the 80s and 90s.



retro-bit.com

Boss Fight Books

GALAGA, SMB3, MEGA MAN

by Old School Gamer

Recently, while traveling to various retro video game expos, I came across Boss Fight Books and asked the publisher which three books would be best for OSG to review. Based on his suggestions, I picked up Galaga, Mega Man 3 and Super Mario Bros. 3. The books, written for Boss Fight Books publishers, were written by different authors, and the three being reviewed here exhibit varying writing styles.

Galaga, by Michael Kimball, for instance, is written as a bunch of seemingly unconnected, uncoordinated small tidbits of information called "levels". In this book, he gets to one level past 255, also known as "Kill Screen Level 0" (a nice tidbit of geek gamer humor for all). I appreciate his dry sense of humor as well as his references to previous levels, but I preferred the writing style of the second book (mentioned next).

Super Mario Bros. 3, by Alyse Knorr, covers one of the most famous sequel console games ever released. It covers everything from why we didn't get a proper second release in the Super Mario Bros. series to some great details on the game, its development, its pop culture marketing and more!

Mega Man 3, by Salvatore Pane, was the third of this series that I read and it covers a game of which I was never really a big fan. Salvatore pulls "MegaMandom" back, with more current tie-ins and references, such as YouTube contributors and references to many other game programmers that were heavily influenced by this Nintendo Entertainment System gem.

I recommend you check out Boss Fight Books and see which one of these light reads are right for you. At a reasonable price of \$14.95 each, they are an enjoyable read that you can get through with a couple nice reading sessions in about a week or so.

bossfightbooks.com



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Convention Update: Start of 2018

ARCADE EXPO, TEXAS PINBALL FESTIVAL,
CTGAMERCON, LOUISVILLE ARCADE

by Old School Gamer

This is another of those big seasons where Old School Gamer visited/exhibited at four expos since the last issue. Enjoy the most recent coverage!

ARCADE EXPO • BANNING, CA BY RYAN BURGER

The Arcade Expo is held at the Museum of Pinball in Banning, California, and is one of only three or four times per year that the facility is open to the public. Banning is about an hour outside of downtown Los Angeles, and as an arcade or video gamer, this is a must-have, bucket-list entry... call it an Arcade Bucket List, and this destination should be near the top!

Held over three days between March 16-18, the Old School Gamer gang joined it's advisory board members, Billy Mitchell and Walter Day, in talking to gamers from across the country in the arcade room (the best part of this large facility). The Museum of Pinball houses approximately 1,100 retro to modern games. Chances are, if you have ever played it, they have it, plus hundreds of other games you may have heard of or maybe seen online in one form or another.

This year also marked the 6th Kong Off held by Richie Knucklez, which happened right around the corner from us at the show. This event brought a dozen or so

champion-level gamers from across the country to compete, including Steve Weibe, who doesn't come out as often as some of the others. It was a thrill for the staff of OSG to see Kill Screen level games completed by several people including Steve.

And this excitement was just in the one room we inhabited most of the time. Other activities in the event included pinball competitions, visits by pinball celebrities like Jersey Jack Guarnieri, a cool expo floor, food and drink, and entertainment.

One of the performers that caught our interest was The 8Bit Jazz Heroes (8bitjazzheroes.com), who entertained us with their fantastic jazz stylings of Nintendo-era tracks and other vintage classics. Look for a piece on them and other retro-themed artists coming soon to Old School Gamer.

The Walter Day Trading Card Museum is also housed here - at the Museum of Pinball. Walter debuted about a dozen new cards and presented them to many of the honorees at the event.

Without a doubt, OSG will be returning to this event next year and we hope to see you there as well!

arcadexpo.com

TOP: Richie Knucklez, Billy Mitchell, Steve Wiebe and more compete in Kong Off.
BOTTOM: Ryan Burger (publisher of OSG), Steve Wiebe and Walter Day.



TEXAS PINBALL FESTIVAL • FRISCO, TX • BY RICK ELLIS

Ever since I was a young boy I played the silver ball..." the words ran through my mind as I entered the Texas Pinball Festival held in Frisco, Texas March 16-18 this year. It was an amazing sight to see with 404 pinball machines and 52 classic arcade games on the floor for a grand total of 456 opportunities to get your game on. There were also awards for the best games at the show with the Grand Champion Lonny Payne with his Jurassic Park machine. It was a fantastic machine that looked just as great as it played.

If you wanted to hear from some of the greats in pinball you were not disappointed in the seminar offerings. Festival attendees were able to hear from Christopher Franchi, "Father" Steve Ritchie, Bowen Kerins among others and the Spooky Pinball Team who presented Spooky's newest pinball Alice Cooper's Nightmare Castle.



L to R: Walter presenting new cards, the pinball room at the Museum of Pinball, and the 8 Bit Jazz Heroes playing outside

Fans were able to meet and take pictures with Lou Ferrigno "The Incredible Hulk" and he was one of the nicest people I've ever met.

The Texas Pinball Festival was enjoyed by young and old as everyone from families with young children, teens, millennials and gamers that have been playing for more than 50 years stepped up to their favorite machines and let that silver ball fly.

texaspinball.com

CTGAMERCON • MOHEGAN SUN, CT BY BILL LANGE

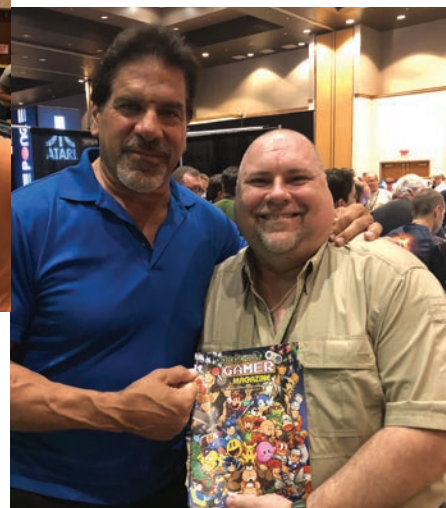
The second annual CTGamerCon took place the weekend of March 24-25, 2018 at the spectacular Mohegan Sun Entertainment Complex along the banks of the Thames River in Uncasville, Connecticut. Old School Gamer was there in force! Manning the booth were publisher Ryan Burger, Lucy and Bill Lange, and Richie Knucklez - the star of "The King of Arcades" which was reviewed in issue #3.

We had a lot of fun meeting and talking to the enthusiastic gamer crowd, handing out free copies of the magazine, checking out the merchandise available in the vendor room, and people-watching, especially all of the cosplayers in attendance. With so much staff on hand, we were all able to find some time to enjoy the event.

In the main hallway of the Mohegan Sun Convention Center, where the Old School Gamer magazine booth was setup, there were tables for tabletop board and card gaming, including MAGIC the Gathering, Dungeons and Dragons, Warhammer and more. Tabletop games were played all weekend. There were also a half a dozen pinball machine and a few arcade games configured for free play as well. Our hope is that future events will include a much larger selection of arcade



TOP: Richie Knucklez, Billy Mitchell, Steve Wiebe and more



LOUISVILLE ARCADE • LOUISVILLE, KY • BY BRIAN SZAREK

video games and pinball tables.

One large room was dedicated to console gaming stations. There were a few giant TVs broadcasting the tournament play. The console room was packed the entire weekend with competitive gamers.

Another large room contained dozens of vendors. There was original artwork, gaming supplies, action figures, Funko Pops (lots of Pops!), Anime, movie posters and more in the dealer showcase! My personal favorite was the stunning pop culture-inspired imagery by artist Rob Taylor. Check out his artwork at herofieldart.com. I purchased a piece of his art inspired by the Atari 2600.

In addition to the vendor room, the console room, the arcade, tabletop gaming and cosplay contest, there was live music and speakers, such as actor Rafael Ferrer, the voice behind Darth Malack in Star Wars Knights of the Old Republic video game, in his first ever signing appearance. Son of actress and singer Rosemary Clooney, Ferrer talked about growing up amid Hollywood royalty and his memories of being part of the Star Wars universe.

While the main hall also had a few food and snack vendors, we were merely feet away from a vast array of amazing restaurants just outside the Convention Center doors, out in the Mohegan Sun casino.

Old School Gamer plans on being back next year! See you then!!

ctgamercon.com

I finally got a chance to get out from behind the computer monitor and write a piece for this great magazine! I typically do the editing around here, but I had the chance to visit the Louisville Arcade Expo this year, about a two hour drive from my home, which is its eighth year in existence. I was only able to make it to Sunday's events, but I had a great time. I was really impressed by the sheer number of activities and exhibits, ranging from rows upon rows of alternating arcade cabinets and pinball machines; a tournament area with projection gaming; a row of vintage game systems that were projected on the wall for all to see; a console history museum/game room, where anyone can go in and play sample games on pretty much every major (and most minor) console systems ever released; a working standee store display area with some older consoles to play; computer gaming room; pinball tournament; an 80's living room setup AND they even had a room full of cocktail arcade cabinets to sit at and play while you were eating your lunch!



Some of my favorite cabinets were on display, including my new favorite: a lesser known Pac-Man called Pac-Man Plus in cabaret format. They also had some other favorite classics such as Robotron: 2084, BurgerTime, Space Invaders, After Burner, Dragon's Lair, Crazy Climber, Popeye, and many others. I also got exposed to some great pinball classics such as Atari's Middle Earth, Old Chicago, Wipe Out, Super Mario Bros, and some amazingly creative vendors who developed and created their own pinball machines that you could play to your heart's content and purchase (if you had the room in your truck and didn't care what your spouse thought!).

I took my time playing as much as I could before I ran out of time, then I reached out to Matt Fleitz, one of the co-creators and annual organizers of this event. Here is a portion of our interview:

OSG: *What was the impetus for creating the Louisville Arcade Expo?*

MATT: This is our eighth year. When we were younger, my brother and I used to go to pinball shows in Chicago and Allentown. Those were the big shows back in the 90's. Eight years ago there really weren't games around...just at people's houses, things like that. Since all of our friend's would haul their games to Chicago for shows, we thought, "why don't we do one around here?". And my brother worked with a guy who was way into consoles and computers. So the three of us tried to get other people with us, and they all thought we were nuts. We rented some hotel space at the Holiday Inn for our first year. We had maybe 40-50 games and a couple rooms full of old consoles, we got no sleep...and when we threw the doors open, there were a million people there, and it just went nuts. We thought we were going to lose money and have a nice party.

OSG: *How did you advertise that first year?*

MATT: First year I think we just put fliers everywhere, begged everybody, you know... So then facebook began to be a huge thing probably about 6 or 7 years ago. We really go off word of mouth these days.

OSG: *That's probably due to the fact that vintage and retro gaming is so huge right now...*

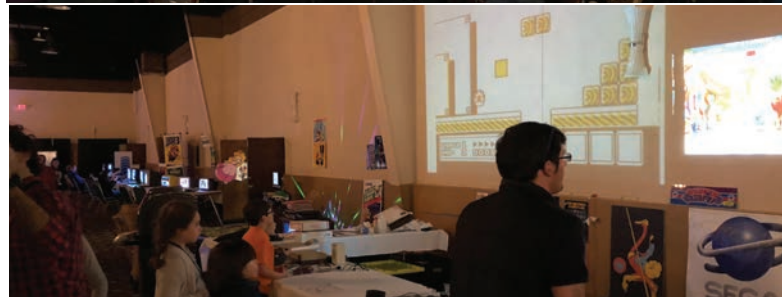
MATT: That was our goal. We helped promote it, get that stuff going, that's what we wanted to do. We think we've helped that cause in our town. Now there's RecBar, there's Z Bar (Zanzabar), there's all these places that have games...there's pinball machines and games everywhere. There's just been this massive resurgence and we feel like we've been a part of that.

OSG: *So what are your personal passions in gaming?*

MATT: I'd say pinball mainly, these days. But the arcade games, too. And honestly, I like the (Nintendo) Switch. I play Zelda a lot. But I have a Joust and Donkey Kong cabinets (at my house) that I love. My nieces and nephews will come over to Uncle Matt's house to play games, which is great, and my brother has a million games at his house too, so it's always fun.

OSG: *What does it take to put on an event like this?*

MATT: It's just one of those things where it takes a lot of planning and I would say experience. Every year you learn something and you have to adapt every year, change a little bit...but there's always so many crazy things that you can't plan



for (and can't imagine!). Crazyness with just having thousands of people in the same place at the same time over a weekend. There's always things that pop up - you can't let it bother you.

OSG: *I see that you have vendors that bring machines that they're trying to sell, but who else brings machines to the event?*

MATT: Well, just random collectors. There are bars that bring games as well. Like, RecBar brought 40 games this year... there's a guy named Dave who brought in 20 games by himself! There's a guy named Dan from Indiana who used to fix games for Pizza Hut - he brings in games like Dragon's Lair, Space Ace, Sega Star Trek... You know, he works on all those games and he loves it! He rents a U-Haul and brings them himself. Then there are local collectors that bring machines that are awesome.

OSG: *What are your favorite exhibits?*

MATT: I really like the Apple stuff they brought in this year. They have Print Shop going, so you can go in and print your own banner...takes like a day and a half, but people love doing it! They did the "Welcome to the Louisville Arcade Expo" banner in dot matrix, it literally took about a day to print.

OSG: *I really like how you have a few vendors here who bring their items that they're looking to sell, but are also playable, so it affords you the opportunity to fill up even more space.*

MATT: Yeah, we love it when vendors bring games, we're very happy about that. We could fill the whole hall with vendors, but we limit the number of vendors and the types of vendors. We don't want 10 comic book guys, etc. So we're kind of a weird show like that where some shows are driven by vendors, but we want to have as many games as possible. We're all about the games - we have limited space for vendors...but if a vendor has a game, then it makes it all the better! We like artists too - we want it to be different.

A big thanks to the Louisville Arcade Expo and Matt Fleitz for the great show and interview. Can't wait for next year's show.

arcaderx.com



Preserving History

Ken Horowitz



In September 2017, I had the opportunity to do a panel on video game history and preservation at Dragon Con in Atlanta. The convention was divided into several tracks, including one for video games, and I felt that I could offer my experience of writing about Sega over the years as something that might interest attendees. I had only anticipated 20-30 people, but to my surprise, almost 200 people showed up! The turnout far exceeded my expectation.

Seeing so many people there was truly motivating, especially the large number of younger fans that came. As I talked to the crowd about the need to embrace gaming history beyond buying a SNES Classic or playing MAME, it became clear to me just how many people genuinely care about preserving the legacy of the gaming industry. My presentation went through the problems faced by gaming historians and writers, most of whom are enthusiasts and aren't paid for their efforts. I discussed such issues as the de-listing of digital-only games, which denies access to newcomers, and developers passing away before getting a chance to share their stories,

One particular row of listeners caught my eye: Sandwiched between a girl with cat ears and a boy with an Iron Man mask were two adults who were at least my age. At first, I thought they were the children's parents, but it turned out that they were historians who were also into video games! Both were Ph.Ds. One was from England, and the other was a document researcher from right there in Atlanta. Neither were directly involved in gaming history or preservation, but they were very intrigued by the topic and eager to learn more.

For 50 minutes, I shared my own research and documentation experiences, all done through the lens of a Sega fan. That's been my area of study for the past 14 years and the subject of my two books, so my talk had a decidedly Sega slant. "There are more than enough people to talk about Nintendo!" I declared, a statement that actually garnered some applause from the audience. It was said partly in jest, but it was also a reminder that there is just so much more out there in retro gaming that many people aren't exploring. The industry's five decades worth of history may pale compared to those of movies and music, but they are equally as important. Thousands of people have spent their lives working to create the games we love and enjoy, and their stories deserve to be told. We owe it to them, and to future generations of gamers, to preserve their work and document their efforts. Only by doing so can we fully understand what it takes to make a "classic" game, as well as gain a greater appreciation for those titles that for some reason never achieved that coveted status.

I spoke of three specific examples of Sega-related game developers who are no longer with us: Sega of America Senior

Vice President of Product Development Joe Miller, Sega Europe (arcade) founder Victor Leslie, and Park Place Productions founder Michael Knox. Both Miller and Knox died shortly after they spoke with me, and I'm thankful that I had the opportunity to speak with them. To my knowledge, Miller never gave any other interviews regarding his time at Sega, so it gives me great satisfaction to have his answers in both audio and written forms. Knox also gave me a lot of wonderful stories about working on the first Joe Montana Football for the Genesis, stories that he never really shared with anyone else. Unfortunately, Leslie died in 2002. His death represents the worst-case scenario for game historians. To my knowledge, he never gave an interview about his Sega period, and now those experiences are lost to the game world forever.

And this is the crux of why it is so important to preserve gaming history. Interviews may be subjective recollections of events, but they are first-hand accounts and are useful as starting points for further research. They provide vital pieces of data that can be used to unravel a whole sequence of events and circumstances. Often, they lead to further interviews with other people, allowing the writer to form a clear image and get the best possible account of events involving a game or company. They also illustrate the fact that people do want to hear these accounts and that they are historically valuable; something many of the people I contact are surprised to hear. I'll never forget getting an email from one former Genesis developer after I published his interview on Sega-16. "Thanks for remembering me" was all it said, but it was a powerful reminder of how so many people still consider video games to be a disposable medium that retains no lasting value.

This reality got me thinking as to why so many people decided to show up. It's true that retro gaming is popular now, but it didn't occur to me that public interest in game history could equal, or even surpass, that of modern gaming. After all, there was an Assassin's Creed panel just across the hall! Interestingly enough, that event was about the series' use of Genetic Memory and was paneled by two biology professors. Reportedly, we had a higher turnout, which further piqued my curiosity (and, I admit, made me proud).

My panel ended with a 10-minute Q&A session, and more people lined up to ask questions than could be accommodated. It was heartening to see many of those young people in line, most of them likely born during the mid '90s and later. They asked very thoughtful questions about what I considered to be the greatest danger to game history preservation and what the average person should do to help keep game history alive. I told them pretty much the same as I've written about here: talk to those who were involved. Get their stories before it's too late. One never knows when that window will close.

I was once again made aware of this fact while working on my Sega Arcade book (due out later this year). I had the wonderful opportunity to speak to the former president of Sega Enterprises USA, Tom Petit. Over two phone interviews and a ton of emails, Tom shared all kinds of incredible information regarding legendary Sega games like Hang-On, Golden Axe, and Daytona USA. He

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Man vs. Snake

KING OF KONG, KING OF ARCADES....NOW THE 3RD!

By Brad Feingold

also shared some jaw-dropping photos, including one of him, Sega co-founder David Rosen, and then-President of Sega of America Tom Kalinske, all sitting together. He was a virtual treasure trove of Sega information.

About two months after he sent me the photos, I read that he had passed away. He was very cooperative and gracious in our communications, and like many of the wonderful people I've had the privilege of interviewing, he gave me the impression that he would be happy to speak to me about other video game events. I never got the chance to ask him about his time at Atari (his first job out of college) and his friendship with Nolan Bushnell or his tenure at Nintendo before coming to Sega. That chance is now gone, and the light of gaming is all the dimmer for it.

My words seemed to resonate with the crowd. I've been asked to come back to Dragon Con next year, and I plan on sharing this talk at as many game conventions will have me. I truly believe that the best way to drive home the point of preserving game history is by discussing it with people face-to-face, showing them what's at stake, and how they can help keep it alive. My kids enjoy their PlayStation 4, but they love ToeJam & Earl as well, and my youngest daughter plays a mean game of River Raid. Their enjoyment of these classics brings me great satisfaction, and it is thrilling to hear them ask me how the games were made or why they look the way they do. The only way I can answer them correctly is if someone has documented the necessary information. That job doesn't just fall to the writers and historians; it's the responsibility of every true video game fan. We owe it to everyone who ever made a game we loved, and we owe it to ourselves as fans of the hobby.



Ken Horowitz - Dr. Kenneth Horowitz is an English professor who has taught research and writing for 20 years. He is the author of "Playing at the Next Level: A History of American Sega Games" and "The Sega Arcade Revolution: A History in 62 games," and his work has been featured in numerous video game publications like GamesTM and Hardcore Gamer Magazine. Ken has also published academic articles in professional publications, such as Language Magazine and the Hispanic Educational Technology Services Journal.

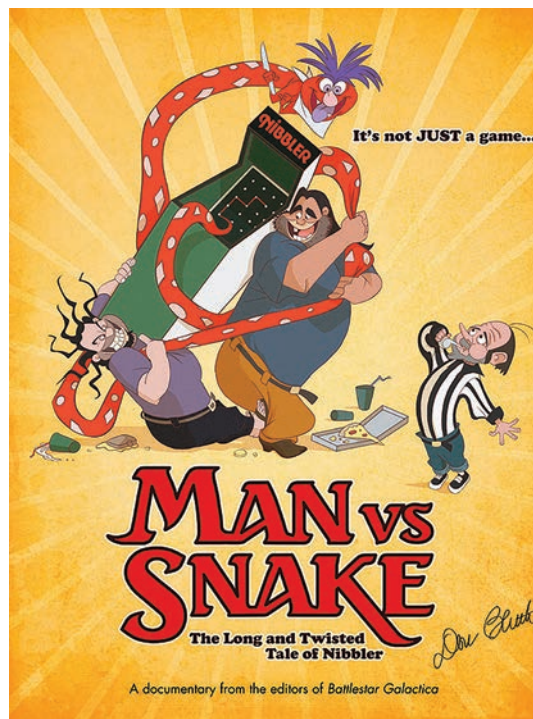
One thing that I have noticed about video game documentaries is that it turns into "Six Degrees of Iowa". Every one of the movies I have seen always links back to Ottumwa, Iowa. And it should because that is where Walter Day started Twin Galaxies. But even better, it is the home of another video game record breaker.

Man vs. Snake follows the story of Timothy McVey and his quest to beat the high score for Nibbler. We already know what your first question will be... TIMOTHY McVEY?!?!? No, not the evil Timothy McVey. This guy is a humble video game player from Iowa. But the next question is always, "WHAT THE !#*&@ IS NIBBLER?!?!?" That's the fun question...and I will explain.

Nibbler is a game from Rock-Ola Mfg. Corp. released in 1983. It's a very basic, yet challenging, game. You are a snake going around in a Pac-Man type board eating up gems. As you get the gems, your body starts to grow longer and the object is to not hit yourself. Just like that old game on your flip phone but adding a maze.

But MvS has a lot more to it than just a guy playing a game. It, like King of Kong, is a quest to be the best. At the very beginning, the documentary talks about McVey and how, out of nowhere, he breaks the record of the game and scores over a billion points, causing a huge chain of events. And one of the biggest event was how Ottumwa, IA created an actual Timothy McVey day. Getting him national recognition and even his own Nibbler machine.

But later on, an opponent appears to take on the king, Dwayne Richard. With Walter Day refereeing the event, the battle to be on top begins. At this point in time, I am not going to say much more about it, as I don't want to spoil the movie. You should see it yourself to find out what happens. What I will say is that MvS is actually a sweet, yet emotional, movie, and every time I see or eat Kraft Mac and Cheese, I am thinking of McVey's struggles to be on top again.



Normally, when I watch any type of movie, no matter the genre, I serious dislike the Kabuki/Animation storytelling method. However, MvS does an incredible interpretation of telling the story at certain points, and it is just a minor moment of the movie. The best parts are how everyone was completely supportive in his quest, including Billy Mitchell who, when McVey was struggling the most, did what he could to be there for mental support.

This was the first documentary that I watched for my list of reviews and absolutely loved this film. I have actually lost count of how many times I have watched MvS. It's good background sound when I am doing computer work as well. And mark my words, when I start building my own arcade machine, I will probably have this movie playing in the background, provided my Wi-fi reaches the garage. It's a great movie whose main character I was honored to meet in person and can't say enough nice things! .



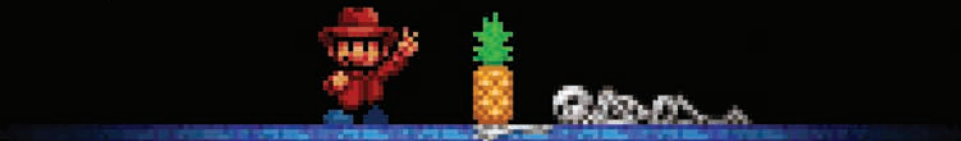
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45 Years of Arcade Gaming: The 1990s

By Adam Pratt

This is an update & re-write of an original article that was published on ArcadeHeroes.com on June 27th, 2012 entitled '40 Years Of Arcade Games'.

*You can still read that post here:
<http://arcadeheroes.com/2012/06/27/40-years-of-arcade-games/>*

In our quest to reminisce about the games of arcades past, we've journeyed through the 70s, spent a couple of articles on the 80s, and now we've finally reached the 1990s. While the previous ten years gave us hit after hit, this decade was not far behind in giving us amazing experiences and memories.

Instead of going year by year, this time the focus will be on the influential games and their genres, occasionally touching on the obscure. That means that we're starting with the genre that redefined gaming for years and shaped the decade at large – the one-on-one fighter. The king of this class is undoubtedly Capcom's Street Fighter II, elevating their 1987 release by giving the player the chance to choose among a variety of unique and interesting characters. This was enhanced by the graphics that were lighting fast and beautifully detailed, memorable sounds, and perhaps, most of all, the complexity offered by the fact that both beginners and hardcore players could get the same satisfaction out of the game. This was thanks to the move sets given to each character, a sort of secret code

in action that with some knowledge and practice (sometimes just some dumb luck), a player was rewarded with pulling off a special attack that wasn't readily apparent from just looking at the six button layout.

Street Fighter II was followed by many improved editions, almost to the point that it became a joke. The series dabbled with 3D play in the EX line but eventually got around to Street Fighter III which offered more entertainment to pro players who sought to master the parry technique among other things.

Street Fighter II's success reinvigorated arcades and stuffed cash boxes at locations around the world. Naturally, this spawned a number of similar titles in the genre. Mortal Kombat by Midway would become the American rival to Street Fighter, opting for a slower pace of play but bringing the art of digitization to the forefront at a time where 3D was still in its infancy. This game brought to the fore the violence factor – the idea of the "fatality" at the end of the match delighted some players while causing others, particularly politicians in both parties, to bristle with righteous indignation. It wasn't long before every company with skin in the game had a fighter – Sega did try out a few 2D based games but settled to show their dominance in the realm of 3D with Virtua Fighter, a somewhat more realistic take on the fighter that spawned several sequels; Namco also went the 3D route with the faster paced Tekken (and eventually the weapons-based Soul Edge/Soul Calibur series) and The King Of Fighters by SNK focused on 2D play but proved to be a decent cash cow for the company. It was somewhat ignored in the United States until recently, but from 1994-2003, it saw a new entry every year, bringing together massive character rosters, fantastic graphics and more storytelling. SNK, for their part, would flood their popular Neo Geo MVS hardware with fighting games, finding titles that would rank among the memorable and the forgettable along the way. The MVS is one of the most iconic pieces of hardware from this era, using giant cartridges and finding support through the 2000s.

Other companies not exactly known



for the genre would try their hand at such games: Taito gave it a go with the likes of Kaiser Knuckle, Atari with Pit-Fighter and Primal Rage or Konami with titles like Monster Maulers and Martial Champion. Lesser known companies would also contribute to the dustbin of history, American Sammy creating duds like Way of the Warrior, to garbage like Data East's Tattoo Assassins. Because everyone wanted to be the next Street Fighter or Mortal Kombat, the market became saturated to a point where the genre would fizzle out. But that wasn't before it made its mark and made operators plenty of money.

An unfortunate effect from the overwhelming popularity of fighters saw the beat 'em up all but disappear from existence from the latter half of the decade. It was a shame, as this genre was an excellent fit for arcades, thanks to the focus on fast-paced, multiplayer action that just isn't the same when played on a console. Despite the shift in focus to fighters, we did get some great games in this genre, many of these names are still well-known: Konami made most of the notable ones such as Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Turtles In Time ('91), Sunset Riders ('91), The Simpsons ('91), X-Men ('92; and in two flavors, the most impressive of which was the giant 6-player dual screen model); Atari did well with Guardians Of The Hood ('92); Capcom, with titles like Alien Vs. Predator ('94) & a pair of Dungeons & Dragons games (Shadow Over Mystara in '96 getting most of the praise); Sega had a few, such as Arabian Fight & Golden Axe: The Revenge Of Death Adder ('92), while they pioneered the 3D brawler with Die Hard Arcade & Dynamite Cop ('96) and Spike



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Out ('98). Die Hard was one of my personal favorites back in the day, right along with Atari's vehicular combat arena game T-Mek.

We'll also give a shout out to pinball here – when pinball makers began to add dot matrix displays, ramps, toys, animatronics and licensed themes to their games, pinball machines began to sell better than at any other time in history. The most recognized pinball machines ever made came out of the 90s – The Addams Family, Twilight Zone, Fun House, Theatre Of Magic, Medieval Madness, Terminator 2, and so on.

Another genre that saw major developments that would bring people out to arcades in droves (or entertain them on top of what the fighters were doing) was the racer. Racing games have been around since the 70s, but it was due to some particular technological improvements in the 90s that made them better than ever. As we read in the last article about this subject, Namco created a game-changing innovation with Final Lap: the networked game. This technology would be used in most racers of the decade (including Namco's Final Lap sequels), but the most important game to use this combined with cutting edge 3D graphics was Sega's Daytona USA. Using Sega's specially designed Model 2 hardware, this was a system capable of providing smooth textured mapped 3D graphics beyond the capabilities of the contemporary home consoles. It wasn't just the graphics that wowed players though – the realism provided by the force feedback steering, the incredible high energy music, the exciting track design and the ability to network up to 8 units saw many locations holding their own tournaments to bring the gamers in by droves. Daytona USA would become one of the highest earning video arcade games in history, with many locations keeping their cabinets operating until Sega offered up a modern alternative in 2017 with Daytona Championship USA, a remake of that original.

Sega would lead the way with their simulation racers although nothing would quite match Daytona's popularity – even Daytona USA 2. We should mention that they did design a few racers before Daytona such as Rad Mobile (the first appearance of Sonic the Hedgehog in a video game), OutRunners, F1 Super Lap, among others. With 3D hardware to show off, however, that's where Sega would make sure to get the most out of their R&D investments. Scud Race, Manx TT Superbike, Sega Rally, Indy 500, and more, would make Sega a force to be reckoned with – but not one that their competitors would take laying down.

Midway would release a rival to Daytona that would enjoy a similar success

while using a very different racing formula. Cruis'n USA would also feature 3D texture mapped graphics and force feedback steering but would feature open-circuit tracks, instead of the traditional closed-circuit, making it more fantasy-based racing. This difference proved to be a success as Cruis'n would become a franchise in itself that lives on today with Cruis'n Blast that was released in 2017. Beyond that, the other major impression Midway would make was with Hydro Thunder, a fantastic boat racing simulator that also gained a loyal fanbase.

Apart from the battle between Sega and Midway for that dominate driver, Atari Games pumped out a few racers in the 90s, particularly a vehicular combat off-roading game Road Riot. However, their signature title would be San Francisco Rush, a simulated racing game that would take place on closed-circuit courses through the titular city. Taito also had a few odds and ends in the genre, the most interesting of which was Dangerous Curves as this had a car on one side of the cabinet and a motorcycle on the other. Konami was in a similar boat – they did release several 3D driving games, but most are not remembered too fondly apart from GTI Club and Jet Wave (a jet skiing game with a realistic jet ski controller). Namco may have started the whole networked racer, but among the several driving titles that they would pump out, Ridge Racer is the one that captured the most attention – especially the Full Scale version released in 1994 that used a full, realistic car with fully operable controls (even the A/C worked!). Although one has to give Namco credit for also creating several unique games that were about racing that did not involve a car – they brought skiing back with Alpine Racer or let you enjoy the feel of being a jockey with their hilarious work-out of a game, Final Furlong.

Manufacturers would adore networked cabinets since that meant more sales but they didn't ignore another important, high earning genre – the light-gun shooter. Efforts on this front had been fairly tepid in the 70s and 80s but the 90s is where this style of game really began to shine. This started with games like Taito's Space Gun in 1990, a game that borrowed heavily from the Aliens franchise while sporting an incredible looking cabinet and even foot pedals used to reverse your in-game movement. As a mounted gun game, this was a format that would still remain popular, despite the number of 'free fun' titles out



there; Midway had the likes of Terminator 2: Judgment Day and Revolution X; Sega with titles like Laser Ghost, Alien 3: The Gun; Gunblade NY and Behind Enemy Lines; Data East with Dragongun; SNK with Beast Busters 1 & 2; Taito with Operation Wolf 3 and Gunbuster, and so on. This last game, Gunbuster, was rather unique – it was a 4 player, first-person shooter, with free movement not dissimilar to games like Wolfenstein 3D or Blake Stone.


Pedals would come into play once again when Namco launched Time Crisis in '95, a franchise that lives on to today with Time Crisis 5 as released in 2016. Time Crisis' special ops action combined with the cover mechanic won over the hearts of many gamers, but none in the franchise performed as well as Time Crisis II ('98) would. This was thanks to the dual monitor, dual player station setup that subsequent installments would use. The 3D graphics didn't hurt either – archaic by today's standard but they got the job done at the time. The same could be said for Sega's Virtua Cop series that launched in 1994. Running on the same hardware as Daytona USA, the game looks dated now, but at the time, it set the standard for how to handle a 3D shooter with scaling effects and details that could only be done in the format. One could also recall Midway's CarnEvil, a game dripping with personality and odd 3D graphics (that still earns quite well at my arcade today).

Over at Atari Games, they had been struggling to find that break-out hit since Gauntlet and in 1995 they did with Area 51. This tapped into interest that was found in

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UPCOMING SCHEDULE

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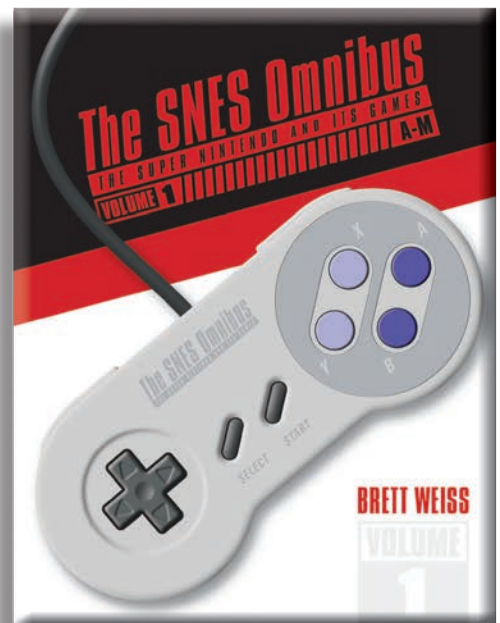
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—Dave "The Video Game Critic" Mrozek



popular culture with alien abductions and the secretive Area 51 base out in Nevada, and it ended up becoming the best-selling title the company had produced in years. It would get a sequel a few years later with Area 51: Site 4 but that one would fail to capture the same interest as the predecessor did. This captured a bit of interest due to the digitized graphics that were running on a modified Atari Jaguar console but it wasn't the first to do this with the format - Konami went the digitization route in '92 with Lethal Enforcers as did Taito in '93 with Under Fire and Data East in '94 with Locked'N Loaded.

Where Sega had carved out an even bigger name for themselves with racing games, their brand recognition would be boosted even higher thanks to their light gun releases of the 90s. We mentioned a few above but perhaps the most famous of those was the zombie shooting series The House Of The Dead, a fantastic horror shooter game that put players into the roles of special agents investigating a zombie outbreak. When I worked at an arcade in the late 90s, we had fun tinkering with the settings on this one to change the blood and other aspects of it. It's worth noting that Sega will be launching a 5th official entry of franchise to arcades at the end of this year entitled House Of The Dead: Scarlet Dawn.

Sega also enjoyed a bit of mileage from the wildly popular Jurassic Park franchise, first launching a joystick controlled effort based on the first film in 1994 (Sega also would use this kind of controller for shooters like Rail Chase and Star Wars Trilogy Arcade), then striking gold when they developed The Lost World: Jurassic Park in 1997. This one gained enormous popularity in arcades at the time, in good part due to the "jeep" style enclosed cabinet it came with. Arcade operators had more than a few issues with those types of cabinets back then, enough to label them "Dens of Iniquity".

It wasn't all fighters, racers and light-gun games to be found in the 90s though. Quite a few sports games would shape the direction of the industry at large, from Midway's NBA Jam and NFL Blitz, to Sega's Virtua Striker or Incredible Technologies' Golden Tee (which still see an arcade release around September of every year, making it one of the longest running franchises in video game history). Every Japanese company would develop a number of soccer, volleyball and baseball games - no, they wouldn't all get much attention out West, but they still would carve out their niches. The same could be said for

the shoot 'em up genre; Japanese gamers would find the most to like here whether it was Seibu Kaihatsu's Raiden series, Taito's continuation of the Darius series in Darius Gaiden and G. Darius, or pushing alternate shooters like the Rayforce games, Konami's extra love for the Gradius franchise or the creation of companies like Psikyo (the Strikers 1945 series, Tengai, Zero Gunner), Raizing/Eighting (Armed Police Batrider, Battle Bakraid & Garegga) and of course Cave and their focus on the "bullet hell" shooter that would find a solid audience in Japan. Most of their titles were released in the 2000s, but they did get started in 1998 with Dangun Feveron. You also had sub-genres like 'Run'n Gun' games, led by titles like Metal Slug.


Perhaps the most interesting part of the 90s were the simulators. While several simulators were released during the 80s, the 90s is where this genre exploded. They didn't have to include motion - examples of that include Atari Games' Steel Talons, Sega's Star Wars Arcade or their Bass Fishing titles later on. In the 'gray area', you had games that players could stand on and move but the cabinet itself didn't use motors to move things around; titles like Namco's Alpine Racer, Sega's Top Skater or Konami's Hang Pilot. There was also the class of rhythm games to consider - mimicking instruments or arts like dance with titles like Beatmania, Keyboardmania, Guitar Freaks and the king of them all, Dance Dance Revolution (all of these by Konami). DDR would become such a phenomenon that various arcades would be packed with players seeking to show off as the best dancer, not unlike how they used to come in to show off their fighting skills on Street Fighter.

But most games that would be thought of as a simulator would generally incorporate cabinet movement in some form, and among these, chances were that it had a Sega logo on it. This all really picked up in 1990, as Sega developed their Y board system to control games like G-LOC and Rail Chase, but subsequent hardware systems would also support motion bases, often for Sega's racing games. Sega would also create "Special" versions of games like The Lost World which would use motion seats to spin players around between two screens, these games being found at their

Gameworks locations. Perhaps the most famous Sega simulator of them all would be the R360. This gyroscopic cabinet that was developed with the help of NASA was quite a sight to behold if you came across one (usually at a big theme park, although we had a local FEC that kept a couple of them outside to rot away when they couldn't figure out what to do with them), as it was capable of spinning users around in any direction. For user safety it was not 100% accurate in that motion, being a little slow in reaction times. Either way, just watching this one was an attraction in itself.

Both Taito and Namco would try their hand at the simulator, but neither company would match Sega's output. Taito kept their systems more towards the non-interactive end while Namco created theme park-style attractions. In 1990 they released the Galaxian 3 Theaters, released in both 6 and 28 player configurations (the latter not receiving a wide release, even in Japan). It was more like a light-gun game, but this would influence modern multiplayer interactive theaters to a great degree. These theaters proved to be too much of an investment, so later on, the company would show some restraint by releasing two-player motion simulators like Rapid River or the aforementioned Final Furlong.

There were many other titles worth mentioning that came to us from the 90s, but space is limited. Suffice it to say, it was a great decade for arcades and classic gaming in general. It is true that much of the early 3D games have not aged well when you look at what can be done now, but they still have their charm - or the gameplay was such that it overcomes the look.

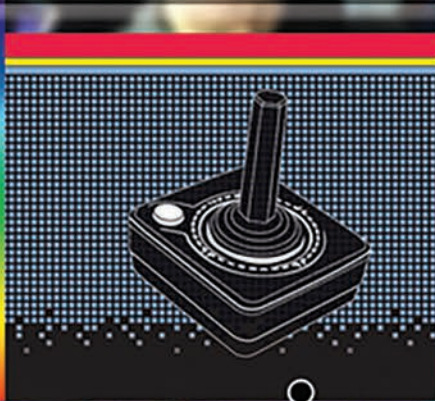
We'll end with a note that this decade did end on a low note for arcades as a downturn around 2000-2003 saw the closure of various arcade divisions as well as arcades themselves. But from those ashes, new challengers arose and the industry has been humming along over the past several years. Arcades still live, be it through nostalgia with retroarcades or fresh new ideas found at other facilities. Hopefully you'll find some great games to play from the ages when you visit a venue - either way, be sure to get out and play! 

Adam Pratt - Owner and operator of the Arcade Heroes news blog and of the Game Grid Arcade (West Valley City, UT) that opened in 2008. He began collecting arcades in 2000 and has done everything in the business; from game sales to writing game reviews, marketing, QA testing, and consultancy, to name a few. He released his first book, The Arcade Experience, in 2013. Adam lives in the Greater Salt Lake City area with his wife and three kids..



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Keyboard Creations

By Leonard Herman, the Father of Video Game History

Labo, the do-it-yourself kits that released on April 20, 2018, are pure genius on the part of Nintendo. They're somehow breathing new life into the Nintendo Switch, which right now is burning bright like a phoenix, while teaching kids (and adults) the principles of engineering and physics.

One of the projects that the high-quality pre-cut cardboard can be turned into is the Labo Toy-Con Piano, a keyboard peripheral that turns the Switch into a functioning piano. It's part of a \$70 Variety Kit that features five do-it-yourself cardboard projects.

NINTENDO LABO PIANO

The Labo Toy-Con Piano is a 13-key, 1-octave piano. Once assembled, the Switch console sits in it and acts as its command center. One of the Switch's Joy-Con controllers has a built-in camera, and when this controller is buried within the bowels of the constructed piano, it uses the camera to read which key is being pressed. The Switch, which sits above the keys in full view, would then respond appropriately.



While Nintendo came up with an ingenious and innovative way to distribute a piano peripheral, it is certainly not the first time that a piano has been available

Intellivision II with Music Synthesizer



for a videogame console. With Labo Toy-Con Piano, Nintendo has put a novel spin on a peripheral category with a winding, noteworthy history in gaming. Piano-style peripherals have been around for decades, and developers have offered very different visions and uses for these sometimes expensive videogame instruments. These are the industry's Keyboard Creations.

VIDEOPAC MUSICIAN

Coincidentally, the very-first piano add-on for a console had also been made out of cardboard. The Videopac Musician, which came out in 1982, was available for the Philips Videopac G7000, the European version of the Odyssey2. The keyboard was actually an overlay that sat atop the console's built-in membrane keyboard.

The overlay displayed seven black and nine white keys, 1-octave (a standard piano has 88 keys and covers 7-octaves). Technically, compositions could be created on this but they couldn't exceed 81 notes. Once a song was in memory, it could be played back or edited. Unfortunately, there was no way to save the songs. A primitive, necessary first step soon to be eclipsed a year later.

MATTEL INTELLIVISION II MUSIC SYNTHESIZER

The next musical keyboard introduced was much more sophisticated. The \$125 Intellivision II Music Synthesizer was released by Mattel Electronics in 1983 and was part of the Entertainment Computer System (ECS) upgrade to the Intellivision II. The ECS plugged into the cartridge slot of the Intellivision II and effectively turned the console into a real 16-bit computer. Two types of keyboards could then be plugged into the ECS: one was the alphanumeric Computer Keyboard that was needed to enter data into the computer, and the other was the 49-key music synthesizer.

Although the Synthesizer wasn't a full-size piano keyboard, its 4-octave range made it perfect to introduce the fundamentals of piano playing to novices. Although Mattel Electronics announced several programs that combined game-playing with piano-playing tutorials, only one made it to market. Melody Blaster used the basic concept of the Intellivision

hit-game

Astrosplash to teach people how to play the piano. In this game, falling musical notes had to be shot down for points by pressing the correct keys on the piano keyboard.

SOFTWARE TOOLWORKS MIRACLE PIANO TEACHING SYSTEM

When Nintendo decided to enter the U.S. market in 1985 it introduced the Nintendo Advanced Video System, the NAVS. One of the peripherals that Nintendo announced for the new console was a 3-octave music keyboard. Unlike Mattel's Music Synthesizer, which could only operate when plugged into the Intellivision ECS, the NAVS keyboard was planned to also function by itself since it would use batteries and have its own built-in speaker.

Alas, Nintendo did not go ahead with the NAVS due to the dwindling videogame market. Instead, they came up with the NES and its Robotic Operating Buddy as a trojan horse to get it into toy stores. A music keyboard wasn't planned for the new console. NES owners would have to wait five years before a music keyboard became available for their console. And the one that did arrive was not from Nintendo.

The Miracle Piano Teaching System from Software Toolworks, a ten-year old company best-known for developing game software for personal computers, was the most professional of any music keyboard ever released for a game console. And while its main purpose was to teach people how to play a piano via software that plugged into an NES, this 49-key unit was, in fact, an actual four-octave MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) keyboard that could be used alone without the NES.

Versions of the Miracle Piano Teaching System were released for the Genesis and SNES, as well as the Mac, Amiga and PC. Despite the unit being a critical success, its \$500 price tag (over \$900 when adjusted for inflation) kept it out of the hands of most people.



Konami Keyboardmania Controller



Mad Catz Rock Band 3 Piano Controller

YAMAHA CBX-K1 KEYBOARD

Aspiring Japanese piano players hoping to hone their skills through videogame consoles didn't get the chance, because none of the afore-mentioned music keyboards were released in Japan. That changed in 1997...sort of.

Waka Manufacturing, a manufacturer of computer adapters, released a \$72 title for the Japanese Saturn called Saturn Music School, which taught users how to play piano. The package included a MIDI Interface Box which connected any MIDI piano keyboard to the Saturn. However, a limited \$191 version of the game came bundled with an actual 3-octave Yamaha CBX-K1 keyboard.

KONAMI KEYBOARDMANIA CONTROLLER

Keyboardmania was an arcade game from the Bemani division of Konami in which players had to destroy 14 columns of falling musical notes. Each column represented a white key on a piano keyboard and the note was hit when a particular key was pressed. A home edition of the game was released in Japan for the PS2 in September, 2000. Like the home versions of Bemani games that preceded it such as Beatmania and Guitar Freaks, Keyboardmania used a special controller to play. In this case it was a 2-octave, 24-key piano keyboard that was similar to the arcade version.

Unfortunately for fledgling piano players, the Konami Keyboardmania controller didn't double as a functional piano. Its only purpose was as a controller

for the home game and it was the only controller that could be used with the game. This changed with the early '02 release of Keyboardmania II, which allowed the use of any MIDI keyboard that could be connected to the PS2 with a USB to MIDI converter.

VALCON GAMES EASY PIANO

Musical keyboard peripherals weren't limited solely to consoles. In early 2010 Valcon Games became the American publisher for Easy Piano, a 13-key, 1-octave piano keyboard that plugged into the Game Boy Advance port of the Nintendo DS.

The keyboard was part of a \$40 package that also included a DS game card featuring ten mini-games that taught players the fundamentals of playing the piano. These mini-games featured a musical staff on the screen and musical notes scrolling along the staff from left to right. When a note reached a vertical bar, the player had to press the appropriate key on the keyboard in order to proceed. The program featured several built-in songs, including Madonna's Material Girl, but players had to complete a song successfully before they could unlock another song.

Because the keyboard plugged into the Game Boy Advance slot of the DS, it could not be used with the Nintendo DSi, which did not have the cartridge slot. However, the game card that contained the program could still play on the newer handheld console and instead of the physical keyboard, the player could use a virtual, 8-octave, 13-note keyboard on the system's touchscreen.

MAD CATZ ROCK BAND 3 PIANO CONTROLLER

Until the arrival of the Nintendo Labo Toy-Con Piano in 2018, the last year that a musical keyboard peripheral was released for a home system was 2010. And it wasn't just for one system. The Piano Controller from Mad Catz came out for three: the Xbox 360, the PlayStation 3, and the Wii.

The Piano Controller was the latest musical instrument controller for the Rock Band franchise. However, while numerous guitars and drum sets for prior versions of Rock Band had just been controllers that looked and acted like actual instruments, they were useless outside of the game. The \$80 Piano Controller that Mad Catz designed for Rock Band 3 was a genuine 2-octave MIDI keyboard with 25 keys.

For some reason, keyboard peripherals have failed to really catch on. until the marriage of quality and price point hadn't occurred, and the change is refreshing. Perhaps Nintendo and its beloved hybrid console will break the chains of historic curiosity and catapult the piano peripheral into mainstream ubiquity. So many others have tried and failed, but perhaps Labo will be proof positive that a videogame machine can still retain its core identity while having the ability to be so much more. That would be music to my ears.



Leonard Herman - The Game Scholar, is regarded as one of the earliest and most respected videogame historians. The first edition of his book Phoenix: The Fall & Rise of Home Videogames, which was published in 1994, is considered to be the first serious and comprehensive book about the history of videogames. He has written articles for Videogaming & Computer Illustrated, Games Magazine, Electronic Gaming Monthly, the Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine, Pocket Games, Classic Gamer Magazine, Edge, Game Informer, Classic Gamer Magazine, Mancu Games, Gamespot.com and Video Game Trader, which he also edited. In 2003, Mr. Herman received a Classic Gaming Expo Achievement Award in recognition for his accomplishments in documenting game history.

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SYSTEM	GAME	LOOSE	BOXED
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32X	BC Racers	\$121	\$240
32X	Blackthorne	\$99	\$192
32X	Brutal - Above the Claw	\$19	UNK
32X	Corpse Killer	\$14	\$20
32X	Cosmic Carnage	\$9	\$17
32X	Darxide	\$46	UNK
32X	Doom	\$10	\$19
32X	Fahrenheit	\$15	\$25
32X	FIFA Soccer 96	\$20	UNK
32X	Golf Magazine - 36 great holes	\$5	UNK
32X	Knuckles Chaotix	\$56	\$89
32X	Kolibri	\$70	\$109
32X	Metal Head	\$12	\$19
32X	Mortal Kombat II	\$18	\$49
32X	Motherbase	\$32	\$58
32X	Motocross Championship	\$9	\$13
32X	NBA Jam Tournament Edition	\$23	\$31
32X	NFL Quarterback Club	\$10	\$21
32X	Night Trap	\$49	\$63
32X	Pitfall - The Mayan Adventure	\$30	UNK
32X	Primal Rage	\$35	\$62
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32X	Shadow Squadron	\$20	\$33
32X	Slam City	\$29	\$32
32X	Space Harrier	\$30	\$44
32X	Spider-Man - Web of Fire	\$265	\$403
32X	Star Trek - Starfleet Academy	\$29	\$42
32X	Star Wars Arcade	\$12	\$20
32X	Stellar Assault	\$112	UNK
32X	Supreme Warrior	\$35	\$40

SYSTEM	GAME	LOOSE	BOXED
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32X	T-MEK	\$45	\$81
32X	Tempo	\$39	\$58
32X	Toughman Contest	\$16	\$34
32X	Virtua Fighter	\$12	\$30
32X	Virtua Racing Deluxe	\$9	\$15
32X	World Series Baseball	\$109	\$220
32X	WWF Raw	\$32	\$51
32X	WWF WrestleMania - The Arcade Game	\$14	UNK
32X	Zaxxon's Motherbase 2000	\$32	\$58
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SCD	Adventures of Batman and Robin	\$17	\$43
SCD	Adventures of Willy Beamish	\$3	\$31
SCD	After Burner III	\$3	\$44
SCD	AH-3 Thunderstrike	\$5	\$13
SCD	Android Assault	\$26	\$106
SCD	Animals	\$5	\$17
SCD	AX-101	\$23	\$52
SCD	Batman Returns	\$8	\$40
SCD	Battle Frenzy	\$15	\$29
SCD	Battlecorps	\$12	\$24
SCD	BC Racers	\$16	\$51
SCD	Bill Walsh College Football	\$3	\$8
SCD	Black Hole Assault	\$8	\$33
SCD	Bloodshot	\$45	\$80
SCD	Bouncers	\$6	\$17
SCD	Bram Stoker's Dracula	\$3	\$14
SCD	Brutal Paws of Fury	\$6	\$19
SCD	Cadillacs and Dinosaurs 2nd Cataclysm	\$15	\$45
SCD	Championship Soccer '94	\$13	\$41
SCD	Chuck Rock	\$6	\$40

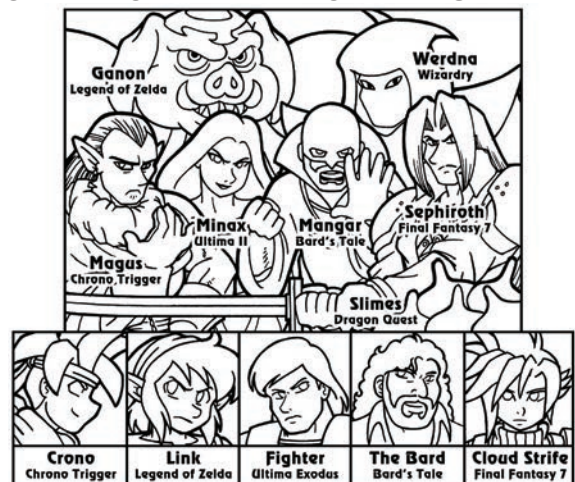
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SCD	Corpse Killer CD-32X	\$16	\$35
SCD	Crime Patrol	\$14	\$58
SCD	Dark Wizard	\$15	\$55
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SCD	Ecco the Dolphin	\$7	\$24
SCD	Ecco The Tides of Time	\$8	\$22
SCD	ESPN Baseball Tonight	\$5	\$14
SCD	ESPN National Hockey Night	\$6	\$9
SCD	ESPN NBA HangTime 95	\$17	\$120
SCD	ESPN Sunday Night NFL	\$6	\$11
SCD	Eternal Champions	\$9	\$29
SCD	Eye of the Beholder	\$8	\$29
SCD	Fahrenheit	\$7	\$24
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SCD	Final Fight	\$13	\$132
SCD	Flashback The Quest for Identity	\$15	\$35
SCD	Flink	\$30	\$105
SCD	Formula One World Championship - Beyond the Limit	\$2	\$9
SCD	Ground Zero Texas	\$3	\$13
SCD	Heart of the Alien	\$22	\$85
SCD	Heimdall	\$8	\$28
SCD	Hook	\$7	\$30
SCD	INXS - Make My Video	\$6	\$12
SCD	Iron Helix	\$5	\$19
SCD	Jaguar XJ220	\$2	\$33

SYSTEM	GAME	LOOSE	BOXED
SCD	Jeopardy	\$5	\$13
SCD	Joe Montana NFL Football	\$6	\$6
SCD	Jurassic Park	\$2	\$11
SCD	Keio Flying Squadron	\$114	\$914
SCD	Kids on Site	\$3	\$14
SCD	Kris Kross - Make My Video	\$5	\$24
SCD	Lawnmower Man	\$20	\$57
SCD	Lethal Enforcers	\$2	\$39
SCD	Lethal Enforcers II Gun Fighters	\$6	\$20
SCD	Links The Challenge of Golf	\$2	\$12
SCD	Loadstar Legend of Tully Bodine	\$3	\$14
SCD	Lords of Thunder	\$28	\$157
SCD	Lunar Eternal Blue	\$31	\$179
SCD	Lunar The Silver Star	\$31	\$102
SCD	Mad Dog II Lost Gold	\$15	\$94
SCD	Mad Dog McCree	\$8	\$19
SCD	Mansion of Hidden Souls	\$9	\$26
SCD	Marko's Magic Football	\$147	\$234
SCD	Marky Mark Make My Video	\$8	\$24
SCD	Mary Shelley's Frankenstein - Bram Stoker's Dracula	\$9	\$24
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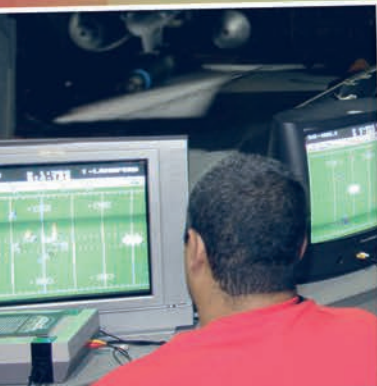
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