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# A Selected History of Maze Games

By Todd Friedman

People of all ages have done some sort of maze or maze game in their life. Whether it's on a piece of paper, an activity book, or a Halloween corn maze...mazes are all around us. The same can be said for video games past and present. Some would say the framework of the early video games started as a maze and built around it. This issue we will look at some of the most popular maze games that changed how we play games today and we will also look at some of the games of today that still use the maze-like feature as part of the gaming experience.

The first game anyone mentions when they think of maze games is Pac-Man. This is probably the definition of what a maze game should be and is still one of the most popular maze games ever made. Pac-Man was released in 1980 and took the world by storm. It was not only the most popular video game, it also sold the most merchandise for a video game back in the 1980's. A simple, yet not so simple, maze game would be a cultural phenomenon and still is to this day. The object of Pac-Man is to eat all the Pac-dots in a maze-like arena without getting killed by the ghosts that are moving around the screen. Every level has special dots called "Power Pellets" that will turn the ghosts Blue so you can eat them, causing them return to the base. We all know the story of the perfect Pac-Man score these days, but back in the early 80's no one really knew how complex and long this game was to solve. Each Maze was the same but got harder as the levels went on. The ghosts would not stay blue as long and they would get faster as the game went on. Pac-Man would be the inspiration to hundreds more maze-like games.

Of course, there are the sequels to the game itself: Ms. Pac-Man, Jr. Pac-Man, Super Pac Man and Baby Pac-Man. These games would change the maze patterns every few levels cleared to make the game more challenging and unique. The concept was the same, but by changing the environment, colors, and sounds, it made each game just as fun as the original Pac-Man. Pac-Man himself morphed into so many



TOP: Berzerk, Maze Craze, Pac-Man, The Legend of Zelda  
 MIDDLE: Lock 'n' Chase, Wizard of Wor, Gauntlet, Adventure  
 BOTTOM: Crystal Castles

more different kinds of games throughout its history. Almost every console and handheld game system has a version of Pac-Man and Ms. Pac-Man to play; some good, some really bad. Even smartphones would have a version of Pac-Man available for purchase. It has kept this yellow pizza guy a strong part of pop culture, still going strong for nearly 40 years.

Even before Pac-Man, in the 1970's, there were some pretty cool maze games that were ahead of their time. Games like "Gotcha" arcade game made by Atari. Gotcha is a two-player maze game in which one player attempts to catch the other. The "Pursuer" is represented by a square, while the "Pursued" is identified by a plus sign. As the player gets closer to the second player, the sound intensity increases and it gives the clue to the player he is getting close to finding the opponent. Each game has a time limit, and if the time runs out, and the "Pursued" is not found, he or she wins the game. In 1976, there was an arcade game literally called "The Amazing Maze Game". The object of the game is for the player to find their way out of a challenging maze before their opponent. Users can play as single player and compete against the computer or play against a friend in two player-mode. In 1978, Atari created a very popular game in its own right "Maze Craze". Two players compete to be the first to escape a randomly generated, top-down maze. A range of game variations make

play more interesting. Though primarily a two-player game, any of the variations that don't involve interaction with the second player can be played solo. One of the first Car Maze games came out in that same year for Atari. The object of the game is to pilot your car through a maze while attempting to fire missiles at your opponent's car as well as evading the missiles your opponent fires at your car. Finally, in 1979, in what they say is the pre-Pac-Man maze game, Head On was an arcade game that had cars continuously drive forward through rectangular channels in a simple maze. The goal was to collect dots in the maze while avoiding collisions with the computer-controlled car that is also collecting dots. It's the first maze game where the goal is to run over dots, similar to Pac-Man but in a car.

The start of the 1980's came with some great maze-like games for the boom of the arcade age. One of the games on the top of the list is Berzerk. In this arcade classic, which came out in 1980, the player controls a green stick man. Using a joystick and a firing button that activates a laser-like weapon, the player navigates a simple maze filled with many robots who fire lasers back at the player's character. A player can be killed by being shot, by running into a robot or an exploding robot, get electrocuted by

the electrified walls of the maze itself, or by being touched by the player's nemesis, Evil Otto. "Evil Otto" was named after Dave Otto, security chief at McNeil's former employer Dave Nutting Associates. Berzerk would find itself on the Atari 2600 system as well and help make the Atari 2600 a popular choice of home console gaming in the early 80s. Another fan favorite is Wizards of Wor. The player's characters, called Warriors, must kill all the monsters by shooting them. Player one has yellow Warriors (on the right), and player two has blue Warriors (on the left). In a two-player game, the players are also able to shoot each other's Warriors, earning bonus points and causing the other player to lose a life. Team-oriented players can successfully advance through the game by standing back-to-back (such as in a corner) and firing at anything that comes at them. Each dungeon consists of a single-screen rectangular grid with walls and corridors in various formations. The Warriors and the monsters can travel freely through the corridors. Each dungeon has doors at the left and right edges that connect with each other, making the dungeon wrap around. Whenever a door is traversed by a player or monster, both of them deactivate for a short period, making them impassable. A player who exits the door can pop back through the door immediately when the Worluk, or Wizard, is in the dungeon. A small radar display indicates the positions of all active monsters.

The one game from the early 80's that stands out in my memory, and is a fan favorite even today, is Adventure for the Atari 2600. This maze game is as challenging as any arcade or console game of its time. The object is simple; to move through the maze, pick up keys that open doors, and avoid the Dragon. The player's avatar is represented by a simple square shape that can move within and between rooms, each represented by a single screen. The game offers three different skill levels. Level 1 is the easiest, as it uses a simplified room layout missing one of the castles, one of the mazes, and doesn't include the bat and one of the dragons. Level 2 is the full version of the game, with the various objects appearing in set positions at the start of the game. Level 3 is similar to Level 2, but the location of the objects are randomized to provide a more challenging game.

In 1982, the Apple II computer release a game called Spectre. This would be one of many games in the 1980's that would use Pac-Man gameplay style as a template to make its own variation of the game and storyline. Spectre is a Pac-Man variant in which you have to collect dots and avoid "Questers." The player navigates via a split screen 2D/3D-maze. As the years went on, maze games got more and more advanced and graphically impressive. In 1983, Crystal Castles was

released for the arcade. In this game, the player controls the character, Bentley Bear, who has to collect gems located throughout trimetric-projected rendered castles while avoiding enemies out to get him as he is attempting to collect the gems. Crystal Castles has nine levels, with four castles each, and a tenth level which features a single castle — the clearing of which ends the game. A trackball and "jump" button are used for controlling Bentley Bear's motions. Gems are collected by simply walking over them, and a bonus is given upon collection of the last gem. Another fan favorite is Lock 'N Chase. The game's main character is a thief. The object of the game is to enter a maze and collect all of the coins, and, if possible, any other treasure that may appear. The thief must then exit the maze, which is a vault, without being apprehended by the Super D (policemen). The thief can close doorways within the maze in order to temporarily trap the Super D and allow him to keep his distance from them.

There were other memorable games such as Track Attack, Cops N Robbers, Capture the Flag, Pengo, Monster Munch and dozens more. But the game that changed all maze-like games for me came out in 1985 for the Nintendo Entertainment System. Some may say that The Legend of Zelda is not considered a maze game but in fact it is just that. The Legend of Zelda features a mixture of puzzles, action, adventure/battle gameplay, and exploration. The game itself is made up of nine dungeons inside a maze-like pattern, as you attempt to find your way to the monster and survive. Each screen sends you a different way in the maze. You find yourself fighting off monsters and picking up items along the way to open doors to the next room. Those dungeons are encapsulated in a world-filled maze trying to find your way to the next dungeon. The Legend of Zelda paved the way to new kind of maze-like gaming - those we even play today.

Around the time Zelda came out, and the tail end of maze-based arcade games, came a four-player gem that made being a magician and a thief cool in a video game. Gauntlet has amazing gameplay that is set within a series of top-down, third-person perspective mazes where the object is to find and touch the designated exit in every level. An assortment of special items can be found in each level that increase player character's health, unlocks

doors and gains more points, along with magical potions that can destroy all of the enemies on screen. As the game progresses, higher levels of skill are needed to reach the exit, with success often depending on the willingness of the players to cooperate by sharing food and luring monsters into places where they can be engaged and slaughtered more conveniently.

Developers in the late 1980's tried to mix things up a bit and go a different way than the "happy-go-lucky" maze games form the past. One example of this was a game called MIDI Maze. Released in 1987, this game was an early first person shooter maze video game for the Atari ST. Graphically the game was very simple with a humorous twist. The game area itself occupied only a quarter of the screen and consisted of a first-person view of a flat-shaded Pac-Man-like maze with a crosshair in the middle. All players were shown as Pac-Man-like smiley avatars in various colors. Bullets were represented as small balls. Up to 16 computers could be networked in a "MIDI Ring" by connecting one computer's MIDI-OUT port to the next computer's MIDI-IN port. Unless the computers were looped correctly, more than 4 players tended to slow down the game to a crawl and make it unstable.

Early generation maze games were fun and entertaining and they paved the way for the "modern classic" games like Doom and Wolfenstein. Games like Myst, Portal 2 and Pokémon utilized the early maze game-patterns and took them to another level. Even tablet and smart phone games like Snake, Labyrinth and Magnetized used the same concept as games like Pac-Man and Gotcha. Some could say games like Super Mario 64, Grand Theft Auto and Zelda-Breath of the Wild are considered maze games. The object is to find your way around an open world to objectives, utilizing a map to find your way. All in all, the early generation of maze games, from the 1970's and 1980's, was instrumental to the design and concept of generations of video games. Without those games, we would not be where we are today. I still, to this day, break out the Atari 2600 and play Adventure and Berzerk. They are as fun and challenging today as when I was a kid. Until next time, I hope everyone can make it through the end of their own maze and be a champion in life.



**Todd Friedman** is heavily involved in the video game community. He is currently writing for GameRoom Magazine, Little Player Magazine, RetroGaming Times and The Walter Day Collection. He has Co-Promoted the Video Game Summit in Illinois for the past 9 Years. Todd is an avid video game collector with over 3400 console games and 25 systems. One of his main responsibilities is keeping the Walter Day trading cards alive and well by keeping an inventory of the cards and writing on the website and getting autographs from the card holders themselves. Todd holds over 60 world

records on the Nintendo Wii game DJ Hero. Todd was also a nominee for the International Video Game Hall of Fame, class of 2016. He has also helped out with such events as ICON and IVGHOF in Ottumwa, Iowa.

# Pac-Man Merchandising

## THE KING OF MERCHANDISING IN THE EARLY 80S

By David Oxford



**I**t may be difficult to imagine for someone who wasn't there at the time - or heck, even someone who was - but following its North American arcade release by Midway Games on October 26th, 1980, Pac-Man became huge. Like, stupidly huge.

One could draw comparisons to more recent titles as a sort of gauge of how big Pac-Man was in the early 80's: Pokémon, Guitar Hero, Minecraft, or even Mario all seem valid as contenders, and in some cases, have perhaps been even bigger than the maze-running ghost-gobbler was in his prime, or simply had greater longevity. But one thing that must be taken into account is that while Mario helped revitalize the game industry and the others that would follow were born into that, Pac-Man became an enormous draw when the business was still in its very infancy.

In addition to spurring on multiple sequels (whose legality was iffy at best), Midway was also happy to license out Pac-Man for all sorts of tie-ins to the arcade phenomenon. Here, we'll be talking a bit about some of the more popular items and tidbits of greater renown - some of which you can still enjoy today!

But not this one. For the love of everything, if you should find yourself in the possession of a can of Pac-Man pasta, please do not eat it. Not that the stuff was necessarily bad, but it was released in 1984, and even a sealed can (with no preservatives) is only going to do so much to keep you from winding up on a list of Darwin Award winners instead of some imaginary YouTube Valhalla.

That disclaimer aside, Chef Boyardee's product came in three different varieties, each

with noodles shaped like the titular character and his four foes (who conveniently all shared the same shape). Where they differed was primarily in the sauce: You had "Spaghetti Sauce with Cheese Flavor," a "Golden Chicken Flavored Sauce" (whether it was simply a gold-colored sauce, or flavored like a golden chicken, they don't say), and a "Spaghetti Sauce with Mini-Meat Balls," which I'm sure made a convenient Power Pellet-substitute for any aspiring Pac-Kids out there.

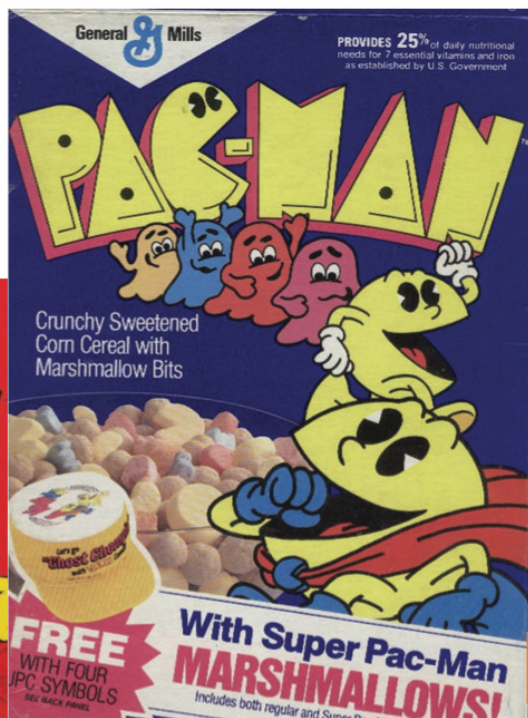
The pasta was advertised on television through commercials which conveniently tie into our next subject: The Pac-Man animated television series, simply titled "Pac-Man."

The 30-minute (including commercials, of course) cartoon was a production of Hanna-Barbera Productions, and first aired on ABC in the Fall of 1982. Over the course of two seasons, the show ran for 42 regular episodes and contained a cast featuring some voice actors you might be familiar with, including Frank Welker (Megatron and Soundwave, Transformers; Fred Jones, Scooby-Doo), Lorenzo Music (the voice of Garfield until his death in 2001),

and Peter Cullen (Optimus Prime and Ironhide, Transformers; Mario, Saturday Supercade).

The cartoon followed the adventures of Pac-Man and his family, including Ms. Pac-Man (named "Pepper" here), Pac-Baby, and their pets, Chomp-Chomp the dog and Sour Puss the cat. Together, they'd defend the Power Pellets of Pac-Land from the Ghost Monsters Inky, Blinky, Pinky, Clyde, and Sue, who were led by the evil Mezmaron. Later episodes would introduce more Pac-people, including the other-dimensional hero Super-Pac (voiced by Lorenzo Music) and Pac-Man's teen cousin, P.J.

In addition to the normal Saturday morning run of the cartoon, the Pac-Man cartoon also saw two holiday specials produced for primetime airing. The





Pac-Man Halloween Special reaired two earlier episodes, "Pacula" and "Trick or Chomp", as one special, while Christmas Comes to Pac-Land is an original presentation which stars Peter Cullen as Santa Claus.

The Pac-Man cartoon would go on to influence the video game side of the property as well, including the box art for Tengen's Nintendo Entertainment System release of the title, as well as certain elements of the side-scroller Pac-Land and the side-scrolling point-and-click adventure, Pac-Man 2: The New Adventures.

Unlike the aforementioned canned pasta, you can enjoy this slice of nostalgia today, thanks to the Warner Archive's Hanna-Barbera Classics. Each season has its own DVD release, with Christmas Comes to Pac-Land on the second season set. And since these DVDs are manufacture-on-demand, getting your hands on them should remain easy and affordable for as long as the Warner Archive program sticks around.

One product that unfortunately didn't stick around, much as we wish it had, is Pac-Man cereal. Produced by General Mills from 1983, the cereal initially contained spherical "Kix"-like puffs of sweetened corn cereal (effectively approximating Power Pellets), while scattered throughout were marshmallows shaped like Pac-Man, Inky, Blinky, Pinky, and Clyde. Later iterations would introduce Ms. Pac-Man

marshmallows (with a shocking pink bow, oh!) and the relatively enormous Super Pac-Man marshmallows, which trumped any other cereal marshmallow on the market.

Of course, any great cereal of the 80's is memorable in part due to its premiums, and of course Pac-Man had its own. They ranged from "nice" (a five-piece pack of Rain-Blo Color Bubble gum) to send-away offers including "Ghost Chomper" hats, Pac-Man game watches, Pac-Man bowls, Pac-Man initial rings, neon cameras, chances to win full-sized arcade machines or miniature electronic versions of the game, and more.

Oh, and as you may or may not have heard: Before donning the cape and cowl of the Batman, a young Christian Bale had an early gig in one of Pac-Man cereal's commercials, advertising Ms. Pac-Man's inclusion.

So at this point, we might have an idea of what you're thinking: "Big deal, Mario has had cartoons, pasta, and cereal, too. Heck, he has another cereal that's out right now!"

This is true, though Pac-Man's cereal was first. And while time will tell whether Mario's latest will last as long as Pac-Man's five-year run, answer us this: Has Mario ever had a Billboard Top Ten hit single?

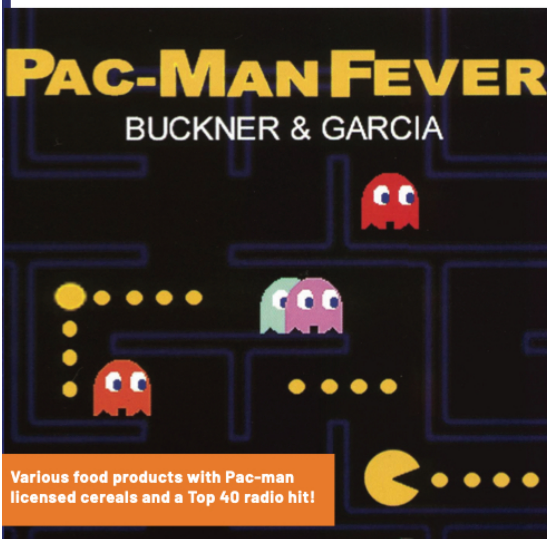
The answer is no. "Do the Donkey Kong" by Buckner & Garcia just missed the Billboard charts by three spots, peaking at #103. However, their preceding hit, "Pac-Man Fever," reached the #9 spot of the Billboard Hot 100 in March of



1982 and sold 1.2 million copies by the end of the year.

Granted, this wasn't an officially licensed song (at least, by anything we can find), but it still shows how popular Pac-Man was and how hard it had hit the pop culture spectrum in the early 80's. Even all these years later, the song is still around in various forms, including a 2012 Jace Hall remix and another for the 2015 Adam Sandler movie Pixels titled "Pac-Man Fever (Eat 'Em Up)".

Keep in mind, this is all just a mere sampling of the various products, merchandise, and other ephemera that was produced. And Pac-Man may no longer be the mainstream sensation he once was, but for a time in the 80's, he was a pop culture king that we'll always remember.



**David Oxford** - Lover of fine foods and felines, as well as comics, toys, and... oh yeah, video games. David Oxford has written about the latter for years, including for Nintendo Power, Nintendo Force, Mega Visions, and he even wrote the book on Mega Man

MICHAEL THOMASSON'S  
**JUST 4 QIX**



# WIZARD OF WOR

By Michael Thomasson

**T**his magical game has you taking on the role of a brave space Warrior in a quest to slay the mighty Wizard of Wor. Armed with a unified-field-disturbance rifle, you'll descend into a series of dangerous dungeon mazes. With tactical strategy, bravery, and bit of good fortune you might just survive the Wizard of Wor.

## HEY! INSERT COIN!

That is just one of three idioms that the Wizard of Wor boldly states while sitting static. The attract mode also randomly spouts, "I'm out of spite, ha ha ha ha!" or "Find me... the Wizard of Wor." In fact, the coin-op was quite the chatty machine. Revolutionary at the time of release, Wizard of Wor wowed game players with early speech synthesis. In fact, the Wizard rattled off a whopping seventy-one phrases, each correlating to a specific scenario. When a quarter was inserted into the machine, there were eight possible lines it could drop, including, "Another coin for my treasure chest." In fact, each of the dungeons opens with its own line. Earn a bonus player... another of eight possible lines would be randomly spoken. The Wizard would certainly mock you when you died, and the GAME OVER banter wasn't much friendlier! A few choice lines of dialogue from the game are featured in BOLD in this column as bumpers between content paragraphs for your amusement...

## WARRIOR, WHILE YOU DEVELOPED SCIENCE, WE DEVELOPED MAGIC.

In a time when co-operative coin-op gaming was in its infancy, Wizard of Wor was one of the best. Players were meant to work as a team against the Wizard's army. Since friendly fire was lethal, an accidental or missed shot often turned one player against the other, creating a whole new two-player dynamic! Don't have any friends? That's a-okay, as a computer controlled Warrior will enter the arena to try and aid you.

## AH GOOD! MY PETS WERE GETTING HUNGRY. HA HA HA HA!

Video games have always featured strangely-named characters, but Wizard of Wor's roster is as odd as it is limited. The game stars the Wizard of Wor, of course, but he is aided by his evil radioactive minions that do his nefarious bidding. Each dungeon begins filled with only navy colored canines referred to as Burwors. For every Burwor you blast, a golden prehistoric dino Garwor is released into the maze. Likewise, for every Garwor that is vanquished, a crimson scorpion Thorwor takes its place. While contact with any of these monsters proves deadly, they occasionally discharge lightning bolts as a distance attack.

## WATCH THE RADAR, WARRIOR.

Garwors and Thorwors are particularly dangerous, as they have the ability to turn themselves invisible, only revealing themselves when they enter the same corridor as the Warrior. Fear not, because below the play field is a radar that betrays the location of the beasts inside the dungeon, visible or invisible.

Upon defeating the Thorwors, the first level ends. However, every round

following adds the Wizard's winged insect scycophant, the Worluk, into the mix. The Worluk won't attack, but instead attempts to flee the maze through the side doors in order to warn the Wizard of your presence. Slay the Worluk, and the subsequent dungeon becomes a very rewarding 'Double Score Dungeon.'

Finally, the Wizard of Wor may (or may not) randomly appear following the fate of the Worluk. The Wizard fires a lethal barrage of lightning bolts from his fingertips while teleporting around the maze to attack or escape to safety.

## IF YOU DESTROY MY BABIES, I'LL POP YOU IN THE OVEN! HA HA HA HA!

You can't dawdle while playing the Wizard of Wor, as monster's speed increases as time moves forward. It is literally a race against time, a very unique feature for a maze game. Each subsequent level removes more corridor walls making evading the enemies more difficult. There are two special dungeons; the first being 'The Arena' which forces the Warrior into a large open space in the center of the maze. If you make it to the Worlord dungeons, the Wizard will promote your title from 'Warrior' to 'Worlord.' However, your ultimate goal is to survive the second special dungeon - 'The Pit.' Here, the maze walls are completely removed and the Wizard bellows, "Oops! I must have forgotten the walls! Ha ha ha ha!" Since there is nowhere to hide be sure to time your shot well, as a single misfire usually proves fatal. If you survive 'The Pit,' your rank will advance to 'Worlord Supreme.'



Wizard of Wor Arcade and Monitor Bezel

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#### WORLUK WILL ESCAPE THROUGH THE DOOR.

The Worluck isn't the only character that can make good use of the door. One tip for survival is to linger around one of the side escape doors for your own personal use. If you are forced to retreat, the door deactivates behind you for a short amount of time, making it impassable. This prevents an enemy from following you before the door reopens, allowing for a moment's peace.

If you are playing a co-op match, try situating both Warriors back to back in a long corridor. This technique puts you on the offensive instead of playing defense.

#### YOUR EXPLOSION WAS MUSIC TO MY EARS! HA HA HA HA!

If you have flashbacks to old reruns of Dragnet while playing Wizard of Wor, it is no coincidence. The famous theme, known as 'Danger Ahead,' plays before entering each dungeon, with the fifth note held in dramatic fashion only before entering an opportunistic Double Score Dungeon.


#### THE WIZARD OF WOR THANKS YOU.

Having trouble finding a genuine Wizard of Wor coin-op in your local barcade? You can also play it on any of

these vintage computers or consoles: Bally Astrocade (renamed The Incredible Wizard), Atari 2600, Atari 5200, Atari XEGS, Commodore 64, and Windows based personal computer. A word to the wise, the Astrocade port is near perfect, while the Atari 2600 version is an uninspired flickering mess. It is also emulated as part of a collection, in volume two of Midway Arcade Treasures for Microsoft's original XBOX, Nintendo's GameCube, and Sony's PlayStation 2. You can even play it on the go using a PSP! The Wizard will even be returning soon as a homebrew title for the Colecovision later this year.

#### HEY! YOUR SPACE BOOT'S UNTIED! HA HA HA HA!

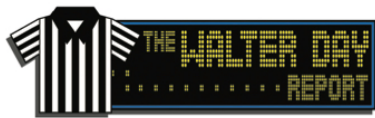
Want more Wizard of Wor? Try streaming the horror anthology movie Nightmares (1984) that brings four urban legends loosely to film. One segment features teenage heartthrob Emilio Estevez as J. J. Cooney, a video game-addicted teenager. Cooney makes a rather futile attempt to defeat The Bishop of Battle, clearly influenced by Midway's popular arcade game, blue maze and all!

You're off to see the Wizard, the magical Wizard of Wor. Now put this issue of OSG down and get to the arcade! 



**Michael Thomasson** is one of the most widely respected videogame historians in the field today. He currently teaches college level videogame history, design, and graphics courses. For television, Michael conducted research for MTV's videogame related program Video MODS. In print, he authored Downright Bizarre Games, and has contributed to nearly a dozen gaming texts. Michael's historical columns have been distributed in newspapers and magazines worldwide. He has written business plans for several vendors and managed a dozen game-related retail stores spanning three decades. Michael consults for multiple video game and

computer museums and has worked on nearly a hundred game titles on Atari, Coleco, Sega and other console platforms. In 2014, The Guinness Book of World Records declared that Thomasson had "The Largest Videogame Collection" in the world. His businesses sponsor gaming tradeshows and expos across the US and Canada. Visit [www.GoodDealGames.com](http://www.GoodDealGames.com) for more.



# Back in the 80s, was there a "Greatest-of-All-Time?"

By Walter Day

**W**ith all the talk about the Patriot's Tom Brady being the NFL's greatest quarterback of all time, one begins to wonder if there was ever a gamer back in the Golden Age of arcade gaming who was undeniably the Greatest of All Time (aka G.O.A.T)?

As a sport reaches an advanced age, people commonly look to its history and examine the great milestones as well as ranking the important competitors who put the sport on the map. As Arcade and Console gaming begins to reach a similar level of maturity, this is something we should consider. There certainly were a lot of gamers back in the day who might have been considered the Babe Ruth or Lou Gehrig of the fledgling sport.

Though I am personally still undecided as to whom the greatest gamer of the Golden Age was, I do believe that we have a list of strong candidates who may very well earn the title of "Greatest of all Time" (either by some future board of industry leaders or publications) who feel the title should finally be given.

My particular bias favors gamers who excelled in tournament competition. However, there were many top perform-

ers who never made it to tournaments but made their presence known through high scores submitted by their arcades. I have focused on gamers who I personally saw play during the years 1982-1985. If I have left any deserving soul out, it's because of an innocent lapse of memory (and potentially my inability to be at all arcades at all times)!

So, since this is not an attempt to rank them, I will simply list them in alphabetical order:

**Chris Ayra** was a Pac-Man expert, par excellence, since the dawn of gaming. He would go on to be a member of that rare group of people who achieved a "perfect" game on Pac-Man. But, he was also the world record holder on Ms. Pac-Man and Head-On, and a serious threat on Crystal Castles, Tempest, Pole Position, Burger Time, and, much later, Berzerk.

**Matt Brass** was one of the first superstars to come to Twin Galaxies Arcade in person. That was easy for him, as he attended school at Northeast Missouri State University (NMSU), which was in Kirksville, Missouri, where the "other" Twin Galaxies was located. He was the "class" of the Kirksville arcade and dominated the high-scoreboard on many games, notably Space Invaders. He was one of the superstars invited to the LIFE Magazine photo-shoot but missed the photo as he overslept on someone's kitchen floor and arrived late to the gathering.

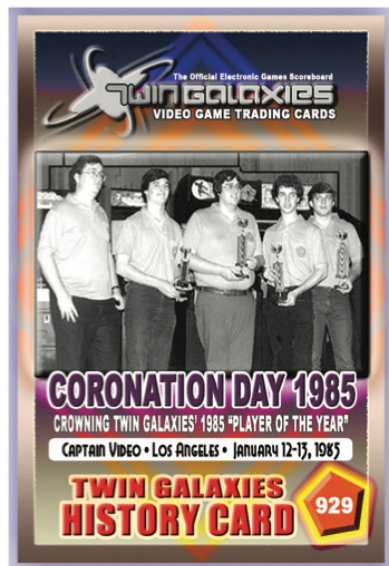
**Phil Britt**, of Riverside, CA, was so talented that many gamers of his era looked to him as being unbeatable. Not only was he a high-score champion on many competitive arcade games, but he took first place in the 1985 Twin Galaxies Coronation Day Championships, held at the Captain Video Arcade. And, even more impressive, Phil went to Tokyo, Japan and won the 1984 March of Dimes International Konami/Centuri Track & Field Challenge - a tournament that some historians consider the largest of that era with more than one million contestants!

**Tim Collum**, of Boyd, TX, was one of the bright stars in Texas gaming. On June 5, 1982, he was crowned the Pac-Man State Champion during the First Annual Texas State Video Game Championships.

On October 11, 1982, he won the televised "That's Incredible Ms. Pac-Man" Championship. But, Yet he was only getting started, as he dominated the Twin Galaxies 1983 State Teams Tournament, achieving the most world records during the event. As a grand finale, he was co-crowned the 1983 Twin Galaxies' Player-of-the-Year on January 14, 1984 in Ottumwa, IA.

**Leo Daniels** was one of the first players to become a national celebrity, with his world record accomplishments appearing in the newspapers. He was noted for high-score performances on many games and his gaming feats can still be found in the Twin Galaxies database. His most impressive feats were his 169 million-point marathon score on Robotron and his 40 million-point marathon score on Asteroids. He was also the Captain of the North Carolina team that faced off against the California team in the "California Challenges North Carolina All-Star Play-Off." He was also one of the luminaries who appeared in the LIFE Magazine photograph.

**Kent Farries** was one of the Top Guns among Canadian players. A partner in crime to Darren Olsen, they were the two wiz kids who put their high score initials on every arcade game in the city of





Life Magazine January 1983 spread shot in front of Twin Galaxies

Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Kent was good at everything he played and, while at the LIFE Magazine photo shoot, he put up a 948,000-point score on Donkey Kong. Jr. He never realized his full potential as he dropped out of competitive gaming by the end of 1983.

**Jack Gale**, of Miami, Florida, is still the Twin Galaxies high score champ on Endure Racer, Mad Crasher, and Vs. Hogan's Alley. His 259,800-point score on Karate Champ held the world title for over 23 years. He distinguished himself at the 1985 Twin Galaxies Coronation Day Championships, held at the Captain Video Arcade, on Pico Blvd. in West Los Angeles, CA, January 12-13, 1985. His breakthrough tactics on Karate Champ ensured him a fifth-place finish in the event (nearly coming in fourth).

**Eric Ginner** became an overnight sensation when he won the controversial Tournament Games International's Centipede competition in September, 1981. One of the first gamers to become a celebrity in the fledgling field, he was a participant in the LIFE Magazine photo and finished in fifth-place in the Twin Galaxies' "That's Incredible!" Video Game Olympics. He appeared in TV ads and his photo adorned numerous print ads in gaming magazines. During the years he was active, he was a major contender and sometimes-world-record-holder on Moon Patrol, Millipede, Popeye, and

Crystal Castles. One of the brightest feathers in his cap was his 112 million-point marathon score on Robotron.

**Ben Gold**, of Spring, TX, was a prolific high-score champ who made it into the news many times, long before he ascended to the throne of all-time video game greatness by winning the Twin Galaxies' "That's Incredible!" Video Game Olympics, in January, 1983. He was a clutch-performer who put together big marathons on Stargate, Millipede, and Q\*Bert. To make the final cut as a finalist at the "That's Incredible!" preliminaries at Twin Galaxies Arcade, he came from behind on Millipede to become the final seed selected to compete in the finals held in the "That's Incredible!" Studios in Los Angeles. Ben also enjoyed the unique distinction of appearing in the LIFE photograph and being a founding member of the U.S. National Video Game Team.

**Steve Harris** may be more famous as a founder of EGM Magazine, but in the early part of his career, he was a serious competitor in the arcade arena. He was a competitor in the Twin Galaxies' "That's Incredible!" Video Game Olympics (placed 7th), and was a founding member of the U.S. National Video Game Team. Steve's 1,232,250-point score on Popeye held the world title for 27 years and his scores on Wacko, Red Alert, and Bega's Battle are still world records today!

**Michael Klug** was and is one of the greatest Pole Position competitors in the history of this classic game. His 67,260-point score on Pole Position I still holds 2nd place today. Michael also holds the world record on the Fuji Track for Pole Position II. We can't forget Michael's Guzzler score, either, which occupies 2nd-place in the Twin Galaxies' database.

**Mark Longridge** was recognized as one of Canada's best gamers during the 1985 Video Game Masters Tournament. His accomplishments during the Golden Age included world record-caliber scores on Joust, Joust 2, Wizard of Wor, Punchout, and Dig Dug.

**Billy Mitchell** is definitely the most well-known of all the Golden Age gamers. When Guinness World Records published its first listings of high scores in the 1984 volume, Billy held 5 or 6 world records. He gained world fame as the Donkey Kong champion and was the first verified person to attain a "perfect" score on Pac-Man. An alumni of the celebrated LIFE Magazine photo, he was a founding member of the U.S. National Video Game Team and was honored as the "Video Game Player of the Century" on the NAMCO stage at the 1999 Tokyo Game Show.

**Donn Nauert** is one of the greatest gamers spawned by the mighty state of Texas. A very early member of the U.S.

# 2018 OLD SCHOOL EVENTS CALENDAR

OLD SCHOOL GAMER IS GOING TO BE EVERYWHERE OVER THE NEXT YEAR. ARE WE COMING TO YOUR TOWN?

SPRING

**March 16-18 - Frisco, TX - Texas Pinball Festival - TexasPinball.Com**  
OSG will be there, expanding our reach and serving the Pinball fans!

**March 16-18 - Banning, CA - Arcade Expo - ArcadeExpo.Com**  
OSG will be here too!

**March 24-25 - Mohegan Sun, CT - CTGamerCon**  
Only on their second show but these guys have major experience in the "ComicCon" world - Old School Gamer will be there!



SUMMER

**April 13-15 - Milwaukee, WI - Midwest Gaming Classic**  
This is where it all began for a lot of the staff of Old School Gamer Magazine. Dan Loosen and Gary Heil produce this fantastic show that celebrates gaming in many ways including most importantly to us, video gaming, both at the arcade and at home. Many staff from OSG will be there. Check out more information coming soon.

**May 4-6 - Las Vegas, NV - Lvl Up Expo - lvlupexpo.com**

**June 8-10 - Atlanta, GA - Southern Fried Gaming Expo GameATL.Com**  
Atlanta GA - the home of Coca-Cola and an awesome gaming expo See us there!

**June 8-10 - Seattle, WA - NW Pinball and Arcade Show - NWPinballShow.Com**

**June 12-14 - Los Angeles, CA - E3**  
Look for news coverage of this event in the magazine and online.

**June 22-24 - Philadelphia, PA - Too Many Games - TooManyGames.Com**

**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**  
Steel Town here we come!

**July 28-29 - Austin, TX - Classic Game Fest - ClassicGameFest.Com**  
Planning on being here too!

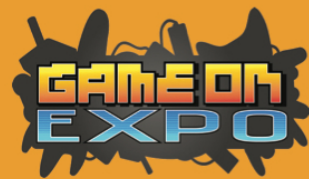
**July 28-29 - Irving, TX Lets Play Gaming Expo - Letsplaygamingexpo.com**

**July 28-29 - Houston, TX - RetroPalooza Houston - RetroPaloozaHouston.Com**

**August 3-5 - Bloomington, MN - 2D Con - 2DCon.net**

**August 10-12 - Phoenix, AZ - Game On - Gameonexpoaz.com**  
Crew from OSG will be there joining in all the fun in Arizona

**August 11-12 - Garden City, NY - Long Island Retro - Expo.lietro.com**



FALL

**September 14-16 - Atlantic City, NJ - J1Con - J1con.com**

**September 15-16 - Parsippany, NJ - A Video Came Con - Avideogamecon.com**

**September 29-30 - Arlington, TX - RetroPalooza - Retropalooza.com**

**October 19-21 - Portland, OR - Portland Retro Gaming Expo - Retrogamingexpo.com**  
Walter Day will be joining the crew from OSG at one of our favorites of the year.



National Video Game Team, he was the winner of the Red Cross/Twin Galaxies Championship in Napa, CA, in May, 1985, and was one of the first gamers to be signed as a pro gamer by the Electronic Sports League that was being formed by Twin Galaxies and Data Power of, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, in January, 1985. Not only did he hold as many as 10 Twin Galaxies world records (later records included: Alien Syndrome, Gridiron Fight, Cheyenne, Crossbow, Danger Zone, and Vertigo), his game play was a sensation at the 1985 Twin Galaxies Coronation Day Championships, where he won fourth-place.

**Darren Olsen** (now called Chris Steele), of Calgary, AB, Canada, was the inspiration for Walter Day to learn Centipede. Some gamers believed that he may have had the fastest hands with a trackball of all golden age players. He was a contender for many high-score world records during his career (Millipede, Centipede) and was one of the luminaries appearing in the legendary LIFE Magazine photo. And, most notably, he took third place in the grand finals of the Twin Galaxies' "That's Incredible!" Video Game Olympics, held in Los Angeles.

**David Palmer** was one of the more remarkable gamers of the 80s, establishing himself as a top performer at Twin Galaxies' 1985 Video Game Masters Tournament. Though never showing up at a contest, his high score submissions made him an eternal legend in the arcade world. On August 30, 1985, David Palmer, of Citrus Heights, California, scored a world record 23,000,000 points on Battlezone while playing at The Game Room Arcade during Twin Galaxies' 1985 Video Game Masters Tournament. Palmer also holds the world record on numerous other arcade games, among them: Firefox, Red Baron, Star Rider, Star Wars, Subroc-3D, The Empire Strikes Back and TX-1.

**Jeff Peters**, of Etiwanda, CA, was a gaming celebrity from the very beginning. He was one of the earliest members of the U.S. National Video Game Team and was a dominant contender during the Twin Galaxies 1983 State Teams Tournament, conducted August 24-28, 1983. During the legendary Twin Galaxies Iron Man Contest, he kept a game of Q\*Bert going for 50+ hours. He still holds many world records that have stood for decades (Pole Position II, Turkey Shoot, Side Arms, Time Pilot, and more). Though he was listed in the Guinness World Records book 14 times from 1984-1988, the accomplishment that impresses me the most was his performance during the 1985 Twin Galaxies Coronation Day

Championships, held at the Captain Video Arcade, where he took third place, despite playing against a strong field.

**Perry Rodgers** was a multi-talented competitor who once attempted a major marathon on Centipede and his numerous world records (Mario Bros and more) earned him an invitation to the 1985 Twin Galaxies Coronation Day Championships.

**Mark Robichek** was a master of maze games. His slow and methodical style won him high score laurels on many highly-contested games. His 244,920-point record on Tutankham stood for 20 years and his 442,330-point score on Frogger lasted 25 years. On slow-bullets Berzerk, his 98,410-point score was only rivaled and beaten by Joel West himself. Mark was an illustrious alumni of the 1982 LIFE Magazine photoshoot and he was honored with a cameo appearance in the 1982-83 Wilson-Sorflaten Video Game Documentary.

**Mike Sullivan** was a man of unrealized promise. He appeared in the competition arena for barely one year and demonstrated tremendous prowess as a high-score champ, then mysteriously disappeared back into the real world. However, his 1985 world record score of 1,938,010 points on Return of the Jedi stood for 26 years (was beat in 2011) and his 1,349,040-point tally on Kung-Fu Master still enjoys world record status today. In the competition realm, he took second place in the 1985 Twin Galaxies Coronation Day Championships.

**Todd Walker** was considered by many gamers to be the best-all-around gamer of the Golden Age of gaming. As the most feared contestant in the Twin Galaxies' "That's Incredible!" Video Game Olympics, he took first place (as expected) in the Ottumwa portion of the tournament. With many high score titles under his belt at that time, he was invited to appear in the LIFE Magazine photo and was one of the stars of 1983's Electronic Circus. Despite his success in the gaming world, he was the first star gamer to officially retire from competitive video gaming.

**Joel West** was an alumni of the LIFE Magazine photoshoot. A serious competitor on some of the more difficult games of

that era, he was the world record holder on Rally-X and today still holds the world record on many categories of gameplay on Frenzy and Berzerk.

Some other honorable mentions:

**Tom Asaki** pioneered Nibbler marathons but was a far more accomplished Ms. Pac-Man player. As a member of the Bozeman Think Tank, he was one of the primary discoverers of the grouping technique used in conquering Ms. Pac-Man.


**Joe Malasarte**, of Anchorage, AK, took fourth place in the Twin Galaxies' "That's Incredible!" Video Game Olympics, barely losing out to Ben Gold by one percentage point in the Ottumwa preliminaries. His high-score marks on Pole Position II and Bubbles are still near the top today.

**Tim McVey** focused mainly on the legendary Nibbler game and became the first verified gamer to achieve one billion points on a video game. Though he only participated in Nibbler showdowns, his fast reaction time and precise eye-hand coordination showed he could have placed high in contests.

**Roy Shildt**, of West Los Angeles, was a remarkable Missile Command player and, at the 1985 Twin Galaxies Coronation Day Championships, demonstrated that he had such excellent eye-hand coordination that he could handle a gun game like Cheyenne on a par with the best.

**Ken Vance**, of Lake Charles, LA, was a major world-record contender with noted scores on Seaquest, Gravitar, Kangaroo, and Tac-Scan. His peers considered him one of the better best Robotron players they had ever seen.

There were other heavyweights such as Tad Perry, Gary Hatt, Robert Mruczek, Les Lagier, and more.

Under the right circumstances, I believe any one of the gamers mentioned in this article could have risen to the occasion and distinguished themselves as worthy candidates to be recognized as the G.O.A.T. What do you think? 



**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.

# Hyperkin Supa RetroN HD

By Brad Feingold

**When the Old School Arcade Magazine started, I was brought in to review products available to the consumer. I was able to review a reboot of the Nintendo Entertainment System and was extremely pleased with the product from another distributor. You can imagine my excitement when I was at the 2018 CES in Las Vegas and got a first look at the newest products from Hyperkin.**

Like any other company there, they did everything to impress with their newest addition to their library with the SupaRetroN HD. This Super Nintendo reboot has added a whole new set of options to give the audience what they want when playing... variety, while at the same time not changing it enough to ruin the retro experience.

Size matters not - Opening the box reveals a system that is just a tad bigger than the latest SNES emulator machine released by Nintendo, yet smaller than the original system. One benefit to the Hyperkin line is that the sizes of their machines may seem too small, but in the end, it's beneficial because not too many people have extra room on their bookshelf or entertainment stand. We'll blame Sony and Microsoft for that little hic-up. The system is noticeably lighter than the original system. Included with the system are two standard sized controllers, HDMI cable, USB power source and the standard AV cable option.

Games - The one important point to mention about the SupaRetroN HD is it is not an emulator system. This system is nearly identical the original SNES system. The challenge to building the library of games, is finding them. However, lately, there has been an explosion of retro madness that makes everyone want the games. So they seem to be more readily available from local gaming stores and through the online marketplace.

Take Control - The original controller released with the SNES was nice because, unlike the original NES controller, there were additional buttons and they were also spread out a little more. But the main issue

with the controller was the fact that it was sometimes difficult to hold. The back was a basic flat layer. However, with the SupaRetroN HD, it makes game handling significantly more comfortable. Each side of the back of the controller is raised a little to give each middle and ring finger better rest when playing through those control gripping games. Play Super Mario World and you will understand.

Play with options - This is the first system that I am happy with the variety of video output options. Just like the original SNES systems, you are able to plug in the traditional left and right audio and the video with the original three RCA A/V cables (composite). This is great when you are dealing with the older non-HD televisions, if you haven't had a chance to upgrade yet or want a vintage experience on an older CRT television. But the HDMI output option was just that sweet ingredient needed to make things even better, allowing you to play these old games at an upgraded 720p resolution. Even though the standard aspect ratio on a new television 16:9, users can still play on that tv with a 4:3 aspect ratio utilizing a switch on the back of the unit that gives you that option. The question is, do you want to experience the games as originally intended OR extend it. It sure does make the world of Hyrule a lot bigger.

The only downside to the upgraded output to HD with the classic titles is how the games are visually presented. While they do really look cool either way, you really can tell the difference between the two screen sizes. I did notice that not only were the characters stretched when playing Robotron and NBA Jam, I also noticed that when playing in 16:9 ratio, some of the graphics are pixelated more than if you were playing 4:3. The thing to remember is that these games were intended to be played on a TV with a 4:3 aspect ratio. This is to be expected when changing/stretching the screen size. This is not a complaint, just more of an observation. But note, this is why when vintage titles like Pacman and Dig Dug were released for the Playstation 4, they kept the ratio at 4:3 and simply placed a border around the gameplay area. It's really a matter of choice. When playing certain games, I prefer the 4:3 ratio, however if I'm




playing Zelda or Super High Impact, I will switch over to 16:9

.Just listen- The audio from the gaming consoles back then were not award winning quality, with the exception of Donkey Kong Country and a few others. However, bringing the audio through HDMI keeps the sound effects and music true to the form. I even compared it to YouTube videos of the original gameplay, and it was very much the same audio quality. There is nothing better than keeping vintage gaming true to form. The composite (RCA) video output was also exactly the same with regards to comparing to the original SNES.

But I travel overseas - Not a problem at all. For those who are fortunate to travel abroad, yet want to take their vintage gaming with them, the region option, something not on any original system, is available. Turn the system over and there is a NTSC/PAL switch option. When I was at the CES, I did hear someone asking why the systems don't support the option and was very pleased to hear that option is now available.

The best part about having the NTSC/PAL option when traveling anywhere is you can easily connect the unit via USB for power. The majority of TVs that are in overseas hotels should have a USB input, and if not, a standard power adapter with a USB plug will suffice. It really helps with reducing the amount of cables and plugs you need to travel with, which is always a welcome change.

The SupaRetroN HD is another great addition to your video game collection. Especially if you don't happen to have the original SNES system or the SNES Classic emulator system. And the best part is, you won't have to spend an arm and a leg to own the system. The SNES was originally sold for around the \$150 mark. And as of today, the value of the original systems are around \$100. The SupaRETRON HD will be sold at the \$70 range. Well worth the purchase! 



# LET'S BRING BACK THE MAGIC



Today with most entertainment products being quite isolating, this Atari Pong Table is an embodiment of turning back the time and bringing back the personal side of games.

## Real Life Pong is the Best Possible Game

Developed as a tribute to the Generation X and it's most iconic game, this table brings together the high-tech mechanical engineering of today and everyone's beloved game from the 80's.



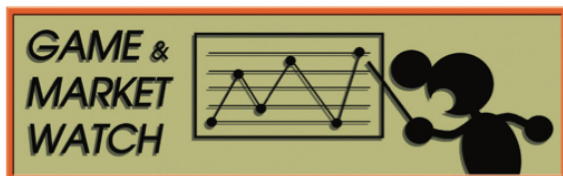
## Coming Soon

Taking email inquiries for those interested  
[Pong@PinballSales.com](mailto:Pong@PinballSales.com)



# Game and Market Watch

By Dan Loosen



**In the last article that I wrote, I discussed the importance that the role of story can have when collecting games - good stories make interesting items more desirable, thus raising their prices, while rare items that are relatively unknown tend to be forgotten about... unless a story comes along.**

I personally believe that the role that story plays is perhaps the most critically important part to collectors. I know that it is to me. I value the games that I received as a kid. I remember playing my copy of Donkey Kong Country on the SNES with Gary - who I have run the GOAT Store with for 18 years - the year it came out on New Years Eve well into the new year.

Although, sadly, I have little time to replay Donkey Kong Country today, and being older I have little interest in trying to stay up all night to do so, seeing the cartridge on the shelf reminds me of those times.

Of course, there are other reasons to collect too. I started collecting all of the original Playstation "longbox" games because I enjoyed the thrill of the hunt when I was out and about, and it was fun to see if I could get the whole set.

But even with items like this, the story - the memory of going into a game store and discovering a new game, the times that managers who knew what I was looking for would call me because someone just sold them a handful of the games, and so on... That is a big part of the reason that I really enjoy those games.

If you read my last article, you may be asking yourself what this all has to do with the Virtual Console, and its effects on the retro game market, since that's what I said that I was going to talk about. The answer, I believe, is everything.

After the Virtual Console was announced but before it came out in [year], as usual I was helping to organize the Midwest Gaming Classic. Every year that I host the show, I tend to have one memory stick out above all the others for me, and for this year the memory that is seared into my brain is walking into the vendor hall on Friday during set up to discover someone who had randomly walked in.

Before we had become a larger show, this was not an uncommon occurrence, as we didn't have enough personnel to check people in, set up the various events that we ran, set up the GOAT Store who was also a vendor, talk with the hotel personnel and keep track of everything, so every now and then a well-intentioned person would sneak past us to try to get a glimpse of what we would be doing the next day. Usually, this would result in someone from our team walking up to them and nicely explaining that we were setting up and really couldn't have people around right now, which resulted in a huge apology, a couple quick glances around to take it in, and the person thanking us and exiting.

I wouldn't have remembered it if that was what happened though. I remembered the experience because this was someone who was filming and offering his own commentary as he did, something that is common today but back in [year] was not. Since all of these people had always been nice, I walked up behind him and let him film for a minute while listening, figuring I would nicely ask him to go when he stopped for a moment.

What he was saying is why I have the memory so well. It was something very close to this...

"And here you see all of the vendors at the show this year. It feels like a funeral in here. Nintendo has announced the Virtual Console, which means that all of the vendors in here are obsolete, and they know it. Why would you need to pay them inflated prices for games when you can just download it from Nintendo instead and play it on one system? You can see these vendors know that, and are hoping for one last good show of sales before they are no longer necessary."

At about that point, I had heard enough, lightly tapping the gentleman on the shoulder, and explained that we could only have people in the hall who were setting up and asking him to leave. For his part, he was absolutely as nice as can be about it, apologizing about his misunderstanding, telling me he was really excited for the show tomorrow, and then leaving.

His words stuck with me though. I, of course, had heard about the Virtual Console coming out, but had never considered how it would impact the GOAT Store in the way

of sales or interest. I had always just sort of figured that sales would go on the exact same as they always had, following a relatively predictable path... but now I wondered, could he be right?

Before I go on, I just want to address one other point that I'm going to skip over but is worth it's own article down the road. I am a firm believer that vendors do not cause game prices to be "over-inflated", although I understand why that belief persists. Instead, I actually believe that vendors help to create a much more stable price for our collections, which benefits everyone. But more on that some other time...

Anyway, back to the topic at hand - What would this Virtual Console do to our business? Was I going to be stuck with tens of thousands of dollars worth of games that were now worthless?

By the end of the weekend, after having seen people at the show purchasing items knowing the Virtual Console would be here soon, I had formulated what I felt like was a fair prediction on what would happen:

- The Virtual Console would affect titles that were already popular - like Super Mario Bros 3 or Donkey Kong Country - little if anything, causing their prices potentially to go down slightly.
- The Virtual Console would affect titles that were relatively unknown or underappreciated - like basically the whole Turbogرافix library - more significantly, causing their prices to rise.
- Games with special packaging - like Earthbound - would rise significantly.
- Games that were not available on the Virtual Console would be relatively unaffected by it.

With the benefit of hindsight, let's examine what I was right and wrong about!

## ALREADY POPULAR GAMES

My first assumption seems to have turned out pretty well. When the Virtual Console came out, we were selling new copies of Super Mario Bros 3 and Donkey Kong Country for the exact same price that we sell them for today, and they were selling in about the same quantities that they do today.

My belief about this is that these games have huge quantities in their original format, and are the most known to casual gamers. We

have sold many a console to someone who wanted one or two games to play and that was it. Those games are almost always the games that were the biggest hits of their day - Super Mario Bros, Zelda, Sonic and Donkey Kong Country just to name a few - did not have any issue selling millions before.

In this case, the Virtual Console helps to add stability to the marketplace. If you don't want to buy a console just to play one or two games, you can get them on the other console that you already own for cheaper than that. The people who want to casually play these games have a perfect option for them. This has held demand for the physical copies in nearly the same spot for the past ten years, as if prices doubled you could play the game for far less Virtually.

### LESSER PRODUCED AND RELATIVELY UNKNOWN GAMES

This assumption also seems to have been accurate. When a new Virtual Console release comes out for a game that was more difficult to obtain, the price for the physical copies of those games has risen, often substantially.

Perhaps I'm mistitling this section by calling it relatively unknown, as a lot of games in this category were known, just simply not as mass produced as others. Super Metroid and the Final Fantasy series falls into this category to me, for instance.

Making these games available on the Virtual Console helped to ignite interest in them from people who may have forgotten about them or never heard of them to begin with. While seemingly every gamer has taken Mario or Sonic for a spin once in a while, there were a lot of us who had heard of Metroid, but maybe only played one of the games in the series. [Full disclosure: I am one of them, having never experienced Super Metroid until recently.]

By putting these titles on the Virtual Console, not just is it more accessible to try them out, but it's more likely you will see media reviews, hear a Podcast talking about it, or other things that get you interested in it. In this case, my belief is that demand from those who don't enjoy the Virtual Console experience goes up, as does demand from those who play the game, really enjoy it, and want to have a physical copy of their new discovery.

This seems to have worked out just like that. Demand for these games has increased, often significantly, from their pre-Virtual Console days.

### GAMES WITH SPECIAL PACKAGING

Even before the Virtual Console came out, I was struck with the fact that games with unique packaging would have a huge demand spike if they saw Virtual Console release. My thought was specifically about Earthbound,

a game I have been a huge fan of since I first discovered it at a rental store in [year of release], but had never seemed to attract that much attention in the US before.

And before anyone says that it has always been so in demand, I have vivid memories of buying loose copies from a local game store at \$5.99 apiece and selling them through the GOAT Store at \$9.99 before people rediscovered it... and those titles would sit. By the time of its same release on the Virtual Console, the price of the game had gone up, but the real spike was after it was released.

Since there has been a ton of articles written about Earthbound, I'll simply say that I thought that a game with an oversized box, scratch and sniff cards, and a Nintendo Power-sized magazine instruction manual would be something unique that you couldn't buy through a Virtual Console ever. I feel like current pricing bears that out.

### GAMES THAT WEREN'T RELEASED

This one I totally got wrong. Just totally and completely wrong.

First, there was some expectation that every game that was ever released for each system would come out before Nintendo actually started releasing their Virtual Console games. I thought this was a silly hope, as things like licensing would be very difficult to overcome, and for a football game that was worth maybe a dollar before the Virtual Console, there was no way that it would make sense to try to relicense it all.

Additionally, we had tried to secure the rights to a relatively unknown Atari 2600 game by this time to create a sequel for it, and we spent hours contacting people trying to negotiate an offer for an official sequel to it, and absolutely no one knew who might have the rights to it any more. Of course, since the 2600 companies were much more aware of who was creating software for them (in large part because it was licensed for the console by those companies), but the ownership line would have been difficult to figure out. A publisher might close shop without selling their rights to someone else, and no one knows what happened to them, and no one even knows who is responsible for those rights.

Then, what about a company who was no longer working for the original company? Rare by this point was making games for Microsoft, would they really want Nintendo re-releasing their library?

Today, it seems like this licensing issue is by far the largest issue that the Virtual Console ran into. When you have so many different parties, and while the cost to put a game on the Virtual Console might be low, the potential returns would also be quite low for a lot of these games, and it would stop people

from creating them.

I expected these games would sit in relative obscurity, and their prices wouldn't be affected much if at all. It turns out, since the Virtual Console, it has rekindled an interest in all of these items that has helped give significant rise to their prices almost across the board.

I do believe that the Virtual Console is largely behind the resurgence of interest in retro gaming that we seem to have experienced over the past 10 or so years. Gamers are discovering the wealth of great games that are available for these systems, and then learning more about those systems, and driving the demand for them up as they discover games that haven't been put on the Virtual Console that look like they are worth trying, creating a story of discovery for items sort of like Indiana Jones discovering a lost artifact. Those of us with nostalgic memories hold onto the games that we love with the story in place. And the combination causes demand to rise.


Another reason that I think the Virtual Console is largely behind these price rises is that we have not seen similar rises from consoles that aren't yet involved in the Virtual Console.

Atari 2600 games since the release of the Virtual Console have stayed almost exactly flat in pricing, and their demand has dropped significantly. We sell less than half of the quantity of 2600 games today that we did ten years ago, even though we have significantly expanded our options and lowered prices. Early consoles before what the Virtual Console covers have all been like this - Odyssey 2, Intellivision, Colecovision and the Atari 5200 - have all fallen in demand (and pricing!) since the release of the Virtual Console.

Some might say that those systems are just older, and therefore the demand simply isn't as high, but the similarly the Dreamcast has seen little demand increase beyond a few key titles in the past 10 years. On the other hand, the N64 has started a resurgence in the past five years in particular.

### IN CONCLUSION

So am I right about the Virtual Console driving a lot of this? I'm not willing to say that it is a definitive thing, as a lot of other factors such as the rise of Youtube, internet content, gaming conventions, more access to purchasing games online, and many other factors definitely played a role in it... but personally, I think that the Virtual Console played a hugely critical role to the modern resurgence of retro gaming, even if it never became what we expected from Nintendo's first announcements.

That's it for today! 

# Atari 2600 Arcade Companion

BOOK REVIEW


by Old School Gamer



**The Unauthorized Atari 2600 Arcade Companion Volume 1 by Michael D. Saltzman is a book that you wouldn't find ever in a local bookstore. But in the world where you can publish a book to go out to potentially only hundreds of readers. This is a book that could have existed back in the day (or in the Ferg as one of my favorite podcasts calls it).**

Using the late release Rampage as an example it talks about it's debut in the arcades and it's development by Bally Midway in 1986, and its conversion by Activision in 1989. It also makes mention of how Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson is currently in production on a new movie based on the game. It covers the storyline of the game and moves into differences between the two games, arcade and home.

More detail on each game covers scoring, extra players, strategy and more. Overall analysis comes at the end of it and in the case of this game compliments the programmers on working with so little power on 2600 and still being able to reflect the original arcade game.

Cool good to read through in 5 quick chill sessions of reading, and a welcome addition to my video game library. I'm looking forward to checking out his other books covering sports titles and his Street Fighter tied in memories. 

[Amazon.com/author/mikesaltzman](https://www.amazon.com/author/mikesaltzman)

## RaspiBoy

BY BRAD FEINGOLD

**Flying at 30000 feet and I am bored. My laptop won't fit in my lap and my PSP Vita died. And I can't surf. I can only type on my iPad. Whee.... Ryan is sitting next to me as we are heading to Las Vegas to the 2018 CES and he was reading and gave me something to do. He handed me one of the the latest in handheld projects, the Raspi-boy.**




The emulator software that is installed onto the unit is also extremely smooth. It allows you to scroll

through the various gaming machines. And when you get through to the desired system, you are able to scroll down the list of games that you put on the system. If you have an oversized list of games, you can use the top left or right button on the unit to page up or down. (Note: All games tested are rightfully owned by us for the testing. Old School Gamer Magazine does not condone illegal downloading. Any questions or information needed about obtaining files is available on the Internet). Loading the games is even slicker. By putting the games on a thumb drive in the respected folder, all you do is attach to one of the USB ports on the top and you are connected and it automatically loads the games into the respected system folders. Way easier than dragging and dropping through the folders in the system.

This was originally a Kickstarter project which I am seriously kicking myself for not getting on board. And normally I am all over the home projects. Retro gaming is turning into an out of control virus that gamers want if they don't have it. More and more handheld and home systems are being created and becoming more and more impressive.

The RaspiBoy is NO exception. This is how the systems should be made. Some of the minor complaints about the unit is the fact that even though the Mame portion does work, it just seemed a little slow on certain games. It is best not to play anything newer than the SNES generation.. The speaker seemed a little flimsy I thought and wish there was a better cover for it. And as slick as black is for the unit, I was wishing that there was some sort of design to represent that it was a retro unit. But if you think these are a deal breaker, think again. As of now, this is the best handheld unit I have played and was way cheaper than my PS Vita. This is a must buy for Retro game lovers!!!!

There are two versions of the unit available. There is an already completed version for those who don't know what they are doing or have no business holding a soldering iron, like me. And there is a version that is a kit to let the home brew enthusiasts have a go at it. I will be purchasing the kit and writing a blog and possible video blog about the process of assembly. I can't wait! 911 is on my speed dial and I am ready to go! 

When handed to me, the first thing I said is, "This is a Super Nintendo controller." Yeah, that's for dang sure. The screen is a small but just the right size and the brains of the unit is a Pi Zero. The progress of modern technology is just incredible these days. Soon we will have digital watches that we can make phone calls with and control our music and....oh wait, we already do. But back to the RaspiBoy. There are several units that I have played in the past that have more of either a PlayStation Vita or a Game Boy Advance feel to the controls. But the way that this was created was just sheer brilliance. It is the entire SNES controller to the exact feel and the screen is elevated enough that it doesn't interfere with the controls.

On the left side is a volume control and head phone plug. In addition to that is an HDMI output and a mini HDMI for the power supply. When playing this, unfortunately, the audio is not that loud, so in order to get the full effect of the game, the best thing to do is wear headphones. Check! I had a pair with me.

On the top of the unit is two USB ports that can be used to plug in external controllers so you can play Mortal Kombat with friends. The HDMI on the side helps with being able to export the image to a larger screen. But I will be honest, when playing the SNES and certain arcade games, I just couldn't see it in my heart to set the controller down. The fact that it is a little slanted from the screen makes it even more enjoyable to play.

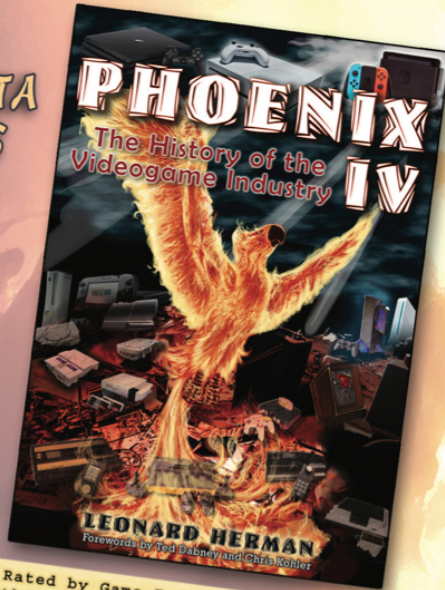
On the back, is the power switch which feels a little weird when playing sometimes. When I was playing the games, I felt my finger bumping into the switch one too many times. Extreme minor yet unimportant flaw. Also located on the back is the standard monitor controls. Very easy to get to and operate.

Turning it on was really funny. It plays a little video with sparkling graphics and the noise of the PlayStation boot up screen. Nice little nod to the classics.

[Raspi-Boy.Com](https://www.Raspi-Boy.Com)

# The Second Best videogame book of all time, just got better!

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 MICHAEL THOMPSON  
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 Foreword by Keith "Mr. Intellivision" Robinson

# Retro City Festival in SoCal

By Old School Gamer Staff

**Sunny Southern California is the scene, specifically Pomona, CA, which seems to be the home of so many great things for the retro gaming community: Hyperkin, RetroBit, and the Retro City Festival. This event in mid-January (moving to the first weekend of January in 2019) is built by gamers for gamers, no doubt about it. This first-time event (produced by people previously involved in other Southern California events), was an absolutely fantastic event and welcomed Old School Gamer Magazine with open arms!**

Special guests at the event included Daniel Pesina, John Parrish, Anthony Marquez and Elizabeth Malecki, known better for their characters in Mortal Kombat (Scorpion, Johnny Cage, Jax, Kung Lao and Sonya Blade). There was an additional guest appearance that we brought along from Old School Gamer - Billy Mitchell! Everyone involved with this event, including the special guests, were warm and approachable, making this a truly great event. The vendors were widespread from pixel art (and other original art) to a dozen or so different retro gaming stores that

were well stocked, a competitive gaming school right next to us, and plenty more. This is a show that you need to spend at least spend a day at to do everything you need to do.

"Retro City Festival is a social interactive show that brings together the video gaming community and welcomes newcomers. California has a large retro gaming community, and it was them who put together Retro City Fest by contributing their collection of arcades, pinball, and historical artifacts to share with the attendees with the purpose to educating any new generation that wishes to learn about the history of video gaming" - Steven Torres, Founder and Chief Strategist, Retro City Festival.

As part of the over 40,000 square foot convention floor (expanding next year) was about half dedicated to exhibitors and the other half comprised of the arcade, console playing stations, and competitive gaming stage. Outside the event we were served by food trucks and an entertainment stage. This whole event takes place on the grounds of the LA County Fairgrounds known as the Fairplex.

Old School Gamer will be back next year - See you all there!

[www.retrocityfestival.com](http://www.retrocityfestival.com)



Billy Mitchell at the OSG booth, and some pictures of the Retro City Festival



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# Q\*Bert's Dad, Warren Davis

## AND HIS START IN THE VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY

By Warren Davis

**P**eople often ask me what they have to do to get a job making video games. If you asked me that today, I'd tell you I haven't the faintest idea because the industry has changed so much from when I started. Ironically, when I was a young programmer just out of college, I was asking that same question, only it was more out of idle curiosity since I didn't believe it could ever happen to me.

Video games were pretty new then. I can still remember them bringing the first video game into the game room of my student union. The year was 1973, my freshman year in college, and I was studying computer engineering. That first game was Computer Space. It was followed fairly rapidly by a succession of crude black and white "blip" games (as I call them because the graphics all looked like white blips on a black screen). Pong, Breakout, Tank and more. Crude as hell but we'd never seen anything like them before and people threw quarters into them like crazy. But to actually make one of these

games? The earliest ones didn't even have CPUs - they were hard-wired! And I didn't know the first thing about electronics as a freshman.

Still, I'd always loved the idea of using computers to make games. I'd been lucky enough to have a computer at my high school, which was pretty rare at that time. This computer, a Monrobot XI made by Monroe Business Machines, looked like an L-shaped desk with a typewriter. (It also had the dubious distinction of being featured in an episode of I Dream Of Jeannie, but that's a whole other story.) The typewriter was how you communicated with the computer. I was fascinated by this. A typewriter that typed back at you, seemingly of its own mind. The first program I wrote prompted the user to enter information, then ridiculed their response with wisecracks and insults. I also wrote a Mad Libs program. It asked you for what it needed (noun, verb, proper name, etc.) , then inserted your choices and printed out the story. I was hooked on the entertainment value of computers.

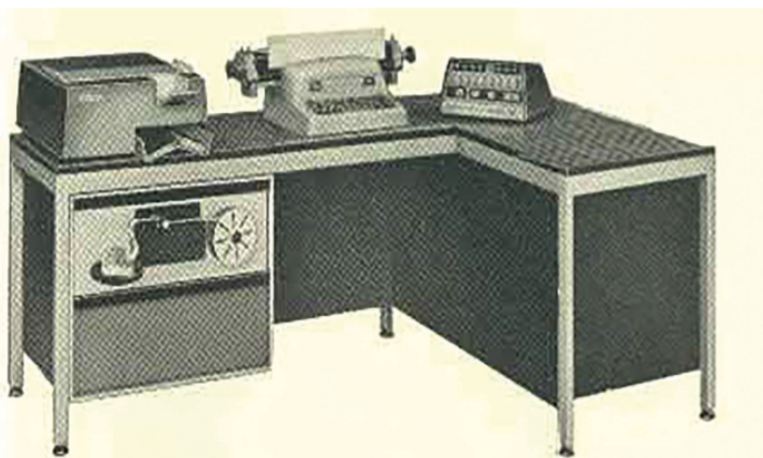
But video games? It was the "video" part that mystified me. I knew nothing about the process of drawing images on

a monitor. Eventually, I learned a bit about electronics, but by my junior year, video games all had CPUs and ran from software. And while I knew how to program, I lived in a world where students had to type their programs into machines called key-punches which would encode a single line of code on a physical card a tad smaller than a legal envelope. We'd carry decks of those punched cards (which could get damn heavy!) to a computer center, drop them off and pick up a printout with the results the next day. There were no PCs - no CRTS for that matter. Some mainframe and mid-size computers had CRT displays, but the introduction of networked CRT terminals available for general use didn't happen until I was leaving college. Basically I was "video-ignorant".

That didn't stop me from using computers for games. Once, I had to do a software project of my choosing, so I wrote a Gin Rummy program in Fortran on punchcards. I made 52 punchcards to represent a deck of playing cards, which I physically shuffled and stuck on the back of my program and it simulated a 2 player game, printing out the results. I found that extraordinarily exciting, I'm embarrassed to say.

So while somewhere in my brain it occurred to me that, yes, there are people out there making these video games - people who are computer programmers like me - it never occurred to me that I could be one of those people because I didn't have the slightest idea how to do it, or know who was doing it, and the guys who were doing it must be geniuses who earned the right to have such an amazingly fun job through years of brilliance and proving themselves worthy, right? So I thought.

I eventually got my Bachelor's Degree in Computer and Systems Engineering and my Master's Degree in Electrical Engineering, but even with an advanced degree, I still never thought I'd be able to get paid to write games for a living. It seemed like an opportunity reserved for a special few, and I was certainly not special.



Monrobot XI computer by Monroe Business Machines



I spent a couple of years working for Bell Laboratories testing new software for operator systems. (For you youngsters, operators were people you could call by dialing "0" on your phone. Look it up on Wikipedia.) For a variety of reasons, I decided to leave that job in August of 1981.

Here's where it gets a little unusual, I suppose. Not only did I quit my job, I also made the decision to quit engineering. In some way, I felt I didn't fit in to the button down engineering culture. I decided to become... an actor! Some backstory: I was introduced to acting in college by a good friend. I had no real interest in it, but he dragged me to an audition and I got cast. There wasn't even a theatre department at my school, just a club. But after my first show, I was hooked. Didn't matter that I had no training (or some might argue, skill). Standing up there for a curtain call was a rush that could only be described as comparable to the high of whatever recreational drug you might fancy.

My Bell Labs job had me traveling to places for months at a time. So as I settled in to a city, I would find a local community theatre and get involved, usually performing in a local production before I was yanked back to suburban Illinois. I even did some productions while I was living in Naperville. I would also go into Chicago on weekends and became very taken with one place I discovered that was like nothing I'd ever seen before... the Second City Theatre. There I discovered the art form known as Improvisation. I watched these ballers in awe, enjoying the sheer ballsiness of what they did, while at the same time thinking... I could do that.

So in 1981, as I quit my well-paying engineering job at Bell Labs, I made the choice to leave engineering entirely. I had convinced myself that I was not really like those engineering types. I related to theater people more. I moved into Chicago... a good move for me, as I'm a city boy, and the suburbs always felt just a bit out of my wheelhouse... and promptly went to the Second City Theatre and asked where I could go to learn Improv. They directed me to the Players Workshop of Second City, run by improv legend Josephine Forsberg. I enrolled in classes immediately.

The program was a year long. I had some money I'd saved up from my Bell

Labs job and I knew I could live off of it for a while, but not forever. As I began to live the life of an unemployed, untrained and possibly untalented actor, it occurred to me I should probably get a job. Over the next few months I went through a succession of low paying, yet flexible jobs that really didn't require much skill.

The first was with Encyclopedia Britannica. I was hired because of my smooth phone voice. (Those years of doing college radio apparently paid off.) I was assured that this was not a sales job, which was great because I couldn't think of anything I'd like to do less than call up strangers and try to make them buy an encyclopedia. But within a few days, they decided they liked my phone presence so much they would promote me... to sales! I reminded them I only took the job because there was no selling involved, but they told me how much money I could make. Why, sell one set of encyclopedias a month and I'm rolling in dough! I tried it for two days, then quit.

There were other similarly pitiful jobs that didn't work out. And so it was that as winter came upon Chicago, I found myself sneakily looking at the want ads in the Sunday paper for engineering jobs. I felt dirty doing it, as I told myself I had left engineering for good, but hey, I was only looking. I didn't have to act on anything. And who knows, maybe there'll be something interesting. In my wildest dreams, I never expected to see what I saw one particular Sunday right after Christmas.

The ad said "Hardware/Software Engineers" in bold letters followed by "Electronic amusement game manufacturer ... requires ... Engineers to expand our Video Entertainment engineering staff." I must have done a double take. It went on, "If you are up to the challenge of designing video games, please send... resume... to Video Mania c/o D Gottlieb & Co." That couldn't be right. Any schmoe off the street could apply to be a video game creator? I thought about it a long time. On the one hand, I always thought making video games would be a dream job. On the other hand, it could be like going back to an "engineering" environment. But on the first hand again, it could be a creative outlet, much like I was finding improv to be. On

Chicago Tribune Dec. 27, 1981

Engineer

**HARDWARE/SOFTWARE ENGINEERS**

Electronic amusement game manufacturer in west suburban location requires Microprocessor Hardware/Software Engineers to expand our Video Entertainment engineering staff. Specialists with strong interest and experience in video games and real-time interactive graphics are needed.

If you are up to the challenge of designing video games, please send letter and/or resume detailing your skills and experience to:

**VIDEO MANIA c/o**

*D. Gottlieb & Co.*

A Columbia Pictures Industries Company

759 Industrial Drive  
Bensenville, IL 60106

An Equal Opportunity Employer M/F

The initial ad that Warren Davis answered

that other hand though, I wouldn't have as much time to study and perform. Back on hand number one, I'd be making a full time salary again. And yet on the other hand, it'd be a long commute out to the suburbs. And so it went.

I finally decided to answer the ad. After all, they might be deluged with resumes and mine might never be seriously considered. I wrote a very informal cover letter which expressed almost no real interest in the job. The subtext was basically, "Here's my resume. Whatever." I went out of my way to make it informal and un-business-like. My reasoning was that if they were looking for some button-down by-the-book engineer, they weren't a company I'd want to work for.

Within a few days - right after New Years 1982 - I got a letter back from them inviting me to come in for an interview. Yikes! Now what? So much for my resume getting ignored. I decided to set up the interview because I truly wanted to get a glimpse inside the place where dreams (well, video arcade games anyway) are made, but I told myself there was very little chance they'd want me, and even if they did I didn't have to take the job.

The interview was the first week of January. I drove out to a suburb of Chicago called Bensenville, next to O'Hare airport, to an area consisting exclusively of industrial buildings. The non-descript one I was looking for was 759 Industrial Drive. The

sign outside had a familiar logo... Gottlieb Amusement Games, makers of pinball machines that I'd played in my student union's game room. I was dressed casually - again, I didn't want to seem corporate, and if they didn't like me dressed this way, then it was back to the city and unemployment and improv class.

On the way to the front door, I passed a large round man with a gruff voice who stopped me and asked, "You here for an interview?" I answered yes and he said, "Watch out for that Waxman. He can be a real pain in the ass." I wasn't sure what to make of that so I just nodded and went inside.

The first person I met with was a middle manager named Bill Jacobs who thoroughly looked like a middle manager. Suit and tie. Not a good sign. He was very friendly and pleasant, though, and he gave me a tour. There weren't a lot of people working there at the time, and the manufacturing plant, which was by far the largest part of the building, was empty as there were no games being produced at the moment. I learned that this was basically a start-up. The main part of the company, the pinball division, was in North Lake, another suburb about 8 miles away. I met a couple of artists, who I immediately liked. They had a relaxed casual vibe that made me want to work there, and I met a few programmers, some of whom had that same vibe, but others did not. One programmer in particular started talking to me in "programmer-speak", all acronyms and technical jargon - a quality I've always despised. Sure there are times when you need to talk to a colleague in shorthand, but when you've never met someone before, I find that English works better. It's best not to assume that everyone knows the same acronyms as you.

So there were pluses and minuses. Another plus was that it was a small group, definitely casual and relaxed. But the minus was that almost no one had a private office - it was more like a bullpen. Not even cubicles. Just worktables sprinkled around a big room.

My last interview was with Ron Waxman, the VP of Engineering. This must be the infamous Waxman I'd been warned about at the door. For this interview I was ushered into the conference room. Waxman was sitting at the head of a long

table. I immediately recognized him as the man outside who'd warned me about Waxman, and I was about to learn he wasn't kidding. I sat on the other end of the table, as far from him as possible. Waxman was a very large man, exceedingly large, and I'm not referring to his height. He had short black hair and a Van Dyke beard. He also had a very gruff demeanor and when he spoke, every word screamed his apparent contempt at your existence. I wasn't nervous, though, as I still believed that walking out of here without a job was a perfectly acceptable and maybe even the desirable outcome. Our conversation went something like this:

**Waxman:** So... what makes you think you can make a video game?

**Me:** Uh, well, I don't know if I can. I've never tried before.

**Waxman:** Why'd you leave Bell Labs?

**Me:** Mostly because I was tired of travelling for months at a time to different cities, getting settled in, making friends, and then having to come back to Illinois. Also, they told me my job would include both hardware and software development, but it actually included neither. And when I had a chance to do some hardware and software development, they wouldn't let me stay on that project.

**Waxman:** Do you think you're smart?

**Me:** I don't know. I get by.

**Waxman:** Do you have a computer at home?

**Me:** No.

**Waxman:** Why not?

**Me:** Well I use them at work. I've never really needed one at home.

And so on it went. Every question seemed to have a subtext of contempt for my existence, but all my answers were calm and as honest as I could make them. I left pretty convinced he hated my guts and I was not getting this job. So it goes. Back to improv.

I was genuinely shocked when I got the offer letter a couple of days later. And yet I agonized over whether or not to accept the job! The only reason I eventually did accept it was the knowledge that I could quit any time if I thought it wasn't working out. I have to laugh at what a moron I was. Taking that job was one of the best decisions I've ever made in my life. It literally changed my life.

Still, I continued to study and perform improv for quite a while. After all, it's always good to have a backup plan. 🧑🏻‍🎤



**Warren Davis** is a classic videogame creator best known as the designer and programmer of the original Q\*bert arcade game. He also co-designed and programmed *Us Vs. Them*, an innovative laserdisc title featuring scenes with live actors interspersed with sci-fi combat gameplay composited over actual flying footage. His other titles in the arcade industry include *Joust 2* (for Williams), *Lotto Fun* (for HAR Management), *Exterminator* (for Premier Technologies), and *T2: Judgement Day* and *Revolution X* (for Williams/Bally/Midway). He was a pioneer in the use of digitized video. His WTARG system was used in many of Williams' most successful games, including *NARC*, *Hi Impact Football*, the *Mortal Kombat* and *NBA Jam* series', *T2*, *Revolution X*, and more.

In 1995, Warren moved to Los Angeles to work for Disney Interactive on a variety of home titles. For a short time, he was an Imagineer with Walt Disney Imagineering. After Disney, he worked as a senior programmer on the console game *Spyro: Enter the Dragonfly*, and programmed an edutainment title, *The Lunar Explorer*, which allows users to interactively explore any part of the moon either from space or on the ground using actual topographic data. He spent some time as an R&D Engineer at Industrial Light and Magic working on previsualization software for movies, and is currently a software consultant.

# Official Retro Gaming Magazine for the RWS

**R**etro World Series and Old School Gamer are now working together to benefit the retro gaming community. The Retro World Series was founded in 2015 by Hal Hawkins to build a competitive esports gaming competitive network for those that want to experience classic gaming at its finest. And Old School Gamer Magazine launched in 2017 by Ryan Burger has blitzed the retro community with its first 2 issues already being distributed at half a dozen retro gaming expos in its first 6 months of existence.

"Before Old School Gamer launched I was able to see the Retro World Series in action down in Texas and was excited about the professionalism and organization that I saw on the gaming floor at the expo, and knew that if my plans went forward for the magazine, this was someone I wanted to work with" says Ryan Burger Publisher of Old School Gamer.

"We're excited to partner with a magazine so dedicated to retro gaming. Our agreement is tailored to benefit retro gaming fans, so that you have access not just to retro gaming competition, but to

learn about retro gaming's past and future."

Old School Gamer will be promoting RWS appearances, highlighting its competitions and more and RWS will be spreading the word about its official retro gaming magazine partner, Old School Gamer. Look for more news from each of them at OldSchoolGamerMagazine.Com and RetroWorldSeries.Com. 

[www.retroworldseries.com](http://www.retroworldseries.com)

## NES Oddities & The Homebrew Revolution

BOOK REVIEW

by Old School Gamer

**T**he original NES (Nintendo Entertainment System), or Famicom in Japan, is one of the most popular gaming system ever made, and, as a result, is the most written about console system. There are dozens of books about the system, it's games, it's re-release as a Mini unit, and more! But none of them that I have ever read has covered the "oddities", as Jeffrey Wittenhagen has called them, and he has covered them very well in his new book that was "Kickstarted" in 2017 (and available now to the general public.

This book is a follow up to his "The Complete NES: Officially Licensed US Releases", which was published in the same manner in 2015. That book covered all of the games that most people are familiar with, including the rare games that were licensed but didn't sell well or were on the market for no more than a couple weeks (in at least one instance).


Thus this book was a perfect follow-up to cover the remainder of all things NES. While the games covered in the first section, Unlicensed Games, mostly didn't sell well (with the exception of the Tengen releases during Atari's fight with Nintendo on licensing), there is some really cool stuff in there mentioned that I want to be able to play someday. As Jeffrey says, "typically these games are regarded as being poorly programmed, however as you will see as you read, not all of these games are bad." Each entry in this section (as well as the PAL, International Unlicensed and Japanese exclusive release sections), has details regarding the year, developer, and publisher, as well as a nice box shot photograph and a screen shot of the actual gameplay. A total of 90 games are chronicled in this way.

The PAL, International Unlicensed, and Japanese release sections are is very similar in nature, but the games are were ones not released in the USA, with 45 releases in the PAL-only areas and 66 in Japan. The International Unlicensed Exclusives includes titles between the three publishers that were located in Australia, Spain and Taiwan.

There are also excellent sections containing Nintendo "Holy Grails", such as competition cartridges, store displays, and more! He also covers variant boxes/cartridges, the Nintendo Vs. and Playchoice arcade systems, Famicom highlights and others. The detail in this book is absolutely fantastic!

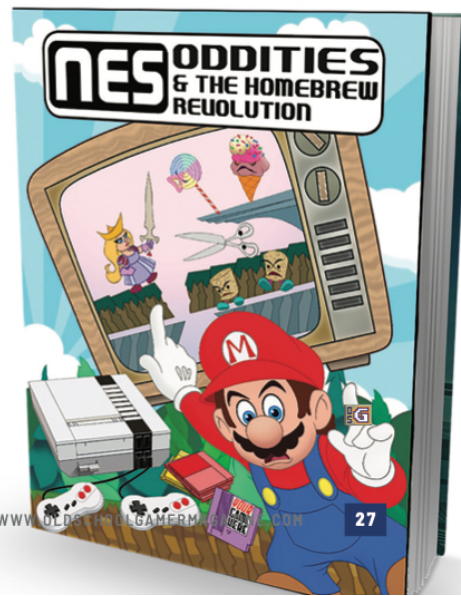
The last third of the book goes into the Homebrew Revolution, starting out with some great editorial and history of the

Homebrew market and explains why the NES is still the top place for programmers working on exciting releases (especially on a 30 year old system)! They give these games the same treatment as the earlier ones in the book, with a full description, pictures, and details. Must read sections for me include : Armed for Battle, Beerslinger (because of its improvement on the Tapper genre), Leisure Suit Larry (played back in the DOS days), and Quadralords (fan of Warlords).

Check out more information on this beautifully-printed and -bound book at [www.hagensAlley.com](http://www.hagensAlley.com). 

[www.hagensalley.com](http://www.hagensalley.com)

REVIEW



# 30 Years of Arcade Auctions in Iowa

By Brad Feingold

**A**s Thanksgiving ends, the Christmas holiday season chaos begins. So many different things happen; not only on the day of Thanksgiving, but the days following as well. People continue to stuff themselves with leftovers, football games are watched, ridiculously long lines form at stores for the biggest Black Friday deals, even though many of them open on Thursday these days. People hang their Christmas decorations and video games are auctioned off. Wait! What?

The pavilion at Adventureland Park in Altoona, IA is transformed from a banquet hall into a giant arcade, where hundreds of used (and sometimes new) video games and pinball machines are auctioned off starting at \$1, with some reaching thousands of dollars!

The same type of auction happens again at the same location in March. The auction at the beginning of the year is normally during the Easter weekend and that reigned in great profits. As a result, they will keep the Easter sale timeframe.

This year's auction marks the 30th Thanksgiving that Tom Rhoades, who is the owner of the Arcade Amusement Auctions (and also a traveling carnival owner and operator) has been holding these auctions. His very first auction was held at a roller skating rink and it was a great success. There were about 160 pieces auctioned off and he did the entire auction by himself.

"Everyone was so impressed," Rhoades mentioned, "and they had so much fun that they

were telling me, 'you need to do this and that' in order to have a more successful event. And we batted it around until I started it. We started to do this in September and then we had a Thanksgiving sale as well. But now we no longer do the September sales."

Individuals from around the Midwest, including business owners, home owners, and collectors are allowed to bring their old games to the pavilion to have them sold at auction. The variety of products that came through the door was incredible. This year brought in full sized arcade games, pinball machines, dart boards, ticket redemption machines, pool tables, jukeboxes, mega touch machines, bar top arcades, cocktail machines, arcade parts, a bus, truck and even a 2006 Harley Davidson. The automobiles were more of the exception; their presence was probably due to condition.


A main concern from people who buy arcade games is condition. Do the controls, monitors, power supplies, and/or PCB boards work? This really becomes a gamble, since everything that is up for auction is "as is". When the games are brought in, they do have people there who attempt to test the machines, and, if possible, fix them on the spot. But there were so many games this year that it was a challenge to keep up. There were over 650 items brought in for auction, which started at 10AM and lasted until 6:30PM!

There was such a wide variety of games that bidders had a multitude of options from which to choose. There were classic machines like Pac-Man, Dig Dug, Space Invaders, Mario Brothers, Popeye and Missile Command. There was also a wide variety of arcade classics from

the 90's and forward, such as Guitar Hero, Killer Instinct 2, Die Hard, Mortal Kombat and Hydro Thunder. Finally, there was a large contingency of newer games. One of the newest games for auction was a Golden Tee Golf 2017 machine.

The one type of machine that kept appearing at this auction more frequently through the years is the "Multicade". These can be older, modified cabinets with new joysticks and monitors, or brand new construction that can house 60-1 PCB's, or up to (and including) PC-based all-in-one game machines. The 60-1 PCB boards contain a wide range of games, such as Donkey Kong, Pac Man, Mr. Do, Frogger and Donkey Kong Jr. Depending on the type of board you purchase, you can go into the PCB jumper settings and turn off certain games. So, if there is something you know you will never play, you can remove it from the menu.

Occasionally a customer will purchase a pinball machine or video game at this auction, play it for a couple years, then eventually want to get rid of it. They can always turn to Facebook or Craigslist to try to sell their machine. But a great option is to bring it right back to the auction it came from! There is always a great audience of buyers likely looking for that particular machine.

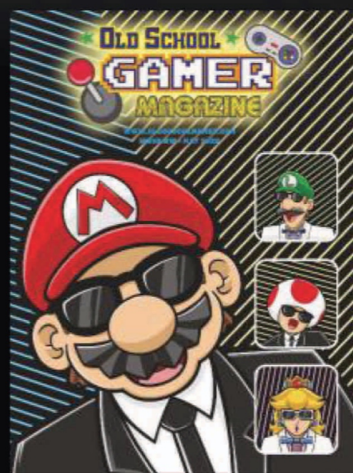
"The thing that I stress at my auctions is that the sale is never final," added Rhoades, "meaning, you might come here today, and it doesn't matter what you purchase...later, when you are tired of it, you can...bring it back. I have been here 30 years, and you are not going to be stuck with the piece. If you come this year and buy an Offroad for \$400, you can probably bring it back in four or more years and get the \$400. It's a good investment." 



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