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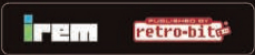


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#ClassicGameFest

A Selected History of RPGs

By Todd Friedman

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Role Playing Games

GETTING FROM HERE TO THERE

Jason Russell

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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



It could be argued that most

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

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

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

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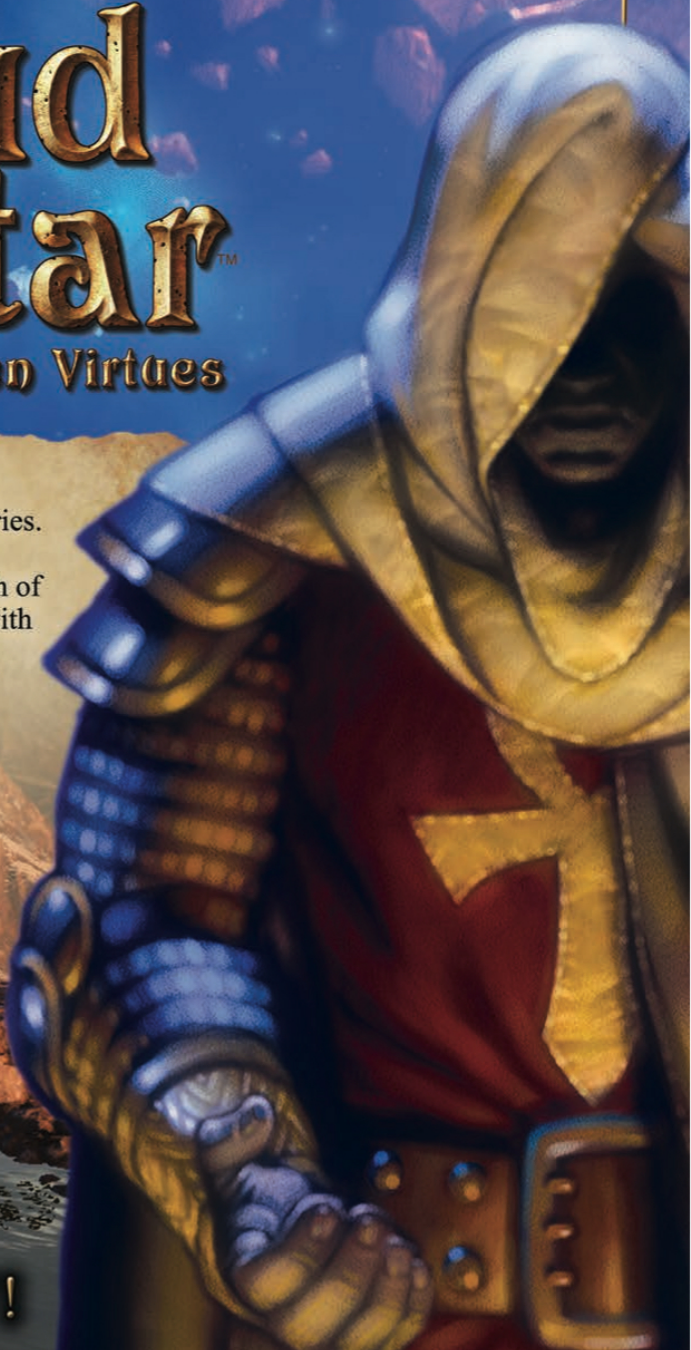
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Nox Archaist

AN UPCOMING TILE-BASED RPG FOR THE APPLE II PLATFORM

Bill Lange



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

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

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

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

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

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

The name itself, Nox Archaist, is an amalgamation of "the Roman goddess of the night" and "the use of something old". It is expected to be a dark and serious game, with hints of "The Bard's Tale"-type humor infused into the robust storyline built upon a nonlinear fantasy world covering four double-sided (eight disk sides total) 5 1/4 floppy disks for the Apple II (or disk images for Apple II emulators).

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

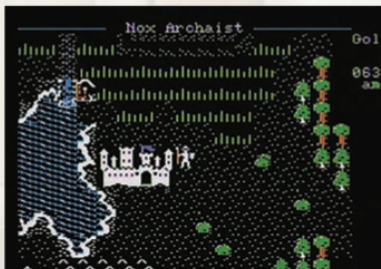
Graphically, the game will use 14x16 pixel tiles, 17x11 tiles per screen, and 256 tiles per tile set (128 static, 128x4 for tile animation). Upwards to 1000 different tiles sets will be used depending on disk space. It will also use popup windows, as needed, for inventory lists, character stats and conversation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

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

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

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

The Nox Archaist Collector's Edition is expected to ship old school with a game box, printed manual, cloth map and four double-sided 5 1/4 floppy diskettes. It may also contain other



feelies depending on which funding level is attained. For Mac and PC based Apple II emulators (AppleWin, Virtual II, etc.), the game will be a free download with additional instructions for setting up and running the game in an emulator. There may also be a copy protection scheme implemented on the physical Apple II 5 ¼ floppy disks for hackers to break as well.

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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


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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CADASH

By Michael Thomasson



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

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

NOTHING-NEW NARRATIVE

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

THE LAND OF DIZIR

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

CHARACTER COUNTS

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

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

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

EVEN THE SKELETONS BLEED!

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

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

TURBO GRAFX 16 **CADASH** **TURBO GRAFX 16** **TURBO GRAFX 16**

Arise brave warrior, your services are once again needed! Baarogue the Destroyer has kidnapped the King's daughter, Princess Sarasa, and is now bent on universal dominion! Become a powerful Fighter, a resourceful Mage, a magic-lovin' Priestess, or an agile Ninja in your quest to return peace to the once tranquil land of Dizir! Be wary on the path to your goal! Baarogue has lured it with many foes, from the re-animated Hands of Stone to the Giant Peetra-Pods of Dokra! Exist the services of a trustworthy friend to aid you, for this quest allows two brave souls to venture forth together via the TurboTap! You must succeed, for Baarogue's dark power grows by the second, and soon no soul will be able to halt his advance!

Number of players: 1 or 2
One TurboTap and optional Turbo Pickle® required for multi-player use
Special Features: Multiple characters to use, each with different spells, weapons, strengths, and weaknesses

Developer: Working Designs (1992)
NEC **NEC**

TURBO GRAFX 16 **ENTERTAINMENT SUPERSYSTEM**

KEEPING UP WITH CADASH

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

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

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

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

OSG PRO GAMING TIP:

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

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



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

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

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JULY 14

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SEPTEMBER 15-16

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



Wiz(ardry) Talk

MEMORIES OF WIZARDRY

Kevin Butler

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

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

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

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



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

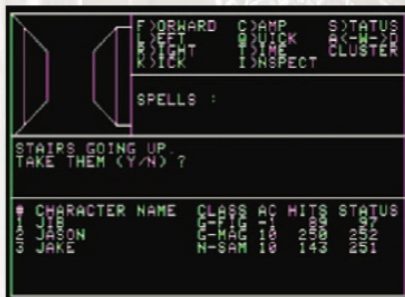
During my next attempts, I learned the system, but I still had to get through the six guardians. These guardians are the most dangerous and nasty monsters Wizardry had to offer. Needless to say, experience points flowed characters leveled steadily.

easily and

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

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

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



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

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

and choices to make.

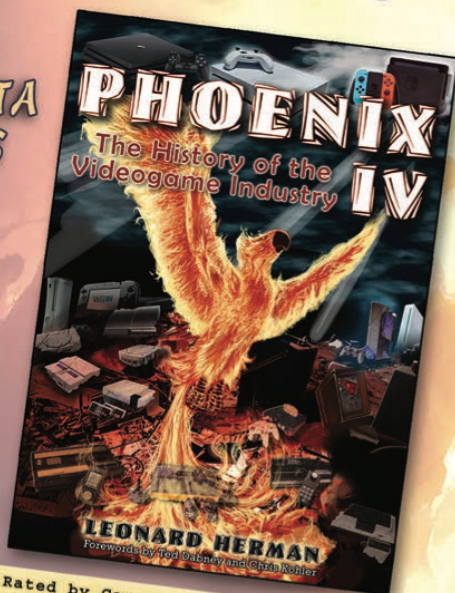
With graphics (thanks to Apple Pascal) that were cutting edge at that time, Robert Woodhead and Andrew Greenberg proved that the age of the PC had arrived and it could generate high quality graphics that could rival the big commercial systems at the time. Due to Pascal being able to manipulate the code,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



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

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Evolution of Role-Playing Games In Japan

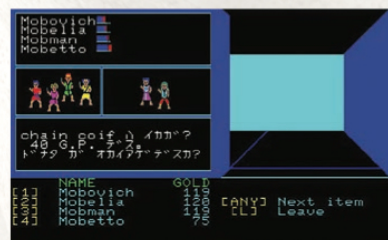
Antoine Clerc-Renaud

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

THE DARK AGES

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

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



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

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

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

A FIRST HIT COMING FROM A DUTCH

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



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

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

A FIERY DRAGON

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

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



REVISED AND UPDATED

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

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

GOLDEN AGE

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

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

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

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

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES


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

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

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

REVIVAL

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

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

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

Lord British Meetup

DAVE AND BUSTERS WITH RICHARD GARRIOTT

Bill Lange



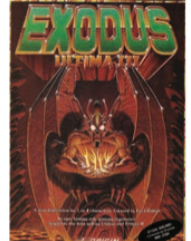
On Tuesday, April 3rd, 2018, Michael Sean Kane organized and hosted a Shroud of the Avatar Launch Review with special guest, Lord British himself, Richard Garriott. The event took place at the Dave & Buster's, a full-service restaurant and video arcade, on 42nd Street in Manhattan, NY.

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

shroudoftheavatar.com

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DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

By Brett Weiss

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

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

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

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

Gygax wrote the rules for *Chainmail* with his associate Jeff Perren, but Arneson tinkering with the game is what led to the creation of *Dungeons*

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

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

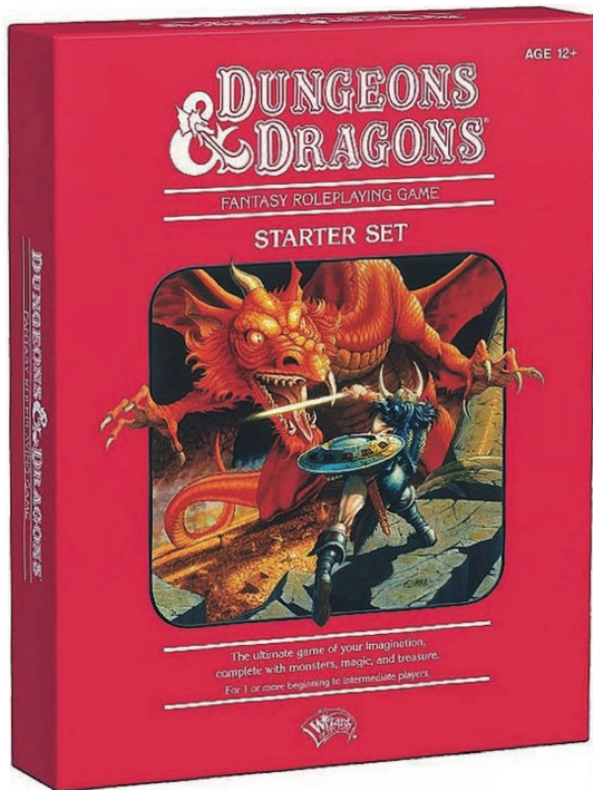
similar to that of J. R. R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, but Gygax has claimed he was inspired more by the works of Robert E. Howard, L. Sprague DeCamp, and Fritz Lieber when creating the monsters, magic, and scenarios for the game. The magic system is based on Jack Vance's 1950 fantasy classic, *The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

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

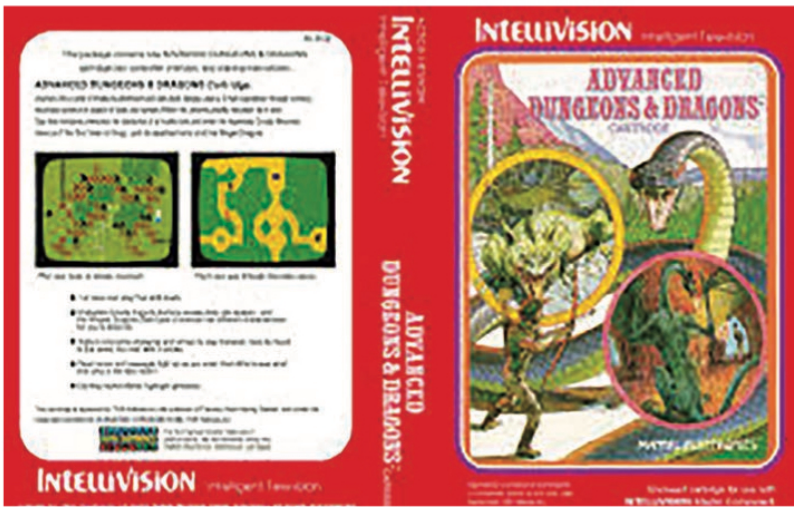
A typical D&D campaign finds a group of six or so guys (and an occasional gal or two) sitting around a table, rolling dice, drawing maps, consulting rule books, leveling up their characters, and pretending they are battling monsters and circumventing traps while on a quest for treasure in a spooky cave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

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

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



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



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

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

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

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

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


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

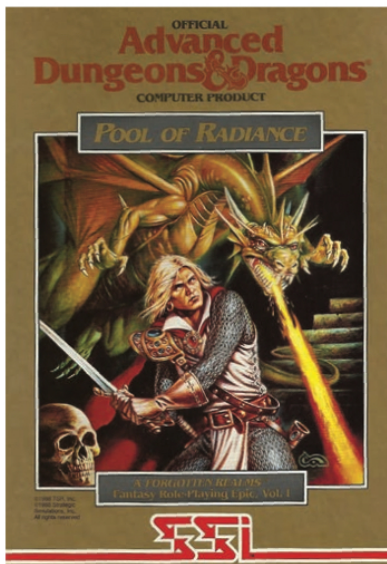
Speaking more broadly, Dustin Browder, game director at Blizzard on

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

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

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

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



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

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



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

By Walter Day

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



of the Year for 2012.

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

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



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



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A Few Minutes with Buck Steine of Retro Game Treasure

BY OLD SCHOOL GAMER

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

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

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

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

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

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


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

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

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

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

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

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

Retrogametreasure.com



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Interview with Video Games Monthly

by Jonathan Polan

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

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

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

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

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

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

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


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

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

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

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

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

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

Videogamesmonthly.com

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





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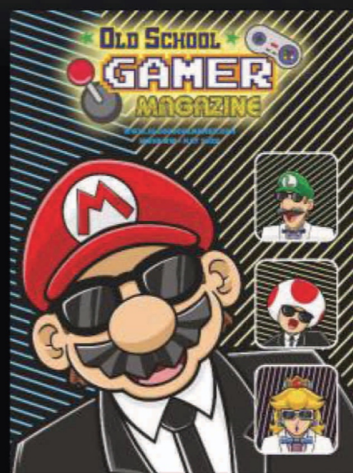
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