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ISSUE #17 • JULY 2020



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YEARS**



COIN UP.?

Roger, Houston, that's an affirmative. The suit is performing wonderfully. I can hardly tell I went... Ready to continue with pre-launch checklist, Flight Leader. ToeJam and Earl... check... StarFox... roger that... Warhawk... one moment, Houston... uh, check... Space Invaders is a go... Cobra Commander... COBRA COMMANDER? WHERE IS THAT RAT BASTARD? What? Cobra Command... It's a game? Oh... Uh, that's a go... Wild Bill Sealey is good to go... Pre-launch checklist is complete, Houston. Payload inventory is complete: Donkey Kong, and Walter Day's Trading Cards are all secure in the Payload Bay. Old School Gamer Issue 17 (Air & Space) is ready for launch. Internals are set. Ignition is in 10... nine... eight... seven... six... five... four... three... Hey, wait a minute... I forgot my lunch...

If you've got questions, I've got answers. If you've got comments, I will listen, but I reserve the right to bust out laughing any time I want. Send me what you got. I'll take it from there. My email is billd.oldschoolgamer@gmail.com.

THE SCRIBES



Bill Donohue did a 13-year stint as Managing Editor for Game Players, Ultra Game Players, and PSM magazines. He created Gazuga and The Cleansing. He caused hundreds of readers to send cheese-filled letters to Game Players. He composed the ultimate *Super Bomberman 2* anthem - (He Ain't Got) "No Boot". Crazy? Maybe...



Brian Szarek is co-editor of OSGM and enjoys repairing and refurbishing vintage home consoles and arcade games. He also enjoys collecting and playing everything from the entire Atari console line and ColecoVision to PS4 and Switch. He lives with his wife and two daughters in Cincinnati, OH.



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Patrick Hickey Jr. is the author of The Minds Behind the Games book series. The first book in the series was released in April 2018. The sequel, The Minds Behind Adventure Games, was released in Dec. 2019. Three more editions of the series are forthcoming through 2021.



Mike Mertes knew from the moment he touched an Intellivision controller that he had experienced something incredible that would shape him for the rest of his life. As a writer for www.gamerlogic.net and other media outlets, Mike enjoys articulating why games from the 8 and 16-bit console generations are some of the best of all time.



Michael Thomasson is one of the most widely respected videogame historians today. He teaches college level videogame history, design, and graphics courses. He authored *Downright Bizarre Games*, and has contributed to nearly a dozen textbooks. Michael's columns have been distributed in newspapers and magazines worldwide.



Todd Friedman is currently writing for Old School Gamer Magazine, Retro Gaming Times, and the Walter Day Trading Card Collection. He has co-promoted the Video Game Summit in Chicago, IL for the last 12 years. He is also the Chairman of the Nomination Committee for the International Video Game Hall of Fame.



Walter Day is considered by many to be the "Father of eSports." As the founder of the Twin Galaxies Scoreboard, the International Video Game Hall of Fame and the Walter Day Collection of video game trading cards, he has spent nearly 40 years of his life uplifting and honoring the achievements of the gaming world.



Eugenio Angueira has been an avid video gamer since he was introduced to the Atari 2600 back in the early 80's. He has contributed retro game and system articles to Retro Video Gamer forum (where he is also an administrator), The Retro Gaming Times, Vectorbolt Magazine, and Homebrew Heroes Magazine.



Brett Weiss is the author of 11 books, including the Classic Home Video Games series, The 100 Greatest Console Video Games: 1977-1987, The SNES Omnibus volumes 1 and 2, and The NES Omnibus Volume 1 (A-L). Find Weiss online at www.brettweisswords.com, and check out his YouTube show, Tales from a Retro Gamer.



Steve DeLuca is the warped brain behind the NES Goofy Foot controller and a founder of the Tetris World Order (tWo); Steve DeLuca contributes to the Classic Tetris World Championship (theCTWC.com), and hosts multiple CTWC Qualifying events (most notably the CTWC Desert Qualifier / Game On Expo, AZ).



Chris Charla works at Xbox where he leads the ID@Xbox program for independent developers. Back in the day he edited Next Generation magazine and was the launch editor of IGN.com, as well as spending 10 years as an independent developer. He edits the fanzine *Incredibly Strange Games*.

BLAST!



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Postmaster - Send address changes to:
OSG • 807 NE Park St • Grimes IA 50111
Postage paid at Grimes, IA and other mailing locations.

Old School Gamer Magazine
(ISSN# 2574-8078 ONLINE/2574-8068 PRINT)
is published by **BC Productions, Inc.**
807 NE Park Street • Grimes, IA 50111

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Greg Johnson: ToeJam & Earl Sega's Funky and Fantastic 'Other' Mascots

by Patrick Hickey, Jr.

Ask any casual video game fan and they'll tell you that an iconic blue hedgehog launched the Sega Genesis/Mega Drive to immortality, all by himself. But as a formidable opponent to the Super Nintendo/Famicom, more than one game played a role in the success of the Sega 16-bit console. Greg Johnson and Mark Voorsanger's *ToeJam & Earl* can not only take some of the credit for Sega's thriving in the 16-bit war, but was even one of the console's mascots for a period, helping launch the Sega Genesis light gun peripheral, the Menacer, with the super fun Ready, Aim Tomatoes. With a 16-bit sequel in *ToeJam & Earl in Panic on Funkotron*, as well as an Xbox sequel [*ToeJam & Earl III: Mission to Earth*] and a next generation version in the works, the *ToeJam & Earl* franchise has continually proven itself to be a venerable one, with a cult following.

The game's following has everything to do with the main characters and atmosphere. Poking fun at society and pop culture, ToeJam and Earl look like rap stars, with hi-top sneakers, Flava-Flav chains and sunglasses. Add their California-slang and the game's chill score and the game oozes with an atmosphere that no game before it on the Genesis can claim. Although the story is a simple one, with ToeJam and Earl stuck on Earth after crash-landing their ship, the sheer number of enemies and power-ups make for a ton of replay ability. Navigating through randomly generated levels to find pieces of their

ship, *ToeJam & Earl* is a game you can easily get lost in and one that anyone can play.

While randomly generated levels weren't uncommon in the early '90s, *ToeJam & Earl* did it better than anyone else on the console. Add in a wonderful multiplayer



mode that was also one of the best of the console generation, and *ToeJam & Earl* was a game you could literally spend hours playing with your friends and family. Long before *Wii Sports* got your grandparents playing video games, *ToeJam & Earl* was seen as a game that changed everything. There was no button-mashing or



High 3? High 4? Only ToeJam and Earl know for sure.

concepts only gamers would understand. Silly and fun, it was a game that made you see first-hand why the medium was a special one. It made you social and at times practically forced you to play with people.

That has everything to do with the fact that Johnson and Voorsanger were good friends and *ToeJam & Earl* was absolutely a passion project. “There was that time at the start of the project when Mark and I were out on a camping trip at Yosemite, sitting by the fire, listening to funk music and discussing what game we might make, when we saw some weird orange lights in the sky that seems to hover and then drop behind the hills,” said Johnson. “We stayed up a long time wondering if there would be anything else. Mark said he heard strange noises that night, but I never did.”

With the alien concept now settled on, the team was ready to work. Throughout the game’s development, the vastly different personalities of Johnson and Voorsanger affected the project in several ways. Like a video game development version of “*The Odd Couple*,” they always found a way to make things work though. “It was just the two of us in an office working away. Mark was always the responsible one of the two of us,” Johnson said. “He hates being late for deadlines and he’s very good at being structured and organized. I’m the head in the clouds, ‘what day is today’ guy. I made up crazy stuff and Mark figured out how to make it actually

work. Mark obviously had the harder job. It’s easy to think up crazy ideas... much harder to make them real.” That Yin/Yang approach development in *ToeJam & Earl* was a match made in heaven. Voorsanger made sure everything worked the way it was supposed to, and Johnson’s humor gave the game a one-of-a-kind personality. “The designs aren’t based on anyone or anything specific, but I’ve asked my subconscious what it has to say about it. The answer I got was, ‘sexy girls and cool aliens from the hood.’ I disregard the sexy girls’ part because every time I ask my subconscious anything, the answer always seems to start with that,” Johnson said. “As far as the ‘cool aliens from the hood,’ I’m pretty sure that part is legit. Something struck my funny bone about two very chill aliens who were basically like two cool black dudes from east LA, who looked at Earth and just saw a bunch of insanity. I’m half black [on my Dad’s side] and I gravitate towards characters with attitude and some cultural orientation [I made an earlier game called *Orly’s Draw-A-Story* that featured a little black girl from Jamaica.] I also have always been a huge fan of old-school laid-back funk [ala Brothers Johnson] and it seems like it just fit with these aliens.”

IT’S THE TUNES, DUDE!

The friendship and differences between Voorsanger and Johnson were indeed a key reason for the success of the game, but without the music, *ToeJam & Earl* was



There are certain aliens who should not go topless, no matter how hot it gets!

simply a very good adventure game. The tunes in *ToeJam & Earl* got stuck in your head, making it great. They were iconic. Like the *Super Mario* and *Sonic* games, it has a soundtrack that holds up to this day and one that is easily recognizable by hardcore gamers.

“Mark and I got really lucky and ended up working with some very talented musicians,” said Johnson. “John Baker [who did most of the composition] and Mark Miller [who was more on the technical side, figuring out how to push the Genesis in new ways.] I came up with a lot of the basic funky rhythms and bass lines by singing them, which is how I’m still making music for *Back in the Groove* [the upcoming game in the series] this time with two other talented musicians, Cody Wright and Burke Trieschmann. Sometimes the pieces just fall into place.”



Play that funky music... uh... alien boy?

Not ironically, the funky fresh tunes add to the layer of fun and mystique of Voorsanger’s level designs and Johnson’s silly characters. With a few game credits under his belt before *ToeJam & Earl*, Johnson established himself early in his career as someone who wanted to take creative chances. From *Caveman Ugh-Lympics* [*Caveman Games* on the NES] and space-themed games, *Starlight* and *Star Control*, he’s always used his imagination to fuel his design process. “I have always suffered from a rare disability known as ‘aliens on the brain.’ Both games [*ToeJam & Earl* and *Starflight*] were also filled with ridiculous humor,” Johnson said. “I have a hard time being too serious or taking myself very seriously. That just seems to come out in my games, mainly because I get bored otherwise. *Starflight* was a total make-it-up-from-scratch experience and a much more complex effort. *ToeJam & Earl* was based structurally on *Rogue*, a game I loved and knew well, so it was less stressful to design. I remember I just wanted to cut loose and have a good time, which me and Mark did. We cranked the funky tunes every day and development was pretty easy-peasy.”

To say Johnson’s motivation to make games is often hard

to understand is an understatement. With a bachelor’s degree in Bio-Linguistics from the University of California, San Diego, he’s not your typical game designer. He’s also designed board games, written children’s books, knows a few languages and loves Bugs Bunny. Regardless of his uniqueness and eclectic intellectual interests, becoming a game developer just worked for him.

“Hang on... I’m going to have to check in with my subconscious again for that one. Accessing... ‘OK... Mmmhmm. I see.’ OK, I’m back. My subconscious said to tell you, ‘sexy girls, and a break from school.’ I’m not sure, but I think what it means is that there was no conscious connection at the time,” Johnson said of his decision to focus on making games. “I thought I was just taking a break from school, before hitting grad school. In retrospect, I can see that I went ahead and started building aliens to talk to, and systems that simulated biological ecosystems, alien cultures, and language syntax systems in *Starflight*. In *ToeJam & Earl*, I went on to feed the fires of my fantasy life of Aliens meeting Humans, which was the real deep dark secret of why I was studying Bio-Linguistics in the first place. My subconscious will deny that’s true, but that’s just because it’s embarrassed about it. I’m pretty sure I’m right.”

Once the game was released, Johnson knew he made the right decision. “I was thrilled. I’ll go ahead and speak for my then-partner-in-crime Mark Voorsanger and say we were both thrilled,” Johnson said. “The game was exactly what we wanted, and we were excited to see how people reacted. The reviews that came out were generally very positive and it was an exciting time. Sales were slow through the first year, so that was a bit disappointing, but I’d say we were still very happy with the reception the game got. People seemed to either get the crazy vibe or not get it at all.”

Now looked at as one of the biggest cult successes of the Genesis and a game that helped make the console a viable one after the lackluster debut of the Master System in the United States, *ToeJam & Earl* has the rare ability to be considered both a cult game and a classic. Its message may be a simple one, but it was superbly effective in a time when games didn’t push the envelope at all. Even by today’s standards, where developers have better tools and nearly unlimited ways to express themselves, there’s something genuinely fun about the game.

“The heart and spirit of *ToeJam & Earl* are captured in a few ideas: joyful laughter, teamwork and play-

ful antagonism between friends, funky music and feel good vibes, and maybe the playful satire of our society, laughing at ourselves,” Johnson said. “My greatest hope is that people will continue to have fond memories of the old games and the good feelings they had with others while playing and that they will have more moments of laughter and surprise playing the new game. I really want people to have a chance to relive those early experiences with a new generation. It’s important to be able to connect with others in a joyful, stress-free way. It may not seem like much, after all, it’s just a video game, but when you stop and think about why we work so hard in our lives, and what life is really for. At its core, connecting and feeling joy with others is probably one of main reasons we’re here at all.”

INTO THE FUTURE!

Over a quarter century after the release of the original game, Johnson and Voorsanger’s alien duo has made an undeniable impact. While the duo no longer works together, Johnson, who has the rights to the series, is currently hard at work on *ToeJam & Earl: Back in the Groove*, which raised \$508,637 via Kickstarter and was released on PC and consoles in 2018.

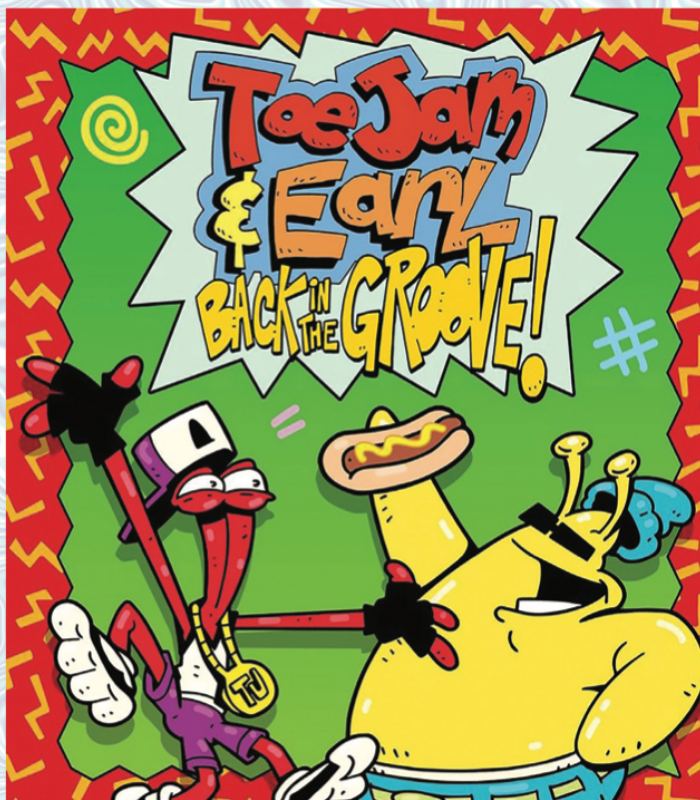
“I will say there is a devoted following. I got to meet and talk to many true *ToeJam & Earl* fans in the course of running the Kickstarter and making this new game,” Johnson said. “I think it’s because the original games were cooperative and accessible to non-gamer types, and light-hearted. These factors made both game one and game two really good bonding experiences for people. Powerful memories don’t really come from games, they come from connections with people who are important to us. The games were just the focal point that facilitated the connection. Moms, Dads, brothers, sisters, best friends, even grandparents. I’ve heard a lot of touching nostalgic stories and they always involve some connections between people. Also, you might find this interesting- I’ve heard a few stories from some people who were large-sized who found comfort in the fact that Big Earl was big, but still very cool and confident. I can’t claim that was a plan, but it’s still great to hear.”

The newest game, Johnson says, is all about delivering the experience of the original game with, of course, superior software. “We’ve tried to listen to the fans and hear what they want

from a new *ToeJam & Earl* game,” Johnson said. “I hope we can deliver that, along with some fresh new surprises as well. I’m grateful for the chance to be able to do something like this.”

Regardless of the impact of the newest addition to the series, Voorsanger and Johnson’s two aliens have left a funky imprint on the industry and one that paved the way for non-gamers to appreciate the medium as more than just a fun footnote. “I just want people to smile and feel good when they think back on their experiences with *ToeJam & Earl* and the people that played it with,” Johnson said. “Maybe they will be inspired to fire up some funk music and dance around in front of the mirror, or maybe call up a friend that used to play with and reminisce a bit. That would make me happy.

“*ToeJam & Earl* was admittedly a weird game. It sort of landed pretty far outside ‘the box.’ Its stream of consciousness characters, its black culture characters, its non-video-game funky music, its cooperative nature and dynamic split-screen, its light-hearted nature, even the rogue-like style of the game at the time was very unusual. I hope the legacy or ‘message’ of *ToeJam & Earl* is: “Cut loose! Go outside that box! Feel the joy! Get crazy and have fun! Don’t take things so seriously! Connect with others! Dance! Laugh! Explore! It’s what life is for.” 🎮



GOING BACK TO THE GOOD OLD DAYS! THE STAR WORLDS ARCADE

by Ryan Burger, with an assist from Walter Day

On the way back from Chicago for a retro gaming festival (Video Game Summit), Walter Day and I decided to stop by an arcade his friend owns in Dekalb, IL. While I had met Patrick O'Malley, who opened his first arcade back in 1985, at several events, seeing him and his partner Glenn Thomas in their environment was very cool.

Star Worlds is a local arcade like there used to be several of in every town back in the 1980s. This isn't Dave and Buster's or any of the hundreds of bar-arcade scenes that use the arcade scene to do other things that have become popular in the last 10 years. This is purely a neighborhood arcade that has survived the test of time. Patrick and Glenn have a passion to keep the arcade culture that children of the '70s and '80s grew up with and it shows. The two of them are heavily involved in the

Midwestern and National scene with restoring games, and keeping what we loved about being social back then. In May of 2011, Star Worlds Arcade was inducted into the Twin Galaxies International Registry of Historic Video Game Arcades. Also, Patrick was the first person to receive the Community Action Award from the International Video Game Hall of Fame when he was inducted into their Class of 2016 for his contributions to the global gaming culture.

The arcade is a mix of retro games from the '80s and '90s, some pinball, crane games, and more. What started in his parents' garage in Maple Park, IL (450 people - 10 miles from Dekalb) had moved to its current location in 2004.

Once inside you will experience a place totally packed with arcade machines, with enough room to squeeze through to the game you want and have friends watch

Continued on page 25



Super StarFox Weekend

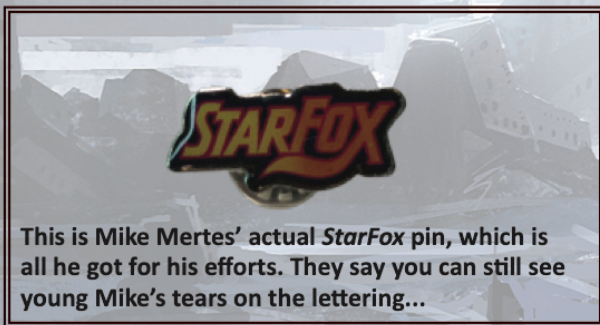
By Mike Mertes

StarFox was a perfect example of how great Nintendo could be at marketing its releases. While the game at its core was just a simple rail-shooter, its obvious sci-fi space opera homage to Star Wars had tremendous appeal to a young boy like myself who would have loved to be like Luke Skywalker and take to the starry skies of space in an X-Wing. While there had been Star Wars games released to consoles, none of them truly captured the essence of a space dog fight like StarFox did at the time. Armed with a special graphics acceleration chip on the cartridge, called the Super FX chip, Nintendo used the graphics to not only enhance the look of the game but to enhance the reason why a consumer should buy the SNES over another console. Nintendo would also launch a StarFox manga-style comic that would run in the February 1993 issue of Nintendo Power. The comic would start just a month before the game's release, leaving potential fans eager to purchase the game.

1993. My first opportunity to play *StarFox* would be at my older cousin's condo, which shocked me since I had no idea he had a SNES. Not long after playing it, the April issue of Nintendo Power magazine arrived at my house, featuring the entire *StarFox* team on the cover. Little did I know what impact the backside of the first page would have on it.

HAVE YOU EVER FLOWN AN ARWING?

The glossy page of the magazine read like it was written directly to me: Super *StarFox* Weekend Competition - April 30 through May 2, 1993. This weekend competition would be held at 2000 different retail locations that carried Nintendo products, and the grand prize winner would win an all-expense-paid trip to London, Paris, Sydney, or Tokyo. I don't recall if my 10-year-old brain thought about what location I would pick if I won the grand prize. I was just stoked that I would get a



Star Fox pin for participating, along with a t-shirt and flight jacket, if I could secure the high score at wherever the competition was being held.

IT'S CALLED "STAR WARS"!

One problem though: the only retail store that carried Nintendo products in my town was K-Mart, and their video game section wasn't exactly a priority to them. I was determined to find a place that was holding the competition, so out came the Yellow Pages, and I started calling every store I knew that carried video games in a neighboring town called Crystal Lake. No one at



PERFECT TIMING

For me, this all coincided with finally getting a Super Nintendo as a birthday present for my 10th birthday in

Have you ever flown an Arwing?

SUPER STARFOX WEEKEND

Competition
April 30 - May 2

GRAND PRIZE!
Fly you and your family away on a dream vacation!

Why go to the next level when you can go light years beyond? You'll get your chance to pilot an Arwing during the Super Star Fox Weekend Competition. The competition will take place at approximately 2000 retail locations during the weekend of April 30 through May 2. You could win an all-expenses paid trip for four to one of four great international locations! Check stores in your area that carry Nintendo products to see if the Super Star Fox Weekend Competition will be held there and at what times the competition will take place.

Star Fox is the newest Super NES release from Nintendo. It's super hot, super fun and it's also the first Super NES title to use the exciting new technology of the Super FX chip.

What are you waiting for? Get Star Fox...and practice.

Super Star Fox Weekend competitors will receive a limited edition Star Fox pin. Star Fox T-shirts will also be given out as prizes for high-scoring pilots. One ace Arwing pilot who flies away with the high score for the entire Super Star Fox Weekend Competition at each contest location will take home an official Star Fox flight jacket AND will be entered in the Grand Prize drawing for an all-expenses paid trip for four to their choice of London, Paris, Sydney or Tokyo. That's a value of approximately \$15,000! Please see participating retail locations for complete contest details.




face, though. My family made a trip to Crystal Lake every Friday for groceries at Wal-Mart, and without fail, I always ended up at the electronics section to see what new games they had. It was what was on the checkout counter that made me jump for joy though: A small cardboard standee advertising that Super Star Fox Weekend was happening at the store. At first, I was angry because I thought the employee I spoke to on the phone was lying to me about not having the event, but many years later and having worked retail at one point myself, I'm sure no one at the store had any idea until the marketing packet for the event showed up. More



Best Buy, Wal-Mart, Montgomery Ward, or Service Merchandise knew what I was talking about and told me they would not have any StarFox event. The Service Merchandise representative I spoke to was adamant that what I was asking for was called "Star Wars"

important things needed to be done, and that was getting my dad to sign myself and my younger brother up for the competition. On Saturday, May 1, 1993, it would be my time to earn my wings.

GET STARFOX AND PRACTICE!

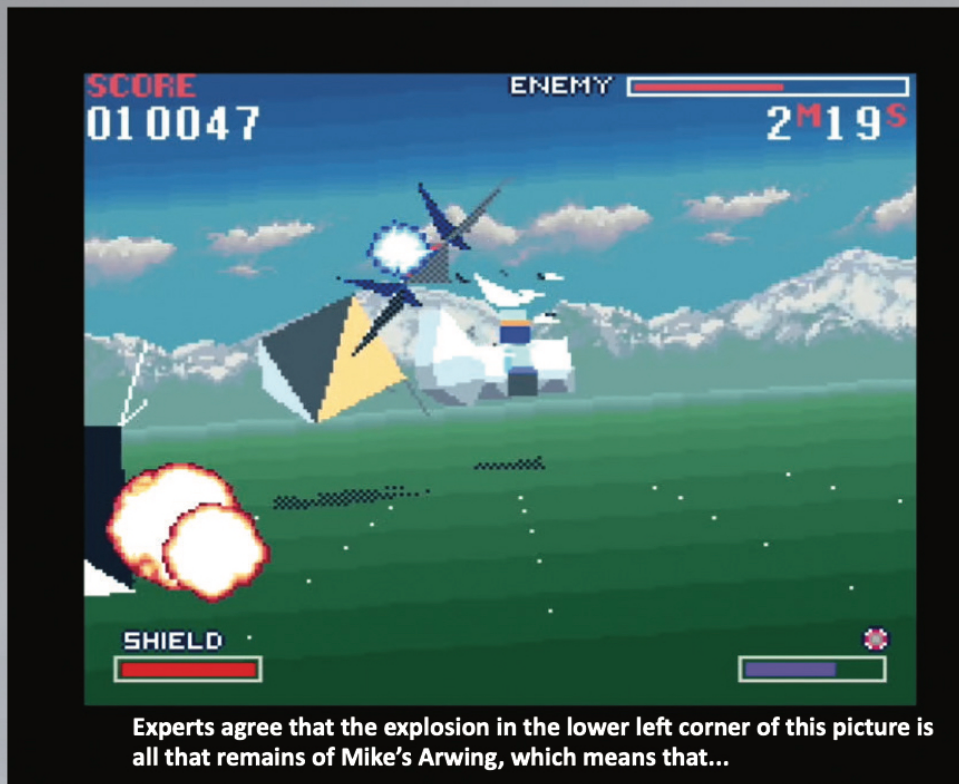
Now that I was signed up for the competition, all I had to do now was perfect my StarFox skills. That would have been easy enough, except I didn't own the game. Other than playing it at my cousin's house, I did get to rent it shortly after, but that was it. Now panic was setting in, so I tried convincing my parents that they had to buy me a copy of StarFox so I could practice. After my parents laughed at me for suggesting they drop 60 dollars on a game, I compromised by asking if I could get it as a rental at the local video store, which they agreed on. We seemingly went to the video store every day for the next two weeks, but the game was always rented out. The only thing I would have going for me into the competition would be my over-confidence.

LET THE TOURNAMENT BEGIN!

On the Saturday morning drive on the way to Wal-Mart, I poured over the strategies featured on StarFox in Nintendo Power magazine as a way to make up for the fact that I couldn't practice on the game. We ar-



and that there was no event for that either. Amateur. Disappointed, I accepted the fact that the area I lived in wasn't cool enough for such a unique event, and I wouldn't be able to play in the competition. My chance to sign up for the competition would resur-



rived at the store just before 10 AM, and I marched down the central aisle to the electronics department with so much adrenaline that I felt like I could have flipped an entire display shelf over. I spoke to the clerk responsible for hosting the competition, and he ushered me over to the SNES Demo Kiosk to explain the rules:

“Ok, kid, you have 4 minutes to score as many points as possible. You’ll fly through Corneria and the Asteroid level, and if you are good enough, you’ll play a special bonus stage. Ready?! Go!”

CRASH AND BURN

Having only 4 minutes to get a high score didn’t register with me until I experienced in-game just how abbreviated the first and second levels of the game were to fit within the 4-minute time limit. Just when I thought I had my full confidence back with how to control the Arwing, my scoring opportunities were cut off because of the shortened levels. I did alright on the first stage, but choked in the asteroid belt, getting smoked by the end level boss, which cost me valuable time. By crashing, I had lost my twin blaster power-up and couldn’t defeat the boss in time for the end-stage scoring bonuses. I knew I had blown

my chances at winning the flight jacket but had hope that my score would grant me a t-shirt. That chance got blown out of the sky immediately, though, as my little brother destroyed the score I got. I couldn’t even comprehend how this was possible because he barely



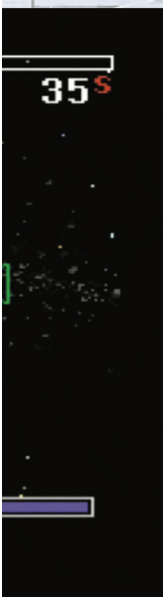


played the game when we rented it. To add insult to injury, the store clerk told my dad: "Wow! The younger they are, the better. He's beating his older brother!" Now, who's the amateur? Not even my little brother's score was enough to get a *Star Fox* t-shirt, but we both got our pins, and despite not getting a high score in the game, I would cherish that pin for years.

MANY YEARS LATER

Its already been 27 years since that competition. In the years that have passed, we have seen several *StarFox* games try to capture the magic that the first few games in the series produced but have never quite hit the mark. Another official *StarFox* competition was never held, but the cartridges that were used for the game were sold in Nintendo Power magazine and now fetch a high price on the collector's market. While I could never justify spending upwards of \$1000 for a copy, I do own a reproduction cartridge. I also still have the original pin that I was given back in 1993, and it proudly sits with other gaming-related pins I've collected throughout the years.

In 2013, I took my revenge on my little brother for beating me at the 1993 competition in a rematch. I destroyed his 69,177 score with a 113,082-high score, which unfortunately is still around 18,529 points short of getting a flight jacket. 🕹️



Space Invaders Ports and Clones

By Brett Weiss

Space is cool. Lost in Space. Ace “The Space-man” Frehley. The various Apollo moon missions. Space, the final frontier. Games like *Space Fury*, *Space Ace*, *Space War*, and, of course, *Space Invaders*, the 1978 coin-op cab that revolutionized the industry.

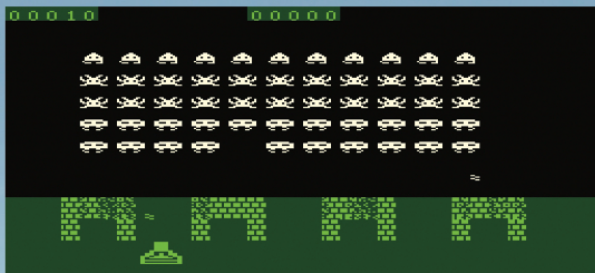
In 1980, *Space Invaders* was ported to the Atari VCS. This awesome arcade conversion was arguably the first killer app for a gaming console, helping bring video games into the mainstream. *Space Invaders* inspired other ports as well, plus countless clones. Let’s take a look at several such games for the classic systems many of us grew up playing.

SPACE DESTROYERS - APF MP1000

PUBLISHER: APF.

DEVELOPER: APF.

1979



How many of you have heard of the APF MP 1000? It’s an obscure console that was produced by APF, which was founded by Al and Phil Freedman. Prior to the MP 1000, the company manufactured *Pong* clones.

The best, most dynamic game for this system is *Space Destroyers*, which is a surprisingly accurate *Space Invaders* clone. It’s certainly not a mirror image, but in strictly numeric terms, it has the same 55-alien, four-bunker layout as the arcade classic. It’s a slow, methodical game, which is fitting for the genre, and it controls well. It lacks all of the crazy options found in the Atari 2600 version of *Space Invaders*, unfortunately, but it was actually re-

leased the year before that game.

Fun fact #1: Other than *Space Destroyers*, which was released in 1979, all the other APF MP1000 games came out in 1978, the year the console hit stores.

Fun fact #2: The *Space Destroyers* cartridge itself is longer and more colorfully designed than the other games for the system.

SPACE INVADERS - ATARI 2600

PUBLISHER: ATARI

DEVELOPER: ATARI

1980



The first million-selling video game cartridge, *Space Invaders* was also the first officially licensed game for a home console. The gameplay and graphics are faithful in spirit to the arcade original - guide your ship along the bottom of the screen, firing upward at waves of descending rows of alien invaders - but it offers a number of welcome enhancements and alternatives, including zigzagging laser bombs, invisible invaders, moving shields, and two-player simultaneous modes.

The home version doesn’t look exactly like the original, of course, but the game is instantly recognizable and looks pretty darned good for a console that was originally designed to play simple action games, *Pong* clones, and rudimentary racers. It sounds fine as well. There are only 36 invaders per wave (as opposed to 55) and three bunkers/shields (compared to four) protecting your ship, but no matter—the game has excellent shooting action with crisp controls. When this port was originally released, I was burned out on the arcade game, so I welcomed the new challenges.

ALIEN INVADERS-PLUS! - ODYSSEY2

PUBLISHER: MAGNAVOX

DEVELOPER: MAGNAVOX

1980



If *Alien Invaders-Plus!* is the *Odyssey2*'s answer to *Space Invaders*, then maybe the folks at Magnavox didn't quite understand the question. The biggest problem is the lame ten-point scoring system that unceremoniously ends the game whenever the player successfully clears a wave of invaders ten times. Each wave consists of a row of eight stick figure robots near the top of the playfield and a row of eight downward-firing laser cannons that look like mushrooms directly below that. Just beneath the two rows of invaders is a row of impenetrable blocks that, um, block your bullets.

As you guide your pyramid-shaped cannon horizontally along the bottom of the screen, you can hide behind a trio of molecular laser shields. If you get hit, you turn into a little running man (who dies if he gets shot), but the laser shields also act as cannon reserves, so you can turn back into a cannon by running underneath a shield and pressing the fire button. The one visual highlight (relatively speaking) is Merciless Monstroth, a nicely animated monster who darts back and forth across the top of the screen. Shoot him for extra points.

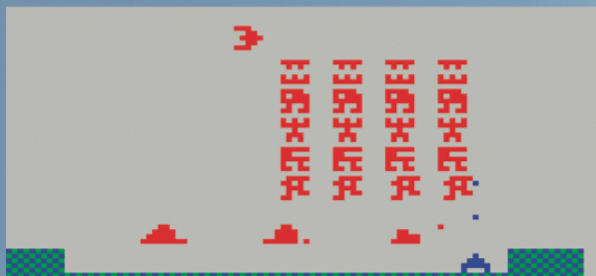
ALIEN INVASION - FAIRCHILD CHANNEL F

PUBLISHER: ZIRCON INTERNATIONAL

DEVELOPER: ZIRCON INTERNATIONAL

1981

Did you know that a fully programmable video game system was released the year before the Atari VCS? It was originally called the Fairchild Video Entertainment system and later dubbed the Fairchild Channel F. *Alien Invasion* is easily the most arcade-like game in the console's original library, which only consists of 26 cartridges, plus two games built into the unit. As "*Videocart #26*," *Alien Invasion* was the last official release for the Fairchild.



The ship you guide along the bottom of the screen looks a little like a tank. Three pyramid-shaped shields are positioned in a row above your ship, and they do disappear incrementally when hit by enemy or friendly fire. The rows of blocky invaders exhibit rudimentary little animations, with the aliens in one row looking like E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial from the infamous Atari 2600 game. The mothership that flies across the top looks like an arrow, and the sounds are the kind of primitive bleeps and bloops (and clicks) you might hear in a *Pong* clone, though they do increase in tempo as the game progresses. The blue, red, and green with white background color scheme doesn't exactly scream alien invasion, but the checkboard design at the bottom of the playfield looks cool. A two-player simultaneous mode lets you and a friend team up against the invaders, but the game gets old after a while because the challenge level is low regardless of which mode you play.

SPACE ARMADA - INTELLIVISION

PUBLISHER: MATTEL

DEVELOPER: APH TECH. CONSULTING

1981



Space Armada looks a lot like *Space Invaders*, and it was released during the console wars of the early 1980s, so you'd think Atari would have sued Mattel, correct? Not so much. According to the BlueSky Rangers website (blueskyrangers.com), the copyright for *Space Invaders* hadn't been properly protected, so "any other company could make their own version as long as they changed the name."

As in *Space Invaders*, gamers guide their laser ship along horizontally along the bottom of a non-scrolling playfield, firing upward at advancing rows of alien invaders. Also familiar are the occasional flying saucers that fly across the top of the screen (a carefully aimed shot will destroy the saucer) and the bunkers you can hide behind until they get shot apart (incrementally by you and/or the enemies). The aliens, which start too low down on the screen for my tastes, are bigger and more colorful than the those in *Space Invaders* for the arcade or Atari 2600, but the action is clunkier and not as exciting. The game is certainly playable, though, and there's plenty of challenge after the first couple of rounds. Enemies start disappearing, dropping faster bombs, and firing guided homing missiles.

SPACE INVADERS - ATARI 5200

PUBLISHER: ATARI
DEVELOPER: ATARI
1982



By the time *Space Invaders* hit the Atari 5200, the original coin-op classic from 1978 had been played to death by most avid gamers. Perhaps with this in mind, Atari went a different direction with the port by speeding it up, adding variations (such as slow and fast enemy bombs), supporting trackball control, and making the enemies more colorful and more animated (they even change form every few rounds). Oddly enough, the invaders, which are comparatively huge, look more like those in *Space Armada* for the Intellivision than the arcade originals.

The result is a challenging, highly entertaining, quickly paced game that relies more on twitch reflexes than precise aiming skills. Purists may object to the missing shield, the rainbow color scheme on the shields, and the fact that there are fewer invaders per wave (48 instead of 55), but a good game is a good game, regardless of adherence to the source material. The controls are smooth, the shooting action works well, and there's just something inherently fun about shooting rows of advancing invaders.

SPACE INVADERS '91 - SEGA GENESIS

PUBLISHER: TAITO
DEVELOPER: TAITO
1991



Space Invaders '91 freshens up the "slide-and-shoot" formula pioneered by the original with faster gameplay, level progression, excellent music, colorful backgrounds, and more graphically detailed invaders that appear in different types of formations. Instead of simple, single-missile shots, you can acquire more powerful weapons, including hyper-laser, homing bomb, buster laser, power beam, and super crusher. There are defensive power-ups as well, such as shields, time stops, and faster horizontal movement for your ship.

One of the more intriguing inclusions is Perfect Bonus, which gives you 10,000 extra points when the number of shots you fire is equal to the number of aliens in formation. There are other ways to score bonus points as well. Another interesting addition is a crater in the ground in one level that makes you shoot at a 45-degree angle. While *Space Invaders '91* does indeed have numerous features not found in the original *Space Invaders*, the core gameplay remains intact, and it's one of my favorite games in the entire franchise.

SUPER SPACE INVADERS - SEGA GAME GEAR

PUBLISHER: DOMARK SOFTWARE
DEVELOPER: THE KREMLIN
1993



Based on Taito's 1990 arcade game, *Super Space Invaders '91*, *Super Space Invaders* is enhanced with colorful backdrops, impressive power-ups (including shields, faster shots, and lasers), big bosses, energetic music, elaborate enemy formations, scrolling playfields, and two-player simultaneous action (via link cable). The most memorable addition to the classic *Space Invaders* formula is the Cattle Mutilation bonus screen, where you protect a herd of cattle from fast-moving saucers trying to abduct the animals. If a cow gets grabbed, shoot the absconding saucer to free it, being careful not to shoot the cow.

Unlike most other *Space Invaders* games, when an invader reaches the bottom of the screen, you just lose a ship instead of getting a "game over." Also different is that the game has an actual ending, which is kind of lame for a game of this type. Even so, it's a lot of fun. The Master System version is similar, but it wasn't released in the U.S.

SPACE INVADERS – GAME BOY

PUBLISHER: NINTENDO

DEVELOPER: TAITO

1994



Other than *Tetris*, which was the killer app for the handheld unit, *Space Invaders* is the ideal title to adapt to the Game Boy. The simplicity of the gameplay and the short time it takes to play a full round are perfectly suited for on-the-go gaming and the limitations of the venerable console. This port solidly reconstructs the 1978 coin-op classic on the tiny Game Boy screen, even if it plays slightly slower and there are 40 aliens per wave instead of 55.

In two-player versus mode, your opponent's cannon is the UFO at the top of the screen. If you own a Super Game Boy, which is the peripheral you plug into your Super Nintendo to play Game Boy titles, you can play *Space Invaders* in various cabinet types. It's like the Super Nintendo version of *Space Invaders*, which is a nice technological achievement for the Game Boy.

SPACE INVADERS – SUPER NINTENDO

PUBLISHER: NINTENDO

DEVELOPER: TAITO

1994

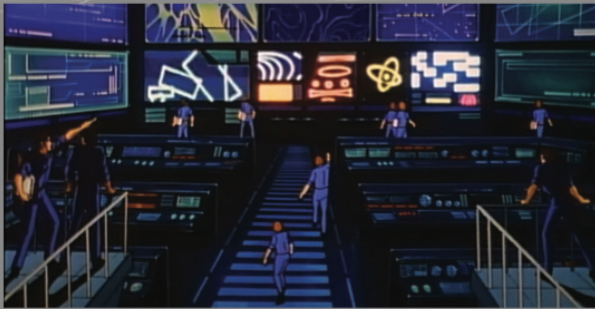


Space Invaders for the Super Nintendo does a predictably excellent job of recreating four different versions of the coin-op classic (which all play the same), including upright cabinet screen, black and white, black and white with cellophane, and color. The manual suggests you select the one that "reminds you of the first time you played, or possibly even the one on which you 'owned' the high score."

What sets the SNES game apart from the arcade original and other home versions is a special VS Game Mode, which is a fun, competitive, strategic, split-screen contest that borrows a page from such two-player puzzle games as *Tetris 2* and *Dr. Mario*. Each time you destroy a complete row of invaders, that row will be sent to your opponent's side. Shooting invaders of different colors affects the game in a number of ways. Green clears that row of any remaining invaders. Blue drops your opponent's invaders one row. Yellow drops the invaders on your side one row. Red drops both side's invaders two levels. Pink randomly has the effect of shooting green, blue, yellow, or red. The first player to shoot down all of the invaders on his side wins, but if a player depletes all of his ship stock, he loses. The latter rule doesn't apply when ship stock is set to infinity. Prior to beginning the game, each player can select their own difficulty level and number of ships, meaning you can handicap matches. Highly recommended.



by Michael Thomasson



ALERT CONDITION ONE

The laserdisc, the first optical disc storage medium, dates back to 1978. The premiere laserdisc title was Sega's *Astron Belt*, which made its debut in Chicago at the 1982 Amusement & Music Operators Association (AMOA) show. *Astron Belt* had a mixture of original video and content borrowed from *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan* and other films. Rick Dyer and Don Bluth had concurrently been working on *Dragon's Lair*, another laserdisc game that narrowly beat *Astron Belt* to the American market. These games, in tandem, marked the beginning of laserdisc fever.

Laserdisc titles required pre-recorded footage which was, more often than not, expensive to produce and slow to create. As a result, software companies raided animation archives already in the can so that they could

quickly publish new LD titles and ride its wave of popularity. Data East's *Bega's Battle* used footage from the cartoon *Harmagedon*, while Stern's *Cliff Hanger* implemented footage from the anime series *Lupin III*.

Following the rushed "chop shop" productions came more original fare. Footage for *Cobra Command* was created by Toei Animation Company, Ltd. specifically to be used as a kit to convert *Bega's Battle* coin-op cabinets into the "world's first video disc helicopter game." Released initially as *Thunder Storm* in Japan, the interactive movie game was rebranded *Cobra Command* in the States and other markets.

In this interactive film and shooting game, the pilot takes command of the most awesome combat machine ever designed – the LX-3 Super Helicopter. The free world is endangered by a far-reaching organized terrorist group that has amassed a diabolical global force. The aeronaut must seek-and-destroy rival sorties in search of the enemy's stronghold. Gunfire lights the skies above the streets of New York City, around the Statue of



SEEING DOUBLE



If you spot the LX-3 Super Cobra helicopter from *Cobra Command* during the opening sequence of *Double Dragon II: The Revenge*, you aren't seeing double. The battle chopper can clearly be seen parked behind them nestled tightly within their garage. Yoshihisa Kishimoto, who directed both titles, can be thanked for the LX-3's cameo role.

A HERO, BUT NOT A "REAL AMERICAN HERO"



Many players made an incorrect assumption that the game was part of the G.I. Joe franchise, since the title shared the same name as the Government Issue Joe team nemesis, "Cobra Commander". It was an easy mistake to make, as the animation for both was similar in style since they were mutually created by the same studio – Toei Animation Company, Ltd.


Liberty on Ellis Island, among tanks in the desert, deep within the Grand Canyon, in subterranean caverns, the ruins of Italy, among the Moai on Easter Island, and finally destroys the well-guarded enemy Fortress.



Players must line up hostiles within their crosshairs, and then squeeze the trigger on the flight stick to unleash 6000 rounds a minute of twin gatling cannon fire to tear apart enemy choppers and planes that require multiple hits. A single press of a button destroys enemy tanks with dual air-to-ground missiles. Massive battleships re-

quire firing an array of missiles with pinpoint accuracy to sink them to the bottom of the Pacific.

While players primarily track and fire at targets within their sites, occasionally the pilot is directed to perform complex flight maneuvers. A superior officer, from within a central reconnaissance station, barks directional voice commands such as, "Pull Up!", to aid navigation. These guidance cues, simplified as arrow icons, also flash on the display panel of the helicopter's cockpit.

A common complaint towards many interactive full-motion-video titles is that the games seem repetitive. Since *Cobra Command* plays more like a traditional shooting video game, it holds up much better than its other laserdisc peers. 



PICTURES COURTESY OF EUGENE JARVIS

HUEY PHOOEY



The fictional LX-3 Super Cobra helicopter is based on the U.S. Army's real-world Bell AH-1 Super Cobra twin-engine attack helicopter.

Designing Yars' Revenge (Part 4 – A Yar is Born)

By Howard Scott Warshaw

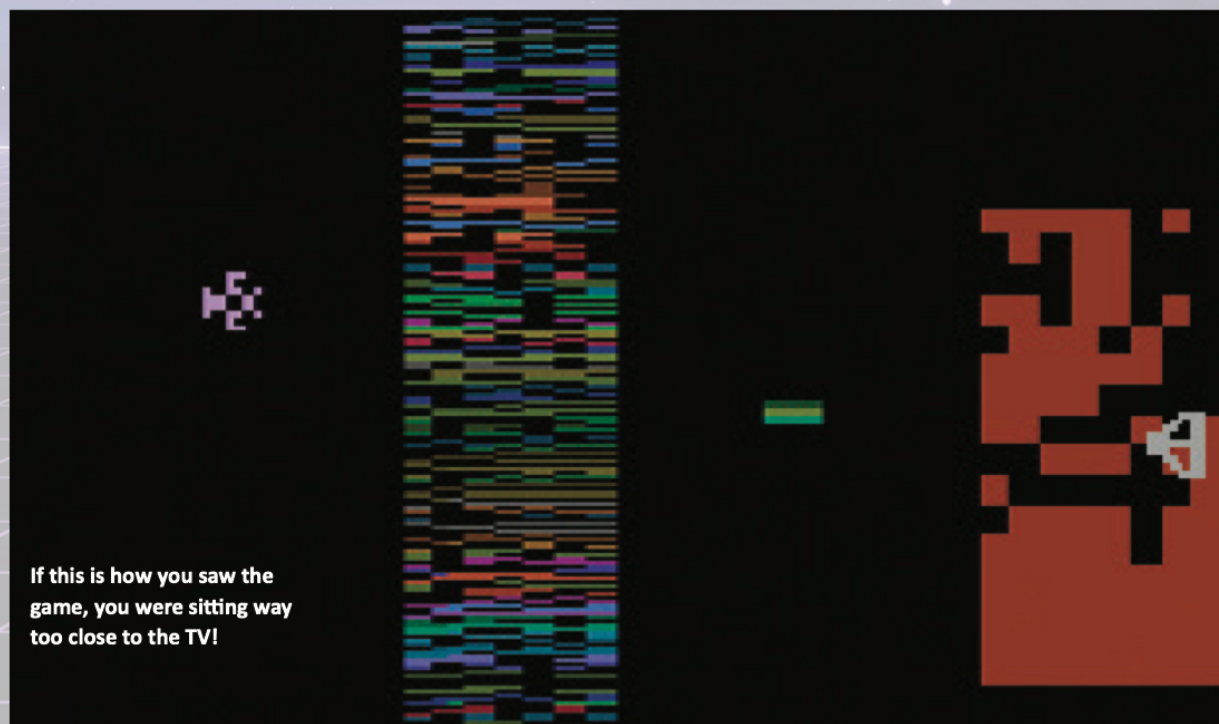
The game was the game. It was a good game, but it had no name. That's OK. In my view, you don't start with a label. You start with interesting tweaks and techniques to maximize the hardware impression. Then you make sense of it later with a game concept and possibly a storyline. That was my approach to Yars and all my games for that matter.

The Yar was the first graphic I designed. It had nothing to do with a fly, it was simply something with moving arms that might look cool and symmetric when animated. The original working title was "Time Freeze" which alluded to an elaborate payoff sequence when the big win occurred. The concepts of Ion Zone, Qotile and all the *Yars' Revenge* lore were a retro-fit on the graphics and gameplay that already existed.

Like life, I did what I thought was cool and then made up reasons for it later. We act on our emotions and then we rationalize things to make sense. That's how I believe we are wired. That's certainly how I approach game design.

There came a day when marketing needed an official name. I wanted everything about my first game to sing, so I asked the marketing rep if I could make my own submission for the name. He said fine. I told him to come back tomorrow morning and I'll have something for him. I spent the rest of that day and all night in my office trying to come up with the best name I could.

I wanted something simple but sharp. Compelling and intriguing without being off-putting. It should connote action in a way that's inviting to a player. Hmmm. It occurred to me that "Revenge" is a great title word be-



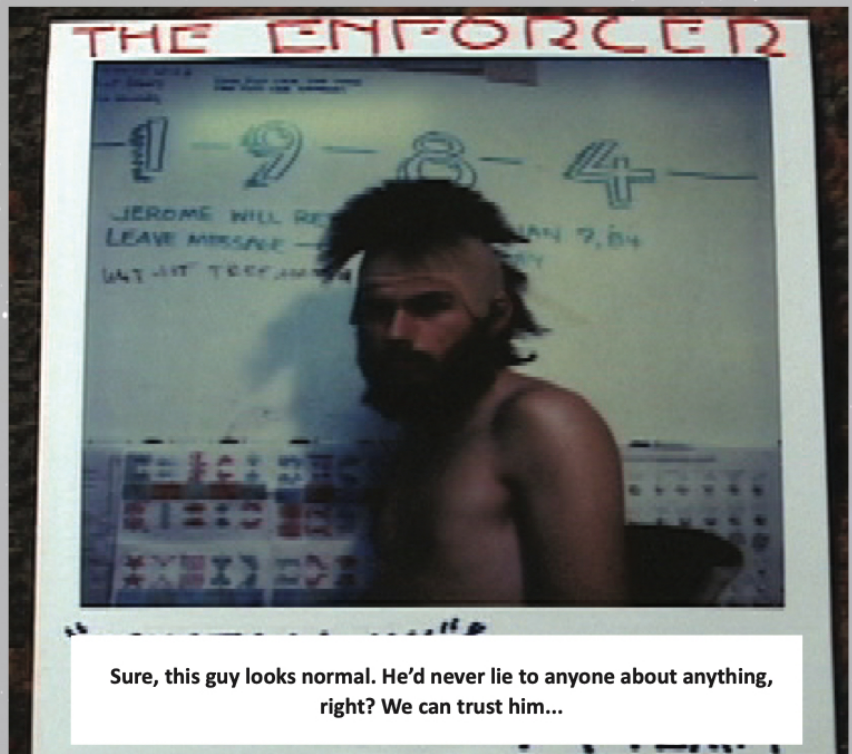
cause it tells a whole story by itself. And after all, who doesn't want revenge? OK, I'll grant you there are monks in Tibetan ashrams who have no inclination toward revenge whatsoever, but they are not the target demographic. So, the next obvious question is: Who is taking revenge? This, I realize, poses a remarkably interesting possibility...

One thing I've always wanted to do is add a word to the English language. It's one of my many dreams. This is my golden opportunity. Everybody knows what Pac Man is. If my game becomes extremely popular, then the character name I choose right now could become common parlance. But have you ever tried to make up a word? I start reeling off possibilities, but everything sounds stupid. This is my chance to enhance the language and nothing is working. I'm frustrated.

Eventually I give up on sounding good and start thinking about alternative ways of approaching the problem. This calls for an algorithm! I need a systematic way of choosing a name. Then it occurs to me that it needs to be more than a name, and my mind starts to spin up. The name becomes a concept, then a theme, and finally the whole thing congeals into a marketing plan. My plan to market my plan to marketing. And here's how my plan goes...

I'll use a cipher. The name will be an encoding of something else. Something irrefutable. Something like... Ray Kassar, the CEO of Atari. Yes! The title of the game should be *Yars' Revenge*, with Yar being Ray spelled backwards. What's Kassar backwards? Rassak? OK, the game will be set in the Razak solar system. But that's not enough. What makes a name stronger for marketing? A package. How can I make *Yars' Revenge* a package? I know, I'll write a story to go with the game.

So I start writing, and by the crack of dawn I'm staring at



Sure, this guy looks normal. He'd never lie to anyone about anything, right? We can trust him...

12 handwritten pages entitled, "The Yarian Revenge of Razak IV." I'm too tired to realize it, but I've just created the first back-story in video game history. It's an action-packed jaunt through space, detailing how Yars came to be and how they came to inhabit the Razak solar

system. I finish tweaking it about 7:30am-ish, and have it typed up and handed off to marketing by 10am. The game's afoot.

By late afternoon I'm informed (by the self-same rep) that my naming package is under consideration. Time to activate phase two. I thank him and offer to share an insider insight if he'd care to hear it. This piques his interest. I insist this is top secret and must be held in strictest confidence, lest it influence the outcome unduly. He assures me he shan't tell a soul.

"OK then," I say, "You know the Yar in the title?"

"Yeah."

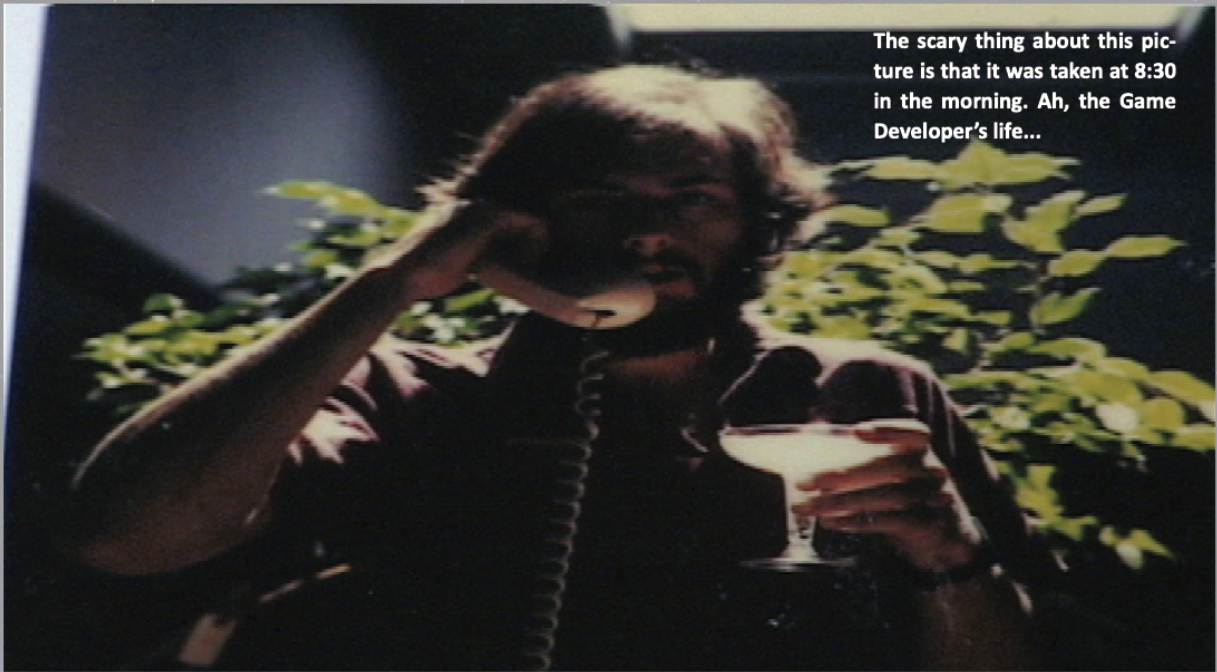
"Spell that backwards."

He thinks for a moment and says, "Ray?"

"Right. And how about Razak?"

After another moment or two, "Kazar? Ray KAS-SAR?!?! Does Ray know about this?"

"Of course," I tell him, "I wouldn't do this without his knowledge. But I don't want this to influence anything



The scary thing about this picture is that it was taken at 8:30 in the morning. Ah, the Game Developer's life...

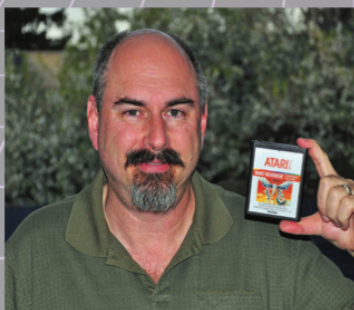
so you can't tell anyone about it."

I swear him to secrecy twice more and send him on his merry way. I now feel quite confident about three things: First, this marketing rep is going to run right back and tell everyone. Second, no one in marketing has the stones to broach this with Ray Kassar, which is good, because the third thing is that Ray knows absolutely nothing about this. A perfect bluff. Feeling right chuffed, I head home for some well needed rest.

The next day, the marketing rep tells me, "We're going with *Yars' Revenge*. Congratulations!" His face beaming with delight. And at that I started beaming a bit myself.

That's how the *Star Castle* coin-op conversion became *Yars' Revenge*. A game that most people liked, and some people didn't. This contrast led me to an interesting life lesson: a friend of Yars is a friend of mine.

Yars truly,
HSW



TESTING, TESTING, 1... 2...

Another life lesson I acquired from my time at Atari was gleaned from the process of game testing. *Yars' Revenge* was Atari's most tested game, consequently I sat through lots of focus groups, interviews, surveys and then the ultimate play test. One thing became abundantly clear to me. When you ask people if they like something or not, you get very good information. When you ask people why, not so much. The reason is simple: knowing what we like is about us. Creating justifications is about other people. And we never know anyone else as well as we know ourselves.

Continued from page 11

you play. Everything is played by the token like we used to do back in the day, plus the entire place is decorated in memorabilia. Games are refreshed into new titles every couple weeks, so if you are in the area, regular visits are a necessity. But for someone like me, I'll plan on stopping in once a year or so when on the way from Grimes to Chicago. Plan to hang for a couple hours... whether playing games or spending an hour or so talking to Pat or Glenn.

The story of Patrick, Glenn and Star Worlds is well documented in a 30 minute DVD produced in 2011 called "Star Worlds: A Pocket Full of Tokens and I'm Heading to the Arcade." If you are driving from Chicago west on Interstate 88 (Illinois Tollway), make sure to plan to be there on the weekend or after 3 PM on weekdays so you can take a 10 minute bypass to see this retro arcade.

Let's wrap this up with a quote from *Pac-Man* Patrick - "My industry has always given me back what I put in, and then some. At Star Worlds Arcade, it's not just about the games, it's about the community of people that have always supported my dreams and my vision of the entertainment, history, and social atmosphere that Star Worlds can provide."

Starworldsarcade.com / 1234 East Lincoln Highway, DeKalb, IL 60115

WALTER DAY ON THE STAR WORLDS ARCADE:

Patrick O'Malley and Glenn Thomas are among the pillars of modern arcade history. Not only do they lead today's resurgence in arcade culture, but they are, themselves, historic icons who have survived through all the epochs of our gaming legacy.

Since September 24, 2011, Star Worlds has been chosen by the Walter Day Collection to be the official site for major Trading Card Awards Ceremonies. Now, nearly 10 full years later, we can count nearly one dozen times that Star Worlds was chosen to host these important awards presentations that honor the legacy of the coin-op industry.

Now that the Walter Day Collection is nearing its 10th Anniversary, Star Worlds Arcade has been chosen to be the site of the card collection's official 10th Anniversary Party planned for sometime in late 2020.

It is only fitting that Star Worlds has garnered so much international attention over the years. After all, how many arcade owners were able to maintain the level of passion needed to keep an arcade alive for 35 years - making it one of the last few remaining "genuine Golden Age Neighborhood Arcades".



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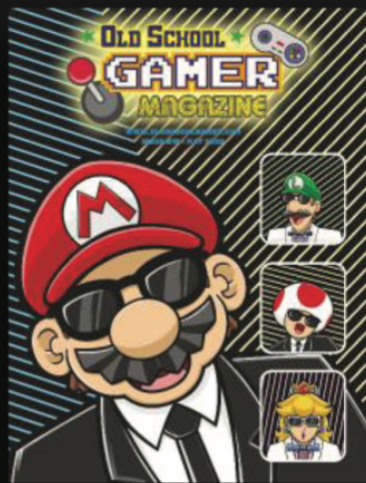
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