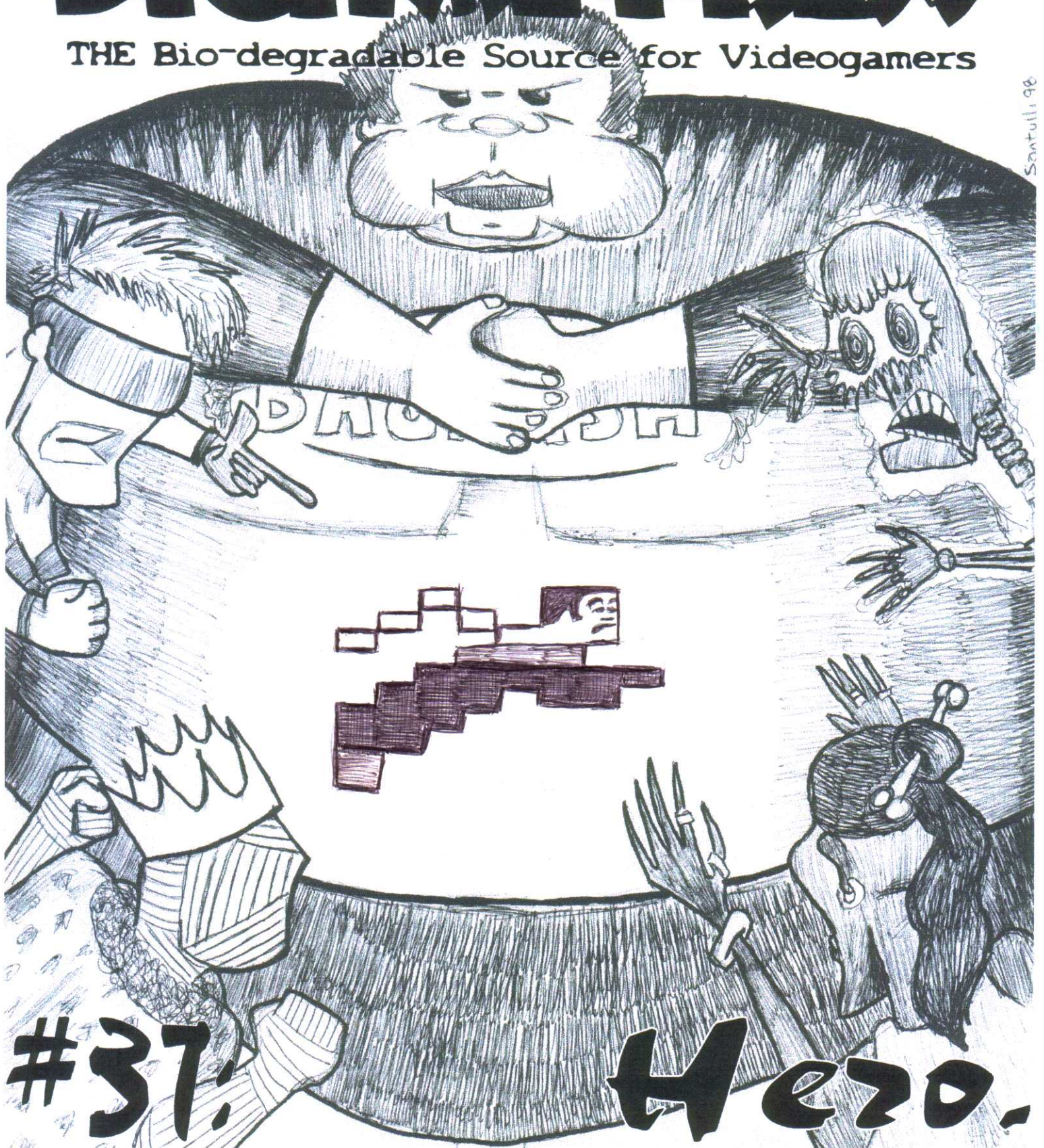
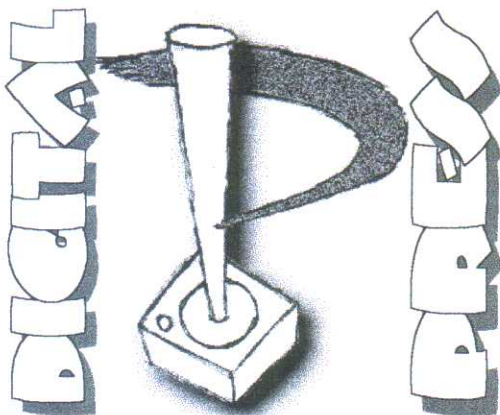


DIGITAL PRESS

THE Bio-degradable Source for Videogamers





Hero.

EDITOR'S BLURB by Joe Santulli

You want to know what a REAL hero is? A REAL hero is a fellow who can rack up eighty hours of any given video game, ignoring all other lesser calls-of-duty. Among this hero's super powers are "Ultra Tall Grass", "Distended Belly", and the awe-inspiring "Chalky White Skin". And though the sun shines and the birds sing outside of his fortress of solitude, the lure of earthy pleasures and well-tanned bikini clad vixens are not enough to distract him from his goal. Beating that game is his holy grail. Responsibility is his enemy. A REAL hero can defeat this enemy and capture the grail.

Revered readers, meet your new hero. Hey. How's it goin'?

It took eighty five hours to beat **Final Fantasy Tactics**, and you had better believe a few important things took a back seat during that time. As I watched the hours add up (the game designers were gracious enough to keep track of that for me, the bastards!), I couldn't help but wonder what things I might have achieved had this game never entered my home. I envision a well trimmed lawn, bereft of the dandelion forest I now harvest. I picture a telephone that does not ring with the calls of collection agents wondering if I'm ever going to pay up. In eighty five hours I may have built a new wing onto my house instead of a pile of potato chip bags in the basement. Yes, these things were once a part of my possible present. Instead, I can say I got "Cloud" to join my party and I beat the pants off of the final boss in **Final Fantasy Tactics**.

At last I have emerged from this dungeon of a game, victorious. But fear not... Summer will not have me. Not while **Tekken 3** and **Gran Turismo** await me, anyway!

As this issue finally rolls out, many of us are at 1998's E3 trade show in Atlanta. I'm heading out with a fine pack of lads, including our very own Keita Iida and John Hardie. We'll meet up with a small mob of vigilant gamers to storm E3, taking every little bit of information back home with us to share with you next issue. The year is full of promise... there's an awful lot to look forward to, so stay tuned.

Speaking of a year full of promise, this is the year we UPDATE the Digital Press Guide. Can you believe we're publishing the FIFTH edition already? Where do the years go? This time around, we're adding in the Nintendo 8-bit system, putting prices and scarce-o-meter together, and generally overhauling its look. The next Guide will have the same "look and feel" as the issue you're holding, complete with loads of pictures and hundreds of updates. Look for it in late Summer (early September)!

Gotta go. I think I hear the grass growing again.

DIGITAL PRESS #37 MAY/JUNE 1998

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Atari Twenty Six Hundred
Superman Meets O.O.M.P.H.
Artwork by Joe Santulli

The "man of steel" is nothing compared to the formidable force that is O.O.M.P.H. (Order of Marginally Powerful Heroes)! I had originally planned an entire comic strip for this theme, but all you get is a cover. Sucks being an adult with responsibilities...

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got it.

Here's the "follow up" from last issue's "Near Miss" letter. This one STARTS with the editor:

Greetings!

I'm not sure if it was the original barrage of emails, my recent tirade about lack of "fantasy modes" in sports games (from Digital Press #36), or just your supreme coolness, but THANKS A MILLION for the Triple Play '99 CD! Thanks to you I've lost hours of sleep (and at one point an entire plate of lasagne, but that's a story for another day) - in other words, I'm in heaven!

I'm especially glad you sent Triple Play over NCAA March Madness, which I ultimately purchased anyway. I was really disappointed with NCAA! Stay tuned, I'll be reviewing TP99 in Digital Press #37. Triple Play 99 is a real gem, I especially appreciate the dynasty mode and improved A.I. I was wondering when someone would create a baseball game where the computer is smart enough to use a pinch hitter in a game-breaking situation, and VOILA! it's been done at last.

PS did you catch our letter-trading in issue #36? Hopefully it wakes a few of my fellow "underground" editors up - there's a common misconception that big game corporations don't give a damn about little journalists. I'm really glad that you've proven them wrong!

Thanks again, and in case I didn't mention it, thanks! See ya.

Joe S.

Glad to help out! Ultimately, your charming prose won me over! =)

Kathy Kostas Frazier
Senior PR Specialist
EA SPORTS

letter from my ex

Joe,

You were probably tempted to destroy this letter before even reading it. I hope you resisted, although I certainly could understand the urge.

I apologize for calling you so late last Friday, and for salting the wound by criticizing "Digital Press". Please understand my motivation for doing this, however. I have tried to call you innumerable times since moving to Arizona, and to the best of my knowledge all of these calls were disregarded. I realize that you are a busy man, but I looked up to you and respected you for much of the early nineties, and thought - perhaps foolishly - that you would make some effort to respond to someone who was, at least at one point, **your biggest fan**. After finally reaching you, the last thing I thought was that you'd respond to my honest criticism of "Digital Press" with a string of profane insults.

Yes, I was out of line to respond so late at night. Perhaps my criticism of your work - although sincere - wasn't the best of ideas either. But however unpleasant this may have been for you, grumbling "FUCK YOU" and telling me to "PISS OFF" was an overreaction at best and completely inappropriate at worst. If you truly "respect my opinion" as you had claimed, you would have found a more tactful way to tell me that my criticism was unappreciated. Better yet, you could have debated each of my points objectively instead of resorting to the kind of language one would expect from "The Jerry Springer Show".

Nevertheless, if you do want me to "piss off" as you'd recommended in our phone call, I will stop calling you, writing to you, and sending you issues of "The Gameroom Blitz". Conversely, you can remove me from your mailing list if you so choose. You may even "ban" me from "Digital Press" if you feel it would suit your needs (although I have no idea what purpose that would serve).

Again, I am sorry for any inconvenience I may have caused you. I suppose I long for the time when "Digital Press" was a true video game fanzine, not the newsletter it's become. I know now that the early days of "Digital Press" are long gone. Thank you for your time.

Jess Ragan
Editor, "The Gameroom Blitz"

Patagonia, AZ

Jess, you really do carry on like a jilted lover. Well, girlfriend, get ready for the big break-up.

I'm not sure if it's supposed to "hit home" telling me that we used to be a fanzine and now we're a newsletter. In my mind, we are NEITHER, and never were. Kevin and I started Digital Press before we had ever heard of a fanzine. We were "adopted" into fandom because that's what everyone thought we were doing. There may have been parallels (game reviews, I suppose), but we never asked to join any particular genre of publishing. This rag is for gamers. Its about gaming. My team and I decide what goes in based on what we've always wanted to read about. I'm sorry if this doesn't fit into your parameters, and if it ever did, that was a coincidence. Try to compose yourself for a moment and remember that I've always been willing to turn our readers onto other publications... which leads me to the reason why I went off on you that night on the phone.

I have stated it personally on countless occasions and printed it for all to see several times as well (the last time in DP#31, pg. 19) as to "why I don't do fanzine reviews" and yet you've found a new way to nag about it - on a phone call after midnight! I'll say it one last time: I'm NOT here to judge others who have the same passion for this hobby as I do. I came to the conclusion long ago that "fanzines" and "newsletters" are NEVER bad. They are produced by the people who live, eat, and breathe gaming and they're the last people I'd ever want to alienate. Who gets paid for this anyway? Aren't we all doing this for fun? It's like criticizing a missionary for the work THEY do. I consider my fellow publishers and revered readers as part of my "second family". With ONE black sheep among them. YOU. I don't understand your agenda nor do I care to - your incessant, nagging, sniping potshots have finally worn me out. "Honest criticism", as you call it, should occasionally be sprinkled with positive commentary, and it's been years since I've heard any of that from you. That ain't no way to treat me, baby, your lover, your friend.

So I guess this is where where we part ways. As my EX-"biggest fan", I leave you with the best advice I could give to anyone, the motto by which I live: Life is, after all, too short. Play recklessly. Think positively. Live every moment to the fullest.

continue?

Hey Joel

Many thanx for the WOW of a write-up - I just got back from a long nite at work, plus a trip downtown to try to find some Saturn stuff (more on that later), so your words brought a smile to THIS tired face!

Funny, I was writing a 3DO piece about MY experiences with the system, so your article was right on target (as usual), I had more luck finding stuff in late '96/early '97 but now all I see here in NY are Fifa, Psychic Detective, a million copies of Immercenary (underrated but confusing fun!) and Tom Kite Golf! I was able to snag some cool imports - Yu Yu Hakusho & Doctor Hauzer are two favorites, then there's this weird FMV title where you have to create a magazine cover using photos of a rather pretty Japanese girl and a PC art program - I don't know if it's geared towards girls or guys as half the pictures of the girl she's wearing skimpy undergarments and/or is posing in a slightly suggestive shot here & there. Anyway, if your magazine cover "beats" the cover chosen by the competitor you get to watch a video - since I've not yet figured out how the CPU chooses a good design I've yet to see any of that video, but I'd imagine its pretty tame stuff! On the other hand, if you thought Trip'd was nuts, you could play the Japanese version Flopon, The Space Mutant (and I thought US games had sucky titles!). Anyway, there was so much changed, from the backgrounds to the crazy mini-games (dropped from the US version because of cultural differences AND they make absolutely NO sense whatsoever, but are funny as hell!) to the FMV tour of the Warp offices (!), that it seems like a different game entirely!

Speaking of different games, Final Fantasy Tactics is GREAT, but it's the SAME game as Tactics Ogre for the Super Famicom (should be out for the Playstation by now), but in TO you can control TEN characters instead of five which means LONG ASS battles - I know virtually NO Japanese, but struggled through a friend's copy some years ago for about ten hours, so I'm glad Atlas is putting this out here (although you know some will say "look, it's a copy of FFT!").

If you liked FFT, track down a copy of either the Super Famicom or PSX versions of Front Mission. I prefer the hand drawn SF version, but the poly update is awesome! Driving & fighting - try Zoku: Legend of Bishin (Super Famicom) which plays like F-Zero meets Street Fighter. In the IP mode

you have to drive to a certain point by a certain time to fight the boss of the level, but you get banged around by the goons on the road, or spin out making a turn & you get TOSSED from your car into a fighting game where you beat the crap out of a couple of punks and get back to your car! Seems like all the best hybrids are imports, but that's changing as you said... oh, and I believe (if they don't screw it up) Gran Turismo for the Playstation will SQUASH all driving games (time to break out the drool cups), I played the import for about two hours the other day - I spent one hour on the options screen alone! TOO much to choose from, it's like buying a real car (according to my import smuggler) & test racing it against other cars. I'll bet they WON'T have a sequel to this one, by the time you play all the cars & tracks it'll be the year 2000!

Here in NYC Saturn stuff is still not that cheap, with most stuff in the \$19.99 and up range. Toys R Us & The Wiz STILL sell stuff for 34-54 bucks! (these bastards need to be taken DOWN, hard and soon!) and the selection at Kay Bee is SO slim, Kate Moss would look like Anna Nicole Smith (hey, I'm tired, so that's how it's coming out!), or is it the other way around? Oh well, I'm looking for a cheap Saturn & games now - a friend was going to give me hers (she's had it with Sega AND is moving to Spain - NOT because of Sega, she got married) but her nephew got it instead (drat!). Well, 1/2 the fun is in the hunt, I always say - I saw an ad for 38 NES games for \$100 which included Dragon Warrior 1-4, Final Fantasy, Punch Out, Pac Man & Vegas Dreams - so I'll check on the condition of THAT lot and press on, as usual!

PS the comics were cool... "animals hump his leg" made me choke on my tea!

Later,
Greg Wilcox
Editor, "Continue?"
Bronx, NY

Thanks, Greg! I think your letter set the record for "most recommendations in a letter", which is a welcome honor. I've played many of the games you mentioned, and I agree wholeheartedly with your picks. I still prefer Final Fantasy Tactics over Tactics Ogre, though. Have you played Vandal-Hearts? That game pre-dated both FFT and Tactics Ogre (and it's a good one, to boot), and a great "entry point" for players who may find the others a bit heavy on the options side.

Take care, and keep up the great work with your publication! Here's another quick plug: Send Greg \$1 for his fab "Continue?",

at 1598 Unionport Rd (7E), Bronx, NY
10462-6061. You won't be disappointed!

belgian retort

Hi,

I was just browsing the archives on your site, and I nearly fell off my chair when I suddenly noticed a letter from Werner Bleys in Belgium who I have known for quite some time. Now I don't know what exactly happened between you and Werner, and frankly I don't want to know. I wasn't very happy with the things Werner wrote (it was his style alright), but I admit I was also shocked by your answer to him. Please allow me to refresh your memory by repeating what you wrote:

"...in a country where the dam could burst at any moment, spilling fish and poisonous slugs over the straw huts that the natives call home..."

Excuse me, but I think this is a very childish answer. You can attack Werner as much as you want - I'm not sticking up for him -, but please don't spread your ignorance about our country along with your flames. Belgium is a very civilized country (our capital is sometimes also called "Little New York") and we're definitely no natives who live in straw huts. If you'd take a look at the world civilization map, you'd see that Belgium is just as "rich" as the richest states in the US. That's a fact.

Besides, recent surveys (done by Americans, not us!) have shown that over 60% of the American graduated students know very little about the world and most of them couldn't even point their own state on the map. That's a fact too. I haven't read this in "some magazine", but a fellow collector from the US told me this a few months ago. This collector (I won't write his name out of respect, but I'm sure you know him too) has lived here in Belgium for several years. Don't tell him about straw huts!

Please don't misunderstand me. I'm no chauvinist, and I have absolutely nothing against Americans (on the contrary, I have quite a few American friends), but it's just that reading such low things about my country hurts. I would understand if we were some tribe dancing around a fire, but we're not, and we've never been. Like I said, there's no difference between America and most Western European countries, except maybe for the language we speak.

Anyway, I hope you understand that I don't have any hard feelings, but I would be very appreciative if you would change your answer to that letter of Werner, or take

the letter off the web altogether. There's no point in spreading hate. Hate only invokes hate, and we all know what this can lead to, don't we? Let's just enjoy our hobby without turning it into some silly war.

Best regards,
Luc Pycke
BELGIUM

Luc,
I am **TRULY** sorry if you were offended by that letter! It was printed quite some time ago (five years ago or more), and Werner and I are actually quite good friends. It was just part of a long series of "letter wars" we participated in and printed in DP's paper issue.

I mean no ill will toward Belgium or ANY country for that matter, but I'm not removing the page from the web. It has already been read by hundreds of hobbyists (several Belgians included) who know I was never meant to be taken seriously. If you'd like to goof on America as a retaliatory act, feel free to write back and I'll print your letter too. We're all just having a little fun.

saturn & 3do now

Dear Joe,

I've not sent a letter of comment since subscribing to DP (this is my 3rd issue) so I thought I might do that as #36 just arrived today. It doesn't really seem like two months since the all-fish issue but here it is. Use any of these comments if you wish. I like the letter column though I don't recall seeing it before. I probably won't comment on every single item but just what grabs me...I don't want this to turn into a novel!

Nice cover...I've tried drawing but was never very good.

One of the letter-writers commented on the Saturn...I just bought one so I'm now starting to see things from his perspective. I, like you, have a lot of systems (14), so I dislike seeing any of them put down even though some do have some shortcomings but I also feel they all have their great games as well as their lesser efforts. I'll be studying your Saturn reviews (both in DP and your online site) to help guide me to future purchases. I just got done reading the online review of *World Series Baseball II*, a game I currently have on order, and am glad now that I'll soon be able to play it since you gave it a solid review.

Another system I have gotten recently is the 3DO and while it was covered a few issues ago, I'm glad to see even more here along with your pick for the top ten 3DO

games. Of those ten, I have 6 of them so I'll definitely be looking for the other 4 I don't have yet (*Road Rash*, *Wing Commander III*, *Starfighter* and *Po'ed*). In case you and other 3DO owners want to find more games, I'd recommend an online auction site called eBay (www.ebay.com) where I've bought a ton of games in all formats including about 17 3DO games. The guy who sold me the 3DO also included 17 games for it so within a month or so I had over 30 games for it. One game I was glad to get is *Captain Quazar* because when I was young and doing my own little comic book stories, I created a character called Captain Quasar...this guy isn't really anything like my guy but it's almost like someone made a video game of my own creation. Cool. I also want to get *Snow Job*. I hear it sucks, but it does have Tracy Scoggins in it!

After writing the above, I notice you had a few not-so-nice words about people auctioning games on the internet. Still, I've found some decent buys though occasionally I find something unbelievable like someone shelling out \$91 for an Atari 2600 *Superman* cart.

Roger L. Schoolcraft
rschoolc@weir.net

I always appreciate getting feedback and comments on various game systems. It's also nice to hear people finally getting around to the 3DO (I never got letters like this while the system was "hot")! I still play my 3DO, but I'd definitely stay away from Snow Job. Tracy Scoggins may look great on the box but there's actually very little of her in the game - definitely not \$14.99's worth, anyway.

solo?

Joe,

Hey! What's the deal with this "solo" issue? What, now you're the Michael Jordan of gaming fandom? Man, and all this time, I thought you couldn't jump.

Great issue. The "solo" theme is a great idea, even if it is only a one shot. (at least, until you let tons more stuff pile up...) It was great to see the Plan 9 From Outer Space reader mail logo back where it belongs, along with, of course, the reader mail. Fortunately, Plan 9 is only one of two Ed Wood films I've seen, the other one is the notorious Glen or Glenda. Sitting through either one of them is a testament to anyone's stamina. By any chance, have you ever seen a film by the name of (no, I am NOT making this one up) "Crazy Fat Ethel II" ?

It is the sequel to a film called "Criminally Insane." Ethel is, (quote from box) "400 pounds of maniacal fury." Another quote from the box, "WARNING! Never come between Ethel and a well stocked refrigerator!" Frightening stuff indeed, but, in all honesty, better than the worst film ALL time, *Waterworld*.

Anyway, not to stray from the topic for too long... I really enjoyed your back and forth with the EA PR Specialist, even if you haven't received any review copies of games from them. Since the topic of the Saturn came up as well, what gives? Did Sega quietly (or not so quietly) throw in the towel on the Saturn? One day, everything seemed to be business as usual, that is to say, the games were still expensive and somewhat plentiful, if not "new", the next day, ALL the games were marked down to nine bucks! Of course, I didn't find that out until the NEXT next day, when they were all gone... Anyway, 'round these parts, Sega is gone but not forgotten - no "new" hardware or software is available anymore, but it occasionally pops up at the secondary outlets. It's not altogether surprising, nor upsetting, but, I just hadn't heard anything really "official" from Sega about these goings on. Does Clint have the inside scoop on Sega's apparent slinking away in the dead of night? Are they just cutting their losses and gearing up for their next go-round, or is it largely the decision of the retailers? Has production of new Saturn software ceased? Will the new Van Halen album sell ten-billion copies? Will Titanic fall from the top spot to the new Jackie Chan film?

Whoa, got a little carried away there... what was I talking about? Oh yeah, the "Solo" issue. As a fan of Topps' Wacky Packages, I got a kick out of your renditions, which, might I say, follow right along with the ones that they had put out there, right down to the outline of the stickers. At first glance, I thought, "Hey, I don't remember THESE..." Good job!

So, not a big fan of *Dig Dug 2*, huh? Wow, I really liked that one a lot. It's a really good attempt at blending the old with the new in just the right proportions to keep things familiar, yet, fresh, and the intermissions are pretty groovy too. Given the choice between Mr. Do and *Dig Dug* though, I'm with you and Tony, Mr. Do! all the way. My other candidate for great blending of old and new "classic" games is *Xevious 3D/G+*. After seeing lackluster reviews on that one, I waited for the price to drop, picked it up, played the 3D version after playing through all the rest, and, it is AWESOME! The best new shoot-em-up

I've played in a long time... Of course, I've been playing SMS Fantasy Zone for WAY too long as of late, so I may be a little loopy at this point.

Talk to you later,
Dave Giarrusso
DTGiarrusso@omlaw.com

Dave, I can especially relate to your Fan-

tasy Zone addiction. Isn't it just nuts when you simply can't find anything "better to do" than return to a game you've already spent 90% of your free time with? I struggled getting this issue out because I've been so wrapped up in Final Fantasy Tactics, then Namco goes and releases Tekken 3 and Gran Turismo... how am I supposed to get back to writing, editing, paying bills, mowing

the grass, eating, etc?

I guess it just comes with the territory. I'm sure one day, when I get a life, I'll look back at the 65 hours logged onto Final Fantasy Tactics in its first week in my home and say "what a fool I was", instead of "One more hour! I can go to work late this morning!" like I've been doing...

ATARI COMIC CONNECTION

by John Hardie

For those who don't know, back in the early eighties before Jack Tramiel bought Atari, they were owned by Warner Communications. One of the things Atari made good use of while under the Warner umbrella was the utilization of other Warner properties and licenses. Look at some of the games that were developed or in development around this time: 2600 Bugs Bunny, 2600 Taz, and 5200 Looney Tunes Hotel were all based on Warner Bros. Looney Tunes cartoon characters. When Atari decided to stage the premiere videogame contest, **Swordquest**, they tapped the Franklin Mint to craft the prizes. The Franklin Mint was owned by Warner at this time. So when Atari decided to integrate videogames and comics, it only made sense to go with their own company, DC Comics. I'm sure there are other examples of these connections throughout Atari history but for now let's concentrate on the comics.

Atari and DC developed several incarnations of comics based on Atari game titles, characters, and contests. Some comics were mini-sized pack-ins that came with the various games, others were full-size comics that could be purchased on the newsstands. I'm not going to get into much detail about the plot content, connections, and other oddities of the comics especially the Atari Force Series since there already exists a fabulous Atari Force Comic FAQ which is maintained by Lee Seitz at: <http://home.hiwaay.net/~lkseitz/comics/AtariForce/>

This article will serve as more of a checklist with some pertinent information for each comic rather than an in-depth review or description of each. On to the comics...

- Atari Force Mini Comic #1 - Packaged with Defender cart. Part # CO18256. (c) 1982.

Part 1 of the origin of Atari Force.

- Atari Force Mini Comic #2 - Packaged with Berzerk cart. Part # CO18257. (c) 1982.

Part 2 of the Atari Force origin.

- Atari Force Mini Comic #3 - Packaged with Star Raiders cart. Part # CO18258. (c) 1982.

Contains an ad for the upcoming Swordquest series.

- Atari Force Mini Comic #4 - Packaged with Phoenix cart. Part # CO20133. (c) 1982.

This comic is the same as the free 16 page preview that appeared in "Superman in the House of Mystery" #53 Jan. 1983.

Some items to note: The title in the preview is: Atari Force Code Name: Liberator while the mini comic is simply called Atari Force: Phoenix. All references to the spaceship Liberator have been replaced with the name Phoenix. The aliens on pages 5, 9, 10, 13, 15, and 16 of the preview look like frogs while the aliens in the mini comic have a more sinister look to them.

- Atari Force Mini Comic #5 - Packaged with Galaxian cart. Part # CO20131. (c) 1983.

Last of the mini comics and lead-in for the New Atari Force full-sized comics.

- Swordquest Mini Comic #1 - Packaged with Swordquest: Earthworld cart. Part # CO19251. (c) 1982.

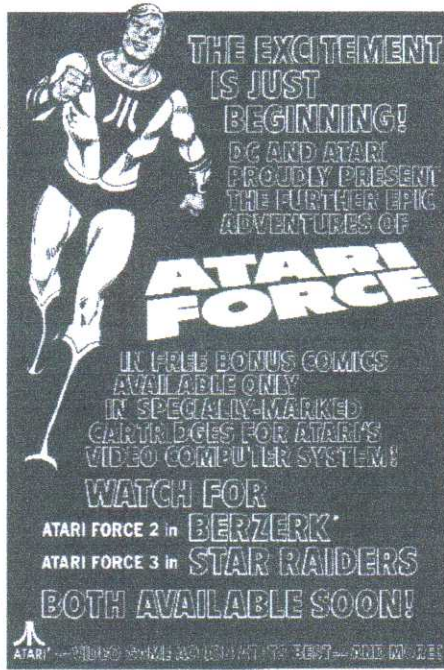
The comics for Swordquest were an integral part of the game and contest. Earthworld is Book One.

- Swordquest Mini Comic #2 - Packaged with Swordquest: Fireworld cart. Part # CO19252. (c) 1982.

Fireworld is Book Two of the series.

- Swordquest Mini Comic #3 - Packaged with Swordquest: Waterworld cart. Part # CO20134. (c) 1983.

Waterworld is Book Three of the series. As most of us know, neither the Airworld game or comic were completed and the whole contest



It is widely believed that Digital Press contributing editor John Hardie was in fact the model after which future Atari Force heroes were modeled. Note the resemblance in this buff young hero.

was a bust.

- Centipede Mini Comic - Packaged with Centipede cart. Part # CO20132. (c) 1983.

One of two non-serial comics. This story was geared more towards kids.

- **Yars' Revenge Mini Comic** - Packaged with Yars' Revenge cart. Part # CO18215. (c) 1982.

I believe this was the first comic Atari produced. It was done solely in-house, not in conjunction with DC. It's possible that after reviewing this effort, they realized they needed help in the area of comic production.

- **Atari Force Preview** - DC Comics Presents: #53 (c) Jan. 1983. Superman in the House of Mystery.

This issue of "DC Comics Presents" had a 16 page Atari Force preview inside. It is believed that this preview also appeared in an issue of "New Teen Titans". This is a re-done version of the Atari Force Mini Comic #4. See that entry for differences between the two.

- **Atari Force Full-size #1** - (c) Jan. 1984.

Interesting that they waited one year from the preview to release the full-size series.

- **Atari Force Full-size #2** - (c) Feb. 1984.

Includes three character fact-files and editorial info on how the project came about.

- **Atari Force Full-size #3** - (c) Mar. 1984.

Three more character fact-files.

- **Atari Force Full-size #4** - (c) Apr. 1984.

Includes three fact-file corrections.

- **Atari Force Full-size #5** - (c) May 1984.

Cool Joust ad from Atari on inside front cover.

- **Atari Force Full-size #6** - (c) Jun. 1984.

Three more fact-file corrections.

- **Atari Force Full-size #7** - (c) Jul. 1984.

Comic-style Moon Patrol ad by Atari on inside back cover.

- **Atari Force Full-size #8** - (c) Aug. 1984.

Burgertime ad on back cover.

- **Atari Force Full-size #9** -

(c) Sep. 1984.

Masters of the Universe for INTV ad on back cover.

- **Atari Force Full-size #10** -

(c) Oct. 1984.

Bump 'n' Jump ad on back cover.

- **Atari Force Full-size #11** -

(c) Nov. 1984.

Comic-style Mario Bros. ad by Atari on inside front cover.

- **Atari Force Full-size #12** -

(c) Dec. 1984.

Starting with this issue, Atari Force had two stories per issue. One story is the continuing adventures of Atari Force, while the second story is usually a solo story starring one of the Atari Force characters.

This issue has a solo story about the character Hukka.

- **Atari Force Full-size #13**

(c) Jan. 1985.

This issue is the end of the first major storyline that spanned issues 1 - 13. Also the second story is another one written about the Hukka character.

- **Atari Force Full-size #14**

(c) Feb. 1985.

The second story is a solo involving the character Babe. Nice Pitfall 2 ad on the back cover.

- **Atari Force Full-size #15**

(c) Mar. 1985.

The second story is part #1 of a 3-part Pakrat story. Ghostbusters ad on back cover.

- **Atari Force Full-size #16**

(c) Apr. 1985.

Part #2 of the 3-part Pakrat story is the second feature.

- **Atari Force Full-size #17** - (c) May 1985.

The second story is the conclusion of the Pakrat 3-part saga.

- **Atari Force Full-size #18** - (c) Jun. 1985.

Another solo story featuring Hukka.

- **Atari Force Full-size #19** - (c) Jul. 1985

The second story is about the character Taz.

- **Atari Force Full-size #20** - (c) Aug. 1985.

The last issue of Atari Force. Another Hukka story as the secondary tale.

- **Atari Force Special #1 (Full-size)** - (c) 1986.

This comic actually contains 3 stories. Codename Dart: A Mercenary's Story, A Hukka story called "Food for thought", and a "A Second Skin".

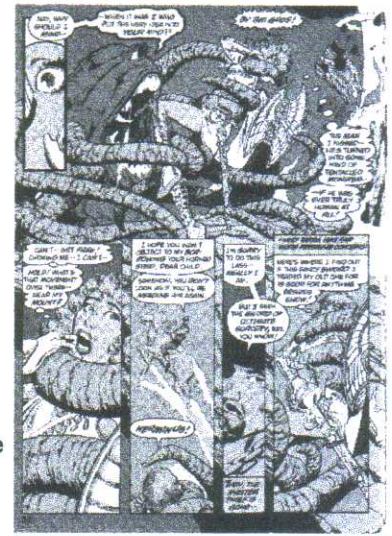
- **Star Raiders Graphic Novel (DC Graphic Novel #1)** - (c) 1983.

This is the first graphic novel produced by DC Comics. This novel is an extension of Atari Force Mini-comic #3.

- **Warlords Graphic Novel (DC Graphic Novel #2)** - (c) 1983. Loosely based on the Atari 2600 game Warlords.

A bit of speculation here: It's interesting to note that the Atari/ DC Comic alliance lasted for four years from 1982 until 1986. One would think that when Warner sold Atari to Jack Tramiel the comics would no longer be printed. Perhaps DC had an agreement for a certain number of issues. Also note that all of the comics except one (**Yars' Revenge**) were done by DC. **Yars'** was done in-house by Atari and was the first comic pack-in available. It seems Atari realized they weren't up to the task and decided to do it right by working with DC.

If you're interested in seeing more scans of the various comic covers, stop by Atari Gaming Headquarters at www.atarihq.com and check under the features section.



Artwork in these exclusive comics were quite extraordinary. Witness the animated retelling of Liz and Joe Santulli's first encounter...



Many of us can only DREAM of being beaten senseless by a woman like this. Ahh, comics...

HONG KONG GAME HUNT

by Keita Tida

I had it all planned out. I was to fly out to Japan to visit Kazuko, my wife, and her family for a few days (Kazuko was already there since June of 1997, tending to her semi-ill mother) and then she and I were to embark on a wild and adventurous journey to the African safari. But just as I had finished my law school exams and was ready to pack up my camping gear for the great outdoors, Kazuko called to inform me that her mother was still quite ill, and that she didn't want to leave her for fifteen days (the planned length of our vacation. A short vacation was still fine, she said, as long as it didn't last longer than three days. So we settled on a brief trip to Hong Kong - which her mother graciously offered to pay for (who says kissing up to in-laws doesn't pay :). My head spinning with excitement at the prospect of being surrounded by a sea of Playstation HK CDs, Famicom multicarts, console copiers and pirate 2600 games, I hastily packed and was ready to go. I left for Japan on the morning of Christmas Day, going from New York City to Detroit and straight from Detroit to Osaka. Because of a significant time zone adjustment, I arrived in Japan the next day at Kansai International Airport in Osaka, right around the same clock time I left the States. I finally got to my in-laws' place in Kyoto at 10PM, but there was no rest for the weary as my wife and I were scheduled to depart for Hong Kong the very next morning....

For those of who have never had the privilege of visiting Hong Kong, wipe away all the stereotypes because it's not what you think. Hong Kong is one of the world's major international banking and commerce centers and is clean, modern and safe for the most part. You can also dispel the notion of stores after stores selling pirated Playstation games because very few places carry them. In fact, if it wasn't for a native Chinese friend of mine who just happened to be there at the same time as myself, I may have returned from the trip empty handed!

Luckily, that was far from being the case.

After going on the obligatory citywide tour of Hong Kong with my wife on the first day, I managed to convince her to join Matt (my Hong Kong buddy) and I for some "shopping." Knowing that she'd blow her lid off if we spent the entire time hunting for games, Matt took us on a blitzkrieg through the main gaming district in Sham Shui Po, located some five miles inland from Downtown Hong Kong. 'District' may not be the appropriate word, since the so-called electronic pirate heaven was situated inside one large building. This is most likely a result of Hong Kong's prohibitive land prices, and the fact that most stores

dealing with illegal software prefer being inside a mini-strip mall instead of residing in a more visible area. The latter would most certainly run the risk of incurring the wrath of authorities, who have supposedly stepped up their efforts to curtail the rampant piracy in the country (good luck). A casual observer may not even notice what's inside the building because none of the stores are listed outside, and the only sign on the building says "Golden Dragon Shopping Mall" (or something like that.) Matt mentioned that well-informed gamers were well aware of the building, and it was, to his knowledge, the only place in Hong Kong that had stores selling black market (contemporary) video game software.



Although Keita is primarily "into" board games and those sliding puzzles that make a picture when you line it up right, he also enjoys the occasional "video game".

Once inside the building, I was treated to pirate heaven. Rows and rows of mom and pop stores were crammed along the aisles, with everything from illegal music CDs, bootleg PC games, console copiers, and CD-R Playstation and Saturn games, ready to be gobbled up by eager shoppers. It should be noted that just about every Playstation and Saturn system sold in Hong Kong is "chipped", meaning they've been modified for use with CD-R discs. All three stores selling bootleg Playstation and Saturn CD-Rs were offering 4 CDs for \$6 deals. This, Matt added, was cheaper than he's ever seen them go for. But given prices for just about everything in Hong Kong were de-

pressed as a result of the Asia-wide economic crisis, that fact didn't come as much of a surprise.

Due to my impeccable foresight, I had brought along a 100-disc Case Logic CD holder just for this very occasion. Loading up on just about every game imaginable, I managed to completely fill up the CD holder. With cheap CD-R purchases out of the way (for my friends, not myself.. ummm, that's it), we then hopped on the train to go to nearby Mongkok (and Yau Ma Tei, which is within walking distance of Mongkok) in search of Famicom (NES) multicarts and cheap console copiers.

Mongkok is known for being the bargain shopper's delight. Vendors with booths line each side of narrow alleys, selling everything from fake Polos to junk electronic equipment. The prices of most goods are negotiable, but haggling for deals can be quite difficult if the dealers recognize that you're a tourist. Luckily for me, I had Matt do most of the wheeling and dealing while I randomly pulled out everything from 75-in-1 Famicom multicarts to V64s (A Nintendo 64 copier.) for him to haggle over. The strangest item I witnessed during my game hunting excursion in Mongkok was an NES clone that was shaped like a

(Continued on page 32)



This and That

Collecting the Press

Classic videogame collecting has slowly been becoming a "legitimate" hobby to the rest of the world for years now. It's getting mentioned more and more lately so I thought I'd take a look at the different places information or mis-information can be found other than in these fine pages.

One of the better (or worse) places to start would be the book *Joystick Nation* by (whatever the fuck her name is). Most any magazine or newspaper article that talks about classic games is going to refer to it as sad as that may be. The fact of the matter is that this woman is clueless. While I have only skimmed through the book, it became apparent to me right out of the box that the project was likely assigned to the author rather than it be a labor of love. In fact, she probably had to be shown what a joystick was. I guess I really don't hold it against her as she probably didn't have a choice in what she wrote about, but it's another sad example of the first rule in publishing - if you've been published, you will get published. Doesn't really matter what the subject is or if you know anything about it, if you're a published writer, publishers will take your word for it.

Our very own John Hardie was consulted a few months back for an article in *Entertainment Weekly* about classic games. John submitted a bunch of factual information to the article's author and answered any questions they had for him. Despite the fact that John has forgotten more about classic videogames than Ms. *Joystick Nation* will ever know, I'll give you one guess as to what was quoted in this article. John's name did not appear at all and yet there were numerous references to *Joystick Nation*.

I find myself traveling down what will probably be the same road right now. A couple weeks ago, someone from the *New York Times* contacted me looking for information for an article they are doing on classic games. They aren't talking so much about the games themselves, but rather they are doing some sort of evolution of controllers thing. I sent them copies of old videogame mags from the 80's that had feature articles on controllers as well as a copy of our fine *Digital Press* CD-ROM. The other day I spent a good two hours on the phone with them running through a timeline of sorts and discussing things that I felt should be mentioned in an article about controllers. I've come to find out, however, that there has been a recent addition to the writing staff at the *NY Times*. Our friendly neighborhood *Joystick Nation* author has been hired-on there as a permanent columnist. I can't help but chuckle when I think about what this article is going to look like. Although I did make the people I've been dealing with very aware of my opinion of *Joystick Nation*. While they claimed to agree with me, I have this strange sensation of smoke in my ass for some reason.

Leonard Herman has been selling copies of his "Phoenix: The Rise and Fall of Videogames" for years now. About six months ago, I finally snagged myself a copy of his book and it's not bad at all. Leonard really seems to know his shit but, nothing against Leonard, I can see why he had a difficult time getting it commercially published. The subject of videogames and what happened with them in the 70's and 80's is boring no matter who's writing about it. It needs to be embellished considerably to keep the reader from falling asleep. A joke strewn in here or there, a personal experience, someone else's personal experiences, whatever. Just reading about what was released or what problems may have arose or what was shown at the various SYS shows gets boring.

If you want to check out the most comprehensive timeline regarding classic videogames you are ever going to see, Don Thomas' webpage must be seen. Don is not just a former Atari employee but he's as much of an Atari fan as anyone. The things he remembers are outright sickening to someone like myself that can barely remember today's lunch! He categorizes everything by year and then by month. So you click on a year and then click on a month and you will be greeted by a listing of EVERYTHING that happened during that month. Don has the same problem that Leonard Herman ran into. The timeline, while extremely informative, gets boring pretty quick. In fact, the part of his webpage I liked the most was the introduction. It's quite lengthy, but it's a lot more personable than the rest of it. In the introduction, Don spends a great deal of time discussing how he came to work at Atari and various things that he personally experienced while he was there....very interesting reading.

There have been a couple different contemporary videogame magazines that ran feature articles on the history of video games. For the most part, the articles are well-informed and to-the-point. That's not to say they are without mistakes as both the articles I've read had some mis-information in them but not so much as to ruin the article for me. One thing I noticed about them is that they are not very particular about where they snag their pictures from! They use images that were obviously snagged from various webpages. Whether they bothered to ask for permission is not really the issue. You would think they'd take some photos of their own.

You're probably going to see more and more of this type of thing in various publications as more people start to jump onto the bandwagon. I personally welcome it as it makes information more readily available but I would really appreciate it if they'd spend a little more time making sure the information they are presenting is correct. I'll tell you something else too...this bandwagon is starting to get a little crowded! Oh how I long for the days when I could be so naive as to think I was the only one collecting this stuff.

MORE ROMpage

Well boys and girls, I can't recall if I've tackled this issue before or not, but even if I have, we need to chat a bit about all this shit I've been reading about people selling games. As crazy as it may sound, there are people actually selling their classic videogames to other collectors for more than they paid for them!! DO YOU BELIEVE?!?!

A big thread in the classic games newsgroup on the internet has been about a certain webpage called "eBay" or "AuctionWeb" - take your pick. Apparently a few collectors are disgruntled about the prices occasionally being fetched on eBay for classic videogames and systems. One example of this is a new-in-the-box Atari 5200 system that sold for over \$400 recently. You also have the kid that put his 2600 **Chase the Chuckwagon** cart on eBay with a starting bid of \$500. He caught some major flack for that one!

Call me crazy, but I could have sworn this is a free market and people have the right to price any item at any price they care to. If the price is too high, then nobody will buy the item and the seller should re-consider his price. What about the guy that was auctioning the 5200 system? Should he have prematurely ended the auction because he was getting too many bids on it? Or better yet, he could have had the common courtesy to offer to take less money from the final bidder since the winning bid was much too high. Please, feel free to take another hit on that crack pipe of yours.

There is and likely always will be such a thing as supply and demand. You see, not everyone has the time or inclination to go scrounging the thrift stores or flea markets for their games. They might have a lot more time than money and would prefer to pay for their nostalgia fix than spend (and waste in many cases) hours on end trying to find it. Does that mean they aren't welcome in our little videogames collecting clubhouse? There's another way to look at it for those of you that think it's much better to go out and find the games yourself. You might consider spending half as much time WORKING AT A JOB as you do digging through skanky boxes at thrift stores to find Atari 2600 games you probably will never play. Perhaps you'd soon find yourself on the side of the fence with the guy that has more money than time? Touche....

So.....we have a demand for games by the people that can't or won't find their stuff themselves. How do we fill that demand? Well, judging by the bitching and moaning I've read many times over the years, that demand is supposed to be filled by fellow collectors out of the kindness of their hearts. Despite having spent several hours walking up and down the aisles at their favorite flea markets on any given Sunday morning at about SIX IN THE FRIGGIN' AM, this poor sap is supposed to sell or trade his extra games to you for the same price he paid for them? He's certainly pond-scum if he dares to put his extra copy of 2600 **Stargunner** up on eBay for auction. You might actually have to pay a price dictated by the very same clubhouse you belong to!? We can't have any of that bullshit!

An argument can certainly be made for prices becoming artificially inflated in auctions just out of the "heat of battle" though. What I mean is when a group of people are interested in the same item up for auction, a sense of competitiveness does come in to play and the price can definitely get higher than it "should" because of person losing sight of what the hell he/she is doing and worrying more about not losing than how much they are paying. It happens all the time. Sure-fire way to avoid this problem is to not bid. Hey....what a great idea!

Have you ever tried to buy a game from a person that has listed several games for sale at what most of us know are prices much lower than they should or could be? I know that by the time I get around to emailing the person, he/she has already

been contacted about 87,000 times by other collectors. Now could it be that all of these people, hey...myself included, are trying to take advantage of this person because they know more than he/she does regarding the value of the games that were listed for sale? NO WAY - not us! I wonder how many of them will bargain the person "up" and offer to pay more than the listed price for these games just because they were priced too low? Now let's take this same person and "adjust" their prices the other way. We'll post his list with prices ten times MORE than the games are really worth. I wonder why these same 87,000 people are going to publicly tar and feather the poor bastard now? Practically everyone has "taken advantage" of someone selling games for less than they're worth. It's part of the fun of collecting and while some people may view that as disgusting, it's only because THEY didn't have the opportunity to do it before everyone else. Bargains are becoming more and more scarce and we should just learn to live with it. Face it, John Hardie and myself snagged all the bargain games years ago guys.

Here's a collector that's probably going to find himself on most every other collector's shitlist. How about the guy that buys games up with absolutely zero interest the games and is only out to make a buck on them or hoard them until they are worth something more? Did I make you cringe? Did I? Huh? Well, the worst of this type of nuisance is the one that is uneducated about what they're trying to do. You have some schmooze show up in the classic games newsgroup that nobody has ever heard of before asking "how much are these worth". THIS guy deserves what he gets! At least educate yourself a bit! At the same time, however, I don't necessarily have a problem with him in general. If he were to buy up stock in some company he thought was going to do well in time he wouldn't be looked down upon would he? How is this different? Oh....I always forget about that part. He's taking away games that YOU might have found isn't he? I guess you should look a little better next time huh?

There's another group of collectors that people seem to have a problem with and they are those that do not play the games they collect. I'm gonna let you in on a little secret that will probably get my clubhouse membership revoked for sure. *I* collect 2600 games to line the bottom of my bird's cage with! I never even look at the games. I just toss them all into a large box and when the old ones have too much BIRD SHIT ON THEM, I toss 'em out and grab a new stack and scatter them about the bottom of the cage. Well of course that's not true, but you wanna know something else though? It's none of your business either!

I get so sick and tired of these people that look at collectors that don't play their games like they have a dick growing out of their forehead! If you like to play every game you find to it's very end, that's great! If you never even plug it in to see if it works, that's cool too! Let's face it....there are CERTAINLY games well-worth playing for the classic systems but they are few and far between and anyone trying to convince me otherwise is on drugs. Using the Atari 2600 as an example, I would be willing to bet that the ratio of good games to bad is at best one good game for every ten lousy games. I'd agree that graphics don't always make a game, but they sure help sometimes. Take 2600 **Circus Atari**, for example, the game has to be among the most simple concepts, but it's fun to play. Now let's look at 2600 **Donkey Kong Jr.**, which I played for the very first time the other day, and compare it to say the ColecoVision version. Can you honestly tell me you wouldn't rather play the ColecoVision version putting aside the differences between the two systems' controllers)???

Let's review what we've learned here today boys and girls. First of all, if a collector feels his or her time and effort in looking for games is worth something if they decide to re-sell their extras, they are allowed to. If you disagree, you are allowed to

clam up and not buy their extras. If this same collector would like to put their extra games up for auction on eBay in an effort to get either the highest price or one that is most reflective of market value, they are allowed to. If you disagree, you are allowed to clam up and not place any bids. If a collector gathers up games for the sole purpose of melting them into the world's largest ball of melted plastic, they are allowed to and....you are allowed to mind your own business.

Have a nice day.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor:

It's kinda weird to see myself here especially since we have already talked about this, but I feel it's necessary to put something in print regarding your letter to the editor of *2600 Connection*.

The credits department on the *Digital Press CD-ROM* is far from perfect. There were many people, yourself included, that should have been mentioned by name. I'll take at least part of the blame off myself by saying that the name Joe Santulli is synonymous with "Digital Press" in my mind - I should not have assumed the same for all though.

In defending myself a bit more without getting too much into details, I'd like to make mention of the fact that support in putting together the CD from the *Digital Press* staff was minimal. While I would have much rather the work was more evenly spread, the bottom line is that I did 90-95% of all the work myself with the second largest portion being contributed by Clint Dyer who was not even a member of the staff here at the time.

Putting together all the data was a monumental project that

took nearly two years to do. I can certainly sympathize with what I think might have been a motivating factor behind the lack of support from the staff - the concept would be extremely difficult to complete and may never be completed. Hell, I second-guessed myself many, MANY times along the way. I also realize that not everyone on the staff had the computer equipment needed to contribute, but at the same time, everyone has a keyboard and could have done some typing. Oh how my Carpel Tunnel Syndrome would have appreciated that.

As for the paper guide and/or *Digital Press* in general, if there is any confusion as to who does what, I'd like to clear it up here and now. I was one of the original six or so people that put together the first DP guide and I continue to offer any help I can with it. I also do my thing here in the fanzine each issue, but that is the extent of my involvement in each. I have never made myself out to be more than that and anyone that thinks I am is incorrect.

The CD, however, is my project. I gathered the information, put it together into a somewhat presentable fashion, arranged and paid-for it's production, distribute it, and make the "not-for-profit" compensation for it.

I have been collecting data for the next revision of the CD since the last one was released and I have a lot more work to do. It is my sincerest hope that we can do the next revision more as a group than this one was. I truly believe that there isn't a problem or misunderstanding that a mention of your name in the credits wouldn't have avoided. For this I apologize. I also believe that more active involvement by the staff next time around will be apparent in the next revision and credit will not only be listed, but obvious.

Sean Kelly

Senior Writer, Digital Press

CATCH UP WITH DIGITAL PRESS - BACK ISSUES \$2.00

DP PRIMARY (spiral bound) The first dozen issues of DP plus extras! Neo-Geo: Worth It's Weight?; Atari 7800 Checklist; Worst of Atari 2600; Genesis Golf Side-by-Side; Whither ColecoVision?; ColecoVision Checklist; Family Tree: Shooters; How to Train a Non-Gamer; Genesis Football Side-by-Side; Streets of Rage Strategy; Whatever Happened To...?; Vectrex Checklist; Worst of Intellivision; Videogame Mags Side-by-Side; Atari 2600 Ranties; Life of the Party Videogames; Channel F Checklist; Gamepro TV Review; Scavenger Hunt '92; Weird Games; Summer CES '92; Buyer's Guide to Classic Systems; SNES Golf Side-by-Side; Astrocade Checklist; What If...?; Worst of Genesis; Atari 5200 Checklist; Atari 5200 Vs. ColecoVision Side-by-Side; The Darker Side of Gaming; Odyssey2 Checklist; SuperCharger Review; PsychOpedia; Ups & Downs of '92; Night Trap Solution; Intellivision Checklist; Sequels; DP Style; Atari 2600 Rip-offs; ColecoVision A/V Inputs; New 5200 Prototypes Discovered!; Coleco Adam Feature; DP Interviews Daniel Bass - Intellivision Programmer; Worst of ColecoVision; Best & Worst of SCES '93; DragonStomper Adventurer's Guide; DP Interviews Ray Kaestner - Intellivision Programmer; Scavenger Hunt '93; Our first April Fools Issue; Scavenger Hunt Winner Special Issue; DP prozine reviews; Classic letters. **SPECIAL** - \$25

#13: PERSPECTIVE: Videogame Trading

Cards; The Puzzy/Bit Corp. Real Videogame Madness; Genesis Baseball Games Side-by-Side.

#14: SCAVENGERS: Scavenger Hunt '93 Contest Special

#15: SCARY: Creepy Classic Carts; Horror Games We'll Never See; Rare Wars; Compu-Mate; Fanzine X-ing with VG Experience.

#16: BRAWL: Six Intangibles of Videogames; Tournament Fighting Games Side-by-Side; The Perfect Fighting Game; Atari Jaguar First Impressions; Upgrading your Genesis; Fanzine X-ing with Zineophilia; Worst of Neo-Geo; pt I.

#17: BRATS: Jess Ragan's Land of Rare & Exotic Coin-Ops; Hollywood Looks at Videogames II; Classic Kids' Games; Jaguar Rebuttal.

#18: FOOLISH: April Fools' 1994.

#19: RUSH: Collectors: hobbyists or bidders?; Jess Ragan's Land of Rare & Exotic Coin-Ops pt 2; The GameLine System; Classic "Panic Games"

#20: ALTERNATIVES: Classic Videogame Board Games; SCES '94 Coverage; Videogame Trading Cards II; Classic Knick-Knacks; Name This Game Contest; Fanzine X-ing with The Laser.

#21: FAME: John Van Ryzin interview; Ten Best and Worst Endorsements; Dealers vs. Bootleggers; Videogame Soundtracks; Classic "Endorsed" Games.

#22: REQUISITION: Adult Video Games; Fanzine X-ing with Infestation; Classic Favorites; Video Game Cartoons; Way of the

Warrior Survival Guide; Sega Master System US Cartridge Listing; Tribute to the "Old" Atari; Guide Addendum 3.01.

#23: BRAIN: Top Ten Brain Games; ROMpage "Sega Hates Us"; PsychOphile Brain Games; Guide Addendum 3.02

#24: PAC: Pac-Man Collectibles; Pac-Man Oddities; Pac-Man Reviews; Guide Addendum 3.03.

#25: SPORT: Unusual Sports in Video Games; Whatever Happened to Pleasant Valley Video Games?; ROMpage "Drought"; Alternate Currents: Running Your Own Sports League; Guide Addendum 3.04.

#26: TRASH: Silicon of the Damned; The 40 Worst Classics; Bad Influences in Videogames; DP Staff Bottom 10's of All Time; Guide Addendum 3.05; Collectible Duds.

#27: DRIVE: The Many Faces of Auto Racing; ROMpage Day-jah-voo; The 32-bit Cashectomy; Classic Driving Games; Mortal Kombat Movie Review.

#28: RECYCLE: Recycled Game Titles; Golden Age Recycles; DP Index; Guide Addendum 3.06; Scavenger Hunt III; Sportsman's Paradise.

#29: LOST: TV Boy Review; Video Game Jukeboxes; ROMpage 32 Bit Wars; 75 Games You Might Have Missed; Classic Sleepers; Guide Addendum 3.07; Why Prices?

#30: BLURB-A-THON: The Game Closet Recreated; Mr. Do! FAQ; Hollywood Looks at Video Games Continued; Interview with John Dondzila - Vectrex programmer; Virtual Boy Flash; Atari: What Went Wrong?; Stuff To Do This Summer.

#31: SUMMER: Play ColecoVision on your PC; Odyssey2/Odyssey3 FAQ; Crypts of Chaos Strategy Guide; Fighting Game comparisons; ROMpage - DP Staff in Turmoil?

#32: SUMMER: PsychOphile: Cool Classics; DP Staff Profile '97; ROMpage: Addiction?; DP Guide Update 4.01.

#33: IMPORT: Unsolved Videogame Questions; "Once Upon Atari" Videotape review; DP in Akuhabura Square; Videotopia & Cyber Playground coverage; DP Top 99 of All Time; DP Guide update 4.02.

#34: SUPERSYSTEM: An ALL-ATARI 5200 issue.

#35: WET: PsychOphile (wet games); BuenoOvision (wet movies); ROMpage: Out of Control; Coop de Grace; 3DO Now; Q*Bert Junk Drawer; Wacky World of AI; Hollywood Looks at Video Games 5.

#36: SOLO: Editor's Diatribe! Santulli Gallery of Fine Arts.

Spider-Man



Atari 2600

Parker Bros

Action



Review by Joe Santulli, who as we all know, can spin a web, any size.

Element	Joe			
Graphics	7			
Sound	7			
Gameplay	8			
Overall	7			

	Multi-Player, Same Time		Data Save Features
	Decent Game Ending		Hidden Stuff
X	Variable Skill Levels		Non-Linear Gameplay

How I love the classics.

Even the games that weren't much fun back then just have this wonderful purity that's so hard to capture in this era of superior technology. You can't play a game where just one button on your controller is all you need to "be" a major-license superhero. Not anymore, and that's a damn shame.

Few super-powered characters have transcended video game eras as well as Spider-man has (Superman being the only other exception). I know why... it's because few super-powered characters have as many super-powers as Spider-man. Look, he can shoot webs. He can climb the sides of buildings. He can "sense" things. He has "spider" strength (more on this in a moment). Hell, he even knows judo, boxing, and just about every other hand-to-hand fighting technique invented... quite a feat for a mild-mannered news photographer. For this very reason, Spider-man can "make it" on ANY video game platform. He's simply too versatile to fail.

This was the first game based on the alter-ego of Peter Parker, who was bitten by a radioactive spider and ultimately became a misunderstood crime-fighting legend, and it's arguably his best game. I really enjoyed the Sega Genesis take on Spider-man, but it takes a little while to get into. The Atari 2600 version is in-

stantly playable. Ahh, one button.

The foe of choice here is the "Green Goblin", whom comic book fans may recall. Although he's even tougher these days, and now known as "Hobgoblin", this baddie has rigged a few skyscrapers with super bombs that threaten Spider-man's fair city. The goal, like the joystick configuration, is simple: disarm the bomb. The task of reaching the top of each skyscraper where the super bomb lies isn't easy. Thugs wait at every window ready to cut down your web. Smaller bombs appear near the top, all set to blow up in the webslinger's face. And, of course, the Green Goblin roams about, just to slow you down.

I have a thing about superheroes in gaming in that no game ever seems to capture ALL of a superhero's skills. If I were Spider-man, I wouldn't waste my time slinging webs to scale the building, I'd just climb up the walls. I'd also use a little of the Ju-jitsu I learned on lunch hours at the newspaper job to clobber a few of the thugs along the way. Alas, it isn't so much a limitation on the Atari system as it is on the game's designers that Spidey has no such skills in this format. So he has to dodge the bad guys, hoping to "swing" into them for points. And he can actually run out of fluid on his way up to the top of the building, sending him plummeting to his death. There's

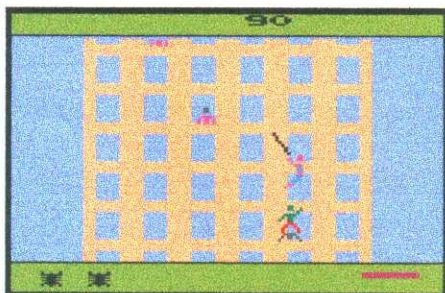
also no sign of "spider" strength here, although I question that... I can pretty much smash even a really big spider with my pathetic "human" strength. Just like those ants carrying 500 times their weight. Big deal, I outweigh those little bastards by at least 50,000 times!

The game's graphics are pretty good, with fairly well-rendered Spidey and Goblin. The building is rather non-descript, but it works. The bombs change from black (safe) to purple (ready to blow), and finally explode. Spidey swings realistically on his webbing, too.

There isn't much sound, but it's OK. A familiar tune launches each new stage, and the explosions and effects work rather nicely. Mae would be proud, if her hearing aid were working, that is.

Any gamer who has played **Crazy Climber** will immediately see **Spider-man's** inspiration. In many ways, this title is superior, as it is far simpler to control Spidey than that infernal **Crazy Climber** guy. Unfortunately, the windows never open and close, and the thugs just sort of watch - you won't find them dropping flower plants on your head here.

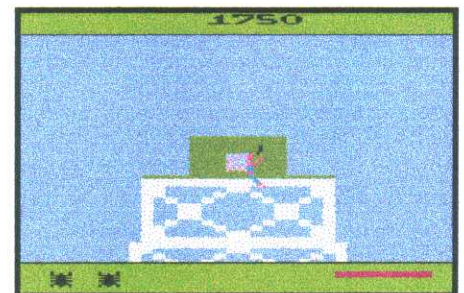
It's hard NOT to like this game. The familiar characters, simple but challenging gameplay, and progressive difficulty put it in that "classic" stack of oldies, even if it really didn't turn many heads when it was originally released.



Swingin' with the Hobgoblin and his boys

dp guide

Spiderman's an easy find. Expect to pay anywhere from \$4 to \$8 for it. Condition-conscious collectors should pay attention to the label, however - Parker Brothers game labels seem to lose their "stick", which later causes tears in the label.



This penthouse apartment is your goal

IGN.com Reviews

X-Men vs. Street Fighter

Saturn

Capcom

Fighting



A rollicking review by resident superhero Keita Ida

Element	Keita				X	Multi-Player, Same Time	X	Data Save Features
Graphics	8							
Sound	7					Decent Game Ending	X	Hidden Stuff
Gameplay	8				X	Variable Skill Levels		Non-Linear Gameplay
Overall	8							

Although Saturn support from third party publishers has been on the decline for some time in the US, it's almost the opposite in Japan, where a popular coin-op is almost assured of being ported to Saturn. A prime example of this is **X-Men Vs. Street Fighter**, the latest in a long line of 2-D **Street Fighter** variants from the venerable fighting masters. Combining the best aspects of the **Street Fighter** and X-Men heritage, the game that was a smash hit in the arcades has proven to be just good on Sega's 32-bitter.

The premise of Saturn **X-Men Vs. Street Fighter** remains unchanged. Two separate groups of good guys have joined forces in an effort to free their captured comrades and eliminate Apocalypse. Unlike previous games in either series, players assemble a two-man team comprised of characters from either the **Street Fighter** or X-Men universe. Several familiar faces return on both sides, including the likes of Wolverine, Chun Li, Rogue and Ken.

The home port of **X-Men Vs. Street Fighter** has remarkably retained the brilliant fighting engine that made the arcade version so popular. And in a change from previous fighters that had team play features, **X-Men Vs. Street Fighter** allows players to switch characters on the fly in the middle of a match. The gameplay is very deep as a result, since it allows

a player to bring a healthy fighter into play when his/her other hero is on shaky ground. Furthermore, injured, tagged-out fighters can partially recover health off-screen. And once your super bar is fully charged, stand back, because they'll have the ability to combine for an awesome team attack!

This is the best looking home 2-D fighting game by a longshot. Thanks to the new 4 megabyte RAM cartridge that's included with the game, every frame of animation has been duplicated from the arcade, and all the backgrounds look sharp and detailed. Just as important is the seamless switching of characters, with no momentary lapse of action as was the case in earlier Capcom efforts. The character movements are smooth and fluid, which is evident from the realistic way that they breath and flex their bodies even when standing still. From a graphical standpoint, it's virtually indistinguishable from its coin-op cousin.

But this isn't the only area of the



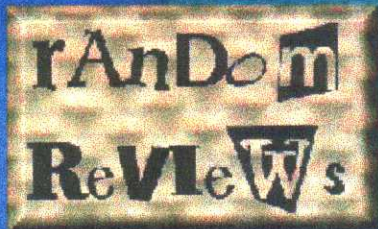
Ken has a bad spitting habit. Mmm, beer.

game that benefits from the extra breathing room of the RAM cart. The load times between matches has virtually been eliminated. This is evident when you compare **X-Men Vs. Street Fighter's** three second load time average to that of **Marvel Super Heroes**, which takes considerably longer (fifteen seconds, according to my stopwatch). Just about every frame of animation remains intact in the Saturn version, and there is absolutely zero slow-down.

Combined with these impressive technical leaps are the standard assortment of home-only features, such as hidden characters, options, and character variations that help sugar coat the already polished experience.

The only downside of **X-Men Vs. Street Fighter** is that Capcom still hasn't decided whether to bring this game (and the RAM cart) to the US. So if you've been putting off the purchase of the import in the hopes that it'll see an American release, you might want to grab the game now, especially since the RAM cart (which also works with several other games, most notably **Metal Slug**) is packed-in with the game.

Frogger



Playstation

Hasbro

Platform



Mark Terry's segmented-eye view of a true classic, revamped

Element	Mark			
Graphics	6			
Sound	7			
Gameplay	3			
Overall	3			

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Multi-Player, Same Time	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Data Save Features
<input type="checkbox"/>	Decent Game Ending	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Hidden Stuff
<input type="checkbox"/>	Variable Skill Levels	<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-Linear Gameplay

Frogger is back. He's got a new look, some new features and a new job to do. **Frogger** is now the hero to five lost baby frogs who are stranded and can't find their way back to the lily pad. He's bigger, bolder and (unfortunately) badder than before.

I'm the first person to jump on (and even drive at warp speed) the "Retro Refit Revolution" bandwagon. Today's gaming realm is so cluttered with driving and fighting and fighting-while-driving scenarios that game companies have lost sight of what made games great. Originality. Old games were born out of the inspirations and passion for fun. Games of our generation were unique, original and achieved their ultimate goal. Fun. And if they have to go back and revamp a classic title to bring out a game that has (and had) something different than the "kick, punch, steer" clones of today than so be it. Bring it on with all speed. **Frogger** was one of those games that was destined to become a classic. A staple in the video game annals of history. That's why when I learned that a 90's version was coming out, I got excited. I promptly cleared space on my game shelves and made room for the not-yet-released title to take it's place next to **Tempest 2000** and **Robotron X**. Maybe it is my genuine love for the original or maybe it is the game design itself but **Frogger** for the Playstation is a pale green remake of a game that is very much better in it's original form.

The new version starts with the appropriately named "Retro" level. This is the ol' highway hoppin', log jumping, turtle riding task that endeared us to **Frogger** in the first place, complete with what I always called the "lonely love-starved female frog" who jumps on your back and comes home with you in hopes of some hot froggy love (and bonus points). As expected with any 1990's remake, the sound and graphic are greatly enhanced. I think the opening sequence, as well as the "Retro" rounds themselves, give you the impression that the programmers wanted to give you the effect of playing the classic version while wearing cheesy 3-D glasses. Just without the cheesy 3-D glasses. This is done very well. However, the control of our hero is a tadpole off. Not on the car avoid-panic fest but on the river jump to home.

When you know you are leaping directly on a short log or back of a pack of migrating turtles for some reason (I guess it's because frogs got slippery hands being an amphibian and all) **Frogger** will lose his web footing, accidentally fall into the water and you lose a life. This is very frustrating. Frogs are suppose to be able to swim. Add to this change in the swimming turtle. In the original the turtles hinted they were about to practice some kind of kayak maneuver giving you a split second to jump somewhere else and stay afloat (and alive). Well... guess what. In the Playstation version you make your jump, you take your chances. Without warning you find yourself back in the drink and one less frog to use to build up points. Some might argue to "play the game as is. It's the way it's designed. It's part of the challenge." I say if the gameplay was solid to begin with, "DON'T @\$# WITH IT!" Keep the classic gameplay intact. The frustration meter on this game is a definite 10. After you complete the 4 "Retro" rounds you move on to levels that are such a diverse change from the original that you are now playing, for sarcastic repose, "Frogger III: The Croak Factor." Let me explain.

The next level is called, "Lily Island". Our goal here is the same but the obstacles have change in this level and all the levels here out. The search area is huge and you have no idea which direction to go to rescue the stranded baby frogs. This leads you to aimlessly explore the level till time runs out and your exploration has cost you a life. It only serve to help you know which way not to go next time. You jump on (and fall off) small logs flowing in lines in the



Lordy, what a bad game.

lake of a thousand islands. On some of the islands there is an infestation of bugs. Wait... this is a good thing. **Frogger** now gets to use his heat seeking tongue to gobble up the insects and acquire quest aiding power-ups. These include temporary high jump, temporary speed up, temporary super long tongue, temporary glow-in-the-dark ability and temporary extra time. Be careful. Some bugs even take away points. The extra time bonus is the only one I have found to be useful since you need lots of time to explore the level to find the damn lost frogs. The speed up power bonus just makes you lose control of **Frogger** and it might as well be a poison insect causing instant death. The result is the same. A dead frog. More things to be frustrated about. And it goes on and on. "Honeybee Hollow" has fast moving swarms of killer bees that are everywhere and out maneuver you every time. "Scorching Switches" just finds a new way for you to die. If the game weren't so friggin' aggravating, I might even care about the other levels and the secret Cave levels.

On the good side (this will be a short paragraph).... the addition of the "Race" mode where up to 8 people can hop about trying to be the first on to get the victory flags and all the prestige that goes with it. I played the 2 player race and found it to be enjoyable. You race vertically up the screen head on into traffic. You can also compete in scenes from the other levels but the "Retro" one is the only scenario worth while. Also, they kept the clock from the original and gives you the time limit in which you have to complete one frog liberation. I love the way the timer counts down the last 10 seconds on screen to add to the panic. These, sadly, are not enough to save the game.

I haven't had the game for very long and maybe I'm being a little hasty. Maybe I'll grow to love it. But based on my first (and second and third and.....) impression, stick with the classic.



Superman

Atari 2600

Atari

RPG



Review by Joe Santulli, man of imitation imported steel

Element	Joe			
Graphics	6			
Sound	6			
Gameplay	7			
Overall	6			

Multi-Player, Same Time
Decent Game Ending
Variable Skill Levels

Data Save Features
Hidden Stuff
Non-Linear Gameplay

Did you know that in EVERY episode of "Seinfeld", there is a shot of Superman somewhere? It's true. Apparently Jerry is a big fan in real life. Seinfeld is just one among millions of fans, among those, game designers for the Atari 2600, Nintendo Entertainment System, and Sega Genesis. Here's the dirt on the first attempt at recreating the man of steel's adventures.

I can vividly recall the week when Superman for the Atari 2600 was released (yeah, I'm a relic). My friend Kevin owned a 2600 in the years when my parents were still convinced that video games would ruin a television picture, not to mention a young man's mind (heh, heh, how right they were). We spent Sundays together, Kevin and I, so his gain was mine as well. These were "lean months" for Atari... those early years just prior to Space Invaders but well after convincing us that cartridge-based gaming was here to stay.

It was at this time that the Yankees were world champions, and not looking back while the Mets were struggling to find their way out of the basement of the NL East. Imagine a time when Mike Vail was the Mets' big hitter and Reggie Jackson was his crosstown rival. By the way, Kevin was the Mets fan. I was the Yankees fan. This "I own an Atari" and "I have the world champs" was the founda-

tion upon which our rivalry was built. Fortunately for me, Superman is a one-player game, because Kevin mastered this game beyond anything I'd ever seen him play. There's a trick to the game (see below) that I'd still swear Kevin discovered.

Unlike MOST superhero-based video games, this Superman closely matches the strengths and weaknesses of his comic book counterpart. He can fly. He has super strength (bad guys with machine guns don't bother him one bit, no sir). He has X-ray vision. Kryptonite really bothers him. His arch-enemy is behind the chaos. His babe is always nearby. Come to think of it, this is about the most accurate Superman rendition EVER done on a video game (imagine, Superman fighting Aquaman in a game and LOSING... heresy!).

More notably, this Superman game was a pioneer of the "role playing game" genre. Like Atari's other RPG effort Adventure, the goal in Superman isn't to score points, it's to achieve an end result. What you do along the way - and how you do it - is completely up to you. This was SO unlike games of its time where scoring points and moving on to a harder "wave" was what it was all about, it's difficult to put it into perspective. Think about Mike Vail vs. Reggie Jackson again for a moment. It was THAT much

different.

The goal of the game is simple, but there are many paths. You have to rebuild a destroyed bridge and incarcerate the thugs that perpetrated the crime. Behind it all is Superman's arch-nemesis, Lex Luthor. There's also a helicopter that flies around grabbing things and placing them elsewhere (similar to the bat in Adventure). Lois Lane walks around ready to change helpless Clark Kent into the man of steel, if you know what I mean. Vavoom! There are various locations with landmarks like the phone booth, the jail, and the Daily Planet. Floating Kryptonite changes Superman back into the flaccid Clark Kent if he comes into contact with it. A timer ticks away, serving as your "scoring device" if you're trying to set a new home record. Superman was, after all, a second generation game. Players expected lots more stuff than the early efforts of Combat, Slot Racers, and Street Racer. And they got it. Superman was a real hit.

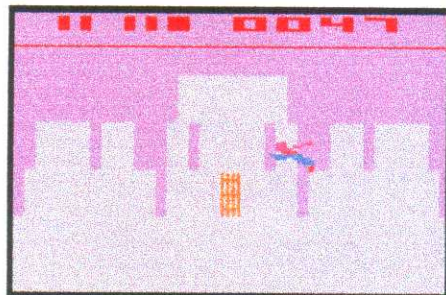
Although it appears to be a primitive early attempt at a quest/RPG game, I will always remember Superman for the Atari 2600 as a ground breaker. It was the Reggie Jackson among the Mike Vails of gaming.



The bad guys can take their guns to jail...

easter egg

Hold the joystick button down as you power on the game. Wait 2 seconds and release. Superman won't change into Clark Kent, and the bridge won't explode! You'll find the bridge pieces in the subway, but all you need to do is capture Lex Luthor and his men (and return to the Daily Planet). This trick only works on early versions of the game.



...this wooden fence seems to hold them

WINTER HEAT



Saturn

Sega

Sports



Review by Jeff Cooper, representing the national army of video gamers

Element	Jeff			
Graphics	9			
Sound	9			
Gameplay	9			
Overall	9			

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Multi-Player, Same Time	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Data Save Features
<input type="checkbox"/>	Decent Game Ending	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hidden Stuff
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Variable Skill Levels	<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-Linear Gameplay

Okay, let's get one thing out of the way: I have never tried Konami's **Nagano Winter Olympics** for either the N64 or the PSX. Many reviews rated it anywhere from fair to downright poor. Critics complained that the controls were way over-complicated, and belittled Konami for wandering so far from the winning formula it had employed so successfully in its many **Track and Field** titles. I didn't consider **Nagano** even worth a rent.

Enter Sega's **Winter Heat**, an eleven-event masterpiece programmed by Data East. By stealing some from Konami's previous releases while avoiding the trap of making a mindless button basher, the programmers have produced the best set of winter games since, well, **Winter Games**, the Epyx classic of the mid-1980s. Let's look at the events.

The competition starts with Speed Skiing, the only pure button basher in the mix. Pound away for about twelve seconds and it's on to the next event, the Ski Jump, a fun throwback to the original **Track and Field**. You work the speed button as you race down the slope. Then just before you ski off the edge, you push and hold the action button. Release the action button when it reaches about thirty degrees and you're launched into the stratosphere. You must hit the action button again to land. The Ski Jump is a real rush. Next comes Downhill Skiing. You have to bash the buttons a little to gain speed, but for the most part this event requires you to steer your way through a tricky course that includes several jumps. The graphics and sense of speed are sensational. Short Track Speed Skating is primarily a test of fitness. Yes, you have to keep the buttons going, but you don't have to bash frantically - it gives you full speed for

even, quick, tapping. The real trick here is in steering and positioning yourself as the other skaters try to block you off and keep you to the outside. The Skeleton, or one-man bobsled is quite simple. Hit the speed buttons to build up momentum, tap the action button at the appropriate point to enter the sled, and then steer you way around the track.

The final six events are also nicely varied. The Slalom is odd in that you don't steer - you just hit the action button at the appropriate moment to go around the gates. Sounds easy but, because of the way they've spaced the gates, this is one of the more difficult events. The Aerial remains true to the button pushing formula. First you choose the difficulty of the jump you wish to attempt. Then you bash the speed button until you enter the ramp. You hold down the action button until the edge of the ramp--at that point you release it (which launches you) and then you bash the speed button some more to do tricks in the air. The Bobsleigh is almost exactly like the Skeleton, and Snow Boarding is quite similar to the Downhill Skiing, though there is a different feel to it. Speed Skating, another fun event, requires you to bash the buttons in the straightaway and then slowly pace yourself around long corners. The animation of the skaters is terrific. Cross-



Who planted bamboo chutes here, DOH!

country skiing rounds out the Olympics, and even that requires careful pacing and positioning to win.

Make no mistake, this is an arcade game (that may be literally the case: the on screen instructions/demos feature arcade buttons and a joystick). The great thing is that anyone can pick this up and play, but success depends on much more than just smashing buttons as fast as you can. The downside is that some will still find this to be a little too simplistic. They could have added some depth by ripping off a figure skating event from the old Epyx series; similarly, I really don't think it would have over-complicated matters if they allowed you to manipulate your ski-jumper while he's in the air. The instructions also could be more complete. Pushing the direction pad up allows the skier to "tuck," for example, which is never mentioned in the docs. The instructions also indicate that you hit the speed button in the Slalom just to build up initial speed--but you'll go way faster if you keep tapping it throughout the course.

Still, what's here is very good. The graphics, animation and sound are great, and really add to the wintry mood. The gameplay features good arcade fun, and is very addictive. Once you complete the Snowboard course you want nothing more than to get right back at it to beat your time but - nope - it's on to the next event. That's a sign of a good game. This release is supposedly the last for the Saturn from Sega Sports. They've gone out with a real winner.

rAnDoM ReVieWs

Earthworm Jim

Genesis

Playmates

Platform



Howie Hirsch re-lives a classic in console-born heroes

Once Upon A Time.

The storey is the best: A worm who just happens to be named Jim is going about his business. A crow who wants Jim to be his next meal swoops down for an attack. Alas, our slimy hero is always one step ahead of his dumb but persistent nemesis. All that our worm-friend does is duck into the safety of his hole. The crow winds up smashing into the ground head first. While this is going on, there is another battle taking place. A spaceship and its pilot with a high tech spacesuit are trying to get away from another ship being piloted by someone named Psy-Crow. Psy-Crow stops and corners the thief, but the thief pulls out his blaster. Psy notices that the thief has a larger blaster than his. So he pulls out a much larger one and blows the guy into oblivion. In a strange twist of fate, the spacesuit plummets towards earth. Back on the surface, Jim proceeds to find out if the coast is clear - of crows that is. Just as he's about to go through his daily routine, a spacesuit lands on top of him, the opening for the head snugly wrapped around him. Suddenly, something strange begins to happen to Jim. He undergoes a metamorphosis where he becomes a "super worm" or for simplicity, **Earthworm Jim**. Once he realizes what has happened to him, he looks over the



Cartoon violence at its finest

Element	Howie	Joe		
Graphics	9	10		
Sound	7	8		
Gameplay	9	9		
Overall	8	9		

	Multi-Player, Same Time		Data Save Features
X	Decent Game Ending	X	Hidden Stuff
	Variable Skill Levels		Non-Linear Gameplay

suit. Strapped to the suit's side is a blaster. Jim proceeds to find out how this thing works. In no time, he figures out how it works and inadvertently blasts his crow nemesis into toast.

Bewildered by what has happened, Jim leans up against a tree. Because of the suit, the tree topples onto the crispy crow finishing him off for good. Jim notices another crow (the spaceman's enemy Psy-Crow) and he is looking at a pattern that the suit left behind. Jim overhears Psy talking to his employer. Her name is "Queen Slug For Butt". The suit is supposed to make her just as if not better looking than her princess twin sister who is imprisoned. Psy-Crow has sworn to the queen to get the suit back and lay waste to whoever has taken it. This is where Jim decides to become a superhero and rescue this princess. I think Jim wants to not only rescue her, but to get some royal nookie. Finally, you, the player come into the picture.

You must help our worm beat the odds and win the girl. Choose your difficulty level and control setup. Sorry, but that's it. You have nine levels with unusual titles such as New Junk City, What the Heck?, Down the Tubes, Snot a Problem, Level 5, Andy Asteroids, For Pete's Sake, Intestinal Distress, and Buttvile. Your enemies are completely bizarre (not to mention a tad disgusting). Each one wants a piece of EWJ's hide and of course, the suit. Some want to return it to the queen and others want it for themselves. Of course there are other pitfalls that must be avoided.

Controls are very responsive and the animation is super-fluid. Everything is superbly hand-drawn. EWJ has plenty of variety and power-ups, too. I like the fact that he says "GROOVY" when a level

was completed, a signature of the game. Sound is great but the background music is merely tolerable.

Here is where I start to whine. There is no way to turn off the BGM! This is especially important in the "Heck" level. The Muzak in this stage drives me up the wall! Then again, there's the volume control or mute button for the TV. In this game the only way to survive is to keep moving - it's hazardous for a worm to stay in one place. Use the blasters and any special weapons wisely. Whip the enemies whenever you can, save the heavy artillery for the real baddies. Collect any power-ups and icons you come across. You will hear Jim say. "OH YEAH" when you grab a one-up. Should Jim die, you will not have to start at the beginning. Last but not least, time your moves. It makes all the difference between fun and frustration.

I find this cart to be both frustrating and a blast to play. A postscript, folks: this game spawned a sequel aptly named **Earthworm Jim 2**. Not to mention a cartoon series on Kid's WB. Where is it now? There was also a line of some pretty cool looking action figures that are collector's items now!

Of all the genres of video gaming, "platform games" are my LEAST favorite. Here's the testament: **Earthworm Jim** is one of the few in this genre I like to play.



Santulli

Rocky

rAnDm
ReVieW's

ColecoVision

Coleco

Sports



Keita Iida gets a little punchy in this review

Element	Keita	Joe		
Graphics	8	8		
Sound	8	8		
Gameplay	2	7		
Overall	3	8		

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Multi-Player, Same Time	<input type="checkbox"/>	Data Save Features
<input type="checkbox"/>	Decent Game Ending	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hidden Stuff
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Variable Skill Levels	<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-Linear Gameplay

Yes, I am aware the Rocky series of movies is regarded as one of best of all time, and certainly the one that helped Stallone attain greatness on the silver screen. I'll also admit that I enjoyed watching each of them for about the the first fifteen times or so. Fifteen?!? Well, how am I supposed to avoid them, when every network and cable movie channel has shown the damn things about a billion times each? Consider them the VCS **Combat** of movies.. everyone's seen it and everyone knows what it is. How about the video game version, you ask? Let's just say I'd rather watch a Rocky marathon on TNT than play this dud.

Rocky Super Action Boxing for the ColecoVision is based on Rocky III, the one made famous by Mr. T and "Eye of the Tiger" (quick, name the group that did the song!). You take the part of either the Italian Stallion or Clubber Lang trying to beat your opponent senseless in three sixty-second rounds. The cartridge allows you to play against another gamer or against the com-

puter at any of four skill levels. Using the buttons on the pistol grip of the Super Action Controllers you make your boxer throw a punch to the head, a punch to the body, put up his guard or drop into a crouch. When the fighters get too close to each other they go into a clinch. The joystick will move your man around the ring, although the fighters cannot circle each other.

The scoreboard shows each fighter's level of daze and fatigue. When the daze level shows your man has advanced amnesia it means one more good hit will send him to the canvas. At the same time, if your opponent is ready to see stars, you can move in for the coup de grace. When the fighters go down they stay down for a mandatory eight-count, unless the referee decides to stop the fight (don't worry, the ref's not a video version of Richard Steele.) The bout lasts ten rounds and the scoring is displayed after each sixty-second round. The winner dons the heavyweight belt (whether WBA, WBC, IBF or WBO isn't clear) and does a victory strut to a famous movie theme. Guess which one.

Among the boxing contests available on classic systems, **Rocky's** technical presentation is inarguably the best. The animation is astonishingly fluid and detailed, and the **Rocky** music is superbly done. However, for those qualities I could have

rented *Rocky III* on video tape. The boxers move as though they were sloshing through ten inches of snow. Not only that, but they can't even leave their half of the ring! Although Intellivision boxing has this same shortcoming, at least it offers additional features not available on **Rocky**, such as the ability to build your own fighter, emphasizing strength, speed, endurance, speed and other attributes. Activision's boxing isn't as versatile, but it allows you to hammer away relentlessly, and if it's action that you're looking for, it moves many times faster than either of the more so-called "sophisticated" cartridges.

Rocky only LOOKS like a boxing game. It's really only an excuse to show off Coleco's acumen with graphics. This is a case of Coleco compromising the gameplay for something that would look great in ads and in the stores. But then again, the same could be said for many games in the ColecoVision library. Shame on you, Coleco.

When I think of all the "near fights" this game caused, I can't help but think that violent people who also have belligerent friends would rate the game differently.



Santullh



The ref really digs Rocky's package, eh?

Batman

Game history by Clint Dyer

Batman rules, doesn't he? How could you not like a guy that wears a cowl with pointy ears on it? Well, the video game industry sure seems to agree with that point of view anyhow. For me, Batman has been a favorite since childhood. I never got into comics (I think I was the only one in school who didn't read comics), but I loved the TV Show (shut-up, you did too!) and then the movies. Although I never wanted to be Batman (Sean was telling me he did the other day - he even said something about Keita being Robin, but that's another story for a different type of fanzine (Sean tells me that he can give full subscription information to anyone who's interested in that kind of fanzine)), I always admired his toys (who could forget the Bat Shark Repellant?). Maybe it's why I'm so much into toys today and why Batman lends himself so well to video games. Sadly, there are very few awesome Batman games. Sure, some are fun to play, but there are also a lot of sad excuses for video games, much like most other TV/Movie related games that have ever been made. I guess the companies just view it like this "Hey, we have a great license, lets just put together any old piece of crap and people will buy it because it has "Superhero/Movie Star/TV Star X" in it!" But, I digress. My point here is that most of the games made around the Batman license aren't what they should be and in general aren't good. I'll be covering all the Batman games that I know of and have played extensively, whether they're good, bad or ugly and for those that I haven't played before, I'll just give whatever information I know.

Batman

PC Engine

5 This Japanese-only release has its good and bad points. The bad points, for me, far outweigh the good points, but it's not bad enough to make this game one of the top on my list of wants. The object of the game is pretty simple. You have to guide Batman through a maze, picking up items and throwing Batarangs at the bad guys. Picking up all the items in a level allows you to go onto the next level... Which is pretty much the same as the last level and so on until you get to round 10, then the graphic set changes, though the gameplay stays the same. As you might have guessed, the game is one of the most repetitive games I've ever played. Each level is the same exact thing, with little twists. For example, the bad guys in the first level don't shoot - the bad guys in the second level shoot at you and move faster, etc. In short, it gets quite boring, quite quickly. That aside, the graphics in the game are pretty nice enough to make you want to continue (this is especially good if you can play games while you sleep). Batman and the enemies are small, but animated well and the colors in the game, much like most PC-Engine games, are crisp and clear. Overall, it's not in my top ten lists of games, in fact, it probably wouldn't be in my top 100, but it is fun

enough to make it into my collection one day. - Clint Dyer

Batman

Sunsoft, for NES

7 The Nintendo Entertainment System doesn't have a lot of power, but it's got more good games for it than almost any other game system (wait, did I say that?). Batman is one of the games in the library that isn't awesome, but isn't horrible. The graphics, although marred by flicker (which can be said for about 80% of NES games), are well drawn and animated (which can't be said for 80% of NES games) and the backgrounds are rich in detail. Play wise, the game holds its own, although there certainly could be more to do. Granted, it's a typical side scrolling game, but that hasn't ever stopped me from enjoying a decent game. - Clint Dyer

Batman

Sunsoft, for Genesis

9 This was one of the games that would have made me buy a Genesis if I didn't already have one at the time it was released. The graphics, for the time, are second to none and absolutely blew me away! Looking back on it now, it seems to have a whitewash effect over the screen, but at the time I didn't notice and was blown away by the effects (the rain was amazing!) and the well-drawn graphics. Animation did leave a lot to be desired, but when the graphics are as impressive as they are in this game, animation is a minor point. The gameplay in this game still holds its own. It's still as easy to control and addicting as it was when it was released! In general, I don't care about a game's storyline, but the story in this game comes directly from the movie. In the beginning, you have to find Jack Nicholson's character (I FORGET HIS NAME!!!) and knock him into the boiling green stuff to turn him into the Joker. And the game remains true to the movie throughout, including the rescue scene with the famous line "Where does he get all those toys!" In short, this is one heck of a fun game that really stands out against all the other Batman games. If you don't have this game in your Genesis collection, put it there ASAP! I should point out that the Megadrive version of this game comes in a very cool small case (I don't know why more games weren't released like this -- it's cool packaging!). Here's a neat piece of trivia -- look at the back of the Genesis package for the screen shots of the NES version of the game! - Clint Dyer

Batman Returns

Acclaim, for SNES

This game is one of the more brutal Batman

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8 games ever made. Basically, it is **Final Fight** with Batman characters, but the gameplay is so fun and addicting that you'll forget that you've played the game to death already. This game allows you to take two enemies and beat their heads together, one of the coolest moves ever in a video game and this is the only game I can think of that allows you to do that! Above and beyond that, the game controls very well. You'll be pulling off cool moves and pounding bad guys into the ground with a fever not matched by many games (**Streets of Rage 1 and 2** come to mind as being equal to this and not many others). The only real drawback to the game is that it doesn't have a lot of variety to it, like the Genesis **Batman** game, but honestly, it's so much fun that you won't even notice it. To make things all the better, the graphics really show off the power of the SNES machine. Batman himself is huge for the time this game came out and the crispness of the graphics and superb animation make this one of the better looking SNES games. If you want some mindless fun, beating guys heads into each other and don't have **Streets of Rage 2** for the Genesis, check this game out! - Clint Dyer

Batman Returns Sega, for SMS & Game Gear

6 The GG version of this game is a direct port of the SMS version (or the other way around, I'm not sure which), so they are basically the same game, except that unless you have special hardware, you're playing the GG version on a much smaller screen.

Overall, this game was an incredible let down. In fact, almost all games that centered on this movie were incredibly disappointing. The graphics in the SMS/GG version are really nothing special and certainly not as good as the graphics on the NES version of the game. It doesn't suffer as badly as the NES version from flicker, but if it weren't for a couple of really cool looking bosses, the NES version would walk hand and foot all over this version. The only thing that saves this cart (somewhat) is that the gameplay is fun. The controls are easy to pull off, and you can do a bit more than your average side scrolling game -- throwing batarangs, using a rope to swing, etc. That being said, though, is exactly what this game is -- an average side scrolling game, with a few cool moves thrown in to hide the fact that it is average at best. If you're desperate for a Batman game to play on a portable system, I'd play this one over the Lynx version, but only because this one isn't as frustratingly hard. - Clint Dyer

Batman Returns Sega, for Genesis & Sega CD

6/7 The Genesis version of this game is all action based. The CD version allows you to play the Genesis game, or take the action and add, between levels, a driving

theme to it. The difference in score is primarily due to the driving portion of the game. Graphically, the two games are identical when it comes to the action portion. No improvements were made to the Sega CD version, although, honestly, that's not really a bad thing as the graphics in the Genesis game are good. The backgrounds are specifically well drawn, and the animation of the characters is acceptable. It's just about everything you'd expect from a Batman game, graphically. Gameplay is where the Genesis game really falls off. The controls are frustrating and just plain not fun. You'll find yourself getting hit by the enemies and not being able to do anything about it because of the poor control. The Sega CD driving game however makes up for the poor control of the regular game. The driving game, although, not "real" driving, is a lot of fun, and let's face it, who hasn't wanted to drive the Batmobile at one time or another? I know I have. If I were to pick one of these two versions to be stranded on a desert island with, I'd choose the CD version, though, honestly, neither of these games would be with me, as they certainly aren't the best Batman games made.

Batman & Robin Sega, for Genesis/Sega CD

8/7 Following up on the relative success of **Batman Returns** (isn't it funny how a movie game can completely stink, but it will still sell just because of the license?), Sega made **Batman & Robin**. They stuck with the same format as the previous games -- the CD version contains the Genesis game, plus a driving sequence thrown in between levels. Switched, however, is the quality of the games. The Genesis game is graphically, nothing short of spectacular. The characters are animated so incredibly well that you'd swear they were on the



screen. In addition, this game uses more colors than most Genesis games, and it really shows, as this game has some of the most incredible graphics (the explosions and the amount of stuff happening on screen at one time are mind boggling) ever seen in a Genesis game. Gameplay itself is incredibly well done. Where this game falters is in the difficulty. The game is so incredibly hard that unless you're one of those people who likes throwing controllers, you'll stop playing this gam after the first level, if you ever get past the first level. Had it been easier, this game would have rated a perfect 10 in my book. The Sega CD version, unlike **Batman Returns** is a great let down. Gameplay wise, you do get to drive the Batmobile and fly the Batwing (same thing applies for the Batwing as does for the Batmobile), but control is jerky and frustratingly hard. Graphically, the CD version is about half as pretty as the Genesis game. The graphics for the flying

scenes are just absolute blah and in my opinion, this game shouldn't have been released with the graphics in the state they are in. Overall, the Genesis game is one of the better games for the system if your controllers can stand a beating. Skip the Sega CD version and you'll be none-the-worse-off. - Clint Dyer

Batman (Animated Series) for SNES

8

This is one of those games that have the player learning a new gameplay type for each new level they finish. Normally, that's not my cup of tea, but in this game, it feels right. Each level is themed around a character from the show and each has that character as the boss. Above and beyond that, the gameplay is fun. Normally with these types of games, there are a couple of fun gameplay styles and the rest of the game just isn't fun. With this one (one of the few games on this list that I cared enough to finish), I thoroughly enjoyed each twist in the gameplay and didn't find myself wishing the current level was the same as the last. It's one of those games that are so different from everything else made that it really stands out. Graphically, the game is superb! The detail and the colors that are used are really second to none on the SNES machine. The only really bad thing about this game is the password system. Passwords aren't my thing normally (who likes them?), but in this game, the passwords are graphics on a grid. This makes it hard to keep track of them while playing the game. Otherwise, if you were a fan of the TV show (or movie), I'd suggest seeking this game out! - Clint Dyer

Batman: Revenge of Joker Sunsoft, for NES and Genesis

8

This game is different from most of the other Batman games in that it doesn't really follow a movie theme. For me, that's a good thing. I'm not expecting anything specific I saw in the movie to appear in the game, nor am I expecting the storyline or plot that the movies have. That being said, this is a fun game. The controls are good, the game has the right challenge level and the graphics are nicely drawn and animated. I really wish more companies would take this game to heart and make games with popular movie/TV characters removed from their original environments.

Batman Forever Acclaim, for many systems

I missed the whole **Batman Forever** game thing. Quite frankly, the games are, from what I can tell **Final Fight** rip-offs. In itself, that isn't a bad thing, but if I want to play a **Final Fight** game, I'll play **Final Fight** or the previous **Final Fight** rip-off **Batman**



game! The graphics in these versions are very nice from what I've seen, though I can't speak for the controls/etc, because as I said, I haven't played any of

them. In this day and age, I shudder to think how incredibly horrible these games could be. But, I'll still pick them up for \$5 at the flea markets, if for nothing more than to have all the **Batman** games in my collection. - Clint Dyer

Batman Atari, Arcade game

8

The arcade version of **Batman** is, not surprisingly, well done! The graphics are incredibly sharp (or were for the time), with detail that you just can't get on a console system. Animation is also spectacular. Graphically, I think it would be best described as bigger than life, which arcade games have always strived for. Gameplay wise, this one could be better. There is a lot to do, as in most arcade games, but it was a bit too difficult for my tastes, and I am the kind of person who likes one gameplay element throughout the whole game. With this version, you get a whole bunch of different kinds of games mixed up into one game. You start off on a typical side scrolling scene (punching, throwing Batarangs, etc.), then when you finish the first level, you move onto another type of game scene, where the skills learned in the previous level mean squat. If you can still find a copy of this game at your local arcade, give it a play, but don't pass up **Zaxxon**, **Tempest** or any of your other favorite games to play it. - Clint Dyer

Batman Forever Sega, pinball machine

Ok, so technically, it's not a video game. I figured I'd throw this one in because I had a lot of play time logged into it (they had it in the Sega lunch room/arcade set on free and I can't pass up a free game no matter how bad it is). Pinball games are supposed to be a) fun, b) challenging, c) mind boggling in terms of there being so much to do and d) well, good! This game is NONE of the above. It has to be one of the worst pinball games I have ever played, period. I don't know who designed this game for Sega, but they should have been fired for lack of creativity! Sure, it had some neat graphics that appeared on the ticker type display, but other than that, this game has no good points! Ack! What'd you go and make me put this one in here for?! :) - Clint Dyer

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Batman & Batman Forever Sunsoft, for Gameboy

Batman games on Gameboy? Why bother? I've avoided these games like the plague simply because they can't do Batman justice, I don't care how fun they may be. 'nuff said. :) - Clint Dyer

Batman Atari, for Lynx

7 Of all the Batman "console" games, this is probably the one that I've played least. I never got into the whole Lynx thing, but when **Batman** came out for it, I had to at least play it! I'm not sorry I did, but I'm also not sorry I don't have the game. The graphics in the game are incredible, much like those in all the Lynx games. The detail that machine can produce is astounding and this title really shows off the Lynx's power. The gameplay on the other hand is very difficult. I don't mind challenge in a game, in fact, I LOVE a great challenge, but there are some games that are just too hard for their own good. This is one of those games. It's just too frustrating to be a game that I'd strain my eyes to play. - Clint Dyer

Tiger Batman, Batman Animated, Batman Forever, Batman tabletop, Batman and Batman Returns watch Handheld games

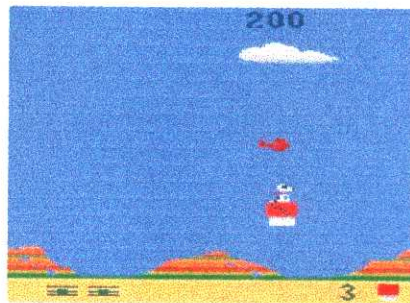
Being a handheld nut, I couldn't leave out the handheld versions of the games! Though, honestly, most of these games are not even close to being fun and the LCD displays really limit the world, there is something cool about holding a game in your hand and playing **Batman** on it. Better yet, wearing **Batman** on your wrist and playing it in miniaturized fashion. For fun factor, there's not a handheld on this list that I would play over any of the console games above, but I didn't want to leave out the handhelds. And besides, you can't take your Genesis and SNES with you (though, that would be a good reason for the Gameboy versions, wouldn't it?)

Overall, the quality of the Batman games isn't as bad as it could be. There are some duds in the collection, as there are with almost any collection (ever played **Wolverine: Adamantium Rage** or **Wolverine/X-Men for the Genesis**?) of games, but on the whole, the **Batman** library would stand up against even the likes of **Superman**. Now, THAT'S a game I want to see! - Clint Dyer

Snoopy and the Red Baron Atari, for Atari 2600

7 Just in case you didn't know, this game is based on the dog character from Charles Schut's **Peanuts** comic strip. Snoopy fantasizes that he is a World War I flying ace. His doghouse becomes a Sopwith Camel biplane. Most of his day-dreams carry him into dogfights (how appropriate!) with his chief adversary, The Red Baron.

The air battle scenario is not a new idea. It can be found in many forms on the very first Atari 2600 cartridge, **Combat**.



The object of the game is defeat the Fokker Triplane flown by the Red Baron while avoiding 8 direct hits from return

fire. It takes the same number of hits to shoot down one Red Baron. There can be 3 to 5 Red Barons per round depending on the game variation/difficulty chosen. You build up your score by scoring direct hits. You build up towards extra lives by collecting the various bonus prizes that are dropped in the course of the action. These prizes are in the form of food items like hamburgers, soda, popcorn etc. After each round is over you get the intermission screen which shows you the inventory of the bonus items collected. A full collection of 3 rows of 8 different items will gain you an extra life. This screen can look very impressive and might make you hungry as it fills up. This whole game is pretty sharp looking graphically for the 2600. The joystick control works well. Once you get the hang of defeating the Red Baron, the game becomes easier and a little monotonous. You can build up your extra lives to the point where you can play for hours. I do think however, that its intended audience of young children might still find the game overwhelming and frustrating. Don't get me wrong, you can get beaten up a bit. Maybe even drop a few lives, but you will learn how to survive indefinitely.

I can offer a few tips. Try to get behind the triplane then fire off a salvo. Leave the area of a food pickup immediately. Try not to miss the specific food items you need to fill the bill. Guide the triplane to a cloud to coax food items to appear. Be more cautious if you have taken several hits. The only way that this game can be considered beaten is, if you max out the score. The game is supposed to end at one million points with the score register being replaced by exclamation points!!! I figure that this would take me about **40+ hours** to do based on the slow addition that takes place and the amount of flight time necessary. Even if I had the time, my extra lives would drop because I had to eat or go to the bathroom. Not to mention the fatigue and eyestrain. If you are thinking about using the inventory screen as a pause, you had better not be away for more than 10-

12 minutes because the game will reset and the screen saver will come on. The only way this game can be beaten is in a marathon playing session with at least 4 or more players working in shifts. I'm game, but I don't know who else is? Joe? John? This marathon would have to be carefully scheduled. This would definitely be a photo op, if successful. I just pray that the game won't revert to zero if you accidentally went over a million. AARGGH! - Al Backiel

Beavis and Butthead Viacom, for Genesis

5 UH, HUH HUH HUH. HEH HEH HEH HEH. America's leading morons, **Beavis and Butthead** are home watching the tube. There is an announcement of an upcoming GWAR concert that's coming to their town. The object is to gather all the ticket pieces so that these two numbskulls can go to see GWAR in concert. Choose Beavis or Butthead. One leads the other follows, each has their own unique weapon (Beavis burps and Butthead farts). To keep themselves healthy, there are supplies of nachos, soft drinks, and other forms of junk food. In order to find the pieces, you must help these two search their favorite haunts from Burger World to the Turbo Mall. They can select where they want to go by using the TV remote. As long as all the pieces are found, they can go anywhere except the arena. Watch out for danger though, which runs the gamut from policemen to runaway shopping carts.

If burping and farting aren't enough, they can pick up other weapons to dispatch their foes. You can switch the lead character, especially when the health of one starts to get really low. You may also change weapons and munch on nachos to build up strength. Some money spending is also involved. If things really become ugly, they can always warp themselves back to their couch.

Okay, I can say that the characters are well drawn. I wish I can say as much for the rest. Control is horrible. I found it difficult to fight and make selections - very frustrating and not smooth at all. The sound was only slightly better. The introductory music sounds like an out of tune keyboard. The programmers should have had more of their one liners sampled into the game. If you are a hardcore fan of these two, then go get it. Otherwise, don't rent it and definitely don't buy it. - Howard M. Hirsch (The Howitzer)

Stimp's Invention Viacom, for Sega Genesis

8 WHAT IS IT, MAN????!!!! The story goes like this. Goodhearted but mainly stupid Stimpson J. Cat creates a machine called the Mutate-O-Matic that turns ordinary household garbage into delicious food. He then proceeds to

demonstrate his invention to his Chihuahua friend Ren Hoek when suddenly it goes haywire, exploding and causing some serious problems in and around the town (that bloated sack of protoplasm!). Now it is up to these two to find the five missing pieces of the Mutate-O-Matic, put it back together, and turn it off. Easier said than done. (Remember what **Toe Jam and Earl** had to face in order to leave planet Earth? Come to think of it. Earl was responsible for that mishap. "Numbskull" comes to mind). There are six stages that need to be completed before everything is returned to normal.

Choose Ren or Stimp. In my opinion, there is no particular advantage into choosing one over the other. I prefer Stimp. One character will closely follow the other should you choose the one player mode. Two player mode is a bit more difficult. That's right... you really **MUST** work together. The opportunity to be greedy presents itself regularly. Don't do it if you can help it.

Here's where the fun begins. You or you with a pal must help Ren and Stimp retrieve all of these parts which are, a beaver, a gauge, a thingy, a TV, and a gizmo. Hey, I didn't build this contraption so don't blame me. At the same time they must be protected from the constant perils. These dangers range from wild lawnmowers to malevolent firefighters and anything else that is totally fucked up. Pay attention or they will lose their health and die. But wait, my fine friends - our heroes can defend themselves against such nasties. Melee such as Stimp whipping a towel and Ren using his feline pal as a bowling ball. Even Powdered Toast Man lends a helping hand where needed!

Controls are crisp, and the characters are very well drawn. Sound and BGM are surprisingly good. I really don't have anything worth bitching about when it comes to this game. Okay, you dragged it out of me. The lengthy password feature. No sir, I didn't like that. Also, if your timing is off and/or if you are impatient (that's me on both counts) this game will really piss you off. Any words of wisdom? You have to use your head. Carefully time your moves. Watch for patterns. It's like that in other games. (NO SHIT, HIRSCH) This is especially important in the two player mode. The characters may be nitwits, but that doesn't mean you have to play like one.

Overall, **Stimp's Invention** is well animated, colorful, and delightfully entertaining without being overbearing. If you are a fan of these two, (I am!) find it and buy it. It's definitely worth the (discounted!) price. HAPPY HAPPY.....JOY JOY!!!!!!! - Howard M. Hirsch (The Howitzer)

Flicky Sega, for Genesis

9 The Villains: Tiger the Cat and Iggy the Iguana
The Victims: Chirps
The Hero: Flicky the Bluebird
I can't think of a more unlikely hero than a bluebird. But in this day in age of heroes being plumbers, hedgehogs, and bandicoots then who am I to judge the life saving abilities of Flicky.



Life Random Reviews

The Genesis version, the only arcade to home adaptation I'm aware of, is a carbon copy of the upright brought to us in all it's blazing simplicity. I feel that if it weren't for this reproduction the game would have surely been lost in the obscurities of time.

The premise is simple. Save 8 little yellow chicks called "Chirps". The Chirps hover about mindlessly waiting to be rescue from their evil captors and brought safely to the promiseland called the "Exit". **Flicky** flies around (more like hops around, he never quite got the grasp of sustained flight) and touches the Chirps who are so grateful that they follow him till all 8 Chirps form a spellbound feathered conga line greatly resembling Dennis Rodman's entourage. As the game progresses some of the Chirps don sunglasses causing their vision to be impaired. When separated from the flock by a pouncing cat the Chirps wonder aimlessly in a panic. To make matters worse the visually challenge chicks even run away from you making a timely rescue more difficult.

Your efforts are scored in 3 ways. The faster you get all the Chirps to the exit and how many Chirps are saved at once. I won't bore you with all the mathematical jargon suffice to say it behove you to save all the chicks as quickly as possible. This is where patterns are form for each level. The third way is in the bonus rounds where **Flicky** uses a net to collect falling Chirps who have been maliciously hurtled into the air by the cat powered (no pun intended) catapults. the bonus level plays much like **Galaga's** Galactic Dancing. Save all the Chirps from sudden deceleration trauma and get a substantial reward. Most excellent.

My first impression of **Flicky** was less than stellar. In our local arcade the game sat on the right hand side near the front next to a strange and seemingly forgotten title named "S.W.A.T." **Flicky** looked like a kids game. A cute cartoonish bird, a brood of cute little chicks, a cute fuzzy pawed cat and a cute green speed demon lizard all set against cute nursery style backgrounds. Cute, cute, cute. Too friggin' cute to be played by a 15 year old boy. Cute was suppose to be what was hanging off your arm on a Saturday night date. NOT a video game you would be caught playing. But for those of us who gave is a curious play and experienced it's unequalled charm found it to have a multi-level challenge and addictive gameplay all wrapped up in a cute package. Go fig. It was great!

Now this ultra cute game was not without the ever-present sex and violence factor of today. Let's start with the sex part. For some strange and unknown reason to me on certain levels if an undisclosed number of points are scored or if a particular collecting pattern was done, a scantily clad homosapien female (a chick of a different species) appears in one of the background windows and shakes her panty covered booty at you. WOOHOO! I am clueless as to how or why this occurs. The instructions don't even hint at it. Maybe it's there so that 15 year old boys without dates on Saturday night had something to look at. Anyone got an answer?

Now the violence. Our cute bluebird of haplessness has to defend himself from the sharp clawed cats and the slimy grossness of the iguana. He does this by chucking coffee cups, flower pots, trum-

pets and even baby bottles directly at the heads of his attackers sending them into a twirling frenzied spin till their skin flies off and they disappear completely. At least I think the skin thing happens. Anyway, this kind of game violence is disturbing and should be addressed by Congress. Oh wait..... they already have.

What I find to be the most intriguing feature of **Flicky** is it's ability to combine aspects of a puzzle game (patterns, addictiveness) with elements of a platform game (ah, um,...platforms). After a few minutes into play you are hooked and really don't know why. The platform portion is not extensive as **Mario**. The puzzle part is not as cerebral as **Tetris** or as panic ridden as **Bust-A-Move**. There is just something about this fearless feathered fighter for freedom known as **Flicky** that empowers you with such a feeling of heroism that you can't help but love it. - Mark Terry

Golgo 13 Vic Tokai, for NES

7 **Golgo 13** is an assassin for hire. He is the most proficient sharpshooter agent in the known world. When solicited, extermination is virtually guaranteed. He kills the targets regardless of who they are, and the amount or quality of protection around the target is inconsequential. He also operates as an expert freelance secret agent that'll make James Bond seem like Maxwell Smart. Plus, his sideburns are awesome.

Based on a famous Japanese comic (or manga, as they say) of the same name, this NES episode has the hero chasing down a faceless threat armed with a bacteriological weapon. Your adventure takes place in all types of terrain: in the water underneath the Aegean Sea and flying through the sky in armed helicopters. **Golgo 13** is composed of a wide variety of sub-games, where you must beat up spies in a side scroller, shoot it out in a 3-D maze, dodge enemy planes in a helicopter, and scuba dive through a winding coral reef.

Although none of these mini games is exceptionally well done, overall the game is lengthy, challenging and graphically impressive. And probably the only NES game where the hero gets laid - twice (which is twice more than Dyer has ever gotten.) The fact that **Golgo 13** got past Nintendo's "quality" control is even cooler. - Keita Iida

Neo Mr. Do! SNK for Neo Geo

7 I didn't know what to expect after searching fruitlessly for over two years in my seemingly endless quest to play and report on every game in this series. I had read magazine captions where it was mentioned and received information from

(Continued on page 31)



Bits 'N Pieces

by Al Backiel

In DP issue #35, I listed Electronic Games Monthly as a current magazine devoting some space to Retrogaming. That situation has since changed. In a recent editorial they stated that they had no plans to do a regular series on classic videogames. They claim this is due to lack of space. I don't buy that!. What is it going to kill them to devote one page per month? I think they would sell more copies per month to all those classic collectors who would not normally buy it. In my recent ATLANTIS review in DP, I could not identify one of the 2600 clones. It turns out the game that I dubbed "Atlantis III: Birds & Bats" is actually CURTISS by Rainbow Vision (Australia). I even had it in my collection, but had forgotten about it until it was too late.

The world of Videogames lost one of its brightest stars recently with the death of Gumppei Yokoi in an automobile accident. Mr. Yokoi was one of Nintendo's chief engineers and the father of the GAME & WATCH handheld series, the DONKEY KONG arcade game and the highly successful GAME BOY. His only failure was the VIRTUAL BOY. After the VB sales did not take off, he either left Nintendo of his own accord or was pressured into leaving. He was in the process of forming his own development company when the fatal accident occurred. Who knows what else he might have come up with in the future? The consensus of opinion amongst myself and my user friends is that the VB will become the next VECTREX. This means it will be highly sought after someday and is worth purchasing now while it is still around. Already some of the rarer Japan only games are commanding \$100 apiece. It looks like Gumppei Yokoi had the last laugh after all. I got together with Keita Iida and put together a FAQ on the VB. It can be found on the DP website (www.digitpress.com).

Are you missing overlays for the Vectrex? Do you wish there were overlays for the newest third party games (e.g. J. Dondzila's **Patriots**)? Wish no more! Now you can get faithful reproductions of the originals, or interpretations of what the overlays might have looked like if they actually did exist. These overlays I must warn you are not made of the exact stiff plastic as the originals, but are closer to the plastic used in overhead projectors. You may also be required to give them a final trim along the edges. I would suggest buying one just to see if you like the way they look and feel. The reprints of the originals I believe are exact because they were scanned. I would recommend buying anything you are missing or at least **Patriots**. **Dark Tower** is almost done. The website to check is Tony Price's at <http://home.earthlink.net/~mfmurdock/Vectrex/vectrex.htm>. Sorry about the plug, but I thought it might be of interest to some gamers.

The GAME BOY has now taken the lead as the system with the longest running support by the original manufacturer. It first reached the US in May of 1989 and it still is going strong today. Why is it such a big hit? It isn't even in color! The secret is the huge software library behind it and the killer apps like TETRIS. Not to mention the convenience of portability. It's the perfect go-anywhere-while-you-are-waiting-timekiller. Here is a bit of trivia. If you put issues #92 - 102 of Nintendo Power in order and look at the binding, you will see that a picture of MARIO (N64 version) has formed. Another image is forming starting with #104 thru 106. It will probably turn out to be Link from ZELDA (N64 version). It will take another 6 months or so to complete.

Just in case you were wondering if any of those Questions that I posed in DP#33 have been answered, the answer is NO. There were a few promising leads, but they did not result in anything conclusive. Come on you guys! Where are the detectives out there? The answers may lie somewhere out there in cyberspace.

In DP#21 **FAME**, we the staff, drew up a list of celebrity endorsed classic video games. Somehow we all missed **JOURNEY:ESCAPE**. I guess one really couldn't call this one an unforgettable game.

Joe Santulli and I went to the March 14th NAVA Collector's meeting in Howell, NJ. This was the first time for Joe and everybody was glad he finally showed up. I asked him what he thought of it and he replied " Pretty much what I expected.... minus the dancing girls and beer". He made a few new friends and gave away souvenir Digital Press pens and sample issues. Keita Iida was there and he brought his Japanese Virtual Boy games. This was the highlight for me. I got to play games I'd thought I'd never see. John Hardie was also there and we made a few trades. Mike Etler was unavoidably detained because he had to handle an emergency in store #2. There was one electronics hacker there who if he didn't like the controller that came with the system, made his own improved version. Pretty impressive! Another guy showed up with laminated movie poster size blowups of Atari cart labels. Looked nice! Somebody sprang for pizza. Thanks again! I hope to see more people at these events. Bring your trade items. Contact Mike Etler for the next date. Do you realize that video games have been in existence for over 25 years? That's right. PONG came out in 1972. My God, how time flies when you're having fun!

BUENO VISION

A Commentary on Capcom and Nintendo

If there's one company I've always felt has produced only the finest in electronic software, it's Capcom. This was the company that truly resurged my interest in the hobby more than any other during the early 1990's. The rest you've all heard before. But there is one very irritating trend they've embraced since **Alpha 2** (well, two, if you count **SF EX** plus **Alpha**'s polygonal graphics), and that is the insistence on putting weak, boring, and for all practical purposes, handicapped fighters in all their 2-D arcade fighters.

No game better exemplifies this than **Marvel Super Heroes vs. Street Fighter**. Here is an excellent fighting contest far superior to **X-Men vs. Street Fighter**. Why the hell did they include Dan, a character openly acknowledged as a joke; Sakura, the weakling Ryu wannabe; and Dhalsim and Zangief, two characters who should have remained dead and buried after **Super SFII Turbo**. If this wasn't enough, when **Marvel vs. Capcom** was released, Zangief is still amongst the selectable characters.

Now I understand Capcom's position of wanting a wide variety of fighters, but when Charlie, Gambit, Rose, Cody, Rogue, and Blanka are visible in the background, frankly I'm insulted that Sakura, Dan, Blackheart, Dhalsim, and Zangief are included in **MSH vs. SF** and the aforementioned characters are not. Plus, Strider, Venom, and a couple of others don't seem to be realistic contenders, either. That really is a God damn shame. How could they make Venom a sorry character?! Where's Bionic Commando? Or Ken? I enjoy both of these games, despite all the negative points, but Capcom, if you're listening, damn it, give us some new (or even old) decent characters from now on! That's just my .02 on this subject. At least they don't pull all that bullshit revision stuff Midway does with every **MK** game. But, like I said, part 4 sucks anyway, so, I guess it doesn't really matter.

I'd also like to use this opportunity to take back what I said earlier about **Super SFII Turbo**. I bought **SF Collection**, and dudes, it fuckin' rocks! Gameplay is perhaps the best of any **SF** game, with the possible exception of **Alpha 2**. I wonder why it didn't appeal to me in the arcade art first, but as Keita put it, this one aches for home translation to learn all its idiosyncracies.

On the flip side, there are some negative aspects with **SF Collection**, namely **Super SFII** is way too slow now, and **Alpha**

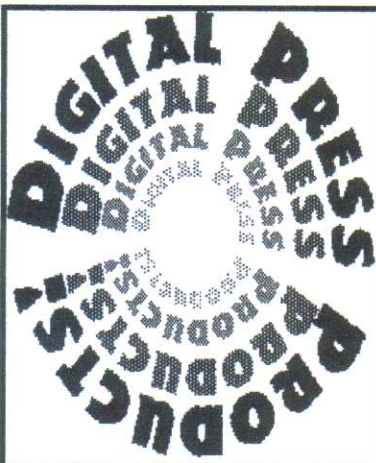
2 Gold is a major disappointment. It's actually inferior to its predecessor due to the extreme difficulty in executing custom combos. Still, for the low price of this compilation, you can't go wrong. Now I hope what I have to say about Nintendo doesn't seem based on ad hominym attacks, but I simply cannot remain silent on this issue anymore.

Since the release of the NES in the U.S., there has been an ever-rising tide of Puritanical self-censorship in Nintendo's library of games. Finding an old arcade ad from 1983 or 84 in **Replay Magazine**, I found that the character in **Punch Out!** named Soda Popinski on NES was actually changed from **Vodka Drunkenski** in the arcade. It's maybe not too nice to poke fun at Russia's massive alcoholism problem, but can't Nintendo lighten up a little? I also recall reading several years back that Nintendo removed the crosses from the graves in one of the **Castlevania** games as to avoid any religious symbols appearing in their American software. Brilliant, especially when you consider that crosses are used as a weapon in the games.

But the hypocrisy doesn't end there, friends. Remember the quotes in **Super SFII** on SNES? Balrog's "My Fists Have Your Blood On Them" was changed to "Get Up, You Wimp!". I guess SHOWING blood is OK, but SAYING it isn't. Yup. Makes sense to me! But the censored **Duke Nukem 64** was the proverbial straw that broke the came's back for me.

Without any classic compilations, no Capcom titles, and a severe shortage of games of just about any genre in general, I am simply astonished that Nintendo's sales are so high and Sega's continually dwindle.

Until Nintendo sees the light and drops this abhorrent policy (and, given the uncensored **MKII** following the outrage over **MK**'s aesthetic changes, they just might), from now on, I will boycott Nintendo. (I'm sure they're shaking, right?) I'd encourage others to do the same, but hell, you're all adults capable of making your own decisions. But I also feel that as adults, your games should reflect this and should be presented in their original, uncompromised editions. What purpose does the ERSB rating system serve if this is the case? As my favorite movie critic Roger Ebert eloquently put it (about movies, not games), this is another example of how a ratings system allegedly designed only to advise parents actually results in de facto censorship for everybody else. - Tony Bueno



DP Classic Videogames Collector's Guide, 4th Edition

WHAT'S THERE:
200 pages of listings and information for all of our favorite cartridge-based systems, long forgotten by contemporary publications but long-cherished by gamers: Atari 2600, 5200 and 7800, Intellivision, Coleco-Vision, and AdventureVision. Arcadia 2001, Astrocade,

Vectrex, Studio II, Odyssey II, Sega Master System and Turbograft-16.

WHAT'S NEW:

- * 3.01 thru 3.07 additions are all here, "Addendums" as printed in Digital Press.
- * Brand new Collector's Connection, over twice the size of the last Guide.
- * Hundreds of product additions, corrections, and updates.
- * New section for AdventureVision, RCA Studio II, Sega Master System, PC Engine, and Turbograft-16
- * Trivia section.

- * Copyright dates have been added in some areas to help chronology buffs.
- * PsychOphile entries provide the editor's capsulized views on hundreds of games.
- * Magazine ratings of the games have been included where applicable.
- * The scarceOmeter tells you how hard each game is to come by.

WHERE TO GET IT:

Only here. Send us \$15, made out to Joe Santulli. Don't be the last on your block to have one!



The Real Story Behind The Hoax

Due to the e-mail response generated by my 2600 Doom hoax, which was featured as the "Psycho Hoax of the Month" in issue #102 of Electronic Gaming Monthly, I've created this page to tell the story behind the hoax and how it all started.

In The Beginning

2600 Doom was originally created as a final project for a 2D computer imaging class I was taking in college. The objective of the project was to create 3 ad images for a product that was either real or made up, and apply each in a different way. For 2600 Doom, a magazine ad was made along with a actual mock box and cartridge.

Having A Little Fun

With the result of the project turning out looking quite real, I decided to have a little fun with it and start a hoax in the video game world. With the help of my e-mail pen pal friend Bill Haslacher, news of a release of an Atari 2600 version of Doom was spread across the internet. With that, even before being featured in EGM, the hoax drew quite a response. By the way, I ended up getting an A for the project.

How Did You Do That?

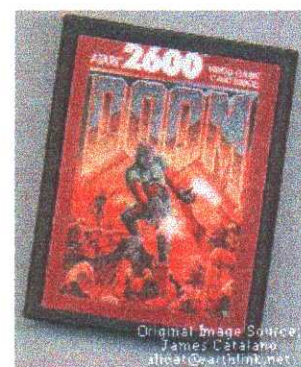
The one thing I am asked by everybody who has e-mailed me on this little hoax is how the screen shots for the game were created. They were made on a Atari 800XL 8-bit computer in a graphics mode that was close in display to what a 2600 might show, and then photographed off of a TV. That is the secret of why they look so real. And

That Is It

So there you have it, the real story behind the hoax of Doom for the Atari 2600 from the one who actually created it.

James Catalano mailto:alicat@earthlink.net

Have any comments or questions? <http://home.earthlink.net/~alicat/2600DOOM.HTM>



SWORDQUEST WINNER: MICHAEL RIDEOUT

Exclusive Interview by John Hardie

In late 1982, Atari set out to develop a sequel to their highly successful game, Adventure. Originally dubbed Adventure II, this larger, more encompassing RPG eventually evolved into a quartet of adventure games known today as Swordquest. The four parts of the Swordquest series were titled Earthworld, Fireworld, Waterworld, and Airworld. Each game had a contest and prize associated with it. The winners of each contest were to receive the following prizes:

Earthworld - The Talisman: made of 18K solid gold, studded with 12 diamonds and the birthstones of the 12 zodiac signs.

Fireworld - The Chalice: made of platinum and gold, adorned with rubies, sapphires, diamonds, pearls, citrines and green jade.

Waterworld - The Crown: made of gold, encrusted with diamonds, rubies, sapphires, green tourmalines, and aquamarines.

Airworld - The Philosopher's Stone: a large piece of white jade, encased in an 18K gold box featuring emeralds, rubies, diamonds, and citrines.

Each prize was valued at \$25,000 and the winner of each contest would return to compete for the grand prize; a jewel-encrusted Sword, with an 18K gold handle and a silver blade, loaded with diamonds, emeralds, rubies, and sapphires, and valued at \$50,000.

As most of us know the contest was a bust and there has been much debate over what exists and what doesn't, which prizes were awarded, etc. Here for the first time, is an in-depth interview with Michael Rideout, the winner of the Swordquest: Fireworld contest, who will give us a behind-the-scenes look at the contest and possibly provide some answers to these questions.

BACKGROUND

JH: Mike, can you start with some background info on yourself so our readers can get to know a little more about you?

MR: Sure. I'm 39 years old. I'm not married. I'm a computer programmer for a company that writes software for real-estate companies. I enjoy reading fantasy and science-fiction, and watching videos, TV shows, and movies like Star Trek, Babylon 5, etc.

JH: Tell us how you got your start in videogames. What was your first game system?

MR: My first game system was the Atari 2600. One day I was at a bar, and saw this guy playing a Missile Command coin-op, and it sort of captured my attention. I was just sitting there watching him play this game, like I was hypnotized. Shortly thereafter, our family got an Atari 2600 for Christmas and I just kinda went crazy with it. I got the Adventure game and Haunted House, and decided that those were the kind of games I liked the most.

JH: How old were you when you got your 2600?

MR: It was probably around '81, so I would have been about 22 at the time.

JH: What other systems have you played with over the years?

MR: Well, I got an Atari 8-bit computer that I played with for a while and did some programming on. I did get a Nintendo and bought some of the adventure-type games like Legend of Zelda.

JH: Have you seen any of the newer systems (Playstation, Jaguar, N64)?

MR: I've seen commercials from time to time but I haven't really looked into them. I'm not really into gaming like I used to be. Every once in a while I'll buy a computer game, but I don't really play them to the extent that I used to. I liked the Ultima series although you really need to compile a lot of info, maps, and stuff, and they just get way too involved. A lot of the newer games seem to be very violent; shoot-em-up and fighting type games and I'm not really into that.

THE CONTEST

JH: Atari began the Swordquest challenge with Earthworld. Did you enter that contest also?

MR: Yes. I bought Earthworld and played it a lot. I didn't find very many clues, maybe three or four from playing the game. I found nine of the words in the comic book. As you know, while playing the game, clues came up on the screen that pointed to panels in the comic book. These panels contained words hidden in them. There were ten words hidden in the comic book and five of them were correct while the other five were dummies. It turns out the tenth word wasn't hidden the same way as the others were. Most of the panels had a word hidden in the picture, like written on a wall or in the grass, etc. Since I didn't find the number clue that pointed to the tenth word, I kept searching through the comic until I thought I saw the tenth word. I picked five words out of the ten I had found but only four out of the five were right so I didn't qualify for the contest, although I did receive a certificate.

JH: What about Waterworld?

MR: I bought the Waterworld game through the Atari Club after the Fireworld contest. I played the game and found all the clues. They were a lot easier to find than in the other games. I found all the words in the comic, picked the four I thought were correct, and entered the contest. Apparently I didn't pick the correct four words so I didn't qualify.

JH: When you first started playing Swordquest, was it your intention to try and win the contests? Or did you happen to think to yourself "Hey, this is easy. I should enter."?

MR: I wanted to enter all of the contests and hopefully qualify for the finals so I could try for the prizes.

JH: How many finalists were there for Fireworld?

MR: There was a maximum of 50 people who could be in the contest but a lot more than that qualified. I know that because they had to have a run-off. They sent everyone a piece of paper with some questions and we had to write in so many words or less, what we liked about the game. Out of those entries, the judges picked fifty contestants. I told them that I liked Fireworld better than Earthworld and talked about the sound, graphics, and challenge of the game.

JH: Did you think you had any chance of being selected as one of the fifty finalists, let alone the winner?

MR: I thought I had a pretty good chance of making the finals because I've always been good at writing. I was pretty honest in what I said. Some of the other people I met at the contest said they bullshitted about what a wonderful game it was even though they didn't really think that. I didn't have a lot of confidence in my ability to actually win the contest, because although I found the ten words in the comic book when I played the game at home, I had only found one number clue. I pretty much went to the game thinking "I'm going to lose this, so no problem." There wasn't a lot of pressure on me, which was good since I wasn't on the edge of my seat all tense while playing the game. I didn't feel I had as good a chance as some others who had found either all the clues, or more than I did.

JH: Can you briefly recall the order of events after submitting your essay that lead up to your arrival in California for the contest?

MR: Atari sent me a letter stating that I had qualified as one of the fifty people. They sent me a travel itinerary and I flew to San Francisco. When I got there, I grabbed my luggage and was standing around waiting for the person who was supposed to meet me. As I was waiting I recognized Steven Bell, the Earthworld winner, from his picture in the Atari Club magazine.

JH: Was Steven friendly to you at all or did you guys not really say much to each other?

MR: I'd say it was pretty cordial. It wasn't really friendly at first.

JH: Did you feel intimidated at all? Did you say to yourself "Jeez, he's in this one too!"?

MR: I guess a little bit. I had pretty much given up on my chances of winning anyway. I just thought it was nice to meet him. He had made friends with some of the people in the Earthworld contest and they were more close-knit as a group; I'm a bit of a loner anyway.

JH: What happened after that?

MR: A few other contestants arrived and the people from Atari came and drove us to our hotel. People were arriving throughout the day. The first day, we had the afternoon to ourselves and I walked down to Fisherman's Wharf and wandered around before the evening banquet.

JH: How many days were you there?

MR: I believe it was three days total. We all arrived the first day and the next morning was the contest. After the contest they took us to lunch and we had a whirlwind tour of San Francisco and Alcatraz. The last day, we all got up and went to the airport to leave.

JH: Did Atari ever offer to show you around their headquarters at all or give you any kind of behind-the-scenes tour?

MR: No. They never offered and we never got to see any of the buildings where they worked. They had us in a Holiday Inn downtown by Fisherman's Wharf.

JH: Is that where the actual contest was held?

MR: Yes, at the hotel.

JH: Did you bring your 2600 system along so that you could practice before the event?

MR: Honestly, I didn't even think of that. They had told us that we couldn't use our own joysticks during the contest and I guess I figured that I wouldn't be able to hook it up to the hotel TV anyway.

JH: O.k. The day of the final competition arrives and I imagine you were a little bit nervous. What were you feeling? What was going through your head?

MR: Well, I was excited to be in the contest. I wasn't too worked up about it, I was just enjoying the experience.

JH: Were the other contestants friendly to you? Did you share strategies or tips with each other?

MR: There were a lot of different personalities present. Some people were timid and others were more friendly. A lot of people were talking about the different clues they had found at home. They asked me "How many did you find?" and I said "Well, I found one." I was sort of embarrassed to admit that. Some of the contestants had found one or two clues and others had found all ten. Everyone had been able to pick the words out of the comic whether or not they had actually found the clues in the game.

JH: What was different about the specially-programmed version of Fireworld compared to the retail version?

MR: I think the contest version was actually easier. One thing about the home version was that you had to have four different objects in one room and another object in another room in order to trigger a clue. In the contest version, you had to have four objects in a room but you didn't have to have another object in some other room. They had a list of ten riddles, kind of like a clue sheet, to help point you in the right direction.

JH: Did they let you keep any of this stuff? Riddle sheets, custom version of the game?

MR: They took back the riddle sheets. Some of the contestants were asking about keeping the custom version of the game but they said they needed them back. I think the reason for this was because the competition for the grand prize would require each of us to play all four games. So they probably planned on re-using the games.

JH: How long did it take you to finish this special version of the game? Was anyone close to catching you?

MR: I think they told me afterwards that it took me like 45 minutes and I remember asking if anyone was doing as well as me. The guy supervising me said there was another person that was close.

JH: Were there any strategies that you used to help get you through the game?

MR: Well, I started out using the riddle sheet and looked over a few of the riddles. You have to realize that I didn't expect to win anyway so I decided to ignore the riddle sheet, which I couldn't make heads or tails of anyway, and play like I did at home where I would just wander around collecting objects, and putting them into each room systematically. I put the riddle sheet down and started playing the game the way I always did and as I was collecting the different objects and moving through the various rooms, I got a clue. I wrote down all the information like where I was and what objects I had and continued on until I had about three or four clues this way. While playing at home, I had made some maps and figured out that the layout was based on the Tree of Life, which is in the Jewish Cabala. I knew about the Tree of Life because I had dabbled in Tarot cards when I was in high school and one of the Tarot spreads is based on the Tree of Life. The Tree of Life is comprised of ten circles arranged in three triangles and in the Fireworld game, each room was one of the points of the triangles and the tenth room was at the base of the tree.

JH: So, your knowledge of the design of the Tree of Life helped out a bit. How did things progress from this point on?

MR: At the contest, I was numbering the rooms in the same order I had used at home. I was finding the clues and writing down where I was and I noticed there was a pattern, as far as which room had which clue. I figured if this pattern held, I would find clue #1 in a particular room, so I moved everything into that room, but I actually found the last clue instead. After thinking about it for a minute, I realized that maybe the first and last clues were swapped and everything else was the same. I looked at the different riddles on the clue sheet and it seemed to me that the rooms they were talking about did fit this pattern I had detected. So I went to the room where I thought the last clue would be and got the first clue. From that point on, I just started finding all the different clues in order very quickly. After about the first six or seven clues, I started to get a little more excited. Every time I would find a new clue, my heart would beat a little bit faster. When I finally did find the last clue, I was about to fall over.

JH: What were you feeling when you realized you had won? Shock? Disbelief?

MR: It was a shock! It seemed like it was unreal. I kept thinking "O.k. I'm going to wake up any minute and I'll be in bed in the hotel waiting for the contest to begin." So I was totally out of it. When they handed me the chalice to hold so they could take my picture, they practically had to hold me up because I was literally about to fall over. My legs were rubbery and I jokingly said "Gosh, I feel like I'm going to have a heart attack or something." They were like "Do you want us to call an ambulance?"

JH: What were the reactions from the other people at the contest?

MR: Some of them were happy for me. I'm sure all of them were disappointed that they didn't win. I can imagine how they would have felt because I didn't expect to win either. I think some of the people who had been doing well were especially disappointed because they

were almost there. When some of the other players found out that I had just played the game and not really used the riddles, they seemed to think it wasn't fair, like maybe the riddles had actually prevented them from winning. The reason I did choose that way to play was because I had no expectations of winning. I thought I had no chance at all of winning so I figured "Why not just play the game the way I always do?"

THE PRIZES

JH: You were crowned the Fireworld champion and awarded the chalice. The first thing I'm sure everyone will want to know is.... Do you still have the chalice?

MR: Yes. I have it in a bank vault. I've considered selling it from time to time although I'm more inclined to keep it as a family heirloom due to its sentimental value. I consider it like a little nest egg where if push comes to shove, I can always sell the chalice.

JH: Can you describe the chalice for us? What's its composition, etc?

MR: It's around seven to eight inches tall. The cup part of it is platinum and is maybe three or four inches across the top. The base is made of gold and has little diamonds on it. It also has three jade rings, two around the middle and one around the base. It has rubies and pearls going around the middle of it. There are five sapphires and some citrines in the middle section, as well as five lapis lazuli stones near the base.

JH: Mike, is there anything on the chalice that would associate it with this contest? Perhaps the Atari (fuji) symbol, the word Swordquest, or any other markings?

MR: Nothing like that. It has no markings on it at all. It doesn't even say "made by Franklin Mint" or anything.

JH: The prizes for Swordquest were manufactured by the Franklin Mint, who are known to sell items that many would call "overpriced". The individual game prizes were valued at \$25,000 and the grand prize at \$50,000. Now, I'm not trying to belittle your prize in any way, but I have to ask.... Do you think the chalice is actually worth \$25,000?

MR: At the moment, definitely not. When I received the chalice, I also got a sheet for taxation purposes that stated its value at around \$21,600 or \$22,600. Something like that, I forget exactly which it was. That was the value I had to put down on my income taxes.

JH: Do you think it's possible that Atari or the Franklin Mint inflated the value of the prize at all?

MR: Supposedly, the value is based on the ingredients alone. As far as the diamonds go, they look very small to me so I wouldn't think that they were worth all that much, although I think there's like 65 of them. I would think that even if the price of gold went down a lot, that the Chalice would retain its value as an object of art, based on its workmanship. But as far as the actual meltdown value, I know it's not worth \$25,000. In fact, I don't think it was worth \$25,000 ten days after they made it because the price of gold was dropping.

JH: Have you ever had the chalice appraised?

MR: No. I've had people urge me to do so but I haven't since I'm not really ready to part with it. I'm sure that jewelers, for the most part, are honest people, but I've heard a couple of stories of people who have taken things to a jeweler to have them appraised and when they got it

back some of the stones had been replaced. Maybe I'm being paranoid...

JH: Did Atari award you the chalice on the spot or was it sent to you?

MR: After the first contest, Earthworld, they gave the Talisman to Steven Bell and let him take it home on the airplane. During the Fireworld contest, they explained that they figured that wasn't such a good idea. So what they did was to award me the prize and let me hold it for pictures and everything and then the security people took it back to the bank vault. They had Brinks deliver it to the bank where my brother worked in Atlanta and he signed for it and they put it in the vault there. My brother took it home and we all went to his house where I picked it up.

JH: What other prizes or promotional items were given out to yourself and the other participants?

MR: We all got Fireworld t-shirts. We were allowed the opportunity to order the Waterworld game at the contest where we also learned that it would only be sold through the Atari Club.

JH: As far as the prizes go, we know that Atari awarded the Talisman and the Chalice. Do you know if the other prizes exist or were they made to order as Atari needed them?

MR: They did exist. All of the prizes were on display and well-guarded at the Fireworld contest. The Philosopher's Stone really took my breath away. All of the pictures showed it with the cover on but they had the cover off at the contest and the actual stone was this large chunk of white jade.

JH: Before the collectors out there start scouring the earth looking for the other prizes, let me ask you if you know what happened to them?

MR: To be honest, I don't know. I kind of suspect that after the contest was called off, Atari either sold them or had them melted down.

JH: So you know Steven Bell, winner of the Earthworld contest. Do you keep in touch with him at all?

MR: I only knew him from the Fireworld contest. After the contest we exchanged photos of ourselves with our prizes, but that was it. That was the only contact I ever really had with him.

JH: Are you aware if he still owns the Talisman?

MR: My understanding was that he had the Talisman melted down and sold to a coin dealer or something. He did keep part of it. There was a little sword on the Talisman that he kept but the rest was melted down and he used the money for other things like school. I remember going out with him and some others after the Fireworld contest and I think he said he got something like \$15,000 for it. Remember that he kept the sword, which was made of white gold, and also that gold was dropping in price at that time.

JH: So do you think it's possible that the Chalice is the only surviving piece from the Swordquest Challenge?

MR: I don't know because I don't really know what happened to the other pieces. I would certainly hope that they were left intact. I would imagine their value as art pieces would be worth more than if they were melted down and the pieces sold.

THE CHALLENGE CONTINUES?

JH: Atari cancelled the contest as Waterworld saw a limited release through the club. Do you know if there were any finals or was a prize ever awarded for Waterworld?

MR: They chose the finalists although if I remember correctly, they reduced the number to 15 instead of 50. This caused a lot of people to get upset. This was right at the time Atari was sold and everything went into limbo. I don't think the crown was ever awarded.

JH: Steven and yourself, and two future winners were supposed to compete for the grand prize, a \$50,000 sword. How did Atari get out of the contest? Was there any legal obligation to you or Steven, or for them to finish the contest?

MR: When I was in the Fireworld contest, there was a group of people that had been in Earthworld, that said to me "Now, if Atari ever comes to you, make sure you don't agree to anything about canceling the contest." I guess they had a suspicion that Atari might try to do that. After a while, I got a letter from Atari stating that they wanted to cancel the contest. They offered Steven and myself \$15,000 each to agree and they offered a smaller amount, maybe like \$2,000 to each of the finalists for Waterworld. I think the reason Steven and I got more than everyone else was because as winners of the first two contests, we had a definite chance of winning the Sword. Everyone involved had to agree or else the contest would continue. I tried to call Steven and some of the other people from the contest to see what they were going to do but I couldn't get in touch with anyone. I talked it over with my father and decided to accept the offer, figuring that someone else would decline.

JH: So you figured the money was a safe bet compared to getting nothing if you didn't win the grand prize?

MR: That was a consideration. I figured if the contest would continue, I would love to play Airworld and have a chance to get the Philosopher's Stone. In fact, I think I would have enjoyed having the Philosopher's Stone more than the Sword. The money was a sure bet. If we continued the contest, it was no sure thing that I would qualify for the fourth game; I already didn't qualify for the third game. If I did compete in the grand prize contest, there's nothing to say I'd win that either.

JH: Did Atari ever offer you anything else for your troubles?

MR: When they gave us our checks as a consolation prize for canceling the contest, they also sent us an Atari 7800 and we got our choice of games to go with it.

JH: Do you personally have any knowledge as to why Atari pulled the plug on the contest? Was any reason ever given to you?

MR: I don't recall them stating a reason in the letter. I think it was because at that time the 2600 was losing its market niche. I don't think the games Atari was producing for the 2600 were selling as well as expected. A lot of people were coming to expect something close to a coin-op from the games and were getting disappointed. I think they were being unrealistic to expect that something similar to the coin-op could be produced on the 2600. Also it seemed everybody and their dog was making games for the 2600 and that was cutting into Atari's market. Also the fact that Atari was sold during this time may have had

something to do with it.

JH: Have you ever seen any signs of Airworld, the fourth game in the series?

MR: No, I sure haven't.

JH: So there were no pre-release demos, prototypes or comics shown at the Fireworld finals?

MR: No. Not that I'm aware of.

THE JOURNEY ENDS

JH: Once you returned home, what were the reactions to your triumph from the people in your community?

MR: When I was in San Francisco, after the contest, I went back to the hotel room and called my parents and my mother answered. She asked "How did it go?" I didn't want to break the news to her right away so I sort of hemmed and hawed and told her about pictures I had taken and finally she said "How'd you do?" I told her that I didn't come in last and she asked "Who did win?" I said "Oh, somebody from Aiken, South Carolina." She got really excited, laughing and crying that she almost couldn't talk. My parents met me at the airport and had a bunch of friends waiting at my house for a sort of welcome home party.

JH: Would you say there was any degree of fame that came with your accomplishment?

MR: Maybe a little brief period. Not so much fame but extra attention. My father was on a business trip and was talking to another man on the plane. He introduced himself as Mr. Rideout and said he was from Aiken, SC, and the man said "Do you have a son who won the Atari Fireworld contest?" Apparently he saw something in USA Today. I never really let it go to my head though. There were a couple of months when I couldn't stop talking about it and everybody got sick of it finally. They were like "Oh, shut up already."

JH: What about newspaper articles, magazines, or anything like that?

MR: The local newspaper did one little story and took my picture before I got the Chalice. After I got the Chalice, they came and took another picture. Channel 10 in Columbia, SC, heard about it and wanted to do a spot on the evening news. They sent a TV crew down and briefly interviewed me and took pictures of me playing the game. I never got a copy of it unfortunately.

JH: Did you notice any jealousy or envy towards you from other people?

MR: Not really. I don't know if there was or wasn't but there wasn't anything I noticed. Most of my friends and people I was associated with were proud of me.

JH: Did you ever have a problem with people trying to get you to invest or donate your winnings? Charities, lawyers, con artists, swindlers, etc.?

MR: No, people never really bothered me. Although at the contest, two of the contestants were a husband and wife and he was a minister of a church or something. After I won, they were like "What are you going to do with it?" and I said "Gosh, I don't know. I guess I'll put it in a bank or something." Then they suggested that I give it to the church although it didn't really dawn on me that they might have wanted me to give it to them. I told them if I

did that, the church would want me to donate it and not pay me anything for it but I think that was their whole point.

JH: How did your parents feel about videogames before and then after you won the contest?

MR: Before, they thought I was spending way too much time on them. I would take all my money and spend it on new games. I had thousands of dollars worth of videogames that I bought. I'd get them and be up all night long playing with them and it was cutting into my study time at college. I was like a videogame zombie. They didn't like that at all. But when I got into the contest they were excited for me. Then after I won, my father said something to the effect of "Well, I'll never complain to you again about playing videogames." Unfortunately, he didn't quite stick to that. For a while he did but when I got a Nintendo and was playing one of the adventure games for

hours on end, he made some comment to the effect of "Gee, isn't there something you'd rather do than sit there and play games."

JH: Did you ever enter any other Atari contests?

MR: No, I sure didn't. The only contests I ever entered were *Earthworld*, *Fireworld*, and *Waterworld*.

JH: Any final words you might have? Thoughts, comments, or stories you might want to add?

MR: No, that pretty much covers it.

JH: Mike, I'd like to thank you for your time and for giving everyone a peek into Atari videogame history.

MR: You're welcome, John.

Epilogue: Shortly after this interview, my research turned up a few more facts. I could never see the reasoning behind having the Franklin Mint design the prizes. I made a couple of calls to them and discovered that they were owned by Warner Communications at the time. There was the link. I spoke with someone in the Public Relations department who checked to see if any records were kept as to the current whereabouts of the prizes. Unfortunately, they had no records at all on the matter. The gentleman who designed the prizes was still with the company but was not available for comment.

Recently, it was brought to my attention by a friend, that the remaining prizes in the contest are now in the possession of Jack Tramiel, who as we all know, bought Atari from Warner Communications. Whether he cancelled the contest as part of cost-cutting measures he was implementing at the time or he just took a liking to the prizes remains to be seen.

HONG KONG GAME HUNT by Kenta Iida

(Continued from page 8)

Genesis! Even more odd was the fact that it was labeled **Street Fighter 100-in-1**, which meant that it was an NES with one hundred built-in games. And on the front of the system was an artwork of Chun Li getting dragon punched by Ryu! It appeared that the Gameboy was just as popular in Hong Kong as it is in Japan, as just about every booth selling videogames had a bin full of multicarts. The best of the bunch was a 58-in-1 cart that had the games selectable via a menu screen. Notable games on said multicart included **Tamagotchi**, **Pocket Monsters**, **Game and Watch Gallery 1 and 2**, **Taito Variety Pack** (featuring such classics as **Elevator Action**, **Bubble Bobble** and **Arkanoid**) and **Wario Land II**.

Random Reviews

(Continued from page 24)

Eric Boghos and John Mooney about the game, but never saw it in the arcade, and had almost no information as to game play mechanics. A few months ago, I finally spotted the game in a San Antonio arcade, completing a pursuit of knowledge that began over 5 years ago. Unfortunately, when you wait this long for a game, if it doesn't blow you away, you're bound to be a little disappointed. That's not to say it's a bad game, just not all I expected it to be.

The intro begins with a colorful, cheery animation with **Mr. Do!** in a graphically impressive roller coaster with monsters riding behind. After several long, sometimes difficult to read instruction screens, gameplay begins.

The rules are basically the same as the original, but with myriad additional elements. For instance, broken apples may reveal special items including "bowling ball" powerballs, missiles, stop watches, and shoes for speed. Most curious of all is the inclusion of the "female" circle with cross at the bottom symbol, which allows **Mr. Do!** to change into a larger, more powerful female clown, who may get hit twice before dying!

To complete a level, one must either collect all the cherries (or hearts, carrots, etc., depending on the level), kill all the badguys (or smiley faces, porcupines, trees, cards, or penguins), or kill all letters of **EXTRA** after touching the empty enemies' nest. It should

Although most players have long ago graduated from NES gaming (and why not, when Playstation CDs can be had for less than two bucks each?), multicarts for the system were still out in full force. I was shocked to see some carts with 1998 dates on them! Among them was a 4-in-1 multicart with **World Heroes**, **Mortal Kombat**, **Samurai Showdown** and **Kart Fighter**. None of these games were ever officially made for the NES, so one can only assume that these are original (albeit unlicensed) programming efforts by dedicated hackers. In fact, aside from some annoying flicker, **Mortal Kombat** is an astonishingly faithful 8-bit translation of the coin-op. **Street Fighter II** (titled **Street Fighter III 56 Peoples**), which was sold as a stand-alone cart, is also a decent effort that's probably better than many games made by licensed third-party NES companies. Later that night Kazuko and I treated our friend to a Peking Duck dinner at a restaurant near our hotel as a way to show our gratitude for his hospitality. That wrapped up my game shopping adventure in Hong Kong. And I could have easily spent a lot more time shopping for more cool and unusual game stuff, but that's the price we pay for being married, right? But it was just as well. I needed to hold onto a couple hundred dollars since I still had two weeks of fun ahead of me in Japan before returning to the US. But that's a story for next issue. Ciao.

also be mentioned that there is never a center treat, but instead just the word **EXTRA** appears in its place. Unlike the original, destroying all of the alphamonsters does NOT give the player an extra life. Rather, this results in completion of the level and allows you a chance at a bonus level where apples must be dropped onto other apples to create a path to the exit awaiting at the bottom of the screen. If this is reached, bonus points are awarded and there is no penalty for running out of time in a bonus level.

To gain an extra life, 100 coins must be collected by striking stationary objects (i.e. snowmen, bowling pins, presents) repeatedly with your powerball or current weapon.

Graphically, **Neo Mr. Do!** is above average in the intermissions but non-extraordinary during actual play. Regrettably, music and sound effects are repetitive and irritating after only a short while. What sort of makes up for these audiovisual shortcomings, however, would have to be the bizarre, insane scenarios, enemies, backgrounds, and the funny, original intermissions.

As it stands, **Neo Mr. Do!** is a good game that could have been much better. Why not contain play mechanics from all four games in alternating levels? I was expecting that when I saw the roller coaster at the beginning. It would have been truly incredible to see what updated gameplay elements could have been added to the other games, although from SNK's standpoint, I can see it might have gotten a little complicated. Still, this would have made the game exponentially more fun. Another big minus is the fact that there are only about 30 levels total, defeating the purpose of never-ending classic arcade coin-ops where there was no highest level or score possible.

Neo Mr. Do! is worth playing at your local arcade, if you can find it. But despite all the glitter, eccentricities, idiosyncracies, and what have you, the original is still the better game. - Tony Bueno

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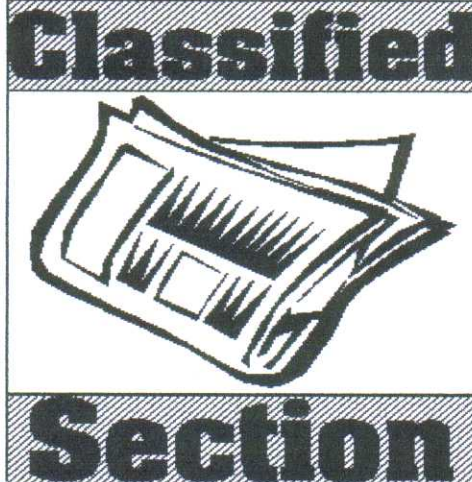
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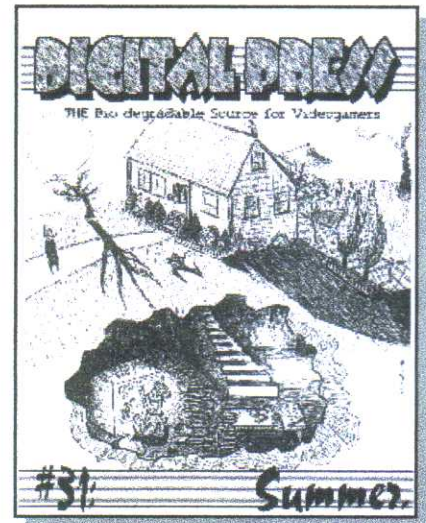
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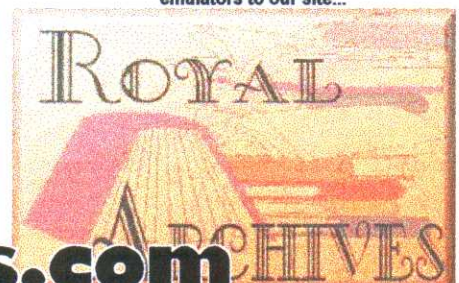
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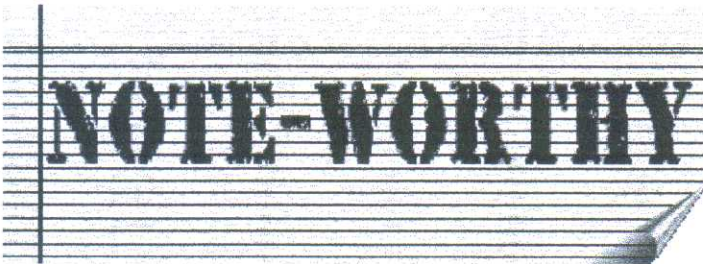


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"At first I thought it was funny", stated editor-in-chief Joseph C. Santulli in a public announcement, "but now it's just hilarious". The eccentric columnist would not state the specifics of the litigation. Details to follow.



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