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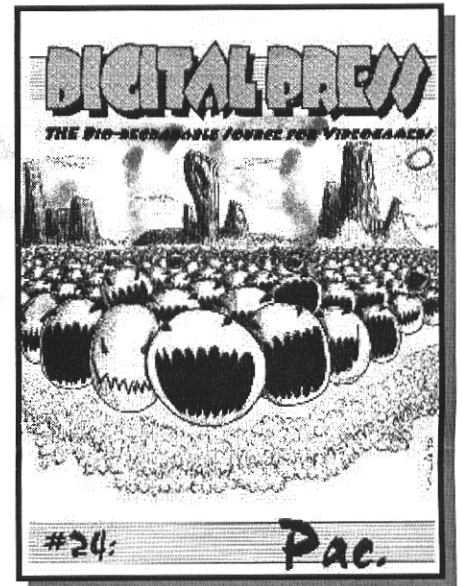
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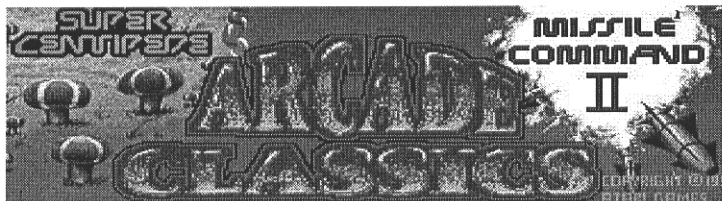
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(Continued from page 10)

doesn't match the fun of doubles Centipede. In MCII, each player winds up with only half of the missiles in each of the three silos. Missile Command II's announcer exclaims, "bonus points" and "bonus city" when appropriate, but the Centipede voice that congratulates a player's "nice score" also congratulates the gamer that earned a place on the Missile Command list. Problem is, the voice is very out of place – perhaps it was scheduled to be replaced by the MC announcer if the game had gone into production. My only real gripe about MCII is that the apocalyptic "THE END" ending is conspicuously absent. Leaving it out is like playing *Asteroids* without... well, asteroids!

The early bird doesn't always get the worm, and because it was just slightly ahead of its time, *Arcade Classics* never saw the light of day. A few years later, Namco would repackage some of their greatest hits for the arcade, including the original games alongside new "arrangements." Namco happened to be in the right place in the right time (they're nigh invincible it seems), and their offering of three classic hits in one machine proved successful. Perhaps if Atari had tweaked their Classics machine just a little bit more and released it just a little bit later, after the "classic" gaming scene had expanded ever so slightly, it would have been a hit. Timing can be everything. As it stands, *Classics* is an interesting game, but only just slightly ahead of what made the original versions so much fun.

NOTE: Ironically, while the arcade game went unreleased, *Arcade Classics*, once again featuring (almost) updated versions of Centipede and Missile Command (and *Pong*), made its way to the Sega Genesis in 1996. DP's very own Clint Dyer was the "Product Specialist" for the game! This Genesis cart is really just a repackaging of a truly odd hybrid of the original arcade games and subsequent 2600/5200 versions and probably shouldn't be confused with this unreleased arcade game.



(Continued from page 13)

help improve your stats just by keeping them with you, and the way you feed them alters the ways they can help you. It's an interesting side-game to the basic hack-and-slash. I know people who are Mag specialists, they can farm Mags while they play and come up with just the right combinations to grow the Mag of your dreams.

And now, version 2 is available, which adds a new difficulty level, 10 new challenge modes, several head-to-head and team battle modes, lobby soccer, and a slew of new weapons and items. I don't think I'll be leaving the house again any time soon. If you see me online, remind me to cut the grass. Or eat.

Very nice people I have met in the game: if you see these folks online, say hello.

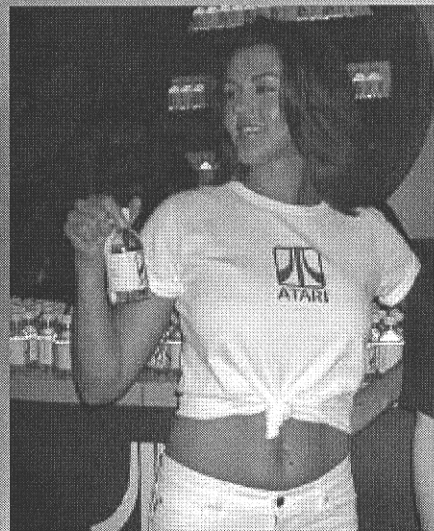
- Sypher
- Buffy 3
- Parva (aka Big Ben)
- Nada (aka El Duderino)
- Racoz (aka Diaz)
- Cube
- SaitoH

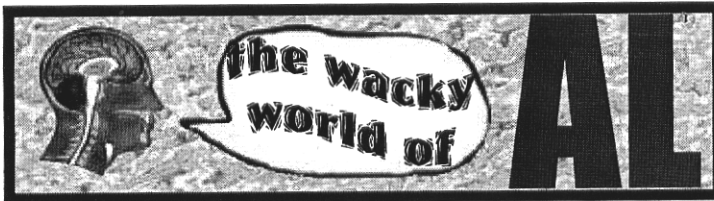
ATARI LIVES!

... in our minds and in our hearts, and SOON, at Infogrames! Infogrames has announced that they will be changing their name to ATARI. The Digital Press crew was



out in Los Angeles attending the E3 Expo and were pleasantly surprised to see Infogrames had hired a model to wear the fuji symbol proudly, and hand out OFFICIAL Atari water! Yes that's right, OFFICIAL! Here's the representative. Tell me she doesn't beat the snot out of Sonic and Mario. We like.





(Continued from page 9)

CHEW-MAN FU (TG16) - There are a hundred puzzles (Area 1-10 x Round 1-10) in this fun game. The object is simply to place three different color balls on their respective squares. There are various enemies like gorillas that will throw barrels at you or turtles that will slow you down. Very addictive. If you miss, you are even more convinced that your next strategy will succeed. Voted one of the best "sleeper" games in DP #29.

BUBBLE BOBBLE (NES/GB/GBC) - This one looks like a kids game, but it does require some thought. You do get to notice the patterns that the enemies follow and discover how to complete each level. This game has had a number of sequels. You can defend yourself by blowing bubbles and enclosing your enemies. It has the same charm and relatively easy difficulty level as the Bugs Bunny Crazy Castle series. Rainbow Islands (NES) is a BB sequel, but it is more of a platformer. I wouldn't recommend it because it takes a lot of patience. Parasol Stars (TG-16) is another sequel.

PRINCE OF PERSIA (various systems) - This game can be frustrating at times, because there are a lot of areas that must be explored and doors that have to be opened. There are bosses at the end of levels that have to be dealt with, if you get that far. Luckily there is a password continue feature. The animation of the Prince was considered very innovative for its time. Besides regular jumps, he can actually jump up and pull himself over a wall. The only problem that I have with these games is that there are many dead ends with no way back. So, taking notes or mapping is a good idea as there will be a lot of trial and error.

LODE RUNNER (various systems) - Basically, you have to dodge enemies and collect all the gold to get the ladder to exit to the next level. You utilize ropes and ladders in your quest. You have one defense. You can dig holes which will temporarily trap your enemies so that you can get past them or slow them down. By studying the patterns that they take, it is possible to devise a strategy that will succeed. Sometimes, a pile of gold is stolen and you have to trap an enemy to get it coughed up. Hyper Lode Runner (GB), I found hard to dig. I mean that figuratively and literally.

Honorable Mention : Megalit (GB), Nail n' Scale (GB), Pyramids of Ra (GB), Tail 'Gator (GB), Mole Mania (GB), Super Skweeb (Lynx), Insmouse (VB), Dino Dudes (Jag/Lynx), Dinolympics (Lynx), Pick n' Pile (2600).

PREVIOUS TOP 10: LOLO/BOXXLE/CHIP'S CHALLENGE/PUZZNIC/BOMBERMAN/KWIRK/ ESCAPE FROM THE MIND-MASTER/SOLOMON'S KEY (series)/BUGS BUNNY CRAZY CASTLE/ CATRAP

PREVIOUS HON. MENTION: A BOY AND HIS BLOB/AMAZING PENGUIN/BUBBLE BOBBLE/ CYRAID/GODZILLA/PRINCE OF PERSIA/SNOW BROS./SPANKY'S QUEST/TOWER TOPPLER

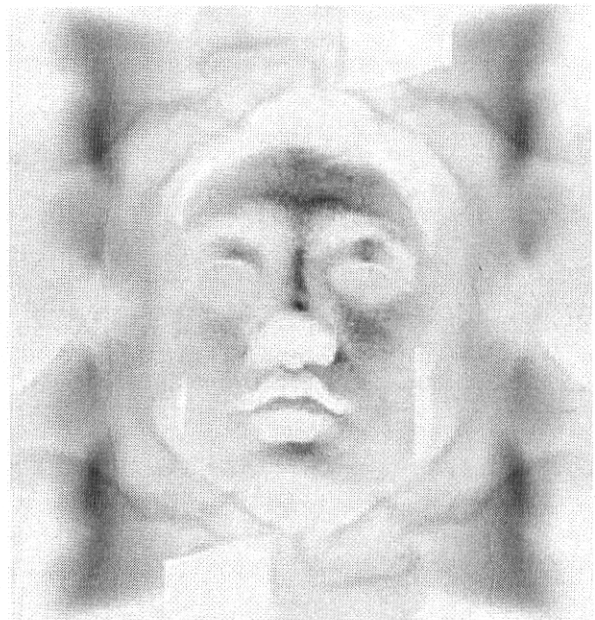


(Continued from page 12)

so subtle that they can hardly be called distracting or detrimental. Slow down is rare, despite the amount of activity or rendering in a scene, and when it occurs, it is brief. Multi-player game play has some drawbacks. It can be difficult to track down an opponent, especially when competing in one of the larger rooms. And sometimes the camera angles can switch on you when in a corner or other tight spot, causing some disorientation. But again, this is rare and not nearly the problem gamers have encountered in other games, like Jedi **Power Battles**.

I could go on and on about this game, but I've got other games to play. No Cliché did a superb job with **Toy Commander**. They had fun creating it, and that fun carries over to its game play. A lot of imagination went into the missions, as referenced earlier by the bunny-costumed monsters or urine-filled cars (I won't go into that one). And the game makers seemed intent on torturing every toy cow in sight whenever aliens are encountered. Replayability is above average because of the number of missions per room to complete, plus the time challenge of each mission to overcome. And as you complete more missions, more play fields open for multi-player combat.

It is a shame we are seeing the end of Sega consoles. Sega has always encouraged unique game development, unlike other Tekken-tag-snowboarding-Madden plagued systems. Sega showed us that it is a good thing to keep playing with our toys when popping **Toy Commander** in the Dreamcast. You should give it a shot to show both Sega and No Cliché you agree.



VIDEO GAME BIBLE

WHERE THE PAST COMES BACK TO HAUNT YOU

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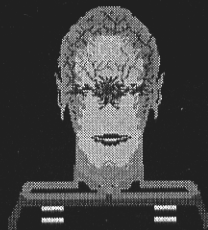
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there's even a European-only release, like Grandstand's *Thomas the Tank Engine*. It's from a very nice line of Tomy's back-lit color LCD screen games, but has a completely British theme to it, which is rare. Most games feature popular Japanese and American characters and arcade licenses. And some Nintendo's Game & Watches (the New Wide and Crystal ones) weren't sold in Japan. Japanese collectors pay big bucks for them.

This (DP) issue's theme is "prototypes and one-of-a-kinds". Did any proto handhelds and tabletops ever surface? Do you know of games that never hit the shelves? Have you seen any?

Bandai was very productive throughout a long period, and I feel they weren't really finished with their developments, when in 1985 the last significant games hit the shelves. After that time only 'inferior' games were made like Tiger's mass productions and no-name "made in hong kong" stuff.

Take Bandai's last VFD games. I have one, a flat panel VFD game, not much larger than a Game & Watch. The other one, *Space Hurricane*, is a classic tabletop but with a highly detailed and fast display, and it was definitely the last VFD made.

I also have pictures of 2 Bambino games that haven't shown up yet, *Black Jack* and *Baseball*. Another game, *Horse Racing* is only listed in a dealer's pricelist. Especially *Baseball* isn't likely to be found, the drawing of the game isn't very precise, and it was supposed to have a large LCD display, at a time when nobody had even made LCD games... Then there's 2 games by Mattel, that didn't make it: *Look Alive! Basketball* and *Baseball*, shaped exactly like their *Look Alive! (Long Bomb) Football* game. The only piece of evidence is a picture in the 1981 catalog. And besides Atari's *Cosmos*, there's another Atari prototype of which only the box has remained: *Space Invaders*.

Handhelds are still released every now and then, and apart from the casing and soundchips, aren't really that different from the original ones. VFDs and Color LCD games however, don't seem to have survived at all. How come?

Today's games are different in many aspects I think, but more importantly, the videogame cul-

ture has changed as well. Kids no longer go to the arcades to play revolutionary games. Now everything has been done before and people play at home, or with others online. So for handhelds and tabletops there is no more "the real thing", as what it should look and feel like.

Many games in the Eighties were made for the non-gaming type of people. For those that didn't have experience with computers, but still wanted to be ahead of the rest. And also consumers that didn't want a machine to invade their living room, with cartridges and cables. Just futuristic but simple, and portable electronic games. Pretty big market, only not for long.

Also several cartridge based systems have tried to find a market, after the Gameboy was such a success. But as in other technological areas, quality isn't the deciding factor for survival. Above all, the production costs of VFD displays is far from economical, compared to those of LCD displays.

Final Question. Now you clearly haven't covered all the handhelds and VFDs available, and the book stops around 1986, but then it's more of a coffee-table book than a guide, that shows the beauty and wide variety of the games. Are there any plans still for a follow-up?

At the moment I'm working on getting my games on the road. Some 50 games will be part of the "Global Tools Exhibition" in Vienna (Austria) this summer. And after that we will set up a portable exhibit of all games. For that occasion a catalog with 450 games will have to be made as well!

You can order the book at your local bookseller, or buy it online at www.amazon.com. "Electronic Plastic", Jaro Gielens - Die Gestalten Verlag; ISBN: 3-931126-44-7. Price is \$35-44 depending on where you get it.

[EDITOR'S NOTE: this page background is just one of the many vivid and nostalgic pages you'll see in Electronic Plastic. Thank you for spending time with us, Jaro!]

INTERVIEW!

JARO GIELENS - "ELECTRONIC PLASTIC"

by Roloff de Jeu

One of my favorite books I have is "Ticket to Paradise". The big, lush coffee-table book holds stories of the movie-going experience of the first half of the 20th century, and is illustrated with beautiful photographs and postcards. I like it so much because it illustrates an era of craftsmanship and passion (for theatre exhibition and movie presentation) that is now almost gone. It instantly creates a nostalgic desire for that era.

Many classic videogame fans recently got the same experience from our own DP Guide Vol. 6. Through the lists, images and Lore stories, many readers' brains get stirred and come up with fond forgotten memories of the good old days. However, the guide is not a coffee-table book (nor should it be). Friends that are not the freaks we are, can hardly be convinced of the beauty of the classic vidgame era we love, by letting them flip through the DPG. Luckily for those of us that do like to show some of our passion in a non-geeky way, there is a book available soon that will make anyone's eyes twinkle.

Jaro Gielens' *Electronic Plastic* is a fuller than full-color 176-page heavy big book, dedicated to the wonderful world of handhelds, VFDs, tabletops and other electronic games of the Seventies and early Eighties. The book starts off with an extensive foreword that summarizes the history of videogaming, focussing on handhelds. Then the highlights of Jaro's collection (a pretty complete one) are laid-out on richly illustrated pages, categorized in neat chapters like Multi-screens, games with detachable controllers, licensed games, 3D games, etc. If that isn't enough, the book ends with an overview of all the featured games, as well as all the games that were released in the same series, in total close to 400 games!

Among the games from America, Europe and Japan, highlights of collection are obvious classics like the Tomytronic 3-D, Nintendo G&W Panorama screens, but also less obvious and more exotic and obscure releases as the *Ludotron* (with a built in beamer), the *Computer Truck*, and a *Raise the Devil* Pinball game. The huge photos and scans accompanied by 2D artwork taken from the packaging and games. In all an awesome and impressive book that captures the special graphic feel these games had very well. It's just one of those rare books you keep picking up and browsing and reading through, just staring at the great pictures. So far 6,000 copies have been printed, and it has gotten great support, reviews and sale results. By now it should be available in the US.

For this review, I had the opportunity to talk to Jaro Gielens. We found out that we do not only share the same nationality and passion

for classic gaming, but studied at the same faculty. One of the things that got him back into classic gaming were the sight of my "WANTED: ATARI 2600 GAMES" posters that I had spread around the cantina! After having finished the Interaction Design course at the Utrecht School of Arts, he moved to Germany and worked for an ad agency. He now works as a webdesigner and programmer.

His collecting started a couple of years ago, with classic consoles and 8-bit systems. Then a friend offered him a Bambino *Safari*. Jaro was totally hooked, and from then on collected "electronic plastic" like crazy. Remarkably, almost all of these games from his collection and featured in the book were purchased or traded via emails and auctionsites! Now on to some in-depth questions:

How did you come up with the book?

Well, my collection was almost completed, and I figured this was a decent way to finish it off.

How long did it take you to compile it and who helped you out?

Well, I had the best team on Earth! I was very lucky to have found such a good publisher. Die Gestalten Verlag has a good reputation worldwide, and they organized everything!. Production took about four months, and happened in four different cities (Bern, Berlin, D,sseldorf and London). I took 200 games to a photostudio in Berlin. In Bern we put together the big pieces in two sessions. The rest of it all occurred through emails and ICQ. Then the best part was the graphic designer they found for me. Lopetz of B,ro Destruct, is a true artisan, and a true player! He has a Dreamcast, PS2 and a big projection screen and videobeamer.

Who is Uwe Sch,tte who wrote the introduction?

He's a German professor working at a University in the UK. He has roots going back to the early gaming scene here in Germany. Rumor has it that he was involved in copying and distributing C64 games on a voluntary basis.

Germany has always had it's own unique oddities and items gamewise. What exotic things does Germany have to offer the handheld fanatics (other than label variations)?

Not only in Germany but also in France and Italy, many games were released with different names and logos. And sometimes



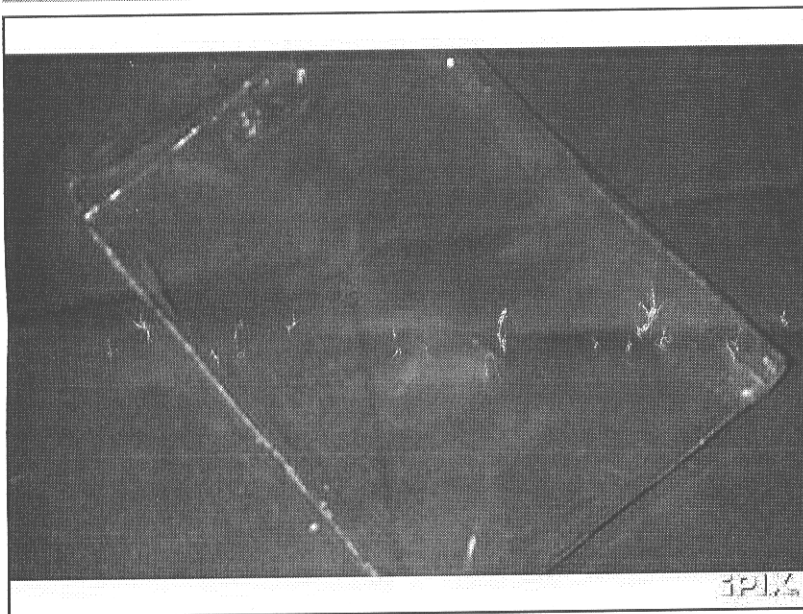
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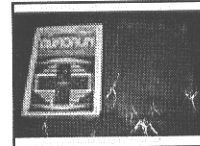
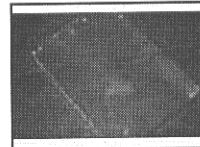


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Description

Yes! It's TRUE! Here's your chance to own your very own, Atari Club exclusive Quadrun's SHRINK WRAP.

Considered to be the TOUGHEST of all games to find, if you manage to find it in a box you can now put this SHRINK WRAP around it! Even if you don't have the box, it's fun to put stuff in the shrinkwrap. I put my own hand in there just so I could say that I had my hand inside the SHRINK WRAP of an Atari Club exclusive! Woo Hoo!

NOTE: game pictured next to SHRINK WRAP is not part of the auction, sorry - the picture is there so you can compare the way it looks around the box versus the "standalone" version you'll be getting if you can win this auction!

Bid with confidence, and don't miss an opportunity to own this piece of Atari history!

Winner pays bid price plus \$1 shipping to US locations (international will vary). PayPal is highly preferred but money orders and checks are fine too. Good luck!

your time. I've had far too many deadbeat bidders waste my time to mention, although I haven't had a seriously bad experience as a buyer yet. And I would consider myself only minimally careful.

If you don't take some time to assess fair market value (which of course can vary ten fold or more), you are by no means an educated buyer. I suggest that a person do at least 10 minutes of research before buying something. More if they plan on spending much cash (let's say over \$10) on a single item. In 10 minutes, you can see what the item you want is going for this week, and what it went for in the last month. If the item is so unusual that it doesn't pop up every week, let alone every month, you're gonna need a lot more patience to get this item. And you're going to need to make a realistic assessment using all the resources you can muster up to garner a sense of it's rarity and value. The DP guide is a start. Although some things have value on eBay beyond the quoted value, because of notoriety or demand. Many of us look down our noses at the prices some popular and available rarities get. For example, **Chase the Chuckwagon** is a solid \$100 cart, but most often gets far more, even though it could qualify as one of the worst games available. This is simply because it has notoriety beyond it's rarity or value.

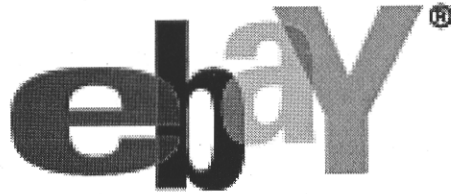
Of course you should take your research with a large dose of granulated Caveat Emptor ('buyer beware, when it rains, I'm poor.'). You may notice the occasional eBay psychopath throwing money around like venture capital in Silicon Valley, but remember, a closing price does not a paid price make. If you're wondering about a recent rash of high prices, feel free to probe a little deeper, as some evil characters take advantage of the largely trust base eBay system to boost prices on others and even their own items. eBay is a fully synthetic market, and every transaction you think you're seeing go off without a hitch could be a conspiracy to raise prices or increase value, or exact revenge on the cartridge hungry classic gaming community. Beware of bidders with multiple bid retractions or negative feedbacks. If it smells fishy, it probably ain't sushi. Knowing, as a seller, that I'm more likely to have a deadbeat bidder when they won a big-ticket item, I have realized that the more the item sold for, the more likely that the transaction had or will have problems. So look closely, and do a little research if bids are out of control- there may be more to discover about every sale than a seamless transaction.

eBay does cause inflation of prices off of the internet, but I recommend you pay internet prices on the internet, and anything close to eBay type inflation outside of the internet is moronic to pay for. I would almost never pay more than half of an eBay market price for anything off the internet. If I saw a **Crazy Climber 2600** (another \$100 cart) for \$50 at a flea market, I'd be hurt, pissed, insulted, but I would buy it, especially since I need it (contact me for a nice trade if you have a spare.) But I probably wouldn't pay much more. I recently overheard a guy selling a Top Loading NES to some sad sap in a Wisconsin flea market for \$145, citing eBay prices as his resource. Of course, that's about twice what they fetch on eBay, and a fluke sale for that much does not dictate an expected market price. Although I scoured his booth for a pathetic deal, I think the guy is such a piece of crap for selling at that price, he's not even worth spitting on.

eBay isn't the last word on internet video game buying either. A very small amount of research with any of the widely available search engines might yield a few nice deals from one of the innumerable internet video game dealers on the web. Of course, the more you look, the better you'll know what's reasonable. I check vendors occasionally to see what new stock they get in, as sometimes they'll have a palette of a shrinkwrapped title I can't find for the life of me, and I can buy a few for myself, as well as my friends and my tradelist if the

price is right.

Finally, eBay signaled a sort of age of innocence for Video Game collecting. I know that many long time collectors got into it when carts were plentiful and cheap, and most of the collection building occurred at that time. Although I'm not as much of an old timer as some of the venerable (and decrepit) DP staffers, 98% of my collection is from street level scores. Nowadays, how much do I get to add to my collection from hunting? About 25%, maybe. The predominance of new stuff to find for me is on eBay, and since I love collecting as much as I love gaming, all I need to do is think of something new to collect to keep this activity going. As well, every week something new or little



known pops up on eBay. Although it may just be another of the myriad PAL format clone carts, sometimes it's a newly discovered prototype (maybe twice a year), or a never seen piece of hardware. And most of the sellers aren't interested in stuff on my tradelist- they want cold hard cash. And frankly, I have less and less hesitation to provide it to them.

Is that so horrible? I used to be more of a purist. I used to insist on trades. I tried to be part of the trading elite. I still maintain a massive tradelist. I still trade avidly, and there are some people who wouldn't surrender their best tradebait for any amount of money. I'm saving the best stuff for them. Trading just isn't the only way to feed your game room. Unfortunately, with money as the middleman, there ain't too much you can't find on eBay. And are we so bad for taking advantage of that?

The website for eBay: if you can't figure it out, I'm surprised you could write a check for your DP subscription: www.ebay.com. A reliable reasonably priced video game dealer with an ever changing selection of classic games: www.videogamedepot.com

Dear Digital Puss,

In response to that excerpt from an email about the **Cubicolor** prototype that I wrote to Joe, I did acquire a **Cubicolor** from that guy who was selling one on eBay. I managed to get it off eBay, for a reasonable price- and much less than what I was prepared to pay. It seems authentic, although it is not numbered (whoever's managing the **Cubicolor** list, please contact me!) Joe certainly has a point about it being a copy of a prototype; although I admit I fully succumbed to the notoriety factor- I really wanted one. The story of the **Cubicolor** that I acquired follows:


I contact the seller on eBay immediately after I noticed it. I wanted to be convinced of it's 'authenticity' before I bid on it. After numerous emails with the seller, he admitted to me that he was rather nervous about selling the cart in a public forum such as eBay; he was worried about copyright infringement issues (or something like that.)

He was a 2600 collector in the early 90s who was liberating his collection. He told me how he acquired the **Cubicolor**. In the early 90s or late 80s, he was interviewing for a job at the company that Rob Fulop worked at, where he met Fulop. He told Fulop that he collected Atari games, and Fulop told him about the **Cubicolor**. He later mailed one to the guy I got it from, who put it in a box with the rest of his collection, which sat quietly for a decade until fancy stuck him to sell of that old collection of 2600 stuff he didn't ever play anymore. And so it was listed on eBay.

I had some other reason to believe he was a dependable guy- a close friend of mine actually knows him through his girlfriend via the internet (actually a 900 number, but that's irrelevant.) He's apparently an avid collector of Arcade games and Pinball, with a game room to rival John Greve's.

Cubicolored,
Ian

ON THE PROWL



with Ian Baronofsky

Wake up and smell the eBay...

When eBay initially came to bear as a force in Classic Gaming, I was resentful. I thought it was the end of days for my bargain resale hunting. Every time I heard a vendor mention eBay, I felt as though it was the end for my shopping addiction. No more scores, no more finds, no more carts cheap. In retrospect, I think my initial anxiety about the concept of eBay was a bit overblown. I say the concept, because the day-to-day functioning of the site isn't the focus here, it's the concept of a worldwide resale marketplace on the internet. There are actually good points to this explosion of availability to sell to the highest bidder, and be the highest bidder, from anywhere in the world. Of course, there are plenty of bad points as well.

eBay can still be a great source for setups and bundles of carts for very reasonable prices. I still regularly pay \$3 for a cart I want on the street, which can be pathetic when you notice that the average price for games in an Atari 2600 setup is often \$1-\$3. And paying \$2 for any video game is nothing to cry about. If you want to buy your carts individually on eBay, you'll likely pay more for the specific selection. Of course you do have to pay shipping, which can raise your average price a bit, but \$15 shipping added to 40 carts you paid \$60 for still gives you an average price under \$2 per cart. Remember when you were doing backflips to get your mom to buy you a \$30 cart? Seems like a reasonable deal to me, if just to recapture a hint of that excitement.

Some people don't have the time to hunt for 6 hours to find a filthy 2600 setup with 15 common games and a busted power supply. Others have no luck hunting locally- there simply aren't the resources to get stuff. It's more convenient to buy on the internet, and you can set your own limit as to how much you spend, rather than be potentially ripped off by a fixed price vendor. Giving the masses more options to buy on eBay makes Classic Gaming (among other things) available to a wider audience to enjoy.

As well, I have several friends who don't even bother hunting because they can't compete when shopping against the local career shoppers who are stocking their stores with finds or selling on eBay. I respect this point of view, as adding more new pieces to your classic game collection can get darn near impossible when you reach the 95% complete mark in your collection(s). And I've resorted to a lot of eBay purchasing myself, because it's much harder to find someone who wants to trade what you want for what you have. It's easier to sell something that has no value to me, and parlay that into money to spend on anything that Joe eBay happens to be selling.

That's another thing I like about eBay. I can turn things I can readily find into things I can't find. I mean, where else could I trade 4 dirty old calculators I bought for \$4 into **Polaris** and **Marine Wars**? Now the calculator market is pretty weak, so don't get any ideas, but nearly

anything of value on eBay (and that includes a lot of readily available crap, some of which might still be sitting in your garage or basement) can be parlayed into money, which can be used to get something you want. Of course there are a lot of things of value that you can't sell, since the market on eBay is pretty saturated for the most common, popular 'collectibles.' (Collectible is a dirty work to me.) Don't even bother with comics, Star Wars, baseball cards, Disneyana, Elvis recordings- these markets are SUPERSATURATED, unless you know exactly what you're doing. If you do, you probably don't need me to tell you this. I could sell a fart in a jar for more than I've gotten for some of the crappy Disney, Star Wars, and Elvis stuff I've tried to profit from.

Nowadays when I'm out looking for goodies, being cognizant of eBay prices, I know what things are worth on the internet. Now, every time a vendor says- it's worth this much in 'the book' (what book?) or on eBay, I know whether her price is more or less than it fetches in the open eBay market (relatively open.) Without an 'open' market (I use quotations because eBay could certainly be more open), people can more easily create a synthetic market- and claim that their crap is worth more than you know you can get it for on eBay.

I am reminded of the metal lunch box debacle. This is the story of a market with price fixing created by a lunch box collector in the early eighties. He documented his extensive collection of near mint condition metal lunch boxes complete with price guide. From which market these prices were gleaned is unclear as the prices seemed remarkably arbitrary, not to mention that it made him something like an instant millionaire (in lunch box money equivalents.) Of course, the market for lunch boxes went wild, with every vendor demanding full lunch pile guide price, even for rusted, dinged examples. I still see these price expectations for lunch boxes everywhere I shop. But on eBay, only the mintiest of examples fetch anywhere near a 'book' number. Nearly everything else takes pennies on the dollar. What was I driving at? An approximation of actual value is revealed on eBay, as opposed to perceived (and shall I say feared) value by a vendor or price guide writer. (Disclaimer: I used to resent the prices in the Digital Press guide, but have since revered them as the most realistic guide available. Most of the prices are spot-on for a reasonable price one might hope to pay in an educated market.)

If you're like most collectors, you probably couldn't think of very many nice things to say about how eBay affected our little hobby. Next month I'll delve into a few of the negative aspects of eBay and the world of classic game collecting. So ends my first installment of On the Prowl. In this column, I'm going to focus on eBay and collecting, as well as the art of collecting. And whatever Joe tells me to write. And I'll write whatever you tell me to write for a Vectrex.

Now, eBay isn't all fun and games- it can be a serious pain in the ass, and being person to person, you are risking your dough. And

Curt Vendel (www.atari-history.com) has released several prototypes which seem to be different from the versions that were previously available.

Even Glenn Saunders got into the act by taking a prototype ROM image that was entrusted to him and releasing it without the owner's permission. The owner planned on releasing it himself but was waiting till a later date. Unfortunately this incident has left a bad taste in the owner's mouth and we may not see any more protos from him.

Another hard-working individual that I have to mention is Matt Reichert (www.msu.edu/user/reicher6/). Matt's enthusiasm in documenting prototype differences is incredible. On his page he goes into detail surrounding the differences in proto versions as they progress towards completion. This may not be everyone's cup of tea but I personally find it fascinating. Nicely done.

There are others who support efforts like this and I'm sorry if I've missed or overlooked anyone. Let's go one step further and examine several other thoughts. Once a proto is released, does the original owner have any say as to what happens to it? Can that person dictate how and where the ROM is distributed? Can the company that holds the copyright on that game dictate terms? Case in point – Recently 2600 Garfield was discovered and permission was secured from Jim Davis (the cartoon's creator) to release the ROM to the public. The only stipulation was that people could not build and sell cartridge versions to others. It's o.k. to build one for yourself but not to give or sell to others. Yet Hozer Games lists it on their site and are more than willing to make a cart version for anyone who shells out \$12. Granted, the stipulation to not give or sell carts to others seems silly, but it is Davis' right to request that. Or is it? Does anyone care what Jim Davis wants? Probably not since we've gotten what we wanted from him and the odds of him going after Hozer or anyone else are ridiculously low.

But imagine this scenario for a minute (note the word "imagine"): A reporter is assigned to interview Jim Davis about the history of Garfield. During the interview, Jim takes the reporter into his personal archives where he keeps early sketches and other items of historical value about Garfield, Odie, Nermal, and Jon. The reporter picks up a black, square-shaped object lying in the dust and inquires to Jim: "What's this? Looks like one of those old Atari cartridges." Jim responds: "Yeah it is. It's

called 'Odie's Tongue Adventures'. We had a deal with Atari to make three videogames for their 2600 system. One of their programmers did the first game and we were going to do the other two in-house. We only completed the Odie game before the deal fell through." The reporter makes his notes and continues on. When the article hits, a keen-eyed classic gamer sees it and posts the info in the newsgroups. Digital Press, 2600 Connection and others report the latest news about this find. Everyone wants to know how and where the game will be distributed. After all, Jim gave us permission for Garfield, why wouldn't he do the same for Odie.



**A girlish squeal, a giggle and a whoosh!
Sean rides again! Bombs away!
Look out below!**

Now suppose Jim is contacted and refuses to share the Odie game with the classic community. He cites the fact that we didn't follow his silly wishes with the first game we found. Would we then blast, curse, and denounce him as an enemy of the classic gaming community? We may find that we have now shot ourselves in the foot. At what price? Was it worth it? Is the entire community now being punished for the actions of a few? Food for thought as we continue our quest for the latest ROMs without any thought to who's toes we step on along the way.


The same situation exists in the case of someone sharing a ROM without the prototype owner's consent. Yeah, Great! We finally got the ROM. But the fact is we would have gotten it anyway if we had just been patient. Do you think the owner of this prototype will be in any great rush to share others he may own?

Let me throw one more at you before we sign off for this month's edition. Could we argue that prototype owners have a moral responsibility to dump their protos since they don't own the code to begin with? Is it Jim Davis' right to not release the proto since he actually owns the code? Who's right should it have been to release Garfield? Steve Woita, who wrote it? Atari, since the code most likely belongs to them? Jim Davis, since he owns the characters? Or all three? If you really want to get technical, all protos are supposed to be returned to Atari and Atari still exists in one form or another.

Well, it's getting late here at DP central and I'm holding up Sean, er, I mean the cleaning crew, from getting the of-

fices in shape for another day. Remember, I'm not saying what's right or what's wrong, but I hope everyone will think about this situation before we go blindly into the wild. Our next meal may be our last.

ROMpage!



While The Mice are Away...

by John Hardie

Well, another month is upon us. This time an issue specifically geared towards prototypes and unreleased games. Jeez. I should have saved last issue's column for this time. Well, I hate to break tradition so let's talk more about prototypes and unreleased goodies in a second but first I want to address some of the feedback I've gotten since taking over this column.

The response to my first column was fantastic and I'm pleased that many of you took the time to contact me with your thoughts. Almost all of the comments were positive (there was only one naysayer in the bunch) and there were several good suggestions for future columns. Here are just a few of the remarks I've received:

"Hi John. Great column! As you probably know, I completely agree with you." – M.K.

"John, thou speaketh the truth. How about a future article on the pros & cons of copyright infringement?" – D. Lowenstein

"Although not everyone will agree with you, thanks for saying what I've been thinking for a long time." – C.V.

"Bring back Sean. Your articles are about as funny as mopping a floor." – ANES LEKLY

I included the negative message I received so you can see that not everyone agrees or likes me. The main purpose of this column is to get people thinking. Not everyone will agree or disagree with me but I hope it will provoke them into formulating their own opinions. If you have any comments or suggestions for future columns (perhaps a topic you'd like to see raised), please send them to me at: jhardie@pipeline.com

P.S. to those who asked: The Elevator Action scenario I discussed last issue was just that – A hypothetical situation. Sorry to disappoint.

O.k. On to our discussion. Why don't we look at the actual releasing of prototypes. Not the argument of whether or not they should be released but rather where to find them. I'm not

talking about emulation ROM sites here but rather the people that are bringing us new, never-before-seen prototypes. Several owners and groups of people have been making these prototypes available for everyone (except Scott Stilphen) to enjoy. Here's a very brief run-down:

One of the best places to start is the Atari 2600 Nexus (www.atari2600nexus.com). Alex and his crew have been diligent in providing many hard to find ROMS that have been previously unavailable. The Nexus is also a great news site to find out the latest happenings in the classic community.

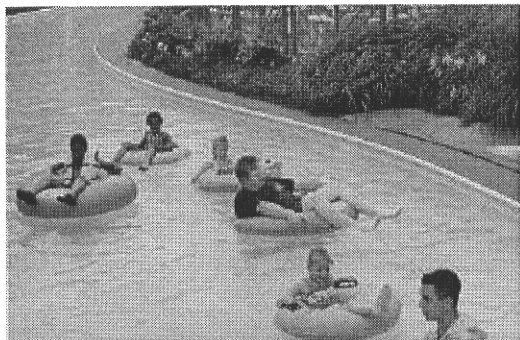
Atari Gaming Headquarters (www.atarihq.com) has released several protos over the years, even going so far as to provide game reviews and screenshots. Their webmaster, Keita Iida keeps a diligent finger on the pulse of the gaming community.

At the Classic Gaming Expo web site (www.cgexpo.com) we've released many of the games that we have gotten through our contact with former employees of the classic era.

Individuals like Marc Oberhauser and Marco Kerstens have graciously released one of a kind prototypes that they owned for all to enjoy. Marc has even gone so far as to make boxes and instructions for some of his carts so that people can buy copies cheaply and have a nice product to put on their shelf.



Sean's taking a vacation from DP. Here he is seen relaxing in the water while young girls suck on his toes.



Sean finds a "warm spot" in the wading pool, unaware that this is NOT a natural spring. Look out Sean!

replace "Super" with "Jr." to get a review of the 5200 Jr. Pac-Man prototype cart. Literally. Well, you'd also have to mentally replace the part about the keys and fruit targets, etc, with power pellet assassin targets and scrolling mazes, but you get the idea. Jr. Pac is right up there too. —Dave Giarrusso

Arcade Party Pak: Missing! Midway, for Playstation

Satan's Hollow: In my honest opinion, Satan's Hollow ain't all that. It's basically a shooter with a twist - build a bridge across a chasm to combat the prince of darkness himself. Repeat until dead. It should be noted, however, that Satan's Hollow does have its fans, I'm just not one of them. Rating: 4

Blueprint A charming little classic sleeper, Blueprint is basically a memorization puzzle contest with enemies and maze action to keep things more interesting. The little houses contain either a piece of an anti-monster gun or a bomb, which must quickly be disposed of in the monster/bomb pit. Construct the machine, shoot the monster before he grabs the chick, then do it all again. Ah, the life of a video game hero! Too bad this was J. J.'s first and last game. I wish they'd made a sequel or follow up just to see this diminutive, obese, overall-wearing, mime-faced, grinning little man with the straw vaudevillian hat in a game with better graphics. Rating: 6

APB: I played this a lot in arcades and on the Lynx. An overhead driving game (in a manner anticipating Grand Theft Auto, now that I think about it), you were a rookie patrolman with a different quota every day. Arrest such criminal scum as litterbugs, speeders, hitchhikers, and drug abusers. APB's are issued out against hardened criminals such as terrorists, arsonists, dealers, and prostitutes.

Audiovisually, APB delivers in spades. Nice details included the closeups of you and your boss during level intermissions, mugshots of all the crooks, and different voices on many people/cars. APB was challenging that you had many hindrances and obstacles including the timer, quota, making sure you had enough gas, and avoiding too many demerits. Donut shops gave extra time, your cruiser could be upgraded, and hidden items were some other nice touches. Good game. Rating: 8

NARC: I don't remember this one too well, but it's basically your Final Fight/Double Dragon/Golden Axe/Alien vs. Predator/Simpsons/X-Men/TMNT/Combatribes/Crime Fighters/Renegade-style pseudo 3-D player(s) vs. armies of enemy clones. This one was distinguished only by its overt "JUST SAY NO" message which depicts vigilante-style warfare against sellers and consumers of illegal psychoactive substances.

Not a bad game, though not a terribly good one, either. And remember, my vicarious friends and readers, HUGS NOT DRUGS. Rating: 5 —Tony Bueno

Boong-ga Boong-ga for Arcade

Once upon a time there was a nation where it's men led lives full of compulsive behavior, strange habits and

a frustrated fetish-driven sex life. Right after work they drink away their neckstrain from another day of nodding and bowing. They spend all their cash on little iron balls they throw in a glass container with lights. They end their day jacking-off, aroused by pictures of naked college girls committing suicide.

That time is now and that nation is Japan. And it's economy thrives the odd culture of it's men. There's sake cans that heat up when opened, vending machines with women's underwear and for everything that goes bleep there's huge pachinko parlors and arcades. Around this time (first weekend of April) techno-fetishists unite to sneak at the newest forms of electronic entertainment at the Spring Tokyo Game Show. Next issue you'll probably read about some of it's most promising highlights, but for now here's a review of last year's arcade-hit *Boong-ga Boong-ga* (Spank 'Em).

This life-size coin-up is the latest in the craze of games that involve physical interaction that goes beyond wrist movement. It combines the people's love of malicious pleasure, their desire to subject someone to their wishes and their twisted sexual fantasies. The object of the game can't be simpler. The item you interact with is not a joystick, not a board, not a fishing-rod.. but a big bent butt. As you spank away using a large flat bat, a screen shows a face with several expressions. There's a version with blue jeans, and one with police pants. Although it's a nicely shaped ass, it's not necessarily a women's behind. Although 'Ex-girlfriend' is one of the characters you can pick, there's also the ex-boyfriend or child-molestor, in all 8 figures you have a right to be angry at (a prostitute?).

If you're good enough you'll get a keychain with a little plastic dork, and a printed card describing your sexual behavior. Yes, this game is politically correct and might even cure some of that distorted lifestyle. Or as the english on the side so wonderfully summarizes: "What the heck !! it's just waiting for the stress of city life Give a shot!! HAVE A FUN!!". The slogan of the brilliant Korean company responsible for this arcade-gem: "Dreams Come True (by Taffsystem)". (<http://www.monzy.com/>) - Roloff de Jeu



Dr. Sparkz Lab Atari, for Arcade

Do ya dig puzzle games? Are you down with ridiculous monster movies? Wellsir, cross goofy sci-fi B-movies with **Tetris** and you're well on your way to understanding **Dr. Sparkz' Lab**, one o' those unreleased Atari coin-ops. Since I love crappy movies AND (good) puzzle games, this game really struck a chord with me. And the good news is, it's a fun game!

Dr. Sparkz' closest relative, Lord Tetris, PhD, is undoubtedly the inspiration for this zany coin-op. Both games are puzzlers in a world where raindrops have been replaced by falling objects. The joystick maneuvers the objects left, right, and down, and the buttons rotate said objects in ninety degree increments. Should the player fail to match enough objects, the screen fills up, thus ending the game. In Sparkz', the objects are square blocks containing a section of pipe. The goal here is to join red contacts on the left side of the screen with blue contacts on the right side of the screen by fitting pieces of pipe together to create complete circuits, or "Sparkz."

The game begins with the decidedly charming Dr. Sparkz asking the player to "help me to build a monster..." in his best mad-scientist voice, somewhere between Dracula and Martin Landau pretending to be Dracula. Creating a predetermined number of Sparkz will add pieces to a monster on the right side of the screen (during a one player game – in a two-player game, the screen is split a la Tetris, **Klax**, etc.). The female monster's head appears first, then the, er, chest, then the waist, right shoulder, and so on. So far, I haven't been able to complete an entire monster, so I'm not sure what happens when she's completed. While she's being built though, she offers appreciative little comments, like "all RIGHT!" after she looks down and notices her boobies. If that's not comedy, I dunno what is.

Sparkz is a fun little puzzle game with a great theme. The characters are all very well drawn, the voices are perfect, and the eerie Saturday monster movie matinee music and sound effects are superb. Sparkz also contains a lot of little nuances that reward the player who sticks with the game. One example: in later levels, little molecular bundles of energy appear randomly around the screen. Running over them with a falling block rewards the player with bonus points.

So why weren't we all playing Sparkz at the local arcade? As is often the case with unreleased arcade titles, I'd guess that the game was put out on test at a local mini-golf game room and wound up performing below the level required to put it into production. I'd also guess that the fantastic art direction and game design were less responsible for its demise than a market that was close to the puzzler saturation point at that time. Pity – there just aren't enough mad scientist coin-ops out there, let alone a mad scientist coin-op that allows us to play god by building monsters.

It's too bad that **Dr. Sparkz' Lab** never made it into production. If you're really into puzzle games, give this one a try, you may be pleasantly surprised. Of course, if

you're the type of person that loves to bask in all the absurd splendor of an honest-to-goodness Ed Wood flick; or, gasp, something much worse, like "The Hands of Orlac," then by all means, get out there and track this game down, Chester! You've got sparkz to complete and monsters to build. Mwhaaa haa haa haaaaa! — Dave Giarrusso

Super Pac-Man Atari, for Atari 5200

If this game had gone into production back in the eighties, you'd be finding it by the BARREL in thrift stores and flea markets today. You'd see TWO **Super Pac** carts for every **Pac-Man** or **Super Breakout** cart. It's that good.

A lot of prototype games were shelved because they still had issues to work out before going into production (**Sinistar 2600**), or they simply weren't working at all in their current form (**Tempest 2600**). Very few protos (relatively speaking of course) were actually finished AND excellent, but still wound up on the shelf.

5200 Super Pac-Man is one of the few. The proud. The amazingly perfect 5200 prototypes.

Like a lot of gamers, I've known about the 5200 Super Pac cart for a long time. Back in the old Atari XL/XE "computer" days, my friend (maybe you guys and girls had similar friends) knew another guy who wound up with the 5200 **Super Pac** on a floppy disk. Which meant, naturally, that my friend likewise wound up with a disk containing 5200 **Super Pac-Man**. The opening screen said something to the effect of "another buried cartridge due to the mismanagement of Atari." That game was probably the single most played game at my friend's house for the entire time he had that (alleged) computer. Betcha can't guess why.

In addition to being my all-time favorite Pac-Man title, fellow gamers, 5200 **Super Pac-Man** is damn near perfect. **Super Pac-Man** on the 5200 contains EVERYTHING that made the coin-op so much fun. Fruit targets? Yup. "Correct," maze with, as Gauntlet might instruct, "...keys to open doors"? Yup, yup. Fantastic music and graphics and control AND intermissions AND bonus rounds? Mm-hmm. In fact, the only negative comment I can make about Super System **Super Pac** is that it looks just somewhat jaundiced. Play through to the fried egg level (where it's most obvious) and you'll see what I mean.

So why wasn't this fantastic game released? I always think back to that opening screen on my friend's XE: it was simply "buried due to the mismanagement of Atari." Damn.

We couldn't have asked for a better arcade to home translation of **Super Pac-Man**. Unfortunately, we never got to buy it. On the plus side, it's still out there for us to enjoy. Hunt it down and marvel at its greatness. **Super Pac** on the Super System is, indeed, Super. With a capital S.

NOTE: subtract two points from the overall rating and

Random reviews
LTC

Lord of the Dungeon Coleco, for ColecoVision

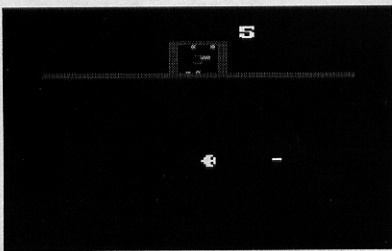
I didn't even hear of this game until it showed up as a prototype at CGE2K. I was lucky enough to get one from Sean Kelly, who got it in trade from somebody who used to work at NAP. At startup a special a special commemorative screen was added. It states that it was released at CGE2K along with the date. According to the actual title screen, it was programmed by Rexford Ayers Battenberg (1 or 3 people?) in 1983. The game looks to be pretty much complete and is playable. According to the DP Guide, it was also known as **Tunnels & Trolls**. There isn't any cartridge case because the game has a battery backup (mercury cell) on the circuit board that would prevent the case from closing. The first thing to do on the title screen is pull down the controller knob and choose the starting level.

Like with most prototypes, no instructions exist. Maybe I am slow, but for the longest time I could not even figure out how to get past the opening menus. Like with a lot of role playing games. You must enter your name or a pseudonym and pick a character. Next is your mission. Then you must buy what inventory you want to start out with from the store. You can buy weapons, potions or increase your strength before you head out. The fire buttons correspond to the two options at the bottom. The number keys are for paging through the menus. If I remember correctly, the controller was used to select and the symbol keys were used to lock in choices. Only when this setup is complete can you begin the quest. For what? I don't know. Let's just say survival for now. The first screen is a hallway in which there are doorways to enter and enemy enemies or monsters to confront. Here it is reminiscent of **Dragonstomper** (2600) and some early computer games. You have to choose an item from your inventory and the computer decides who does what damage to whom by displaying a message. You can decide if you want to go another round or break off the battle. Discretion is the better part of valor. Especially, when you are not getting anywhere. Either your 'magic' is too weak or the enemy is too strong or both. Win the battle and you are rewarded with an additional item for your inventory. I don't know what it takes to complete the level or reach the end because I haven't gotten all that far yet. —Al Backiel.

Sinistar

Atari, for Atari 2600

Some games just shouldn't have been ported to the 2600. Famed 2600 game designer Howard Scott Warshaw has often said that **Star Castle** would (in his own words) "suck" on the VCS, and rather than port it over with limited or no success, he created an offshoot. Perhaps you've heard of the wildly popular, bestselling VCS cart **Yars' Revenge**?



More often than not, I'm with Howard. Though I'm an insane game player, I have (barely) enough sanity left to know that if a game sucks, I (sometimes) won't play it. (For example, 2600 **Pac-Man** sucks, but I still find myself playing it every now and then — don't worry, the people in charge of the white coats with the buttons in the back have already been alerted.) On the other hand, that insanity often makes me wonder what certain games would have looked/played like on the VCS, despite the fact that they would probably suck. **Sinistar** was one of those games.

When I first heard that a prototype 2600 **Sinistar** cart actually was "out there," it's a good bet that my jaw hit the ground in a "take" of Tex Avery proportions. "Wow! What's it like?" Images, not unlike sugarplums, danced through my head. It could work. Given the successful conversion of the late silver label era games (**Crystal Castles**, **Stargate**, **Millipede**) it could have been well done, even for a VCS game.

Alas, it's not that great, but I wouldn't go so far as to say it sucks. **Pac-Man** sucks (but hey, **Tod** — your 2600 **Xevious** proto is great!). Part of the problem with **Sinistar** may be that it is still in the early stages of production. As with some other 2600 games, the sprites in **Sinistar** are much bigger than in the arcade counterpart, while the working area of the screen is smaller. For some games, it's an acceptable trade off (**Mario Bros**, **Asteroids**) but for others, it spells disaster (**Mr. Do!**, **Tempest**). **Sinistar** just doesn't feel right in its current form — the smaller screen is too crowded, and the action is sluggish at best. Not good enough for an insanely difficult, twitchy action arcade shoot 'em up.

Mining the crystals in the 2600 port is a bit too easy, while bombing the **Sinistar** once he lives is actually tougher than in the arcade version. Here, **Sinistar** doesn't stay on the screen long enough for the player to launch a well placed bomb. The voice samples are absent too, though nobody would have expected them to be included, nor would their absence have seriously affected game sales if the game had been released. The hideous reverberating sound that replaces the threatening voice samples needs to be swapped with something a little less nerve shattering though, like... maybe a fire alarm, or fingernails on a chalkboard.

As it stands, 2600 **Sinistar** is a nice place to visit, but well, y'know. I wouldn't wanna have it as my only 2600 cart. It's got the beginnings of a decent port, but it needs some more work. Still, it is surprisingly good for a VCS translation of a pretty advanced golden age game. All we can be sure of is that it would have fared MUCH better on the 5200. Anybody out there found that version yet?

NOTE: There are currently two different versions of the **Sinistar** prototype out in the wild. One version is much more "finished" than the other one. If you have the version that actually says "**Sinistar**" at the top of the screen, you're playing the more complete version of the two. — Dave Giarrusso

Lady Bug™

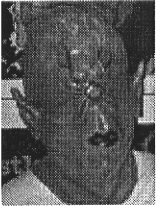
by UNIVERSAL



Atari 2600

Coleco

Arcade



by the now hideously-mutated-by-alien-forces Joe Santulli

Element	Joe	John	
Graphics	8	9	
Sound	1	1	
Gameplay	3	5	
Overall	3	4	

multi player same time	data save features
decent game ending	hidden stuff
variable skill levels	non-linear gameplay

I'll tell you the truth. I was a little surprised to find this game in my collection. I was going through my stuff, organizing titles by manufacturer (I'm a bit anal about collecting if you hadn't noticed), and as I was putting my Atari 2600/Coleco boxes all together in a nice little row with edges no more than 1/4" apart from one another, I noticed that I had a **Ladybug** in there. I couldn't remember playing this game, and when I went back to the DP Guide that I had personally edited, I realized that it had never been included. Could this be one of those rare "finds"? Just sitting there in my collection?

Well not really. Turns out John Hardie has one as well. So does Al Backiel. Apparently this has just been one huge oversight. That semi-rare game that no one really talks about that mysteriously slips through the cracks. Well, if it's been sitting unused in your collection as it has in mine, I'm here to tell you a bit about the beloved arcade "sleeper" that found success on the ColecoVision but was all but murdered in the Intellivision and Atari 2600 versions. Here is the story of the Atari version.

The most endearing aspect of this Univer-

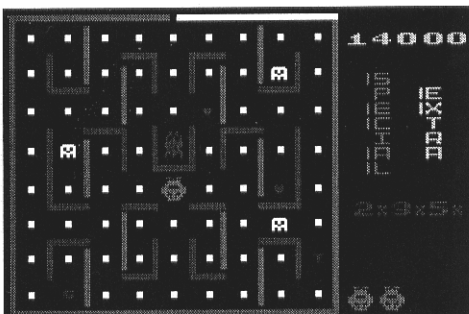
sal coin-op was the fact that it's quite a lot like Pac-Man but with a constantly changing maze environment. You could be facing certain death only to turn the turnstiles and leave the bad guys on the other side of a wall. While the Atari version keeps this feature, it's also its biggest drawback. For you see, the doors just "flick" into the alternate position, sometimes leaving the bad guy on YOUR side of the wall. I played the game dozens of times and could not figure out the trick to this. If they're close when you flip the turnstile, there's a 50/50 chance they won't be on the other side of it. Sigh...

A big surprise for me was the "SPECIAL" meter, retained from the arcade game. Letters scattered on the playfield change colors at various times. Spell the word SPECIAL (there's only 3 letters per stage so you'll need at least 3 stages to complete this task) while the letters are red and you're taken to the bonus harvest screen. Sounds great until you see it. I guess there wasn't enough memory to do several different types of bonus vegetables, so all you get is the silly celery stalk all over the screen. I guess I shouldn't complain—the Intellivision version didn't even have this feature!

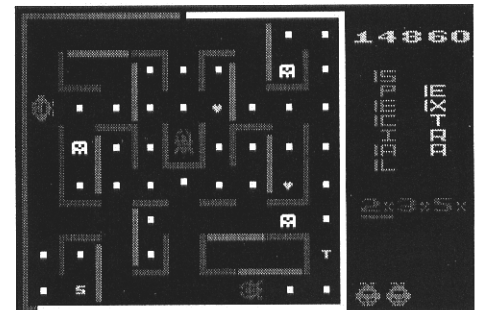
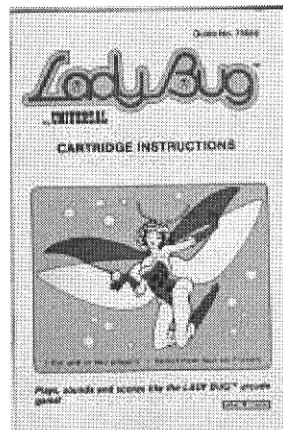
In addition, nab the letters to EXTRA while they're colored yellow and you get a bonus ladybug. No special screen like you got in the arcade, but you do get the extra, so again, kudos for managing to keep that option intact.

Now for the big problem. THE NOISE. I'd call it sound except that it sounds like someone buzzing a very loud buzzer, pausing for a brief moment, then buzzing it again. I think this is supposed to replicate the timer (a marker that runs around the edge of the screen to indicate when a bad guy is about to emerge) and maybe the buzz of the insects but GOD DAMMIT it's annoying. I'm talking Fran Drescher annoying. This is no joke. And unfortunately you kind of need the sound on so you can hear the turnstiles switch and the dots and letters being eaten, they're part of the rhythm of the game. I found that when I played with the sound off my scores were terrible. When I played with the sound on my ears were terrible. It's just sloppy.

And so, with moist eyes I give one of my favorite ColecoVision ports a big thumbs down for the Atari 2600. Don't worry that the game has been forgotten over the years. I think it was intentional.



Well, it looks like Ladybug... sort of, but it sure doesn't PLAY like Ladybug



This version even has the "harvest special" but they're still just dots—no veggies!



PHANTASY STAR™

ONLINE

ファンタースターオンライン

system

company

genre



by Joe Santulli and friend from another planet

Element	Joe		
Graphics	8		
Sound	8		
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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	non-linear gameplay

I think I can safely say that I've surpassed my previous personal "most addictive game of all time". If you've been reading DP for awhile you may recall that a few years ago I was killing myself over hitting 80+ hours in **Final Fantasy Tactics**. Well I passed 80+ hours on **Phantasy Star Online** long ago, with my first character, who had 200+ hours. I've had three more characters since that time. I lost count, and it's a good thing because my brain automatically tries to convert these hours into days, which are then converted into "days when I should have been doing something meaningful", which is then converted into raw depression.

If you were to play this game offline you'd get bored in a hurry, I'd say 50 hours would be enough to finish it and have seen all of the levels and quests, and would have beaten the final stage boss. You would also have been disappointed with the story and the conclusion, both of which seem to be afterthoughts. Where this game becomes more of a game is in the online mode. This is clearly the focus of the game, and where not only a better time is had in battle (where you're now working as a team of four), but relationships are made. That's right, ME. Relationships. They don't normally go hand in hand. But this game inspires it. You'll meet people you like,

people you hate, and people who will actually become friends, if you so desire. I've made a bunch of friends (who I shall name at the end of this column) online whom I've started to chat with via email or website message boards OUTSIDE of the game. Fortunately they all live far away and mostly in other countries, so I'll never have to be disappointed by their real-life counterparts (just kidding folks).

The game consists of a paltry four levels: forest, cave, mine, and ruins. Each level is broken into 2 or 3 sub-levels, which you work through to get to the end level boss. There are about a dozen different types of monsters in each level, each with a variety of attack styles. There are usually several monsters in each room that you'll need to destroy in order to move on. The battles are typically fast and furious, and lots of fun. I can say that even after the God-knows-how-many-hours I've been playing this game, I still get a rush from charging into an enemy-infested room and clearing house with my double saber. The end-level bosses are equally impressive, each taking up several screens. Nothing more impressive than knocking a 100 foot dragon out of the air, and running around from the tail to the head to give it a few whacks, have it rise up, run under its legs,

and have it take flight again. I only wish there were more!

You have a variety of weapon types to use, from long distance rifles to up close short swords. Certain character types are restricted to using certain weapon types, but there's a good selection for all. Better still, each weapon has a different animation, so you'll twirl into the fray with a double-saber type weapon, but perform an elaborate series of animated strikes with a dagger. Some weapons even have special animations, like the Magical Piece, which leaves a wake of translucent hearts (!) behind on a strike, or the C-Bringer Rifle which fires a blast of fire instead of the more common photon bullets. Furthermore, every weapon in the game has variations where you can do things like "steal" health, create confusion, paralyze, or even instant kill an enemy on a hit. And weapons are upgradeable by "grinding" them, so that your basic saber can become a +40 saber with a little tender loving care.

And of course there are various types of armor and shielding with various ways to improve and combine them to make them more effective. In addition to these you also have a "Mag", which is a cross between a Pokemon character and a personal assistant. Mags can

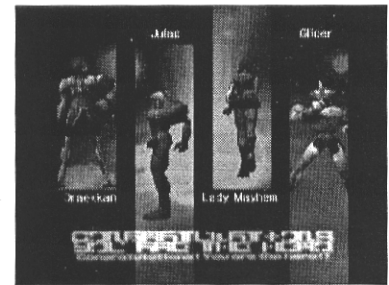
(Continued on page 28)



Version 2 is out in Japan. The cute little rappers got a lot bigger and meaner



There are lots of "not real" people, even in the online game



Ah, the heroes of the game. 2 guys from Jersey and a 12 year old



Dreamcast

No Cliché

Action



by Don "boy toy commander"
Evanoff

Element	Don	Joe	
Graphics	8	8	
Sound	7	8	
Gameplay	9	9	
Overall	9	9	

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	multi player same time	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	data save features
	decent game ending		hidden stuff
	variable skill levels	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	non-linear gameplay

Well...The Dreamcast is now a dead system. No need to linger on the point. Just because a majority of gamers out there are more interested in the next **Tekken** installment than something innovative, that is not my concern. But, now that the system is gone, we can now start thinking about "classics" or "must-haves" for the system. While the list for Dreamcast "must-haves" is long, **Toy Commander** is certainly near the top.

Who didn't set up huge battles with their toys as a child? Lego and shoebox cities, alphabet block and hot-wheel track highways. Racing their model cars full of urine. (huh?) All this and more is accomplished in **Toy Commander**. A variety of missions take you through battles in cities, races on the ground and through the air, and search-and-rescue and infiltration missions. And similar scenarios take on a new feel and difficulty as you progress through the game, moving from room to room in Average House, U.S.A.

Toy Commander is about a group of evil toys that are tired of losing in play battles with the boy of the house. Huggy Bear, the ring-leader of the rogue toys, has taken control of the house, commandeering each of the rooms with the help of evil sub-commander toys (i.e. bosses). Each room is divided into six to eight missions, with an additional mission against the boss of that room. After successfully completing four missions in a room, you can move on to the next open room of the house. Progress through all the rooms of the house and you encounter Huggy Bear in a final battle. But wait! It is not that simple. Yes, you can complete a room without encountering the boss, moving on through the house to the final battle with Huggy Bear. But, no, you can not fight Huggy Bear without conquering several of the bosses. You must use the conquered bosses against Huggy

Bear, as they are your only weapons against him. And to meet a boss in combat, you must complete three of the individual missions of a room in a shorter time than the boss has determined for that mission. A mission can be conquered without the best time, but a best time is necessary to encounter the boss. Without the boss conquered, there is no way to conquer Huggy Bear.

One of the great aspects of **Toy Commander** is the wonderful sense of scale No Cliché has created. Possibly the best example of this scale is during a battle in a city being ravaged by a Godzilla-like monster in a bunny suit. You control two vehicles to stop this "giant" before he flattens and burns the city; an armed jeep and a helicopter. I use the term "giant" because the Godzilla is only three feet tall, but you control vehicles the size of Matchbox cars in a child's bedroom. You drive around carpeted and play-track streets, roll up and down Hot-Wheels parking garages, fly in and out of cardboard and Lego skyscrapers, but can pull back to discover the relation between your battle and the boy's bedroom. Suddenly the cityscape has become a play-set, and the battle a noisy play-time activity which a mother would complain about.

Other games have tried to convey this scaling atmosphere before. Some well, like **Micro Machines** and **Micro Maniacs**, and others not so well, like **Army Men**. The **Army Men** series most closely resembles **Toy Commander** in concept, but **Army Men** has always failed to realize what it is supposed to be...toy combat. **Army Men** is a combat game disguising itself, and evading ESRB adult ratings, by coloring it's soldiers solid green or tan. Throwing in the occasional alphabet block or hanging a bath towel in the background does not translate into toy warfare. True, **Toy Commander** focuses more

on vehicle combat than man-to-man fighting, but **Army Men** never made you feel like you were playing with toys. The battlefields seemed more like hostile terrain than a sandbox or bedroom floor, and the soldiers seemed more like, well, soldiers than plastic toys. Seeing a figure melt from a flame-thrower is small consolation for a lack of effective game design.

Speaking of game design, another strong suit of **Toy Commander** is the gorgeous layout of the different rooms in the house. As well, the play-fields show an enthusiasm in their structure, not just getting to point B from point A without letting enemy C get you. The combination of room and mission bring a unique feel to the game play, despite the similarity of two separate missions. An air race in the boy's bedroom can have a feeling of playfulness as you swoop and dive through bunk bed ladders, tented album covers, and over fish tanks, while another air race in the attic can take on a dark, confining tone as you bank by dusty cobwebs, buzz over discarded photo albums, and loop over abandoned wire dress mannequins. The overall impression is enhanced by the little details, like the snowflakes falling against the ceiling skylights, smoke puffing from a damaged vehicle, or the steady flames of a fireplace or you burning home base. And background action keeps the whole scene alive and moving with anti-aircraft missiles streaking through the dining room sky, opposing aircraft dive-bombing a base, and ground men providing cover fire as you attack the enemy on his turf. Witnessing the thought and commitment that went into each level, it is hard to believe this was No Cliché's first game, or that **Toy Commander** was a first release title for Dreamcast.

There are problems with the game, but are

(Continued on page 27)



ColecoVision/O2

Probe 2000

Action



by Al "yep, my middle name is power lord" Backiel

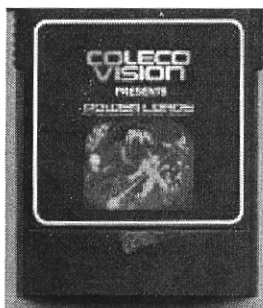
Element	Al	Joe	
Graphics	6	6	
Sound	7	4	
Gameplay	6	3	
Overall	6	3	

X	multi player same time	data save features
	decent game ending	hidden stuff
	variable skill levels	non-linear gameplay

This game concept did make it out the front door, but as an Odyssey2 release. Both the O2 and CV versions, subtitled The Quest For Volcan, were part of the Probe 2000 game series manufactured by NAP (North American Philips). Unfortunately, even the Odyssey2 edition is very rare because it came out near the end of the system life cycle in the US. It has shown up in Brazil under the name **Serpente do Poder**. There is no Videopac counterpart. My O2 cart has the word 'prototype' printed diagonally across the label. I believe it is the same as the production version. The title is based upon the DC comic book series and the Revell action figures. The Power Lords were superheroes with the ability to transform themselves into various alter egos. This was one of those rare times that the O2 had a licensed commodity. A limited number of the ColecoVision prototypes were available at CGE2K in Vegas. Sean Kelly had somehow managed to get a hold of that title and others in a trade with an ex-Philips employee. Last I spoke to him he had a few left.

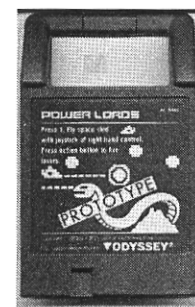
Screen one in the CV version is a 2 against 1 shooter. A cobra and a starfighter vs. you (Space Sled). The cobra fires lasers at you with its beady little eyes from the top of a volcano. The starfighter comes at you like some pesky mosquito. Which is a good analogy because if you hit it, the word SPLAT appears. This game is very tough on your hands and controller. Since you can wraparound, playing both edges of the screen seems to be the best strategy. It takes many hits to destroy the cobra. I am not sure how many, but you can notice it sinking lower and lower. The O2 prototype is similar, but the graphics are blocky and not as nicely detailed. This time it is a one-on-one confrontation. Missing is the attack by the starfighter, instead you spend a lot of time dodging the deadly falling debris from the frequent volcanic eruptions. The eruptions are a nice effect, but they aren't as convincing as those in Atari's **Crossbow**. As far as I can tell, the O2 prototype has only one screen.

left side appears to be the best way to navigate the hallway because prizes can be found in some of the open doorways. You have to get close and use the * key in order to pick them up. The items include a rifle, armor, and a key. If you get a key, you can exit through any of the right hand doors to cut across the hallways. One key can open any door. This seems too easy. Probably the final version would have required a new key per hallway. To build up your score and strength it is probably best to collect as many prizes as you can. After the last hallway door is exited, the end of round # screen appears. The next round starts automatically and returns to the cobra screen with the pace cranked up a notch. The difficulty level (1-5) is an option from the title screen. The # key is pause and the * key is continue. I did manage to complete Level 2 and found that the number of hallways had increased to 5. The fifth level I don't think is humanly possible.



Unearthed and shamelessly distributed at CGE2K, the ColecoVision version...

Screen two on the CV prototype starts a secondary quest game. There are no instructions for this part, so bear with me. You have to dodge fire and reach a hole in the ground to descend a stairwell. Screens three thru five contain hallways that are the same, except for color. It looks as if each hallway goes "to infinity and beyond" to paraphrase Buzz Lightyear. There are many doors on each side. The ones on the left are all open while the ones on the right are all locked. You have to defend against attackers that appear overhead. Staying towards the



... and the prototype of the Odyssey2 version, note "PROTOTYPE" on label



Arcade

Atari

Arcade



by Dave "I'm pretty sure I'm an Atari-an" Giar-russo

Element	Dave	Joe	
Graphics	7	6	
Sound	7	5	
Gameplay	7	7	
Overall	7	7	

X	multi player same time	data save features
	decent game ending	hidden stuff
	variable skill levels	non-linear gameplay

Atari's waning years almost turned them into Panasonic's kid sister. During those last few attempts at recapturing lost glory (and dollars) Atari was occasionally, "just slightly ahead of [their] time." Unfortunately, Atari always managed to be slightly ahead of their time at slightly the wrong time, or wrong place. Remember the 64-bit Jaguar, the first 64-bit ("do the math!") home gaming console? Remember the Lynx, the first color portable game unit? Remember "Arcade Classics," among the first coin-ops that gave gamers a healthy dose of nostalgia? Remember the way all of these gaming firsts fell by the wayside due to lukewarm response from a public that was just slightly not ready to accept them?

Even if you do remember the Jag and the Lynx, you might not remember Arcade Classics. (By this time, Atari Home and Coin divisions were two separate companies, but anyway...) Don't worry though, you're not losing your mind. Arcade Classics, planned for release in 1992 to celebrate twenty years of Atari, never made it to the arcades, despite the fact that it was (almost?) completed.

While not entirely "Super," **Super Centipede** could have just as easily been given

the Roman numeral treatment that was given to **Missile Command**. Even then, the "II" is more like the "2" at the end of funny movies like "Evil Dead 2" or scary movies like "Home Alone 2." Both films are admitted remakes of the originals with a couple of extra bucks. **Missile Command II** and **Super Centipede** are the Evil Dead 2 and Home Alone 2 of the original games.

Like that timeless (and dopey) wedding cliché, **Super Centipede** contains something old, (**Centipede's** main elements) something new, (two-player simultaneous play – very cool!, power-ups) something borrowed (Mosquitoes, DDT from **Millipede**) and something blue (the "left" player is "blue, the right player is "red"). The cartoony revised graphics (thankfully) don't go too overboard with crazy new 3D rendered bugs – the entire cast is immediately recognizable. A forest backdrop is included, and as with **Millipede**, the bottom portion of the screen (where the blaster can move about) is marked by a slight offset of the foliage.

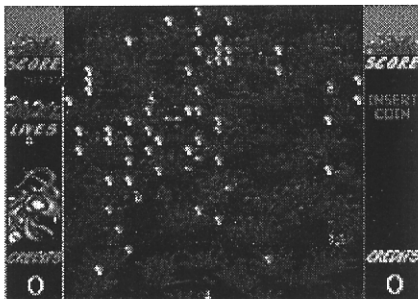
Perhaps the most welcome graphic embellishment in the new model is a snarling centipede that sits on either side of the screen. When a player earns an extra life, the centi-

pede springs into action and announces "extra life!" in a well done piece of animation. The centipede also wakes up to announce, "nice score!" if the player makes it into the high score table at the end of the game. Other vocal stylings include a countdown (5, 4, 3...) during the last few seconds that a powerup (invincibility, double speed shots) is effective.

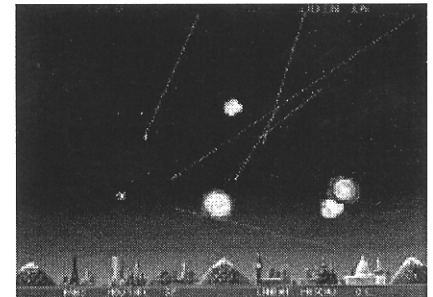
Missile Command II fares even better in the graphic-overhaul department. Here, the original game's nondescript cities are replaced by nicely rendered drawings of Paris, New York, San Francisco, London, Moscow and Washington DC. The explosions, mushroom clouds, UFOs, planes and mountain silos have been given a more realistic facelift as well (think **Blasteroids** graphics). MCII also includes bonus rounds where the player must launch missiles from the three silos (without using the crosshair) to destroy flying saucers that attack "Air-Sea Battle" style. Finally, the player squares off against a renegade mother ship that may or may not have escaped from the scrapped **Xevious II** game.

The two-player simultaneous play option is also present in **Missile Command II**, but it

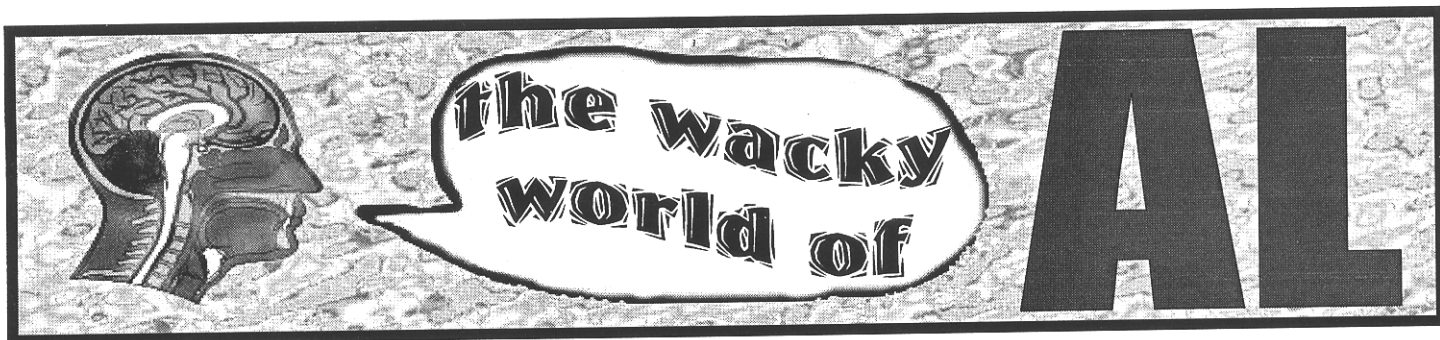
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Is it just me or have the centipedes taken on a bit of an "alien" look?



Is it just me or have the missiles taken on a bit of an "insecty" look?



The Top 10 BRAIN Games (Part 2)

compiled by Al Backiel

Back in DP #23, I did an article on what I considered to be the Top 10 Brain Games. Since that time (Early '95) several more of these mind games have been released on various systems. So this update could be considered choices 11-20 out of the Top 20. Some games were missed completely by me the last time around or they just missed making my Top 10. As with the first group, the following criteria was used:

A) All games should run sequentially, not randomly. Tetris-style games require some thinking, but they run differently every time you play them. Therefore you can never come up with a single solution.

B) All levels of a game should be infinitely solvable using more logic than reflexes.

The new Top 10 games (not necessarily in any order) that come closest to meeting the above criteria:

CRYSTAL MINES (NES/LYNX) - An excellent blend of action and logic puzzles. The original CM (with 100+ levels?) came out as an unauthorized NES third party title from Color Dreams. So this gem (pun intended) could easily have been overlooked. Color Dreams evolved into the Christian company Wisdom Tree. They used the CM game engine, changed the graphics and levels and released Exodus and Joshua on the NES. Both have a set of 100 or more logic puzzles alternating with Bible quizzes. CM II (181 levels) appeared on the Lynx and is the most common version, because it had the blessings of the hardware manufacturer. Carl Forhan has added 50 levels (plus x hidden) on a CD called CM II: BURIED TREASURE. The new levels can be downloaded to the Lynx utilizing a special patch cord connected to a PC. The game selection menu appears on the PC. Carl did get a little help from his friends (e.g. Scott Davis) in designing the various levels. One of the names I recognized was Harry Dodgson, the designer of the Atari 2600/7800 development tools. The levels can be quite challenging and it is recommended that you play the earlier software first to get a feel for the games and what to expect. Also contained on the same CD is a Level Design kit so that you can create your own puzzles. Songbird Productions (<http://songbird.atari.net>) is the source for CMII:BT.

LEMMINGS (various titles on NES/GB/LYNX/GEN/SNES/PSX) - A true Lemming always follows the leader of the pack. Even to its own destruction. The Lemmings are divided into Blockers (stop others), Builders (build diagonal bridge sections), Climbers (scale anything vertically), Diggers (dig straight down), Bombers (explode and make a hole), Miners (dig down diagonally), Floaters (parachute down via umbrella), & Bashers (tunnel across). Switch to the proper Lemming at the appropriate time to survive. Some Lemmings may have to be sacrificed as long as the minimum number reach home safely. There is also a time limit to deal with. I have always enjoyed this series. I usually pause each new level and plan

my strategy according to what is allocated. I have played the Game Boy version of Lemmings and they looked like ants. It was a strain on the eyes and besides it may have been exactly like the NES version. This is an excellent series of logic puzzles, but it still requires a degree of precise timing. One mistake and you may as well self-destruct and start over again.

KICKLE KUBICLE (NES) - Very similar to the classic Adventures of Lolo series. This one adds a rotating hammer that hits a square and may trip other switches. So you have to visualize events occurring in order as in a complicated Rube Goldberg gadget. Trial and error will get you through eventually. As expected the puzzles eventually become more difficult.

TETRIS 3-D (VB) - No, I am not contradicting myself here. There is a puzzle mode inside this game that contains 20 puzzles in which the puzzle pieces are not random, but sequential. Each puzzle is a block puzzle in the shape of an animal or object. As you play each level, you get to see upcoming blocks (which may be different from the normal Tetris shapes) and you can also get cross sectional views from top to bottom. Place one block out of the pattern and you get an error message ending the level. If the puzzle is completed correctly, you are rewarded with a cute little animation. Also a 3-D ring of completed levels is formed.

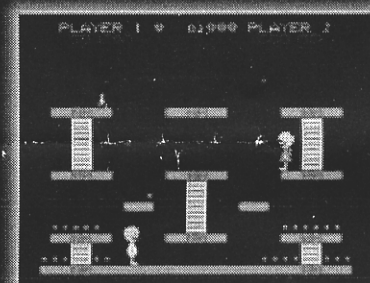
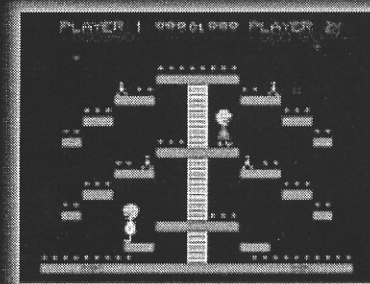
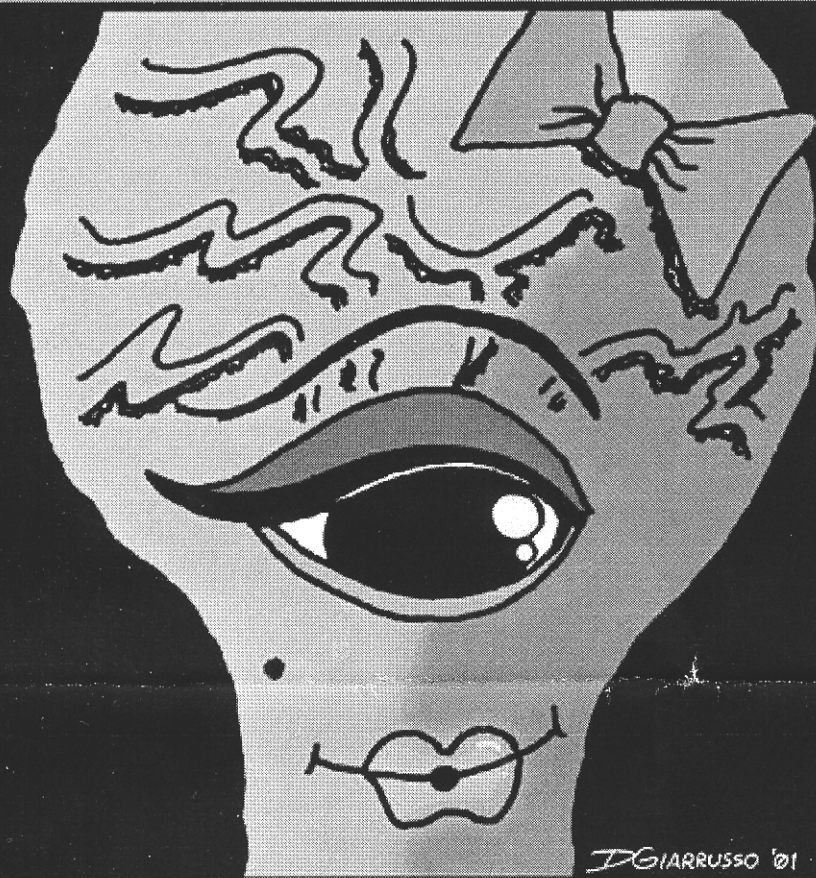
TOWER TOPPLER (7800) - This game has the unique feature of a rotating, cylindrical tower in the center of the screen. The tower must be scaled to the top in order to advance to the next level. You have to basically run through a whole obstacle course on your way to the top. Pretty tricky to do because timing is critical. Memorizing the various levels and trying new strategies will help. There are no password continues, but luckily there is a cheat which you can use to practice the higher levels which was published in the Atarian magazine and I quote "You can get an infinite number of lives by allowing Pogo to fall into the water on your last life. As soon as the bubbles disappear, activate the level select by moving the Player 2 difficulty switch left. Move the switch right when you reach the level you want. The life counter will have no marks on it. Let Pogo die once before attempting the tower and you will have an infinite number of lives." There were also GB and NES versions of this game called Castelian.

TRICKY KICK (TG16) - A collection of 60 progressively more difficult logic puzzles. The objective is similar to Shanghai in that you have to match identical objects on the screen so that they disappear. The screen must be completely cleared within a set time frame in order to advance to the next level. The graphics are nicely done and the game can become very addictive. You will want to solve them all. There are a variety of positive and negative features which make things interesting. So it is not just a simple matching contest.

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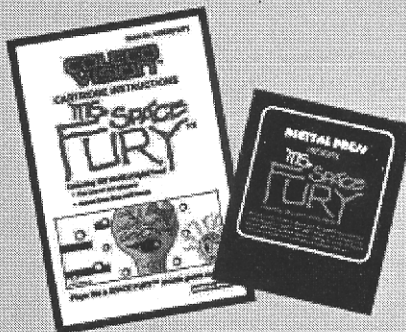
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because SPACE hath no FURY...
like a
woman.



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- **ONLY FIFTY CARTRIDGES WILL BE AVAILABLE AT CGE2K1!**
- **AUTHENTICALLY STYLED INSTRUCTION MANUAL AND FULL COLOR LABEL!**



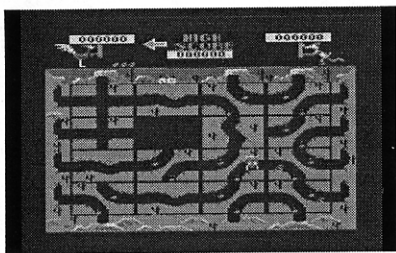
At Digital Press, we don't just play video games. We PLAY video games. We write about video games. We eat, sleep and breathe video games. And on the **TEN YEAR ANNIVERSARY** of our planet dominating formation, we thought it would only be appropriate to create a video game. **MS. SPACE FURY** is the first ColecoVision sequel to hit the scene since 1984, and she brings a whole new dimension to the Space Fury universe. So get to CGE2K1 and get your hands on this game. If you miss out, you just might live to regret it. IF she lets you live. She's keeping her eye on you...

DIGITALPRESS. CONQUERING THIS TINY PLANET FOR TEN YEARS.

MS. SPACE FURY DESIGNED BY AND © 2001 DANIEL BIENVENU, SYLVAIN DE CHANTAL AND JOE SANTULLI. MANUAL AND ADVERTISEMENT DESIGNED BY AND © 2001 DAVE GIARRUSSO. ORIGINAL SPACE FURY GAME IS © 1981 SEGA.

game. The first thing you should know is that the keys on the keypad correspond to actual telephone frequencies while you're at the Game Select screen. Basically, what this means is if you hold your phone up to the TV speaker and "dial" the number using the 5200 keypad, your call will go through just like normal. The other egg involves starting a demo game where the computer plays itself. At the bottom of the screen, there is a scrolling message that says "5200 Realsports Basketball Copyright 1983 Atari". Pressing the 2,3,4,6,7,8, or 9 keys will remove the word "Realsports" from the message. Pressing the 1 key will restore it. If you press the 5 key you will change the scrolling message into the following: "When Running Into The Tropical Entropy Nightly, By Yourself, Project And Try Reaching Into Circles Killed Because All Seems Strange". Now if you take the first letter of each word and put it together you have "Written By Patrick Bass".

Roadrunner



If you're thinking of the arcade game, forget it. This game is essentially a slide puzzle type game that requires the player to move chunks of landscape around to keep the Roadrunner and Wil E. Coyote apart. Minimal sounds indicate that there was still some work to do on

this one. An interesting concept that didn't quite work out. #CX5242.

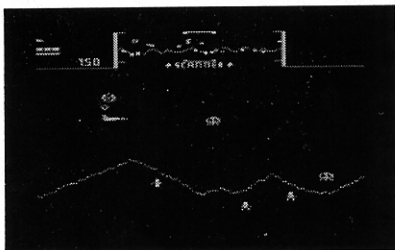
Spitfire

Programmed by Joe Copson. This seems to be a Zaxxon style game, but with full 360-degree movement and "Crystal Castle" style structures. It's obviously early on in development although it seems the 5200 controllers could have worked out nicely for this title.

Sport Goofy

Programmed by Leo Salinas. Although it was originally thought to be incomplete, a recent press release found indicates that this game was only planned to have 2 different events. The 2 events play well although it won't hold your attention for very long. Obviously planned as a kid's title. #CX5237.

Stargate

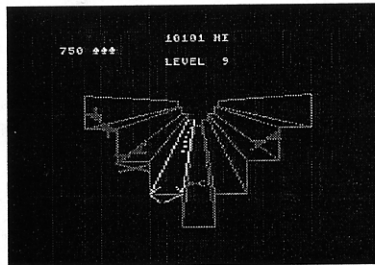


Licensed from Williams. Programmed by Steve Baker. This sequel to Defender suffers from screen flicker and poor control (with the standard 5200 stick). It's likely that this title was still a little bit away from release. #CX5219.

Super Pac-Man

Licensed from Namco. This is the title that will put your friends over the edge and cause them to run out and buy 5200 systems and Sean Kelly's multi-cart (which is important since we don't pay him a lot for his house-keeping chores around here). This is a great conversion. Get yourself a Masterplay, Wico, etc. and settle in for some fun. Another complete title that makes you go "Hmmm..." #CX5252.

Tempest



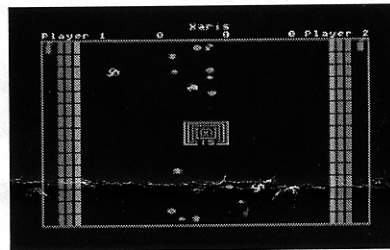
Programmed by Keithen Hayenga. According to the programmer the sounds are ported directly from the arcade version. Plays surprisingly well with the standard joystick. Select a starting level up through wave 81, including the invisible webs. It seems that only a lack of partial collision detection as well

as the absence of a few enemies keep this one from being complete. #CX5220.

Track N Field

Licensed from Konami. Seems complete with no noticeable bugs, glitches, etc. You can select any of the 6 events just by pressing the corresponding key on the keypad. Remember playing Activision's Decathlon where you rapidly moved your stick (joystick that is) from side to side? Now imagine doing that with a non-centering 5200 controller. Not sure if that prevented its release but it certainly had to be a factor. #CX5258.

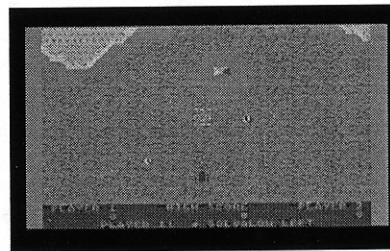
Xari Arena



Programmed by John Seghers. Talk about a sleeper hit! This game could be described as a cross between Breakout and Off The Wall, yet there's much more involved. A little tough to control unless you're using an alternative joystick. Great intermissions scenes with

dancing Xaris and incredible music. A very hard game at the higher levels. According to the programmer, when you complete level 32 (the last level) you'll see a message telling you to send a picture to the Master of the Arena at Atari's address.

Xevious



Licensed from Namco. Programmed by Jim Huether. This excellent conversion of the coin-op utilizes both fire buttons and plays very well with the stock controller. The graphics are translated well from the arcade original. Another seemingly complete title as no noticeable bugs,

glitches, etc. have surfaced. If you like Xevious, plan to spend a romantic evening with this one. #CX5246.

So there you have it. Of course, you're doing yourself an injustice if you don't try each of these titles on your own. Every person is different and while I may think Miniature Golf is a good game, other cretins like our fearless editor, Joe S. think it's garbage. My advice is to get a good joystick alternative (you should have one anyway) and take the time to explore this "undiscovered country" and formulate your own opinions. A whole new world awaits you brave adventurer. Journey on and I think you'll be pleasantly surprised at what you find.

tute.

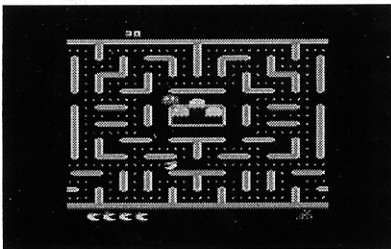
Elevator Action

Licensed from Taito. Programmed by Joe Copson. The game still has a little way to go from being complete. It actually seems further along than its 2600 counterpart but that's mostly because the graphics are more polished and refined. You can even shoot out the lights just like in the original. A lot of fun to play even though it's not finished.

Final Legacy

Seemingly identical to the Atari 8-bit computer version. If you've never played Final Legacy, you're missing out on the fun. While not graphically wondrous, this title is heavy on the game play factor. Spend some time with this one; you won't regret it. #CX5256.

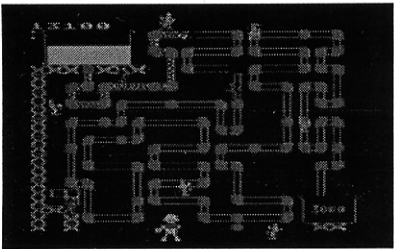
Frisky Tom



This game seems complete and is very playable, but then again I'd say that about any game that features a girl in a bathtub. Frisky Tom pretty much came out of nowhere. It was never mentioned in any magazines or literature of the time and was quite a shock when it was

found. Here's where we start to wonder why these games didn't get released.

Jr. Pac-Man



Licensed from Namco. Programmed by GCC. A phenomenal conversion of the coin-op game. It figures that one of the best games for the 5200 is only available as a prototype, although its 8-bit computer counterpart seems identical. Tough to control

with standard joysticks but plays spectacularly with a Masterplay or other digital alternative. I have to assume that it's complete as I've gotten pretty far and haven't found any bugs or glitches. #CX5251.

Last Starfighter, The

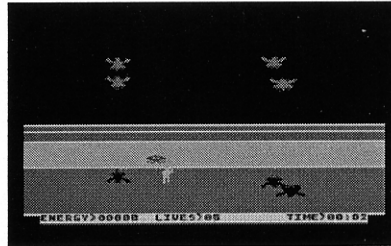
Programmed by Gary Stark and Bruce Poehlman. This title went through a name change and became Star Raiders 2; only seeing release for the Atari 8-bit line of computers. Apparently, Atari purchased the rights to Last Starfighter but decided a sequel to Star Raiders would be better embraced by the masses. Seems complete except for the lack of shields, and plays fairly well. Although they couldn't remember how to trigger them, the programmers admitted to hiding a few extras in the game. One of them involves a spaceship (U.S.S. Enterprise?) and is seen near the Sun. #CX5260.

Looney Tunes Hotel

Atari was famous for making full use of the Warner Communications properties (Franklin Mint, DC Comics, Warner Bros. Cartoons, etc.) and here's a perfect example of in-house "licensing". Utilizing the

Warner Bros. cartoon characters, this game featured Bugs Bunny, Elmer Fudd, Yosemite Sam, and Devil (Tasmanian, I assume). The game seems to be in the early to middle stages of development. You control Bugs as he tries to get the carrots while avoiding the bombs placed around the Looney Tunes Hotel. It gets boring rather fast and isn't much fun to play.

Meebzork



Programmed by Eric Manghise. An interesting adventure game concept that featured 6 different stages. This one still needed some work as it has a few bugs that cause screen freezes, flashes, and crashes. The game requires some precise movements that are almost

impossible with the standard 5200 stick. Graphics aren't bad and include a nice 3-D effect on the Phoenix stage. According to the programmer, there is a way to get a secret screen of names, although he doesn't remember how to activate it.

Micro-gammon SB

Programmed by Steve Baker. If you like backgammon (and who doesn't?) then this is the game for you. You need a working 5200 controller for this one as it uses the keypad and fire buttons only; no joystick. Contrary to what you might think the SB in the title does not stand for Steve Baker. SB denotes "Super Brain" and is one of the IQ settings for the computer opponent. The game is apparently complete although it is rumored to cheat.

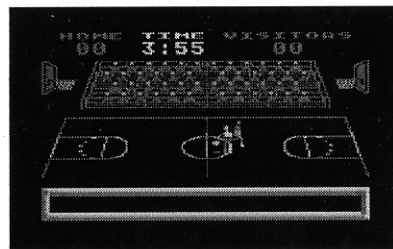
Millpede

This Centipede sequel is another winner to show off to your friends. A spot on conversion that perfectly duplicates the features and gameplay of the arcade original. Includes trak-ball support, which is a must if you want to enjoy this game. Obviously complete and waiting for release. And waiting... And waiting... #CX5248.

Miniature Golf

Programmed by SAB (Steve A. Baker). Although it doesn't stand out graphically, this game is a complete 18-hole miniature golf course. While some may scoff at this title, a miniature golf fan like myself should enjoy it. It's actually not that bad considering how difficult it would be to program any sort of 3-D version. #CX5230.

Realsports Basketball



Programmed by Patrick Bass. Looked good for its time but just isn't a lot of fun to play. The gameplay requires you to utilize the keypad buttons while taking shots, which as you may imagine is no easy task. The game is playable, however, the real beauty of this proto

lies in its' easter eggs. As a side note, we've seen several versions of R.S. Basketball and the easter eggs only seem to work on the one dated 31 Oct. 83. Some years back, I had the pleasure of speaking to the programmer and he told me of the many hidden things in the

ATARI 5200: UNCOVERED, UNEARTHED, AND EXPOSED

by John Hardie

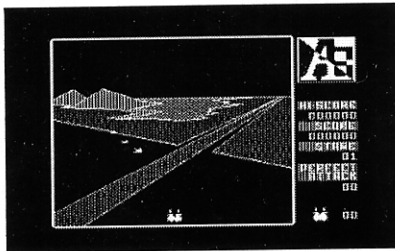
If you're a 5200 fanatic, you don't need me to tell you that Atari's SuperSystem sports one of the most impressive software libraries around. While there weren't a lot of games produced for it, the quality and selection of released titles is quite good. But what many people don't realize is that lurking beneath that impressive release list is a whole sub-library of unreleased games that are every bit as good.

It's hard to understand why many of Atari's 5200 titles went unpublished. We've actually heard from more than one former Atari employee that Atari purposely did this in an effort to kill the video-game market. While this may seem preposterous at first glance, keep in mind that many of these titles were being worked on or recently completed in mid 1984. Jack T. had just taken over Atari and shelved the 7800 ProSystem while downsizing the company to roughly 100 employees. The Tramiel Atari mantra of "we don't do videogames" became evident as the company focus shifted entirely to computers.

Although it would be hard to prove the above rumor either way, there are quite a few seemingly-complete, unreleased 5200 titles around which forces you to wonder. Many of these unreleased games are available on various ROM web sites or our own Sean Kelly's 5200 multi-cart (which he still builds in between mopping and dusting the DP offices).

Below, I have listed each unreleased game with some general info and/or comments about it as well as any recommendations I might have. I hope many of you will spend the time to check out these games, as they're some of the best-kept secrets around.

A.E.



friends.

Licensed from Broderbund. Similar graphics and game play to the Atari 8-bit computer version except that the time required to draw the backgrounds is agonizingly long. Not a bad shooter if you have time to kill. This definitely won't be one of your first choices to show off to

Asteroids

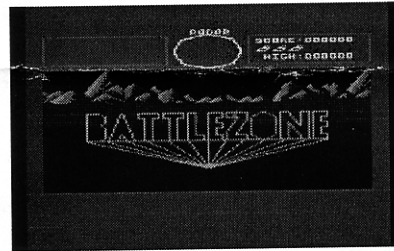
Although it's virtually identical to the Atari 8-bit version, programmer Tod Frye claims that he wasn't responsible for this conversion. Like the 8-bit computer version, the game supports up to 4 players in head-to-head or cooperative play. Absolutely unplayable with a standard 5200 stick, which is the most likely reason it was never released.

Interestingly, the game was found with an actual production label and a prototype Asteroids controller. Makes you wonder what Atari had in mind. #CX5201.

Barroom Baseball

Not really an unreleased game since it's the same as Realsports Baseball. Original game (RS Baseball) programmed by James Andreassen and Keithen. Surprisingly, the RS Baseball programmers were not aware of this title's existence. Evidently someone else was tabbed to do the modifications. Noteworthy only because it proves the existence of coin-operated arcade machines with 5200 systems inside. This title is simply re-programmed to include a time limit per credit (.25).

Battlezone



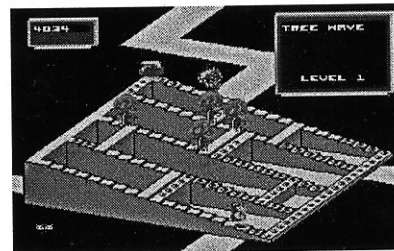
botron and Space Dungeon. #CX5239.

This version resorted to colorful backgrounds instead of the arcade original's vector graphics. Plays o.k. but is definitely not finished. The game also has an option to use 2 joysticks simultaneously. Most likely would have been packaged with a controller holder like Ro-

Black Belt

Atari's entry into the karate genre. Although it has some impressive graphics and several different rooms, the unbearably slow gameplay/movement, and lack of collision detection make it about as much fun to play as watching Scott Stilphen flex his muscles (unless you're into that sort of thing).

Crystal Castles



Like the original, Crystal Castles is beautiful to look at. The 5200 version is very well done and seems complete. Unfortunately, it plays horribly (as many games do) with the standard 5200 joystick. You would think this game would adapt to the analog joysticks well, since 360-degree movement usually works nicely with these sticks. A good game to show to your friends if you have a Masterplay or other digital joystick substi-

(it's been known to act funny on certain games) so I tried it on my 7800 and my ColecoVision using the 2600 Adapter and ran into the same problem (the colors were actually lighter on the 7800 for some reason). Have you ever heard of such a problem before? Could the cart be defective somehow? I cleaned the contacts (they weren't dirty at all, this baby is mint!) and that didn't seem to help. One other quirk it seems to have is that the walls in the first room disappear when you re-enter it (they're actually there, just invisible) but this doesn't happen on the 7800 (I think it has something to do with the lighter colors). Do you have any ideas?

Matt

It's not a problem, believe it or not. That's how the game is! There's no set order to find the clues in WW (like in EW or FW), so whenever you find one, it simply resets. As for the "invisible" walls, two rooms are like that, but it sounds like the color is a bit off on either your TV or system(s). Props to Mr. Scott Stilphen for clarification on this.

Leverage

Here's an interesting little bit of "lore".

In my area the few thrift shops we have never seem to have any games available. We have one decent video store that buys and sells old videos and games, but they usually won't deal with anything older than Nintendo NES. They charge \$3.75 per NES game, so I usually pass unless I happen to find something that is really worth it.

Yesterday I went to the store, and as usual, asked them if they had any old Atari stuff around. I was in luck..they had a couple of crates out back with about 50 games, plus a system. No big score, but decent for my area and who knows what the games might be.

I asked how much for the whole package, and they said \$100. I was hoping for something like \$25, but that didn't happen. Needless to say, I knew I was going to spend some time picking through the games so I could get the ones that I didn't already have in my collection, or were rare and I knew I could sell them somewhere else.

I went out to the car to get my new DP6 guide, which I already spent about 6 hours with last weekend filling in my entire inventory. When I came back in, the guy kinda looked at me funny but didn't say anything as I browsed for games that I wasn't sure if I had, or didn't immediately recognize. I ended up finding 15 games that were well worth the \$2.00 each he was asking (\$100 for the whole system so I figured \$2.00 max per game). A couple of them were rated 4 on the rarity scale, and most others were worth anywhere from \$4 - \$8 according to the fair prices noted in the DP guide.

As I was getting ready to check out, the store owner started asking me questions

such as am I a collector, and what is that guide thing I'm looking at. I figured no harm in showing him, so I told him all about the guide, and how it would really be useful to him as well for his business. Although he isn't much of a collector himself, we looked up a few unique games that he had kept over the years, and one of them was rated a 6 on the rarity scale and going for about \$45.

We hit it off really well, and after about 15 minutes of talking about retro gaming, he asked where he would get one of these DP guides. I told him the about the digitpress.com website, but he was an older gentleman not very familiar with computers. He asked if I could order a guide for him and he would pay be double the cost for my time and effort. I told him to keep the extra money, and would prefer if he would just contact me when Atari stuff comes in, and give me first dibs on the selection. He agreed, and also said he would give me a decent discount on any games I wanted!

He ended up cutting me a deal on the 15 games as well and only charged me \$20.

This works out great since as I mentioned above, our area has very little resources for finding old games (other than garage sales).

Anyway, just goes to show that your DP guide can be used as leverage to your advantage!

- John Mangan
jmangan@phathippo.com
www.phathippo.com

Hey... had I known that that second guide you ordered was being used as leverage I would have charged you double the cover price! Actually you bring up a perfect example of a defense I've been using regarding our "low low prices". This IS a collector's guide. The prices are intentionally low for to a) not artificially inflate prices and b) keep harmony between collectors who really only care about being fair in trades. We've been criticized for putting a \$75 price on a game like Bubble Bath Babes for NES. Collectors have said "I'd pay \$200 for one right now". But these people are missing the service we're providing for them. Rather than get upset by the fact that the price looks low, or that (heavens forbid) they've paid much higher than the guide says it's "worth", use the prices as a "guide"... a fair starting point.

I had a seller at PhillyClassic ask me how much I'd pay for his Bubble Bath Babes for NES. I opened up the book, quoted the \$75 price, and he accepted the offer. Note also that this was not just some rube who got taken for his cartridge. He shopped the cart around, and my offer was still the best. Guess not everyone is willing to pay \$200 for a video game.

Leverage, leverage, leverage. See? You've got the knack.

Coke Wins: the true story!

Digital Press recently caught up with Christopher Omarzu at the Game Developer's Conference in San Jose, CA.

As we typically do, the probing began early and often. We knew Chris was involved with Atari but were not sure which games he had been responsible for developing. Interestingly enough, Chris gave us a list of familiar Atari titles as well as one that didn't quite match our lists:

"Good Luck, Charlie Brown"
"Oscar's Trash Race"
"Big Bird's Egg Catch"
"Pepsi Invaders"

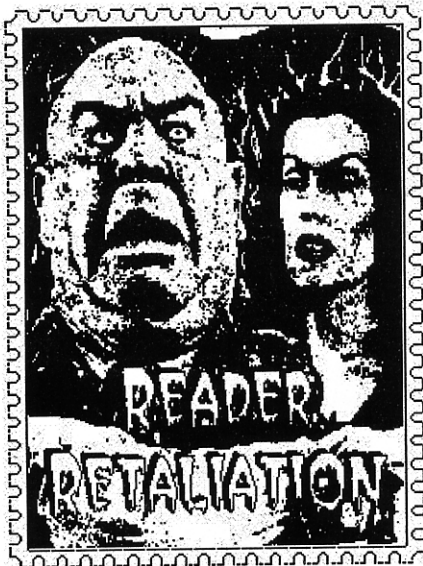
PEPSI Invaders? That got us especially interested. This had become more than just a "match the designer to the game" project. It seemed as if we were onto something here.

As it turns out, Pepsi Invaders was written for a 1983 Coca-Cola Sales Convention. The convention was attended by all the top Coke Executives. Each exec got a complete Atari 2600 game system and a bunch of games including... Pepsi Invaders! This was the title originally given to the game. How it became Coke Invaders is a mystery to everyone including Chris. It's quite obvious that the "invaders" spell the word PEPSI.

And for those of you who own the game, REJOICE! There were only 125 of these made. It's even more rare than we had imagined.

Here's another interesting tid-bit Chris shared with us: Big Bird's Egg Catch was originally called "Grover's Egg Catch" and likewise Grover was originally called "Big Bird's Music Maker". The programmers were talking one day and they asked themselves, "Why would Grover be catching eggs? That's Big Bird's job, isn't it?" They decided to swap characters and that's how they ended up.

Special thanks to our own John Hardie for this exclusive detective work.



whizzing cats

Joe,
2 years ago a neighbor's cat (Spike, but we call him meow meow - he never stops talking) began visiting daily.

Last year he took sick and the owner, I suspect, to avoid the vet bills, dumped him God knows where. He was gone for 3 weeks, but found his way back and adopted me as his new food supply. Of course, new digs have to be properly "marked" by any responsible cat. He chose as his starting location: My cartridge collection room. When I spied him whizzing on the rarer end of my 770 cart NES collection, I nearly took him out with a box of ne'er-be-well doubles. He exited the premises and I didn't see him for 3 days.

I just received my copy of DPG 6th ED. I noted the ebay listing in the newsletter you sent along. Thanks for the memories.

Sincerely,
Richard F Sweetman
NES.FULL

Ah, aren't cats GREAT? The infamous "Cosmo", destroyer of rare carts has all kinds of little tricks and pranks like the one printed in last issue. Recently he vomited on my Ms. Pac-Man Coleco tabletop, utterly destroying the labels. He also likes to walk precariously along the shelves where I have games stashed specifically out of the way so that they don't get tampered with. And this is only the video game tomfoolery. Don't even get me started on the roof of my convertible or the carpet in our basement.

Anyway, I'm looking into untraceable poisons. I have a little trick of my own to play on Cosmo.

If you liked the eBay auction we listed in the last issue, check the latest eBay fun in this one. No cats involved this time.

more digs
Hi, just a note to let you know I got issues 44 & 45, and they are great!

Yes, I've been with DP most of those ten years (and with the 2600 Connection...I was one of Tim's first subscribers and used to do the arcade artist cartoons in it). Loved the dig issue...always loved subterranean games. A few you missed, (though I know you don't have room to list every one) were THE PIT by Centuri, MR. ROBOT by a very early Atari, and PICK AXE PETE (though I can't remember the last time ANY O2 game was in DP... was it BEES? Long time ago...) and the more recent Sega game SUB TERRANIA.

For those keeping score....

Thanks again. Keep up the good work.
David Allen

Thanks for the additions, David. There were a LOT of subterranean games to choose from, we just picked the ones we liked (or really hated). DP "themes" are just a foundation for the issue, but you'll notice that we stray from the theme quite often, especially if we've been playing a particular game that we want to share with everyone or would like to promote for selfish reasons. This is the benefit of being a completely unbiased and non-profit 'zine - NO RULES! Bwahahaha!

retro game idea

I have a new idea for retro-gamers everywhere. How about a software package for any new home console, but have the old feel. Example: A CD with all the classic atari games on it for play on the Sony Playstation THEN have an atari style controller with a port to fit the Playstation or just pack the CD with a controller converter so retro-gamers can play the old games without the hassle of changing carts but still have that old game feel. Then expand this idea out to all the old retro ware systems. My only downside is that I have these good ideas but not the funds to produce such a thing. I was figuring since everyone at Digital Press has the funding as well as the expertise this could become a reality.

Thank you for reading my idea and I hope you expand it beyond just this e-mail.

Sincerely,
Josh Brown

Ack! What on earth makes you think Digital Press has "funding"? We're paupers, forced to pick bits of food off of the curb and huddle into cardboard boxes at night!

I like your idea though. Essentially you're suggesting an emulator packed with a special controller adapter (and maybe the controller too). Well, the Dreamcast system is half-way there, anyway. Talented individuals have managed to emulate the NES 8-bit, Sega Genesis, Neo-Geo Pocket, Sega Master System, and more onto the Dreamcast sys-

tem. For example, we have an NES emulator with 700+ ROMs (all of games we own, of course, since having these ROMS implies that own the original game and these are our backups) that plays through a very nice front-end called NESTer. You can find these emulators at www.dcemulation.com.

The controller thing hasn't been done yet though, but I'm not sure that would add so much value. Personally I prefer the Dreamcast controller (or a third party alternative) to the NES controller. Some emulators even allow the analog controls to work, which is a nice feature if you're into that kind of thing.

The problem with getting something like this done commercially is that the old games are still owned by their respective companies. That's why you see things like "Atari's Greatest Hits" or "Arcade Party Pak" with just Mid-way games. I don't think even Nintendo would be allowed to distribute a massive library like this without permission from each of the companies who originally trademarked the games. So for now, it's the "underground" scene, which fortunately is pretty good.

Moral of story: buy a Dreamcast!

sniper

Subject: bid on Fantasy zone

To member: digitalpress

From member: mc_justus

I'm pretty upset with your bidding strategy & I think it is very cold. I had the high bid with 25 seconds left & you swepted in with a bid. NOT COOL AT ALL! I didn't even get a chance to counter bid!

You know, I guess I AM pretty cold. Because I'm feeling pretty good about myself right now!

Seriously though, I quote eBay on this:

"I was outbid at the last second. How can I prevent this? The only way to protect yourself from being outbid at the last second (also called being "sniped") is to bid the highest maximum you are willing to pay. Remember, it's not the last bid that wins, it's the highest. There is a common misconception that snipers always win. This isn't so. To win, they must outbid you. If someone places a last-second bid that isn't high enough, they almost never have enough time to try again and place a winning bid before the listing ends."

So there.

swordquest problems

Hi,

I finally got my hands on a copy of SQ: Waterworld as part of trade from Ian (I believe he got it from you). I started to play it, and I discovered that it has a big problem. It plays just fine up till you solve one of the puzzles and get the number clue, then it resets itself!

I thought it might be my old 6-switch 2600

beta.
editor's BLURB by Joe Santulli

I would like, if I may, to take you on a strange journey.

The date is April 1st, 2001. And this issue is in your hands. You scan through the pages and note that some of the items inside simply *have* to be April Fools' gags. Or do they?

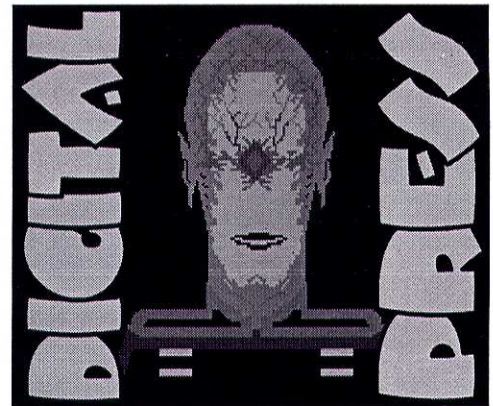
Elevator Action for the Atari 2600 was originally planned to be a gag played on our general public. We went so far as to create fake screens, label art, and even modified an existing lab label (prototype) game cartridge to appear as though we had found the game, and the entire prank would unfold in our April issue. As luck would have it, right around this same time Sean Kelly and John Hardie met up with a game designer who did, in fact, design this game for the Atari 2600. It was planned for release back "in the day" but alas, things got tough in the industry and the project was scrapped. But he still had the source code.

A little tweaking, an EPROM, and a nod, and miraculously the prank was a prank no more. The game was displayed at PhillyClassic 2001 and will be sold by CGE Services at Classic Gaming Expo 2001! Isn't life funny.

This issue was put on hold and suddenly most of it needed to be rewritten, since there would be no April Fools' issue. Then the PC broke down at Digital Press HQ. While waiting for the new PC to arrive, I developed a fascination with the Dreamcast game **Phantasy Star Online** that kept me away from the PC for quite a bit longer. Then the work on several other Digital Press projects crept up on us as the Classic Gaming Expo loomed near. So you might say we got a little off of our schedule.

I spent more time than usual to ensure that this would be a quality issue, and things are really rolling again. As I write this I'm already compiling the *next* issue, which will be released shortly after you get this one. We're going to get six issues out this year no matter what!

So kick back and enjoy the relaxing melodies of the DP staff as they spin tales of intrigue and merriment, but keep in mind that we have a little April Fools' spirit ALL OF THE TIME.



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Back Issues

Available upon request. If you're very nice about it, have loads of cash on hand, or have very large breasts.

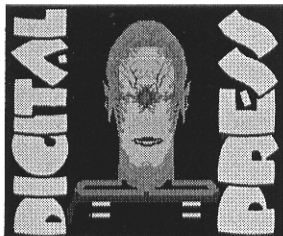
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**All Your Protos...
 By Dave Giarrusso**

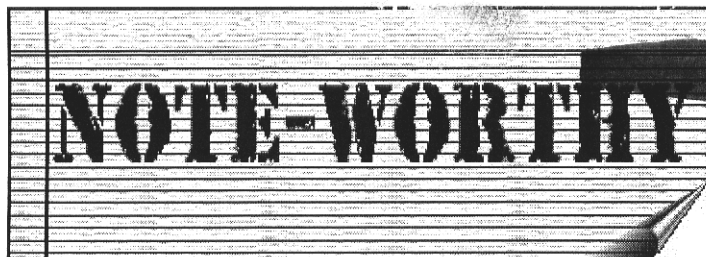
The game gag of the moment has already come and gone (hopefully), but like everything else we do, we never let it really die. Bwahaha!



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If the number in the upper right of your mailing label **EQUALS** this issue number, **THIS** is your last issue! Re-subscribe today, see inside back cover!



classic gaming expo is here

THE show for classic gamers will be held in Las Vegas on August 11th and 12th. For full details and registration, check out <http://www.cgexpo.com>.

New titles will be debuted and sold at the show:

- CGE Services Corp: The official AtariSoft versions of ColecoVision Dig Dug, Joust, and Pac-man will be made available in limited quantities!

- Elevator Action for the Atari 2600 will not only be available, but will come complete with an Atari-style label and BOX! Check out a picture

of the label and box at <http://www.cgexpo.com/img/eapic.jpg>.

- Digital Press: The folks at Digital Press will have Ms. Space Fury for ColecoVision to commemorate the anniversary. The cartridge will be offered with a ColecoVision-style label and instructions in a limited quantity.

- Ikarion Software: Two forthcoming titles for the Gameboy Advance will make their public debut at CGE 2001. Roxstar and Loc-O-mania will be on display at the Ikarion booth.

- Retrodesign: The official Atari sequel to Combat - Combat II. This title will come complete with an Atari-style silver box, color cartridge label, and color instruction manual.

CGE recently announced that Dragon's Lair 3D will be debuted at the show, and original graphics designer and Disney animation artist Don Bluth will be in attendance. Mr. Bluth joins other CGE attendees, industry legends such as Ralph Baer, Garth Clowes, David Crane, Don Daglow, Jamie Fenton, William C. Fisher, Rob Fulop, Arnie Katz, Joe King, Garry Kitchen, Bill Kunkel, Franz Lanzinger, Susan McBride, Alan Miller, Michael Minkoff, Rob Newman, Karen Nugent, Bob Polaro, Keith Robinson, Dave Rolfe, Stephen Roney, John Seghers, Tom Sloper, Howard Scott Warshaw, Steve Woita, Joyce Worley, and Steven Wyatt..



Digital Press is dedicated to the memory of my best friend
and DP co-creator, Kevin Oleniacz.

Kevin's spirit will be with us through every homing missile fired, knockout punch delivered, UFO destroyed, and finish line crossed.

Play recklessly. Think positively. Live EVERY moment to the fullest.