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# GAMER

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## **COIN UP!**

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

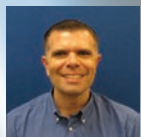
If you've got questions, I've got answers. If you've got comments, I will listen, but I reserve the right to bust out laughing any time I want. Send me what you got. I'll take it from there. My email is [billd.oldschoolgamer@gmail.com](mailto:billd.oldschoolgamer@gmail.com).



# THE SCRIBES



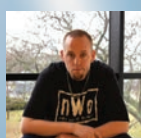
Bill Donohue did a 13-year stint as Managing Editor for Game Players, Ultra Game Players, and PSM magazines. He created Gazuga and The Cleansing. He caused hundreds of readers to send cheese-filled letters to Game Players. He composed the ultimate *Super Bomberman 2* anthem - (He Ain't Got) "No Boot".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



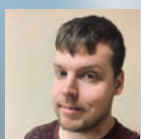
Brian Szarek is co-editor of OSGM and enjoys repairing and refurbishing vintage home consoles and arcade games. He also enjoys collecting and playing everything from the entire Atari console line and ColecoVision to PS4 and Switch. He lives with his wife and two daughters in Cincinnati, OH.



Howard Scott Warshaw is a creator, communicator and healer, who holds many titles: MoMA artist, innovative technologist, award winning filmmaker, video game pioneer, author, speaker and licensed psychotherapist. Now, he employs every facet of his eclectic skill set as The Silicon Valley Therapist.



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



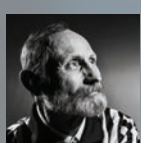
Mike Mertes knew from the moment he touched an Intellivision controller that he had experienced something incredible that would shape him for the rest of his life. As a writer for [www.gamerlogic.net](http://www.gamerlogic.net) and other media outlets, Mike enjoys articulating why games from the 8 and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



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



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



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



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



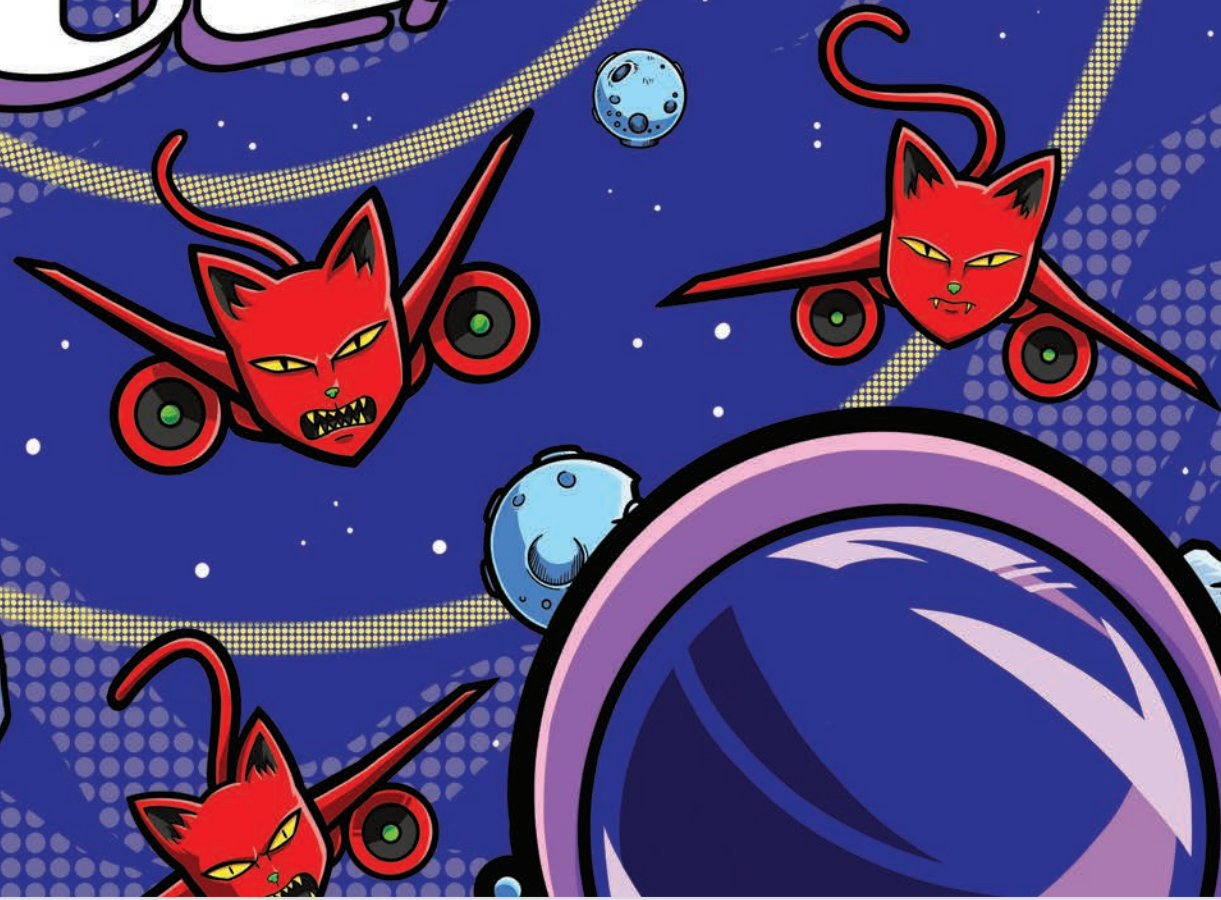
Steve DeLuca is the warped brain behind the NES Goofy Foot controller and a founder of the Tetris World Order (tWo); Steve DeLuca contributes to the Classic Tetris World Championship ([theCTWC.com](http://theCTWC.com)), and hosts multiple CTWC Qualifying events (most notably the CTWC Desert Qualifier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



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



# BLAST!



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

by Patrick Hickey, Jr.

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

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

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

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





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



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

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

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

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

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

### IT'S THE TUNES, DUDE!

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



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

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



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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

## INTO THE FUTURE!


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

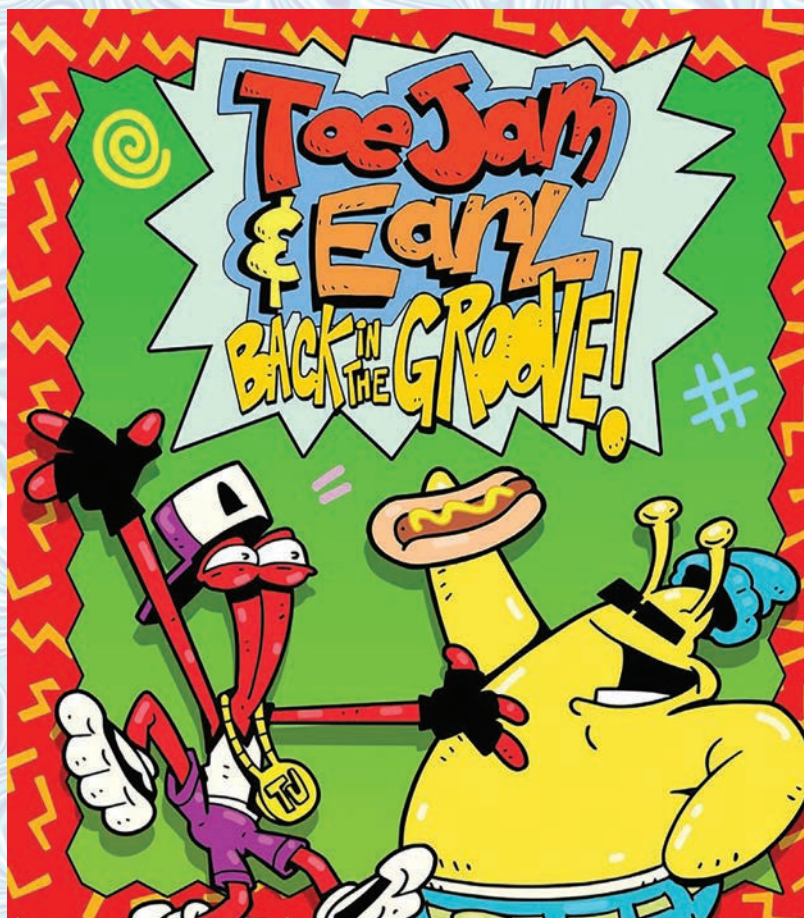
“I will say there is a devoted following. I got to meet and talk to many true *ToeJam & Earl* fans in the course of running the Kickstarter and making this new game,” Johnson said. “I think it’s because the original games were cooperative and accessible to non-gamer types, and light-hearted. These factors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

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

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

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

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





# GOING BACK TO THE GOOD OLD DAYS!

## THE STAR WORLDS ARCADE

by Ryan Burger, with an assist from Walter Day

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

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

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

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

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

Continued on page 25





# Super StarFox Weekend

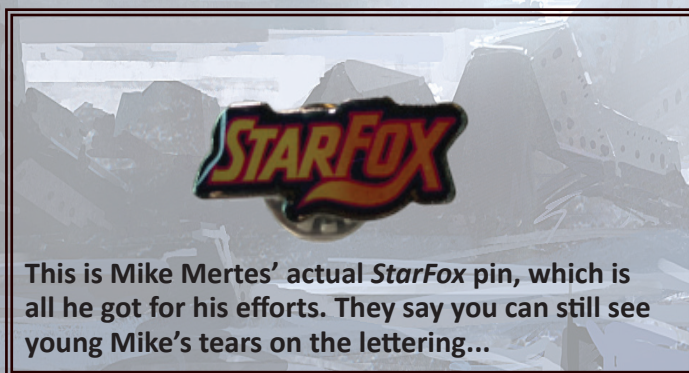
By Mike Mertes

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

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

## HAVE YOU EVER FLOWN AN ARWING?

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



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

## IT'S CALLED "STAR WARS"!

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

## PERFECT TIMING

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





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



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

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



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

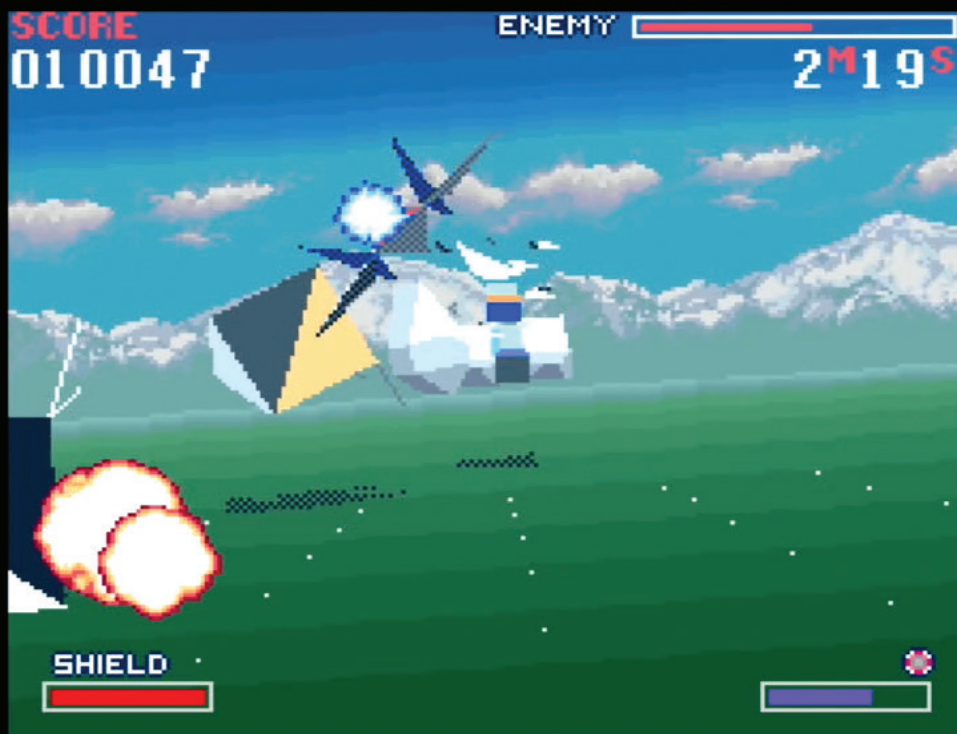
## GET STARFOX AND PRACTICE!

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

## LET THE TOURNAMENT BEGIN!

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





Experts agree that the explosion in the lower left corner of this picture is all that remains of Mike's Arwing, which means that...

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

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

## CRASH AND BURN

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

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



... Mike never got this far into the asteroid belt...





ch means young Mertes never got this far, either.

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

## MANY YEARS LATER

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

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



Slippy tried to cheer young Mike on to victory, but because his diet consists mainly of insects, all he could muster were these gaseous bubbles...



# Space Invaders Ports and Clones

By Brett Weiss

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

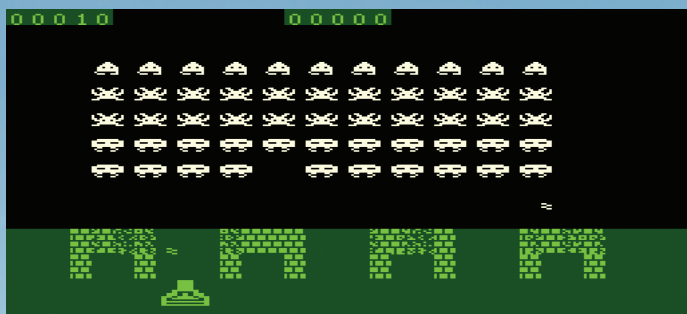
In 1980, *Space Invaders* was ported to the Atari VCS. This awesome arcade conversion was arguably the first killer app for a gaming console, helping bring video games into the mainstream. *Space Invaders* inspired other ports as well, plus countless clones. Let’s take a look at several such games for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

## SPACE DESTROYERS - APF MP1000

PUBLISHER: APF.

DEVELOPER: APF.

1979



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

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

leased the year before that game.

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

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

## SPACE INVADERS - ATARI 2600

PUBLISHER: ATARI

DEVELOPER: ATARI

1980



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

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



## ALIEN INVADERS-PLUS! - ODYSSEY2

PUBLISHER: MAGNAVOX

DEVELOPER: MAGNAVOX

1980



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

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

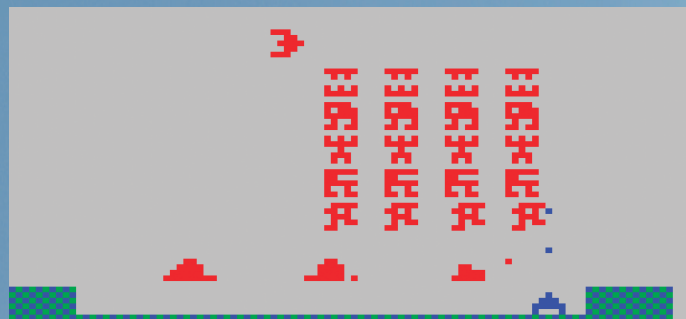
## ALIEN INVASION - FAIRCHILD CHANNEL F

PUBLISHER: ZIRCON INTERNATIONAL

DEVELOPER: ZIRCON INTERNATIONAL

1981

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



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

## SPACE ARMADA - INTELLIVISION

PUBLISHER: MATTEL

DEVELOPER: APH TECH. CONSULTING

1981



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



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

## SPACE INVADERS - ATARI 5200

**PUBLISHER: ATARI**  
**DEVELOPER: ATARI**  
**1982**



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

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

## SPACE INVADERS '91 - SEGA GENESIS

**PUBLISHER: TAITO**  
**DEVELOPER: TAITO**  
**1991**

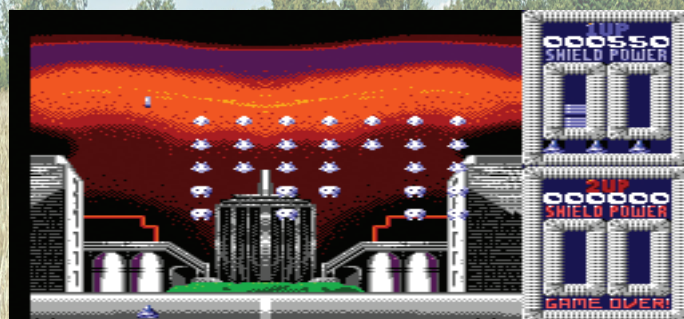


*Space Invaders '91* freshens up the "slide-and-shoot" formula pioneered by the original with faster gameplay, level progression, excellent music, colorful backgrounds, and more graphically detailed invaders that appear in different types of formations. Instead of simple, single-missile shots, you can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

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

## SUPER SPACE INVADERS - SEGA GAME GEAR

**PUBLISHER: DOMARK SOFTWARE**  
**DEVELOPER: THE KREMLIN**  
**1993**





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

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

### SPACE INVADERS – GAME BOY

**PUBLISHER: NINTENDO**

**DEVELOPER: TAITO**

**1994**



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

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

### SPACE INVADERS – SUPER NINTENDO

**PUBLISHER: NINTENDO**

**DEVELOPER: TAITO**

**1994**



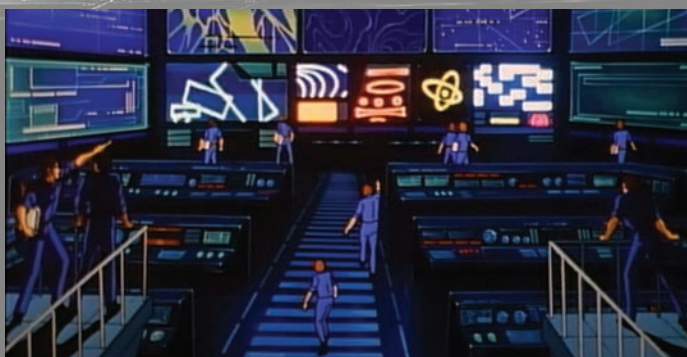
*Space Invaders* for the Super Nintendo does a predictably excellent job of recreating four different versions of the coin-op classic (which all play the same), including upright cabinet screen, black and white, black and white with cellophane, and color. The manual suggests you select the one that "reminds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

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





by Michael Thomasson



## ALERT CONDITION ONE

**T**he laserdisc, the first optical disc storage medium, dates back to 1978. The premiere laserdisc title was Sega's *Astron Belt*, which made its debut in Chicago at the 1982 Amusement & Music Operators Association (AMOA) show. *Astron Belt* had a mixture of original video and content borrowed from *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan* and other films. Rick Dyer and Don Bluth had concurrently been working on *Dragon's Lair*, another laser disc game that narrowly beat *Astron Belt* to the American market. These games, in tandem, marked the beginning of laser disc fever.

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

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

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

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





## SEEING DOUBLE



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

## A HERO, BUT NOT A "REAL AMERICAN HERO"



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


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



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

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

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

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



PICTURES COURESTY OF EUGENE JARVIS

## HUEY PHOOEY



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



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

By Howard Scott Warshaw

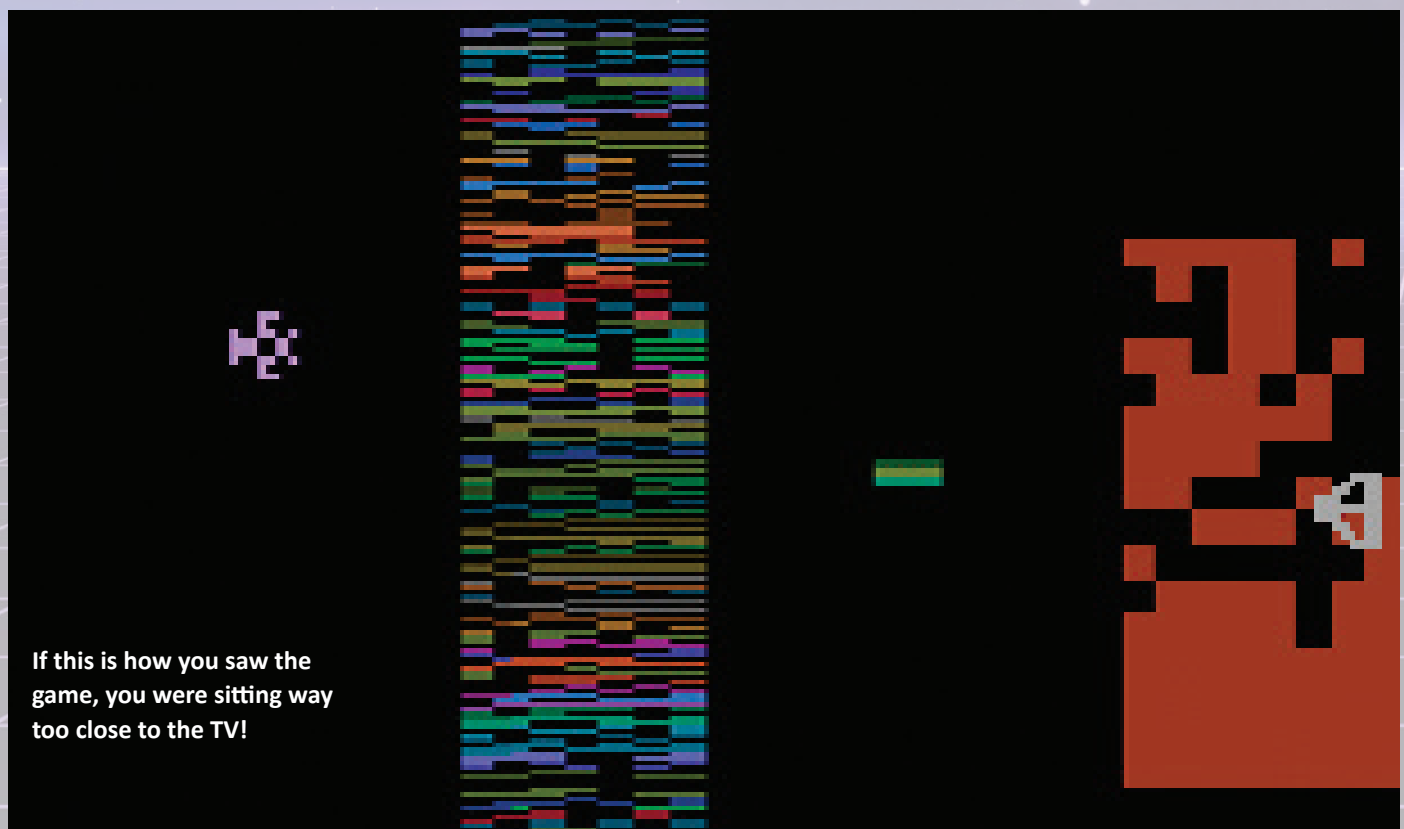
**T**he game was the game. It was a good game, but it had no name. That's OK. In my view, you don't start with a label. You start with interesting tweaks and techniques to maximize the hardware impression. Then you make sense of it later with a game concept and possibly a storyline. That was my approach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

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

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

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

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





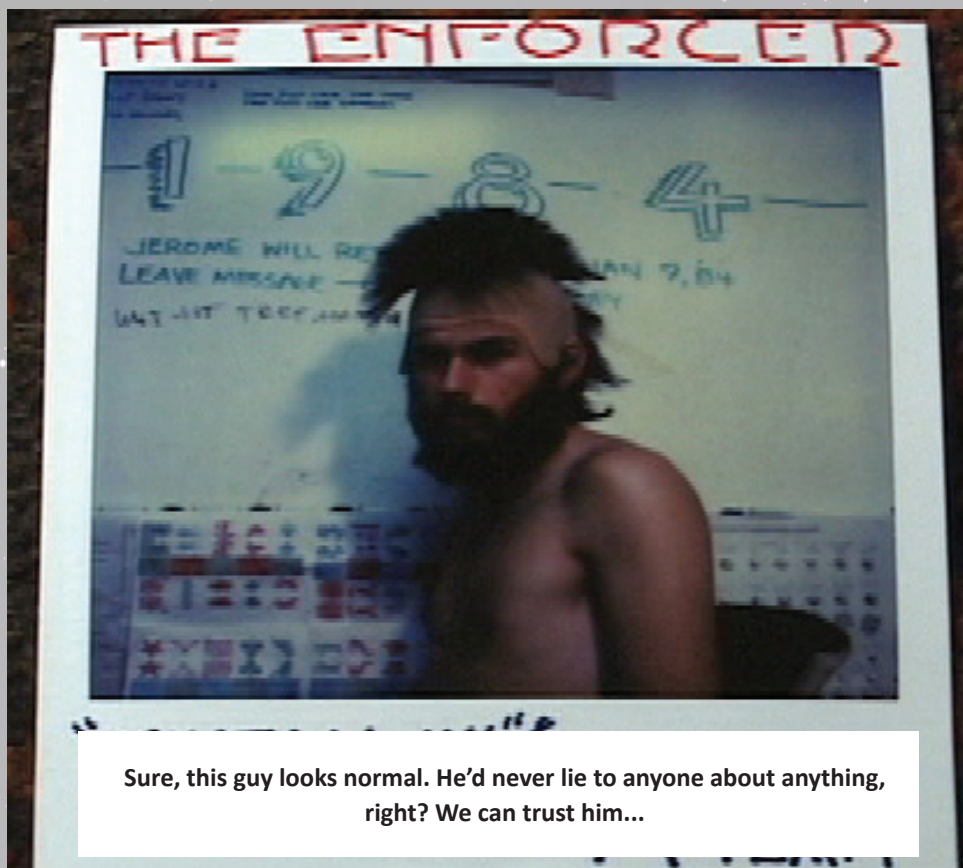
cause it tells a whole story by itself. And after all, who doesn't want revenge? OK, I'll grant you there are monks in Tibetan ashrams who have no inclination toward revenge whatsoever, but they are not the target demographic. So, the next obvious question is: Who is taking revenge? This, I realize,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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

"Yeah."

"Spell that backwards."

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

"Right. And how about Razak?"

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

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







Continued from page 11

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

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

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

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

## WALTER DAY ON THE STAR WORLDS ARCADE:

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

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

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

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





# WARHAWK COMMON, BUT COMMENDABLE

by CHRIS CHARLA

**W**arhawk is a super fun game – one of SingleTrac’s finest efforts, and it stands the test of time. But more than just a single game, it’s also a fascinating artifact at the cross-roads of so many of the biggest changes in videogame history. 1995, its launch year, was a pivotal moment in the transition to modern games (texture-mapped 3D graphics, optical media, new controllers, fully developed cut-scenes) from those that came before. At the very dawn of the era, *Warhawk* managed to encompass just about every single element of what distinguishes all the games that came after from their forebearers. At the same time, a few elements mark it very firmly as a creature of the mid-90s!

A launch title for PlayStation - it shipped in November '95 in the US, just two months after the PlayStation launch - *Warhawk* had blown up E3 in '95. Sony showed it on special “thunder seats” that added cranked up bass speakers under the seat and behind your back, but the game didn’t need gimmicks to shine.

The devs, inspired by forward scrolling shooters like *After Burner* and *Star Fox* - designer Mike Giam described it in *GamePro* at the time as “...a *Top Gun* attitude in a 3D *Desert Strike* game” - had maximized the PlayStation’s capabilities, and by carefully limiting draw distance - naturally, without lots of fog - they were able to keep high-quality, texture mapped 3D graphics in the center of your view most times. The canyon level, with full, gorgeous reflections on the water and lots of blind turns was a perfect marriage of maxing the PlayStation’s capabilities while hiding its weaknesses (there wasn’t a lot of RAM for those texture maps!) The open desert and city levels struggle compared to the more closed-in levels. The canyon level still looks quite good

today, while others... feel classic, to put it charitably.

Still, the technical design is brilliant - and the game featured more than just smart technical design. The PlayStation controller didn’t just look revolutionary with its horned design, it featured four shoulder buttons,



which, at the time, seemed like overkill. But *Warhawk* used all four - in fact, in those pre-Dual Shock days, it used every single button on the controller in meaningful ways to enable 6DOF flight in the game. The feeling was one that you were playing a game that could only be seen - and played, on new hardware. The game featured both a cockpit view and a behind-the-ship view yet maintained a solid playable framerate throughout. Gameplay itself was solid. This is not a game that took a lot of chances with the play - it’s a 3D shoot ‘em-up and it’s definitely fun, but not a rarified experience. The ship feels good to control, even today, and the team managed to save enough tech budget to feature great visual effects in combat - the multi-shot swarm missiles and lock-on effects were standouts. The game also included a nice to have, but little-used co-op mode, with one player steering the ship, and the other controlling the guns. (When I wrote the preview of the





game for Next Generation back in the day, I remember the producers mentioning that people might find it too complicated to do both at once!). At only six levels, it's also a very short game - it got dinged in some reviews for this, but it's another way the game nodded to the coming era of shorter games.

Although it's a 25-year-old antique today, in almost every respect *Warhawk* - graphics, controls, and pacing - feels like a modern game (albeit an old one), more so than many PlayStation and Saturn games that shipped after it. It's really an amazing achievement and a great game to look back to, to see how things have changed, and where they haven't.

At the same time, it's also clearly a product of its time. The graphics are primitive to modern eyes. It was designed before the release of the Dual Analog controller and using the shoulder buttons and d-pad for flight was a smart solution for the day, but not one that we



would use today. The game was subtitled as "*The Red Mercury Missions*" and you get the feeling that early in development there was probably more intent to lean on the story, which is developed through 15 minutes


of live-action cut-scenes.

Ahh, FMV... Nothing says "90s" more than grainy FMV clips, and while projects like *The Daedalus Encounter* or Sony Imagesoft's own *Johnny Mnemonic* were all FMV, all the time, nothing was safe from green-screen sets and sometimes questionable acting in the '90s, not even a forward-scrolling 3D shooter.

The story focuses around your efforts to rid the world of Kreeley, an evil genius from central casting. The game actually has multiple endings and the tongue in cheek nature of the endings (Kreeley can choke to death on a chicken bone, and you can end up selling souvenir hats if you defeat him) suggests that at some point someone realized live action cut-scenes were a little goofy.

The game was well-received, scoring 4/5 in Next Gen



and 9/10 in EGM, but it never seemed to get the attention it deserved. In Next Gen, *Destruction Derby* scored five pages of preview, while *Warhawk* got one. While many of its launch-era brethren like *WipeOut* and even *ESPN Extreme Games* received sequels almost immediately, there was no follow-up to *Warhawk* until the PS3 era, when it was rebooted as a MP-only shooter in 2007. A Sony advertising supplement in January '96 said the game was coming for PC, but it never shipped. While the franchise may not have the proudest legacy, *Warhawk* stands the test of time, both as a classic shooter in its own right and as a fascinating snapshot of the birth of modern console games. It's one of the most common PlayStation games, and if you don't have it, it's well worth picking up! 



# END OF DAYS

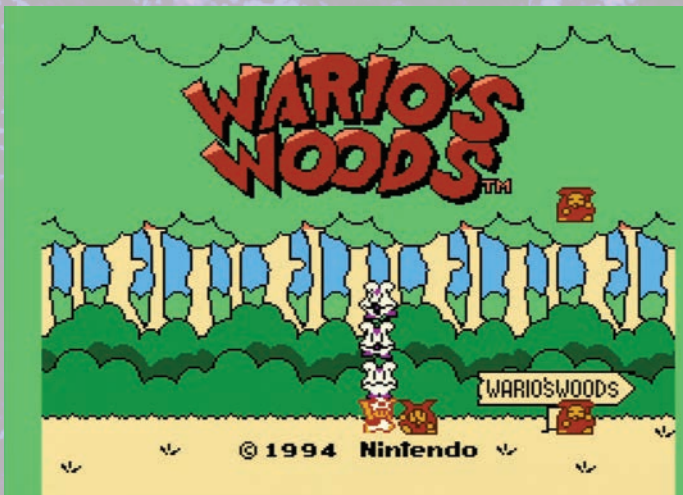
## WARIO'S WOODS AND THE NES

by Mike Mertes

**T**hat pesky Wario is up to no good again and has taken over the once peaceful woods that sit near the Mushroom Kingdom with his nasty minions. Mario seems to be missing this time around, so it is up to Toad to stop Wario from harassing the inhabitants of the woodlands he's now calling "Wario's Woods."

manages to stay entertaining for many hours. If playing against the computer gets boring, you can take on a friend in split-screen VS mode.

As soon as you turn on the game, you are greeted to a vivid title screen with lots of cute animations and a very catchy title theme song. While it certainly isn't anything groundbreaking, the game does feature story cut-scenes featuring Toad and Wario after completing several levels. The music in this game, while short, is



*Wario's Woods* sits in the puzzle game genre, along with other Nintendo character-based puzzle games like *Yoshi* and *Yoshi's Cookie*. Players directly control Toad and utilize him to pick up colored bombs to blow up color-matched monsters to complete levels. With over 100 levels and multiple game modes, *Wario's Woods*

exceptionally appealing and very melodic. Most puzzle games have a basic concept to them that generally stand the test of time, and *Wario's Woods* provides enough of a twist on the genre to make it unique. *Wario's Wood* was also developed for the SNES and is often dubbed the definitive version to play. Due to the NES market coming to a close in 1995, the NES version is harder to track down and is more expensive than its SNES counterpart.

### EIGHT ISN'T ENOUGH

As 1994 ended, Nintendo offered *Wario's Woods* as the swan song for gamers who were still in the market for 8-bit NES games. By the beginning of 1995, though, the NES's retail market support shrank drastically, making it challenging to purchase the NES's final few games. At last, I knew what being "left out in the cold" meant.







Eight years into its lifecycle, the NES grey box we had all come to love had received a facelift by its original designer, Lance Barr, with a new top loader design and a budget price of \$49.95. While the new model matched the SNES's design and was more reliable when it came to booting up cartridges, it was inferior in its output capabilities, offering only RF output. Still, for less than the price of a SNES game, if you were one of the few households that didn't have an NES, now was the time to get one. Nintendo also launched a short-lived "Classic Series" of reprinted games featuring *Metroid*, *Punch-Out!!!* and both *Zelda* titles to support the legacy system. Ultimately, the decision to reprint more titles stopped when it became clear that the consumer had moved on to 16-bit titles.

## USED SELLS... BUT WHO'S BUYING?

While the new game market for the NES was vanishing, the used game market was booming. This shift to 16-bit meant that consumers were dumping their old games to make money to buy the new systems, and used game shops and flea markets were getting flooded with cartridges. The price for used NES games lowered because of this, making it easier for kids on little allowance to pick up games at places like Funcoland. One could walk out of a used game store with 3 to 6 great titles for around \$20 bucks,

and the quantity over dollar ratio increased the further along the 16-bit era progressed.

## NESTICLE BRINGS BACK THE SPARK AND THE CONSOLE

By 1997, I had left the console gaming world and traded it for PC gaming. With the lure of unique titles with online multiplayer capabilities, it seemed there was no need to go back to a dedicated video game system. I thought about offloading my entire console collection and games because of it. During one of my late-night internet sessions, I discovered NESTicle, the first console emulator I had ever encountered. Along with the link to the program, links to dozens of NES game files could also be downloaded. The possibility that I could download any NES game I wanted, reasonably quick on my 14.4k baud modem, seemed ludicrous to me. Surely, this had to be a joke, but I had to try it. I downloaded NESTicle, followed by the game *Deja Vu* and low and behold, after installing it and opening up the ROM file, the game started up.

I stayed up all night, playing everything and anything that would work in NESTicle. With my four-button Gravis gamepad plugged into the computer, I almost had the perfect NES experience, and now I could play every game that I couldn't afford before. With such an amazing experience, you would have thought this would



**MOST THINGS CHANGE...**

The Nintendo Entertainment System has evolved, but the huge library of over 700 NES games that exists plays exactly the same way! The design of the new NES is totally cool, especially the new Controller. It's sooooo much more comfortable than the old rectangular Controller. And speaking of comfort, at \$49.95\*, the new NES is extremely comfortable to afford!

**THE NEW NES**

REDESIGNED CONTROL DECK

SAME OLD CORD

**\$49.95\***

UNBELIEVABLY LOW PRICE

EXCELLENT NEW CONTROLLER SHAPE!

**EVOLVE OR BECOME EXTINCT!**

**Nintendo**

\* Suggested retail price.

have solidified dumping my physical game collection, but instead, the opposite happened. That old itch of having an incredible, physical game library came back.

As unbelievable as it was that I had access to almost any NES game, that same magic of owning the physical game wasn't there. I couldn't gawk at the box art, nor could I read the instruction manual. As decent as the games played in NESTicle, the experience was not one to one compared to playing them on the original hardware.


Rather than selling my games, I would use emulation to curate what the great games were. In turn, this would lead me to purchase the physical cartridge version of the games. Funcoland once again got a lot of my money that year, but in exchange, I formed a fantastic NES library for pennies on the dollar. I continue to follow

this process today: games I enjoy via flash carts, typically end up in my physical collection, one way or another.

## BACK TO THE FUTURE

Despite the NES losing popularity with gamers due to newer hardware, many people still actively collected for the system into the late 90s, and plenty of online video game forums were populated by eager NES gamers looking to own a complete NES collection. The emulation scene was extremely popular, with ROM hackers taking their favorite NES games and tweaking them to add new levels or content. More so, Japanese games that never got the opportunity to be released in North America and around the world were receiving fan translations, essentially bringing out new, playable games for fans of the 8-bit generation.

By 2005, online video streaming and video game Youtube personalities helped propel thriving NES communities and other classic game systems into the spotlight, creating a high demand for the NES console and its games. Fast forward to 2020, and Nintendo Entertainment System is receiving brand new, homebrew developed games that are even exceeding what the original developers thought was possible. Nintendo got in on the action as well, launching the NES Classic, a plug and play box that gave casual and hardcore fans an easy drive into memory lane with 30 classic titles from the console's long history.

The NES may have met its official end in 1995, but its flames will always burn eternally in the hearts of fans, old and new alike. 





NES P WB

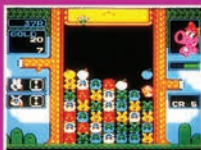
# WARIO'S WOODS™

**It's up to Toad to keep the woods safe in this new puzzle-action!**

Toad is back in his very own big adventure in this game with the challenge of Tetris. It's up to you and Toad to keep peace in the Mushroom Kingdom — and that means outfoxing the wicked Wario!

Monsters, goblins and bombs fall from the sky faster and faster as Wario fires them into the woods. Toad must scramble to catch and line up the falling puzzle pieces to eliminate Wario's evil hold. If you loved Tetris, this puzzle action game is for you!

- Choose one or two-player action!
- Run the field to line up puzzle pieces and bombs!
- Many levels, from challenging to gut-busting!



FOR USE WITH THE NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM GAME PAK (NES-GP)

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WARIO'S WOODS™

Nintendo

# WARIO'S WOODS™



KIDS TO ADULTS

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THIS OFFICIAL SEAL IS YOUR ASSURANCE THAT NINTENDO HAS APPROVED THE QUALITY OF THIS PRODUCT. ALWAYS LOOK FOR THIS SEAL WHEN BUYING GAMES AND ACCESSORIES TO ENSURE COMPLETE COMPATIBILITY WITH YOUR NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM.





# DONKEY KONG

## Arcade Ports in Retro Consoles

By Eugenio Angueira

### Introduction

**B**ack in 1981, Nintendo introduced the world to two characters that would withstand the test of time: a gorilla called Donkey Kong and a plumber named Mario. The characters are household names today and Mario is even the “mascot” for Nintendo. In 1981, the characters were the protagonists in the platformer called *Donkey Kong* and, in the game, Mario (then known only as Jumpman) has to rescue his girlfriend Pauline from the titular ape. Mario travels from the bottom to the top of four different screens of platforms through which he must avoid dangers like barrels, foxfires, and fireballs.

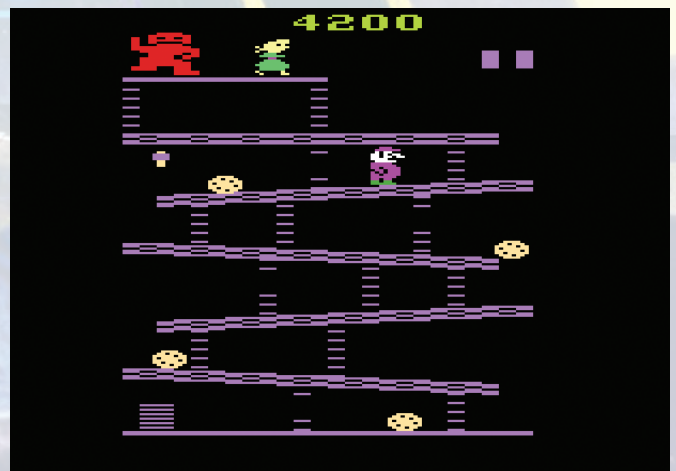
*Donkey Kong* was the first platform game to add jumping to the already existing element of climbing ladders that was featured on previous games of this type. Mario jumps over obstacles, enemies, gaps between girders or belts, or rivets that hold platforms. He can also pick up bonus items such as purses, umbrellas, and hats, but the key is reaching Pauline before the timer runs out. Mario can die if he is touched by any of the enemies (this includes Kong himself), falls from the girders or platforms, or runs out of time.

The four screens that Mario must survive include slanted girders, conveyor belts, elevators, and rivets. The sequence of these screens was different whether the game was played in the U.S. or Japan. Regardless of the sequence, the game features intermission screens that ask the player “How High Can You Get?” with each screen representing 25 meters. There’s also a nice animated screen showing Donkey Kong going up ladders with Pauline and Kong jumping to slant the girders before the game even starts.

With the success of *Donkey Kong* in the arcade, it was not unexpected that home console makers would want to port the game to their systems. Coleco won the home rights to develop console ports using cartridges,

rights they used to release their ColecoVision console with *Donkey Kong* as the pack-in game. Several months after the ColecoVision’s release, Coleco released ports for the Atari 2600 and the Intellivision. While the ColecoVision’s port of *Donkey Kong* was well received, the Atari and Intellivision ports were not as appreciated. Both systems were less capable than the ColecoVision and had challenges that needed to be overcome when porting the game. There has even been the urban legend that Coleco intentionally created crippled versions of the game for those two systems to make their ColecoVision look better. Regardless, both versions have been disliked by gamers for years. In the late 1980’s, the game was also ported to the Atari 7800 (Coleco was no longer in the picture and Atari was able to get the console rights). Though this version looked and played well, it was crippled by the sound chip in the console.

So, what were gamers to do? Well, thanks to homebrew programmers, *Donkey Kong* has been given a great deal of attention and new versions have been developed for the Atari 2600 and the Intellivision that take the game to a whole new level. Even the Atari 7800 version has been transformed with not only better sound, but also more arcade accurate graphics and gameplay. Let’s take a look at the original and the homebrew versions of *Donkey Kong* for these three systems and smile as you see how the game has been improved.



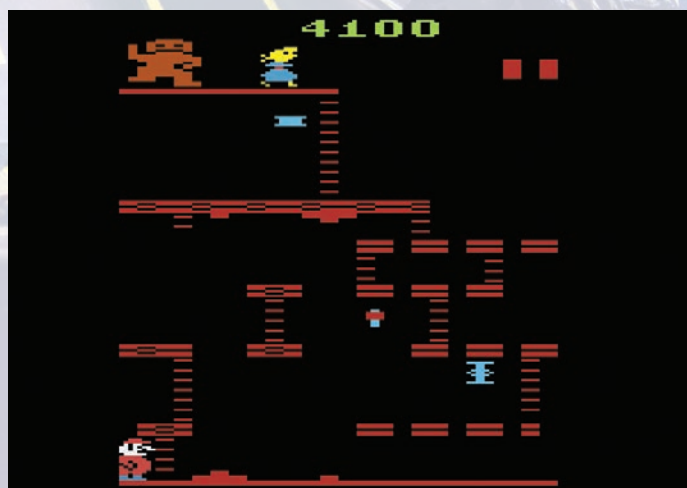
DK Arcade 2600 - Atari 2600



## Atari 2600

### **Donkey Kong by Gary Kitchen for Coleco**

When Gary Kitchen was given the task of porting *Donkey Kong* to the Atari 2600, he knew he would have had a better chance of porting the game with all its screens if he had an 8K ROM. He did ask Coleco for this, but he was instructed to port the game using only 4K, which forced him to make the game with only two of the four screens. Despite the restriction, Gary was able to create a game that worked well within the limitations of the 2600 and was free of flicker. The game, however, falls short when compared to the arcade. There is no title screen and, though the first screen resembles that of the arcade fairly well, a programming accomplishment for the time, there is no in-game music, Kong looks like a gingerbread man, there is no fireball, and there is only one hammer. Kong is not seen throwing the barrels as he only moves his arms and legs up and down as Mario moves up and down the ladders. By necessity, the barrel at the bottom platform and the ladders are the same color as the girders. The sound effects are also quite simplified, but they are decent. The second screen is the rivets screen, and this one is simplified when compared to the arcade. The foxfires neither chase Mario nor do they move up or down the ladders. There is a hammer, but none of the bonus items found on the arcade are present. Once all the rivets are cleared, the game starts again on the first screen and there is no animation of Kong falling. One could say that *Donkey Kong* for the 2600 was a victim of its times, since it is likely Gary could have done a better job had he had more resources. What he did accomplish, though, may have been limited, but did bring the great ape home for 2600 owners.



Donkey Kong 2 Lost Levels - Atari 2600

### **Donkey Kong 2: Lost Levels by Claudio Salvucci**

Claudio Salvucci took the approach of hacking the existing game created by Gary Kitchen to create the two missing levels, hence the name of this particular version of the game. If you're wondering why anyone would bother hacking the original port, the answer is simple. Claudio Salvucci liked the original 2600 port and what Gary accomplished for the system. So, instead of just starting from scratch, he decided to hack what was existing to create the two missing screens, following the same style as the Coleco port. This version is still a work in progress, but it does show what perhaps could have been done back in the days of the original release had Gary been given 8K to work with. The current version still has some bugs, the elevator level has no platforms, and the conveyors will simply take you off the screen. Despite this, this hack has been combined into an 8K ROM with all four screens by Kurt Howe to help us play the game as it could have been. This version may not be much of an advancement in terms of graphics or sound effects but is a nice homage to the original port.



DK Arcade 2600 - Atari 2600

### **DK Arcade 2600 by Todd Holcomb and Michael Hass**

This version of *Donkey Kong* for the 2600 was created from scratch using batari Basic and it is a treat! Todd and Michael have created a port of *Donkey Kong* that is much closer to the arcade by increasing the amount of memory from 4K to 32K. With the extra memory, the game now has four screens of play. Yes, the girders, conveyor, elevator, and rivet screens are all here and rendered rather well. Not only that, but the game also boasts a title screen with the words "*Donkey Kong*" rendered in a design similar to that of the arcade. Kong himself is on this screen and the game offers the player



the choice of playing in the Japanese or U.S. order of the screens. In addition, you can play as either Mario or Pauline. To add the cherry on top, this screen also plays a brief version of the *Donkey Kong* theme! Once you make your choice, you hit Reset and you are welcome to the “How High Can You Get” screen (though the word Get has been changed to Try) with a well rendered Donkey Kong. When the game starts, the slanted girders are all here but now the barrel on the first floor is blue and has an animated flame in it. Only half of Kong can be seen when he is looking forward and he is rendered in only one color. He does turn to throw the barrels and he has the proper shape that you’d expect. The two hammers are here, and the barrels will give you the action you expect. There is no fireball from the barrel, but I’m not going to complain. The sound effects are softer than those of the Coleco port and closer to the arcade version, but the most important aspect is also here: in-game music! Yes, the theme music you’d expect to hear is here and it is present in all four screens. Something that you will also find are the bonus items in both the elevator and rivets screen. By the way, you’d better know how to deal with the foxfires, because they do follow you and move up and down the ladders on the elevator and rivets screens. While the ladders have the same color as the platforms in the girders and elevator screens, their color matches more closely with their arcade counterparts on the conveyor and rivets screens. The animation of Mario dying is like that of the arcade and he even has the little birds flying over his head as he lies down when he dies. Lots of details have been included in this port and they make for an excellent game. So, what’s missing? You don’t see Kong carry Pauline, but you do get the heart breaking as she is taken from Mario, as well as Kong’s growl. We also don’t get the introductory animation of Kong going up the ladders. Compared to the original Coleco ports, this is leaps and

bounds better and quite challenging to play as well.

## Donkey Kong VCS by Andreas Dietrich



Donkey Kong VCS - Atari 2600

In creating *Donkey Kong VCS*, Andreas Dietrich took a totally different approach from either CDS Games or the team of Todd Holcomb and Michael Hass. In order to create a port that was as close to the arcade as possible, Andreas decided to create a version of *Donkey Kong* that scrolls the screen vertically. By doing this, he can recreate the characters and the various screens with more accuracy and with large multicolored sprites that could not be accomplished before. Instead of staying away from flicker, Andreas used flickering to his advantage and has given us something that is utterly amazing. In fact, it is hard to believe this is Donkey Kong on the Atari 2600. *Donkey Kong VCS* uses 32K of ROM, features all four arcade stages as well as all cut-scenes and arcade animations. It also features arcade accurate sound effects, something that has not been accomplished before. When the game starts you see Kong going up the ladders and jumping to slant the girders. He moves aside and growls and then the action starts. You find yourself on the first floor of the girders, the blue and clearly marked Oil Can is there with fire and the jumping fireball. Mario looks fantastic and, for the first time on a 2600 port, the ladders have the appropriate color that is not the color of the platforms. Now, to get all this to work as desired, there was one compromise made on this screen - the girders are not slanted. Given how much detail there is, this is a fair compromise. As you move up the screen, you’ll see a Kong that is multi-colored and animated, but standing on a high platform. He’s not throwing the barrels at you, but you do get to see the set of barrels as you would on the arcade game. Pauline is also up there waiting for you (you can’t re-



Donkey Kong VCS - Atari 2600



ally see her because she is behind Kong), but you'll have your heart broken as Kong carries her up the ladders to the next level. Other details are the life counter actually using small Marios, the score that says 1-UP, and the bonus timer that is rendered in two colors and looking very close to its arcade counterpart. Each of the screens is beautifully done and pretty much all aspects of the arcade are adapted on this port. So, what's not here? The placement of the hammers is not 100% arcade accurate and the bonus items are not all present either. Despite this, the game is challenging and something truly impressive.

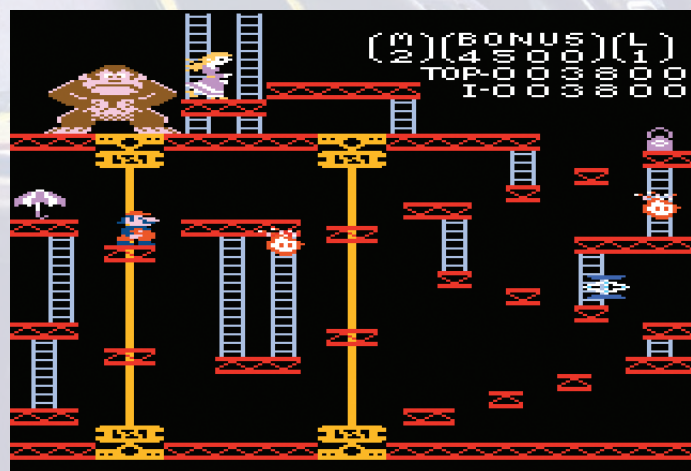
## Atari 7800



Donkey Kong By Atari - Atari 7800

### Donkey Kong by Atari

Atari's port of *Donkey Kong* for the 7800 was well done. There is a title screen that plays music and lets the player choose a one or two player game as well as level of difficulty. The game looks very much like the arcade, though each screen is horizontally stretched to fit the TV screen. This port has three of the arcade screens:



Donkey Kong by Atari - Atari 7800

girders, rivets, and elevators. It does, however, lack the animation of Kong going up the ladder to jump and slant the girders, as well as the intermissions that ask, "How High Can You Get?" It does have the animation of Kong falling when you clear all the rivets on that screen, though. So, what's the problem with this version? Well, for one, it is incomplete as it lacks the conveyor belt screen. The graphics are also a bit off. Pauline stands on a platform that is lower than the level of the platform Mario has to climb to reach her (this is even worse on the rivets screen, where she just stands in a little piece of platform next to Kong), and Kong doesn't go up the ladders with Pauline. The score counter does not look like it does on the arcade. The life counter is just an M with a number beneath it. The real problem with this version, though, is the sound. While it does have a rendition of the in-game music, the sound effects have been considered by some as ear piercing. The gameplay is pretty close to the arcade version but not quite perfect either. Despite this, this port plays well and can be enjoyed (even if you have to wear ear plugs).



Donkey Kong XMPK - Atari 7800

### Donkey Kong XM/PK by Perry Theunte



Donkey Kong XMPK - Atari 7800



While Atari's port of *Donkey Kong* was pretty good, the sound effects were its weakness and it was not truly a complete version of the game. In comes homebrew programmer Perry Theunte to take this game to an entirely new level. This particular version of the game was originally developed to take advantage of the Expansion Module (XM) for the Atari 7800. This module adds RAM that can be used for the games but, most importantly, it also adds POKEY and Yamaha sounds to the system. Remember the main problem with the 7800 port? Sound. Well, it is no longer a problem, but why limit the enhancements to the game to just sound? Oh no, taking advantage of the additional resources, Perry has created what has to be the ultimate home version of *Donkey Kong* for a home system. *Donkey Kong XM/PK* now includes the animation of Kong going up the ladders to slant the girders and it also has all the intermission screens asking, "How Hi Can You Get?" The graphics have been enhanced and the colors have been made closer to the arcade original. The platform where Pauline stands is also now like in the arcade (it no longer is lower than the main platform) and on the rivets screen is just like in the arcade. You can also see Pauline's cry for HELP. The scores show up at the top of the screen with text that is similar to the arcade and the bonus timer looks just like in the arcade, rendered in three different colors with a border and a level indicator. The life counter is actually done with little Marios. The character animations have been made smoother and the conveyor belt screen has been added. There is an arcade-like title screen and the main screen now gives the player the option to select the sequence of the screens (Japanese vs. U.S.) to play. As if that wasn't enough, the game also has high score retention with the player able to enter their initials. As if all these changes weren't enough, the gameplay itself has been improved to make it as arcade perfect as possible. What does that mean? That the game is pretty much as difficult as it was in the arcade. Perry has even added that certain "feature" on the rivets screen that lets you jump right next to Kong to score 100 points for each jump. I'm probably missing some of the details added to this port, but suffice it to say, this is the version of *Donkey Kong* you need to own. In case you're wondering what the PK stands for, that's short for POKEY. For anyone who doesn't have an XM Unit, you can have your own cart made with the new POKEY ONE chip.

## Mattel Intellivision

### *Donkey Kong* by Coleco

For anyone who thought that 2600 owners got a poor



Donkey Kong - Intellivision

version of *Donkey Kong*, they really need to look at the Intellivision version. There is a text title screen, followed by a screen where the player can select for a one or two-player game and from one to four levels of play. So far, so good, right? This port has two screens, the girders and the rivets. The girders screen is missing one level and has Kong on the right side instead of the left side. The ladders and the girders are all the same color but at least Pauline is on an elevated platform like on the arcade version. Unfortunately, Pauline is also rendered in the same color as the girders. Kong looks hideous. He is rendered in only one color but, at least, he is properly animated, and you can see him turn to pick up the barrels and throw them. Mario looks nothing like Mario. He is also poorly animated and the sound effect of him walking on the platforms is terrible. The rivets



Donkey Kong - Intellivision

screen looks closer to the arcade version and the fox-fires do follow Mario and go up and down the ladders. Unfortunately, the game plays poorly. The controls are lousy, and the jumps are slow and short. If you manage to clear the rivets screen, you get a musical tune (like



in the arcade) and simply go back to the girders again. There is no animation of Kong falling. To add insult to injury, if you happened to be an Intellivision II owner, you were not able to play the game. Perhaps that was a blessing in disguise? This Coleco port was a poor version of the game no matter how you look at it.



DK Arcade - Intellivision

### DK Arcade by Carl Mueller Jr.

It took the effort of a homebrew programmer to show what the Intellivision was truly capable of when it came to a port of *Donkey Kong*. Carl Mueller Jr. created something that put the Coleco port to such shame that it's best to consider that one as nonexistent. This version of *Donkey Kong* is as close to the arcade as possible on the Intellivision, but also includes elements that are unique as well. The game boasts a nicely rendered title screen with a smiling Kong that resembles more his modern rendition of the character. This screen includes a menu for choosing a one or two player game as well as which character will be played. That's right, you have to choose between using Mario, Toni, or Bruno. Mario is his usual self, Toni is a faster brother, and Bruno can go up and

down the ladders while holding the hammer! With this character selection, the game gives you choices for different strategies to be used during play. A nice tune also plays on this screen. The game has all four screens from the arcade, all the intermissions, all the animations, the bonus items, and superbly rendered sound effects and music. It's hard to believe this is the same console that had such an awful commercial release of the game. I should add that this was done within the system's limitations. In other words, there is no extra memory or special hardware added in the cartridge. Since the game was created within the system's limitations, there are some aspects that are not as arcade accurate. For example, the girders level is missing one row and the ladders are of the same color as the girders. This is true of the other levels as well, but it really doesn't matter because the gameplay is all here. Pauline is also rendered in the same color as the girders, but she is animated, and you can see the word "HELP" as she calls for her rescuer. The score, level, and lives left also do not replicate the arcade version, but these are on the right of the screen to ensure the best possible rendering of every level. Kong is rendered in two colors and he now has his real face and "smiles" at the player from atop each level. Mario looks exactly as he should also, with Toni and Bruno wearing different coveralls. This Donkey Kong is a superb experience, even with the visual differences from the arcade. Every other element is here and done exceedingly well.

### Conclusion

The success of *Donkey Kong* in the arcade made it a game that players wanted to enjoy at home on their preferred console. Owners of the Atari 2600 and the Intellivision got versions that were hampered by the limitations of the systems, while owners of the Atari 7800 got a better version that was limited by its sound chip. Homebrew developers have taken on the challenge of creating better versions of this game for these consoles and have successfully created ports that are an excellent take on this arcade classic thanks to having additional resources, more time, or simply better programming techniques. If you have not tried any of these homebrew versions of *Donkey Kong*, I suggest you give them a try. You'll be glad you did. 🎮



DK Arcade - Intellivision



# A MAN AND HIS DREAM

## THE WALTER DAY TRADING CARD COLLECTION

### by Walter Aldro Day

**W**hen the staff of Old School Gamer Magazine learned that the Walter Day Collection of trading cards had already designed nearly 5,000 trading cards with more than 2,000 of them in print and distributed around the world, we had to ask Walter “How did this happen?”

**Here's what Walter said:**

I loved baseball cards as a kid. I collected Topps baseball cards for the 1959-1963 years. A neighbor gave me a couple dozen Topps cards from the 1956 set. I was wowed by them. They were like ancient treasures, historical relics. I was sure that I was never going to let them out of my grasp... but when my family moved from Anaheim, California to Lynn, Massachusetts on August 3, 1963, somehow, I was required to give them all away in order to make room for more essential family items on the trailer our car was pulling.

So, Ralph Barber - or someone else I had grown up with since I was five years old - ended up with my priceless cardboard treasures.

I was 14 years old and I wouldn't circle back around to my love of card collecting for 16 years.

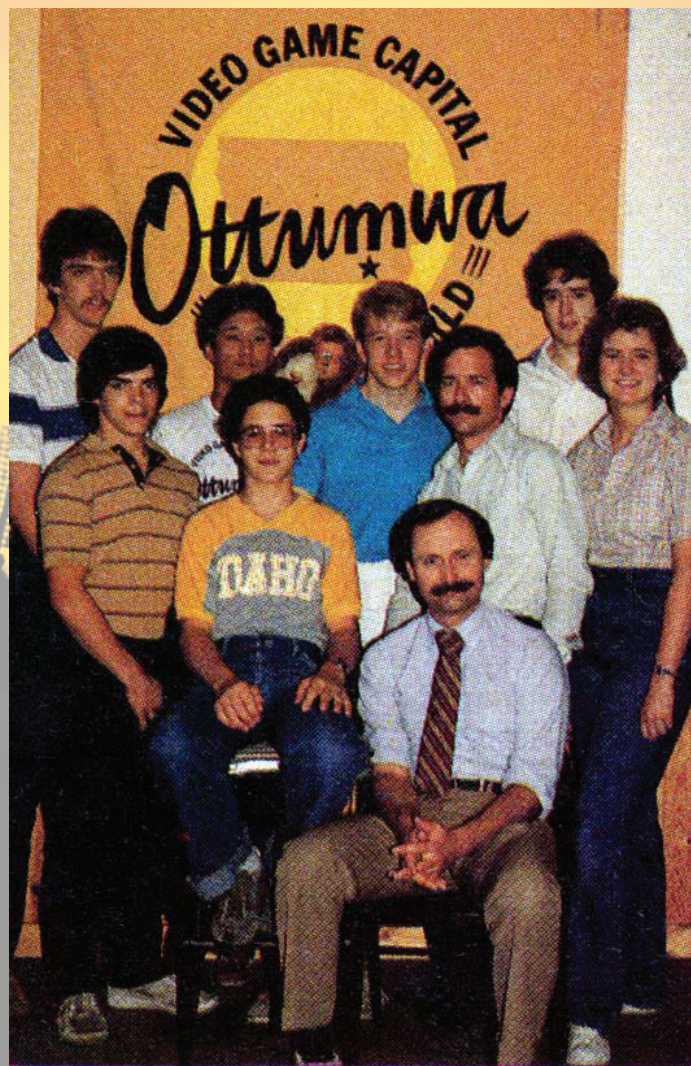
It was 1979 and my fiancé Barbara was somewhat amused that I had started buying packets of Topps cards while on our shopping sprees. The information on the cards was fantastic but it was the physicality of the cards themselves. Holding them in your hands and smelling them. It was something that I had missed in my 16-year-absence from the card collecting hobby.

This renaissance lasted for only a couple months and then Barbara and I had to move around a lot and I eventually got separated from my new collection of keepsakes.

The passion never died, however. When the famous LIFE Magazine video game photograph came out at Christmas time, 1982, everybody could see that the se-

ries of small photographs that showed the gamers posing in front of the games they had conquered looked just like trading cards.

It took me a few months to get my feet on the ground and actually act on this new inspiration, but by May 1983 I was asking parents for permission to put their video game champion children on baseball cards.



**Twin Galaxies' Walter Day is building a team to face Japan in the World Championship of Video Games.**



Much to my pleasant surprise, numerous parents responded positively (they were probably harassed by their kids until they sent back messages of approval). This would be expected, of course, because, after all, no kid in his right mind would pass up on the opportunity to appear on a baseball card.

I still remember that a kid named Jason Smith, who claimed a remarkably high score on *Gorf*, was the first gamer to get his paperwork to me, replete with signed parental permission forms and all that stuff. The parents had really gone out of their way to support their son, too. They brought in a professional photographer who posed Jason in front of a *Gorf* machine. It was a colorful photo and the photographer was clearly a professional.

Now, the difficult part arrived. How to get the layout finished and pay for the printing. I looked high and low, but the printing costs were exorbitant. In those days, you see, there was no Internet and printers, saddled with ancient technology, could not “batch” together orders from multiple customers in order to keep the costs as low as possible. Instead, for me to print a single card could cost thousands of dollars just for the set-up and print-prep services.

The dream of printing cards was taking a beating and I had to put it on hold. The kids were okay with this because I told them I wouldn’t give up.

As everyone knows, the history of Twin Galaxies became a joyful roller coaster ride between 1983-1986. It was impossible to stop and think about working on the trading card project during most of that time. But, in the summer of 1985, a potential investor in Texas wanted to create a regional Twin Galaxies sub-organization and part of the promotional scheme I laid out before him was the creation of a 110-card set of video game collectible cards. He loved it and so did I.

The summer of 1985 was not a good time for launching creative business ventures, however, so nothing was able to come out of our worthy intentions.

Finally, in 2007, the passion for creating a series of trading cards dominated my brain again. I had been working on designing superstar medallions that featured high score champions in a Twin Galaxies Video Game Hall of Fame. They were designed to appear like sports medals, and I had developed almost 200 different medals. This, too, had to remain on hold for a long time.

By October, 2009, we had Greg (the Greye Ghoose) Hoose, our artist in Fairfield, Iowa, start working on designs. With Greg at the helm, the engines were now hot and running and we were moving forward. First off, we were able to get some free consulting advice. Billy Mitchell was connected with Metro Signs Inc., in Hollywood, Florida - a nationally known printing & design house that enjoyed a stable of prestigious customers, including the Florida Marlins Baseball Team and the Miami Heat Basketball Team. Audrey Nisman, their account representative, began guiding us through the myriad of decisions that we faced in order to finally define our product.

“You want 80-pound stock and it should be 2.5” x 3.5” in size,” she advised.

On July 10, 2010, I traded emails with Greg Hoose and we finally formalized a plan to create as a special gift for the contestants in The Big Bang 2010 PoTY Scavenger Hunt, 300 sets of a 65-card series that was based on the original medallions I had enlisted Greg to create.

The cards we finally printed out for The Big Bang were







printed out as 20 different cards per sheet by Frontline Graphics in Fairfield. They were blank on one side and are commonly referred to as the “prototypes” by today’s card collectors.

The real birth of the card set can be formally marked with the Twin Galaxies Video Game Festival, held at Ottumwa’s Bridge View Center, November 9-11. It was created to celebrate Twin Galaxies’ 30th Anniversary (founded November 10, 1981). It was here that 138 different cards were released and given out as gifts to the attendees. These 138 cards were all part of what is called today the “Superstars of 2011” trading card series. Some of the earliest cards designed for the set had a different promotional header on the back and were called the “Circus Card Collection.” That brand name was eventually eliminated, and all the cards were merged together in to one united set called the “Superstars of 2011.”

When the Twin Galaxies Video Game Festival was over, I was not sure what the future held for the card set. I absolutely loved creating the cards and wished to move forward with the series.

As I had retired from the company, I no longer was in charge of Twin Galaxies and the management at that time didn’t wish to support the card set moving forward because it was clearly a total money-loser.

I had to make this come to life, even though I had no money to pull this off. I wasn’t going to let this fade on the vine in the same way my vision wilted in 1983 and 1985.

What little money I had was spent on printing the first two cards: Billy Mitchell (#1) and Walter Day (#108). I knew these two cards could automatically win media coverage for the project, so it was an easy choice of which cards to start with. These first two trading cards were presented in front of newspaper reporters and TV cameras outside the entrance to Billy Mitchell’s King of Kong Arcade in the Orlando International Airport. Not only did it make the evening TV news, but my hometown newspaper, The Fairfield Ledger, put the story on the front page.

Since I was working with no money, I had to figure out how to get some more cards printed, slowly building up the card set. This next stop on my journey was at Richie Knucklez Arcade in Flemington, New Jersey. I took a 2 and 1/2-day train ride on Amtrak in order to get to Richie’s home. As I had no funds to work with, Richie, who is forever a golden-hearted man, personally paid for the creation and printing of the next four trading cards: Joel West (#11), Don Hayes (#17), Michael Vacca (#54) and a card for Richie’s Knucklez, too. It was also Richie’s Birthday Weekend Celebration and unveiling the new cards was a special feature during his celebration.

We had discovered at that time that Gotprint.com gave the best rates for printing 1,000 copies of our trading cards. As I look back and realize that they were charging only \$19 per 1,000 cards in 2011, I marvel at how far the card set has now grown despite current rates reaching an astronomical \$55 per 1,000.

However, \$19 seemed an easy price for anybody wishing to appear on a card. I asked all world record holders interested in appearing on a trading card to donate the \$19 for printing. Though I pointed out that you had to be a world-record holder in order to be eligible to appear on a card, some people were distressed that “you





4. September 28, 2011 • King of Kong Arcade • Orlando Intl Airport.

5. November 12, 2011 • Twin Galaxies Video Game Festival • Bridge View Ctr. • Ottumwa, IA.

At each location we held a group autograph session that gave the public free autographed cards. By the time we reached the November 9-11 event in Ottumwa, our autograph session spread across 12 tables and we had 50 people signing their cards in one big celebrity autographing session. It made for a great photograph.

At this early stage of creating the card set, I had to make a decision that would affect the destiny of the project. I saw the card set differently than most people. Some people saw it as a Congressional Medal of Honor and believed that only a very small sub-set of people should be allowed on a card. To me, however, it was a vehicle for celebrating and honoring the history of gaming and the legacy of the gaming culture. I believed that the card set should grow into becoming a big historical tapestry that documented all aspects of the birth of the global gaming culture. I was committed to finding all the people who were hidden behind the scenes who had contributed greatly in bringing the gaming culture to life. This is why the cards have embraced contest winners, high score champs, game designers, voice over artists, tournament organizers, magazine publishers, online podcasters... and on and on and on.

could pay for appearing on a card.” Meanwhile, about 35 people took me up on the offer. These 35 people helped me fill out the card set and get it ready for the big unveiling in November in Ottumwa.

As the plan progressed, approximately 50 superstar gamers filled out this form: TWIN GALAXIES INTERNATIONAL, INC. RELEASE AND AUTHORIZATION TO USE AND REPRODUCE PHYSICAL LIKENESS AND VOICE.

Maybe as many as a half-dozen parents signed, too, in order to get their under-age children on cards.

In the course of that first year, I pioneered five Trading Card Awards Ceremonies. They were:

1. February 2, 2011 • King of Kong Arcade • Orlando Intl Airport.
2. July 30, 2011 • Richie Knucklez Arcade • Flemington, NJ.
3. September 24, 2011 • Star Worlds Arcade Movie Premiere • DeKalb, IL.

When the handful of people who wanted the cards to be about their accomplishments saw that I was honoring the entire culture, they felt betrayed. They had needed for the cards to be Medals of Honor for them - something they desperately needed - and they were vastly disappointed and asked to be withdrawn from the set. I am pleased to report that of the thousands of people who have appeared in the card series, only 2-3 have asked to be removed from the series.

In late November 2011, I went for my annual sabbatical to India. But, even in India, I was still on fire to come back and finish the card set. I wanted to finish the “Superstars of 2011,” which I had now decided should include 200 different cards. That meant that the 138 cards already in cardboard would have to be augmented with additional 62 cards yet to be determined.

I was walking on eggshells, though, because I didn’t have the authority at that time to decide to keep the series going forward. Still, I started designing cards as soon as I got back in February 2012. And I boldly took the card set on the road and conducted major awards



ceremonies all over America, including a stellar presentation at the Smithsonian Institute on March 12, 2012 where we gave Nolan Bushnell his card on the stage in front of an appreciative audience.

In the course of 2012, we conducted 17 awards ceremonies with high-profile presentations at the E3 Exposition, Pinball Expo, Star Worlds Arcade, California Extreme, NW Pinball & Arcade Show, the Kong Off II and many more.

On April 20-22, 2012, we went to Allentown, PA to be an exhibitor at the 56th Philly Non-Sports Trading Card Show. Dozens of video game luminaries who were already on the trading cards came to commingle with a new class of trading card inductees who were receiving their cards for the first time. Everybody in attendance, new and old, were honored in a ceremony that culminated in a group photo. The organizers of the bi-annual event, Harris, Marvyn and Roxanne Toser were also honored on a card, the first time they had ever made it onto a card after 30+ years in the non-sport card industry.

The card set was beginning to make waves in the card publishing industry and the Tosers featured our trading card set on the front cover of their program issue for the Convention.

"You know," said Roxanne Toser, one day "no company in the trading card industry has ever turned the release of their new cards in to a 'World Premiere' ceremony that involved a gathering of the people who were on the cards and with them getting awards certificates and honored status. You are creating something new that has never been done before."

Eventually, by the time we concluded our slate of ceremonies for 2019, we had logged 103 awards ceremonies with another dozen scheduled for 2020 that were canceled due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Another major way that the Walter Day Collection diverged from the norm in the trading card world was that I chose to add lots of content to the information to the backside. Normal card manufacturers would limit the amount of words so that the text was easily readable. They were concerned with making sales and if their cards didn't sell, they would close down their business. I, however, didn't care if the cards sold, or not. I was doing this not as a business but as an artistic expression of my inner nature to create. As long as people would step forward and become sponsors, I planned on

keeping the card set alive and well. I would be remiss if I didn't tell you that much of the success of the project is due to the generous and divine support that was received from Eric Tessler, of La Habra, California. He paid all the expenses for printing and shipping for more than 500 different cards. And, for just the 2015 Arcade Expo alone, in Banning, California, he paid for 187 new trading cards to be produced. Eric was the Guardian Angel of the Project. Lonnie McDonald, the celebrated Patron Saint of *Joust*, also helped in major ways with offering financial aid again and again. Plus, David and Chris Reichelt, developers of the ground-breaking *Color Switch* mobile game contributed mightily to cover the costs of printing, shipping and frames for 144 new trading cards that were issued as part of my 70th Birthday Celebration in May 2019.

But, as mentioned earlier, I felt that the text was so important that I would insist on including the whole story on the backside and the readers would just have to put on their glasses as needed to read the text. I deeply believed that when a trading card manufacturer limited the text on their cards - just to make it an easier read - was demoting the cards ability to be an educational tool. Admittedly, some of my cards were very hard to read without picking up a magnifying glass or putting on your glasses, but I insisted on putting the whole story, whenever possible, on the backsides of the cards.

Another great blessing that soon dawned on me was that I realized that because I was personally doing almost all the work, the costs for producing the sets was very low. A traditional card manufacturer who decided to create a set of cards as voluminous as the Walter Day Collection would have required a staff of at least 8 people. There would have had to have been a project director, a copy editor, a designer, a fact-checker, a permissions director, a writer/researcher and a legal professional on board in order to get the cards approved for printing. I suspect that the 5,000 cards I had designed - with over 2,000 actually in print - would have cost far more than one to two million dollars in aggregate expenses to produce. It would have taken a business plan that required a serious infusion of investment capital.

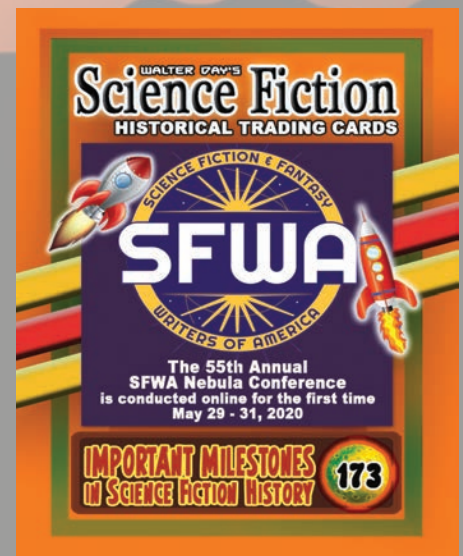
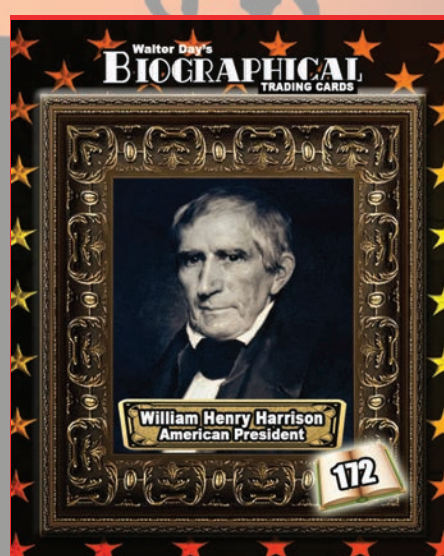
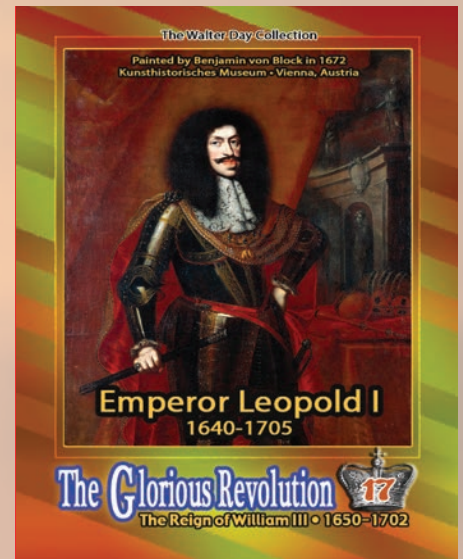
To conclude this article, I have to be fair. The success of the Walter Day Collection of trading cards must be shared by many different people.

The actual website - [www.thewalterdaycollection.com](http://www.thewalterdaycollection.com) - was inspired by Derek Sorrells, an avid game collector and arcade owner in Wichita, Kansas. Derek personally paid for all the expenses of programming and design-



# IT'S NOT ALL ABOUT THE GAMES...

Most people don't realize that Walter Day publishes far more than just video game & pinball trading cards.





ing the website and has been the ongoing patron of the webpage, paying all the online expenses generated by the site for its first five years of existence and up until now.

Brian Peat, an established web designer put his shoulder to the wheel and devoted many hours to programming the site to handle all the stories and images associated with the thousands of trading cards now in its database.

Mark Hoff, of Ottumwa, Iowa, diligently worked the social media to round up many worthy card members who were important entities in the world of *MAME* and the world of pinball. Mark singlehandedly made the rounds to get cash donations from dozens of leaders of the pinball industry to pay for the printing of 60 cards that were created for all the inductees in the Pinball Expo Hall of Fame. In the end, we were able to lure Mr. Hoff up onto the Pinball Expo's 2015 Banquet stage and present him with an award, thanking him for his ingenious efforts at making the Hall of Fame cards a successful addition to the legacy of the pinball culture.

Also, legendary illustrators responded to the call, too,

and donated free of charge hand-drawn trading cards for the video game set. They are Dan Tearle, of Lichfield, UK, who produced illustrations for nearly 50 different cards in the set; Sean Tagg, of Melbourne, Australia, who added nearly 40 hand-drawn cards using his masterful technique of employing a Nintendo console. And, Matthew Hardy, of Massachusetts, who designed a set of four cartoon cards that were oddly reminiscent of the popular "Garbage-Pail Kids" card series.

And, most importantly, our beloved editor of the website, Todd Friedman, who also volunteers lots of time to helping the International Video Game Hall of Fame in Ottumwa, Iowa. Todd has kept the website alive and relevant with activity by authoring his weekly "Trading Card Spotlight," a series of interviews that focus specifically on people who are featured on trading cards. His interviews have crossed over from one card series to the next, interviewing people who appear on cards in the video game series, the Fairfield series, and the science fiction series.

There was always a sense of expansion as the Walter Day Collection moved forward. At no time did it become a business plan because I was happier giving the cards away as gifts instead of worrying over whether or not they were generating income. Different individuals who were helping me with the project estimated that we had given away about 250,000 cards as free gifts. Despite weak or no income, I somehow managed to launch additional card titles. In 2015, the Science Fiction Historical Trading Card set was unveiled in Banning at the same time that Eric Tessler and John Weeks collaborated on creating and funding an "Official Walter Day Trading Card Museum." Not only did the fledgling Museum sponsor more trading card awards ceremonies for the gaming community, but further awards were presented that honored George Washington, Alexander Graham Bell, Ray Bradbury, and Alan Turing, to just name a few.

In 2013, a local art gallery in Fairfield, Iowa hosted a museum display of the cards. It was called "The Trading Cards & Posters of Twin Galaxies. Nearly 90 people who were immortalized on cards came for the ceremonies, desserts, autograph session, and media interviews - all culminating in a traditional group photograph.

The Walter Day Collection had been blessed so many times that it was hard to believe that another big blessing was soon on its way, and it was something that could never be predicted.

Jeffrey Wittenhagen, a talented





book author who owned a company called Hagens Alley Books, decided that he wanted to give back to the community by creating (as a free gift) a colorful picture book that told the full story of the first year of the card collection. working closely with fellow author, Todd Friedman, of Chicago, they spent two years writing and designing a 130-page book titled: "Walter Day's Gaming Superstars Volume One." Through a Kickstarter Campaign, they were able to raise enough money to pay for the printing of 500 copies of the book.

The book came out on January 21, 2020 and fast became another great reference book for the gaming historian's bookshelf.

Today, the Walter Day Collection proudly publishes nine different sets of cards. They are: The Video Game & Pin-ball Trading Cards, The Biographical Trading Cards, This Day in History Trading Cards, World War II Trading Cards, The Glorious Revolution Trading Cards, Comic Book History Trading Cards, Small Town America Trading Cards, Lynn English High School Trading Cards and Fairfield Renaissance Trading Cards.

Despite the amazing workload involved, I don't think I will ever retire from expanding the sets and will always be

creating many, many more cards. Still, knowing that the end must come someday, I have asked numerous times if the Ottumwa Video Game Capital of the World Interactive Museum would like to receive complete ownership of the entire Walter Day Collection project as a free gift. I would donate it to them. The clock is ticking so they better make up their mind. 🕒



Walter Day and Billy Mitchell present Nolan Bushnell with his trading card.





# Coins Detected in Pocket eSports vs. Chris Tang

By Steve DeLuca

**W**elcome to another installment of a column dedicated exclusively to Old School Gamers and Old School Games from the Golden Age of gaming. These gamers, back in the day, had to physically use a coin or token to start a video game. The earning of these coins was mostly accomplished after some form of work, usually the hard or difficult variety. After earnings were paid to the gamer, there was the trip to the ARCADE. ARCADE is written in ALL CAPS because it is the Old School Gamer's origin and sanctuary. It was, and shall always be remembered, as a hallowed place. Respect your origins. -Joel West (arcade legend and column originator) R.I.P.



"Boom Tetris!" a short recognition that carries so much clout. A universal battle cry, that when spoken will unite all Retro Gamers within earshot. The origins of said "Boom Tetris" stem back to the 1990 Nintendo World Championship. Terry Lee Torok, MC, and color commentator of the NWC 1990, fired out a "Boom, Tetris." as competitors scored big on the final stage of the game. One finalist in particular heard these words. A teenage Chris Tang was captivated by the calling to carrying on the legacy of "Boom Tetris". Chris' crusade would be no walk in the park, testing his strengths in all facets of our culture, before achieving a voice that could spread the gospel of "Boom Tetris".

Growing up in Hawaii, a perfect culture blend of Japanese and North American video games, Chris' competitive journey started off early. In 1989, Chris showed his *Super Mario Bros.* skills in a power run (10 mins. limit) tournament, where he was the only competitor to complete the game, earning the title of Hawaii's Nintendo Champion. This pioneering contest was put on by Nintendo and Holiday Mart, a department store where Chris discovered his love of SEGA and anime, planting the seeds of future expeditions.

Following his rise to island fame, Chris was uprooted and transplanted to California. Now an unknown in this





foreign land, the second calling came when Nintendo Power announced the Nintendo World Championship (NWC) 1990. The new competition would prove to be far less meek than those back home. Chris' first attempt at the NWC 1990 would fall short against Robin Mihara in Oakland. Never giving up, Chris traveled to Los Angeles to claim his spot in the finals where he would eventually be empowered by the "Boom Tetris".

Having come so close to becoming Nintendo's World Champion, Chris could see what it takes to become the best in the world. Now completely saturating himself into the world of gaming, Chris was awarded a position at Tengen / Atari disregarding California's age requirements. Now there would be no more excuses; Chris would train across all video game platforms and genres. He would become the best at whatever was thrown his way.

1991 hits and *Street Fighter II (SF2)* is sweeping the ARCADE scene, stirring up a new era of competition. It should go without saying, but Chris Tang was ready for them. The next calling came in the form of a handwritten invitation from Gofland (Sunnyvale, CA), CAPCOM's testing site. Honestly, a whole story needs to be written just on Sunnyvale's Gofland, a historical place. Chris would not miss his chance in competing in the first ever *SF2* tournament of champions, performing heroically and taking home the third spot.

At the height of MTV's 90's influence, the media giant teamed up with SEGA to put on the video game championship of all championships, Rock the Rock (1994). A master of Sonic's golden rings, Chris swept through the local competition, getting himself bound, blindfolded, and hauled off to Alcatraz Island. Competitors from all over the globe were locked in a prison cell and forced to win their way to freedom by playing an unreleased *Sonic and Knuckles*. Although the competition was fierce, Chris quickly learned this new title and climbed his way to the finals. Surrounded by cameras, hyped VJs, and a load of screaming extras just stoked to be on MTV, the two finalists faced off ready to fight for the \$25,000 prize. Claiming his NWC 1990 experience gave him the poise to dominate under pressure; Chris Tang took the victory, proving he was on this Earth to be a World Champion.

At the top of the world, Chris Tang made the most of his status and kept pushing on. Throughout the decades Chris stacked victories one on top of the next: 3-time

CAX *Street Fighter II Turbo* Champion, winner of Hawaii State *Mortal Kombat & Mortal Kombat II* Championships, third place at E3's *Street Fighter Alpha 2* Championship, winner of E3's *Marvel Vs Capcom 2* Championship officiated by Walter Day and winner of Working Designs \$10,000 RayStorm competition. Living a double life in the anime world, Chris has also won over 40 awards for his mastery of cosplay, including Best in Show at Wondercon and Best Craftsmanship.



Now having proven himself, Chris Tang takes a seat amongst our wise elders, inducted into the Video Game Hall of Fame as well as joining ranks with the U.S. National Video Game Team. With a weighted voice, Chris continues his crusade and unites with old friend Robin Mihara on the search to find the world's best *Tetris* player. This would prove to be the perfect platform for the gospel of "Boom Tetris", soon becoming the Classic *Tetris* World Championship (CTWC).

Fast forward to modern times, the CTWC becomes a YouTube sensation with Chris Tang's hype sculpting the enthusiasm that enlists all generations to train and compete. "Boom Tetris" went viral when a silly recut of the 2018 CTWC Finals was released. This "Boom Tetris for Jeff" video would attract all the right attention, exploding the popularity of the CTWC and encouraging a new era of teenage Classic *Tetris* Masters that would take hold of the CTWC title.

Chris Tang is textbook and should be studied. His display of confidence during tournament play, backed by his play skill, can only be accomplished through years of focused training. Chris will stop at nothing to becoming the best, even building portable consoles (all eras) for



training on the go. Bottom line, if you see "Chris Tang" listed as competitor, it's best to walk away from that tournament.

**Coin's Detected in Pocket** always ends with a few pro tips straight from the mind of the champion at hand. This time, I decided to switch things up and let the community share their thoughts on the Champion. Let these beautiful sentiments be the true description of the man, the myth, the LEGEND... Chris Tang.

#### **Boom Tetris!**

"Chris brings profound dignity to the gaming community. His brilliant creativity and leadership skills fuel his ability to uplift the global gaming community, making it a richer and more constructive place." - Walter Day

"Chris's contagious commentary helped spark a worldwide *Tetris* resurgence (and made me a meme!) All-around gaming legend, and all-around fantastic dude. Boom!" - "Boom Tetris for Jeff" Moore (CTWC Finalist)

"Chris can be defined by two words, "pure joy" When he won the Sega world championship in 1994, you could see the elation on his face, and that joy came from him reaching his goal, not from shaming or kicking down his opponent. He continues to share his love of gaming through his commentary for the Classic *Tetris* World Championship. His positivity and joy for video games is the bedrock that Classic *Tetris* scene was built on. Had a snarky jerk announced these events, the CTWC would have withered on the vine years ago." - Chris Bidwell (2015 NWC Finalist)

"Chris has an infectious excitement that stems from being both a hardcore gamer and developer." - Sean Fortenot (Tony Hawk Pro Skater Champion)

"Chris Tang is one of the most exceptional people I've ever met, not just in the context of gaming but just as what an actual hero is supposed to be. His accomplishments speak for themselves, but only tell half the story of his kindness, humor, warmth, and generosity. He's an invaluable unique brand of sincerity and optimism in a world that often seems to demand cynicism. I didn't get to spend much time with him back during the original NWC era, but am honored to have him as a friend in the long years since. And should this man get trapped in a cave by militants, he will probably emerge in a fully operational mech suit, he's a real life iron man with a heart of gold." - Thor Aackerlund (Nin-

#### **tendo World Champion 1990)**

"From the beginning, Chris brought full commitment and passion to commentating CTWC. He is and always will be a legend in Classic *Tetris*." - Adam Cornelius (CTWC Founder)

"I used to hit imaginary backyard homeruns with Curt Gowdy announcing my way around the bases. In the same way, a whole new generation imagined being on the main CTWC stage with Chris shouting BOOM! as they Tetrised to victory. He's an inspiration, and today's worldwide competitive NES *Tetris* scene wouldn't exist without the excitement Chris brought to it." - Keith Didion (Classic Tetris Monthly Organizer and Commentator)

"Chris has been a fantastic representative for classic competitive gaming. I love having him at retro championships events where he shares his unique experiences with the gamers just learning about this world!" - Dorian Whitlock (NWC 1994 Finalist)

**"What Chris did in the SEGA tournament was major.**



I remember watching it back in the days when video game competitions on a truly large scale were incredibly rare and even rarer to see on television. What he went on to contribute to the video game world has been incredible as well. But the best thing about him? His incredible humility combined with his sheer love and passion for video game culture. I don't find that combination in enough people. Chris has both qualities in spades." - Patrick Scott Patterson (Gaming Preservationist)

"Tang is the color commentator the world of Tetris needed and his taste in music is impeccable." - Christian Deitering (Let's Play Gaming Expo)

"I've known Chris from our AOL Video Game Chat Room days of the late 90s. His passion for gaming is



infectious. Whether it's watching him play, his announcing or just bumping into him at a convention it's always a pleasure." - John Riggs

"I was introduced to Chris through his inclusion on the US National Video Game Team and then later his Induction in the International Video Game Hall of Fame. When I was in Phoenix playing several *Jousts*, Chris came out to two locations in support and then in one, I believe Cobra Arcade Bar he played fighting games against many players - he made quick work of all wannabe Fighting game players. Chris is just a nice guy with a great public image." - Lonnie McDonald (Video Game Hall of Famer)

**"Two words: Boom *Tetris*" - Sean "Quaid" Ritchie (CTWC Finalist)**

"Chris is an OG NWC legend and an iconic presence at every CTWC. He vocalizes the emotion of the game with a unique flair that has inspired players and spectators worldwide. We love you Chris!" - Trey Harrison (1990 NWC Contender, CTWC Organizer)

**"I was Chris's color commentator for the legendary *Tetris* World Championships finals where "Boom *Tetris* for Jeff" and "Piecement Places" were born. His enthusiasm and passion is infectious and combined with not only his knowledge, but also his contributions to history with the development multiple video games, he is truly what I call a legend of the industry and am honored to call him my friend." - Jeffrey Wittenhagen (Retro Gaming Author and PodCaster)**

"Chris is the heart of CTWC. His enthusiasm has kept audiences captivated for 10 years. BOOM *TETRIS* for Chris Tang!" - Joey Parker (*Tetris* Master)

**"I am a huge fan of the classic *Tetris* world championship, watching all the videos all the time one of the parts I love is how awesome of a announcer Chris Tang is! Always so hyped up, positive, and brings the emotion. He really draws you I to the game play. With out him the CTWC would not be the same to me." - Aaron "JAWS" Homoki (Pro Skater)**

"Chris can light up a room with his generous smile and positive vibe. One of the nicest people to know." - John Hancock (Video Game Historian)

**"Chris has been with the *Tetris* community from the beginning, he helped grow the tournament with live-**

**ly, and memorable commentary. Much could really be said for how his personality helped make those early tournaments more memorable before we really had the players and fan base to make it self-sustaining. He did a lot to help sustain it!" - Ben Mullen (*Tetris* Master)**

"When it comes to gaming you really can't find anyone more passionate than Chris. No one has cheered for me




more in my return to NES *Tetris* than him." - Dave Lopez (1990 NWC and 1994 NWC Finalist)

**"Chris is an integral part of the Classic *Tetris* World Championship. His insightful commentary and memorable catch phrases have helped catapult what otherwise might be a niche event into a worldwide phenomenon. 'Boom *Tetris*' will forever be etched into eSports history." - Chris Brady (*Tetris* Master)**

"Chris' passion for the gaming community is awesome. Not only is he an amazing player, but he is one of the nicest guys you'll ever meet." - John Lester (Game On Expo)

**"As a contender in the CTWC, I'm glad to share enthusiasm with Chris, and his long-standing dedication to the industry for decades is simply amazing." - Sho "SQR" Akaki (*Tetris* Grandmaster)**

"It wouldn't be until much later that I would connect that the same person was behind various cosplays, game credits, and contest wins, which is a testament to his presence in many different scenes. The Barnaby hero suit was the base he used for the flashy "Fami-com" costume he wore at CTWC 2011. - Alex Kerr (*Tetris* Grandmaster, CTWC Finalist) 



# "WILD BILL" STEALEY FLYING TO NEW HEIGHTS IN THE GAMING INDUSTRY

by Todd Friedman

**A**nyone who loves flight simulation games will probably know the name "Wild Bill" Stealey. He was the founder and CEO of the game companies, MicroProse and Interactive Magic. They designed dozens of popular flying and air warfare games over the last 38 years. Bill is a retired Lt. Colonel and Command Pilot from the US Air Force. He used his experience and training to create, test and sell top-notch simulation games to the public. Bill's adventure started in the gaming industry in 1963, when he won a National Science Foundation Scholarship and got to work and play on helicopter simulators at the Army's Research and Development Laboratories as a 10th grader. Wild Bill never intended to be in the game industry. He wanted to be a fighter pilot. This is his story.

puts his finger in my chest and said, "Wild Bill, you got a job!" I played 4 years of first-string NCAA Lacrosse for Air



**OSG: What influenced you to join the Air Force?**

WB: I was following in my Dad's footsteps. He wanted to be a pilot during WWII, but he ended up being a navigator. Dad tried to go back to pilot training but ended up in Korea as an Infantry Company Commander. I lost Dad when I was 8 to a drunk driver. I decided I would do what Dad did not get to do and be an Air Force Pilot!

**OSG: What is the significance of the name "Wild Bill"?**

WB: I was just Bill as I grew up, named after my uncle killed in WW II. I went to the US Air Force Academy after already having one year of college engineering already completed but had to start over at USAFA. I had a 4.0 and was bored after being a Doolie (freshman), at another military college the year before. I decided to go out for Lacrosse which I had never played. I got the helmet, gloves, big stick and was told by the coach, "Stand in front of that goal and when an attackman comes close, yell at the top of your lungs and crash into him!" "Yes sir!" I did and knocked the kid out cold and broke his helmet in three pieces. The coach comes running out and does not even look at the kid on the ground and

Force and loved it. I was always Wild Bill after that. My friends say it is because I am not very great at anything, but I am enthusiastic about everything!

**OSG: What inspired you to create your own software publishing company back in the early 1980s?**

WB: That was not my objective. I wanted to be a fighter pilot. I went to pilot training, did very well, and graduated 6th in my class of 54, and was asked to stay on as an Instructor Pilot. After 5 years they told me I was getting assigned to the F4 Phantom fighter. It turned into a C-5A, a giant transport airplane. I did not want to be a transport pilot, I wanted to be a fighter pilot. I decided to go to the Air National Guard to fly aircraft that were not transports and got to be a Forward Air Controller in an A-37B Dragonfly aircraft, bombing and strafing the heck out of New Jersey!

I also went to the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania for an MBA at the same time. After I completed the MBA, I got a job in the consulting world with McKinsey and Co. in New York. I mostly did strategic planning work for clients that involved a lot of Spread-



sheets, Income Statements, Cash Flows, and Balance Statements. In one case I got to give an entrepreneur a \$25 million check for an acquisition just as he had gotten once before! I said, "Fred, how do you do this?" He said, "Well, you have to start a business you know and build it and make it so someone else wants what you made." He did not graduate from high school, did not go to the United States Air Force Academy, to Pilot Training, to the Wharton School, or to McKinsey and Co, a famous consulting firm, but he had already sold two businesses for 25 million dollars. He would start a business and get it going really well, grab customers and sell it someone and start all over again.

I decided I wanted to be an Entrepreneur like Fred. A military and MBA friend of mine decided that we are going to find a business and buy it. We looked at 100 businesses, we negotiated about 20, then we made offers on three. We lost them all. I decided to leave consulting and go to General Instrument in Baltimore in 1981 to do financial and strategic planning, and that's where Sid Meier was.

At GI they also wanted me to do financial things again like all the spreadsheets I have been doing in consulting. I am a smart lazy person and went looking for a home computer to do the financial models on. I heard of a program called VisiCalc by Dan Bricklin, the very first spreadsheet program. I went to buy a home computer and looked at a Trash-80, the Radio Shack computer with 8K memory. Next was a brown computer with some kind of fruit with a bite out of it. And then there was a computer making all kinds of explosion noises further down the shelf. I said, what is that? He said that is a toy computer playing a game called *Star Raiders*. I said, "Does that do VisiCalc, too?" He said yes and I said I will take that one. I bought the Atari 800, took it home and did all my financial planning work with VisiCalc on the Atari 800.

I heard there was a guy in GI Engineering with an Atari user's group called Smuggers. Smuggers was Sid Meier's user group. I went in the back and found out Sid. It appeared to me he was a software pirate. He said he was not stealing software; he was just looking at it, so he knew what to do in games he was trying to develop. That is quibbling at the US Air Force Academy, so I did not stay in Smuggers. A short time later, in 1982, Sid and I were at a business planning meeting for all the salesmen of GI. He was the only techy and I was the only finance person and there were 200 salesmen telling us how good they will be next year! Sid said, "Bill, I know where there are some games, let's get out of here."

We went downstairs at Bally's MGM right there on the famous corner next to the current Bellagio of Las Vegas. Sid beat me at every video game in that arcade. I was looking around the arcade and said, "OK Meier, I can beat you at this flying game." It was an arcade game called *Red Baron*. I sat down and scored about 75,000 points! I said, "OK Sid, your turn! He scored 150,000 points and I asked how he did that? He said, "I watched you play, and I memorized the algorithms. I can write a better game in a week." Not to be out bragged I said, "I could sell it!" He brought me a game called *Hellcat Ace* about a month later. I told him it was not that good and wrote a four-page paper on what was wrong on *Hellcat Ace*. One month later, he brought the game back and said, "I fixed all those things you wanted!" Sid told me he had previously sold 4 games for a grand total of \$800. Being a fighter pilot, I was sure I could do better than that!



**Sid Meier and Wild Bill fly off into the wild, blue yonder in search of the Red Baron.**

We started selling *Hellcat Ace*, *Floyd of the Jungle*, and *Chopper Rescue* in October 1982. I sold mostly by telemarketing and visiting as many computer stores, I could find every week. I would call computer stores and ask to buy *Hellcat Ace*. They said they did not have it, and I would call them a crummy computer store and hang up on them. I would do that for three weeks and then the fourth week I would say, "Hi. I am John Stealey with MicroProse. We have this game called *Hellcat Ace*." They would say, "We are getting a lot of calls on that game!" And I would sell them 50 copies. Corny but it worked!

**OSG: How did you come up with the name MicroProse?**

**WB:** Sid came up with the name. We thought about



Smugglers, and I did not think that would work. He said, "Well, we write Prose for Microcomputers, why don't we call it that!" You have to understand, he only wrote in basic. He was not really a trained programmer; he was a brilliant system analyst who taught himself all about the new home computers and programming. He had a pho-



tographic memory, great math skills, love history and music, and was an all-around brilliant guy. I gave him the 2017 days of WW II in a book for Christmas one year. He gave it back to me on New Year's Day. "Sid did you not like the book?" "Yes, I love it, but I already memorized it!!!" Yikes!!

*Chopper Rescue* was sold to CBS for a lump sum. *Floyd of the Jungle* was only sold if I would be there in the computer store and go one on one with myself, laughing and giggling. *Hellcat Ace* - the whole idea was defending Pearl Harbor from the Japanese attack - was something people were interested in, and they bought it once we started getting some great reviews.

**OSG: What were your expectations when you started MicroProse?**

WB: We first thought we would generate enough revenue to charge our cars off to the IRS. Then I started selling too many games and real money started rolling in. In 1985 or 1986 Trip Hawkins of EA said, "How big are you Bill?" I said, "We are about six million..." Well, we were really about three million and I think he knew it. Trip and I negotiated with each other many times three times trying to sell the other on joining force. MPS was bigger than EA in Europe at the time and he said that we need to get our two companies together. He said, you can do all the simulation games and I can do all the sports games. I turned that down, which was stupid, then Nintendo offered MPS the very first license in America and I turned that down too. I did a bunch of dumb things in the early days learning as we went along.

We grew the company for ten years and went public in 1991 at a \$400 million dollar valuation. Big moment for us at MicroProse. I was ready to go to Christmas break two months later with my kids to the Caribbean, and Gilman Louie of Spectrum Holybyte (*Falcon* games), called me. Gilman said, "Bill, you need to send me a half a million dollars." I said, "What! Why would I do that?" He said, "Because I am your friend and I need it." I sent it to him on a handshake. (His funding source was a British billionaire who ended up floating in the Mediterranean under suspicious circumstances and therefore no money was coming in!) We were competing, he was doing the *Falcon* series and we were doing *F-15 Strike Eagle*, my dream AF assignment. Two years later his investors came to the rescue of MPS and Gilman became MPS CEO when I left the company.

**OSG: How were you able to simulate the F-15 gameplay?**

WB: As a retired AF Officer, I had lots of friends and classmates who flew the F-15. All, I would do is call them up and they would say, "Well this is classified, and this isn't." They even provided us an old operating manuals for an F-15! I gave them to Arnold Hendrick, our brilliant military game designer. He is the one that actually did the design of the product based on what the F-15 manual said. I hired an F-15 guy who played Lacrosse with me, George Wargo, and he was a customer service man for people asking about F-15's. Players would tell us we got things wrong on our BBS. George would ask, "How many hours do you have in F-15's?" They would say that they did not have any hours, but they read about it. George said, "I have about 5,000 hours in the F-15, so I can tell you what it actually does."

Next came the *F-19* game because Tom Clancy told me that the Stealth fighter was an F-19 and I knew as an





Officer at the Pentagon that the Air Force was going to announce a stealth fighter. We were shipping *F-19* on the day the AF announced the Stealth Fighter was called the F-117A! We redid the game as *F-117A* and sold a ton again!

I was probably the most experienced player at most of our games because I had hundreds of hours and tested everything we did. I would test every night, stay up until one or two in the morning testing games, writing notes. Some of your readers might remember many of the high score screens had Lt. Col. WB at the top of the leaderboards!

Another time I wanted to license Chuck Yeager. He flew with Denise and me at the Oshkosh airshow for many years. We were all in EAA Warbirds of America. Every time we went to an Oshkosh he would want to come over and ask where Denise was. He wanted a hug. One time I said to Colonel Yeager, "I want to use your name and make a game out of it." He said, "That is great except EA just offered me ten million dollars." I said, "I guess we can't compete with that." He said, "Well, I love you guys, but money is money." So, Trip did Chuck Yeager's game in the late 1980's and made a life size cardboard standup of Chuck Yeager. Chuck is about 5'6" tall. I made a life-

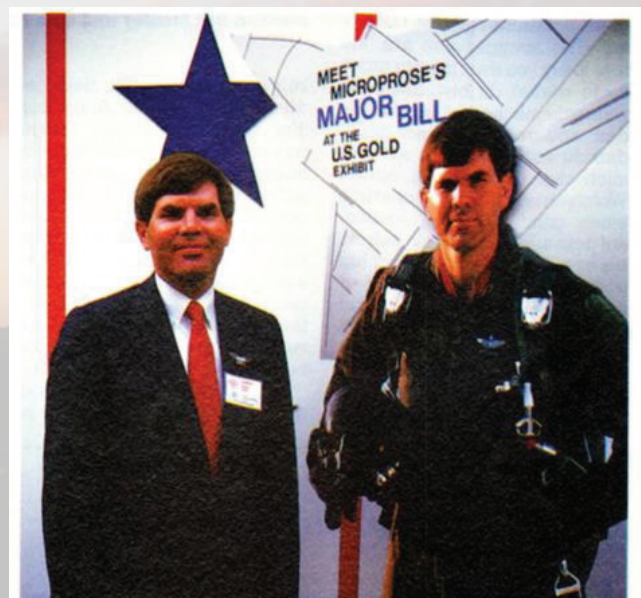
sized, seven-foot (?) cutout of me in my flight suit and put them next to Chuck's shorter cutout in computer stores. We got a lot of press on that. My specialty was marketing and being very enthusiastic at trade shows, always in my flight suit, always have fun demoing our games.

**OSG: Which game you were involved with sticks out as your most memorable and why?**

WB: Whenever we were developing a game, each of them were probably my favorite at the time... I was very excited about *F-15 Strike Eagle* because I was flying A-37's and dreamed of flying the F-15. The A37-B has two seats side by side and a refueling probe. Our whole mission was to shoot rockets at bad guys in the jungle so fighter bombers could see the target to go after.

If you look at the MicroProse catalog, most of the military games were things I wanted to do and the strategy games were Sid's.

Sid did *Pirates* because he got enthusiastic about the history of the Caribbean when he took our first employee, later his wife, there on a holiday. *Pirates* was my kids favorite for sure, even to this day. We did two great strategy games, *Railroad Tycoon* and *Civilization*. Both games were formerly well-known board games from Avalon Hill. The CEO, Eric Dot, calls me and says, "Bill, Sid's stealing my game" I said, "What are you talking about? He said, "*Civilization* is my board game". I said, "That can't be, Sid would never do that. I went back to Sid and he said, "Yes that is where I got it." I said, "Eric, let's get together for lunch to talk about it." At lunch I ordered him three martinis and he signed the piece of





paper that we agreed to promote each other's products in our packaging. After I left the company there was a very big lawsuit about the entire licensing issue That is how we got away with it.

**OSG: Are you still involved in the MicroProse company process and to what extent?**

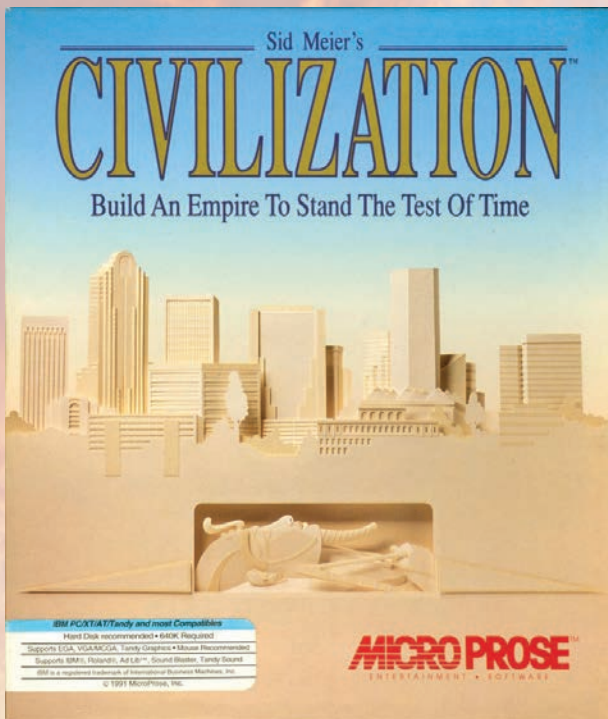
WB: MicroProse is being relaunched by a really smart guy who is into real military contracting but started a long time ago in games, David Lagettie. They have announced their first three games due sometime in the fall. We started talking almost two years ago when someone asked me if I was restarting MicroProse? I did not know David was doing that, so I checked in with him online. He has helped fund a big update to our *War-Birds* online combat simulation game and we expect to

meet the spirit of the old MicroProse games, and I have told David I would like to help playtest them all. He told me that would happen!

As I said before, I was one of the chief playtesters at MicroProse, with my talent mostly not in real design but in seeing what players would see and understand and making it better in already great products. You should ask Sid about the Deck Gun on *Silent Service* or the Science, Military, and Political advisors in *Civilization*. All my suggestions helped us sell even more games. I hope to do the same for David and his team.

**OSG: Where do you see software companies and gaming going in the next 20 years?**


WB: I was interviewed by a New York Times reporter many years ago who wanted to do the interview in my T-28B, Trojan, WW II era, aircraft trainer. He set up a camera to my left in the cockpit and got in the back seat. On takeoff I rolled the aircraft and I heard the camera click 20 times. We landed and he had a new handle, "Two Bags!" But in the interview, (after he cleaned himself up), on the ground I told him my vision of future gaming. After a long day on the golf course taking \$20 bucks off of young guys who can hit the ball a mile and sometimes can even find it, I will go back to my home and open the door. "Good evening, Wild Bill! Would you like me to pour you a Cabernet or Zinfandel tonight?" "Thanks Hal, I think I will take the Zin. Mail?" "Yes sir, there are 8756 players from Europe who want to kill you tonight, and only 4592 from Asia who want to kill you!" "Great Hal, pour the wine, warm up my V/R Holodeck and tell them my team and I will launch at 2000 hours for the combat!" And then I will play and laugh all night before I got out to win another \$20 bucks the next day. My vision is something you see in Science Fiction every day, the Holodeck! The only issue is that we must be up and doing things everyday outside to keep ourselves human!



do more games together with David.

Denise and I went to Australia last September to meet with David and his team. They are a good and talented group and we had a great trip, even meeting seven of David's 8 kids and his wife, Summah. What a nice family.

David and MicroProse have announced three military strategy games on the MicroProse.com website. He has teased art of some of our more famous old MPS games including an attack helicopter, B-17, and tank screenshots on the MicroProse Facebook page. He has a great team and great game ideas in development, and he will have to tell you about them as he is ready to announce them over the next few months. All I can say is they all

Thanks for the fun of letting me tell some of my stories! Anytime you want to bring a bottle of wine and come sit on my back porch in the mountains of western North Carolina, I can tell you a few million more game stories. Salute! WB 





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