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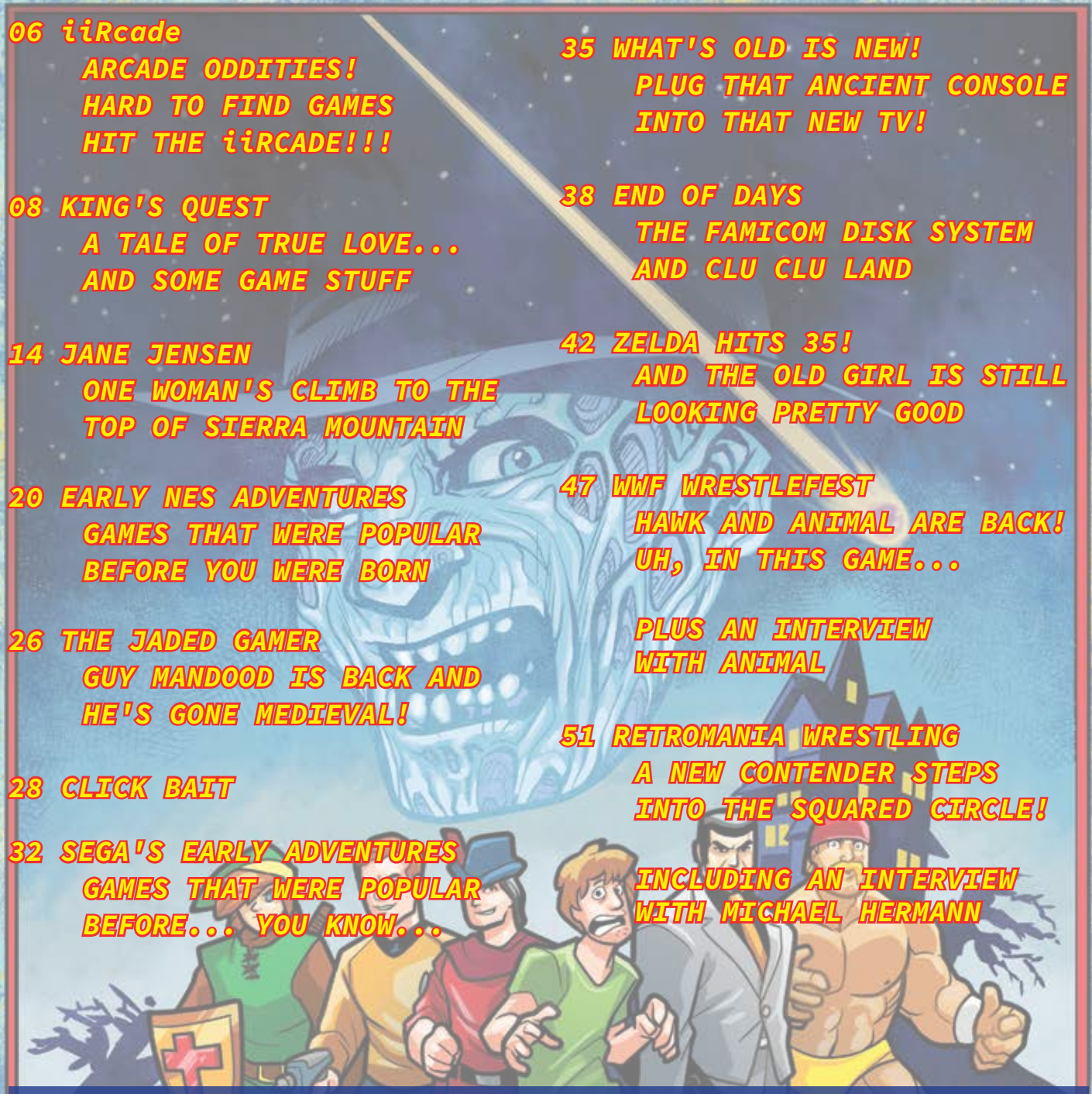


COIN UP!

Everyone has had at least one adventure. Even that liitle old lady down the block has had some racy adventures at one time... trust me on this one... I've had some amazing adventures in my time on Earth, little old ladies not withstanding. Like the time a friend and I thought we had scored the only... Uh, I can't ell you about that one... There was this time on tour that I ate 3 egg salad sandwiches and on stage, I... Hmm, you don't need to hear that one... Then there was the time we made a depth charge and put it my Dad's pool to see what would happen. We set that thing off and... Anyway, my point is that everyone loves a good adventure and this issue of Old School Gamer is packed with plenty of 'em! So put on your Elven cape, grab your walking stick and climb on in!

The guys who write for Old School Gamer magazine are some of the brightest minds from the gaming world! Got a question? Send us an email and we'll get you an answer! Our email is OLDSCHOOLGAMERMAIL@gmail.com

FEATURED SCRIBE

Todd Friedman has written for the RetroGaming Times and The Walter Day Collection, in addition to his work both with this magazine and it's website OldSchoolgamer.Com. His current book "The Walter Day Gaming Superstars, Volume 1", features a host of gamers and their featured trading cards. He is finishing up Volume 2 this year. Todd has Co-promoted the Video Game Summit in Illinois for the past 13 Years. In 2016 Todd was also a nominee for the International Video Game Hall of Fame. Todd lives with his wife, Erin. He has 3 children, Clint, Aiden and Hannah.

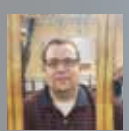
THE EDITOR

Bill Donohue did a 13-year stint as the Managing Editor for Game Players, UGP and PSM magazines. He created Gazuga and The Cleansing. He prefers Gibson guitars, Marshall amps, and Benelli combat shotguns. He once hit the Publisher of Game Players in the face with a whipped cream pie. He composed the ultimate *Super Bomberman 2* anthem - (He Ain't Got) "No Boot". Crazy? Hey, it's a life choice...

THE SCRIBES

Craig Cooper is a Network Engineer in his own company. His first gaming console was a Pong machine followed by an Atari 2600. He is very interested in new technology, hacks, and modifications to old school consoles and loves the innovations and renewed life it provides to the old machines we know and love.

Michael Coorlim is a Chicago-based writer, podcast producer, and game developer whose first console was a hand-me-down Atari 2600 and first home computer was a TRS-80. He's written 9 novels over the last decade, including the Galvanic Century steampunk series, and the Shadow Decade cyberpunk thrillers.



Brad Feingold's love for retro gaming goes all the way back to *Space Invaders* and *Asteroids*. Even though he plays the newer games, he always goes back to the classics. Thanks to the Nintendo Switch and its ability to play the retro and retro-looking games, his retro cravings will be complete.

Kieren Hawken has been writing about video games for over 15 years, working for major publishers and websites. With over 50 books to his name and numerous media and TV appearances, he's also one of the most prolific and recognizable personalities within the video game sector.

From the moment he touched an Intellivision controller in 1985, Mike knew that he had experienced something incredible that would shape him for the rest of his life. As a writer for www.gamerlogic.net and other media outlets, Mike enjoys articulating why games from the 8- and 16-bit console generations are some of the best of all time.

Video game historian and national columnist Brett Weiss is the author of 12 books, including the Classic Home Video Games series and The SNES Omnibus volumes 1 and 2. Find Weiss online at www.brettweisswords.com, and check out his YouTube show, Tales from a Retro Gamer. Find Brett online at www.brettweisswords.com

iiRcade Report

By Brad Feingold

Let's talk coin-op oddities--obscure titles lurking somewhere almost hidden in the arcade. However, some of these games have just enough cachet to interest the developers to make it to the iiRcade.

Stone Ball takes you back to the stone age of sports. After searching online, I found the best description of the game:

"*Stone Ball* is a mixture of soccer and baseball in a pre-historic setting. In a 2 vs. 2 match, neither side has a goalie; armed with big clubs, the player(s) have to put a stone ball in the opposite cave. They can tackle, or hit the opponents. Also scattered around on the field are special bonus items that increase the caveman's speed or power. "

Unfortunately, with the iiRcade, it only allows you to play a 2-player game, but there is still a lot of chaos involved. This game is Rated T for Teen.

Power Balls was originally to be released as one of the titles to be included with the machine, but was replaced at the last minute. If you have ever played *Breakout* or ***Arkanoid***, get ready because this is NOT as easy as that.

At the beginning of the level, you hit a ball towards targets consisting of trash cans and other items. After certain levels, there are boss levels, where you are hitting the boss with the ball. Sounds easy, but it isn't.

The overhead view of the game does make this game challenging to play since the ball does come back at a very fast speed. This game is rated M for Mature.

Finally, we have ***Snake Core***. Released by Orange Pixel, the rules are very simple: 1. Don't run into anything including yourself and the enemies. 2. Save everybody from potential threats. As you are playing, your army grows just like a snake. The main trick is to not run into your formation line or any of the hazards.

This game except it is very frustrating, and extremely fun! ***Snake Core*** was originally designed for the Android and iOS operating system, but that's okay.

It is still an awesome game! This game is rated E for Everyone.

Arcade Memories in Korea and the USA

By Jong-Wook Shin - CEO of iiRcade

When I was a young boy living in a small town in Seoul Korea in 1981, I saw my first arcade machine in a local strip mall. The game was Galaga, a shooter that I had never heard of. It allowed me to shoot down aliens, strategically have my ships captured and shoot them down to gain a twin shooter. At a time when Casio handheld gaming machines were owned only by the richest kids in the block, the concept of arcade machines with the most technologically advanced gaming was the most exciting thing that I had ever experienced.

My family moved to US in August 1984 and one and half year later was when I experienced Showbiz Pizza Place for the first time. It had a collection of arcade machines that filled up the entire room that seemed to be as big as a mall. There was *Galaga*, a game that I knew, but the rest of the games I had never heard of, like *Space Invaders, Kangaroo, Q*Bert, Elevator Action, Bubble Bobble* and more. *Dragon's Lair* especially took a lot of my quarters - it was expensive and awesome. The place was a heaven! It was that magical moment when I fell in love with arcade gaming and promised to myself that someday when I grew up, I would have an arcade in my home, filled with all these games that I love.

Time flew by and I went to college in 1991. I went to a school located in a small town and for a kid who was looking forward to partying, there was not much fun to be had. A small movie theater and local VHS store were about the best choices for fun. Then one day, I found a place that made me the happiest boy on earth... a laundromat. They had arcade machines! This was my first time when I saw *Street Fighter 2*. Everyone was gathered around the machine with their quarters put on top of the machine, waiting for their turn. After spending hundreds of dollars on the game, I became pretty good, and it became a daily task to visit the laundromat between classes to virtually beat up others. It was fantastic. That was how I survived college and I had the laundromat arcade to thank.

The crash of arcade market in the early 2000's caused all the arcades to disappear. This was the saddest time of my life. That was when I promised to myself again what I had promised myself 15 years ago - I will have the entire arcade in my home someday.

Unfortunately, I could not make my dream come true. The arcade machines were too big for my house, too expensive and I had to buy a new machine every time I wanted a new game. I bought a 60" TV, game consoles and arcade controllers that connected to my consoles, just to find out that it was not the same. I knew I had to do something. In 2012, after many years of learning how to make machines that can play games while working at Motorola and Sony, I drew a plan on how to make this happen. Unfortunately, making the dream come true was not an easy decision to make, as I had a family to feed and a career to build.

One day in beginning of 2018, it struck me that it was my destiny to fulfill my childhood promise. Taking out the drawings from 2012, I created iiRcade Inc. with my cofounder. We spent days and nights together for the entire year building iiRcade. At CES 2020, we showed the result of our efforts to the world and the result of our Kickstarter campaign in June proved that we were not the only ones who were looking for the same. This was the start of making the grand iiRcade dream happen and now we were no longer alone. We were making this amazing dream happen together with our fans, whom we call our family.

iiRcade enabled fulfilling my childhood dream of bringing the entire arcade of the world into my tiny townhouse, legally and perfectly, via a single machine. Now, I can relive my youth with iiRcade and not only that, I can also play amazing games from all over the world that I missed due to my local laundromat arcade not having them and the spectacular modern games from today's consoles the arcade style, bringing the Dave and Busters experience home. Arcade gaming means the world to me, and I look forward to becoming a child again, this time, together with my own children, who will not only be living my childhood with me, but will also be making arcade gaming a part of their childhood memories via iiRcade.

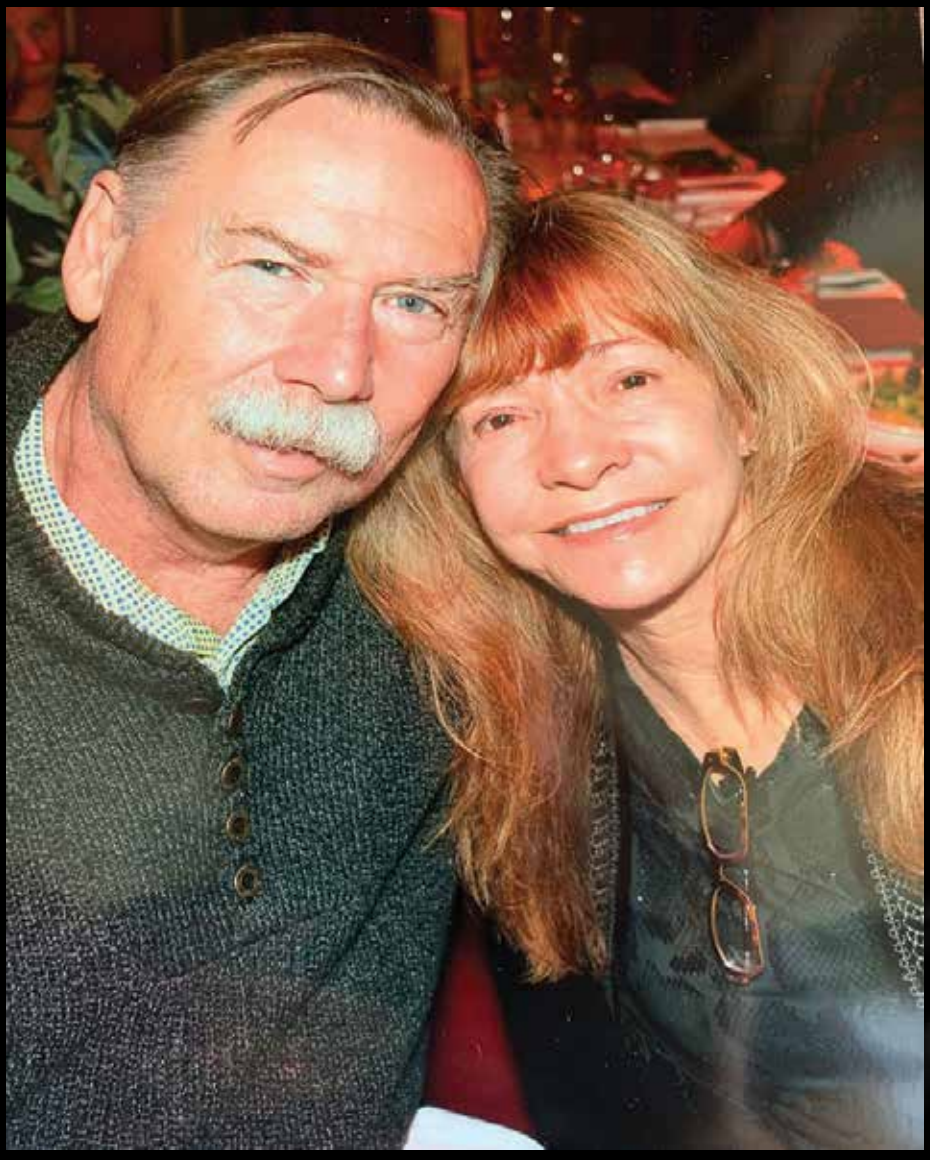
Jong-Wook Shin
President and CEO
iiRcade, Inc.

KING'S QUEST

...AND ALL THE KING'S KEN... AND ROBERTA

By Todd Friedman

Sierra Entertainment published dozens of classic adventure games. Some of their most memorable games I have played are *Police Quest, Space Quest, Leisure Suit Larry* and, of course, *King's Quest. King's Quest* was my first experience at an "RPG" game on the PC. I was 10 years old and thought I was the coolest kid on the block. Friends would come over and we would imagine the game on the monitor was real and we had to make sure our decisions were perfect. It drove the imagination to the highest level.



That was the goal of all the Sierra games and the visionaries behind it were Roberta and Ken Williams. Roberta and Ken created the first graphic adventure game in 1980 called *Mystery House.* From there they would go on to create some of the most recognizable adventure games in history. Not only were the games iconic, but the company had one of the most recognizable logos in gaming history. Sierra Entertainment was a blockbuster creator and sales were through the roof. The *King's Quest* series alone sold over 8 million copies and is still played today with remastered versions on the modern-day consoles. I talked with Roberta and Ken and found out more about their *King's Quest* personal journey.

Todd: Where did you and Roberta meet?

Ken: We have been married 47 years! We met when we were only 17 and 18 years old. Roberta was dating a friend. I stole her away and we've been together ever since.

Todd: When did you both know you were going to be in the video game business, and what were your other options?

Ken: I was doing well in my software career in Los Angeles, but tired of driving an hour each way to work. Plus, we had young children and didn't want to raise them in Los Angeles. We had a dream of "living in the woods" and I kept trying to think of some business to start that would get us out of Los Angeles. I didn't care what kind of business as long as I could escape L.A. In

those days (the 70s) there weren't computer jobs away from big cities. One of the places we considered was Seattle, and I even accepted a job at Boeing (the aircraft company) but our house sale in Burbank fell through and I couldn't take the job.

Roberta came up with the idea of building games. I was working on writing a Fortran compiler. Microsoft was selling Basic for personal computers and doing well with it. I thought we could be the next Microsoft (which at the time was only a few people). But then Roberta convinced me to sidetrack briefly to code her already assigned game, *Mystery House*, and when I started demonstrating her game at computer stores, while talking to them about my compiler, it quickly became obvious when they yawned and when they showed excitement. They loved *Mystery House* and were bored by Fortran. It was at that point that Sierra became a game company.

Todd: Do you remember when you created the first *King's* Quest and what do you remember about the experience?

Ken: Can I have 50 pages to respond? It's a long story, the quick version of which was that IBM was launching the PC Jr and wanted Sierra to do a version of Roberta's *The Wizard and the Princess* for the PC Jr. Meanwhile, Roberta wanted to see if an adventure game with animation would be possible and I asked IBM if they'd be willing to fund an ambitious project to build a game that would really push their new hardware. That game was *King's Quest* and it launched first on the ill-fated PC Jr.

Todd: What were your goals and expectations when you created Sierra?

Ken: By the time I was a teen, I knew that I wanted to start and run a big company. I was cocky and ambitious. Sierra was started as a way of leaving Los Angeles, but there was also an element of aggressive entrepreneurism in starting a company. Priority #1 was to leave Los Angeles, but I absolutely knew in my soul that I was destined to do something big. There was no part of me that would ever have been happy working the same job, or for the same company, year after year, for the rest of my life.

Todd: What are some interesting and/or funny stories that happened while working on the *King's Quest* games?

Roberta: I can't think of any particular story (with time, I'm sure I could come up with some), but I can say that my two favorite parts of designing these games were the incredible creativity involved at the beginning of design. Especially when I could literally "build castles in the air" with others on those ideas. Then again toward the end of the process when I

could actually “play” the game and see if it was fun! They were, in my “humble” opinion!

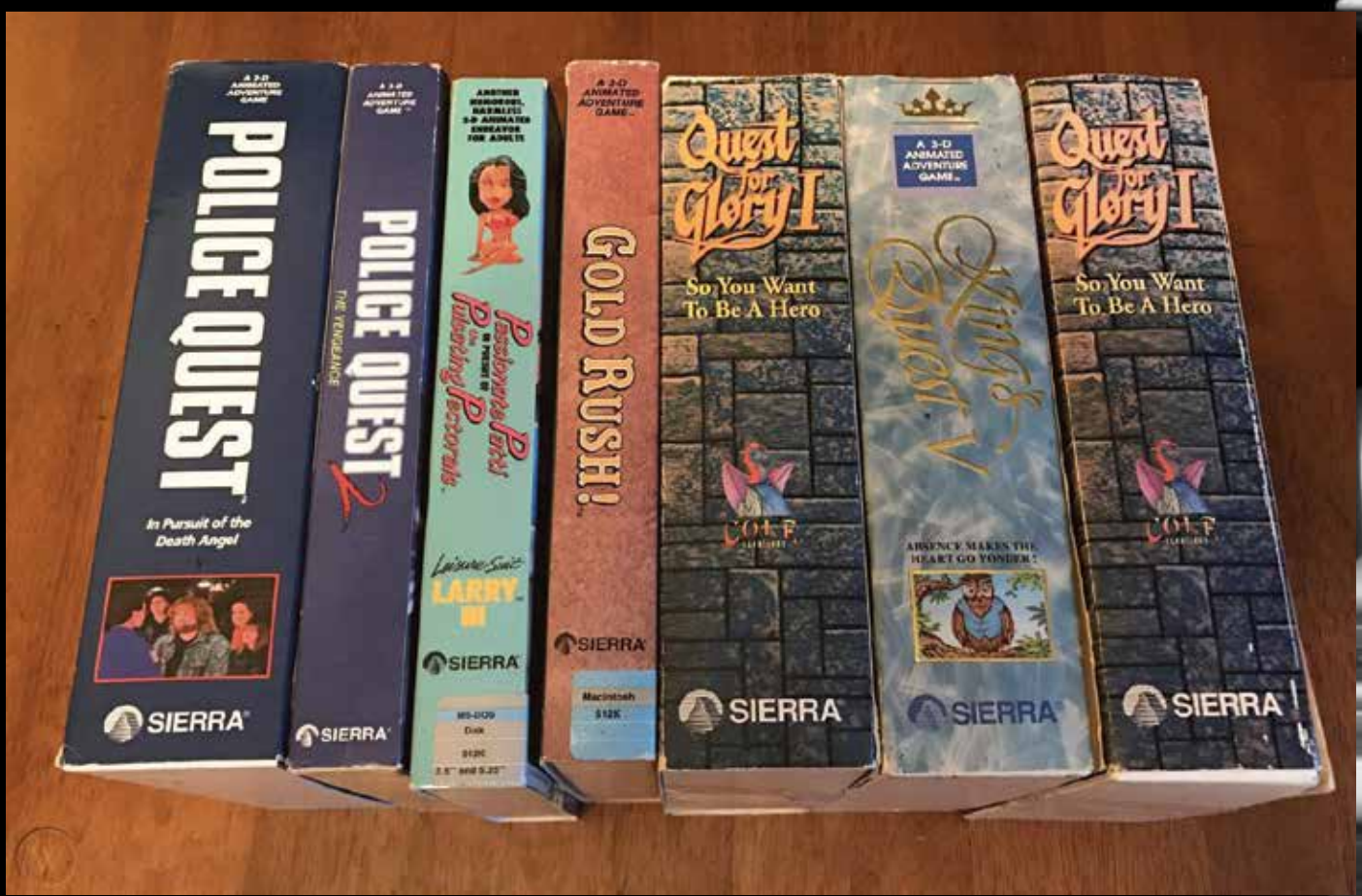
Todd: How many people first started working for Sierra and how many people were involved creating the first *King’s Quest?* How many were involved in the last one?

Ken: When Sierra started, we had two people: Roberta and Ken. The first *King's Quest* was probably a team of ten people for 18 months.

Roberta: I think it was a shorter time period, Maybe a year. We moved faster in the early days.

Ken: It's hard to say because there were different groups involved. We had a technology group that was four or five people that built the tools we used to produce games, and a tools group that built things like animation and sound editors, and then there was the actual game team that was probably around five people. This was thirty-five years ago, so I've forgotten the total count. For the last *King's Quest* that Roberta worked on, the team was probably around thirty or forty people, but keep in mind that they were sitting on top of a core technology that had been evolved by a large team over a nearly twenty-year span.

Todd: What was the inspiration to create a *King’s Quest*-themed game?



Ken: Roberta was a fan of Disney's approach to stories. In particular, she wanted a fun story with strong fantasy characters that would be appealing to children, and that parents and children could play together, and that both would be drawn into the story. Roberta tried to "borrow" creative ideas from both Disney and fairy tales.

Todd: How long did it take to create the first *King's Quest* game and was it in the time you expected?

Ken: We were under enormous time pressure during the first *King's Quest* game. IBM provided funding for the game, but the money wasn't covering all costs and we were running out of money quickly. I needed to seek additional funding from our investors in order to complete the game. We knew we had to hit our date, so that the game could be ready for IBM's launch of the PC Jr. I forget how long it took. I'm guessing only a year; we knew this was extremely important and that we did hit the date.

Todd: When the first *King's Quest* was released to the public, did it meet expectations, and where were you when it was released?

Ken: The game was popular, but the PC Jr hardware bombed. However, Tandy (Radio Shack) had been working on a PC Jr competitor called the Tandy 1000. We launched *King's Quest* on the Tandy 1000 and it was a megahit and really put the company on the map in a big way.

Todd: Were you and Roberta fans of the guidebooks to help the gamer get through hard challenges?

Ken: Balancing the games, making them not too easy or too hard, was virtually impossible. No matter what we did there would be someone who would complete the game in under 24 hours, and a horde of people who complained it was too hard. I didn't want to make money on the hint books, but we had to cover our costs for them, and the market demanded them. It was the only way many of our users could complete the games.

Todd: If you could make a change to the *King's Quest* series, what would it be and why?

Roberta: Honestly, they all did well, for their time; that has to be remembered, so that is difficult to say. Perhaps, "back in the day" if that question had been asked of me, I'd probably have had some good answer for each game because I would have been closer to the project and would have had a prompt answer!

Todd: There were talks of a *King's Quest 9*. What was the issue in not creating the game and could it still happen?

Ken: The company was sold midway through *King's Quest 8: The Mask of Eternity.* Roberta was essentially forced out of the company after *King's Quest 8*. Once again, can I have 50 pages? Wait! I already did that. Check out my book (www.kensbook.com). Anyway, Roberta did do a bit of a design for *King's Quest 9* which is floating around the internet somewhere, but no one at Sierra cared. The company had bigger problems. The new owners of the company (after we sold it) had their own vision for how to run Sierra and it turned out to be a flawed vision. Running Sierra seemed simple from the outside, but they quickly discovered it was not an easy company to manage. Plus, they turned out to be crooks and went to jail, seriously. Activision did release a new series of *King's Quest* games a couple years ago. Roberta and I never played them but did see an early demo and thought the game looked amazing. We hoped that the games sold well and have heard that they did.

Todd: If you had to pick a favorite *King's Quest* game, which one would it be and why?

Ken: For me, probably *Kings Quest 1* or *King's Quest 7. King's Quest 1* because it pioneered animation in adventure games. And *King's Quest 7* because it was the last *King's Quest* that was 100% Roberta's vision for a game.

Todd: Who worked on the cover art of the games and what was the vision?

Ken: Different artists at different times. We were broke in the early days and the covers usually reflected that. Roberta did some of the early covers herself, and she is definitely not an artist. Then, for a while, we used our inhouse artists. By the end we were commissioning expensive original works of art for the covers.

Todd: What are your opinions about today's generation of RPG games? How do you compare them to older, PC, console games?

Roberta: Obviously, we were gamers at the beginning, though once you have worked on so many game projects over time, believe it or not, it does become work, and I don't think either of us has played a game since the Sierra days.

Ken: When Sierra was sold, the new owners of the company destroyed the company's reputation, gave crappy products to the customers, and ruined the lives of most Sierra employees. It was beyond horrible and unimaginable. I always thought we were building a company that was so strong it would live forever. It was important to me that my great grandkids would play Sierra games. I only agreed to sell the company because I thought the company was so strong it could not be harmed, and that the sale would allow it to grow faster. It didn't turn out that way.

Todd: Who is your favorite video game character of all time and what makes that character special?

Ken: Leisure-Suit Larry! He was charming, sexy without being sexist, risqué, funny. He was a great character.

Roberta: I have to answer King Graham, of course!

Todd: Where do you see video gaming in the next 10 years?

Ken: I'm working on a game now. I'd like to think that when my game turns out the whole industry will shift to playing my game and that everyone else will concede the industry to me. That said, and given that it won't happen, the answer is "I don't know."

When I was living the industry, every day for twenty years, I had a very good sense of where the industry was going. And to be honest, I felt that it was Sierra's job as an industry leader to have a long-term vision and to steer the company towards that vision. Sierra succeeded because we were very good at guiding and predicting the industry. At this point I am "kind of" putting my toe back in the water, and really am not thinking beyond the one product I'm working on. My focus for this particular game is only that people who play it will have fun. I've reached a point in life where I have enough money to support my lifestyle. I don't really seek money or fame, but I do want to think that if I put time into something that players will appreciate it. It's actually a very high bar.

Roberta was a woman on a mission... and when Roberta wants something, the only thing to do is get out of her way.

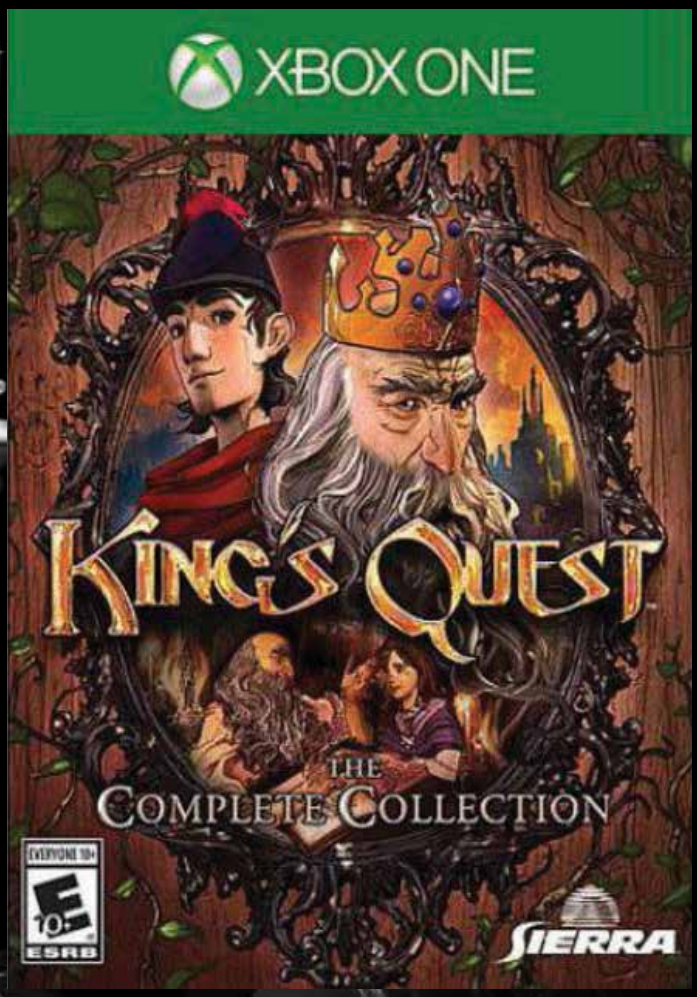
Lots of games are produced that have pretty graphics or that push the hardware to the limits, but what I'm hoping for is that people have fun. That's really the holy grail of gaming, to give people a few hours of serious fun.

Roberta: I really don't know and feel bad about that. but my honest belief is that computer/video game design is for young people; you're more 'with it' and also more aggressive at that time and, frankly, probably more creative. though Ken and I are definitely not old and 'out of it,' i think that our interests have changed to other ways of fulfilling our creative energies. in

Ken's case, he has written a book, Not all fairy tales have happy endings, but also is working on an interesting computer game. For me, I've invested my creative energy into home construction and design, cooking and - ta da! - writing a book of my own: Farewell to Tara.

Todd: Thank you, Roberta and Ken, for taking the time to share your memories of those days that shaped your lives.

You can see Roberta's books at www.robertasbook.com and Ken's book at www.kensbook.com.



THE MAIN GAMES IN THE KING'S QUEST SERIES

1984
King's Quest

1985
King's Quest II: Romancing the Throne

1986
King's Quest III: To Heir is Human

1988
King's Quest IV: The Perils of Rosella

1990
King's Quest V: Absence Makes the Heart Go Yonder!

1992
King's Quest VI: Heir Today, Gone Tomorrow

1994
King's Quest VII: The Princeless Bride

1998
King's Quest VIII: Mask of Eternity

JANE JENSEN:

A CLIMB TO THE TOP OF SIERRA MOUNTAIN

By Mike Mertes

The creation of *Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Fathers* by Jane Jensen sparked a fire in the point-and-click adventure game genre. That fire shined a light on a less traversed path in the genre that was previously thought to be one that could never sell games: Horror. After its 1993 release, *Gabriel Knight* became a hit, and Jane continued to invigorate the adventure game scene on the Sierra Online label with two sequels to *Gabriel Knight*. I caught up with Jane, who recently released her latest book under her Eli Easton pen name, to find out what led her to work for Sierra Online, the creation of *Gabriel Knight,* and some of her favorite memories of the game.

THE PERFECT MIX

Graduating with a Bachelor's degree in Computer Science, Jane exited college and began work as a Systems Engineer for Hewlett-Packard for six years in the 1980s. Working in the network division, Jane's work involved early TCP/IP networking protocols and network drivers. "At that time, we were still programming in Pascal and on a mainframe." While ASCII-based games on the mainframe were fun to play, it was an employee benefit program with Hewlett-Packard that would get the ball rolling on Jane's interest in video games. "I was working there, and I think it was around the late 80s; they had an employee program where you could get half off purchases. So, I bought my first personal computer, and at that time, half-price was $10,000 for a little HP laptop." Shortly after the purchase, she visited a mall to find software for her brand-new laptop. She picked up *King's Quest IV* and *Manhunter*, both titles released by Sierra Online, a successful software company based in Oakhurst, California. Jane became immediately enamored with both titles. " I fell in love with these games because at the time I was writing a novel, and it felt like the perfect mix of writing, fiction, and technology." This perfect mix felt like the best way Jane could combine her knowledge of technology with her love for writing and, in essence, started her quest to become a game designer.

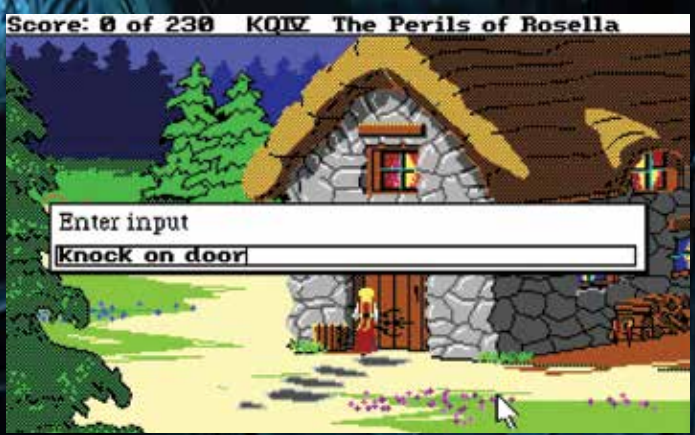
GO WHERE THE GREAT GAMES ARE

Inspired by the great games released by Sierra Online, it made perfect sense that the company was Jane's primary target to get a job at and work on games. In a letter addressed to Sierra, Jane detailed her experience in both technology and writing

for a potential job opportunity. "I'm a programmer, I can do quality assurance, I can do writing, wherever I could possibly fit, I would love to come work with you." Jane wrote, even attaching a short story to show writing skills. Jane would not hear back immediately from the company. It would take almost a year before she would receive a response. A brand-new writer's division was being formed at the company to help assist game designers like Roberta Williams and Al Lowe with storyline writing for future games. During this time, Jane's letter was reviewed, and it ultimately led to her receiving a call for a spot in the writer's division. Despite a substantial cut in salary compared to what she was making at HP, the opportunity at Sierra was precisely what Jane set out to achieve. She accepted the offer and made her way to Oakhurst.

TIME AT SIERRA ONLINE

Jane hit the ground running at Sierra and contributed her talents to *Police Quest 3* and co-produced *EcoQuest: The Search for Cetus*, an adventure game focused on educating younger players about the environment. The work she contributed to both games ended up getting her a recommendation as a co-designer to Roberta Williams, who was looking to continue the *King's Quest* series with the 6th entry into the series. Considering that Jane's itch to become a game creator started with playing *King Quest IV*, having the opportunity to leave her mark on a sequel was incredibly exciting. " I was absolutely thrilled about it; it was amazing!" She recalled the moment fondly as she knew that this would be her big break.



Jane began working with Roberta on the story and characters for *King's Quest VI*, but she carried something with her concerning the previous entry in the series, *King's Quest V*. She hated the point-and-click interface used. "I had first been introduced to the *King's Quest* games with *King's Quest IV*, which had a text entry interface, and I loved it. Then *King's Quest V* came out, and at that point, I was still not working for Sierra. So, I bought *King's Quest V* and ran through it in a couple of hours, and I hated it. I wrote a 3-page letter to Sierra, just ranting about how much I hated *King's Quest V*. I felt that the point-and-click interface of *King's Quest V*

took out so much of the exploratory nature, challenge, and fun. Though Jane wanted to return the original interface, Roberta pointed out that the game's objective was to appeal to the masses. To get the best of both worlds, Jane and Roberta reached a compromise: a short and long path. "We came up with this idea for *KQ6* of having a shorter path that was much easier for casual players that could easily find their way through it and then having a longer, more challenging path for gamers like me that wanted more in the game." It was one of the only Sierra games that offered the feature and is the design decision that she felt contributed most to the game.

King's Quest VI sold over 400,000 copies shortly after its release and continued to hold its position at the top of sales charts for over a year. With a hugely successful release, Jane's work as a co-designer did not go unnoticed and granted her the opportunity to pitch her own game. The game she would pitch would be

far different from the fantasy elements of other Sierra games and focus more on the dark side.

DO NOT GO GENTLE INTO THAT GOOD NIGHT

The PC Gaming world in the early 1990s was severely lacking real horror games, and this gap was something that Jane felt she could fill. As an avid reader at age 12, she was given her first adult fiction book by her brother-in-law, a book written by Stephen King, Carrie. She was instantly hooked and, throughout high school, continued to read horror books by Dan Simmons, Peter Straub, and other horror authors. "I remember my older sisters telling my mom, '"She's going to warp her brain reading that stuff! You shouldn't let her read it!'" That was one reason I wanted to do something like *Gabriel Knight* because I always loved horror, and I still do. I still watch every horror movie that comes out." Armed with her vast knowledge of the horror genre and love for logic puzzles, the basis for *Gabriel Knight* was formed, but the pitch for the game did not get the great reaction she was hoping to receive.

Jane pitched the idea of *Gabriel Knight* to Ken Williams, the founder of Sierra Online, and his response to it was a disappointment. "Ken's response was basically,

'I'm going to let you do this, but I wish you would have brought me something else because I don't believe in this dark material for a computer game. I think people want to have fun, but I'm going to let you try it and see how it goes.'" Ken's comments caused Jane some initial worry that she was making a mistake by doing a horror game, but she continued to believe in herself and her decision. Even though Ken didn't believe in the concept, Jane solidified her respect for him when reminiscing about her time at Sierra. "One thing I've consistently said about Ken that I loved was that he believed in letting a designer be the author. You could do whatever you want, but if the game doesn't sell, you were out. He wasn't one to interfere. Even with me, though he didn't love the concept of *Gabriel Knight,* he gave me full reign to implement it."

Jane began to work on the plot for the game and, after three months, had a detailed 100-page plotline. Players would take the role of *Gabriel Knight*, a wom-

anizing, down-and-out bookstore-owning author who was based out of New Orleans. The main narrative to move the plot forward in *Gabriel Knight* would focus on the dark aspects of Voodoo. A series of ritualistic murders begin taking place in the city, and evidence at the murder scenes point to a voodoo cult performing the killings. Sensing a plot opportunity for his next book, Gabriel begins investigating the murders. Jane researched the history of the Voodoo religion to provide authenticity as to what voodoo aspects were depicted in the game. Jane looked to horror movies for inspiration as well. "*Gabriel Knight* was definitely influenced by Angel Heart, which is one of my favorite movies, which is a voodoo movie. A particular focus also went into recreating real locations of New Orleans in the game, including St. Louis Cemetery No. 1, Jackson Square, St. Louis Cathedral, and a bar called the Napoleon House.

Despite the great recreations of the city, Jane had never been to New Orleans. Instead, she utilized books she

ordered from a New Orleans-based bookstore focused on the city with photographs that she could source.

THE SINS OF THE FATHER

The start of *Gabriel Knight* presents the player with a spine-tingling introduction: a man watches as a

witch is being burned at the stake, but the imagery quickly changes to snakes, leopards, a talisman, and then the lone figure of a man hanging from a tree. The sequence concludes with the horrified face of Gabriel Knight awakening from the nightmare we just witnessed. The man hanging from the tree was himself. Is death, much like the snake he saw in his dream, beginning to wrap itself around Gabriel's neck? Day 1 starts for Gabriel, and as luck would have it for his book, another voodoo murder has taken place on the shore of Lake Pontchartrain. Despite not having much success in owning a bookstore or keeping a steady relationship, Gabriel is a resourceful guy. His best friend, Frank Mosely, happens to be a Detective for the New Orleans Police Force, and Gabriel takes full advantage of his friend to get access to the murder scene. During Gabriel's investigation of the murder scene, he encounters a beautiful woman named Malia Gedde, who happens to live up the road. Upon their first glance at each other, a strange attraction between both of them occurs. While Gabriel has met his share of women, Malia seems to have something special that he can't get out of his mind.

During the next nine days, Gabriel will discover more than meets the eye regarding the voodoo murders, Malia Gedde, and his cursed family history. His journey into solving the mystery will take him to the darkest parts of New Orleans, as well as Germany and Africa. All of this will culminate in a journey back to New Orleans, where a final confrontation that has been building for generations with his family history will take place. Fate has a way of getting what it wants, one way or another. The story is displayed with beautiful set pieces, told audibly by an incredible narrator and voice cast using the superb writing of Jane Jensen as a great backbone. It captivated both gamers and gaming press as it won two awards as Adventure Game of the year in 1994 in Computer Game Review and Computer Gaming World Magazine. Twenty years after its release, Jensen's game studio Pinkerton Road Studios released a re-imagined version of the game in 2014. Though the original is approaching its 30th anniversary, the game is well worth playing as it solidifies just how great the point-and-click adventure genre could be.

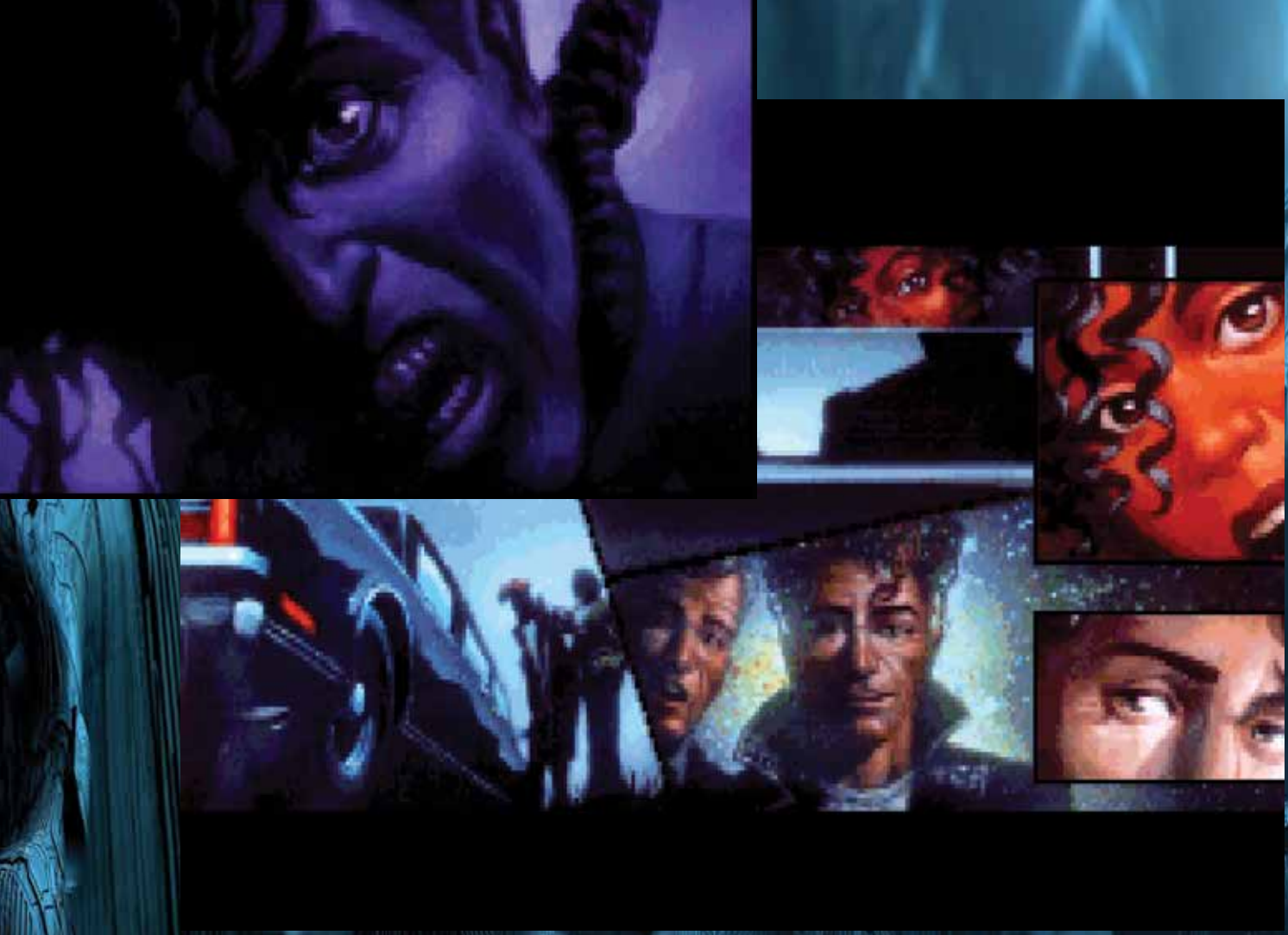
GABRIEL KNIGHT OPENS THE DOOR TO DARKNESS

Although Ken Williams may have doubted that players wanted to experience horror elements in computer games, *Gabriel Knight* went on to become a hit. It essentially opened the doors for designers within Sierra and other companies to take a chance on the dark side. Subsequently, after the release of *Gabriel Knight,* Roberta Williams would begin working on a full-motion video horror adventure game called *Phantasmagoria.* The game would depict supernatu-

ral horror and gruesome deaths with live actors and become a popular PC game release. With the incredible work that Jane Jensen put into *Gabriel Knight* and the sales that came with it, one can't help but think that she lit the fuse to let designers know that monsters can be fun for computer game players too.

ONE MORE KNIGHT

Despite Jane not being active in the game industry since 2016, she would not pass up the opportunity to design a new game. "I would consider making a game, full stop. If I had the opportunity to make another adventure game, I absolutely would." After the release of *Gabriel Knight 20th Anniversary*, long-time fans of the series had hoped that news of the 4th installment



being designed by Jane Jensen would be announced. Sales of the remake were, unfortunately, lower than expected. Though the announcement that fans wanted did not come, Jane would undoubtedly love to continue the story of Gabriel Knight. The puzzle piece to make that sequel happen ultimately depends on Activision, who owns the exclusive rights to *Gabriel Knight*. Even if a game was not possible, Jane has considered other avenues of continuing the story, like writing novels.

Jane continues to focus on her career as a writer and embraces the love that the LGBT community gives her with several books she has released under her Eli Easton alias. A list of the romance books Jane has written can be found at https://www.elieaston.com/.

If a mystery is more up your alley than a romance novel, you can check out some of the great books she has released under her name, like Dante's Equation or Kingdom Come.

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NES ADVENTURES!

Excerpts from The NES Omnibus: The Nintendo Entertainment System and Its Games, Volume 2 (M–Z)

By Brett Weiss

For Christmas of 1987, I got an NES and have been playing it on and off (mostly on) ever since. I've always had a console hooked up in my living room, bedroom, or game room, depending on where I was living at the time. It's one of the greatest consoles of all time and includes some pretty nifty (and not-so-nifty) adventure titles.

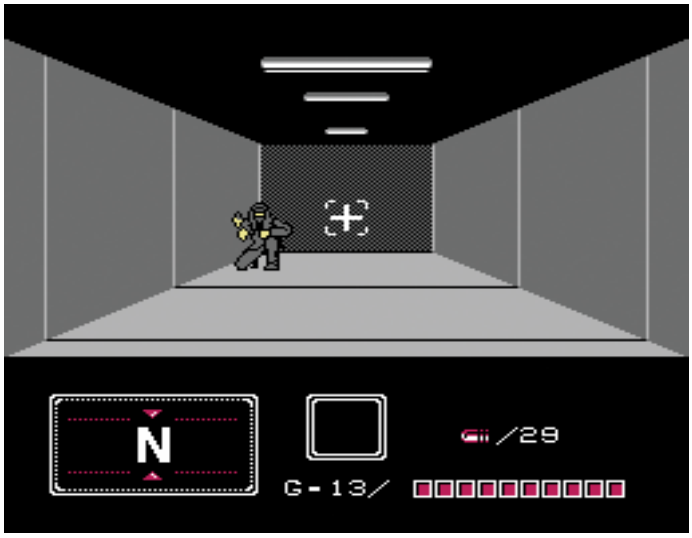
Since my next book, The NES Omnibus Vol. 2 (M-Z), is coming out later this year (October 28, to be precise), I thought I'd share some excerpts with Old School Gamer readers related to the adventure theme of the issue.

The book features synopses/reviews of each game, box art and screenshots, and quotes from other sources, such as vintage magazines and respected websites.

Here are four of the adventure games featured in the book, which covers every U.S. release from M to Z.

THE MAFAT CONSPIRACY
PUBLISHER: Vic Tokai.
DEVELOPER: Aicom.
GAME TYPE: Multi-Genre Game/Adventure; 1 player.
YEAR: 1990.

The sequel to *Golgo 13: Top Secret Episode, The Mafat Conspiracy* once again puts players in the role of anime character Duke Togo (a.k.a. Golgo 13), a sharp-shooting secret agent who's smooth with the ladies. Duke has been assigned by the CIA to eliminate the leader of the Mafat Revolutionary Group, which is threatening to bring down all American and Soviet satellites. The action is divided into several types of gameplay scenarios, the main mode of which is side-scrolling action. Gamers shoot and kick dogs, scorpions, and monkey men, plus henchmen armed with boomerangs, guns, grenades, knives, and scythes. There's platforming as well, and you can grab ammo from fallen

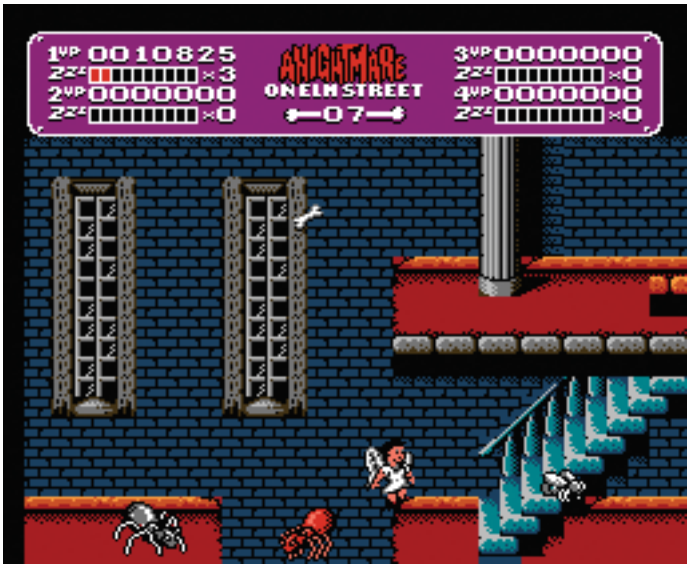


enemies. To gain additional health, you can enter buildings and shoot an enemy in first-person, 3D maze action - maps in the manual will help you keep from getting lost. First-person sniper sections let you aim and fire a single rifle shot at a target, aided by a targeting scope and adjusting the aim to account for wind conditions. You'll also drive a Ferrari, viewed from behind, down twisting, turning roads, accelerating, shifting gears, throwing grenades at other cars, and trying to reach the finish line in time. The maze sequences are redundant in terms of gameplay and visuals (the walls are a consistent gray), but the rest of the game is nicely illustrated and more fully realized. Cinematic cutscenes tell the involved storyline.

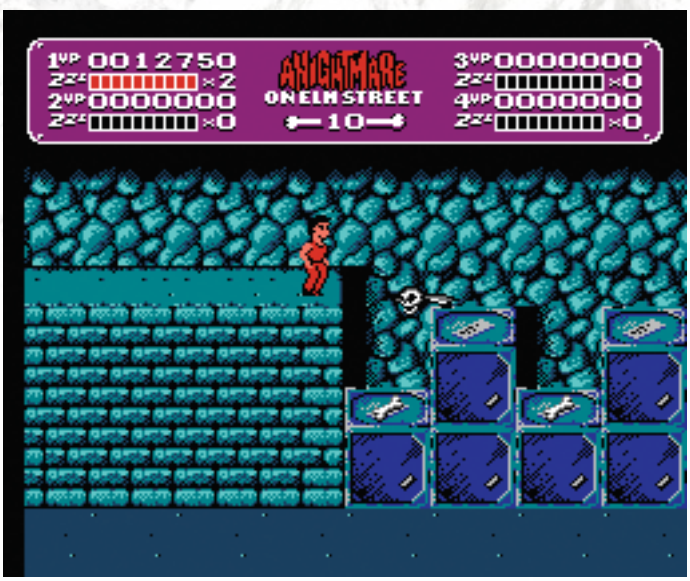
Notable Quotable: "A story straight of a James Bond movie… a dramatic improvement over the first [game] and definitely one of the year's best… a lot of substance… graphics are topnotch, but the gameplay could have been slightly better… the action scenes seem a little bit less than what they could have been… there's never much intensity here. Good anyway." - Electronic Gaming Monthly (June 1990)

Notable Quotable: "The graphics are a step up from *Top Secret Episode*. They're sharp and considerably less goofy than in this game's predecessor… Unfortunately, there's a lot more gray in this game… gameplay is more straightforward and linear… controls are simple and tight… Audio is about what you'd expect - beeps and boops for the punch impacts, gunshots, and explosions, but they all sound appropriate. The music is a series of grooving beats that help propel the action along, despite being repetitive." - Deviant Art (www.deviantart.com)

A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET
PUBLISHER: LJN.
DEVELOPER: Rare.
GAME TYPE: Side-Scrolling Platformer/Side-Scrolling Combat/Adventure; 1–4 players (simultaneous).
YEAR: 1990.



Freddy Krueger has been killing teens in their sleep. You and up to three friends, as Dream Warriors, must defeat him by searching for and collecting his scattered bones and then burning them in the high school furnace, a plot similar to 1987's A Nightmare on Elm Street 3: Dream Warriors. This 8-bit take on the Nightmare on Elm Street film franchise, which began in 1984, offers more than typical running, jumping, obstacle-avoiding, creature-punching action (enemies include bats, hounds, snakes, zombies, and the like), though there's plenty of that. You'll enter buildings, a cemetery, and a junkyard to gather the aforementioned bones and battle Freddy Krueger in his various horrifying forms. If your sleep meter gets too low by inactivity (which drains the meter much faster) or by not drinking



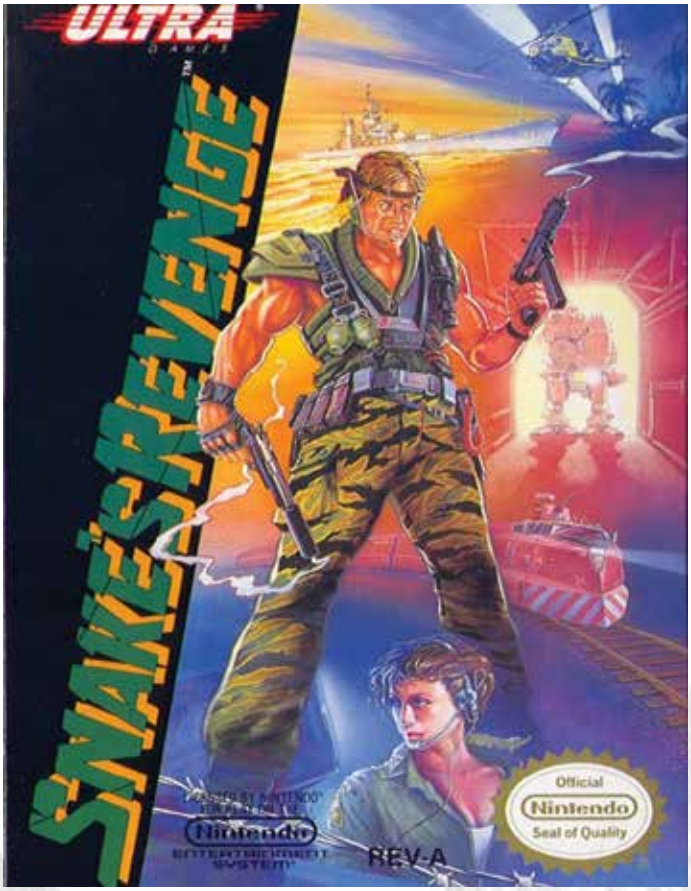
enough coffee (the drink refills your meter), the area will transform into the dangerous Dream World, which features Freddy at his toughest and the enemies become their scarier counterparts. Fortunately, here you can find icons that will turn you into a shuriken-throwing Shadow Warrior, a javelin-throwing Acrobat, or a magic-firing Necromancer. If you find a boom box, you can "wake up" to return play to normal.

Notable Quotable: "This game, while providing a fairly large environment to explore, just isn't intense enough. The dream sequences are a nice angle, but the play doesn't change much - just the graphics. *Elm Street* tries to be *Simon's Quest* but comes up short." - Electronic Gaming Monthly (June 1990)

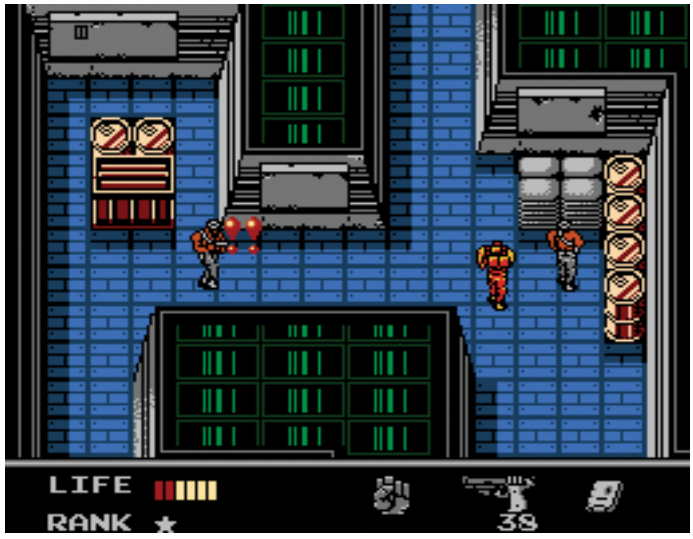
Notable Quotable: "Manages to set itself apart from being just another generic platformer, but fans of the movie will have a hard time being able to swallow having to fight off bugs, ghosts, and Frankensteins in order to catch a small glimpse of and an overly easy battle with their favorite horror movie icon… Freddy got the short end of the stick on this one and it's not helped with the gimmick of poorly implemented four-player support." - Brad Hicks (www.swankworld.com)

SNAKE'S REVENGE
PUBLISHER: Ultra Games.
DEVELOPER: Konami.
GAME TYPE: Adventure/Stealth, 1 player.
YEAR: 1990.

Set three years after its progenitor, *Snake's Revenge* is the North American follow-up to *Metal Gear.* Gameplay follows a similar premise, with Solid Snake sneaking through enemy territory to retrieve a weapon known as Metal Gear. To prevent detection, Snake should



move quietly, avoid guards, and stay away from search lights and security cameras. As in *Metal Gear*, an overhead viewpoint is employed, but action-heavy side-scrolling scenes have been added to the formula. In addition, there are more areas to infiltrate, including jungles, buildings, a boat, prison camps, a train, a castle, a factory, and a desert base. Snake punches bad guys and can pick up a variety of useful items, including guns, knives, mines, plastic explosives, grenades, missiles, card keys, binoculars, infrared goggles, body armor, mine detectors, smoke bombs, and truth gas.



Since series creator Hideo Kojima had no involvement in creating *Snake's Revenge*, many fans consider *Metal Gear 2: Solid Snake* to be the true sequel to *Metal Gear*.

Notable Quotable: "Graphics have slightly improved. Textures are sharper and the perspective is more consistent. There aren't confusing areas like the tacked-on jungle in the original NES game, and it seems a little easier to line up guards this time…Audio is much the same, with reused effects and some new music of equivalent style and quality…It's not official *Metal Gear* canon, but it's better than the first NES attempt…Plot keeps you moving, but isn't very memorable. Watch out for the surprise instant-death pits!" - Just Games Retro (justgamesretro.com)

Notable Quotable: "After the success the NES version of the first game had in the U.S., Konami decided to do a sequel specifically with the western market in mind. The game was developed by a team within Konami's Famicom division, and the developers used the original MSX version of the first *Metal Gear* (instead of the NES port) as the basis for their sequel. Hideo Kojima wasn't interested in doing a sequel himself, since the original MSX version didn't sell very well in Japan. However, the lead programmer of the *Snake's Revenge* team met with Kojima at a train. The two became acquainted, and eventually the undisclosed programmer revealed the development of *Snake's Revenge* to Kojima, saying that although '(he) was a fan of the first *Metal Gear,'* he wanted Kojima to do a 'true Snake game' himself. When he arrived home, Kojima began working on the first draft of what would become the true MSX sequel to *Metal Gear,* titled *Metal Gear 2: Solid Snake*." - Moby Games (www.mobygames.com)

STAR TREK: 25TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

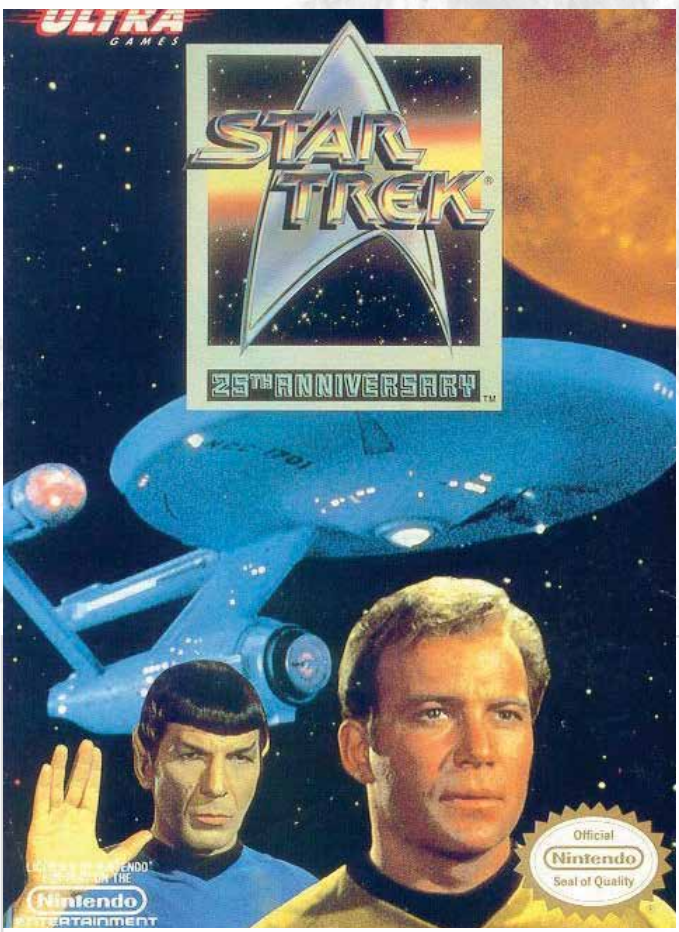
PUBLISHER: Ultra Games.

DEVELOPER: Interplay Productions.

GAME TYPE: 3rd-Person Graphic Adventure, 1 player.

YEAR: 1992.

While in the vicinity of Sigma Iotia, collecting data on strange disturbances in the local gravitational and magnetic fields, fluctuations produced a hole in space. Luckily, a space distortion threw the starship Enterprise and her crew into a safe (but uncharted) territory before it could be sucked into this rip in space. As Captain Kirk, your job is to return to the Iotian system and find a way to reverse the expanding rip in space before it destroys the entire galaxy. You control navigation, communication, and battle tactics from the ship's bridge. To help you with your mission, you've got the finest crew in Starfleet: Commander Spock (science), Chief Engineer Scott, Lieutenant Uhura (communications), Chekov (navigational/helm), Sulu (navigational/helm), and Doctor McCoy. You can go to each of these



experts in their respective fields at any time for status reports. Like in the Star Trek TV show, you must choose a landing party and beam down to strange planets. You

can use members of your primary crew or choose from experts in biology, history, geology, and security. The landing party's job is to look for such items as dilithium crystals that provide the Enterprise with power. You can talk to inhabitants of the planets, analyze plant life, and evaluate ancient artifacts. At times you will need to use your phaser weapon to kill or stun aliens who are less than friendly. Only Kirk and the security guards are authorized to use phasers. While aboard the Enterprise, you must sometimes defend your ship against other vessels by firing phasers and photon torpedoes. You can communicate with certain ships to gain information.

Notable Quotable: "On the whole, a mediocre *Star Trek* interpretation whose novelty rapidly wears off. The lack of excitement means most players soon lose interest, but *Star Trek* fans are likely to get more out of this than most." - Nintendo Magazine System (November 1992).

For information on pre-ordering a signed copy of The NES Omnibus: The Nintendo Entertainment System and Its Games, Volume 2 (M–Z) direct from the author, visit www.brettweisswords.com.

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ADVANCED DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS

OR

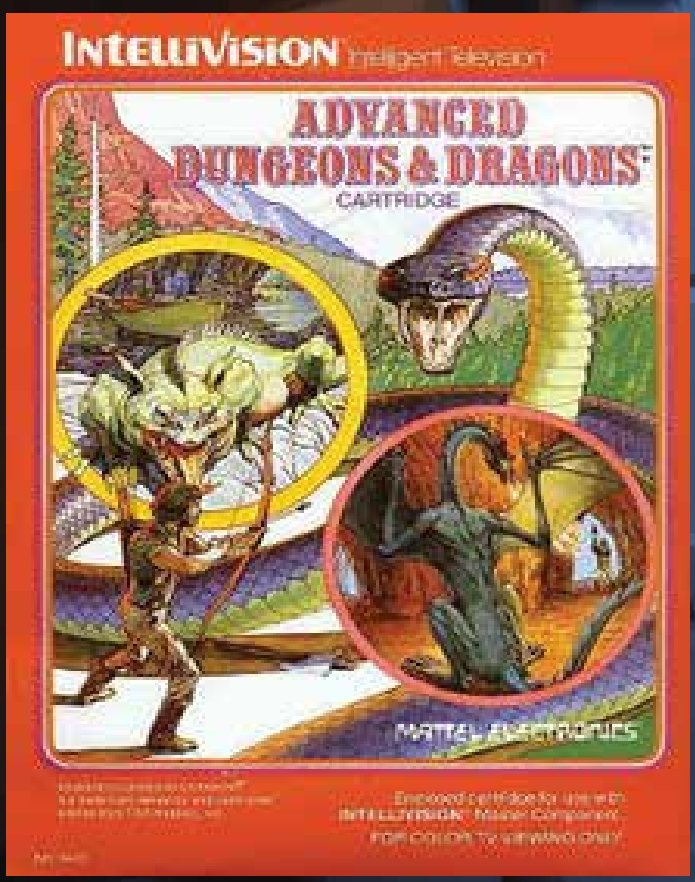
HE WAS A DARK KNIGHT... FOR THE DRAGON HATH SEARED HIM...

By the author formerly known as the Jaded Gamer - Bill Donohue

This I, Sir Guyye of ManDood, who doth inscribe this tale of courage, horror and the ultimate sacrifice in the face of ungodly monstrosities.

When his Royal Majesty, King Avarice of Cupidity, discovered that his crown had been purloined by the evil dragon Regurgitus Phlogiston, he summoned forth the bravest knights in all the realm to recover the glorious fastigium. As Fate would have it, I was chosen to undertake the crusade. Thus, on the very next day, I set forth with my two squires, Fluggi and Mojo, on the path to glory.

The beginning of our quest was quite pleasant, as Fluggi and Mojo had brought along their instruments; Fluggi was verily skilled on the Hurdy Gurdy, and Mojo was certainly no slouch on the timbrel. As we rode forth,they began composing a ballad of our quest, entitled "Sir Guyye of ManDood Won't Be Dragon Food"; a tune that simply reeked of courage and clever lyrics.



We reached the Gray Mountain after a week and prepared to enter the ominous palisade. We were well armed: I carried a long bow, even though I only had three arrows, while Fluggi and Mojo had the Hurdy Gurdy and the timbrel. We were verily a formidable band...

Our passage into the entrails of the mountain was quite successful, having only encountered nothing more fearsome than rats and bats. We were also blessed upon finding three caches of arrows, bringing our arsenal to a mighty number of projectiles. It was with happy hearts that we departed the Gray Mountain and set our course for the dreaded Red Mountain, which was know to be the haunt of the deadly Shuggoth.

Fluggi and Mojo were in high spirits and had composed a verse to celebrate our passage of the Gray Mountain. The verse went thusly: "We passed the Gray Mountain like we were dreaming. Sir Guyye slew bats and rats without much screaming. We carried on; the plot did not thicken. We found that bats taste a lot like chicken." Verily, we sang it often around the fire to keep our spirits up.

As the Red Mountain grew closer to us, our mood became somewhat subdued. Zephyrs in the dank sky seemed to whisper of unspeakable horrors and gruesome deaths unforseen. It was verily a dark moment when we made camp just outside the entrance to the haunted monolith.

We moved cautious as mice upon entering that evil place. Our vision was limited by the dark, foul fumes that passed for air, yet our hearing seemed supernaturally enhanced, as we would often hear strange howls and groans from far off in the labyrinth. And

yet, we screwed our courage to the sticking place and continued on our way into that chamber of horrors. After all, were we not the brave Sir Guyye and the musically talented Fluggi and Mojo? We would surely prevail...

The horror came on us suddenly, in a tight tunnel that fed into a small chamber just off the main passage. One second we were alone, and the next our way was blocked by an amorphous mass of gelatinous goo from which projected many eyes. The thing filled the entire passageway from floor to ceiling and advanced slowly but surely until we were backed into the small chamber.

As it came closer, I pushed the screaming Mojo... Nay, as it came closer, Mojo bravely yelled "Have at thee!" and charged into the hellish mass, bravely sounding his timbrel. Poor, brave, stupid Mojo was immediately encapsulated in the evil thing. Only his timbrel and the hand that clutched it remained outside, bravely rattling away. Fluggi and I found a small pathway leading back to the main passage, sobbing as we ran. We didn't stop running until we collapsed, heartbroken, on the outer slope of the Red Mountain. Even then, the horror didn't end, for we could hear the rattling of Mojo's timbrel as the hellish thing searched for us slowly in the labyrinth.

It wasn't long afterwards that I discovered that Fluggi had changed the title of the ballad Mojo and he had been composing to "The Squires of ManDood Are Royally Screwed." In a fit of rage, I tossed his Hurdy Gurdy into the fire and threatened to have his daughter condemned to the Royal Harem of Hoohaa upon our return. He followed orders after that, but with quite the surly manner about him.

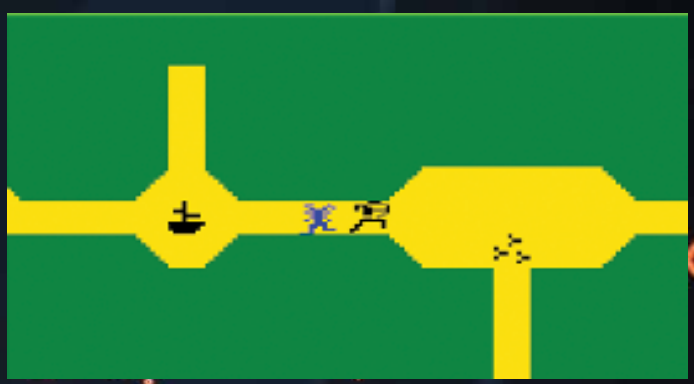
Now our quest was nothing like the light-hearted, laughing journey that it had been at the beginning. My armor weighed upon me as an anchor, dragging me down into deep despair. Fluggi would lag further and further behind, until I described to him the bizarre, menacing devices that could be found at the Royal Harem of Hoohaa and their uses. After that, his pace increased until he was actually leading me across the barren foothills that surrounded the Purple Mountain.

We made quick work of the journey and found ourselves at the entrance to the Purple Mountain.

Foul, dark smoke issued from the opening and we could hear the worm breathing in the depths of the maze. There was nothing else for it; I gripped my bow tightly, Fluggi clutched a broken, charred stick that he'd found in the wilderness and still insisted on calling his "Hurdy Gurdy." The poor sot had lost all sense of reason; his fear of The Royal Harem of Hoohaa was the only thing that propelled him forward. We entered the cave...

The dragon's breathing became louder and louder as we made progress through the many passageways. The beast would growl at times, turning our courage into the hot liquid that stained our breeches. We kept on, though, because the end of this hellish crusade was close... very close...

We stopped at a sharp turn in the passage. The worm stench made the air almost unbreathable. It was at this point that I came up with a stratagem that would ensure the death of the foul thing. I screamed "Heaven forbid! The monster is behind us!" Fluggi jumped straight up about three feet and quickly dashed around the corner into the claws of the dragon. I ran posthaste in the opposite direction and found another passage that led into the rear of the dragon's den of horror.



The dragon was smearing Fluggi with some sauce. He popped poor Fluggi into his mouth with a loud "Mmm!" as I shot the beast in the back three times, killing it. I returned the crown to the King, for I was the bravest knight in the realm! Nay... verily...

CLICK BAIT

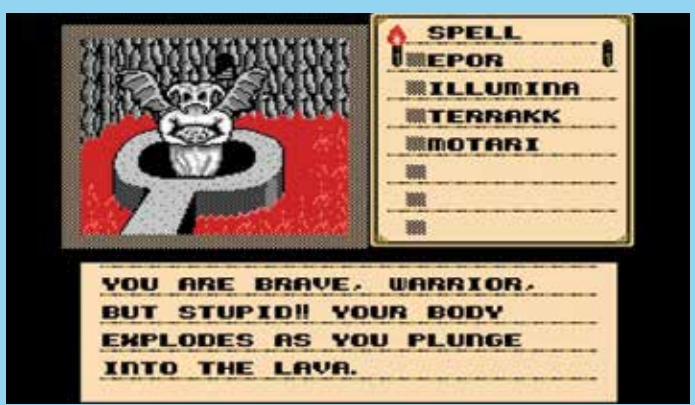
8- AND 16-BIT GAMES THAT CLICK

By Michael Mertes

Computer purists during the late 1980s and 1990s were blessed with many excellent adventure games and would often scoff at the thought of playing a functional adventure game with depth on an 8- or 16-bit console. Contrary to those beliefs, though, both the NES and Sega Genesis, with the addition of the Sega CD, gave plenty for hungry adventure game fans to check out. If you haven't given these games a chance yet on the appropriate systems, it's time to dig in and find out why they are even better when they are separated from a mouse and keyboard.

SHADOWGATE (NES)

Based on the original 1987 Macintosh release, Shadowgate introduced many console players to the concept of a point-and-click adventure game for the first time when it was released on the NES in 1989. As the last in a line of heroes, you are teleported to the front entrance of Castle Shadowgate. The quest: to stop the evil Warlock Lord from summoning the ultimate demon



that, if unleashed, would tear the world asunder.

The story takes place in a fantasy setting where swords, magic spells, wizards, and warriors exist along with horrific monsters. The quest to defeat the Warlock Lord will not be an easy one as almost anything, and everything in the castle can kill you in an instant. If tripping one of the many traps in the castle doesn't do you in, your curiosity will. So, click carefully and save often.

Despite people's reservations that a point-and-click adventure game could not be done on the NES, Shadowgate proves to be better than the original in many aspects. The initial Macintosh release lacked color due to system constraints, where the NES version presents the game in full color. While ports of the game would come out for more powerful computers like the Amiga and the Atari ST, they still lack the beautiful pixel art fidelity that the NES version provides. The NES port is also the only version that features a soundtrack, and it ranks up as one of the best game soundtracks on the console. Each track sets the mood, giving the players inspiration to continue moving forward or creeping the player out with eerie, dark melodies. Shadowgate on the NES is very playable even without a mouse due to an easy-to-use item interface and point and press control scheme. If you've never experienced the scariness of Shadowgate, be sure to seek out a copy. Be prepared for a challenge, though. Even if it is an early NES adventure, it still requires deep thought and logic to see it through to the end.

MANIAC MANSION (NES)

Tentacles? Mummies in bathtubs? Microwaved hamsters? Cheerleaders getting their brains sucked out? Just what kind of game was Maniac Mansion?

Maniac Mansion was released in 1987 on the Commodore 64 and then eventually ported to an 8-bit Nintendo console... twice. Nintendo Famicom players

Good magazine, but we think that our cover looks way better than this one!

got to experience a Japanese-only version by Jaleco in 1988. While the overall concept of the original game was intact, the character artwork differed immensely from the C64 version and lacked other features like

scrolling. Fortunately, *Maniac Mansion* would get a second and more polished opportunity to be seen by console owners with a release on the NES in 1990.

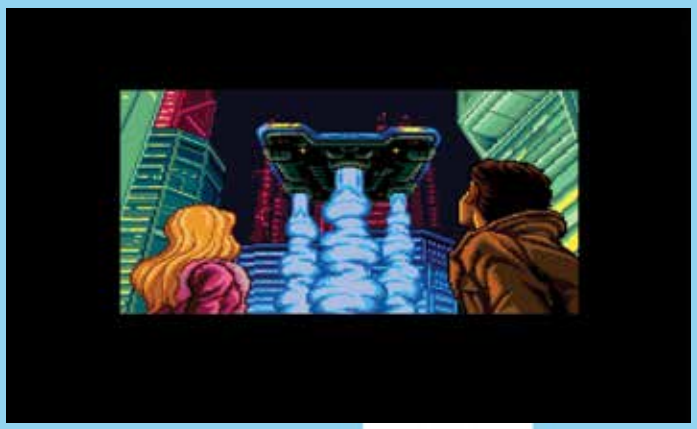
Upon launch, *Maniac Mansion* received high praises from both reviewers and game players. It garnered a multiple-page cover feature on Nintendo Power magazine, and the game's overall weirdness brought it with it a unique experience never seen on a console game before. As a spoof of horror movies, Maniac Mansion puts the player in charge of a group of teenagers to save their kidnapped friend, Sandy, from the strange Edison family. Choosing two teenagers and Dave, Sandy's boyfriend, each teenager possesses a unique skill set that can lead to one of several endings the game contains. While the game includes jump-scare moments, it's more of a wild, wacky, and comedic adventure that anyone can enjoy.

Much like *Shadowgate* on the NES, the graphics for *Maniac Mansion* needed to be redrawn from scratch but look accurate and arguably better than the Commodore 64 version. An NES controller is more than suitable to handle the pointer in this adventure game, and the cartridge even contains a battery to save game progress. While Shadowgate may have proven that point-and-click adventures could be made on the NES, Maniac Mansion knocked the concept out of the park.

SNATCHER (Sega Genesis/CD)

Humanoid Robots have invaded the world and are silently killing and impersonating the victims that they find. They could be your neighbors, your boss, or even your significant other. Since they can easily take the shape, skin, and lives of humans with ease, the robots have been named Snatchers. The only defense against these cybernetic killers is a group dedicated to stopping the Snatcher menace, dubbed the Junkers. A Junker has the complete authority to hunt out the Snatcher menace and play as judge, jury, and executioner against them. Players will assume the role of brand-new Junker, Gillian Seed, who has pledged his life to fight against the Snatchers. The twist is that Gillian Seed does not

remember who he is as he is suffering from Amnesia. The only word that keeps circulating in his head is "Snatcher" which ultimately leads to him training to become a Junker.



Released in 1994 for the Sega CD, *Snatcher* was originally released on the Japanese exclusive PC-88 and MS2X computer in 1988. An enhanced Japanese version was released for the PC Engine CD-ROM, but North American fans finally got the opportunity to play the game in 1994 on the Sega CD. *Snatcher* was the brainchild of Hideo Kojima, who also created and established the popular *Metal Gear* games. Much like *Metal Gear,* several influences from popular science fiction movies, books, and Japanese animations inspired Kojima, and he effectively blended them to create *Snatcher.* The inspiration behind the robot hunting Junker group could easily be identified as inspired by Blade Runner. Meanwhile, Snatcher's robots are directly inspired by the Terminator movies and the Japanese anime series Bubblegum Crisis.

Graphically, *Snatcher* is an absolute tour-de-force with well-animated cut scenes and phenomenal voice acting, which was tough to come by for video games in 1994. While it's straightforward to say that several of the game's key plot lines were plagiarized from other sources, it still delivers an exciting and compelling tech-noir mystery that keeps players interested. While the game presents its fair share of first-person point and click sequences, several interactive shoot-out sequences exist as well. These can be played using a Konami Justifier Lightgun if one has it available, making the adventure experience even more unprecedented.

As impressive as the entire *Snatcher* experience is, North American players have never had the opportunity to see the game released in another format in English past the Sega CD. The game has also become quite a collector's item, with copies going for 1000 dollars or more. Due to the Sega CD's lack of copy protection, the game is also one of the most commonly bootlegged, so be sure to validate your purchase source if you decide to pick up a copy.

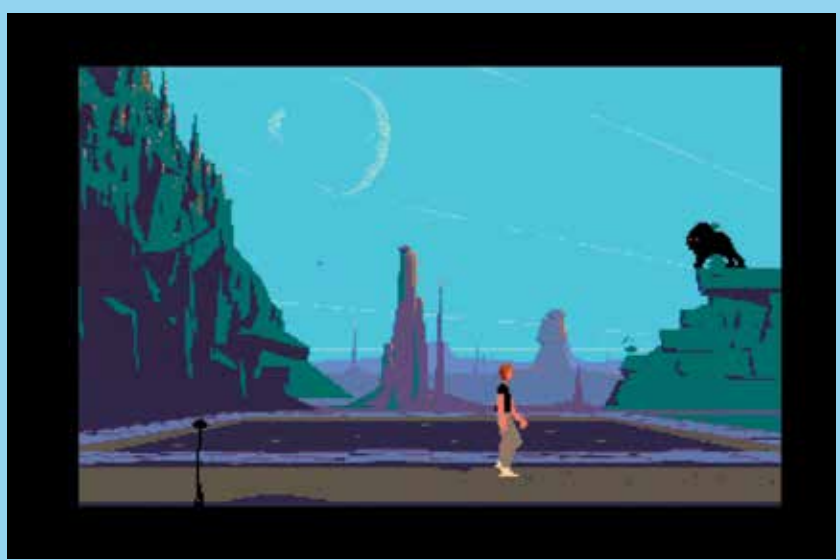
***HEART OF THE ALIEN: OUT OF THIS WORLD; PARTS ONE AND TWO* (Sega Genesis / CD)**

Another World or *Out of This World*, as it was titled in North America, was first released on the Amiga and Atari ST computers. Its distinct rotoscoped look captivated the game industry and found very positive reviews upon its release. Due to the game's popularity, the title was ported to several popular computer platforms and consoles, including the Sega CD. Players take the role of Lester Knight Chaykin, an unparalleled genius in the field of physics who gets more than he bargained for when playing with a particle accelerator during a lightning storm in his lab. The lightning strikes the lab during an accelerator experiment and warps poor Lester to an alien world. Lester arrives in this strange world submerged underwater and barely escapes a watery grave from a tentacled creature from the depths of the pool. Death lurks in almost every aspect of this adventure as you will have to guide Lester through a prison, village, and underground caverns, but the challenge doesn't stop there. All of the action is presented from a side-scrolling perspective, meaning the action (and death) can come at you at any angle.

Thanks to the extended storage capabilities that the Sega CD' CD-ROM format contained, *Heart of the Alien* features several enhancements over the original computer and even most console ports. *Heart of the Alien* includes two games. The first is the original *Another World/Out of This World*, and the second is *Heart of the Alien*, a full-fledged sequel to the original game. The Sega CD port makes phenomenal use of sound in this game and is greatly enhanced from other ports. Laser blasts, explosions, and the very sound of the alien planet are presented in such a high-fidelity way that it sucks players into the game. The musical score in the game is well-produced and, thanks again to the CD format, is more fleshed out than the console versions.

Out of This World is a strict "learn by failing and restarting" adventure game no matter what platform it is played on, but the sequel cranks up the challenge even more. Heart of the Alien picks up right after the first game has ended, but this time you play as Lester's alien friend that joins him in his quest for survival in the first game. During the opening moments of the sequel, the alien protagonist will flashback to moments that lead to him meeting Lester for the first time and what he was doing when he was separated from Lester.

Heart of the Alien is even more difficult than its predecessor. The alien player character has a much different flow of movement to him and utilizes a different weapon: The power whip. Suppose the idea of pointing and clicking isn't exactly your idea of an exciting adventure. If that is the case, *Heart of the Alien* for the Sega CD is an excellent action-based alternative as it essentially gives you two games in one.



SEGA'S EARLY ADVENTURE GAMES

A TRIP BACK IN TIME

By Michael Coorlim

When you think of Sega and Adventure games, what comes to mind are probably games released for the Saturn. Less well remembered, perhaps, are the games released for its 8 and 16-bit systems - the Master System, the Genesis, the Sega CD. Sega's marketing targeted an older audience than their competitors, allowing games that explored more mature subject matter with more depth and sophistication - a fertile soil for the Adventure genre.

Many didn't see English localization, so unless you were fluent in Japanese you couldn't play import copies unless you had the patience to play while reading a printed-out translated transcription. These days we have more options, and dedicated teams have created translation patches that make these games more immediately accessible.

HOSHI O SAGASHITE (SEGA 1988)

Hoshi o Sagashite is a 1988 game for the Sega Master System, in the early style of Japanese first person adventures with a menu interface that would - eventually - evolve into the visual novel genre. While these games were fairly common on the Famicom, the Master System saw very few, and none were released in the US.

In this simple and very linear game, the player - a space explorer - purchases a strange alien egg for his girlfriend that hatches into a little winged-lion alien known as a Mio. Investigating the nature and origins of this creature has the player hopping from planet to planet, without much in the way of puzzles or conflict.

Its best feature is perhaps its brevity, providing about an hour of play, though there are amusing scenes where the protagonist gets distracted thinking about his girlfriend and ignores the game's exposition.

Hoshi does have its positives - there are no superfluous maze sections or pixel-hunting expeditions - but its menu is poorly designed, and actions must occasionally be selected multiple times to get results that should have been provided from a single interaction.

SCOOBY DOO MYSTERY (Acclaim 1995)

One game that did see a US release was 1995's *Scooby Doo Mystery*, a title unrelated to the game of the same name released for the Super Nintendo. The Genesis version is a traditional adventure game in which you take on the role of Shaggy Rogers, accompanied by your dog Scooby Doo, and occasionally assisted by your friends Fred, Daphne, and Velma.

The game feels like an episode of the cartoon - two episodes, actually, as there are two "cases" on the cart which can be played in any order. *Blake's Hotel* has Shaggy wandering around a hotel whose staff and guests have been run off by an angry ghost, and *Ha Ha Carnival* involves an evil clown in an amusement park.

If it were any more *Scooby-Doo*, it would make you a giant sandwich.

It plays like the LucasArts games of the era - you walk around from region to region, interacting by way of a menu interface, solving puzzles to the best of Shaggy's limited attention span.

PSY-O-BLADE (T&E Soft 1988)

Psy-O-Blade, released for the MegaDrive, never saw a Western release. As Keith, junior member of an eight-person crew, the player is dispatched by the Ministry of Space to rendezvous with the errant Septemeius 2 on its return from a 28-year mission to Bernard's Star, which had lapsed into silence after a single strange transmission from its onboard computer. Your mission: rescue the crew, take control of the ship, gather information on whatever transpired, and bring it home.

The game is lighter on puzzles than it is on story, exploration, and dialog with your fellow crewmembers. Its mood pivots between light fare, like a fellow pilot teases you for having a crush on a girl, and horror, when you discover a different crewmate brutally murdered with his head smashed through a deckplate.

Gameplay can slip into the "talk to everybody and click on everything until you trip whatever flag allows the story to progress" slump, but it's not as bad as some games are in this regard, and the mystery is engaging.

PHANTASY STAR II TEXT ADVENTURES
(SEGA 1990-1991)

Before the Sega Channel, there was the MegaNet, an online service for the Mega Drive that allowed users to download games and play them on their consoles. Of course, 1990 download speeds and service costs being what they were, the games tended to be small. One of

the most interesting experiments was the *Phantasy Star Text Adventures*, eight games that served as prequels to *Phantasy Star II,* each focused on a different character. To keep file sizes low, presentation is fairly basic - you

get a title screen, a decorative UI, a portrait of your character, occasional static images during battle, and text... lots of text. No background images, no cutscenes, no NPC portraits - no, these aren't visual novels.

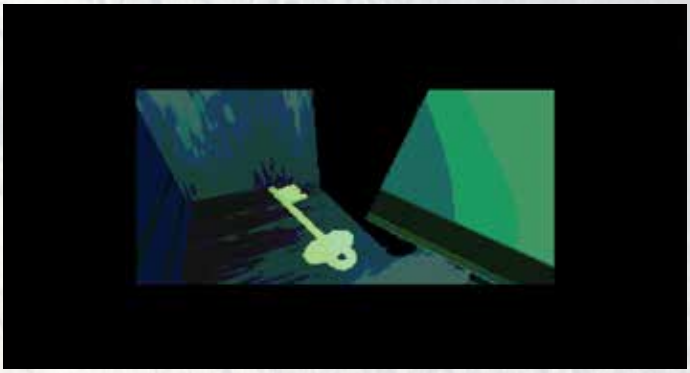
Commands are limited to Move, Look, Take, Use, and Drop, though each is fairly broad in scope. The Look command allowed communication with NPCs, while the Use command allowed one to control a weapon. The implementation of Move is interesting as well - after selecting the command, you push in a direction on the Genesis controller from what's available. Combat is uncommon but very tabletop RPG-like, down to rolling dice to see how much damage is inflicted each round.

With different authors, the games vary wildly in quality and consistency, without much in the way of group direction and cohesion. It was an interesting, if uneven, experiment with more potential than what was reached, and a rare example of text adventures on a console system. Each individual adventure is fairly short, but taken together they add up into a decent enough expansion of the characters players might have developed a fondness for in *Phantasy Star II.*

MANSION OF HIDDEN SOULS
(Vic Tokai 1994)

Mansion of Hidden Souls is an FMV-style adventure game defined by the limits of the Sega CD's capabilities.

The player, Jonathan, is exploring the titular mansion to find his wayward sister Samantha. Inhabiting the mansion are various ghosts that take the form of easy-to-render butterflies, who swing by every so often to



drop a snarky comment or two.

Can Jonathan find his sister before the Hunter turns her into a butterfly forever?

Probably. It's a short game with limited interactivity… what we might call in 2021 a 'Walking Simulator.' There are a few puzzles to solve throughout the mansion, but for the most part you're looking for keys, which can be found simply by investigating a point of interest more closely. You have an inventory as well, though there are few objects to collect.

What tanks the game is the presentation - both its stuttering, poorly digitized FMV, and the terrible voice acting. The poor Sega CD simply isn't capable of much, and looking back from 2021 this game makes it painfully obvious.

JURASSIC PARK (SEGA 1993)

Jurassic Park is a Sega CD point-and-click adventure game set after the events of the 1993 movie. As an employee of InGen, you've been tasked with collecting dinosaur eggs to be preserved in the incubator in the park's visitor center… but your helicopter crashed. Fortunately, your buddies back at InGen are fully willing to give you an evac from an island infested with ravenous dinosaurs as long as you get at least one of each species.

There are a few interesting additions to the first-person point-n-click interface. First, the game makes better use of FMV than *Mansion of Hidden Souls* - you get some nice video scene transitions, and you can find CDs that give you some tips and background on the different species of dinosaur inhabiting the island. Second are the action elements - dinosaur sprites are moving through the locations you visit in real time, and in combat you'll have to move fast to either disable them or grab what you need and run.

For a licensed game, it's not half bad.

A BLAST FROM THE PAST

NEW TECH FOR OLDER GAMES

By Craig Cooper

Have you ever had a moment of nostalgia thinking about just how much you would love to go play a few of your favorite old games again? With much excitement, you dust off the old system and start hooking it up only to find that the connectors on your wires do not plug into any of the holes in your modern flat screen TV. Now what do you do?

Luckily, there are options to address these very issues that allow classic gamers to take advantage of modern technology without really compromising on the nostalgia that classic gamers enjoy.

FRAMEMEISTER (MICOMSOFT)

Although this is not the best option for several reasons, I am going to mention it here since it was the first device that was built for the sole purpose of letting you use analog video gaming systems on modern digital televisions. I don't find this to be a good option anymore for several reasons. The chips used in the device have reached End of Life (EOL). They have secured enough of the chips to make these devices for approximately another two years. However, once those chips run out, no more of these devices will be made. Aside from that, they have always been expensive ($300-$500). Also, it uses a Japanese input standard (JP21 SCART) that would require an additional adapter. If you can find one cheap enough, it's an option. However, it's definitely not the best or currently most popular option.

OPEN-SOURCE SCAN CONVERTER (OSSC)

This is a great device that is much more affordable than the Framemiester. It is built on more modern and available chips, uses the standard SCART connection, and is an open-sourced device. When something is open sourced, it means that anyone can make the device. The plans and the software are open to the public, so now you have a lot of very smart and motivated people working for a common goal. Let's look at the advantages and disadvantages of the OSSC.

Advantages:

- Affordable Device
- Open-Sourced
- Only need one device for every video game console you want to use it with. *
- Easily upgradable software via MicroSD card.

Disadvantages:

- Only has SCART, Component, and VGA inputs.
- Will require a compatible cable for most of your video gaming systems.
- Advanced features can have a bit of a learning curve.

RETROTINK

The newer device on the market is the RetroTINK line of convertors. RetroTINK makes several devices, most of which only have one type of input (varies) and an HDMI output only. For example, if you want to use a Nintendo64 with the original Nintendo cable that the system came with, you could use a RetroTINK 2X-MINI. You would plug in your Nintendo composite cable into the RetroTINK composite ports, then connect an HDMI cable from the RetroTINK to your TV. This same option

would work on all Nintendo machines that use the standard Nintendo Composite cable, such as the N64, Super Nintendo, and Gamecube.

RetroTINK makes several different versions based on what type of input you wish to use. Keep in mind that your output will always be HDMI. They also make a few devices that have multiple inputs such as the 2x-Pro, which has 3 input types (component, composite, and S-video) to HDMI output.

Advantages:

- Very affordable
- Selection of single input device, making for a simple solution for the casual gamer.
- Firmware upgrade by USB cable.
- Often uses cables you already have on hand.
- Multi format units cost about the same as the OSSC but are easier to setup.
- The RetroTINK 2X-MINI would be a great option for 90% of users that are using the cables that came with their consoles.

Disadvantages:

- Does not provide as many options or configurations as the OSSC.
- Most of the RetroTINK line allows for one input type per RetroTINKunit. If your consoles that use different cables, you might have to buy another unit.

RAD-2X

The last option I would like to discuss is the RAD-2x line. This is a great solution for the "connect it and forget it" crowd. The reason they are such great and simple solutions is that the cable and convertor are one device. If you need to connect the convertor to your Genesis Model 1 or 2, you will buy the Sega Mega Drive RAD-2x cable. The Genesis 2 RAD2X cable gets its power from the Genesis, therefore eliminating the need for an external power supply. Pricing is fair at approximately $50-$60 for each cable. The RAD-2x uses the RetroTINK technology but just integrates the needed cables into one package. The cable that would normally be provided with your console would no longer be used and would be replaced with the RAD-2x.

Advantages:

- Extremely affordable
- Easy to hook up
- Simple integrated package
- Based on RetroTINK Tech (which is great)

Disadvantages:

- Generally, Pre-order ONLY and rarely in immediate stock.
- UK seller/manufacturer
- Need one for each system you are going to use
- Only the more common systems supported (Genesis, Nintendo, Playstion, Saturn, and, Neo Geo PCE/TG16 with adapter cables)

All of these are great options that allow you to connect your console to HDMI and provide a quality image. The differences lie in how many consoles you have and wish to connect. The OSSC allows you to connect multiple consoles and switch between them without having to move cables between consoles.

There are some amazing things happening in the retro console gaming world and this article is just a glimpse into all of the ways you can give your old consoles new life. I want to share that knowledge with everyone one of you so you can keep enjoying those old gaming consoles.

END OF DAYS: FAMICOM DISK SYSTEM

WELCOME TO THE NEW CLU CLU LAND

By Michael Mertes

Those who stepped in front of a Famicom Disk Writer Kiosk in April of 1992 may have scratched their heads when they saw the latest and last title available via the disk writer service with *Clu Clu Land: Welcome to New Clu Clu Land. New Clu Clu Land* is an updated version of the original 1984 Famicom game, though it features enhancements from the arcade version. The gameplay concept of *Clu Clu Land* is easy to understand. Players guide Gloopy, the spherical fish around various mazes, to find and collect gold ingots and avoid enemies, much like other maze-based games like *Pac-Man. Clu Clu Land* attempts to tweak the typical *Pac-Man* gameplay by adding poles that Gloopy can grab onto, allowing her to change direction into another lane of the maze based on when players release the pole. Finding and collecting all the ingots will end the level and move players to the next board.

Despite repeated attempts to try to grasp the control scheme of this game, I am unable to do so. Grabbing poles is performed by pressing the D-PAD in the direction of the pole adjacent to you, but that can change depending on which direction you are facing. Even after Gloopy has grabbed onto the pole, you need to have split-second timing and know when to let go of the pole. Otherwise, Gloopy will end up going into the wrong maze lane and possibly falling into a black hole or running into an enemy. If you have somehow mastered the original *Clu Clu Land, Welcome to the New Clu Clu Land* adds an expert mode that will require an even more precise understanding of the control system due to ingot pieces changing colors if you move over them more than once. The concept of *New Clu Clu Land* is neat, but the frustrating control is an immediate turn-off. Had I written this game to my Disk Card in 1992, I probably would have been back at the store to write some other game to my card. A game with such a simple concept should not be this hard to control.

NINTENDO ATTEMPTS TO DITCH CARTRIDGES

In February of 1986, Nintendo launched a disk-based add-on to the Nintendo Famicom called the Famicom Disk System. The unit interfaced with the Famicom by utilizing a RAM adapter cartridge that plugged into the cartridge slot of the Famicom and the back of the Famicom Disk System unit. While the RAM adapter essentially tricked the Famicom into thinking the system was launching a game, it opened up the system to use Nintendo's new Disk Card media to play new games while also adding additional RAM. At the time, memory expansions for game cartridges had not been developed (though they were right around the corner), so the extra resources allowed for additional graphic tiles and sprites to be utilized in games. With the increasing costs of computer chips and other resources needed to produce cartridge games, the Famicom Disk System helped manufacturers and consumers by using the cheaper floppy disk media instead of cartridges.

Poised to sell more games on Disk Card media instead

of cartridges, Nintendo focused on releasing more complex games exclusively for the Famicom Disk

System. The add-on launched with *The Legend of Zelda* and more exclusive titles followed suit like *Super Marios Bros 2, Castlevania, Castlevania 2: Simon's Quest, Metroid,* and *Zelda 2: The Adventure of Link*. Several FDS exclusive games like *The Legend of Zelda* and *Castlevania* would get an eventual Famicom cartridge release with the discontinuation of the add-on. However, games like *Metroid* and *Castlevania 2* never saw a cartridge version released in Japan, and the titles remained cradle to grave exclusives on Famicom Disk System.

FAMICOM DISK WRITER: A LOOPHOLE TO RENTALS

On January 5, 2021, Family Video announced that it was ceasing business and closing all its rental stores. This signaled the end of an era for people who rented movies from their favorite video stores and gamers who experienced a large portion of a video game system's library through renting. While renting video games had been a staple in North America for 40+ years, renting games in Japan is illegal. With software piracy spreading rapidly due to computer stores playing a part in the role, Japanese game publishers worked with several media and software associations to establish a ban on the rental of video game software in the country in 1984. The only exception to this ban was if the software publisher specifically allowed it. Nintendo realized that the Famicom Disk System's disk media could fill a hole that the prohibition of game rentals had caused while still retaining control of the software distribution. Shortly after the Famicom Disk System, Nintendo released a re-writable disk kiosk called the Famicom Disk Writer.

Located in stores that Nintendo deemed authorized to offer the service, customers could buy blank Disk Cards for under $20.00 and write a brand-new game to the Disk Card for around $3.50. The low cost of investing in a blank disk and getting a new game on it was a great alternative to paying the full retail price for a complete packaged release. The Famicom Disk Writer also featured exclusive titles that did not have a packaged release, like *Clu Clu Land: Welcome to New Clu Clu Land.* Customers could purchase printed manuals and labels for these exclusive games for an additional fee at the store or through Nintendo directly. The Famicom Disk Writer remained a regularly utilized service long after the Famicom Disk System was discontinued.

THE FDS DIFFERENCE:
SAVES AND PASSWORDS

The password era of video games could be a frustrating one. After spending hours grinding for power-ups or experience points, the horrifying experience of realizing you didn't write down your password correctly and that you lost progress often gave you the urge to throw your game cartridge out the window. The more

complex the game, the more complicated the password could get as each character represented the required value to restore a specific game state or stat. Games like *Metroid, Dr. Chaos,* and *Castlevania 2: Simon's Quest* are great examples of NES games that require passwords, but the Famicom Disk System versions of these games did not. Due to the Famicom Disk System utilizing a floppy disk, players could save game progression by writing progress back to disk. Game software with the ability to save progress to the disk often started with a name entry screen to identify differences between players and save progress. Unlike the password selection option given to players on the NES version of the games, players choose their save file to resume playing. *The Legend of Zelda* was the first game on the Famicom Disk System to use the save progress to disk functionality.

While the Famicom Disk System gave gamers the ability to save, the ability to do the same thing with a cartridge was already being developed. Utilizing a small piece of RAM and a battery, game saves could be stored on the RAM and remain there as long as the battery had a charge. Just as *The Legend of Zelda* introduced the ability to save progress to the disk on the Famicom Disk System, the NES release of the same game presented saving by battery backup. The save batteries on NES cartridges can last for many years, where the Famicom Disk System disk games often become susceptible to read errors due to the floppy disks being sensitive to dirt and dust. If *The Legend of Zelda* on the NES could have its progress save by battery, why couldn't *Dr. Chaos* and *Castlevania 2*? The deciding factor attributed to cost, as the including of the battery save would increase the cost per cartridge. To save money, programmers continued to use the password method to keep production costs down.

DON'T COUNT CARTS OUT

While the Famicom Disk System sold millions of units, it only lasted four years before it was discontinued in 1990. Ultimately, the evolution of the video game cartridge would lead to the demise of the disk add-on. Within months of the Famicom Disk System release, the availability of components needed to manufacture cartridges had increased and became cheaper. Other advances such as the save battery meant that game data could be saved more robustly instead of fragile floppy disks. The increased memory functionality that the Famicom Disk System offered also became redundant as cartridges with enhanced memory mappers could meet or exceed what was once available on the Disk Cards. Games continued to be released for the platform until 1992, but the Disk Writer and hardware repair continued for over ten years after discontinuation.

A FAMICOM OBSESSION

Since I grew up in North America, I had no real visibility to the Japanese side of video game consoles until I got

access to the internet in the 90s. It was there where I found out that the Japanese equivalent to the NES was called the Famicom, and the design of the console was significantly different from the NES. In 2006, I started watching a Japanese TV show called Game Center CX, where viewers would watch Japanese comedian Shinya Arino struggle to beat retro video games. The vast

majority of games featured on the show were played on the Famicom, and it was here my obsession with the system and the candy-colored game cartridges would begin. Fast forward to 2008, and during my first visit to the Midwest Gaming Classic, I was able to pick up a Famicom and several games from Sean Orange of the Famicom Dojo in the vendor hall. During subsequent visits to eBay and other gaming conventions, my Famicom collection would start to grow.

In 2010, I decided to take the plunge into exploring the Famicom Disk System's world since I now had the Famicom system needed to make the console add-on work. For around $50, I got a boxed Famicom Disk System and several games from a forum user who stated the system no longer worked.

Thankfully, with some minor tweaking, I was able to get the unit running correctly. If you are looking to venture into the FDS world, you'll be happy to know that acquiring it shouldn't be a difficult or expensive endeavor. Units with a brand-new belt and the RAM adapter run anywhere from 50 to 65 dollars, with fully boxed units priced at around $100 on auction sites like eBay. Used systems may have an old belt attached to the disk drive, and these are known to be quite flimsy. Some can even crumble into pieces when touched, so keep that in mind if you think about skipping one with a new belt. The price for the game disks is another story. Titles like *Metroid* or *Super Mario Bros 2* use to cost around $5 to $10 in 2010, but now average around $25 to $50 depending on condition. Convention pricing seems to be following the same trend, as titles I could get for a few dollars have also increased in the last decade. No matter what route you go to pick up FDS games, validate that they have been tested to ensure functionality and that the game you are buying has the described game on it. Because disks could have new games written on them with the Famicom Disk Writer, there is a good chance that the disk you are buying could have been re-written with a different game.

Despite the FDS being an add-on that may require regular maintenance and extreme care to the disks the system uses, it remains a fantastic piece of video game history that NES fans did not get to experience.

35th ANNIVERSARY OF *THE LEGEND OF ZELDA*

THE GOLDEN GIRL

By Brett Weiss and Brian Lesyk

***The Legend of Zelda*, one of the most iconic video games in the history of the industry, turned 35 earlier this year. Yep, the epic quest that kept many a Gen-Xer up late into the night, exploring the world of Hyrule, is now three-and-half decades old. The game was released in Japan for the Famicom Disc System in 1986 and hit North America for the Nintendo NES the next year.**

In 1986, while North American audiences were happily obsessing over repeatedly rescuing the princess in the NES's venerable pack-in title, *Super Mario Bros.*, another princess from across the Pacific Ocean would soon call to us to raise our swords (and controllers) to help save her as well.

***The Legend of Zelda* stood out among NES games not only for its expansive gameplay, but also for its gold cartridge.**

IT'S DANGEROUS TO GO ALONE! TAKE THIS.

While the NES gained its foothold in the states, Nintendo's Japanese engineering team was already busy with the next phase of the Famicom's product cycle. On February 21, 1986, Nintendo officially launched a proprietary diskett"-based peripheral for the Famicom console known as the Famicom Disk System. At the time, Nintendo literally couldn't produce game cartridges fast enough. Compounding this inconvenience were two factors: 1) there was a chip shortage and 2) cartridges were expensive to produce. Being expensive in turn made cartridges expensive for retailers to sell. The Famicom Disk System solved both dilemmas in one fell swoop. Not only were floppy disks significantly less costly to produce, but they could be manufactured at an exponentially quicker pace.

Officially known as Disk Cards, Nintendo's new format would need a solid lineup of launch titles if it were to allure gamers. Coinciding with the debut of Famicom Disk System were disk re-releases of existing titles like *Baseball, Golf,* and *Soccer*, along with a little game called *Zelda no Densetsu*, a.k.a. *The Legend of Zelda*.

The brainchild of directors Takashi Tezuka and Shigeru Miyamoto (whose inspiration for the game came from his childhood exploration of the countryside where he grew up in Japan), *The Legend of Zelda* is a massive (for the time) adventure that takes place in the overhead world and subterranean labyrinths of Hyrule's kingdom.

Our southpaw elvish hero, Link, quests to find the lost fragments of a powerful artifact, the Triforce, and ultimately rescue the kingdom's princess, Zelda, from the clutches of the sinister Ganon. Starting off with only a small shield, Link promptly encounters an old man who warns, "It's dangerous to go alone! Take this." Link is furnished with a rudimentary wooden sword and off he heads into the wilds of Hyrule.

Gamers guide Link through many landscapes and hazards. The overworld is a patchwork of 120 adjacent

screens to explore representing forests, deserts, mountains, lakes, and even haunted cemeteries. The player is tasked with fighting off a host of monsters, interpreting clues to locate various items, shooting arrows and hurling boomerangs, using keys to open doors, collecting rupees, buying or finding equipment upgrades (including a magical sword and a magical shield), locating hidden labyrinths, and defeating various larger boss enemies. The journey is of such a grand and time-consuming scope that the Disk Card (Japanese version) or battery backup in the cartridge (North American release) allowed for the player's progress to be saved for later so that they could complete the game over multiple sessions.

And what a cartridge it was! Rather than the standard grey cartridges for which the NES had become known, Nintendo opted to initially release *The Legend of Zelda* in a shiny gold cartridge that could be seen peeking through a strategically placed window cut out in the game's outer packaging. Consumers knew almost immediately that *Zelda* was special from its marketing presentation alone.

With its mind-blowing size, captivating narrative, tuned learning curve, and plethora of secrets, *The Legend of Zelda* quickly hacked and slashed its way into becoming a must-have title in the NES lineup. Players experienced a great sense of wonderment and satisfaction when they solved one of the game's more difficult puzzles. In an age long before the internet and online strategy guides, figuring out the game's myriad of mysteries was usually a lone task - one of much trial and error.

IT'S A SECRET TO EVERYBODY! OR NOT…

Considering its age, *The Legend of Zelda* holds-up extremely well, and it was a quantum leap over every console adventure game that came before, such as, well, *Adventure* for the Atari 2600. The gravity of its allure remains strong enough to completely draw you in again and again no matter how much time has passed. As of this writing, the *Zelda* series now encompasses nearly 30 officially licensed games, and its characters frequently pop up in crossover games. Some will say that there are other titles in the franchise that are better than the original, but many hold a special place in their heart for the 8-bit NES classic.

The *Zelda* brand has achieved household name status for all the right reasons, like S*uper Mario Bros., Pac-Man*, and *Sonic the Hedgehog*. As with those titles, *The Legend of Zelda* proves that a high-quality, imaginative, fun video game is timeless. And like all successy",

underwear. But collectors are as unique as their collections, and every *Zelda* aficionado has their own criteria. For Connelly, it's aesthetics, style, and condition. She says, "It's not necessarily about rarity or limited edition, and it's not so much about retaining value or making sure I have all the variants. It's what catches my eye, how it's styled/presented, and if it makes me happy."

Speaking of eye-catching, another telltale sign that someone is a *Zelda* fan is when they literally wear their passion on their sleeves. Sporting Link and Triforce body art on his left shoulder, collector Trent Farrell, who grew up in the '80s watching cartoons and wrestling and playing video games, explains the genesis of his collection: "I started collecting *Legend of Zelda* merchandise in my 20s when I started to have disposable income to play with and the adult collector market was putting out more cool stuff to buy."

Farrell largely prefers *Zelda* merch from the 1990s

Diehard *Zelda* fan Trent Farrell wielding Link's Master Sword.

(Super Nintendo through the Nintendo 64), but he collects later stuff as well. In fact, his favorite piece is *The Legend of Zelda: A Link Between Worlds* Figma

This is just a small portion of Farrell's *Zelda* collection. He takes his items out of the packaging for display and doesn't care how that affects their value.

figure, which is based on the 2013 Nintendo DS game. Known for their uncanny detail and quality of materials, Figma creates high-end posable action figures for serious collectors.

Farrell would rather display his collection than simply archive it in unopened packaging. "Condition isn't much of a worry for me," he explains. "I generally grab things new in package and open them myself, so the contents are typically brand new. And I don't care about the condition of the boxes since I'm not keeping them sealed."

Just as there is no end in sight for the *Zelda* franchise, many collectors have no intention of hoisting the white flag of surrender anytime soon. When asked what he considers the "Holy Grail" of Zelda collectibles, Trent said, "I've seen some really high quality Hylian Shield replicas. I'd love one of those at some point." For those who are unfamiliar, the Hylian Shield is a shield Link wields that made its first appearance in 1992's *The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past* for the Super Nintendo.

THE LEGEND...

When discussing the "who's who" in the world of *Legend of Zelda* collecting, culture, and achievements, it's impossible not to mention a name that is synonymous with the franchise: Isaiah "TriForce" Johnson. Years ago, Isaiah legally changed his name to TriForce to represent his love for the series. Since then, Nintendo has officially recognized his name. He says, "That will live with me forever, long after I'm dead. My late Father called me TriForce. My wife calls me TriForce. In fact, most people call me TriForce."

Isaiah Johnson is such a hardcore *Zelda* fan that he legally changed his name to "TriForce."

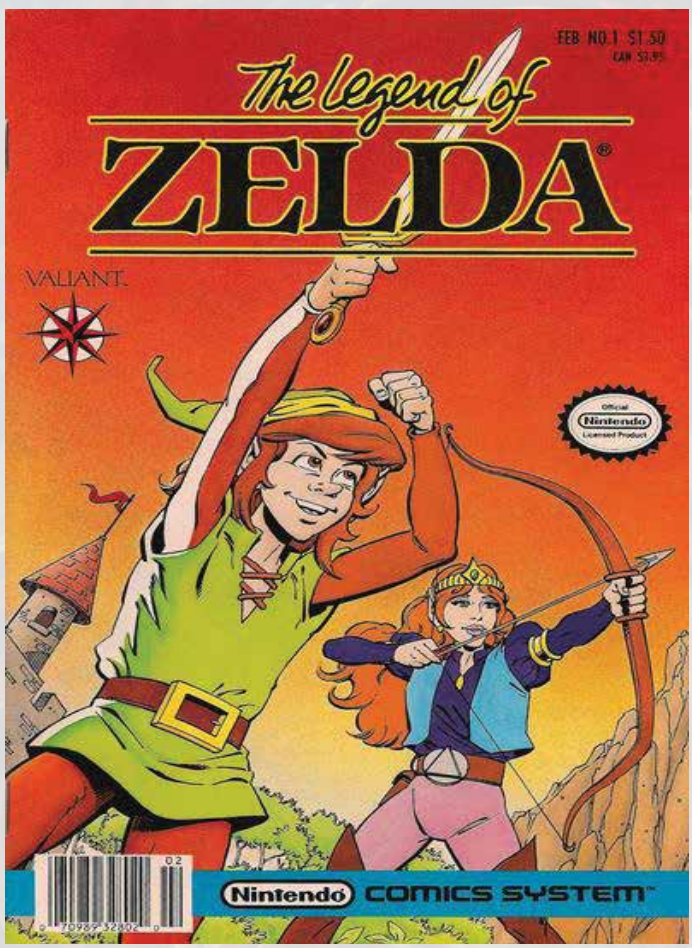
TriForce Johnson with former Nintendo President Reggie Fils-Aimé (on the left) and Shigeru Miyamoto.

TriForce, an inductee in the International Video Game Hall of Fame, is so ingrained in the *Zelda* scene that Nintendo chose him to help launch their handheld console, the Nintendo 3DS, in North America by adding his Mii avatar to their online eShop along with his list of top 10 games.

Like many hardcore *Zelda* fans, TriForce's interest in the property dates back to the '80s. "The first *Zelda* game that drew me into the franchise was the first one for the NES," he says. "Not only was the gameplay great, but the cartridge was GOLD!"

TriForce began his collection around the time when the second game in the franchise - *Zelda II: The Adventure of Link* - launched in North America in 1988. The gold cartridges did indeed draw him in initially. "I have eight versions of *Zelda* one and two on the NES," he says. "Just because the cartridges are gold."

Over time, TriForce's collection has expanded to include a few hundred items ranging in size, condition, and rarity. "My favorite piece would have to be my *Zelda* Game & Watch," which is a rare handheld from 1989.



Another one of his favorite pieces is a Hylian crest pendant that he's worn for nearly 20 years, and he considers a digital watch he got from a box of Frosted Flakes cereal in the late '80s to be the weirdest item in his personal *Zelda* museum.

Despite the volume and high-end nature of his collection, TriForce does advise fans to "collect within reason" and not be a "zealot."

… OF ZELDA

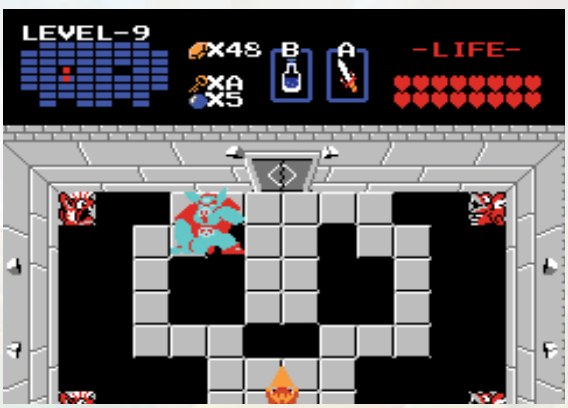
There are countless video games in existence. Some go largely unnoticed while some take time to build a following. Still others age like a fine wine. And then there are the finite few, such as *The Legend of Zelda,* that hit the ground with a full-on sprint, never letting up and never relenting their spot at or near the top.

The Legend of Zelda played a pivotal part in further solidifying the NES's market foothold worldwide early in the life of the console. As more and more quality titles and franchises sprang forth, it became increasingly evident that the NES - and video gaming as a whole - were here to stay.

As of December 2020, the *Zelda* video game franchise has sold 126 million copies worldwide, with total merchandising and licensing revenue in the count of billions of U.S. dollars.

Perhaps the best measure of *The Legend of Zelda*'s impact remains on the personal levels of the many gamers and collectors who have experienced it firsthand. The stories are many, the nostalgia is palpable, and the adventure awaits.

Stay gold, Zelda!



THE STORY OF WWF WRESTLEFEST

MAT WARS!

By Kieren Hawken

If we asked you to name a hugely popular arcade game that had never been ported to a home system you would probably struggle to do so, yet in the form of Technos' *WWF WrestleFest* we have just that!

Before we go on to talk about that game in detail, we should probably turn the clock back a bit further to explore what came before it. Even though wrestling, and

Vince McMahon's WWF, was gaining huge momentum throughout the eighties, it took video game publishers a few years to realize its popularity. The very first fully licensed WWF game arrived 1987 in the form of *Micro League Wrestling* for the Commodore 64 and Atari ST computers. What is even more surprising than the length of time it took a WWF game to arrive on the market is the way it was executed. Instead of the arcade-style grappler you would no doubt expect, *Micro League Wrestling* was a turn-based strategy game using digitised graphics. You could only pick between two different matches (more if you bought the data disks) and then proceeded to select each move individually via an on-screen menu. It was very impressive visually, but not particularly fun to play. The game remains a real oddity in the vast history of WWF/WWE video games.

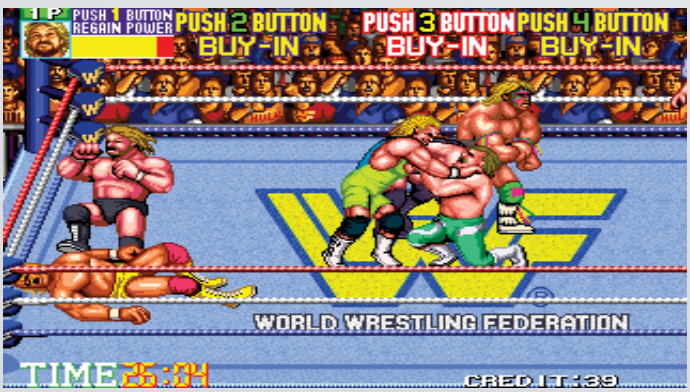
Two years later, in 1989, things got a bit more interesting as WWF started to actively seek out promotional partners to help increase brand awareness. While licensed game specialists Acclaim picked up the home rights, it was a Japanese company who pursued the opportunity to create an arcade game out of the property. Technos was looking to break into the U.S. market on their own after previously licensing games such as *Renegade* and *Double Dragon* to Taito for a western release. *Double Dragon* had brought tremendous attention to the company and another fighting-themed title seemed the ideal follow up.

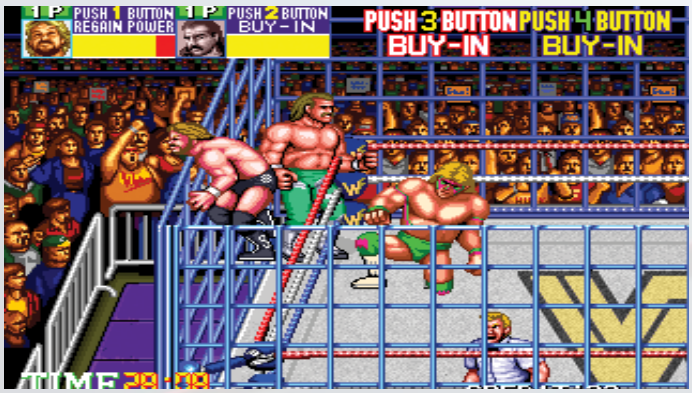
WWF Superstars was released to widespread acclaim and saw you forming an unlikely tag team on a quest to defeat The Mega Bucks (The Million Dollar Man Ted DiBiase and Andre the Giant) for the WWF Tag Team Titles at the Tokyo Dome in Japan. Although the game was far from perfect, most notably in the lack of a singles mode, it set the template for all future wrestling games by introducing key aspects such as finishing moves, taunts, ring announcers, weapons and individual player characteristics.

After the huge success of *WWF Superstars* there was no way Technos was going to rest on their laurels, and after 2 years of development, they finally debuted the follow-up in the form of *WWF WrestleFest*. This new coin-op took everything that was great about the original games and improved upon it while adding a host of new features. A truly ground-breaking time game for the time, it was a long time before any console-based title matched its level of features. The tag team mode from *Superstars* was still here, except you are fighting for the opportunity to face WWF Tag Team Champions Legion of Doom for the prestigious belts – in a steel cage no less! This was styled after the Saturday Night's Main Event TV show. There was now a second gameplay mode in the form of a Royal Rumble match where you aimed to be the last man standing by either pinning or throwing the other wrestlers over the top rope. Obvious this wasn't quite the same as the real pay per view spectacle, as aside from being able to pin people, there was far less than 30 wrestlers to compete against, although each wrestler did still arrive at timed intervals complete with a proper entrance sequence.

called alongside all the usual theme music and sound effects. Although there were lots of different improvements to the gameplay, perhaps the most notable one was that *WrestleFest* allowed up to four players to compete against each other in the Royal Rumble match or team up to face each other on Saturday Night's Main Event.

One of the most interesting features of the rumble match was that you could return as another character after you got eliminated, but you could only pick from the wrestlers who hadn't entered yet. Although it was possible to keep your energy topped up by depositing more coins, this didn't help if you were thrown over the top rope – there was no way back from that, just like the real thing. It wasn't just the Royal Rumble that had unique gameplay features, so did Saturday Night's Main Event. One of the most interesting features of this mode was being able to climb out the ring and use foreign objects. You can grab steel chairs and smash them over your opponent's head, then pick up the ring steps and drop them on their lifeless corpse! That





Vastly improving on the six selectable characters from the first game, this sequel featured double the amount in Royal Rumble mode and up to ten being selectable in Saturday Night's Main Event (Legion of Doom can't be chosen). Along with LoD's great rivals, Demolition (Smash and Crush), you could also select Intercontinental Champion Mr. Perfect, Hulk Hogan, The Ultimate Warrior, Big Boss Man, Sgt. Slaughter, Earthquake, Jake "The Snake" Roberts and The Million Dollar Man - Ted DiBiase. In the rumble mode, both Hawk and Animal are added as selectable characters to make a total of 12. Other WWF alumni make an appearance as well, including ring announcer Mike McGuirk and hall of famer Mean Gene Okerlund on promo duty. This isn't all the improvements; another notable feature of *WWF Wrestlefest* is the in-game commentary! Although this isn't voiced by any personalities of the time, it sounds fantastic with every move being

is until you get to the "final match" against Legion of Doom, at which point you are confined to a steel cage and all the dangers that come with it. There is also another surprise in store after this: when you finish celebrating winning those prestigious belts, you discover that you now have to defend them several times to prove your team deserve to be champions. It doesn't matter which of the two game modes you choose, each one is superbly presented and amazingly authentic for a game produced at the very opening of the nineties.

Let's dig down into the gameplay a little deeper now. While there are standard moves in the game that all the wrestlers perform, such as simple punches and kicks, each wrestler does have their own individual move set that includes taunts and finishers. These moves are progressive – so you start with simple low

impact moves and work your way up through heavier attacks until you get to unleash the finisher. Unlike all other wrestling games of the time, the moves are not fixed to specific button combinations. Instead, your grappler performs an action based upon the energy level of your opponent and only performs his signature move once all of it is depleted. A few characters, such as Ted DiBiase and Sgt. Slaughter, have submission moves which, once locked in, almost guarantees victory. All the other wrestlers need to perform a pin after their finisher, except Mr. Perfect, of course, where the pin is part of this. This means that you can be kicked out of the pin quite easily if there are other wrestlers around you. You will also notice that wrestlers start to become tired as their energy depletes, slowing them down and needing to rest, which in turn leaves them more open to attack. In tag team mode switching between wrestlers means one can rest outside the ring where their energy will start to replenish slowly. Depositing a coin at any time, however, tops this energy up.

In many ways, *WrestleFest* was the perfect game;

drawing you in with its bold graphics and booming-sound, giving you recognisable themes and characters, differing play modes, gameplay that was easy to learn but with tactics that needed to be mastered and a genuine pay-off for finishing it. This is what makes it even more scandalous that it was never ported to a home system. In fact, if you analyse all its design concepts more closely, it fits the mould of a home console game much more closely than an arcade game designed to eat your pocket money. Given that Technos and Acclaim already had a good relationship from the latter licensing *Double Dragon* from them, it seems strange that such a port never materialised for the 16-bit machines. The closest thing we got was *WWF Royal Rumble,* which certainly copied some of the concepts but with nowhere near the same aplomb. In fact, most people agree that there wasn't a home WWF game to rival *WrestleFest* until the N64 came along and

AKI stepped into the fold. While they stepped up the realism, they never came close to replicating the pure gameplay experience that *WrestleFest* offered.

We are not alone in our feelings about *WrestleFest* either; many people still love the game passionately and it would be hard to argue against it being the greatest arcade game never to be ported to a home system. This is why it's so surprising that it has taken nearly thirty years for somebody to have a go at resurrecting the game, and no, we don't count the awful THQ "remake" from 2013 for Xbox 360 and PS3. It seems that finally our prayers have been answered as RetroSoft Studios get ready to deliver a true sequel in *RetroMania Wrestling* for modern platforms. At the time of writing, this hasn't yet been released, but the early previews we have seen suggest something very special indeed. If you want to know more about this, then checkout the interview with creator Michael Hermann included elsewhere in this article. Before we step out of the squared circle, we must return to the game once more to ask the ultimate question – what's your *WrestleFest* tag team combo? It has to be Ted DiBiase and Jake "The Snake" Roberts for me!

Check out oldschoolgamermagazine.com for Kieren Hawken's interview with Michael Hermann!!!

AN INTERVIEW WITH ANIMAL

By Kieren Hawken

His real name might be Joseph Laurinaitis, but we all know him as Animal from Legion of Doom and The Road Warriors. He was kind enough to sit down and share a few of his memories of WWF WrestleFest with us and what the game means to him.

Kieren Hawken (KH): First, did WWF tell you that you were going to be in the game and were you excited that it all revolved around beating The Legion of Doom?

Animal (A): They only told us about it once it was out and they wanted to do some promotional shots to help sell it. But yes, both Hawk and I were excited to be such a huge part of it.

KH: Were you consulted at all by Technos while the game was in development?

A: Unfortunately, we were never consulted on the game by anyone at Technos, they only spoke with the office. It's a shame, because had we known about the design for the game, we would have offered to do the voiceovers for it.

KH: When you finally got to play the game what did you think of it?

A: We were given an arcade cab by Technos to keep. We both thought it was awesome and it's still one of my favourite video games. In fact, I still have that full-size arcade machine in my basement!

KH: From a personal standpoint, are there any wrestlers you wish had made it into the game that didn't?

A: I think all the top wrestlers in WWF at the time were in the game, so I can't really think of anyone in particular.

KH: Do you think it's sad that half the wrestlers that appeared in it are no longer with us?

A: I think it's very sad. It's horrible that so many of them are no longer with us. But it's also a good memory and fitting tribute to their talents.

KH: Many people regard WWF WrestleFest as one of the greatest arcade games ever made, so are you pleased that it's finally being brought back?

A: Honestly, it's so awesome the game is being brought back. It's one of first wrestling games ever created and one of the greatest games ever developed full stop. So yeah, it's great to see it being brought back for a new audience and I am even happier that we (myself and Hawk!) get to feature in it again!

R.I.P. John "Animal" Laurinaitis (September 12th, 1960 – September 22nd 2020)

Shortly after this article was completed, Old School Gamer learned of the passing of John "Animal" Laurinaitis at the age of 60. We offer our condolences to his friends and family and hope he found his way to heaven and reunited with former tag team partner Hawk, who passed away in 2003. We were pleased we got to interview him in what became his final days and hope that this article serves as a fitting tribute to one of the greatest tag team wrestlers of all time.

AN INTERVIEW WITH MICHAEL HERMANN

By Kieren Hawken

In RetroMania Wrestling we finally have the true sequel to WWF WrestleFest that everyone has been waiting for! Due to be released later for PC, Xbox One, PS and Nintendo Switch, the game promises to retain everything that made the original game so great while bringing it right up to date with a host of new features.

With the WWE roster (past or present) unavailable, creator Michael Hermann approached a plethora of legends, free agents and indie wrestling stars as well as signing on the dotted line with the world's oldest wrestling federation - the NWA. This means you can play as a host of popular pugilists including former ECW World Champion Tommy Dreamer, multi-time World Heavyweight Champion Nick "Magnus" Aldis, much-decorated veteran John Morrison, serial WWE title holder Matt "Zack Ryder" Cardona, cult ECW stars The Blue World Order (bWo) and even the legendary stars of the original game - The Legion of Doom! We spoke to the man behind the game to see what treats lie in store for us when we finally step back in the ring.

Kieren Hawken (KH): Can you start by telling us your own personal WrestleFest story - when did you first encounter the game and what are your memories of that day?

Michael Hermann (MH): The first place I remember playing WrestleFest was at an arcade called Sportland. This place had a bunch of other things like go carts, laser tag etc. but had a really big arcade. WrestleFest was one of the games that they had there, I must have spent like an hour playing it. I also spent more money than I care to remember. It was and is such a great game.

KH: Ok, so who did you pick and why? Your tag team of preference and Royal Rumble entrant!

MH: My go to team for Saturday Nights Main Event was Jake the Snake and the Million Dollar Man. In Royal Rumble I would always change it up, but Ultimate Warrior was always a favourite.

KH: Most people agree that it's scandalous the game never got any home ports. Was this what motivated you to create a sequel?

MH: Definitely! I was so looking forward to playing this at home. A friend of mine and me were trying to find out if we could purchase the arcade machine. At the time they were too expensive, so that never happened. The Genesis and SNES wrestling games were not bad, but they weren't WrestleFest!

KH: Tell us about your vision for the new game and how close it's come to meeting it!

MH: This changed a little from the start of the project several years ago to now. Originally, we were almost

trying to clone the original, but for a home version a lot had to change. Many design decisions were made based on the developers trying to get the players to insert more quarters. So, we have made a bunch of changes and added a lot more variety when it comes to moves and locations, but we definitely want to keep the spirit of the original in this game.

KH: How hard was it to get real wrestlers to sign up to be in it and how did some of the biggest signings come about?

MH: Actually, it was not super difficult. Most of the wrestlers were very easy to deal with. Mike Archer from our team used to work for the WWE and Acclaim Entertainment. He had a lot of ins which made getting a hold of people easier. For example, Mike already knew Tommy Dreamer so that was just a phone call away.

KH: Are there any wrestlers you tried to land but couldn't?

MH: Yes, for sure. Some were due to budget considerations and others were due licensing issues. But we have a solid roster that we are very happy with.

KH: Have any of the wrestlers involved given any creative input?

MH: We have received a few ideas here and there and are always willing to take things into account. For example, our Indiemania winner Warhorse designed his own stage and it came out incredible.

KH: Are you hoping to add more wrestlers via DLC further down the line?

MH: Definitely, if we can, it will depend on how successful the game is. But all indications are that we will be offering more DLC.

KH: Did you speak to any of the original team from Technos about creating RetroFest Wrestling?

MH: Unfortunately, we did not. The original team was all based in Japan and we were unsure of their whereabouts.

KH: How faithful to the original is RetroMania? What features does it keep and what does it add?

MH: It stays true to the pick-up and play arcade fun of the original, but we have added a lot. We have corner and apron grappling, more moves of every variety, many more venues to wrestle in and many more game modes.

KH: Were you surprised at the positive reaction to the game from consumers and the press?

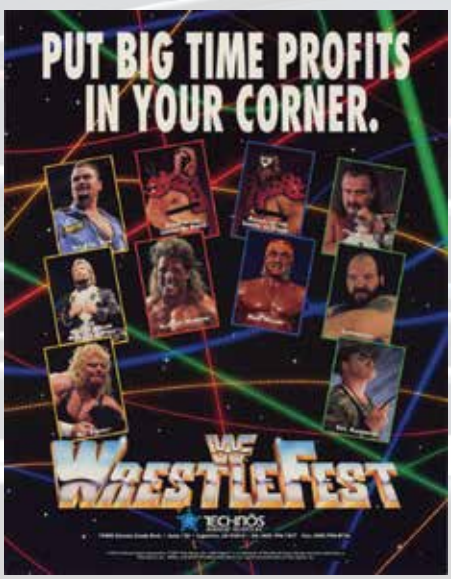
MH: Yes, a little bit. I thought we would definitely get an audience but was surprised at how much social media attention we have received. And almost all of it is positive.

KH: Can you tell us any funny stories about the game's creation?

MH: Ok. Tommy Dreamer invited me to the Keystone Comic Convention last fall. He was running some House of Hardcore matches. We set up a table and demoed the game. At one point I was able to get into the ring with Tommy. It was the first time I was ever in a wrestling ring. As I got into the ring, my second foot clipped the rope and I stumbled. Luckily, I did not fall completely down, but it was embarrassing, nonetheless. Tommy didn't say anything, but I still felt silly.

KH: Last of all, what are your plans? Any more sequels or remakes?

MH: Ha-ha! I just need to get this one done first! I have some more ideas that I would like to pursue, but we need to get this game over the finish line first.



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RETROMANIA WRESTLING

A NEW NUMBER ONE CONTENDER

By Michael Mertes

Just when no one thought it could happen, a sequel to the fantastic *WWF WrestleFest* arcade game has appeared in the form of *RetroMania Wrestling.* The Road Warriors make their return to this pixelated smash fest along with a mix of 14 other superstars. Legendary wrestlers like Tommy Dreamer are featured with a great selection of modern stars like Jeff Cobb and Colt Cabana. With the video game wrestling landscape growing, does *RetroMania Wrestling* have what it takes to become a heavyweight champ?

PICK UP AND PLAY

Most modern wrestling games like *Fire Pro Wrestling* or *WWE 2K* can be daunting to play due to the complexity that has been added to them over the years and can lead to an underwhelming experience for casual wrestling fans. *RetroMania Wrestling*'s most appealing feature is just how simple it is to play. The controls and momentum mechanics of the game are easy to understand, and within seconds you can start slamming your opponent to the mat with a variety of attacks. Positioning your wrestler next to his opponent will initiate a lock-up; if you manage to get the initial timing right, you'll win the lock-up and perform an attack in your wrestler's repertoire. If you and your opponent lock up at the same time, though, a tug of war starts. Whoever mashes the buttons the fastest will get the upper hand on their opponent and dish out some damage. Punches, kicks, clotheslines, suplexes, DDTs, and powerbombs are just a few of the moves you will witness depending on who is currently in the ring. Playing this against multiple players on an actual arcade joystick setup is incredibly fun, especially with the back and forth of winning and losing the button-mashing competitions.

RetroMania Wrestling also has plenty of match options to keep Pro Wrestling fans busy. Three-Way and Four-Way Dance match types are available, increasing the opposition in an "Every man for himself" fight to

the finish. Those looking to partner up can do so with a standard two on two tag match, six-man tag match, or eight-man tag match. Those wanting to experience the classic Rumble mode featured in the original *WWF WrestleFest* game will be excited to know that it makes its return in *RetroMania Wrestling* with up to 16 wrestlers featured in the match. The object of the Rumble match is to eliminate all other wrestlers in the ring by throwing them out, pinning, or submitting them. Staying alive from start to finish in this match is challenging but fun and addictive. All of this excellent wrestling action will take place throughout 13 different areas.

10 POUNDS OF GOLD AND A RETRO ROAD TO REDEMPTION

Wrestling fans looking to get some drama and storyline between matches will be happy to know that Retromania Wrestling includes a story mode. Players will control Johnny Retro, who long-time wrestling fans will instantly recognize as current WWE Superstar John Morrison. Starting as a broken and battered man, Johnny will work with the Blue World Order members to get him back into a ring shape, so he can take his revenge against the man who put him down: Zack Sabre Jr. In between matches, the cutscenes will expand, changing the experience. Not only will you have the opportunity to choose your tag team partners, but you can also betray your friends and put a beat down on them, establishing yourself as the most ruthless bad guy in the business. These small storyline choices add more depth than what the original WWF WrestleFest arcade game offered.

If Johnny Retro doesn't have what it takes to be your virtual wrestler, the 10 Pounds of Gold mode may be more up your alley. Paying well-deserved respect to the National Wrestling Alliance, 10 Pounds of Gold allows you to choose any wrestler in RetroMania Wrestling to climb the ranks in hopes to challenge for the NWA Worlds Heavyweight Championship.

A WORLD CHAMPION FOR THE FUTURE?

While RetroMania Wrestling does not currently have a create-a-wrestler feature, there may be an opportunity for it to be added based on how well supported the game is by fans. Cowboy James Storm, Mr.Hughes, and Dashing Chris Bey are scheduled to be added to the game as post-launch DLC, increasing the roster from 16 wrestlers to 19. *RetroMania Wrestling* gathered a tremendous amount of buzz and hype when it launched, and it's great to see that it meets the expectations set for it. This game truly lives up to the legendary legacy that *WWF WrestleFest* created and continues evolving the formula to a modern audience and platform.

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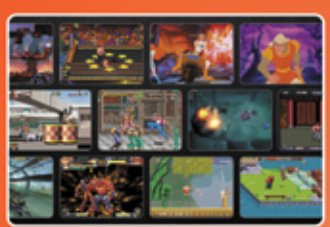

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