

BREAKING NEWS – NEW WORLD RECORD ON ARCADE ‘DONKEY KONG’  
As Reported on April 25<sup>th</sup>. 2004

Hello fellow gamers:

Nine months ago to this day, Twin Galaxies announced that a gamer had set a new world record on the classic arcade title ‘Donkey Kong’ of 947,200 points. At the time, that was the highest score achieved on any version of the title, whether original arcade, conversion set, MAME, MacMAME...it was the highest score ever, and gamer Steve Wiebe was afforded every possible accolade and recognition. News of the score managed to reach the CNN website, USA Today, and at it’s pinnacle was mentioned by Conan O’Brien on his nightly talk show.

The story relayed how more than twenty years after the title’s original release, a talented gamer managed to set his mark as one of the greatest ‘Donkey Kong’ gamers of all time. Quite simply, it was a media phenomenon. Well nine months have passed, and Steve has been practicing. The Twin Galaxies Intergalactic Scoreboard is very pleased to announce that Steve Wiebe has set another new world record, playing on the beloved, original arcade classic, with an awesome score of 985,000 points even, completing the game, and solidifying his position as the undisputed ‘Donkey Kong’ world champion, surpassing all the highest scores achieved on emulation and conversion platforms.

I spoke with Steve regarding his attempt to set another world record back in early January of this year. When it comes to the elite gamers, if they state that they are practicing to beat a world record, there is very good reason to believe that they will. In my position as chief referee for Twin Galaxies, one thing I have learned is never to underestimate the resolve of a determined gamer. That was about three months ago, and I am now very honoured to be the referee that would authenticate his latest world record performance.

As with Steve’s other world record attempts, including the one on the sequel title ‘Donkey Kong Junior’, Steve played under very unique conditions, as you will soon read. And when it was all over, a most enjoyable and thrilling outcome was that he saw his own personal best beaten...and then some !! Almost reaching the incredibly lofty goal of a million points, Steve is that much closer to becoming the world’s first player to officially set a score of a million points on this golden age classic, and one of the most popular video arcade games in history.

As I did with my last recap of Steve’s previous 947K performance, I will list the data from levels 1 thru 4 separately, as those levels have less than 6 stages per level, whereas levels 5 thru 21 have the full compliment of 6 stages. In total, there are 116 stages in the game that a player can complete. The game has a finite ending...the 117<sup>th</sup> stage otherwise known as the ‘Kill Screen’ amongst players. It is a barrel stage that offers few opportunities for points...perhaps 400-500 at most, before the timer expires, maybe a bit more.

Additionally, since we have empirical data from two (2) distinctly different ‘kill screen’ performances, it is possible to compare how Steve’s pace was compared to his previous attempt, and to further refine what might be the ‘theoretical maximum’ that can be achieved on the title, to benefit ‘Donkey Kong’ experts and fans interested in such data.

To borrow a direct quote from my previous article recapping Steve’s 947K record, I also stated that the name ‘Donkey Kong’, when literally translated into colloquial English, roughly means ‘stupid ape’. Well, I beg to differ...this ‘stupid ape’ is tough enough that only a small handful of players worldwide are documented in having beaten the game by reaching the ‘kill screen’.

Since reporting that record, only one (1) more player in the entire world has reported reaching the ‘kill screen’, Brian Kuh who hails from New Jersey in the USA. So although the game still maintains a loyal following constantly striving to improve their own personal best performances, the challenge of beating the game is among the most difficult in arcade history. Other gamers who have achieved this incredible

accomplishment are Bill Mitchell who hails from Florida in the USA, and who is a former world record holder on both 'Kong' titles, and Timothy Szczerby who hails from New York in the USA, and also Ben Jos Walbeehm, another Florida gamer.

And now, without further ado, here is a recap of Steve's new world record performance of 985,000 points on the original arcade classic 'Donkey Kong', followed by a detailed statistical analysis and some final thoughts.

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## THE PATH TO VICTORY

In 'Donkey Kong', each level consists of a number of stages beginning with a stage known as a 'barrel' stage, and ending with a 'rivet' stage. The game starts with two stages in level 1. Each level, 1,000 more points are added to the bonus timer until the maximum of 8,000 points is reached in level 1. Further, additional stages are added each level, starting with an 'elevator' stage in level 2, and a 'conveyor belt' stage in level 3. Additional 'barrel' stages are added in levels 4 and 5 until each level comprises of three (3) 'barrel' stages, and one (1) each of an 'elevator', 'conveyor belt' and 'rivet' stage..

Thus, stages 5 thru 21 (the last stage comprising all six stages) potentially, in theory, can result in an equal opportunity in points per stage. But as the title and enemy behaviour is random, and as anything can happen in the course of the 2+ hour performance, some levels, and stages, can result in more or less points than others.

That being said, here is a stage-by-stage recap of Steve's first four (4) levels, followed by a more detailed analysis of stages 5 thru 21, and then the 'Kill Screen'.

Stage 1-1 - 'Barrel Stage' – 7,200  
Stage 1-2 - 'Rivet Stage' – 11,800

Stage 2-1 - 'Barrel Stage' – 19,200  
Stage 2-2 - 'Elevator Stage' – 25,200  
Stage 2-3 - 'Rivet Stage' – 33,200

Stage 3-1 - 'Barrel Stage' – 42,400  
Stage 3-2 - 'Conveyor Belt Stage' – 50,000  
Stage 3-3 - 'Elevator Stage' – 56,500  
Stage 3-4 - 'Rivet Stage' - 63,700

Stage 4-1 - 'Barrel' - 73,700  
Stage 4-2 - 'Conveyor' - 79,500  
Stage 4-3 - 'Barrel' – 90,400  
Stage 4-4 - 'Elevator' – 96,600  
Stage 4-5 - 'Rivet' – 104,200

In his earlier attempt, Steve finished levels 1 thru 4 with a score of 103,400 points, so he is pretty much on pace with that attempt, but the real points don't start adding up until level 5 when there are more stages per level and the bonus timer is at a maximum of 8,000 points.

Beginning with Level 5, there are six (6) stages per level, three (3) of which are 'barrel' stages. For the benefit of fellow competitors, additional statistics follow at the end of this recap. Oh yes, this is a direct cut/paste from an EXCEL analysis worksheet, so please excuse the format.

Stage 5-1 - 'Barrel' - 113400  
Stage 5-2 - 'Conveyor' - 121700

Stage 5-3 - 'Barrel' - 132400  
Stage 5-4 - 'Elevator' - 138400  
Stage 5-5 - 'Barrel' - 148900  
Stage 5-6 - 'Rivet' - 155800      Level 5 Cumulative Points - 51600  
Stage 6-1 - 'Barrel' - 166200  
Stage 6-2 - 'Conveyor' - 173300  
Stage 6-3 - 'Barrel' - 182700  
Stage 6-4 - 'Elevator' - 189300  
Stage 6-5 - 'Barrel' - 200700  
Stage 6-6 - 'Rivet' - 208500      Level 6 Cumulative Points - 52700  
Stage 7-1 - 'Barrel' - 218700  
Stage 7-2 - 'Conveyor' - 226400  
Stage 7-3 - 'Barrel' - 236300  
Stage 7-4 - 'Elevator' - 242100  
Stage 7-5 - 'Barrel' - 252600  
Stage 7-6 - 'Rivet' - 259800      Level 7 Cumulative Points - 51300  
Stage 8-1 - 'Barrel' - 270900  
Stage 8-2 - 'Conveyor' - 277200  
Stage 8-3 - 'Barrel' - 286500  
Stage 8-4 - 'Elevator' - 291400  
Stage 8-5 - 'Barrel' - 301800  
Stage 8-6 - 'Rivet' - 309400      Level 8 Cumulative Points - 49600  
Stage 9-1 - 'Barrel' - 318700  
Stage 9-2 - 'Conveyor' - 328400  
Stage 9-3 - 'Barrel' - 339000  
Stage 9-4 - 'Elevator' - 345100  
Stage 9-5 - 'Barrel' - 355100  
Stage 9-6 - 'Rivet' - 362600      Level 9 Cumulative Points - 53200  
Stage 10-1 - 'Barrel' - 374400  
Stage 10-2 - 'Conveyor' - 382700  
Stage 10-3 - 'Barrel' - 392900  
Stage 10-4 - 'Elevator' - 399300  
Stage 10-5 - 'Barrel' - 408500  
Stage 10-6 - 'Rivet' - 415700      Level 10 Cumulative Points - 53100  
Stage 11-1 - 'Barrel' - 425100  
Stage 11-2 - 'Conveyor' - 433500  
Stage 11-3 - 'Barrel' - 443000  
Stage 11-4 - 'Elevator' - 448400  
Stage 11-5 - 'Barrel' - 458900  
Stage 11-6 - 'Rivet' - 467100      Level 11 Cumulative Points - 51400  
Stage 12-1 - 'Barrel' - 476300  
Stage 12-2 - 'Conveyor' - 484700  
Stage 12-3 - 'Barrel' - 493600  
Stage 12-4 - 'Elevator' - 500800  
Stage 12-5 - 'Barrel' - 509000  
Stage 12-6 - 'Rivet' - 517300      Level 12 Cumulative Points - 50200  
Stage 13-1 - 'Barrel' - 526500  
Stage 13-2 - 'Conveyor' - 535700

Stage 13-3 - 'Barrel' - 544800  
Stage 13-4 - 'Elevator' - 551300  
Stage 13-5 - 'Barrel' - 560500  
Stage 13-6 - 'Rivet' - 569100      Level 13 Cumulative Points - 51800  
Stage 14-1 - 'Barrel' - 577800  
Stage 14-2 - 'Conveyor' - 586000  
Stage 14-3 - 'Barrel' - 595200  
Stage 14-4 - 'Elevator' - 601000  
Stage 14-5 - 'Barrel' - 609800  
Stage 14-6 - 'Rivet' - 617600      Level 14 Cumulative Points - 48500  
Stage 15-1 - 'Barrel' - 626600  
Stage 15-2 - 'Conveyor' - 636400  
Stage 15-3 - 'Barrel' - 645000  
Stage 15-4 - 'Elevator' - 650400  
Stage 15-5 - 'Barrel' - 658500  
Stage 15-6 - 'Rivet' - 665000      Level 15 Cumulative Points - 47400  
Stage 16-1 - 'Barrel' - 673200  
Stage 16-2 - 'Conveyor' - 678800  
Stage 16-3 - 'Barrel' - 688200  
Stage 16-4 - 'Elevator' - 694600  
Stage 16-5 - 'Barrel' - 703200  
Stage 16-6 - 'Rivet' - 711100      Level 16 Cumulative Points - 46100  
Stage 17-1 - 'Barrel' - 719900  
Stage 17-2 - 'Conveyor' - 729800  
Stage 17-3 - 'Barrel' - 740100  
Stage 17-4 - 'Elevator' - 745400  
Stage 17-5 - 'Barrel' - 754100  
Stage 17-6 - 'Rivet' - 762100      Level 17 Cumulative Points - 51000  
Stage 18-1 - 'Barrel' - 770900  
Stage 18-2 - 'Conveyor' - 774900  
Stage 18-3 - 'Barrel' - 784800  
Stage 18-4 - 'Elevator' - 790400  
Stage 18-5 - 'Barrel' - 800700  
Stage 18-6 - 'Rivet' - 809300      Level 18 Cumulative Points - 47200  
Stage 19-1 - 'Barrel' - 820600  
Stage 19-2 - 'Conveyor' - 827600  
Stage 19-3 - 'Barrel' - 838100  
Stage 19-4 - 'Elevator' - 844300  
Stage 19-5 - 'Barrel' - 854900  
Stage 19-6 - 'Rivet' - 862600      Level 19 Cumulative Points - 53300  
Stage 20-1 - 'Barrel' - 870900  
Stage 20-2 - 'Conveyor' - 878200  
Stage 20-3 - 'Barrel' - 889000  
Stage 20-4 - 'Elevator' - 895800  
Stage 20-5 - 'Barrel' - 905500  
Stage 20-6 - 'Rivet' - 913800      Level 20 Cumulative Points - 51200  
Stage 21-1 - 'Barrel' - 924100  
Stage 21-2 - 'Conveyor' - 933000

Stage 21-3 - 'Barrel' - 943200

Stage 21-4 - 'Elevator' - 949800

Stage 21-5 - 'Barrel' - 969200

Stage 21-6 - 'Rivet' - 984300            Level 21 Cumulative Points - 70500

The "kill screen" itself yielded 700 points, a little better than estimated based on his previous performance, for a finishing score of 985,000. Steve said 'Oh, baby...THAT'S how you play Donkey Kong !!' after the final life was lost. Steve then entered his initials into the game screen's high score table, and had to have been very, very satisfied with his achievement.

As Steve zoomed in with his camera to verify the score itself, he said 'If I have another game like this, I could hit the million (mark) if everything goes as planned...even though I was harassed but I got through that all right.', regarding his unique interruptions throughout his performance, which you will soon read about.

Steve next zoomed in to showcase the original upright unit and the original PCB, to prove that everything is legit.

He left with some parting thoughts...'Let's see what happens from here. I'll pretty much give it a rest for just a little bit, and see what happens. Anyway, thanks guys...see you later'.

As with Steve's previous performance, there were many moments of excitement from beginning to end. My apologies that I am listing them afterwards, but in order to obtain the extra statistics using EXCEL that I will present you with later, it was not possible for me to have the text alongside the points-per-level. So once again, here goes...

## TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS

(3-1) Steve is almost clipped by a flying barrel on the 4th girder up, which just goes to show you that even the easiest levels are no cakewalks.

(4-1) Steve is chased by fireballs all the way to the top !!

(4-2) Problems with fireballs are aplenty in this stage, as Steve must re-assess his initial plans for completing the stage and switch sides. He finishes the stage with the timer at 1,100 points, the lowest so far in this game.

(4-4) A bit ahead of his previous game's pace coming into the stage, he has difficulty getting points from either of the hammers as the fireballs avoid him completely. But he still finishes the stage a few hundred points ahead of his previous world record attempt.

(5-6) A fireball was determined to guard the top-most hammer in this 'rivet' stage, forcing Steve to abandon a chance for extra points and end this stage earlier than usual.

(6-3) The first of many tough spots for Steve this game as he is sandwiched between falling and rolling barrels on the 2nd girder, right side. 'Oh', is all he can say when it's over, as he narrowly escapes a tight situation.

(7-2) A near-death experience as the lower hammer in this 'conveyor belt' stage runs out the instant he hits a fireball coming down one of the central ladders. Another microsecond and Steve would have lost his 1st man.

(8-3) In my opinion, even in this early stage, Steve experiences the absolute toughest moment of both this game and his previous record attempt. Allow to me recap for your enjoyment !!

Steve's 'Mario' character was in an extremely tight spot on girder 2, the left side. Multiple barrels were coming down both rolling and straight, and a fireball was giving him a scare. For starters, his hammer runs out on the left side as a barrel is falling straight down to his left, and a fireball makes it up the right-side ladder and starts to head across. A barrel is imminently rolling down the ladder on the left, and two more follow, possibly heading down the other left-hand ladder. Steve jumps two barrels as the fireball comes closer. He tries going up the ladder 2nd to the left, but more rolling barrels on the girder above force him to abort while two barrels are below and three more come from on top. Steve is trapped...or is he ? But as he gets down the ladder, the fireball luckily moves to the right, and Steve jumps the next four barrels in three jumps, and finally climbs up to the next level, making his way to the next hammer. By the time he finally reaches the top-most ladder, a fireball is coming up on the top right, but by then he's safe. Definitely a nail-biter for the title if I ever saw one !!

(9-5) A close call on the top right of this 'barrel stage'. Steve was standing under the top left ladders as a barrel dropped straight down to the left of him as another barrel cascaded down the right. Good thing he chose to stand still at that particular moment !!

(10-6) Steve finishes the stage with 467,100 points at the 60-minute mark.

(12-2) Perhaps the 3rd hardest stage for Steve this game (the 2nd is much later in stage 18-2) !! Steve opts to get the 'gift' at the top right, and just as he gets it, fireballs come down both the two right-most ladders. Steve acts quickly, and hopes for the best. As the fireball on the left comes down, he jumps across to the central platform, then immediately back to the right. As he is in mid-air, both fireballs go in a direction away for Steve, who could have worked out better, but the danger is not over. He jumps back to the center platform, and is away from imminent danger. He then quickly proceeds to finish the stage. A close call indeed.

(12-6) With two rivets to go, on the top and bottom right, Steve's next to the one on top with the bonus timer at around 3,000 points. He momentarily contemplates the point-gathering tactic employed in the vicinity of Kong's right foot, but changes his mind and opts for safely completing the stage as fireballs are nearby. Oh yes...he STILL has not lost his 1st life yet !!

(14-3) Steve barely survives here. As he is at the top left of this 'barrel stage' and in mid-air jumping upward for the hammer, Kong viciously throws a barrel at him, and Steve ends up hitting the barrel with the hammer on the way down as he touches the ground. He may have even hit the barrel while in mid-air...it's hard to tell, and I'm not sure if such is even possible.



(14-5) At this point, Steve's young son makes a special guest appearance. This pretty much entails the 'unique circumstances' that I alluded to earlier. As with one of Steve's last world record attempts, either 'DK' or 'DKJr', he was challenged by simultaneously handling the game in progress and the youngster's antics. 'STOP IT !! I'm in the middle of a game" followed by "Waaaaahhh !!" was heard at this point. In the screen of the game unit I could see the youngster pacing back and forth. I must admit, I never had that to deal with when I used to play in the arcade on my favourite title !!

(15-1) Steve is beginning to get used to the sounds of 'Waaaaahhh !!' from nearby, and tries to calm the youngster down. He tells him 'I'm gonna get the world record !!' as well, but his son seems to have his mind set on other matters, including some more loud sounds.

(15-2) Steve has his first game-death as his foot is nipped by a conveyor car at the top right as he climbs a ladder, mis-timing when the next car would appear. 'I can't believe this is happening !!' Steve says to himself, as the volume and frequency of the crying picks up.

(15-5) In addition to a rare triple jump this game, perhaps his second (I logged one in stage 4-1 but forgot to make note of others), Steve is chased by fireballs up the entire length of the stage, and barely escapes with a fireball hot on his tail...literally, as it made it halfway up the top left ladder. Steve finishes the stage with an even 665,000 point score, 2/3 of the way towards a million points.

(16-1) 'WAHHHHHHH !!'. I couldn't help that folks, the crying just started again at this point, abruptly and very loud. 'Stop it buddy, you stop that !!'. I have to admit that at this point, listening to the taping, I could not help but smile a bit at the happenings. Here was a player trying to keep their composure and concentration under the most 'unique' of circumstances as far as today's record submissions go, and he seemed to be doing an excellent job of doing so, but how long could he keep up this great game in progress without a another mistake, and with the toughest part to go ?

(17-3) Finishing this 'barrel stage' with a score of 740,100 points Steve passes the 90 minute mark. It won't be long now, but at this level of difficulty, anything can happen.

(17-6) 'I'm almost done !!' Steve tells his young son. He has twenty five stages to go. Almost indeed...my personal best of a little over 100K only lasted thru stage (15-1) which is about fifteen stages. Okay, so I write about 'Donkey Kong' better than I can play it. I have to accept that.

(18-2) Another exceptionally difficult stage, and in my opinion the 2nd most difficult this game. Steve is challenged by pesky fireballs guarding the top ladder on the right side, to the point that he has to make a do-or-die decision and switch to the other side, hoping for the best. By this time, if I can remember correctly, all the fireballs made it to the top, or at least most of them did, so getting to the other side was not the problem. Doing so while avoiding another conveyor belt problem was, and then counting on a break opening up when the ladder reaches the top would be necessary else the timer would run out. Steve keeps his cool, and makes it to the top with just 300 bonus points left on the timer. And considering that about that much time goes by when the ladder retracts and then extends upwards again, he didn't have many more choices open to him.

The score after the stage is 774,900 points, still a long way to go, and Steve is attempting this game to get to the last 'barrel stage' before the 'Kill Screen' with all of his remaining men, so he can press for points and further extend his score.

(19-2) Another do-or-die decision for Steve. He's on the lower conveyor belt with a fireball chasing him, so he jumps for the hammer on the run, hoping he timed it right and that the conveyor belt won't suddenly switch directions on him. This maneuver saves him and he ends up finishing the stage with 827,600 points, when suddenly...

(19-3) 'WAAAAAAHHHHHH !!!'. Yes, fellow gamers, Steve's young son has returned. 'Stop it...I almost have the world record, I'm almost done !!' he implores to his son. I have to admit, if you listen to this recording, you will definitely feel for Steve at this point and hope for the best. Even knowing what his eventual score will end up being as I authenticate this tape, I was not told when he died or how often, so this is still a surprise to me as the performance unfolds.

(19-5) Steve finishes this 'elevator stage' at the 1:45 mark. His game is almost over with only thirteen (13) full stages to go before the 'Kill Screen'. His score is now 854,900 points, and he has two lives in reserve. As I said before, anything can happen from this point on.

(20-3) A very close call here. Steve is at the lower right and just jumped up to get the hammer. Kong flings a fast-moving barrel directly at Steve, and it barely misses him as he switches directions and hits it right before it makes contact. Although Steve did not say a final word due to his extreme concentration at this point, I have to imagine that to himself he was thinking 'Whoah !!', and that the game maybe was trying it's best to get him to lose a life, or maybe not to end up beating it by reaching the 'Kill Screen' intact. Either way, it was a good move and any 'DK' expert would have been impressed.

(20-5) Steve finishes this 'elevator' stage with 905,500 points and passes the 900K mark at 1:50.46, a point very few gamers have surpassed. Only two hurdles left to go...Steve's own world record threshold, and then reaching the 'Kill Screen'. With seven (7) complete stages to go, and two (2) lives in reserve, Steve won't take any risky chances at this point, at least not until stage (21-5), the last 'barrel stage'.

The goal of every master 'Donkey Kong' player is to reach that stage with all their lives in reserve, then max-out points in that stage between jumping barrels and using the hammer, until either the timer runs out or a fireball catches you, and then you repeat this twice more, losing two lives in the process. On your last life, if you live this long, that is, you do this again, only this time finishing the stage and the 'rivet stage' that follows, and then obtain whatever points you can in the 'Kill Screen' before the timer abruptly runs out.

(21-3) Steve finishes this 'barrel stage' with 943,200 points, and must be pretty confident about now that he would soon break his previous world record score. But whatever he was thinking, he kept it to himself as he entered the next stage.

(21-4) As he finished the last of the 'elevator stages' without a hitch, the bonus timer increased his score to 949,800 points and a new world record. But not a single sound was uttered, as he was concentrating on the next goals at hand...point-pressing with two lives in reserve during the next two stages.

Really, that's what it comes down to, fellow gamers. The difference between breaking his world record, and dramatically surpassing it. Up to this point, Steve had obtained a maximum of 11,800 points in the 'barrel stage', with an average of about 10,000 points, and in the 'rivet stage' he was averaging about 8,000 points. So, in theory, if he spent two lives maxing out the barrel stages, good for +20K or so, and on his last achieving another 10K in the 'barrel stage' and 8K in the 'rivet stage' that followed, that would yield +38K, not including the 'Kill Screen'. But what would Steve do...what tactics would he employ ?

I really was not sure as he reached this point on his last life during his previous attempt. In any event, every point he made at this point was towards increasing the new world record, and from experience, he knew that each reserve life was worth a good +10K to +12K, depending on a little bit of luck with the barrels and fireballs.

(21-5) As expected, Steve employed a point-press tactic here, picking off eleven (11) barrels with the lower right hammer, then employing the top hammer for either 7 or 8 more (sorry, I forgot to annotate). Then he spent as much remaining time as he could on top next to Kong, single-jumping barrels until the fireballs came up and got him. His 2nd game-death ended at 960,000 points even.

With his 3rd life, he plays the stage a bit more conservatively. He has, after all, one life in reserve, and with each life worth anywhere from 8K-10K, he was looking at somewhere between 880K-890K if all went well.

So, he finished the stage without losing a life, opting instead to invest point-pressing time in the last stage before the 'Kill Screen', possibly because of how risky the 'barrel stages' can be. What I've learned when gaming after all these years is to never second guess yourself when you make an on-the-spot decision during a world record performance. You have to simply play on, concentrate, and hope for the best.

Steve finishes the stage with 969,200 points, with one (1) life in reserve, and one (1) complete screen before the 'Kill Screen' is reached.

(21-6) Based on his previous world record performance, Steve was well aware that a 'rivet stage' netted at most 8,900 points, and on the average 7,400 points, so he was looking at anywhere from 984K-987K not including the few hundred points from the 'Kill Screen'.

On his first life/attempt here, he set himself up for obtaining extra points jumping next to Kong's upper right foot, a point-pressing tactic employed by the best 'Donkey Kong' players, but here, Steve's goal would be to do so until the timer ran out, or until a fireball caught him by coming up the ladder.

As luck would have it, he was able to continue and run the timer out, finishing this 3rd life at 976,800 points. Only one more to go.

On his last life, he finishes all but the lower right rivet and the 'gift' nearby, and cautiously makes his way downward due to fireball trouble. And with the timer close to 2,000 points he grabs both and increases his score to 984,300 points, finishing the stage.

(22-1) It is sometimes debated, rarely actually, as to what the most points you can make in this screen can ever hope to be. I say rarely because only a small handful of players reach this point, and only after 2+ hours of game play. Last game, Steve obtained 400 points. This game, he managed to squeak out 700 extra points thus achieving an even 985,000 points and crushing his previous world record score by 37,800 points !!

And with that, the greatest verified performance in the history of 'Donkey Kong' came to a conclusion. And now for the data.

## STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

I received so many compliments on the extreme details provided with Steve's last performance that I thought it wouldn't be the same unless I provided the same now. However, I now have two (2) sets of

empirical data to compare, making this analysis a bit more precise as to what the 'Theoretical Maximum' score might hope to be on this title. But more on that later.

Based on the assumption that the same point potential exists for each of levels 5 thru 21, as each has the same 6 stages, this data relates to Steve's performance only during this phase of the game.

#### Complete Level Data

-> The minimum achieved for a completed level during this phase of the game was 46,100 points and set through Level 16. Steve's previous attempt had a low of 45,400 points in stage 17.

-> The maximum was 53,300 points adjusting for loss of life, which skews the statistics, and was achieved for Level 19. In his previous attempt, his stage maximum was 53,700 (stage 6)

-> Steve broke 50K for a stage all but five times between stages 5-21 (stages 8 and then 14, 15, 16 and 18). In his previous attempt, Steve achieved 50K or more for each completed Level 6 through 10, and for the remaining 11 Levels, only once did he break 50K for the completed level, that one being Level 13. As the gamer must evaluate how well their 'Kill Screen' attempt is proceeding, it is hard to compare the decisions they make in one game versus another. For example, in this game, Steve's goal might have been to be conservative until he locked in a new world record, and then try his luck afterwards once the score was secure. Next game, who knows what he will do...except Steve, that is !!

#### Barrel Stage Date

-> The minimum achieved for a completed 'Barrel Stage' this performance was 8,100 points, and occurred in Level 15-5. Of the 51 'barrel stages', he achieved less than 9,000 points only twelve (12) times this game, and in his previous attempt that number was twenty two (22) times. So a key to Steve's success is aggressiveness in the 'barrel stages'.

-> The maximum achieved was 11,800 points adjusting for loss of life, and occurred in Level 10-1

-> Overall, Steve's average per 'Barrel Stage' was approx 9,700 points, adjusted for loss of life in stage 21-4, about 400 points higher per stage than his last performance. Considering that there are fifty one (51) 'barrel stages' within levels 5-21, that's a good +20K right there !!

#### Conveyor Belt Stage Date

-> The minimum achieved for a completed 'Conveyor Belt Stage' was 4,000 points, and occurred in Level 18-2

-> The maximum achieved was 9,900 points adjusting for loss of life, and occurred twice, in Level 17-2, and not as the result of a loss of life

-> Overall, Steve's average per 'Conveyor Belt Stage' was approx 7,900 points, about 200 points higher per stage than his last performance. Although there are only seventeen (17) of each of the non-barrel stages within levels 5-21, that's good for +3,400 points compared to his previous performance.

#### Elevator Stage Date

-> The minimum achieved for a completed 'Elevator Stage' was 4,900 points, and occurred in Level 8-4. In his previous performance, the minimum was 5,000 points, so Steve did about the same here. Truth be told, it's not easy to make more points in this stage. Two 'gifts', one of which is difficult to get, and what's left on the timer is about it. Sure, it's possible to squeak out a hundred points here or there from close-call fireball or girder jumping, but the risks make the extra point potential not worth it.

-> The maximum achieved was 7,200 points and was achieved in stage 12-4. Previously his best maximum was 7,100 points, the difference here being an extra tick on the bonus timer.

-> Overall, Steve's average per 'Elevator Stage' was approx 6,000 points, slightly below his previous performance average of 6,300 points, the point-loss here compared to his previous game (103,000 total 'elevator-attributed' points this game versus 107,500 in his previous attempt) just about offsets against the extra points gained in the 'conveyor belt' stages (134,100 versus 132,200).

#### Rivet Stage Date

-> The minimum achieved for a completed 'Rivet Stage' was 6,500 points, and occurred in Level 15-6. In fact, Steve scored less than 7K only twice from stages 5 and on, compared to his previous attempt where that happened five (5) times.

-> The maximum achieved was 8,600 points and was achieved without loss of life in stages 13-6 and 18-



6. His previous performance's maximum in a stage was 8,900 points.  
-> Overall, Steve's average per 'Rivet Stage' was approx 7,800 points, adjusted for loss of life, compared to 7,300 in his previous performance. With seventeen (17) 'rivet stages', that represents a cool +8.5K (approx) compared to his earlier score.

### Theoretical Maximum

Assuming the same point potential was possible for each completed level, and each stage completed within, I was curious just how high would be possible on "Donkey Kong" using Steve's statistics as a guideline, and the starting point of 104,200 points after completing stage 4-5 (in his 985K game), and adding a token 700 points for the "kill screen" (also from his 985K game). Here I treat every Level 5 thru 21 identically in both difficulty and potential point yield...additionally, I referenced his previous performance, as you will soon see.

Barrel Stages - I took the maximum points without loss of life (11,800 from 985K game) and multiplied by 51 (17 Levels at 3 per Level) and came up with 601,800 points

Conveyor Stages - Taking the maximum without loss of life (9,900 from 985K game) and multiplying by 17 (1 per Level), that comes to 168,300 points

Elevator Stages - Taking the maximum without loss of life (7,200 from 985K game) and multiplying by 17 (1 per Level), that comes to 122,400 points

Rivet Stages - Taking the maximum without loss of life (8,900 from 947K game) and multiplying by 17 (1 per Level), that comes to 151,300 points

Factoring the above data in, it is theoretically possible to achieve 1,148,700 points...at the very least over a million points.

104,200 – points achieved through stage (4-5 from the 985K performance)  
1,043,800 – points for levels 5 thru 21 based on the maximum points per stage, either game  
700 – maximum 'Kill Screen' points achieved in either of the two games

Additionally, and I did not factor this in with my last assessment, the three (3) reserve lives could each be employed to point-press in the stage yielding the highest point potential, the 'barrel stage', and therefore we must factor in an additional (7,600 x 3 = 22,800) points to the above assessment, assuming a gamer reaches stage 21-5 on their 1<sup>st</sup> life and point-presses to the maximum extent possible. The 7,600 points is the amount that Steve achieved with his 2<sup>nd</sup> life as he point-pressed in that stage until a fireball caught him. As I do not know for sure how much is truly possible in this stage via point-press tactics until the timer expires, this value, for now, will have to do.

Therefore, the theoretical maximum now thought to be possible on the classic arcade title 'Donkey Kong' is believed to be at least 1,148,700 + 22,800 = 1,171,500 points in a 'perfect world', if everything perfect went right for each and every stage, and not including previous maximums per stage achieved by either Steve or any of his fellow 'DK' masters up to this point.

For comparative purposes, here is how Steve's 985K performance stacks up against the theoretical maximums per stage type...and this does NOT include point-pressing tactics with three (3) reserve men at some 'barrel stage' prior to the 'Kill Screen', and is adjusted for Steve's intentional deaths in stages 21-5 and 21-6, else the data below would be distorted.

Barrel stages (51 stages 5-21 only)  
Steve – 493,600...82.02% of theoretical maximum  
TM – 601,800 (51 stages of 11,800 points)

Conveyor stages (17 stages 5-21 only)  
Steve – 134,100...79.68% of theoretical maximum  
TM – 168,300 (17 stages of 9,900 points)

Elevator stages (17 stages 5-21 only)  
Steve – 103,000...84.15% of theoretical maximum  
TM – 122,400 (17 stages of 7,200 points)

Rivet stages (17 stages 5-21 only)  
Steve – 139,200...92.00% of theoretical maximum  
TM – 151,300 (17 stages of 8,900 points)

Clearly, the keys to success for an even higher score lie in the most dangerous stages, and the few extra points possible in the 'elevator stages' in particular are quite simply not worth the trouble, unless you are really greedy for points and want to stare game-death in the eye head on. Were I to recommend a course of action here, I'd say that the 'barrel stages' are definitely the biggest key of all, as a whopping +108K is theoretically possible as opposed to +34K from the 'conveyor belt' stages, +19K from the 'elevator stages' and +12K from the 'rivet stages'.

Here are some 'threshold' scores that Steve achieved within this performance with respect to the two stages that yielded the most points compared to, a statistic I omitted from my last performance recap but which I now think might prove interesting...

Barrel Stages (not including 'point-press' stage 21-5, so for the fifty stages 5-1 thru 21-3)

- > 11K or more was achieved four (4) times
- > 10,000-10,900 was achieved seventeen (17) times
- > 9,000 to 9,900 was achieved seventeen (17) times
- > 8,000 to 8,900 was achieved twelve (12) times

Conveyor Stages (for the seventeen stages 5-2 thru 21-2)

- > 9K or more was achieved four (4) times
- > 8,000-8,900 was achieved six (6) times
- > 7,000-7,900 was achieved four (4) times
- > Less than 7K was achieved three (3) times

Elevator Stages (for the seventeen stages 5-4 thru 21-4)

- > 7K or more was achieved one (1) time
- > 6,000-6,900 was achieved nine (9) times
- > 5,000-5,900 was achieved six (6) times
- > Less than 5K was achieved one (1) time

Rivet Stages (not including 'point-press' stage 21-6, so for the sixteen stages 5-6 thru 20-6)

- > 8K or more was achieved six (6) times
- > 7,000-7,900 was achieved eight (8) times
- > 6,000 to 6,900 was achieved two (2) times

So, just how accurate is my theoretical assessment? Well, all it guarantees is that at least a million is possible, but doing so requires a LOT to go right, and judging by the many harrowing escapes that Steve faced this game, saying it's theoretically possible on paper and actually doing it is a whole different matter. Suffice it to say, reaching a million is still on Steve's mind.

My last assessment based on his previous performance speculated that 1,084,700 points was possible, and here I am, nine months later, saying that an even more astounding 1,148,700 is possible. Mind you...I am not even factoring in the highest per-screen scores achieved by other 'Kill Screen'-capable players as I do not have that data readily available. But suffice it to say, regardless of how 'doable' a million points may be on this title, it still requires a lot to go right.

It is safe to say that only with the exception of classic arcade 'Ms Pacman', that getting a million points on 'Donkey Kong' is logically considered one of the 'Holy Grails' of the million point club, that being titles in which attaining or surpassing the million point barrier is a performance that is worthy of legendary

status among gaming peers everywhere. Each is theoretically possible, but no one officially has yet to do so.

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## FINAL THOUGHTS

For those of you interested in this title, witnessing a 'Kill Screen' reached is nothing short of astounding. You genuinely are in awe at the skill set of the gamer before you, and you find yourself privately hoping that every jump along the way succeeds, and that they just keep on going and beat the game that you yourself most likely cannot.

As I stated in my last performance's write-up, it is very encouraging to know that more than twenty years later, the classic titles that I grew up playing are still being contested by a very loyal following. As chief referee for the Twin Galaxies Intergalactic Scoreboard, I can only hope that all classic titles see their world records inevitably go higher and higher.

A point is realistically reached where a game performance can quite simply go no higher, when the pinnacle of performance has been achieved on that title. Twenty years ago, when legendary gamer Bill Mitchell achieved the world's first verified 'Kill Screen' score on his first life, no less, nobody back then thought that close to one million points would one day be possible.

Over the past two years, one million points has been achieved on a number of titles for the very first time, including (but not limited to) 'Congo Bongo', 'Junior Pacman', doubles 'Wizard of Wor', and 'Domino Man', to name a few. Another title passing this barrier has yet to be authenticated, and will be announced shortly. For the serious gamer, 'rolling over' a game's score is an incredible achievement, and one that is quite pleasing to the gamer's spirit and soul. Doing so sometimes invokes a restrained 'Yeah !!' from the gamer and their onlookers, and in other cases results in a lengthy round of applause from all who bore witness to the achievement.

I wish Steve Wiebe all the best in his pursuit of this momentous goal, and with 985,000 points under his belt, it is a goal that I must imagine he has his sight set upon.

Congratulations to Steve Wiebe on behalf of the entire staff of the Twin Galaxies Intergalactic Scoreboard on a truly incredible and awe-inspiring achievement !!

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