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ISSUE 3 - MARCH 2005

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ISSUE 3 EDITORIAL

Wow, what a couple of months I have had at the helm of Retro Revival.

I can safely say that issue 2 has been a success, after all some 750 + downloads have been logged since its release in December 2004, and the response to the articles and information promised for this issue has been simply amazing.

Not only this, but in the space of three months the team has grown in numbers too, from a lowly 3 to a quite healthy 8, with more contributors appearing in issue 4 (which is well underway!). May I take this opportunity to thank them for their continuing support and efforts, as without them Retro Revival would not exist.

Apart from the support from the readers and our new contributors, we have also received praise from those actually in the retro gaming scene. The likes of Boyo (Digital Arcade), ~J~, Merman, The Retro Passion guys, Danceaway, Octave Sounds, Markie (of RetroVision fame) and even a few of the Lamasoft bunch have all made positive comments on this third issue, and all seem eager to support us in the future too. The encouragement from these guys has been phenomenal, and is truly appreciated.

On the subject of RetroVision, this issue has been a little late in reaching you as I attended RV5 and feel it necessary to include a frank account of my time at the event. This extended the release by another week or so, however I feel that it was worth it. For those who went, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for a simply great weekend, and for those who didn't, you missed a blinder. All is revealed in this issue.

Our Dreamcast article has been praised in the DC Homebrew scene and is so well thought of that several websites have asked if they can host it. Naturally we are well chuffed! Expect to see it at a DC website near you soon.

This issue also sees the first of a few new columns:

Boyo (of DigitalArcade) runs a UK based website devoted to Mame arcade cabinet building. Still in development, but already a great resource, www.DigitalArcade.co.uk is an informative website that has a lively and active community. After 2 seconds of thinking time, Boyo agreed to write a regular column for RR, and this issue he talks about his entry into cabinet building. There are some great tips to be found as well as answers to those questions you have all asked yourself when contemplating building your own cabinet. Check it out on page 25.

~J~ (Jason Hirst) is another new arrival at Retro Revival, and starts his remake column on page 29. This regular slot promises to become a bible for those wanting to start out in remaking retro games, and with Jason's experience, you could not be in safer hands.

Another newcomer is Simon (no not me!) who is affiliated to www.RetroScene.co.uk and has kindly offered us his own viewpoint on retro gaming. Every issue he will amuse and inform us in his own unique way. Check out his first contribution on page 35.

Our main reviewer Paul, has excelled himself in the reviews we have included in this issue, however he can relax a bit now as we have managed to get someone to help him out for Issue 4 and beyond (yes yet another contributor!).

Lastly, for this issue anyway, we have included a new column called 'How To' where we will be looking at hardware mods and practical projects for you to get your teeth into. This issue sees a SNES pad to PC mod, as well as our guide to cleaning your dirty gaming equipment.

In other news, Retro Revival has managed to acquire another website, its contents and traffic :-). This acquisition, although confirmed, will retain its current look and feel until we have had time to develop it into the Retro Revival way. More news will be made available as and when we have something to show you all, but lets just say that it will compliment RR and increase its profile in the retro gaming community.

Lastly, a few words on issue 4.

After the amazing support we have received for issue 3 (even though as I write this it has not even been released!) I have decided to continue with Retro Revival. I have to admit that there were times when I thought about scrapping the idea, however certain people (you know who you are) have given their frank and honest opinion, and from this I have decided to continue with it.

After a lot of thinking and talking to others, you will be pleased to know that Retro Revival is here to stay, although expect some changes over the coming months. Issue 4 will be groundbreaking, not only to retro gaming, but to gaming coverage in general. Always wanting to push the limits, our new idea will be a first in all respects, so expect to see something you have never experienced before. It will cost a few pounds to develop and nurture, but remember, Retro Revival will continue to give you the best retro gaming coverage at an affordable cost, if not FREE!.

Just to remind you all donations will not be turned away - bandwidth costs money after all, and there is not better way to support us.

Enjoy this issue, and remember to let us know what you think either via the forum or through email.

Regards
Simon



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Thanks guys

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The views contained within this publication represent the personal opinion of that particular writer. If you have an issue with anything they have said, please sue them directly!

Whilst we work our nutz off trying to bring you the most up to date and concise information we possibly can, please remember that we are only human and DJ does cock up now and again :-)

Due to this some things may be missed, or just blatantly made up. Either way we apologise for his shortcomings in advance and urge you to email us and tell us what you think we should do with the little scrote!

Ok, lets get serious...

The pictures, screenshots, marketing material, trade marks and anything else that does not belong to us remains the sole property of the original creators or the rich people who now own the rights.

We do not take credit for anything other than the inane drivel that fills the white spaces between the pretty pictures. If you have a problem with a part of your intellectual property that appears in this thing-ami-jig then please contact us before sending round the heavies.

It will give us a chance to leave the country!



NEWS

SD / MMC ON YOUR C64



By the time you read this developer Oliver Ahtens' MMC64 will be ready to ship for your Commodore 64 home computer.

The MMC64, currently produced by Individual Computers, is a combined MMC and SD card interface that not only reads information on either Secure Digital or Multi Media Cards, but also has the ability to access files directly from them too.

The unit accepts any FAT16 formatted card up to 4GB in size, giving you the possibility of storing the entire c64 software collection or even the complete HVCS SID collection on removable media. Load up files from your PC to your card, then pop the card into the adaptor, it is as easy as that.

Getting excited yet? We are!

To keep the costs down to a minimum, Oliver has included a small, software upgradeable, on-board bios chip which allows the access of files stored on the card via its built in browser.

By including this, programs can be launched without the need for complex compatibility with the CBM DOS and Kernel as the adaptors browser will load and play files directly.

No more standard LOAD commands to type in!

In addition to this the adaptor also has a built in SID player. To hear your favourite tune its is a simple matter of browsing the files on the card, locating the desired song, hitting the enter key and then just sitting back and listening to all that SID goodness (Most RSID files are also playable too) .

Playlist features are not implemented as yet, so you will have to listen to music on a track by track basis, however we are sure that it will be only a matter of time before this will be included.

NTSC C64 users have been catered for too, as not only does the adaptor work in the US machine, it also adjusts the playback speed of SID files so that every PSID can be heard at the correct speed, a common problem with US computers.

Unfortunately D64 image files are not mountable in this initial release, however you can write those images directly to your floppy drive, and with the ability to upgrade the bios in the future, maybe we will see mountable images after all.

The card also has an auto booting feature so that you can load up the browser as soon as the C64 is turned on, or you can soft-disable the bios so that the computer powers up normally, yet still has access to the files on the card (albeit without the ability to use the built in browser).

Also included is a clockport for inclusion

of the RR-Net network adaptor for the C64, and a full pass-through port which is 100% compatible with another of Individual Computers products, the Retro Replay.

It has to be noted that both expansions can be used in their full functionality at the same time, which is great news.

Future additions include full browser navigation via joystick, so you can control file loading from a distance (and even use the card on a C64GS!), A video player plugin so you can view .ani files from the IDE64, and a general plugin system which will load a plugin associated with a particular file extension.

Oliver has admitted that better compatibility can be achieved through software upgrades to the browser component, and to further its development he has decided to give out detailed hardware information and code examples to those who want it.

Oliver believes that the MMC64 is a product for the whole community and every programmer should have easy access to the code, so that the best can be made of the hardware he has created.

We totally agree with him and think others should take his example. After all, the more people who work on a project, the better it can only become.

With a street price of 49 Euros (around £35 at the time of writing) this may well be a piece of hardware that no C64 user can be without.

Check out Individual Computers for more information at :

www.jschoenfeld.de/indexe.htm

CODEMASTERS FREEBIES

Codemasters have recently released Treasure Island Dizzy to the public as a free gift for Christmas 2004.

Originally a hit in 1988 for the coding team, Treasure Island Dizzy is the second in the games collection and sees the egg abandoned on a desert island.

The aim of the game is to help Dizzy get back to his friends, the YolkFolk, by solving problems and collecting the 30 well hidden gold coins along the way.

The game is entirely free and runs in a self contained version of the CCS64 emulator, all neatly packaged up in a zip file for easy download and installation.

Also available is the ever popular BMX Simulator also from Codemasters past glories.

Released initially in 1986 this was the first game the team ever published, and was made available for free download in September 2004 to celebrate the companies 18th birthday.

You can get hold of both games from:

www.codemasters.co.uk/downloads

However be warned that you will have to sign up to the Codemasters newsletter first before you get the chance to download the goodies.

A shame really, but if you are a fan of either game, it's a small price to pay.



SYMBOS UPDATE

Amstrad aficionados will be pleased to hear that the SymbOS project created and maintained by the Prodatron / SymbiosiS team, has had its second preview version released.

New features added to this replacement CPC operating system are:

- The ability to control the mouse pointer with either a joystick, or a combination of keyboard presses.
- Run applications from the Run command in the Start Menu
- Shut down the system from the Shut Down feature in the Start Menu
- Open the Start Menu by pressing the CTRL+ESC keys
- Start Task Manager by pressing the CTRL+SHIFT+ESC keys
- Switch between windows by pressing ALT+ESC

- Close a window or open the Shut Down dialogue by pressing the ALT+F4 keys
- Change Date, Time and Zone options from the Control Panel
- Change the screen colour and resolution from the Display item in the Control Panel

- Monitor CPU and memory usage in Task Manager
- Use the calculator function (although it is not functioning properly at present)

Get more information here:

www.prodatron.net/symbos.htm



DO CRONOSOFT AND THE LIKE NOW HAVE SOME COMPETITION?

Paul Andrews who is behind www.retro-trader.com is spearheading a new retro games project team called www.retro-soft.co.uk.

In an **EXCLUSIVE-FIRST** interview Paul was being tight lipped about the specific plans, but told us it will be worth the wait!

Paul has drawn together a team of people, to include programmers (both newer people and some names from the past we all might know), graphic artists, authors and web designers, and various other people to collaborate on his new venture.

What is it all about we asked him?

"Well I don't want to give too much away just yet" he said, "but I had seen what some other people were doing with regards to releasing new retro games, for some old systems, and these guys are doing a great job."

"We are not trying to step on their toes at all, but I felt that I might be able to take things to the next level."

"I don't see why the big software houses, and the game machine companies should dictate and control every game that is released. They only want games which are going to sell tens of thousands of copies and make them mega bucks."

"Of course it would be great to release a

game which did sell that many, but why can't we produce a game that sells a few thousand or less?."

"I also feel that most software publishers drop outdated formats to quickly which is not really fair on consumers. Of course this is all part of the marketing and money making machine that we all belong to in this modern world."

"We all know the story. The companies get us gamers to buy console 'Z' and buy a load of games for it, then 12 months later they release console 'Z+' and we are induced into buying another new console and more games."

"Admittedly things do improve, and we all love the latest gadgets, but do we have to stop supporting these other formats so quickly? It hardly seems fair to people."

"We realise that there are many people creating and releasing games for retro formats, but there is minimal co-operation or co-ordination, and that is what I am trying to do, bring these people together."

"We are looking at bringing back some older games for their original formats but also porting them to other retro formats which they never made it onto in their day. We are also looking at new games for older machines, as well as bringing some older retro games to current formats."

"Once we are up and running I am also aiming to bring out new games for current formats by plowing back the profits, as well as the seed capital, back into this new company."

"We have had some strong interest from various parties keen to invest some money in this growth industry. Only recently Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation which owns FOX media, stated its interest in getting into the games market. They are not looking at us as far as I know" laughed Paul "but maybe they should be. Nintendo did not re-release its old NES games on the GBA for nothing you know."

"I am 100% convinced this is going to be big, but who knows, at the end of the day it is down to the people out there. If they support us with their wallets we will try to give them what they want."

"Do you remember the excitement of rushing down to Smiths or your local newsagents on a Saturday morning with your pocket money to buy a game, not being able to wait to get home to load it up?"

"Well maybe, just maybe, we can get people to feel like that again and, recreate the same feeling gamers had before the small time programmers were swallowed up by the big corporations as they are today."

"Maybe those gaming corporation Goliath's had better keep a look out for this modern day software David!"

RETRO MINATURES

For twenty years now Graham Richards has been sculpting and decorating miniature figurines.

Starting with Sci-Fi characters from 50's cinema and B-Movies as a hobby, by the time he was 15 Graham realised that he could be making a few pennies from all the time and effort he put in to each creation, not to mention the possibility of getting a return on the money he spent out on materials.

He tells us that he was the first to sculpt a Grey Alien miniature, long before they were commonplace, but at the time he never tried to market it. (Silly boy!)

He carried on sculpting after this, trying to be the first to capture the likeness of as many TV and movie aliens as he could. However it was not long before the big companies had the same idea and drowned the market with numerous renditions of the characters.

One of Grahams greatest passions is the Sinclair Spectrum, and now Grahams attention has turned to spearheading the creation and sale of game character miniatures.

Already, Graham has penned a deal with Cronosoft so that he can create sculptures based on the characters from their new releases, however more well known characters are a harder task to complete.

No so much due to the sculpture itself, but more because of the copyright issues involved.

Having said all of this, Graham already has a decent number of miniatures to choose from including Dizzy, Pink Deamon (Doom) and Hungry Horace (as seen on the right).

Future additions to the catalogue will include: An Imp (Doom), Mutant Telephone (Manic Miner), Pi-Man (Pieman), Cobra MK3 (trading ship from Elite), Horace with slalom flags (from Horace Goes Skiing) EggHead (from Egghead In Space) and many more.

Talking to us about his little empire, Graham told us...

"I don't intend to make a lot of money out of this. Really, I just want to be able to own accurate sculptures of the 8bit characters that I know and love, and if someone else feels that they too would like a 3D Horace or a Dizzy on top of the telly, then they're here for them too."

"I also want to try and keep the price down to as low as possible. I'm hoping to run Monument Miniatures as a cottage industry, but I need more support."

"Most miniature companies insist that you break the bank to afford their work, but I can only keep 'em cheap, so long as people are buying! Hopefully I'll still be making them 10 years from now."

www.monumentminiatures.co.uk



SNODGE '97 FINALLY RELEASED

Originally written in 1997 by Richard Bayliss using the SEUCK games creator, Snodge's Water Caper '97 has finally been updated and enhanced with a few new features, one of which being the use of a decent music score, as opposed to the dire spot effects of the original creation.

(Richards words not ours!)

Download the C64 DSK image and find out more by logging onto:

www.redesign.sk/tnd64/download_classix.html



Snodge's Water Caper

ATTENTION ALL READERS

We are always looking for contributions irrelative of the subject matter, and urge you to contact us if you have already written an article, simply have an idea for one, news of new games and hardware for us to preview, or anything else you want to get in print (so long as it relates to retro gaming of course!)

Specifically we are still looking for people with experiences of the following:

Any 16 Bit computers (Amiga / Atari ST etc)

Any 8 bit computers other than the C64 and Spectrum

If you fall into any of the above categories and would like the chance to write about something you love, then drop us an email as we are looking for people who would be prepared to run their own columns in the fanzine.

The email address to use is:

contributions@retrorevival.co.uk

For general enquiries please use this email:

simon@retrorevival.co.uk



PREVIEW S

REAL SPEED WE NEED (C64)



Richard Bayliss is the coder behind The New Dimension (TND), and since 1995 has been releasing games into both the public domain and more recently to publishing companies such as Cronosoft.

Using, amongst other programs, the SEUCK (Shoot Em Up Construction Kit), Richard endeavours to please us gaming public with his original games and ideas for the Commodore 64 format.

With always more than one project on the go at any one time, his current love affair is with the production of 'Real Speed We Need', an original game based on a fictitious movie.

You play the part of Jack Hammer, a stunt driver by trade playing a motor cycle cop in the film, trying to rid the roads of dirty, rotten and damn right dangerous drivers who all feel that it is necessary to disobey the speeding limits whenever they can.

However after a hard days work at the office, you return home to find that your apartment has been broken into.

Looking round at the mess, trying to work out what has been taken, you

Dear Jack Hammer

We have kidnapped your brother. If you want to see him again you will have to pay ransom of \$13,643.

If you don't pay up within 48 hours of this notice (10.15am) we will take him to the bridge, shoot him and throw his body into the river.

REMEMBER 48 HOURS

Meet us at the Vortex River Bridge 6.30AM sharp with the money, and he will be free.

No games, no police, just you on your own.

Signed: David Carper and da Mob

notice a note on a table that reads:

Shocked and in fear for your brothers safety, you jump on your bike and speed off towards the bridge.

Stopping you in your quest to find you brother, David has littered his mob gang along the road to slow you down. Also hindering you are other dangerous drivers as well as sharp bend and other

obstacles.

Apart from the main mission, there will also be side quests that you must complete, all the while making sure that you reach the bridge before the deadline.

Richard was fond of the Codemasters game Mean Machine which was released way back in 1991, and featured a top down racing style.

In an attempt to create a tribute game to Mean Machine, Richard has since coded For Speed We Need and also updated it to V2.

Real Speed We Need is the next offering in the tribute series, and promises to be a great little driving game.

Keep track of its progress over at Richards website:

www.redesign.sk/tnd64/welcome.html



PARALLAX (PC REMAKE)

A space probe has landed you, and four of the world's most experienced scientists on an artificial world divided into five broad horizontal zones.

The inhabitants seem hospitable and friendly until you stumble across vital information being switched across the zones by a controlling computer intelligence.

The information you find reveals an imminent attack upon Earth!



Using your spaceship, the IBIS, you set out to search for the missing scientists who are held prisoner in alien-infested hangers which are scattered over the zones.

Each scientist holds a data card that must be collected to gather the code that will unlock the zone and allow advancement to the next.

This wonderful looking Parallax remake features full 3d landscapes, lighting, particles, whooshes and zaps, annoying enemies that swoop around you, nice explosions, aliens (ooooo scary!), fading icons, glowing objects, scientists, drugs (yes, we said drugs!), online highscores, fast paced action and a nice spinning title (...and breathe).

If that doesn't sound like enough for you then let us tell you about the several full remixed soundtracks of the original game, together with original compositions that will make your ears wobble.

Find out more about this great looking remake by visiting the website of the author, one of or very own columnists:

Original game by Sensible Software, 1986, music by Martin Galway
Remake coding by Jason M. Hirst (~J~)
Graphics by Trevor 'Smila' Storey, Expotes and ~J~
Music and soundFX by Danceaway

Read more about this wonderful remake in the next issue of Retro Revival.



αβγδε

confused?

Only scientists on drugs know...!

PARALLAX

2005 REMNKE

Original game by Sensible Software

C64 remake and graphics by ~J~

C64 remixes and original tracks by Danceaway
Featuring his original titles : Drive the Beat and Space Jump





FEATURE - RETROVISION 5

Before Retrovision 5 (RV5) I knew that Llamasoft was (is) a company created and ran by the famous Jeff Minter. I also knew that Llamasoft has a cult following of people called Llamasofties, however I had never met one in the flesh.

I had a picture in my head of what one would look like, mainly due to the vision I had of Jeff himself. Scruffy, hairy, un-kept.

The pictures I have seen of Jeff have only enforced this image for me, and therefore it would only be natural for me to think of the Llamasofties group in the same vein; scruffy, hairy, geek-ish.

How wrong I was about it all. The weekend of RV5 would be one that may well end up changing the future of this fanzine as well as my life.

Since December 2004, a few of the contributors of this fine fanzine had been badgering me to go along to the event.

To be honest the thought of the journey was the thing putting me off the whole idea, as the event was being held in Frome, Somerset.

I live in Essex, and do not drive, so it would have meant several hours on good old public transport. Not a pleasant thought at the best of times.

After being nagged by Chris from Digital Arcade (aka Boyo) and Jason Hirst (aka ~J~) for what seemed like an eternity, some two weeks before the event I finally buckled in, and emailed Mark Rayson (the organiser) to see if there were any tickets left.

I had seen Marks posts on various forums promoting the weekend, and urging people to get tickets while they can as they were quickly running out.

I introduced myself in the email I sent him as the editor of a retro gaming fanzine who would like the opportunity to attend the meet and write an article relating to my experiences.

Not expecting a reply, I was surprised when Mark sent me an email and attached a Press e-ticket for me to use. I emailed him back and asked him about validity and pricing and he replied telling me that it was a full 4 day pass and he did not want any money for it as he was sure that Retro Revival would give the event a good write up!

I did not realise the importance of this gesture until I actually met Mark, but let's just say that his generosity was indeed genuine, and a true testament to his personality and friendliness.

I had received the ticket, but was still deliberating whether or not to go, after all it was over the other side of the country!

However the constant badgering from Boyo and others pretty much made my mind up for me. (Cheers guys!)

So there I was, two weeks before the event, with a 4 day pass to my first gaming meet in some 14 years. I was well excited!

I booked a one day return train ticket for the Saturday; I'd get there at around 1pm and would have to leave at 6ish to catch the train home. 5 hours was surely going to be enough?

Saturday came around fast, I was up and out of the door at 9.30am, made my way to Paddington station and boarded my train to Frome. 3 hours later and I was there.

The event was being held in an annex of The George (pub come hotel), located in Frome Market. I could not get in. I searched all over the place to find an entrance but no joy. I could see the posters all over the pub windows regarding the event but no indication of the entrance at all.

"...I DID NOT REALISE THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS GESTURE UNTIL I ACTUALLY MET MARK...HIS GENEROSITY WAS INDEED GENUINE AND A TRUE TESTAMENT TO HIS PERSONALITY..."

After some 20 minutes of looking like a right plonker I asked one of the guys working behind the bar who directed me around the back to the annex.

I was just about to enter, and a Welsh voice came from nowhere...It was Boyo. I had spoken to him before on the phone and seen a few pictures so I knew what to expect. We greeted each other and he led me past security (Mark's missus!) and into the lower floor.

It was buzzing, and busy. Mark had sold the allotted 150 tickets per day, the venues maximum capacity, and for the first time Retrovision was a sell out.

Set out on two floors, the lower floor contained the bar, a large section for Retro Passions setup and the main hall which was host to a whole heap of gaming goodness.

Retro Passion (RP) found at www.retropassion.co.uk is a company specialising in the sale of retro gaming equipment and games and arguably had the best setup of playable games at the show.

The highlight was a head to head Outrun 2 system comprising of 2 x 28" TV's, one black XBOX, one crystal XBOX and 2 steering wheels firmly suctioned to a wooden table.

The XBOX's were channelled into a DVD/5.1 surround system that belted out



Head-to-Head Outrun 2 all weekend!

the familiar, catchy Outrun tunes continually throughout the weekend. I still can't get the music out of my head, bloody thing!

Also appearing in the RP section was a 42" Plasma screen connected to the

current generation hardware and was home to such games as Burnout 3, Pro Evo Soccer and Donkey Konga.

RP had also brought their CGEUK Saturn Outrun set-up, a miniature MAME cabinet plus a plethora of old retro machines such as the classic Megadrive, Vectrex and Master System for visitors to play. Oddly enough an Easter Egg called Geometry Wars (found on the Project Gotham Racing 2 XBOX disc) was the game of choice on the plasma. Someone asked if they could play it for 5 minutes and once it was running everyone wanted a go.

They were still playing it when RP were packing up their gear on Sunday night!

In the main hall a modified XBOX linked up to a projector and screen was the center piece and was there all weekend.

massive screen was amazing. Not to mention the sound system that was hooked up to it too!

To the left of the hall was www.myatari.net displaying a whole range of Atari retro machines such as the ST, Lynx and the Jaguar (running Tempest - Just for Jeff!).



Part Of the MyAtari set-up.

To the right was the www.codersworkshop.co.uk exhibit at which I had my first playing experience on a Nintendo DS.

In the right hand corner of the room was the stage where SID80 were to play on the Saturday evening.

Just to the left of the stage was the arcade cabinet made by Boyo which he kindly offered as a raffle prize for the Saturday night draw, needless to say that it was never left alone, and everyone had their sticky fingers all over it at one point or another.

If you had seen it in the flesh you would have too! A great piece of kit and a testimony to Boyo's building abilities.



The last time Boyo played with his cab!

Upstairs was occupied by the UKRockers (www.ukrockers.co.uk) who had brought a nice selection of retro machines for visitors to play.

Games Exchange, a local retro games shop, had a wide range of retro goodies for sale and YakYak's PsychoRob's Gamezone was filled with an amazing selection of retro machines, most of which had their display projected onto a white screen via a very expensive looking projector.

Amongst all the games available Mashed

was the game of choice here, and even Jeff Minter himself was seen to be being entangled in some 4 player head to head madness.



UKRockers great gaming zone.



Games Exchange (some cheap gear too!)



PsychoRob's Gamezone playing Sensi Soccer

The dimly lit environment (which, after the show turned out to be a lighting problem) was filled with the sounds and visual delights of a vast number of retro games being played at the same time and created an absolutely superb atmosphere!!!

After an hour of taking it all in, I took a seat upstairs with Boyo and ~J~ to gather my thoughts and give my brain a rest!

I had taken a printed mock up of this very issue with me, mainly to show Boyo and ~J~ as they had contributed to it.

Boyo has voted himself as my PR man, and after looking at the printed material, got off of his chair and disappeared. A few moments later he returned with Merman (Andrew Fisher a freelance writer for magazines such as Retro Gamer and the great C64 fanzine

Commodore Scene, as well as the mighty Zzap64 no less!).

I must have spoke to Merman for about an hour and a half, probing him for tips on writing, talking about gaming and whatever else came to mind. Friendly, approachable and definitely knowledgeable, he was just one of the many great people I met.

I didn't realise until after the show that he had been in the scene for ages, writing articles, composing music and even co-authoring the great 'Games That Weren't' site with Frank Gasking.

Back downstairs and ~J~ had his Parallax remake demo with him in the hope that he could show Jon Hare (original Parallax designer) to get some feedback.

~J~ was so delighted that a full page advert for his remake was appearing in issue 3 of Retro Revival that he wanted to show it to whoever he could! He snatched the mock up off me and made a beeline for those who were interested.

One of the people was Paul also know as Danceaway (www.danceaway64.co.uk), a C64 music re-mixer.

Paul had remixed the original Parallax music for the remake and even composed his own tunes for it, and he seemed just as happy to see the advert as ~J~ was.

I was introduced to Paul, and we spent a while chatting and drinking. Paul was accompanied by three of his Mancunian friends, Jeff (Octave Sounds www.octave-sounds.co.uk), Jon and another (sorry I didn't catch your name!) and these guys ended up being one of the highlights of the weekend for me (more on that later).

Somehow (thanks Boyo!) I managed to get involved in a friendly contest with Merman on RP's Outrun 2 setup. If I lost I would have to refrain from posting on Live's Retro Gamer magazine forum, and if Merman lost he would have to write up a nice little piece on Retro Revival for inclusion in the Retro Gamer magazine.

I sat down at the wheel, revved up the engine and promptly lost although I am sure Merman will include a piece on the RV5 write up declaring his victory over me!



Me losing to Merman :-)

Jeff Minter and his buddy Giles (and his donkey) turned up at around 5pm and was instantly surrounded by the Llamasofties, greeting him and chatting about new developments.



Jeff & Giles (and Donkey!)

Unlike my initial thoughts, the Llamasoftie clan were in fact a 'normal' bunch of people, not a geek to be seen, the only difference being that they were all united in their appreciation for Jeff's work.

A great bunch of people, friendly and all up for a laugh. As an outsider, I was welcomed by all and felt a part of the event more than I could have ever imagined and for this I thank them all.

I never did manage to get into a conversation with Jeff, although to be honest, not being a fan of his creations myself, I probably would not know what to say to him anyway.

Whilst the fans were talking to Jeff, I managed to get Mark away from it all for a few minutes. We went outside, where I met his better half and had a little quiet time to get his reaction to it all and ask a few questions I managed to prepare on the train earlier in the day:

RR: What is Jeff really like? Is he the drug induced 60's throwback, Ozzy Osbourne lookalike, that his infinite appearances in photo's lead us to believe, or is he a tea total, middle aged long haired fella with a passion for gaming that is totally misunderstood?

Mark: (Laughs at the question for 30 seconds or so!)...That's one hell of a question to answer! Is he...? Well Jeff encapsulates what it really is to be a game guru.

Apart from the hard work that goes into the coding he produces, Jeff loves to have a good time, he loves to party, I mean Jeff and a party just together go so well, like they were made for each other!

He is a great guy, a little shy at first, but he is a top man.

RR: Explain to everyone (especially me) what being a Llamasoftie firstly is, and secondly what it means to you personally.

Mark: Four years ago we started off what is called the Llamasoft Archive which was originally an idea bought together by a guy called Justin Leask. I got involved with him and created the Llamasoft Archive with all the games, all the covers, all the information and stuff like that, basically as a tribute to Jeff.

I have always been a follower of Jeff's work, and therefore always been a Llamasoftie.

I was even partially instrumental in bringing the Llamasoft forum together (www.YakYak.org), and so my affiliation with Jeff started right from the start.

To try and describe it, being a Llamasoftie is being a fan of the games first and foremost. It's being a fan of the guy who codes the games to bring joy to other people.

Jeff puts his heart and soul into everything he does, and this can be seen in the games and creations he codes.

Regardless of what the media think of his work, if Jeff thinks something will work, he will add it to his latest coding. A lot of the reason why I respect Jeff, is because he follows his heart and does not conform to what the corporate side of gaming society demands from programmers today.

Jeff makes games that he feels people want to play, but primarily he makes games that he enjoys to play himself.

RR: What are your highlights of the last few years of Retrovision?

Mark: Retrovision started 2 years ago, in a basement in an Oxford pub and we have grown from, in those days what seemed to be a seedy environment in a friends pub with a few machines set-up (and with Jeff Minter always on side), to RV5 which is the biggest and best thing I have ever done.

It really has broken all the boundaries. We have taken a few chances, brought in other people to help us whereas before it has all been down to myself to organise, but the likes of Retro Passion, Console Passion and others have helped to create something far bigger with a greater selection of machines to play on.

It offers much more complexity and each exhibitor has brought their own foundation, which inevitably helps us with ticket sales.

As for highlights, well every show has been brilliant. I just enjoy watching people playing games and having a good time.

RV is based on love, it started out of love for gaming and we never set out to make money.

With the retro scene at the moment, the likes of Back In Time, CGEUK etc, none of us are making money, in fact we are lucky to break even most of the time. Its nice to make a few pounds from it all, after all no-one wants to walk away from it out of pocket, but at the end of the day it's about the love we all have for gaming, bringing people together from all over the country, playing games in a fantastic gaming environment, and everyone having a good time and making new friends.

RR: Anything you regret at all? People who you wished would have shown up at an event, things you may have thought did not work well?

Mark: After every show you always sense things...like maybe we should have done this differently or that differently...but it has never been anything major, just little subtle things.

Evolution has shown us what people like and do not like about the event. When we started with RV1 we only used old games, pure retro gaming equipment, but we realised that we should try and incorporate some new stuff in too, which is why at a Retrovision show now you get everything from the ZX81 to the current generation machines, and everything in between.

We like to cater for everyone's gaming needs.

RR: What have you learned over the time you have been organising the event from a personal point of view as well as a gamer?

Mark: What I have learnt personally is that it must be the most stressful thing I have ever done.

An RV show takes about 6 months to put together and it can be a very frustrating time, building up the idea, trying to build up the funds etc, however I have never heard anyone saying that it was a waste of time or money, and that makes it all worth while.

As a gamer I have learnt that everything is retro. I mean take the XBOX. The first XBOX games are 3 years old and they are climbing very quickly into retro cabinets.

However people still want to play games with pixels. The C64 and Spectrum is my love, I have been playing them for 20 years and will continue to do so. People who come to RV events are exactly the same, and this is the reason Retrovision will continue to happen.

RR: Some coders seem to want to put their gaming past behind them as they have moved on to bigger and better things.

As you promote the games these people have been a part of creating over the years, what would you say to them in an attempt to lure them to appear at a future RV event?

Mark: What's really nice about RV5 is that we have taken a part of the Back In Time idea and invited some of the BIT musicians to perform in a small concert tonight.

We are privileged to have the legendary Jon Hare (coder of Sensible Soccer, Wizball and others) as part of the set-up and look forward to hearing his guitar skills in action (he is pretty good!).

What John is doing is showing many of these old coders that it is still possible to be a part of the scene, especially as the games they helped design and play are still being played by many.

It is nice for those coders to really get involved with the people who have enjoyed, and still enjoy the games that they have been a part of over the years, to really see the appreciation that people have got for the efforts that have been made.

We have been fortunate enough to have the likes of Jon Hare, Ben Dalglish and Chris Abbott attending both now and in the past, so there is always scope to include others if they want to attend.

RR: What with RV, CGEUK and other smaller meets across the country, where do you want to take Retrovision in the future?

Mark: Retrovision in the future eh? Well, we are actually taking a small break after RV5, there has only been 8 months between 4 and 5, so there will probably be a 16 to 18 month interval until RV6 is here.

We have had a lot of support from the Back In Time guys, Press Play On Tape and SID80's and hope to pool all our resources together to create a unique musical experience.

RV5 is really a test ground for the potential concert at RV6. We are putting SID80's on stage and basically seeing what happens, and if the response is good then the next event will incorporate not only one band but will attempt to bring the major C64 musicians together on stage in one big musical extravaganza.

RR: You are a house husband much like myself, but what does your other half think of it all, and is she into the gaming scene?



Mrs RetroVision!

Mark: I think you should probably ask her (Mark's partner Sarah hides in the corner), OK don't ask her then.

Sarah has always been so supportive right from the outset of RV, in fact it was Sarah who thought of the name for Retrovision.

We knew it had to be Retro in the title but we could not think of another word that would work. We went through many different combinations, trying to find the one that would sum up what we were trying to achieve. The ethos of the event was to allow people to not only look at retro computers and consoles, but also to play them; it was to be a vision of gaming, and from this Sarah decided to call it Retrovision.

At this point Mark was being pulled from all different angles by those wishing to speak to him. I got my wallet out and put my £10 ticket fee into his hand.

Instantly he refused it (that's the kind of guy he is) but I forced it into his hand and told him to add it to the proceeds, thanking him for the efforts he has made at the same time.

Time was ticking on at this stage. I had about 30 minutes to get to the train station before I made my way back home. I bumped into Paul (Danceaway) again and told him that I was about to make a move home.

I started to say my goodbyes, however Paul was a little sad to see me go. I didn't have enough money to get a hotel room for the night, nor did I have any spare clothes, but to cut a long story short in the space of 10 minutes Paul had rallied around his friends, and with ~J~ and Boyo also contributing, a room had been reserved for me at the same hotel they were staying at.

Amazing. I mean I had never met any of these guys before and yet only after 5 hours of meeting them they were trying to get me to stay so that I could appreciate the evenings entertainment.

I was truly gob smacked and obviously appreciative of the gesture. I didn't know it at the time but if I had gone home I would have missed the highlight

of the show, SID80's live performance.

We all went out to get some food, and returned at around 8pm, to see the raffle draw for Boyo's arcade cabinet. Trolley won it (eventually) and after some cheering and merriment from the Llamasofties, the stage was prepared for SID80's to play live.

Comprising of Jon Hare on guitar, The Mad Fiddler on violin, Chris Abbott on percussion and Ben Dalglish on virtually every other instrument known to man, they spent around 45 minutes playing their own remixes of popular C64 tunes, and also any other tune that came into their heads, to a hypnotised group of on looking fans.



Mad Fiddler, Jon Hare, Chris Abbott and Ben Dalglish - The SID80's - Pure class!

I really cannot describe how good these guys were. If you have never seen SID80's play live then it has to be something you do before you die.

Simply breath taking and well worth every penny I spent over the entire weekend.

The rest of the evening was spent playing games, talking to Ben Dalglish, Jon Hare and others, and then marvelling at a SID80's jamming session as they played along to the techno tunes emitting from the PA system, in time, in tune and completely adlib.

Around 10pm saw the unveiling of Jeff Minters latest project, however he asked us all to keep a word of silence as he was still working out things with potential publishers. Needless to say that what was shown was typical Jeff Minter and will not disappoint his many fans when it is eventually released.

I spent a while with the Retro Passion guys (Barry and Tom) and we talked about life and gaming, and more importantly how Koopa could actually stand up straight although he managed to down 18 pints of lager!

They even offered to give me a lift back home on the Sunday, so long as I helped them pack away, and although appreciative of the offer, 5 hours or so on the motorway was enough to tell me that the train was going to get my vote.

Me, Boyo, ~J~, Paul and his mates all left around 1am, but the party was still

going on inside, and continued to do so until around 3am when those left finally fell out of the venue and into their beds.

Sunday was much quieter than the previous two-days. Many of the weekend attendees had called it a day on Saturday evening and had either gone home or were saying their goodbyes early Sunday morning.

This was a good time to reflect on the events of the weekend and an opportunity to have "one" more go on Outrun 2 (I still lost!)

The day again passed quickly, Sunday lunch was had in the lounge area at the hotel where a fairly large group of RV 5 attendees had gathered to watch the Football (Manchester United v Manchester City) and the rugby (England v France).

I said my goodbyes and left around 4pm, getting home at round 8, and promptly fell asleep!

So...what a weekend!! I must say that I thoroughly enjoyed the experience. Everyone made me feel so welcome and

I look forward to the next one with relish.

Kudos has to go to Mark for organising the event, from what I have heard each one just gets better and better.

Retrovision Fusion, www.retrovision.org, (aka Retrovision 6) is planned for February 2006 again at The George Hotel in Frome. From the little Mark has told me it promises to be bigger, better and more colourful than all the Retrovision's before it.

I for one can't wait!

RETROVISION 5 - SECOND OPINION

One of the threads over on the Retro Gamer forums I frequent is named 'Upcoming Events', and it is here that I was introduced to the wonderful, colourful world of Retrovision and Markie the organiser.

After seeing the line up for the show I promptly bought a ticket to the next event in February 2005 via Paypal; the ticket got delivered a few days later. I had been allocated ticket number 47.

Through the Retrovision website I found one of Markie's other creations, Retro Games World (www.retrogamesworld.co.uk), a huge web portal to a large number of UK based retro sites and forums, and from within the links on Retro Games World I found the YakYak community, which I promptly joined.

And so the build up to Retrovision V for me had begun.

In a parallel universe to Retrovision, I started a new hobby building MAME cabinets and thought it would be an idea to take one along to Retrovision.

I sent an E-mail to Markie (probably as far back as August 2004) asking him what he thought of my idea – and the response back was extremely positive with a hint of "I bet I don't hear from this guy ever again!!!"

A few months passed by. During this time I launched my Digital Arcade website and forum, posted endless entries on to the many forums I frequent such as Live Publishing, YakYak, RetroPassion and my own. A new year had started and Retrovision V was only a number of weeks away.

There I was innocently posting on the RetroPassion website one night, sometime in January 2005, when Markie PM'd me a message. "Please ring me on OXX XXX XX".

And I did. I came face to face (well voice to voice) with an extremely likeable, enthusiastic chap who was very passionate about the retro scene. Markie asked me if I was still Ok to bring an arcade cabinet to RV 5 and of course I

was, my intention being to advertise a little of what I did and allow the people I had met on the forums over the months to have a play on my creation.

I added Markie onto my Messenger contact list and started to talk to him on lots of ad-hoc topics over the coming days.

Then one evening, out of the blue, Markie asked me on Messenger whether I would consider building a cabinet that could be raffled as a prize at RV 5. I had started to build the cabinet that I was going to take to the show and said that that could be the cabinet used for the raffle!! Over the next couple of days we negotiated a fee for the cabinet parts and then the deal was struck and the marketing campaign started - "Win a MAME cabinet at Retrovision V!!!"

Little did I know how much of a hit it would be.

Over the coming 2-3 weeks prior to the show I posted progress pictures of the cabinet onto my website and various forums and received amazing positive feedback from the communities.

And then the cabinet was complete.

I had originally planned to go to RV 5 on the Saturday and Sunday but those plans were changed at the last moment by the persuasive talents of ~J~ (or in some scenes, "squiggle J squiggle") a forum member at many communities who is partial to coding a few half decent Commodore 64 remakes!

So on Friday 11th I left work at 3pm, loaded the cabinet and a change of clothing into my car and headed down the motorway. I met up with Lee (Koop42) and we continued down to Frome, eagerly anticipating the event.

When we eventually got to the show entrance a chap was standing there whom I had initially thought was the person checking the tickets for entrance. So I got my ticket out of my wallet and dutifully handed it over, keen to get into the show to meet up with ~J~, Markie and co. The chap started talking to me.

I thought to myself, I recognise that Yorkshire accent – "Is that you ~J~?"

After a bit of male bonding we all went in. I recognised Markie instantly – who wouldn't – with his green trademark "Ming" makeup, baldhead and goaty beard. "Hi", I said, "I'm Chris". "Who?" said Markie, "I'm Boyo", I said. A loud vocal "Booooooooooooooooooooooooooooo" followed by a gripping handshake followed.

After an hour or so of being there I thought the time was right to bring in my MAME cabinet, and with the help of ~J~ and Koopa42, the cabinet was soon resting just inside the foyer of the venue.

As Markie came over to have a look at his main Saturday Retrovision 5 raffle prize, I pulled the protective sheet off the cabinet. Markie's response to seeing the cabinet for the first time was absolutely magical and culminated with him giving it a great big hug!!!!

We manoeuvred the cabinet onto the ground floor stage. Markie plugged the cabinet into a power socket and I nervously switched it on. By this time a small crowd of attendees had gathered around the cabinet.

I waited for the cabinet to boot into MAME32 and then loaded Pacman and 1942 in turn to perform a quick control panel check. Everything worked perfectly! I then left the cabinet for everyone to play on and stepped away to the bar for a pint, relieved that the cabinet had survived the journey and that the initial response to the cabinet was so positive.

For me the event was a great success, not only for the wonderful responses I had to the cabinet, but also for the event in general.

Markie is truly a great man, and deserves all the credit and praise he will get once the reviews of the show have started to flow in.

I have already purchased my ticket for the next show, that's how good it was. You missed a weekend not to forget.





FEATURE - DREAMCAST HOMEBREW

Launched in the UK on the 14th October 1999, the Sega Dreamcast was to become a legend in the very short time it graced our retail shelves, and even more so since its commercial demise, thanks to the ever popular homebrew scene that has since developed for it.

Innovation and originality was at the forefront of the Dreamcast profile and it was the most powerful home console the world had seen. It was a smaller home version of the Naomi arcade board (see boxout) and came with a 33.6k modem as standard (NTSC machines had 56K modems).

Future keyboard and mouse capabilities and a great catalogue of original games was not enough to ultimately compete with the likes of the Playstation and Nintendo 64. Domination of the market by Sony, along with the imminent arrival of the next generation machines, coupled with doubt over the system (due to the failure of the 32x and the Saturn before it) eventually sealed the fate of arguably the best console ever.

After only having been on sale in the UK for 17 months, Sega announced in March 2001 that it was to stop production of the console in a bid to restructure themselves as a 'software only' company after some four years of financial losses.

As soon as the announcement was made third party games developers began to drop off the DC bandwagon, and by the end of 2001 game production was all but over. Only hardcore publishers in Japan

continued to release games after this (Ikaruga possibly being the best of the bunch), with the last game from Sega themselves being Puyo Puyo Fever in early 2004.

Even though the Dreamcast has been commercially dead for some three years or so, the emulation and homebrew scene goes from strength to strength, with some offerings being equivalent if not better than anything that has already been released.

In fact the only other console to come anywhere near as close to the Dreamcast in terms of homebrew development is Microsoft's XBOX. If you are looking at playing retro games on your TV, the Dreamcast is a great way to get initiated as you can pick one up for around £20 now, and the best thing about it is that you do not need to modify the machine, unlike the XBOX, to play any of the homebrew offerings.



WHAT IS A GDROM?

The GDROM (Gigabyte Disc Read Only Memory) has the ability of holding up to 1GB of data, as apposed to the standard 650 / 700MB on normal CDRom media.

The disc, created and manufactured by Yamaha, had three sections to it.

The innermost section was a low density track of around 35mb which was produced to the usual cd standard. In this section of the disc you can usually find an audio track. Sega decided to record a message to this sector which stated that the disc was only to be used in the Dreamcast and not an ordinary cd player.

The outermost section of the disc contained around 1GB (or 112 mins) of data that was written in a high density format. The data pits on this outer part were packed tighter than normal CDRoms and therefore meant that they could not be read on normal computer CD drives.

The section in between these two was a blank space. It could not be written to, nor could it store data, so it was used to display the following writing:

'Produced by or under license from Sega Enterprises LTD'

'Trademark SEGA'

Technically an uncopyable disc, even to this day (unless you have a GDROM writer of course), however, as in all things, some clever chappy got around this little problem!

They came up with their own proprietary format (well Yamaha did and Sega bought it from them – See boxout), called the GDROM, which was in essence a 1GB CDRom disc of the same physical size.

Initially the GDROM was the perfect method to stop the copying of games. Blank GDROM discs were not available (and never would be commercially), and the blank space in between the low and high density tracks was not by-passable by normal CDRom drives. All was looking good.

In April 2000 a coder by the name of Skywalker, a member of the demo group Hitmen, released the A.E.G -Demo.

It was shown at the Mekka & Symposium 2000, an annual demo scene meet for all computers and consoles, held in Fallingbostenl. It was created with the Dreamcast Debug Handler (a PC to DC cable and software) and ran off of a normal CDRom disc on a totally unmodified console.

The Dreamcast world was stunned, and so was Sega.

WHAT IS NAOMI ?

The Naomi (New Arcade Operation Machine Idea) was an arcade board developed by Sega. It was initially revealed in 1998 and was proposed to be the natural successor to the Sega Model 3 board. From this board and its architecture the Dreamcast was created.

The DC was virtually identical to the Naomi board apart from the fact that the arcade board had twice the system memory (32MB) and twice the graphics memory (16MB). GDROM support was not introduced to the Naomi until the second release in 2000, so initially it used a ROM board able to hold up to 168MB of data, along with a 6MB ROM for sound. Naomi arcade cabinets could take up to 16 boards in a parallel processing format for games that needed more than the capacity offered by the usual single ROM.

There were around 50 arcade games created for the initial Naomi board including Crazy Taxi, Dead Or Alive 2, Ferrari F355 Challenge, House of the Dead 2, Virtua Fighter 3 and Virtua Tennis.

Find out more about Naomi by visiting this website:

www.system16.com/sega/hrdw_naomi.html

SEGA AGAINST THE PIRATES

The DC homebrew scene was never meant to happen as Sega had a host of anti-piracy methods installed in the console to protect their profits.

They had seen that cartridge based console piracy was virtually non existent due to the cost of buying a programmer and blank cartridges. However it was realised that Sega's Next Gen machine would need a cd based format (due to the amount of data needed for each game), and therefore the piracy situation would probably change.

They decided that they needed to create a cd system which would be hard, if not impossible to copy, thus stopping the appearance of pirate games as much as they could.

The A.E.G Demo gave hope to other programmers, and they slowly started to see what they could create, however the Debug Handler was cumbersome to create and use, so coders all over the world started to look for alternatives. Help was to arrive for them from an unusual and unpredicted source.

Sega's protection methods in the Dreamcast's hardware itself had been breached by Skywalker and he had proven to everyone that homebrew software could run on an unmodified machine. Sega, still concerned about software piracy were comforted by the fact that they still had the ace card up their sleeves in the form of their GDRom formatted discs.

For now the games themselves were safe but it was not long before this situation would change and ultimately pave the way for gifted bedroom coders to show off their talents...

MIL-CD AND BLEEM

Back in 1999 Sega launched the MIL-cd format in Japan. It was created as an enhanced format designed to improve on the then current cd music media by fully utilizing the space on the 1GB GDRom.

The idea was to allow the inclusion of additional elements such as video clips, image galleries and extra data not normally found on the already standardised CD-Extra format.

It was planned that new music cds would include full screen video, internet capabilities and enhanced navigational interfaces, to take advantage of the DC's ability to play them. It would be this new music cd format that would be the thorn in the Dreamcast's side as it would allow the booting of code from a CDRom bypassing the need for GDRom discs altogether.

Fast forward to May 2000, and a small company called Bleem Inc had wowed onlookers at the annual E3 gaming show with information on a new piece of software for the DC called Bleemcast.



Bleem came in three varieties - Metal Gear Solid, Gran Turismo 2 and Tekken 3. Smackdown was planned but Bleem Inc was shut down before it was released.

The demo they showed was touted as an emulator that would not only enable you to play PSX games on your Dreamcast, but also enhance the experience, as it would use portions of the consoles hardware to dramatically improve those games. What was remarkable was that it was an unofficial product, but more importantly it used the DC's ability to play the MIL-cd format, which was the way Bleem Inc managed to bypass the consoles protection mechanisms.

Initially promised as a pack of four emulators, each able to run 100 games, Bleemcast was eventually released in 2001 as a set of three discs each emulating only one title each (Gran Turismo 2, Tekken 3 and Metal Gear Solid) before Bleem Inc went bankrupt. The reason for them shutting up shop are not crystal clear however it is rumoured that Sony offered to pay off Bleem Inc's massive debts if they stopped production of all Playstation emulators, which obviously included Bleemcast.

It was a shame, as Bleemcast is an exceptional piece of coding, and proved that the Dreamcast had great potential for homebrew coders to create truly amazing programs. Even today the enhancements that Bleemcast gives over Gran Turismo 2 cannot be matched by the backwards compatibility of the Playstation 2 and its Emotion Engine, which shows us just what the DC was, and still is, capable of.

"...WHICH SHOWS US JUST WHAT THE DC WAS, AND STILL IS, CAPABLE OF..."

Not so long after the success of the Bleemcast announcement at the 2000 E3 show, a guy called Marcus Comstedt started to document the MIL-cd format.

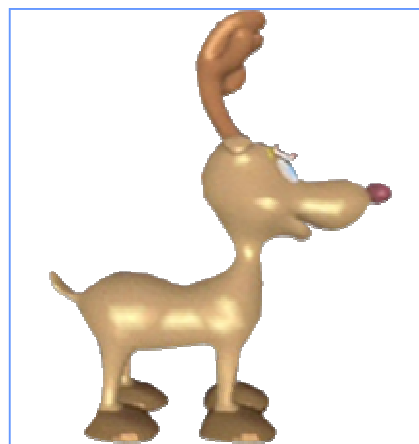
It was known for some time that MIL-cd would allow unauthorised code to be booted from a CDRom disc, so he went about disassembling of the Dreamcast and found that it was possible to self boot programs by placing an audio track before the data track and then scrambling the binary information. He posted his findings on his website along with sample code and tools that would let other coders create their own bootable Dreamcast CD's.

UTOPIA

In June 2000 the famous Utopia boot disc was released, along with pirated Dreamcast ISO images, by a warez group named Utopia.

They took all the glory by claiming to be the first group to release pirate games for the Dreamcast, however it was the hard work of Skywalker, Bleem Inc and Marcus Comstedt which made it all possible (albeit they were working towards developing the homebrew scene - piracy was simply a horrible side effect of their combined work.)

The Utopia boot disc used the MIL-cd structure to boot specific code into the



The Utopia reindeer - This little guy would spin uncontrollably on the title screen of the original boot disc.

consoles RAM which would then execute and allow the loading of unauthorised programs and imported games (bypassing the region coding) as well as pirate games.

What made this more accessible to the DC community was the fact that it could be burned onto a normal CDRom disc with a normal cd writer, and the fact that you did not need the console modified with a mod chip or other device to use it. People all over the world were using copied software in the knowledge that their warranties were still intact.

It was not long before the boot disc was discarded as warez groups found ways of incorporating the boot code into the released ISO, thus eliminating the need for a boot disc at all.

SEGA BUY OFF KALISTO

Sega were losing money on the hardware as it was, let alone the money they were losing due to lack of software sales through the ever increasing piracy scene. They had to do something fast, and so they started shutting down websites that were advertising or offering the Utopia boot disc and associated games ISO's.

One of the biggest ISO release groups at the time was Kalisto (not of Kallisto Entertainment software house fame we hasten to add.).

It is regarded in Dreamcast circles that they were the first to contribute a number of things to the scene including PAL / NTSC conversions, self booting pirate games (without the need for the Utopia boot disc) and the removal of the dummy file from games (which too was included as a copy protection mechanism).

It is reported that Sega contacted members of the group and offered them stock options in Sega themselves on the promise that the group were to stop releasing pirate games immediately.

This has never been confirmed, and in some instances ridiculed, however it would not be the first time this type of thing has happened.



Like Kalisto, the Pompey Pirates also took bribes to stop cracking games and releasing their efforts on the warez scene...allegedly.

Unconfirmed reports suggest that a few years previously Pompey Pirates of Atari ST warez fame were also allegedly offered bribes and products from top game publishers, in exchange for the group stopping the release of cracked versions of new titles. However, although they apparently accepted the goodies on offer, it never stopped them releasing the odd game or two down the line.

The story goes that when Kalisto eventually bowed out of the DC warez scene to turn their attentions to Playstation piracy, a new group called Echelon instantly appeared who could do everything that the famous Kalisto could do and then some.

It is considered and generally accepted in the piracy scene that Kalisto and Echelon are one and the same, but whatever the true story behind this really is, unfortunately for Sega, the pirated game releases kept coming and their debts kept growing.

DC HOMEBREW TAKES OFF

In June 2000 Dan Potter decided to experiment with compiling code without the need for the official Sega development kit, and just one month later he released his work as LibDream, a freeware independent Dreamcast library, which would become the defacto software that many coders used to port over the first emulators, games and applications.

In the same month the WinCE Dev kit was "leaked" and a group of coders operating from Boob.co.uk used it to release an application called BoobPlay (an mpeg and AVI player).

August 2000 was a busy month with not only another movie player released in the form of GypPlay, but this was the month in which the first emulators were successfully ported over to the console.

Gleem was a NES emulator written by Chuck Mason using LibDream, and shortly following that the SNES emulator Sintendo was released written with the

WinCE development kit.

Many other emulators and applications appeared, made with both the LibDream and WinCE development kits, and in December 2000 LibDream evolved into KallistiOS, which is still in use today.

Sales of Dreamcast hardware took off virtually overnight as more and more applications, emulators and pirate games appeared. Sega were selling consoles by the bucket load, however they were also selling them at a heavy profit loss, and the lack of game sales meant that they were building up a large debt very fast.

"...IF IT WAS NOT FOR MIL-CD SUPPORT BEING INCLUDED IN THE CONSOLES HARDWARE, THE HOMEBREW SCENE MAY NEVER HAD HAPPENED..."

Sega rapidly changed the code in the Dreamcast in an attempt to stop unauthorised code from being booted, and as of October 2000, NTSC machines had additional code installed in the bios which would not allow booting of the MIL-cd format from CDRom.

This stopped unofficial games and programs running on the newer consoles once and for all, however it was too late by then. The damage through piracy had been done, and the console was condemned to the grave in early 2001 when Sega officially ceased production.

The compromising of the MIL-cd format was amongst the reasons for the demise of the machine as it helped create the pirate scene in the first instance, however in a strange twist of fate if it was not for MIL-cd support being included in the consoles hardware, the homebrew scene may never had happened.

THE FUTURE

Admittedly, the current homebrew scene on the Dreamcast is not as strong as it was in late 2000, but that does not stop new software being written and the updating of games and emulators.

With the likes of the ever increasing Beats Of Rage mods, the ability to play MP3's, VCD's and even Divx, as well as the new emulators being developed like the Neo Geo one the future of the homebrew scene is looking good, if not terrific.

In addition to this, projects such as the GOAT Store endeavours to take the best homebrew games and press ready for commercial distribution.

GOAT is an online shop which caters for virtually all consoles both with software and hardware sales, and is to the best of our knowledge the only publishers outside of Japan that both press and distribute DC media.

Inhabitants and Maqiupai, winners of the First Annual Dream On Contest (a

contest for homebrew coders) had their creations made available for sale via the GOAT Store as prizes, so there is hope for those of you thinking about delving into the Dreamcast programming scene and want to make a few pounds from it too!

For those of you considering this, there are many websites out there now that include all the freeware tools you need to code and compile a project on the console. With some of the best programmers around there is always a helpful hand available from one of the many forums if you decide you want to try your hand at a little programming.

Over the years there have been many homebrew projects produced including the DC Tonic compilation disc handed out at E3 2001 (see boxout) as well as countless other games, emulators and applications.

In the next few pages we take a look at just a few of these creations, as well as showing you where to get help when you are stuck, and listing some of the more well known Dreamcast websites for further reading.

It is not meant to be a definitive guide by any means, however what it will show you is what is actually possible with the console in its stock form, with no additions whatsoever.

These pages alone will prove that there is still life in the old dog yet!

WHAT WAS DC TONIC?

Cryptic Allusion were a group of coders who had collaborated with three others (Moving Target Software Design, Ganksoft Entertainment and AndrewK of Napalm) to create an attractive CD which could be handed out at the 2001 E3 show, the first of its kind.

The disc, named DC Tonic, contained homebrew software and applications produced with the KallistiOS toolkit and was burned to either a red, orange or violet cd and had a custom printed label.

Not only were the games and demos bootable from the disc on a non modified Dreamcast, but the source was also available for all to see.

To try and promote homebrew coding even more the latest source code of the compiler was included, and with the games and demos made a complete homebrew development kit on a cd.

Since the E3 in 2001, Cryptic Allusion have gone from strength to strength and have recently released the beta of Feet Of Fury, much to popular appraise.

You can still download the contents of the original cd by visiting the website at:

www.cagames.com/dctonic.php

DCDivx

This DivX player has been coded from the core of the ProjectMayo project named the "Pocket DivX Player".

A group of DC coders have taken the ProjectMayo code and used it as a backbone for the port to Sega's console, using Dan Potters KallistOS tools to compile and produce the player.

It currently supports the following codecs:

Audio -
OGG, MP3 Layer I & II with MAD MP3 Decoder

Video -
OGM, V3P, DivX 3.xx, 4.xx, 5.xx, 5 Pro, Open DivX, Xvid & Avi

Although format support is good, you will no doubt have to re-encode your movie and audio files so that the Dreamcast can play them fluidly at full screen.

It's not all bad news however as DCDivX has a few features not found in other Dreamcast media players.

Firstly, it is possible to have the player on one disc and the movie files on a separate disc, thus allowing disc swapping.

Secondly, the player supports themes so that you can customise the look of the GUI that you are presented with when you boot the player.

To see a selection of themes visit:

covers.boob.co.uk/themes/divxtheme.shtml

And to see how to create your own, as well as a general FAQ and usage information visit the main DCDivX website at:

www.DCDivX.com



DC Playa

DCPlaya is a freeware music player for the Dreamcast.

Supporting the ISO9660 level 2 file system this program supports the following music codecs:

MP3, OGG Vorbis, Soundtracker, Sid Misc, SC68 and CD Audio track.

This program also supports disc swapping and therefore your music files can stay on their original discs and will not need to be burnt again just to be used with this player.

What makes this player special is the fact that it can play both SID (Commodore 64) and SC68 (Amiga & Atari ST) music, so if you are into 8 and 16bit music, this is the player for you.

To get more information on DCPlaya point your browsers to:

sashipa.ben.free.fr/dcplaya/

SidPlay

This little program, coded by CHN has to be the ultimate in retro music playing.

SidPlay does exactly what it says on the tin, it plays SID music, or rather it plays Commodore 64 / 128 music that utilises the SID chip in the original computer.

It does this by emulating the MOS 6851 sound chip and the MOS 6510 micro-processor unit.

Unlike DCPlaya, SIDPlay is a SID specific player and has been coded by a quite gifted coder, who not only has a passion for music but also in retro hardware, emulators and the retro scene in general.

Check out his website here:

chn.roarvgm.com/

And for SID music collections check out:

hvsc.c64.org/

Dreamcast Applications

DC Linux

The Linux mob have been out in force and have managed to port over a version of the operating system to the WinCE console.

Requiring a keyboard (naturally), an optional DC mouse, and preferably used with a VGA box on your PC monitor as opposed to the TV output of the DC. DC Linux is mainly a text based environment, however X Windows can be run from the command line. If you have the DC broadband adaptor you can even use FTP and HTTP commands too.

The bootable image can be downloaded and burnt to disc from:

<ftp://ftp.m17n.org/pub/super-h/dreamcast/>

And for more information visit:

www.m17n.org/linux-sh/dreamcast/

&

www.fivemouse.com/dclinux.html

Hardcore Dreamcast enthusiasts only!

Slideshow

This program-ette allows you to view Jpeg files on your console, giving you the ability to browse both backwards and forwards throughout the pictures.

Coded under the GPL by Nathan Whitehead, the viewer also allows you to change directories (so you can have individual collections of pictures), zoom in and out of the pictures and also pan around.

The nice thing about this program is that any discs you burn with jpegs on them are useable in a PC as well as the Dreamcast.

There are many features to this viewer including aspect ratio correction, gamma correction, fading between pictures, rescan cd to allow disc swap and many more.

Unfortunately the website no longer exists but you can download the program from the Spiffy.com site mentioned on the next few pages.

DreamFrodo

This amazing Commodore 64 emulator has been ported over to the Dreamcast by Tolga Abaci using the KallistOS.

Emulation of the C64 is mostly at full speed and is pumped out to your TV at a resolution of 640x480 with 44.1khz 16bit audio.

It comes packaged in a nice user interface that allows you to change the emulator settings and also load both tape and discs.

Save states are also supported via the VMU, and you can even assign certain keys to the triggers and buttons on the DC controller.

It can be used with either a real DC keyboard, or Frodo's own virtual keyboard.

Get more information here:

frodo.boob.co.uk/

UAE4ALL

This is a relatively new emulator to the homebrew scene but has already caused a stir amongst the DC faithful.

A port of the successful WinUEA, this is still in its infancy and is no where near complete, however it is definitely looking promising so far.

It currently only runs as an Amiga 500 with 1mb of ram, however the coders are the same team behind DCastaway, the amazing Atari ST emulator for the dreamcast.

Currently supporting around 50% speed, a menu system, virtual keyboard, joystick and mouse emulation and sound (although not that well) this emulator needs the Amiga Kickstart 1.3 rom to work.

Get more information from:

www.dcemu.co.uk/chui/uae4all.shtml

Definitely one to keep your eye on.

Others

Where do we begin? There are countless ports of emulators over to the Dreamcast, along with single game emulation programs too.

Here is a brief list of other emulators available:

Multi Game Emulators: -

(These emulators will play most normal game roms, however some may not run at full speed and / or with full sound capabilities)

Apple 2
Atari 800
Atari 2600
Atari 5200
Atari 7800
Atari ST
Atari Lynx
BBC Micro
BHole DC (DOS 386 Emulator)
Colecovision
Commodore 16 / Plus 4
CPS1 / CPS2 (Arcade)
Gameboy
GameGear
Genesis / Megadrive
Intelelevision
Mame
Master System
MSX
Neo Geo
Neo Geo CD
Neo Geo Pocket
N64
Odyssey 2
PC Engine
Playstation
SG 1000 / SG 3000
SNES
Spectrum
System 16
Vetrex
Wonderswan

Something for everyone there we bet.

Single Game Emulators: -

(These emulators need arcade roms to play correctly)

1943
Arkanoid
Bubble Bobble
Contra
Double Dragon
Galaga
Gradius 3
Paperboy
Rastan
Robocop
Shinobi
Space Harrier
Street Fighter 2
Super Sprint
Wonderboy
Yie Ar Kung Fu

For more information please see:

www.dcemu.co.uk/emusfordc.shtml

Emulators For Your Dreamcast

NesterDC

NesterDC is arguably the best NES emulator for the Dreamcast.

Coded by Takayama Fumihiko (formerly Ken Friece) it currently supports almost full speed emulation, complete NES sound emulation, savestate to VMU, screen adjust / size and a customizable GUI.

In addition to this NesterDC also supports GameGenie codes and themes.

What is nice about this emulator is that not only does it allow multiple emulators on one cd, it also has a feature where you can create a one game emulator.

This will then boot, and run the game without any interaction from you, and without having to navigate the menu. Great if you want a collection of one game cds.

Get more information by looking at:

www.dcemu.co.uk/nesterdc.shtml

SCUMM VM

If you remember the likes of Maniac Mansion, Zak McKracken, Monkey Island and Loom, you will have to try out the Dreamcast port of ScummVM.

SCUMMVM is the "Script Creation Utility for Maniac Mansion Virtual Machine" and was the utility used to create the famous LucasArts point and click adventure games.

The utility was initially used in 1987 for the Maniac Mansion game, and modified later for the creation of Zak McKracken and the Alien Mindbenders.

After the success of these two games development on the SCUMMVM utility continued until it has now become the application we know it as today.

The Dreamcast port of SCUMMVM was coded by the SCUMMVM Team and information regarding compatibility can be found at:

www.scummvm.org/

Feet Of Fury

Apart from Beats Of Rage, this has to be the best produced homebrew game of them all (the demo is free whereas the full version will eventually be a full commercial title).

This is a DDR style game for the Dreamcast, and an accomplished one at that.



There are 9 different characters to choose from to compete in a one on one competition with the computer being your opponent.

Whilst playing head to head, certain notes, if hit at the right time, will give you power ups and hinder your opponent in one way or another, even sometimes to the point where the game is unplayable for them!



There are around 6 tunes to choose from in the homebrew version, with the ability to include your own music, from CD which you can play the game to.

If you have a Dreamcast keyboard you can even play the Typing of Fury mode where you have to type words in time with the music!



For more information go here:

www.feetoffury.com/general.php

Echos Quest

Echo is a dog and the lead character in this original Mario-esque 3D platform game.

Trilinear (who also coded Amanda The Witches Apprentice) has created a simply superb platform game here, with graphics and sound not far from commercial offerings.

In this game you must collect coins, push boxes and solve puzzles whilst either avoiding or jumping on the wind-up penguins that are out to stop you on your quest.

There are some great effects in this game including the viewpoint which suits the game, and the effects of the ice blocks, which really should not be missed.

Get more information by visiting:

www.dchomebrew.org/echo.shtml

xRick

This is a port of the classic game Rick Dangerous coded by Metafox, a regular contributor to the homebrew scene. IMR, another great coder, has been involved with the release too and has subsequently updated parts of the game and also bought it up to full speed.

The end product is a game that has been immaculately ported over to the DC and is a simple joy to play.

Get more information on it here:

www.dchomebrew.org/xrick.shtml

As a side note, Metafox has also been involved in many other DC projects including coding the DGen Genesis emulator (probably the best emulator on the console bar none) as well as individual Mame game ports and involvement in the DCRPG project.

Read about it all on his website:

www.consolevision.com/members/metafox/dreamcast/

Dreamcast Games

3D Space Invaders

This is a novel take on the Space Invaders theme coded by Paul Boese as an entry in the programming contest held by DCEmu.co.uk

With the viewpoint being underneath the action looking up at it, the player not only has to avoid the fire of the enemy, but also steer clear of any damaged invaders as they hurtles towards you when shot.

To protect you from all of this there are 9 protection spheres between you and the enemy which take a total of five hits each before they disintegrate.

It was only coded as a one level demo for the compo, however it really does show how the console can handle an original take on an old idea.

Take a peek at it by surfing to:

www.dchomebrew.org/3dinviders.shtml

Amanda

Amanda The Witches Apprentice (to give it its full title) is a simple yet addictive 3D game that has you guiding our broomstick riding friend through a maze of oncoming blocks.

As she is always moving in a forward motion with constant speed, you only have to control her up and down movement, achieved via the A button on the joypad. The longer you hold it down the higher Amanda goes, release it and her height reduces.

The more blocks you manage to successfully pass, the closer they become, making it harder to avoid them as the game progresses.

As blocks come onto the screen, the counter at the bottom goes up, and it is the need to get a greater score that will keep you coming back for more.

Check it out at:

www.dchomebrew.org/amanda.shtml

Current Mods

Around 10 or so completed mods have been released, each of which turn the original BOR game into something completely different. Here are just a few of them...

GOULS 'N' GHOSTS RETURNS



www.freewebs.com/gng-r/

DOTT—RETURN OF THE PURPLE TENTACLE



teamsanity.wildeaglerecords.com/dottmod/

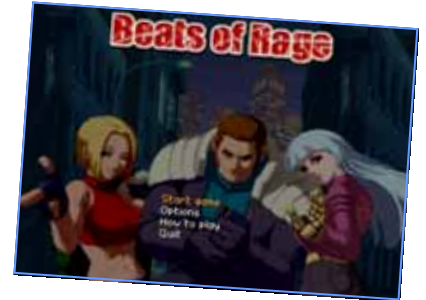
ROAD RASH REVOLUTION



www.freewebs.com/rr-r/index.htm

About Beats Of Rage

This freeware game coded by the Senile Team started out in life as a Streets Of Rage meets King Of Fighters tribute, but has now evolved into a fully modable game with a rock solid engine that others are just eager to utilise for other homebrew efforts.



In true Streets Of Rage style the original BOR is everyone's idea of a side scrolling street fighting game. The levels are similar in theme to the Megadrive classic and the sprites are taken directly from the King Of Fighters series of games.



There are three playable characters, food to increase your power meter, special moves, and even men on motorcycles.

Beats of Rage

dcevolution.netfirms.com/DCHelp/BOR.shtml

For all of your Beats of Rage questions answered.

Work In Progress Mods

Here are a few screenshots of mods which may be coming to a DC near you soon...

GA : THE CURSE OF DEATH ADDER



TARGET RENEGADE



DOUBLE DRAGON



STRIDER



As you can see this game looks, feels and plays like a commercial game and without doubt it is the best homebrew title on the Dreamcast to date.

What's more, where BOR surpasses all commercial offerings is in its modable capabilities, which gives coders the ability to create their own backgrounds, sprites and levels to create truly unique games.

The way the Dreamcast coders have accepted and developed the game is truly a testament to the longevity of the console itself and the homebrew coders that are still fully supporting it, even if Sega have stopped.

Final Thoughts

Everyone who has owned a Dreamcast at some point in their lives have had the opportunity to be treated by some of the best games that have ever been created for a home console.

Being technically equal to the Naomi board Sega managed to take arcade machines into the home. Games players were playing near perfect conversions of countless games, some of which were groundbreaking at the time, and some of which have never been bettered.

The likes of Crazy Taxi, Soul Calibur, Power Stone, Dead Or Alive 2, House Of The Dead 2 and the many others were at the forefront of the gaming industry at the time, with DC owners being lucky enough to play them in the comfort of their armchairs, much to the disgust of Playstation and N64 owners all over the world.

But like all good things it had to come to an end. Piracy definitely played its part in the demise of the console, when Sega announced they were ceasing production in 2001, however the likes of Beats Of Rage, Feet Of Fury and all the other programs, emulators and applications that have been carefully coded, have managed to keep the machine alive since then.

For every great game, emulator or application created there are probably three or four that are never updated or even finished, and this is where a potential problem lies. Homebrew software is coded and distributed for free with the coders only motivation being their own desires, and because of the lack of financial reward, a lot of programs fall by the wayside.

The Dream ON competition however, has recently brought a sense of meaning to those endless nights of bedroom programming by offering commercial pressing and distribution to top games entered into their yearly competition.

Fundamentally, the homebrew scene is fuelled by the passion that the following has for the console, and it is this togetherness and strength that has made, and will keep, the Dreamcast at the top of the development tree.

SPECIAL THANKS

Go to the entire DC homebrew scene who have helped with the creation of this article including Dan Potter, Metafox, Curtiss (over at the DCEmu forum), Groepaz (of the Hitmen group) and anyone else we may have left out.

Also a big thanks to those of you who still create homebrew software for the Dreamcast, as if it was not for your efforts, this machine would have been dead and buried a long time ago.

General Websites

Here is a small list of some of the bigger websites devoted to the DC homebrew scene:

www.dchomebrew.org

www.cagames.com

www.dcevolution.net

dreamon.cyberdogcastle.com

www.dcemulation.com

imrtechnology.ngemu.com/index.html

www.consolevision.com/members/fackue

A special mention has to go to the guys and girls at www.dcemu.co.uk who have arguably the best website devoted to everything DC Homebrew.

Also, for the newbies out there, take a trip to dcevolution.net/DCHelp/ where you will find news, tutorials and a community forum dedicated to those new to the homebrew scene.

Beats Of Rage Websites

Beats Of Rage is not only a good game, but also a heavily modifiable one. Here are some sites for you to look at regarding the main game and the mods available to it:

senileteam.segaforums.com/index.php

This is the game creators site, full of news and mod information including new projects the Senile Team are working on.

www.gamikaze.org

The ultimate BOR website not only advertising completed and demo mods, but also contains a very healthy community forum where you can chat to others who are using the BOR engine to create their own games.

borrevolution.vg-network.com

Created by BOR enthusiasts, this website is growing by the day to become a definitive site for mod files including the mods themselves, sprite downloads and other programming information.

DC Homebrew Resources

SPIffy.Com

Homebrew programs have to be written to CD as the Dreamcast laser has difficulty reading CD-RW discs.

As you can imagine, testing out homebrew programs one by one can be an expensive task as there are several hundred floating about the net.

SPIffy.com takes this problem away from you as there you will find SBI files and in conjunction with the Self Boot Inducer (SBI) program, you can burn as many homebrew programs onto one CD as possible, with access to each via a menu system.

SPIffy is the home of the largest SBI file collection on the internet at present and has not only the most currently updated files, but also contains a great tutorial section as well as a very active community forum.

Check it out here:

www.consolevision.com/members/sbiffy/

Programming Websites

A bit more on the technical side, these websites are the places to be if you are thinking of dabbling in a bit of Dreamcast programming.

www.boob.co.uk

www.gamedev.net/reference/articles/article1368.asp/

hitmen.c02.at/hitdc

www.cagames.com/articles/howtodev.php

dev.dcemulation.com

In addition to this a new project called DC FreeDev has been created and is a selection of tools which have been bundled into a package which is trying to make Dreamcast development easier for everyone.

Although a new idea, it has already gone through several revisions as more and more coders contribute to the cause. Get more information here:

www.dchomebrew.org/dcfreedev.shtml



FEATURE - BIRDS EYE VIEW

How many times do you see adverts on Ebay for arcade machines... having to sell because 'the wife says we need the space'...or 'my wife won't be sad to see it go'...

or even 'play on a funky small sized cabinet that fits anywhere without a nagging girlfriend, or worse, the wife moaning how big it is'.

What sort of wives are these? They just don't know what they're missing :)

No-one at work knows of my hobbies... why?...they just wouldn't understand.

I love playing, collecting and repairing arcade machines, enjoy PC games, console gaming, collecting retro gaming items...so what's wrong with that?

It's simple...I'm female!

I remember back to being a kid. We lived in Scotland and all of our family lived in Newcastle. We managed to make the long journey a good few times a year, spending most of the journey playing with electronic hand held consoles.

I had a Merlin which I used to play with for hours on end (which incidentally Merlin is now re-released and back on the shelves). I had a couple of shoot em up's too which used to make the journeys, and long visits to relatives houses, much more bearable!

My family returned to England in 1980 and settled in Newcastle. My next step in gaming came a couple of years later when I was around 12 years old and I got a Vectrex for Christmas – WOW my own arcade system. I used to play Minestorm and Scramble for hours and hours...'yes mam...just one more game before bedtime'...hehehe...I knew one game would last a good long while!!!

Not long after that my little brother got a Commodore 16 which I used to hog too. I remember writing a program to display some lyrics I'd copied out of Smash Hits one verse at a time in different colours (hey top class programming!) Oh and I didn't mention it was Wham! Lyrics. Lol

The problem was I didn't realise at the time how memory worked and I filled it, consequently crashing the computer and wiping everything I'd done off my tape.

That was it for the computer as far as programming went, so I stuck to playing games on it.

When I thought gaming couldn't get any better, my dad opened an indoor market where he rented space out to traders, and in each room of the market was an

arcade machine! WOW! Asteroids, Scramble, Space Invaders...heaven.

On a Saturday he used to get me to look after a 'bric a crap' stall and I used to ask for my £1 pocket money at the start of the day – in 10p's! By the end of the day I never had any pocket money left... but did have the top 10 high scores on Asteroids that resided in the same room!

Not long after that my dad got me working part time in his café in the school holidays, and I had to give out change in the little arcade he had at the back of the café – how cool was that?

We had a few cabinets namely Frogger, Scramble and Donkey Kong, a Defender unit (which I didn't play because 10p just didn't last long enough) an Asteroids, a Space Invader, and a cocktail cab running Uniwers...what a fun school holidays that was...and when the guy came to empty the machines he always gave me a couple of free credits – what a nice guy!

Well, what did my dad do next...he opened a miniature crazy golf on the promenade of Whitley Bay so I had to spend all of the school holidays for the next two years there, (in those days arcades were real arcades) so I blame my dad really for getting me into gaming!

The next few years were a blur...doing exams, finishing school, getting first job, learning to drive then when I was 19 out came the Sega Megadrive.

I sold the Vectrex and it's games (funny how we regret things we did when we were younger) and bought a Megadrive, and played Sonic the Hedgehog like mad...wow games you can play on your telly. I ended up having to buy a portable for my bedroom as I was hogging the main TV too much!

After that I missed out on gaming for a while. I got married a bit too young and it wasn't until I left my (very boring) husband, and a bit later met my (now) fiancé that games got back into my life.

On our first weekend together we spent a lot of the weekend playing on MAME, I couldn't believe that you could play arcade games on a PC! WOW.

I must admit I'm well into gaming, PC, consoles, arcade – the lot, and I spend a lot of time on the net. I also love gadgets. I'm probably what some folk would

class as a geek – but I don't care. I've met a lot of great people on the net who are into the same thing and usually the first reaction is that of a surprise, coming across a girl who likes gaming.

It's also given me the chance to have to learn how to solder, and understand schematics and be able to help people on various forums. I find the restoration and repair side of arcade machines really rewarding and interesting.

I don't mention it to anyone at work or other 'real' grown ups I come across, I really don't think they'd understand what a thirty-something woman gets out of gaming. Well let me tell you. It's fun, it's addictive, it's interesting and I enjoy it – much better than sitting watching telly all the time. In 'real life' I'm an I.T. Trainer and I wouldn't dare mention it to any of my delegates/students simply for the backlash that would probably follow!

In a very male dominated hobby a lot of guys I come across say they wish their partners or wives (or both!) were as understanding when it comes to them playing games. I'm just chuffed to bits and lucky that my partner Alan is as into all of this as I am. I also don't mind that I'm one of a few girl gamers...it's kinda cool! :)

What is funny though, is what's retro now...is what I had when I was a kid!

Shellski's Collection

Since I met Alan some five years ago we now have the following little collection:

Moon Cresta (Cocktail Cab)
Space Firebird (Cocktail Cab)
Space Invaders (Cocktail Cab)

Operation Thunderbolt (upright Cab)
APB (Upright Cab)
Pole Position (Upright Cab)
3 x Upright Jamma Cabs
Phoenix (Upright Cab)
Astro Fighter (Upright Cab)
Terminator 2 (Upright Cab)
Original Asteroids (Upright Cab)
Galaga 88 (Upright Cab)
Nemesis (Upright Cab)

Mr & Mrs Pacman (Pinball Machine)
Space Invaders (Pinball Machine)

Monopoly 60 (Fruit Machine)
Space Invaders (Prize Machine)
Penny Pusher - 2 Player.

And a whole heap pf computers and consoles including:

Vectrex + most games + 3D Viewer,
Megadrive + Megadrive II, SNES,
Gamecube, Gameboy, GBA, GBA SP,
PS2, C64, CPC 464, Amiga (500 + 1200 I think?), and much much more!

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COLUMN - MAME & CAB BUILDING

At some time in your life you get to a point where looking back is often as rewarding as looking forward.

We look to the past and fondly remember the innocent times in one's life; the time when life was simpler; the time when each new experience helped to mould you into the person you have now become. The time when each day was an adventure; the time when the latest arcade machine gave you such an amazing roller coaster ride of emotion, it persuaded you to part with all your weekly pocket money in one afternoon!

Suddenly your thoughts start to drift. You start daydreaming, recollecting the things you used to do on those warm afternoons during the long school summer holidays back home in your childhood. Getting your "Chopper" out of the garden shed and cycling down to the coastline and meeting up with your mates. Playing Space Invaders in the local chip shop...

And then in your mind time moves forward...you study, you are awarded certificates, you get a job.... time ticks on...there you are getting married at the local church... time ticks on.... there you are becoming a Dad for the first time.... time ticks on ...there you are taking your children to school...and before you know it, there you are introducing your children to tales of how things were like when you were a kid...(During the war and all that!)

My name is Chris, a 30 something gamer. I grew up by the seaside in the 80's and early 1990's. Apart from the sea, sand and ice cream that are the obvious benefits of living by the coast, amusement arcades were also a prominent, important feature of the small towns in my area.

As the years of my youth passed, the arcades became full of more wondrous arcade machines and continued to be very popular places to hang out by both the locals and tourists alike.

The introduction of the home computer allowed the arcades to be emulated on the home TV, albeit in primitive form initially.

As technology marched forward with new iterations of home computers being released, the games developed for them matched and surpassed the graphical and vocal delight of anything the arcades could provide, and introduced longevity and complexity within their gameplay.

As I grew up through those times I slowly forgot about how things were and continually embraced each new advancement in the entertainment industry, selling the hardware and games of last year's technology to be able to afford the next new thing, ZX Spectrum, Atari ST, Commodore Amiga, Sony Playstation – the list goes on and on.

So there I was in my mid-30's at the beginning of 2003. A time when the amusement arcades now saw dance games and fruit machines as the norm – not a joystick in sight!

A time when each newly released game on the modern gaming formats (PS2, XBOX, Gamecube, PC) required the gamer to invest a huge amount of time to learn an endless number of keys and gameplay actions and enter a gaming world that was normally epic in size.

How I longed for the simple games of the past!

So I turned to the internet for the simple gaming fix I so desired, and before very long I found the emulator scene.



I found that emulators existed for more or less every computer and console I had owned in the past, and for many systems I had never even heard of, and allowed me to re-live the games of yesteryear once again, albeit on my PC.

I then stumbled upon an emulator called MAME. This emulator allowed gamers to play arcade titles as recent as Ridge Racer and Virtua Fighter, amongst 3,000 or so other arcade classics of the 1970's, 80's and 90's, on their computer.

So there I was in my study introducing my 4 year old daughter to the simplicity and purity of Pacman on my PC using MAME, saying press that key on the keyboard to go up, that one to go down etc. I started thinking to myself, "this is great but wouldn't it be even better if my daughter could play and experience Pacman as it was meant to be played using proper arcade controls, and not have to worry about whether she was pressing the right key on the keyboard or not?"

So I turned to the internet again, I had been bitten by the bug!

A NEW HOBBY BEGINS

I logged onto a popular search engine typed in 'Mame' and pressed the search button. The first few retrieved sites informed me about the MAME emulator and its history and encouraged me to me to download the latest version of the emulator – which I promptly did.

The next site I looked at was entitled 'Build a MAME cabinet in 24hrs'

rtcw.no-ip.org/cabinet/index.shtml

I entered the site and was presented with a detailed diary account of how two chaps, after purchasing the wood and parts from local and international supply companies, built a playable and 99% completed arcade machine within 24hrs in their garage! I read the contents of that website more than once, completely fascinated and hungry for more information, trying to digest and understand the activities those guys performed during the construction of the cabinet. I made a note of the unfamiliar jargon on the site and searched the web further to discover their meaning!

On my journey of discovery through the link pages of the many cabinet building sites I found, I seemed to always be directed to a couple of sites that seemed to be regarded as a higher authority on arcade cabinet building than the others.

The first site you may want to bookmark is Ultimarc, who can be found at:

www.ultimarc.com

A large percentage of the cabinet building sites that I had visited used a device supplied by Ultimarc called the I-pac.

This device plugs into the keyboard slot on a PC and allows the interface of arcade joysticks and buttons to be made to a PC. As the joystick and buttons are used by the gamer, the I-pac converts the action into a corresponding keyboard press that instructs the MAME emulator to move your spaceship left, right, fire etc.

Ultimarc also sell all manner of arcade related goodies such as buttons, joysticks, trackballs etc. as well as the I-Pac itself, and they even have a UK office, something which turns out to be very rare indeed in this cabinet building field.

The second site is simply called BYOC, or 'Build Your Own Cabinet' controls, and

can be found at:

www.arcadecontrols.com

This site has a plethora of information contained within its many pages and I found myself coming back to two sections of it on a continual basis.

- **The Forum**
Where you find diary accounts of the build process of member's cabinets including detailed photographs of progress.
- **The Examples Pages**
Where you find links to member's websites that diarise the activities of during their own cabinet building experience.

I visited and read every single example site listed in BYOC (there are a few!) and frequented the forums daily, absorbing ideas, studying plans and preparing myself for my first cabinet build.

PLANNING THE BUILD

I talked about what I was going to do to many people for a long time. My confidence in actually making a cabinet at that time was not particularly high, even though I felt I had read all there was to read about making a cabinet.

I still faced the following problems:

- I had not done any woodwork since the 3rd form in school when I was 13, dropping the subject as soon as I could in favour of something more exciting.
- My DIY skills were very basic. How do I use a Router?
- My toolbox comprised of only a drill, a number of screwdrivers, a cheap jigsaw purchased for cutting laminated flooring and a hammer.
- I wanted my cabinet to be as authentic as possible, which ultimately meant spiralling costs.
- The web sites I had visited were primarily American based and therefore did not tell me where to get the appropriate parts I needed from the UK.
- I had to decide what type of cabinet to make! I had the choice of a full arcade cabinet design (traditional upright shape where you stand up to the play the game); a cocktail cabinet (sit down design where two players can play opposite each other); or a Bartop design (designed to sit on a table or be freestanding on 'legs')
- I had to figure out how to cut a perfect curve in wood!

- I had to figure out how to cut a straight line in wood!!
- I had to decide what type of wood to use.

I am sure that those reading this, who have contemplated building their own cabinet have also come across some if not all of the issues I had thought about, but I was not going to be beaten.

After a year or so of researching and deliberating on what to do next, I finally had a plan to build from.

My cabinet of choice would be a cocktail cabinet and in a single impulsive moment I ordered a whole list of parts from Happ Controls totalling nearly £200, so as they say "In for a penny, in for a pound!"

The decision to make a cocktail cabinet was purely based on the theory that the resulting unit would be smaller than one based on an upright design and with a bit of luck my wife may allow it to 'live' in the lounge if it was presentable enough, and if I could persuade her that it could double as a coffee table! (Well that was my thinking at the time anyway!).

And then before I knew it the postman delivered my order.

HANDY ANDY HAS NOTHING ON ME!

The Happ Controls order comprised of a couple of joysticks, a number of buttons, a Midway coin door, a Ms Pacman graphic underlay and a 19" monitor bezel!

I ordered some MDF (Medium Density Fibre) wood from a local DIY shop and was informed it would be delivered the next day.

"...AFTER A YEAR OR SO OF RESEARCHING AND DELIBERATING ON WHAT TO DO NEXT, I FINALLY HAD A PLAN TO BUILD FROM..."

MDF seemed to be the material of choice for many cabinet builders due to its durability and ease of use. I ordered a sheet large enough to cover the size of the design I was going to use from one of the websites I had visited.

The next day the delivery guy carried the MDF from his van into the garage. At this time I did not fully appreciate how heavy MDF was – this guy made it look like he was carrying a crate of fruit.

I bought some workhorses to support the MDF and using the aforementioned design, pencilled each line on the wood where I wanted a cut to be. I then went about cutting the wood using my trusty jigsaw.

It was now that I encountered the first of many hurdles. For the life of me I could not cut a straight line. I used every technique I had read about on the internet in cutting wood but still no joy.

I basically spent the afternoon sawing into the MDF continually looking for inspiration, hoping and praying that I would discover the trick / skill needed to actually cut a straight line, but it was not to be.

A couple of hours later I gave in, dejected, frustrated and feeling a little sorry for myself. I needed help.

I had seen cocktail cabinet kits on the internet at www.gremlinsolutions.co.uk, maybe this would be easier, especially as it was my first cabinet.

The kits cost around £280 which I personally found as an extortionate price for what you actually get. A piece of MDF large enough to form all the pieces to make a cocktail cabinet totals £10.58 in the local hardware store – so using Gremlin Solutions was not a justifiable cost efficient option for me whatsoever.

I then phoned some local carpenters to see if they would cut the MDF for me to the required design. Again I was getting quotes in excess of £200, well beyond my budget.

As they say behind every great man there's a great woman, or something like that anyway! My wife suggested to me to use the wood cutting service in B&Q, a large DIY type store here in the UK. I had nothing to lose. I took my plan to the local store and before you know it they had cut all the straight edge pieces I needed to make the cabinet from one piece of MDF for only the cost of the wood plus 50p for each cut above the first three which were free! Perfect!!!

Finally I was making some progress. Just this short step filled me with the confidence to continue with the build and

before I knew it I had something before me that was starting to resemble a 'Ms Pacman' cabinet. My excitement was clear, for all those who knew me, to see. I was like the cat that got the cream!

Once that initial first hurdle was overcome I methodically got through each part of the design, making mistakes, learning from them and generally having good fun in the process!

As progress was made I kept a journal on the BYOC Forum. The encouragement and support I got from those guys was amazing – the only shame was that it was primarily a USA based site/forum and some of the recommendations of where to get parts from were not appropriate to us UK residents, or anyone else outside of the USA!

Time passed and progress continued to be made on the cabinet. I managed to get the coin door working including the



This Ms Pacman replica cocktail cabinet was Chris' first effort and cost him near to £600!

coin slot light; I used my jigsaw to cut the "curvy" cocktail top; I ordered, received and fitted the tempered glass top; I built two control panels and fitted them to the cabinet; I installed a PC and monitor.

Three months or so later I had a working 2-player authentic looking 'Ms Pacman' Cocktail cabinet for the world to see (oh, and for me and my mates to play arcade games on!).

I have heard the phrase "Wow, where did you buy that?" so many times now since the completion of the cabinet. The gratification I feel when I return with, "I made it!!!" is unbelievable.

I played all my favourite arcade games from my youth on the cabinet (Hi-scores were continually being bettered!) and my daughter played Pacman as it was meant to be played (she plays a bloody good game too considering she's only 5!!).

And then I was thinking...I must build another cabinet...and before I knew it I had built a further two cabinets. One was based on a Bartop design and the next one on a design I had come up with which I called the 'Mini-Cocktail'.

I posted pictures of the cabinets on the BYOC forum and again I received praise for my efforts and lots of questions from members on the build process I had followed and whether I had plans I could



This is Chris' second effort, a very impressive Bartop design.

submit.

Since making them, I have sold the Bartop and Mini-Cocktail cabinets on E-bay, but the Ms Pacman cabinet still takes pride-of-place in our bay window.

I was not finished yet though!

I got to thinking again ...I wanted my own website and forum just like BYOC but primarily to help UK enthusiasts. As I mentioned earlier in the article, one of the obstacles I had to overcome when researching for my initial project was translating the products and suppliers that were recommended in the BYOC forums to products and stores that we have here in the UK. So I thought a UK based site and forum would fill a gap in the UK MAME cabinet building community.

So for my next challenge, web design!

DIGITAL ARCADE

Building the site itself was quite easy. I had previously used a package called Namo Webeditor V4 but had sold it on. So first things first, I purchased a copy of Namo V6 and started to build my site – this was at the start of November 2004.

I realised that I needed a name for the site and quickly came up with Digital Arcade. The name sounded nice and hopefully gave the potential viewer some clues as to what was inside the site. I registered the domain and secured some web space with my web space provider.

I posted a request on the BYOC forum asking if any of the members would be so kind as to design me a graphic based around Digital Arcade and within hours I had several responses.

I eventually decided upon a logo which you can now see on each page of my website located at:

www.digitalarcade.co.uk

I then posted links to many of the forums I was familiar with on the internet in a blatant attempt to attract people to my site. Some of the forums welcomed my free advertising and others shunned my activities. The end result was that the site attracted a lot of visitors over a very short period of time, over 5,000 hits to date on the site over a period of 9 weeks!

As I write this article the forum continues to see more and more daily activity with its current 60 members.

I have been constantly updating the site and it now includes documentation on a small percentage of my own personal retro collection, many pictures of the three cabinets I have made, the beginnings to a diary of the build of my next cabinet and some great contributions from the more vocal forum members.

I have met some great people over the few months Digital Arcade has been online including some great Mame, cabinet making and retro enthusiasts from all across the world, including the editor of this fanzine, Simon.

THE FUTURE

Word of my new hobby has steadily spread through some niche communities in the UK via forums on the internet and also through word of mouth to family, family friends, friends of friends, work colleagues, and pretty much anyone else who would listen!

So what does the future entail?

At the time of writing I have got six "orders" for the Mini-Cocktail cabinet from friends and family outstanding, and am considering making and selling more of these cabinets in the future through my website and E-bay. The thought of actually starting up a small company to build and sell arcade cabinets has also crossed my mind.

In addition to all this, buy the time you read this I would have already attended RetroVision V (all sold out!) and raffled off a cocktail cabinet as a competition prize.

In terms of the website, I am going to be building up the information relating to my personal retro collection as well as making the site THE UK authority on Mame and cabinet building.

Just to give me something else to do apart from all of this I will be heading the Mame section in this very fanzine, and already have some great plans for it.

Expect to see reviews on the latest Mame building equipment including joysticks, spinners, keyboard interfaces and whatever else I can get my hands on...

...reviews on Mame games, the popular ones as well as some more obscure titles...

...Mame troubleshooting help, and hints and tips to make mame run better....

...A self build cabinet or website of the issue reviewed and rated....

....A classic cabinet dissected so that you can see how it became a success....

....cabinet collections from those lucky enough to have more than one...

...and much much more.

So until the next time, remember to keep it Mame.





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COLUMN - REMAKES: BEGINNINGS

A particular fond memory of mine is Christmas 1983. For years and years the same Yule time routine occurred; Visit grandparents one day, they visit us the next, visit aunts and uncles the day after, and yes you've guessed the rest.

My father had his own business, was doing particularly well and so that year we went away for Christmas to Haworth in West Yorkshire to escape the routine. It was a little 'treat' seeing as my father had worked incredibly hard and needed a break.

The hotel boarded with the Yorkshire Moors, the nearest village was Haworth itself with its cobbled streets where the Brontë sisters surely once took a walk, and of course the infamous 'Black Bull' decorated traditionally as to not deter from its uniqueness.

What's even better, and as I get older I notice this is becoming less, is that it snowed! Boy did it snow. People were entering the hotel asking the receptionist if they knew of a local breakdown service, guests checking in with their shoes covered in snow and the floodlights of the hotel casting a yellow shine over the totally untouched and ever increasingly growing blanket of whiteness.

There was I, a 12 year old alone in a hotel bedroom, parents downstairs acquainting with other adults, and for me an adventure is about to occur.

For starters, I had the mini bar in the hotel room. Now I'm not going to pretend I 'raided' the spirits, of course I didn't, but yes there were bottles of 7up, cans of coke, crisps, nuts and the complimentary biscuits - perfect accompaniment for the film Flash Gordon (the one with Queens music) showing on the TV.

It all added up to total captivation for any 12 year old who's got a double bed, remote control TV, plenty of 'refreshment' and the snow outside now turning everything white at an incredible rate.

Fantastic film, but it was over way to quick, and the time was only 8pm. Seeing as there was some tragic episode of Crossroads on ITV, BBC1 had an Agatha Christie film (probably Murder on the Nile), BBC2 was singing Carols at Ely Cathedral and Channel 4 wasn't even invented, I decided to turn my computer on and have a play to pass the time.

Yes you read correct, my computer was there in the hotel bedroom with me. I'd asked, no I'll be honest, I'd begged / pleaded / asked for mercy / cried and

blackmailed for my parents to take my computer with me which they eventually agreed to and so after the film, on it came.

My first computer was a Texas Instruments TI99/4a. There were few games, and those that were available were expensive (£19.99 WAS expensive in 1983!!) and would you believe it, I'd come all this way and forgot the only 2 games I owned - Parsec and Pirate Adventure, although I had packed my Extended Basic cartridge.

Beside me on the bed (apart from a few empty bags of crisps, and an empty can of coke) was the December edition of Computer and Video Games. It's cover showed a young child sat on a bed, a black and white cat at his feet and there he was coding away whilst a space ship zoomed by his window outside.

Anyone who can remember the "real" C&VG will remember how much this magazine packed software, hardware, interviews, tips, tricks, adverts and code listings for various formats and gorgeous covers each and every month.

I also had a Christmas edition of Computer Weekly, again a great little 35p magazine that covered most of the popular formats. Inside this particular issue was a listing for the Spectrum called Bomber. A really simple game, a plane flew across the screen, each time it reached the end it appeared on the



The 'Good-Ole-Days' of C&VG - Dec '83

opposite side again only lower and you hit a key to release a bomb and, yes we have heard it so many times since.

Pumped full with happiness over the film, the snow, the refreshments (and wondering if I'd see that cute girl at Christmas Day breakfast!!) I was eager to do something to pass the time away before Christmas Day arrived.

I decided I'd try and convert Bomber from the Spectrum to the TI. I was pretty clued up with Basic although I hadn't done much with it I grant you, but I showed an interest, and apart from the Peeks and Pokes that the Spectrum had in it's language, converting the game to my TI was pretty easy.

About an hour later, there I was playing what was meant to be a Spectrum Game on my TI.

Months later, I was still converting the listings which took up a good few hours on a night as I listened to Radio Luxemburg or watched Nino Feretto on Music Box in the early hours, whilst the likes of Def Leopard, Europe, Sisters of Mercy and other great bands played their latest.

Eventually I took to writing my own games, some of the more famous ones being Dr. Who And The Deadly Swamp, Diver Miner, Laser Dodger and of course Car Killer. I agree, you've probably never heard of them, if I remember rightly I made about £20 in sales to friends who lived in the estate in Pontefract where I lived. But it was a start to where I am today.

I'm 33 now. That's 21 years that I've programmed pretty much every day, almost a third of my entire life, and 17 of those years I've been getting paid for it. I can't remember any occasion, in fact I know there has never been one, when I've questioned my career. I've worked for medium and large sized companies and more recently a very well known global-wide company as software developments manager, and I currently reside in an ever-so-small village just outside Swansea, in Wales.

I've introduced myself before giving some details on game making purely so you know that what you're about to read hasn't been created by someone who has a passing interest or pretends to know a lot about nothing.

Likewise you'll also get to realise that I don't for one second believe that you'll get all the answers from this article, but I sure do hope that you'll have a better understanding and you're a little more

'clued-up' in what could become a nice little hobby, maybe even career if you find it interesting.

Please remember that this article is not intended for people who wish to create a game to rival HalfLife 4 or Toca 10, instead it's aimed purely at the bedroom coder or indie developer who wishes to create a retro remake.

REMAKES DEFINED

In it's general context, a remake of a game is a newly coded version of an existing title from a retro machine.

Retro machines are more commonly the 8bit series of computers and games consoles, of which the Commodore 64, Spectrum, Amstrad, Atari 2600, Collecovision and BBC Micro are but a small selection.

As time goes on, other computers and games consoles are added to the list and it is now widely accepted that the Commodore Amiga, Atari ST, Sega Megadrive and Super Nintendo are also part of the retro age. Twenty years from now, we'll probably see the XBOX and PS2 as retro machines.

As for a retro remake, well there is a common agreement that there are three kinds of remakes, a Direct Remake, a Clone and finally a Hybrid.

To cover the first example, a Direct Remake is by far the most common. It takes the original game and enhances it slightly by having better quality graphics and sound yet retaining the original game play. This game play component is never changed, although it is acceptable to eliminate bugs or annoyances that may have been criticised on the original.

One of the finest examples of a remake is Retrospecs Head Over Heels.

Retrospec achieved incredible results with the graphics and sound updated to a level where they are definitely not modern looking (none of this 3d pixel-shaded alpha-blended texture mapping), but they are certainly significantly enhanced from the original.

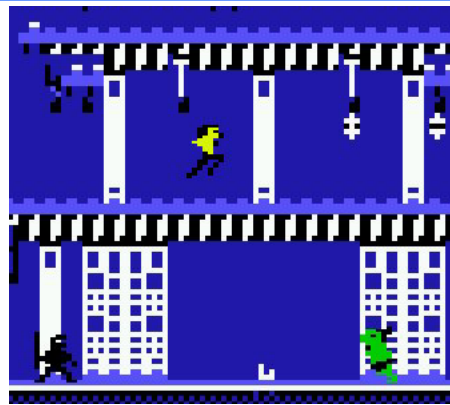


Retrospecs 'Head Over Heels' remake

Anyone who has played this remake will instantly appreciate how good it is.

The second type of remake is a Clone which is an identical copy of the original that can be played within a non-emulated environment. The graphics and sound of a clone are identical to that of the original as is the game play, although again, like the direct remake, it is acceptable for bugs to be fixed, however any 'annoyances' are retained within the Clone.

A great example to show what a Clone is can be found playing Mark Rostens' Clone of Data Soft's classic C64 game Bruce Lee. Mark has done an unbelievable clone of this game and has received an impressive collection of glowing reviews and praises for his effort. Whilst it is fair to say Mark isn't alone in the Clone remaking lair, unquestionably Mark hit an instant winner as the original title was a hit back in 1983.



Mark Rostens' wonderful 'Bruce Lee' clone

Finally, the last type of remake is called a Hybrid. Hybrids are essential based on one game, but have other elements of game play coded in. Here, graphics and sound from the original are enhanced, as sometimes is the game play.

Additional features perhaps taken from other games are also included to create a second version of the original game, yet still retaining a feel that you are indeed playing the original.

One example of this may be Space Invaders, but instead of using a missile to destroy the invaders, you could use a bouncing ball taken from Arkanoid (InvaderNoid anyone?).

Hybrids are perhaps the least common of remakes to be found as they do tend to be the hardest to design without destroying the feel of the original game being remade.

DECISIONS DECISIONS

It's always a difficult decision to come to when creating a remake. There are many choices you have to make. Do you play it safe and do a direct Clone, but who's going to want to play a Clone when they can play it on the original or an emulator?



The PangicPlus hybrid from TCKSoft

Do you merge two great games to create a new one but run the risk of total disaster?

Or do you create a new remake and hope that someone somewhere will compliment you (or condemn you) for changing the original into your new enhanced version?

Whichever route you do decide to go down you can guarantee you'll receive mixed responses from all parties.

Take some advice, do what YOU want to do. Remember, the remakes scene isn't a competition nor is there any one governing body to tell you what to do or not to do. There are no prizes to be gained; your work is given out free so those 12 weeks painstakingly creating models in a 3d editor, or those months of coding for a few hours each night will not give you any financial gain.

I for one will hold my hand way up and appreciate that you want people to like your work and you don't agree that shoddiness is an excuse just because you're not getting paid.

But remember, there is a limit. It's all very well doing a 256 pixel-perfect ray-traced PacMan with power-pills that explode into a gazillion pixels before zooming into the screen, but is there really a need for such eye-candy?

Take your time, be sensible, set an achievable target and try everything you can to stick to it.

Think of the remaking scene as simply being a place where gamers of old and new, modern day hard cores to the nostalgic driven elderly, can play a game that has stood the tests of time and is a joy to play.

Most people are sensible enough to know that these games are generally created by either one or a small group of individuals who are not expecting quality like that of HalfLife2 or Doom3.

Before getting deep into the coding or the graphics, ask the community what they'd like too. Remember, they are the ones playing the games and it's always a nice touch to ask those gamers (you could say your customers) what they'd like to see.

Maybe you're going to remake Wheelie but people would love to have a first person perspective mode!

Or even you're planning on a remake of Monty Mole and the general opinion is that little old Monty should be a moley black!

There are lots of options that you will have never thought of that increases your chances of getting your work out there and ultimately satisfying a hungry audience.

Finally, but probably most importantly, try to track down the original author or team of the title you wish to create and see if there are any unknown legalities or issues with you doing the remake.

In every instance apart from one, I know the developer(s) of the original have given their blessing to the remake and are often shocked that the popularity of their title is still strong.

A perfect example of this is Ovine by Designs beautiful remake of Imogen. The original developer Michael St Aubyn provided Ovine with copies of his original sketches, designs and ideas that never quite made it into the original title. Ovine by Design were naturally thrilled with the enthusiasm and generosity that Michael gave and of course this fuelled their desire to create a beautiful remake in Imogen.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

So what tools are required to start you on your journey? Believe it or not, you don't really need much, and what you do need is very easily affordable to teenagers, students and even OAP's!

Broadly speaking, there are three types of tools available to you.

These are either Point and Click products, authoring suites or finally programming languages. Each tool offers a significant advantage over the other and whilst it's true to say that ultimately you'd have more control with a programming language, your next lesson to learn is not to crack a nut with a sledge hammer!

By that I simply mean a Point and Click product is more than capable of creating



Ovine By Designs' 'Imogen' remake

a game like Bubble Bobble and Defender, or even the likes of Spellbound and IK+.

The only limitation, as infamously said, is your own imagination. There are many great games, including remakes, that are created with Point and Click products and in some cases it's often impossible to tell them apart from those developed in other tools.

POINT & CLICK

A Point and Click tool literally means that! You select what you want and click on the available options to you. These options are generally predefined based on other actions you have given.

For example, if you had created an object and defined it as a car-type object, then the option to detect if it can jump is unavailable.

Likewise if you created some kind of Bad-Guy then you could easily create a condition that says 'Has the player hit the Bad-Guy, and if so, deduct a life'. If of course you hadn't created the Bad-Guy in the first place, then this simply wouldn't be available to you.

So using the example above, just how would it work? Well, for starters, when you created the Player's character object, you would point and click on the object properties and perhaps set it to 'Player Controlled'.

There will probably be an icon of a person (politically correctness there for you!), or maybe a joystick, but either way it would literally be a button to tell your game that the object is controlled by the player.

Likewise, you would change the properties of the Bad-Guy object and set it to 'Bad-Guy' (or baddie, alien, nasty, or whatever) again using just your mouse to point and click on the relevant icons.

There will probably be an icon of two squares touching with a crash symbol, or something similar, and this will indicate the 'collision' event. Likewise there could also be an icon of a man with a plus or minus sign to indicate the increment or deduction of player's lives.

In our example therefore, we could simply click on the following icons...

- First, the 'collision' event icon which will ask us for two objects to detect against. The first icon will be the player icon, the second the Bad-Guy icon.
- We need to click on the 'Player Life Deduction' icon
- Then click on ok.

And that's it! A few clicks on the mouse taking maybe 10 seconds or less and we

have a routine that moves the player with the cursor keys or mouse and detects if he's collided with a bad guy or not AND (yes, we've not finished yet), if the player has collided with the Bad Guy (or vice-versa!) then deduct a life from the player.

Now I ask you, how simple is that? Point and Click tools are the perfect way to explore the world of remakes and to see if this is an area you would like to delve into further. It really does not get any easier than this.

There are 2 Point and click tools that stand out from all the rest and are ideal for both short term and indeed long term remaking projects.

The first is called MultiMedia Fusion and a trial version is available to download from www.ClickTeam.com.

Anyone who can remember STOS or AMOS will surely remember Francois Lionet, the creator of these products and indeed Francois is now a member of Clickteam.

It's also worth noting that if a Point and Click tool sounds remarkably like Click & Create or The Games Factory then you'll be pleased to know that MultiMedia Fusion is the big brother of these products.

Featuring an incredibly simple interface with a full storyboard and event editor, royalty free distribution with the ability to create standalone executables and a vast 3rd party library of extensions, MultiMedia Fusion is a definite must to try out for yourself.

Another great Point and Click tool is the ever popular and simply named GameMaker. A fully working version can be found at www.gamemaker.nl, with an enhanced version available at an incredibly low price.

GameMaker, like MultiMediaFusion, is also predominantly a Point And Click tool but does also have a full scripting language built in that offers you to fine tune certain aspects of your creation.

GameMaker also features a very active community and continual support from it's users as well as a very easy to use interface.

AUTHORING SUITES

If the Point and Click route isn't to your liking, then why not try your hand at an Authoring Suite.

Containing more tools, options and allowing you to get your hands slightly dirty on various aspects of your remake, an Authoring Suite often comes with other tools such as 3d model, sprite or level/map editors. Definitely something to consider if you wish to create any type of 3D car game.

An Authoring Suite will come with a

Script Editor which allows you to program small (or large!) Snippets of code to attach to various objects within your game.

If you've never programmed before, it's an ideal way to have give yourself a taster of programming and the language is usually a derivative of 'C'. This is a very easy and very well structured language that is perfect on learning some good fundamental coding techniques.

It's worth noting however that Authoring Suites are slightly more expensive than Point and Click products, and generally more expensive than programming languages themselves because of the tools they include.

For the bedroom coder there are 2 affordable and powerful authoring suites, available; Conitec's 3d Game Studio and Garage Games Torque Game Engine.

Both suites offer some pretty powerful tools like model, world and level editors and both come with a fantastic scripting language to really drill down and change the functionality of your game.

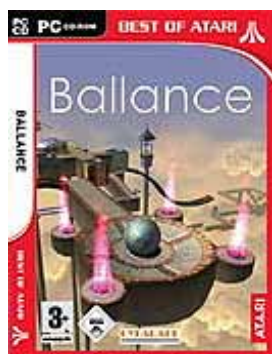
Both suites use the C programming language, a language that is sufficient in it's execute speed and relatively simple to learn.

3d Game Studio comes in 4 versions; Standard, Extended, Commercial and professional, each offering more features than the previous with the latter offering a full physics engine and dynamic shadows for some unbelievable results.

Torque on the other hand comes as a single package but does have a number of add-ons available to purchase separately.

Whilst not created under any of the suites I've mentioned, Atari's recent game 'Balance' was in fact created with an authoring tool called VirTools. I haven't mentioned VirTools as its starting price is £5000, but all the authoring suites I've mentioned would have been more than capable of creating a similar product.

Like the Point and Click products, 3d Game Studio and Torque have a fantastic community behind them, regular updates



Atari's brilliant 'Balance'

and some very good quality games as a result of using these suites.

PROGRAMMING LANGUAGES

Finally we come to the languages themselves. As I mentioned above, I won't be going into details or tutorials on programming, not in this article anyway, however rest assured that the applications I'll mention are aimed at the beginner but can provide professional results.

Remember how I mentioned not to try to crack a nut with a hammer? The same principal applies with languages. Now I'm not saying you shouldn't use a language like C++ or even assembler, but you don't need to use these languages to create a retro remake.

Armed with the BASIC language, you should be more than capable of create some fantastic games that are easy to code, easy to debug, and especially easy to learn if you've never programmed before.

Before I mention two popular languages (that I'm sure to receive some feedback on my comments!!!!), let me mention one great language that is sure to please a few people out there – JaMagic.

JaMagic is created by those guys at www.ClickTeam.com and again a free fully functional demo can be downloaded at their site.

JaMagic is a game development language aimed towards those people familiar with the Java language, and includes a simple but effect 3d world tool and a similar image editor. JaMagic has a very devoted group of followers behind it, a very active community (and friendly too) as well as some fantastic looking original games.

What's more, JaMagic also has the ability to create web-based games too, so there's another reason why you may wish to take a look at this great programming tool.

Now the moment I'm dreading! In a retro fashion similar to the old Spectrum Vs Commodore debate, there's a noticeable debate between two languages that can be used to create Retro remakes! Talk about uncanny!!

I am of course referring to Blitz3d and DarkBasic Pro (and to avoid any arguments over preference, I've mentioned these in a diplomatic alphabetical order!)

There's no question in anyone's mind that these two are near-to-perfect in creating a remake. They both offer the same BASIC language, albeit with slight variations of certain keywords, but essentially they offer the same structure of programming that has been used for decades (decades!! Good grief I feel old!!) Where they do differ however is both in

their 'use' and technical abilities. Confused? Let me try and explain.

Both languages use an IDE (Integrated Development Environment) which not only displays the source code of your program, but also other information such as variables, includes and functions.

The IDE of Blitz3d shows instantly a hierarchal tree of your projects as well as the various variables, functions, type and labels that can be viewed in an instant.

DarkBasic Pro on the other hand, whilst offering a similar facility, uses what can be described similar to a tabbed docked window used to navigate various parts of information.

Unless you're incredibly gifted, chances are you'll run into a bug within your program. Again both languages have a debugging system; Blitz3d has a simple yet straight to the point debugger clearly showing where the error is, whilst DarkBasic Pro offers a comprehensive integrated debugger to see what's happening where.

Both products allow you to create standalone executables which can be distributed royalty free and without the need of a splash screen. This basically means there is nothing stopping you from creating a game, selling it for whatever you want and not even mention it was creating in either Blitz3d or DarkBasic Pro.

Their technical abilities also differ greatly. In the first instance, Blitz3d uses DirectX 7 for it's handling of graphics, both 3d and 2d functions whilst DarkBasic Pro uses the very powerful DirectX9.

Unless you want to create a remake or a game that is going to be very graphically intense the differences between the 2 are minimal. Because DarkBasic Pro uses DirectX9, you will be able to use pixel shaders to achieve some incredible results and of course DirectX9 opens up other very complex graphical functions like bump mapping and enhanced lighting effects that are used by today's modern games.

As for the language itself, there are also some noticeable differences in the command themselves. For example, Blitz3d will use a command such as `MoveEntity id,x,y,z` to move a particular entity a set number of units on the respective axis. DarkBasicPro however will use `Move Object id,step` value.

As you can see, both mean the same thing, but the latter is literally an English explanation (you can't get any clearer than using the word Object to define an object!).

As a further example, to set the ambient light in Blitz3d, you would use the command `AmbientLight red#,green#,blue#`.

However in DarkBasic Pro the command **Set Ambient Light Light, Value** is used.

Again you can see that the syntax of DarkBasic Pro is pretty clearly defined yet the attributes it accepts differ greatly.

You'll be pleased to know that both have an outstanding community behind them, offering some particularly friendly people who are happy to help and regular competitions to keep those coding skills in tip-top condition.

SO WHAT ONE IS THE BEST?

Out of all the products I've mentioned, it's extremely difficult to pick one that outshines the other. They are all more than capable of creating a vast range of remakes, extremely affordable, and they all offer an excellent community and regular updates.

Most of the programs don't come as boxed products, but are distributed as downloadable content and include all the things you will need to get going. As some of these tools are large in size,

if there are any dial-up users out there, make sure you reserve a good few hours of the telephone line!

Some of the more observant of you may have noticed I've been extremely diplomatic in my article, not listing bad points or leaning towards a particular product.

The truth is that all these products are perfect in one form or another and it's impossible to say which one is better than the other. Sure, you could argue that the languages are ultimately better when it comes to total control, but I can pretty much guarantee that in a head to head battle between Clickers and Coders, the Clickers will produce the results quicker.

Likewise with reference to the scripting of certain objects, I'd place my bets on the users of authoring suites rather than the programmers.

Ask me which group could produce the realism of physics combined with various visual effects and I'd point and smile at the ones using the programming

languages.

It's really horses for courses, but for beginners the Point & Click programs mentioned here cannot be beaten, combining easy of use and fast results.

Well that's it from me. I hope this article has given you an adequate insight in the remaking scene and a behind the scenes glimpse into how it's all done.

There are many sites and forums that are dedicated to the remaking scene and even more so for indie development, so remember to take a look round, introduce yourself to these groups and get a taste for it even further.

Remember, it's a rewarding hobby with plenty of people offering enthusiasm, help and support as well as an ever growing amount of people who simply wish to play something new on their PC rather than the expensive monotony that seems to circulate today's gaming industry.

Until next time.....Game over.

WIN A COPY OF BLITZ BASIC

To encourage you to get involved in game remaking we are giving you the chance to win a sealed copy of the famous Blitz Basic programming tool.

Usually retailing at around £29.99, Blitz basic is very easy to use. It is aimed at beginners and advanced coders alike as it features simple and logical commands that make writing programs for the PC easier than ever.

What's more anything you create in Blitz Basic can be easily saved out as a standalone EXE file and distributed with NO royalty fees to be paid.

To win this great prize all you have to do is to answer the following question:

Parallax was a game originally designed by which legendary programmer?

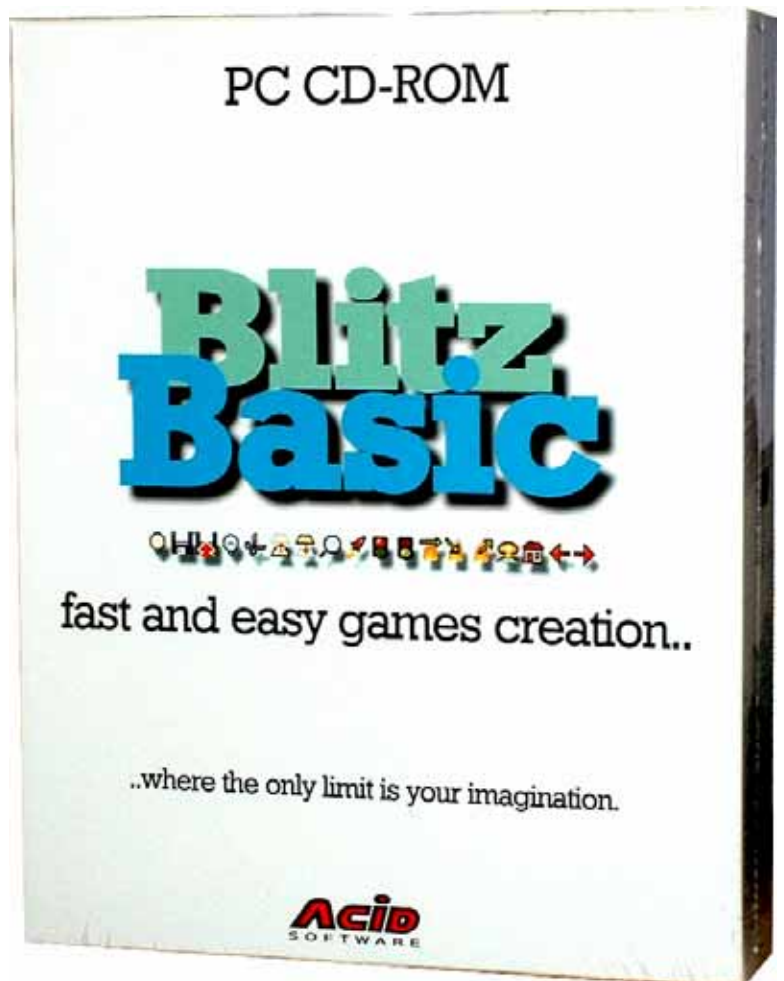
Send the answer to:

compo@retrorevival.co.uk

The closing date is 1st May 2005, and the winner will be notified soon afterwards.

Good luck.

(PLEASE NOTE THIS COMPO IS OPEN TO EVERYONE)



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COLUMN - SIMON SAYS!

Welcome retro & classic gaming fans to Simon Says! EPISODE I: ARCADES - where did it all begin?

For most of us our first recollection of classic video games would be of either Pong or Space Invaders, with the latter usually being found in a dirty dark dank arcade in some back street, well before videogames became 'cool'.

Maybe you remember (if you're old enough!), as I do, sneaking out of school to feed the nearest arcade with shiny ten pence pieces, instead of listening to your maths teacher banging on about the Pythagoras theorem.

Mooncresta, Pacman, Scramble, Galaxians, Gorf and Galaga (amongst others) all hold fond memories for me.

Back then, arcades were un-cool places, unlike today, as they were mainly filled with fruit machines and Pinball tables, and at best a small spattering of coin-op heaven.

You would be overjoyed as a new machine turned up and your pockets emptied as your pleasure grew.

Space Invader cabinets nestled between Pinball machines with that familiar thud thud as wave after wave of alien scum inevitably beat you into dust... competing with your mate for that high score that would beat his...

...going in to an arcade, just as it opened, to set a new high score on your favourite machine...leaving your initials to prove your worth and returning later to find some nerd had either beaten your score or even worse had accidentally on purpose turned the machine off, resetting the machine and wiping off your score after all your efforts. Bastards...

...The stale smell of cigarette smoke in the air, the din of electronic heaven...the scrabbling about to find the required dosh to feed the habit of gaming and keep playing for just a while longer...knowing you were in trouble for missing school, or not being home for mum's beans on toast at the required parental guidance time set, so you concluded that few more minutes wouldn't make much difference...

...monochrome invaders replaced with wave upon wave of coloured Galaxians... Scramble's maze of rockets and missiles...Robotron's limited appeal Square Dance fight effect...all turning into a mish mash haze of ultra violet flashing lights (no epilepsy warnings in those days). You inserted your coinage

and it was then up to you what happened next.

It was a domain of male aggression in those days as not many femme fatales were gamers, unless they fancied one the blokes of course, and then you would see them hang around like love sick groupies, totally oblivious to the felling us fellas got from the lights and sounds omitting from the cabinets. It was sex without the need to sleep in the wet patch afterwards. Sheer bliss!

Times were a-changing and more and more people were getting into games. Home systems were becoming more prevalent, from the early Atari V.C.S's to the miniscule memory of the Vic-20 (3.5k!) to the Speccy and C64 et al. It went from arcades one day to the home console revolution another day.

However arcades were where it was at in my youth.

SCAMMING

I can remember 3 scams back in the day - oh what a devil I was when I was younger and the world was simpler:

'Fanny by gas light' was the art of being able to obtain illegal credits for free by using a gas cooker igniter to fool the machine that you had inserted money into its' greedy innards. As the coin slots were metal originally you could use the igniter to send a spark into the slot and it



Never saw her in my local arcade!

would fool the electronics into thinking you had put money in - sorted!

Unfortunately they sussed us all and replaced the metal coin slots with plastic ones. It was fun whilst it lasted though.

'Wot no puppet on a string or soap on a rope?'. The old coin on a piece of string trick meant you could get your money back if you were nimble enough - a skill in itself. You drilled a hole in a coin and tied a piece of string or fishing line through it tightly and as the coin dropped it was whipped out again at the last second, ready for the next attempt.

'Not the water Margin...' My mate even froze water into 50p shapes using an indentation of a 50p in blue tack - never saw it work but he was always full of crack pot ideas and stories. Supposedly when the ice froze it became "real money" and thus meant more free gaming.

Hmmmm I'll reserve judgement on that one I think!

Nowadays we are spoilt with what we have at our fingertips - XBOX, PS2, Gamecube, PC online gaming, oh and don't forget the multiplayer deathmatch, playing people from all over the world, but from the comfort of your Ikea armchair. All this was only a dream in my day.

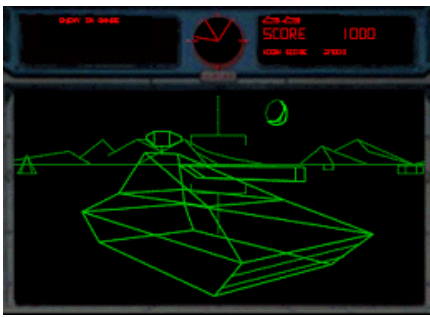
We had no internet to talk over or XBOX live to lounge around in - these were the real nitty gritty in your face arcades where fights often broke out if you were thought to have distracted someone and caused them to lose a credit or scupper their chances at that elusive high score.

A VERY BRIEF HISTORY

To be factual 1979 was when the UK first saw a Taito Space Invader cabinet, and before long they would be seen in your local chippy or pub (you can even spot one in early episodes of Only Fools & Horses if you look in the bar scenes closely enough).

Monochrome was followed by the lush colour event that was Galaxian, featuring coloured diving alien hordes. It was a revelation in comparison to the basic invaders stance and you got COLOUR!!!!

For the player with 4 hands (or more usually - you flew it and a mate did the firing and smart bombs) was the octopus lover's game Defender from Williams, created by Eugene Jarvis. Instead of a static attack from side to side as in Space Invaders or the swooping attack formation of Galaxian,



Atari's Battlezone - 1980

you now had to contend with the whole screen moving left or right dependant on which direction you took. Not only were there varying hordes of baddies to dispatch but you had to save the poor sap humanoid figures and carry them back to 'Mother Earth' to safety. Complicated at the time and still a challenge today.

The games were innovative and the genres were fresh, as nobody had seen these wonders before.

Atari unleashed a classic - Battlezone - the first 3D vector graphics game where you controlled a wire framed tank which, in its' day, was a revolution as the graphics had never been so big or done in this way before.

Centipede was to see the use of the first trackball controller (a ball mounted into the cabinet which you rolled about with the palm of your hand in order to control the direction of the ship), the aim being for you to destroy the alien centipedes and spiders. The trackball often broke or got jammed at inappropriate moments but it was unique compared to the norm of button bashing (like using a mouse now on Quake or Counter Strike, it was very intuitive). This was followed by Missile Command which also made use of the trackball controller.

Moon Cresta was my fave of this time (great to play on a PC-based emulator but not the same as being there nearly 25 years ago). It had a simple theme you had to kill the bad guys, (whether they looked like flying jammy dodgers or moon rocks that resembled marshmallows or not very scary icicles) all the time trying to preserve your ships, of which you had 3. This was unique as the strategy behind the game was to stay alive long enough through the first few waves to be reunited with your other ships via a tricky docking manoeuvre. This docking needed skill and you always looked like a real plonker if, after trying so hard to keep them from destruction by the alien hordes, you managed only to crash and burn yourself as you were docking.

Scramble was a huge hit also, with you having a ship flying over mountainous terrain, shooting and bombing at the right time to kill the enemy spaceships,

whilst still having to keep re-fuelling as you flew from left to right to reach the maze of the enemy base. A very colourful game that required hand and eye co-ordination to kill the bad guys and keep hitting enough fuel power-ups to keep your ship afloat.

Gorf from Midway was a take on Space Invaders and featured the first early digitised speech.

I remember playing Phoenix, which was a Galaxian clone. Phoenix was great. The game itself reminds me of visits to the seaside and summer hols spent at Blackpool or Yarmouth. Young love and teenage holiday romances. Yesteryear!

Anyway back to Phoenix.

Made by Centuri, it featured hordes of birds swooping down on you and spawning out of egg capsules. You had to reach a mother-ship at the end and break through its defences whilst fighting off the attacking birds, only for it to start all over again with another wave, only faster. You had a shield button which you could use for a limited time when you were in the mire and this added a touch of skill and finesse to the proceedings.... do you use your shields to save your bacon or finely time the use of the shield to kill an alien attacker just as they were about to touch you?

All made for an enjoyable tactical gaming experience.

Galaxian had itself a lovechild, named Galaga. This was to be Namco's own follow up game to the successful Galaxian itself. It pitted the player against similar waves of coloured alien hordes to defeat, but added the chance of boosting your fire power if you were adept enough to get the extra ship bonus.

The alien ships would swirl above your tiny single laser gunship set against a starry background, very similar to Galaxian in fact, but when they had all formed into a Space Invaders type squadron above you, a few groups would ream off from each side and bomb you. If you hit one of the top alien mother-type-ships it would change colour from green to blue indicating you could get it to project its' tractor beam at you on its' next approach. Sometimes they even emitted the beam unaided.

You then waited as it emitted said beam and you guided your ship into it's ray. It would Hoover you up and your little white ship became red and was captured. You then had to shoot the alien ship holding your ship captive and, if successful, it would then rejoin you for the fight giving you double the fire power, all the time avoiding the hordes of other invaders.

It seemed manic at the time but was very addictive. You needed the double fire power for the bonus challenge stages

where, if you shot all the aliens in various waves you were rewarded with a PERFECT! and a bonus of 20,000 points to aid you in your journey.

Scoring points was paramount as you needed to attain a certain score to get extra ships to continue - 20,000 saw your first and then at 70,000 and then every subsequent 70,000 point mark. Accuracy was very important in the challenge stages to get the best number of hits to get the bigger bonus to keep you gaming!

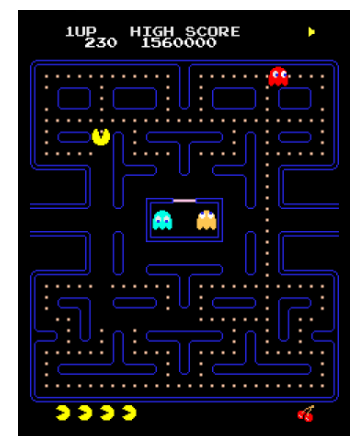
A little Flag icon in the bottom right of the screen would indicate how far you had got and the centre screen subtitle would ask if you were 'READY !' for the next wave, great simple fun and at the end you were rated on how many shots you had fired and you got a percentage score, so trigger happiness was not the order of the day! Even the music was jolly and added to the feeling.

Pacman, another Namco game was to be the most popular and successful game in the arcades of the year of its release, in 1981. It was different to the other fodder of the time. No aliens, missiles, lasers or bomb attacks were evident in this pioneering effort from the great arcade creator.

It featured the now world known little yellow ball man known as Pacman. In reality it was just a little yellow mouth shaped like a ball with no legs that moved around a set maze, gobbling coloured dots and avoiding 4 deadly ghosts that lived in the centre of it. The ghosts would pursue poor Pacman around the maze trying to catch him.

Contact meant death unless you gobbled up a Powerpill. One was located at each of the 4 corners of the maze and if you ate one the ghosts turned blue and slowed down, which made it easy for you to catch them and eat them. If you manage to catch all 4 of the ghosts you got the better bonus as the value of each would increase as you caught them.

The Powerpill did not last long so you had to be quick and the ghosts soon morphed



Namco's Pacman - 1981



Pacman's ghost enemies

back to hunt you again, temporary relief only coming when you finished the maze by gobbling all the coloured dots on screen and then being placed in the next.

Who could mistake the familiar sound of the little yellow fella going "wakka wakka wakka" around his maze prison until he had removed all his dot to dot spots? The 4 ghosts even had names (as shown in the picture above).

The game was an instant success and soon to follow would be all manner of license deals made for merchandise for the little yellow ball. There were pillowcases and lunch boxes made with the little yellow icon on, amongst many other things. Pacman even spawned his own cartoon series and this in turn lifted Namco into stellar riches for the time and the richest arcade game company in the

world.

Stories and myth surround the birth of Pacman, one being that Namco's boss at the time (MASAYA NAKAMURA) gave the creator of the game a mere \$3500 bonus in recognition of his efforts for the company. Dismayed at the pitiful amount of his gratuity he left the company and the videogames industry forever, never to work in gaming again.

It reminds me of how poorly treated the creator of Tetris was treated (we will delve into this another time as it is a big story) and how little he saw of the money it produced in eventual sales - it's a crime how they were unappreciated.

While Pacman was the most successful arcade game in 1981, nothing could prepare us for the momentous arrival of the king - Donkey Kong (not Elvis stupid!)

Donkey Kong was to bring us three very important names to the industry which we now take for granted, namely Nintendo, Shigeru Miyamoto (known as GOD in the games world - sorry but he is great - no Ninety fanboy lovey dovey stuff - he's an icon) and finally lest we forget the cameo role Mario had to play in the game too.

Despite the attempts of the movie giant Universal to stop the use of the name with an injunction, because of their rights

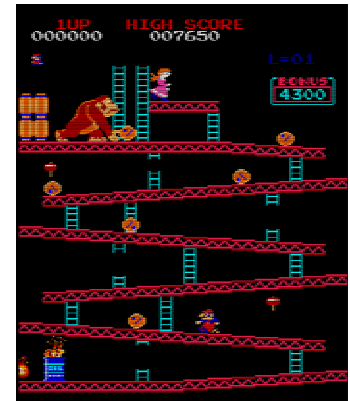
with regards the King Kong property & movie licence, Donkey Kong became a smash hit and the little plumber Mario would rise from this cameo roll to where he is today.

The trio of Nintendo, Mario & Shigeru Miyamoto were now set to become close to our hearts, and a relationship had

begun which now 20 years on is still with us (just!) - the dirty threesome! Little did they know at the time of how important Donkey Kong would become...

NEXT TIME:

GAME WARS - EPISODE II :
ATTIC ATTACK OF THE CONSOLES.



Nintendo's famous monkey game.



Simon Says has been donated by online retro games store Retrosce

WWW.RETROSCENE.CO.UK

If you are looking for a certain game or want to sell something, please drop by.

You can catch Simons latest words of wisdom at Retrosce, or in Retro Rival over the coming months.

Please note that Sonic was never harmed in the making of this article!



COLUMN - C16/+4

For those who are not aware of this magical computer that was released by Commodore in 1984, here is a little history lesson that I hope you will enjoy.

In 1984 the Commodore 16 was released; it looked like the C64 in many respects apart from its colour. A dark grey case, but still had the famous breadbox look, which in many respects attracted a new age of computer users from its familiar looks.

Parents were looking for a cheap but functional educational computer, but with a brand they could trust. I remember pestering my parents for a computer, hinting it would be used for school work, but was hoping for a C64.

When I received the C16 and started to play with the system it was clear to me that it was a good decision. It came dressed up as a starter pack for new computer users and included programs on BASIC programming. Also included were a few games, the best out of the pack was Punchy, which was a platform run and jump game.

The C16 wasn't long on its own though, the Commodore Plus 4 soon was released and was vastly superior. It came packed with 64k of memory and a very new sleek design, not to mention a set of office packages built into the system.

Quite a few of my friends owned Plus 4's, so I played at their houses a lot. The Plus 4 had its own unique range of games that were designed to use the 64k of ram rather than the 16k of the C16.

As you can imagine the games for the Plus 4 were rather good compared to the C16, but the C16 still had a good catalogue of games and the Plus 4 was totally backwards compatible with C16 software.

People often dismissed the Commodore 16/Plus 4 for being a computer lacking software support, but they were wrong. The back catalogue of this system was simply huge, check out the web links at the end of this feature for further information.

The C16/Plus 4 benefited from having a very much improved BASIC language, version 3.5, which was far superior to that of the C64 or Vic 20. This made it easier to program graphics and sounds.

However the C16/Plus 4 didn't come with any hardware sprite functions, which made game development more of a challenge. Even with this restriction, programmers were producing some excellent quality software.

Some of the games were complete drivels as you tend to get with all computers, but there were a vast amount of excellent titles available too.

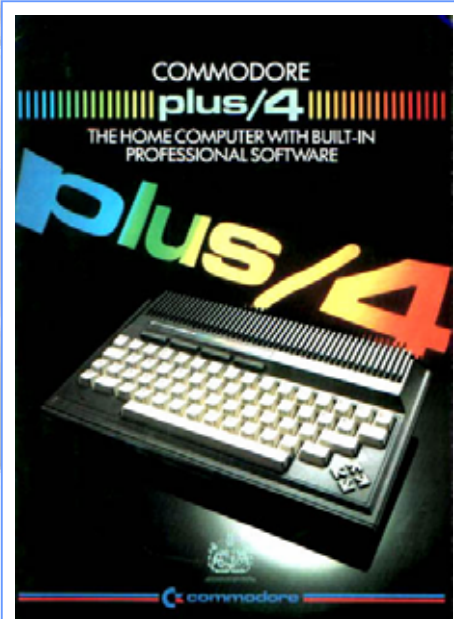
Whilst this range of Commodore computers wasn't software compatible with the C64 or the VIC 20, the hardware was.

You could use devices designed for the C64, like the 1541 disk drive, printer and other items with the C16/Plus 4 range. I myself have a plus 4 using a 1541 disk drive; they make a very happy couple together.

It's a shame that most of the games released for the C16/Plus 4 were on a tape format, more disk games would have made faster loading times, something all taped based systems fell foul to.

The cost of the disk drives back in the eighties was nearly as much as the computers themselves, so this option wasn't open to most. These days the C16/Plus 4 is easily affordable from sites such as EBay, its possible to pick up a complete Plus 4 package, with games and cassette deck for around £50.00 depending on the condition, a great price, and a great machine to add to your collection.

The C16/Plus 4 still enjoys a great amount of interest online, there are lots



An advert for the Plus/4

of website resources available, some better than others.

Here are some of the best websites currently available:

- plus4.emucamp.com

This has to be regarded as the best C16/Plus 4 site currently available. As one the longest running sites it includes a friendly forum, that is always busy, and everyone is welcome. The owners of the site are very dedicated and it clearly shows from their efforts.

- www.commodore16.com

This is my own site which is aimed at everything C16/+4 related. Included is reviews of hardware and software, a small but growing forum, and regular competitions. You can play up to 300 C16/+4 games directly on the site, and even use the shop to get the latest hardware.

- www.c16.de

This is the best German C16/+4 site and has a wealth of information crammed into its pages. Well worth a visit, and even has English translation.

I hope you have enjoyed this insight into the Commodore 16/Plus 4 range of computers as much as I've enjoyed writing it.

In the next issue you can expect a more in depth look into hardware for the system, full length reviews, one being an old game and a recent release.

In March I will be attending a Commodore meet up and will sharing my experiences whilst attending.

In the mean time keep reading to find out what my top 9 games are for this wonderful system.

C16/+4 TOP 9 GAMES

This is a bit like desert island disks for the Commodore 16/Plus 4, trying to provide you a guide of the best games available for the system.

I've asked a lot of people, including the visitors to my own website, for their favourite games and have compiled this list for you.

If you get a few minutes spare, download one of the many great emulators and try them out for yourself.

You may just be surprised.



ICICLE WORKS

This is a very festive game where the basic aim is to collect presents for Santa. Naturally there are enemies that are out to stop you, but you can either simply avoid them or drop snowballs on them! A great game for the Plus 4, it has a nice sound track and is very addictive.

Icicle Works really is a great Boulderdash clone that's well worth your time to play.



TOM THUMB

You play Tom a hardy adventurer overcoming a vast maze to find the hidden treasure. So many obstacles lie before you, monsters, disappearing platforms and spikes that appear out of the ground.

The graphics were so colourful, sprites well drawn and the game play was ever so addictive. The best C16 game ever.



MONTY ON THE RUN

This is Monty Moles first ever run and jump platform adventure. Playing as Monty you have to collect as much money as possible without being caught by strange and unusual creatures.

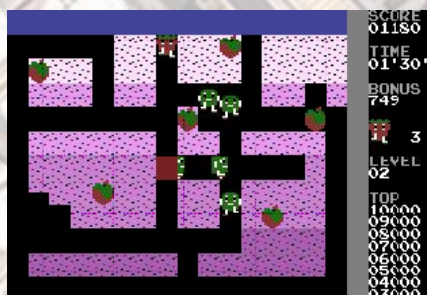
Graphically its very cute however the simple spot effect sounds lets things down. As an overall package it certainly delivers a very entertaining game that will inspire the majority of gamers.



TREASURE ISLAND

As a game that was bundled with the Plus 4, Treasure Island was surprisingly good as it used the full 64k. You play Jack from the story Treasure Island and the aim of the game is to avoid the pirates, find the treasure and escape the island.

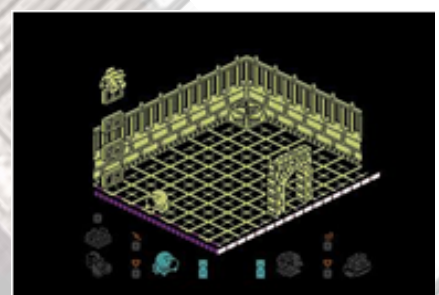
After a few hours of game play and lots of learning from your mistakes, completion is possible.



TUTTI FRUTTI

I know this game holds a special place in the heart of our editor, but that's not the reason it's here. As soon as you start to play it the colours and wonderful graphics jump out and grab you.

Tutti Frutti is another Boulderdash, conversion, but you get chance to shoot your enemies. What other game can you play a super strawberry trying to defeat the evil acid apples?



HEAD OVER HEELS

This has to be one of the most amazing games on the platform: its sheer beauty is outstanding. You take control of Head or Heels, trying to reunite them.

The puzzles are very challenging, as you have to choose which of the characters are better suited to completing them.

The graphics are very amusing, but not very colorful. However, that does not distract from the gameplay at all.



KIKSTART

If you remember the TV show will love this game. It is quite a difficult game but you always came back for more. Different, more challenging obstacles lay ahead of you and you have to find the best way to jump clear of them.

If the ground obstacles were not enough in the later levels the sky filled with storm clouds and you had to avoid lightening bolts from the heavens.



TRAILBLAZER

A totally original game, Trailblazer was the credit of Gremlin. You control a football traveling through the galaxy on a colorful platform that was made up of squares. Using special ability tiles you can speed you, slow down or even jump gaps.

A password system allows you to return to you last complete level, instead of having to start from the beginning again.



SKRAMBLE

This early release for the C16 was a conversion of the brilliant Scramble arcade game. The programmers managed to pack in wonderful sprites, excellent game play and great backgrounds into just 16k. Amazing.

The aim is to guide your space ship through the enemy infested land, destroying everything in your path, whilst keeping alive!

Gynoug

Reviewed By Paul B

Developer: NCS Corp.

Publisher: Sega

Year: 1991

Format: Megadrive / Genesis (Cartridge)

"You are Wor, a winged battle master with the power to hurl bolts of energy and control the magical forces of nature".

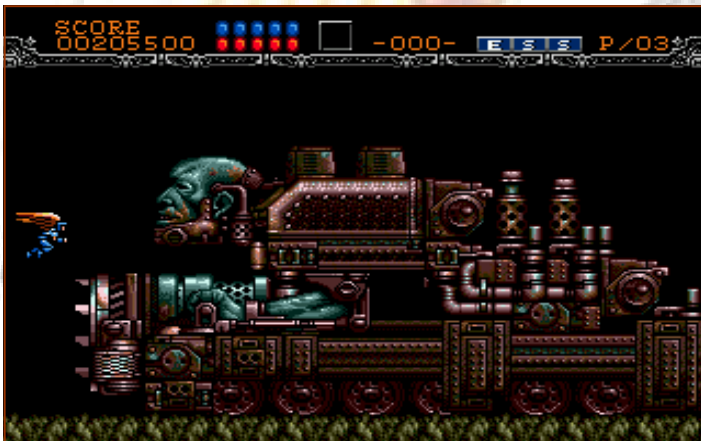
Cool. I knew that already, but thanks for the update.

Welcome to 1991, welcome to state of the art shoot' em uppery at its very best. You just handed over 44.99 of her majesty's finest crowns and you're ready to waste some alien scum.

Wor lives on the planet Iccus, which has rather predictably been invaded and taken over by the Mutants of Iccus, led by the terrible (and rubbishly-monickered) Destroyer. Many have tried and failed to defeat the terrible minions in the past, so the fate of Wor's planet now rests at his feet. Etc, etc.

In a brave attempt to veer slightly away from the R-Types and other Nemesis-esque horizontal shooters, Sega released Gynoug on Megadrive/Genesis in the early nineties to mixed reviews.

The formula is the familiar multi-directional flying about the screen/shooting everything that comes at you/picking up power-ups that we had all come to know and love, but in a classical fantasy context.



Instead of flying at warp speed, unleashing waves of proton missiles from your space fighting, smart bomb spraying, Gradius-a-like ship, you controlled Wor on his own, naked from the waist up (him not you..)

The game plays handsomely from the off, your character is very nimble and responsive right from the start with none of the annoying syrupy/sluggish movement that mars the enjoyment of some other shooters. There are speed-up bonuses in the game, but pick up too many and your character becomes too responsive.

You start off the game with the standard tri-shot magic weapon but soon you pick up a host of special items to increase your firepower to devastating proportions.

The ability to shoot behind and in front at the same time is a great touch, as is being able to switch between different weapons to suit the different attack patterns of your opponents.

The screen can get unbelievably busy at times but the game shows no sign of slow-down. At all. Not even with the new-fangled multi-layered parallax scrolling throughout.

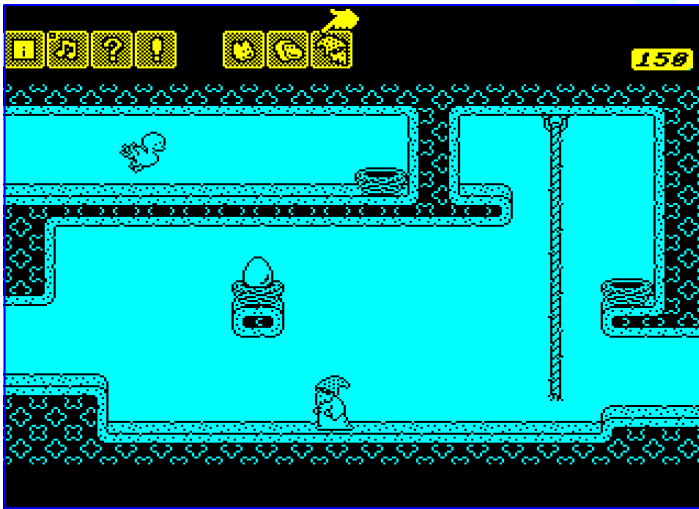
As you work your way through the game, you cant help but be impressed by the graphical prowess of Gynoug. The artwork is reminiscent of H.R.Giger's work, with most of the bosses being a mixture of mechanical parts and living tissue.

Although the levels are all in settings we've seen a hundred times, i.e. forest/caves/industrial/water, the whole game has an air of quality missing from the many other clones and colour-by-numbers examples of the genre.



Imogen

Reviewed By DJJ



Programmer: Michael St Aubyn

Publisher: Microgames

Year: 1986

Format: BBC Micro / Electron (Cassette)

Imogen is a wizard in the town of Egmain, who has the power of metamorphosis. When the town was attacked by a fire breathing dragon, Imogen transformed himself into an even more powerful beast and destroyed the monstrous threat. Unfortunately, the strain of the transformation was so great that upon returning to his normal state, his mind snapped and he started to use his powers to terrorise the poor town folk. Seeking help, the villages consulted the Great Wizard who imprisoned Imogen until his insanity passed, proven to all by his ability to solve the puzzles placed before him in prison.

This is we pick up the adventure. You play the imprisoned Imogen who must solve the numerous puzzles in his bid to taste freedom again.

Imogen still has his metamorphosis powers, but can now only shift between three different forms. A cat, a monkey, and his original Wizard form are all that you have at your disposal to try and solve the tasks ahead of you. As a cat you have the ability to leap onto high objects and jump across wide gaps, the monkey form is able to climb up ropes and some other items and the wizard is able to use the items that have been scattered around the prison, left there to aid his escape and recovery.

When you start the game, the first thing that hits you is the quality of the graphics and animation. The graphics are a high resolution monochrome, light blue and black, and are of great quality especially when you see the animation of all the creatures in the game. Each character moves fluidly which adds so much to the experience, and each action you perform is complemented by equally great animation.

There is no time limit in which to complete the game, so you are almost free to take as much time as you like to solve each of the 16 levels.

I say almost because even though there is no time limit, there is a energy bar that decreases by one every time you change shape. You have 150 points to start with but this soon decreases as you try to solve the many puzzles.

150 may sound a lot, but when you have to use the cat to jump to a far off rope and then transform into the monkey in mid air to grab the rope, you will soon find out that timing is everything. The amount of times that I have leapt for a far off rope, only to time changing into a monkey wrongly, this tends to use a lot of energy points, so practice is necessary.

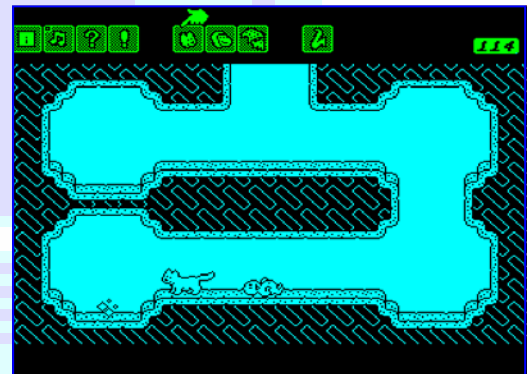
You must use a combination of the 3 characters to solve the games increasingly difficult puzzles which can involve you performing tasks such as knocking babies out with a saxophone, whipping dogs, squeezing frogs to open doors and many more bizarre acts.

The aim of each level is to collect a spell that will transport you to the next one, until you have completed all sixteen puzzles and are set free. Only in the Wizard form can use the spell, and changing back to the Wizard form uses up an extra energy point. Remember that you only have 150 for all 16 levels so expect to spend a lot of time replaying levels, trying to make no mistakes.

This all adds up to a strange but fun game to play and is only let down by its controls. They are responsive and there really is nothing wrong with them, they just take some getting used to. I found that I kept getting mixed up with the different action buttons and the two different left and right controls.

The Z & X keys are used to move your character left and right, however the < and ? keys on the keyboard cycle through the menu at the top. Confusion sets in to begin with.

Even with this small issue (which I am sure you will get over in no time), Imogen is a beautiful game and should be added to your playlist pronto.



Remade...

The remake squad over at Ovine By Design have a whole subdomain devoted to their wonderful remake of this game.

With extra information on the original game, including documents from Michael St Aubyn himself, the remake can be downloaded freely from:

imogen.ovine.net/



LEANDER

Reviewed By Paul B

Developer: Travellers Tales

Publisher: Psygnosis

Year: 1991

Format: Amiga



Some games are the interactive media world's equivalent of fine wine. Quake gets better with age, Doom although now looking quite aged and buckled, still retains the flavour of utter brilliance. The original and best Sonic is still infinitely playable: the list goes on...

But what of the Buckfasts? The cheap & nasty? The quick & regrettable?

Hello Amiga Leander.

Your intoxicating front screen lures me in with promises of daring far-flung adventures & suggestions of untold rewards. Once me and my hard-earned have been cruelly torn apart, the cold light of day reveals the cheap, formulaic and down right rubbish gameplay that lurks beneath that oh-so polished veneer.

Leander you lied to me you bitch.

I must have been wearing my videogame beer goggles when you seduced me with your pretty box-art, your boasts of your kingdom saving, dragon slaying exploits. I shelled out big bucks for you, got ripped and woke up in bed beside a monster. (A slight feeling of DeJa-Vu!)

Like most of the Psygnosis games of the early nineties, Leander has pretty but flat looking visuals - think Shadow of the Beast, Killing Gameshow, Puggsy etc.

The game has three worlds each split into seven levels or quests, thereby giving you 21 tasks to complete. The tasks mostly involve traveling from one end of the level to the other to retrieve an artifact, then finding the exit which more often than not is back near where you started.

The main sprite in the game is well drawn and animated, though not very convincing as the dragon-slaying tough guy we are led to believe he is. Leander (or Sir Galahad if you are playing the Megadrive version) kind of 'minces' along effeminately rather than swaggering like how you would expect a real dragon-slaying, world-saving tough guy to walk.

Maybe this is some private developer's joke, but to everybody else it just looks shit, and while we are here...where's his

sword? (oo-err missus).

Leander walks (ahem) up to enemies and seems to be unarmed until you press the attack button, where he will flash his arm left and right in a quite bizarre slashing motion which is meant to represent sword-swipes. This is frankly very poor and could have been much more convincingly done.

The enemies themselves have zero A.I., they just wander back and forth across whichever platform they are standing on. A couple of sword swipes dispatch them soon enough then you discover to your horror that they are the old fashioned self-replicating type that reappear when you revisit the last screen.

This is particularly annoying because in Leander most of the platforming jumps require surgical pixel perfect precision. So the game turns into an exercise in temper control very quickly when, for the umpteenth time, you fall from a ledge only to meet the enemy you just killed.

It's not all bad though, believe it or not.

There are some quite interesting touches in the game, such as the puzzle later on where you have to let the lemmings escape outside before you can activate the switch which allows you to continue on your quest (I kid you not).

Also, on the last couple of cave levels before the big end-boss there is some really impressive parallax scrolling.

There is an Atari ST version of Leander, but due to the constraints of the hardware, ST owners have to put up with plain black backgrounds as opposed to the colourful sky in the Amiga and Megadrive versions.

Because of its password save system, Leander is a game that you will probably play through to the end but wont return to.

If you are the unlucky recipient of this as a present you might want to trade it sharpish, but if like me you shelled out big numbers for it - tough luck.

Unlucky? I feel like the man who fell into a huge vat of breasts and still came out sucking my thumb....



MAZIN WARS

Reviewed By Paul B

Developer: Dynamic Planning

Publisher: Sega

Year: 1993

Format: Megadrive / Genesis (Cartridge)

Being a huge scrolling beat-em-up fan I remember getting quite excited at the preview shots of this game in the mags of the time, but was I disappointed after spending my hard earned cash on it? Read on and find out....

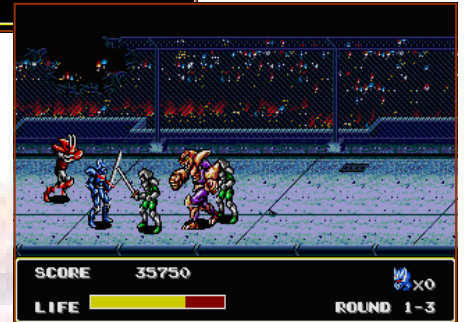
Step back to 1993 and the left to right scrolling fighter was King. We had already been treated to the best of the best by way of Golden Axe, Streets of Rage, Final Fight, Turtles, et al. Was there really room for yet another variant on a theme?

To stand a chance of the merest hint of success in this already saturated genre, the would-be champions, Dynamic Planning, had to come up with something pretty special to tear gamers away from the big guns that were already getting quality playing time.

Set in the distant future -1999- (sounds odd doesn't it) the Biobeast Force, led by GodKaiser Hell, has taken over planet Earth in just a few short months meeting little resistance. The survivors, having fled underground, now live in fear of further attacks and pollution.

Like every story of Good Vs Evil, help is at hand, however, in the guise of one Professor Kabuto. In a Nostradamus like way this chappy predicted the invasion ages ago, and has since been working on a secret Bio-Suit (the Mazinger-Z) which has been designed to aid whatever fruitcake decides to take on the bad guys.

You play Koji, Kabutos' son, and as luck has it you are the only person on the planet brave enough (or dumb enough) to try and stop the Biobeast forces. This is emphasized even more when you realize that your friends are chicken shits as you see them heading for the hills, but never fear as armed with the



old mans invention you feel brave enough to save the world single handedly.

As was the norm for these types of games, the standard Megadrive controller's three buttons were mapped out thus: A for your special attack. B for your standard attack and C for jump, although clever combinations of the three were possible in a rudimentary Mortal Kombat style.

The control system itself is very responsive and there is a real sense of your main (sword) weapon landing blows on the enemy. This is especially evident when you meet up with the first mid-level boss, or more to the point, the part of him that you can actually see.

On the first level, after having cleaved your way through wave upon wave of cannon fodder, you are stamped on by a enormous clawed bio-foot! (did Monty Python make that far east?). If you're quick enough, and you've sussed out where to slash the mega appendage, you get to fight the rest of him and this is where the game comes into its own.

The end of level bosses are a welcome break from tradition because the battle now takes place as a one on one, head to head Streetfighter 2 type extravaganza. Here the experience is ever so slightly marred by a smidgen of slowdown, but apart from this, it's pure quality.

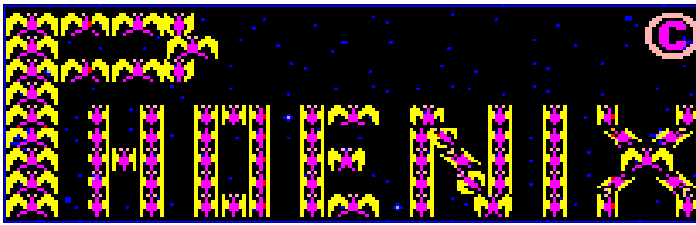
The difficulty level is suddenly shooting skyward also, with the bosses, in comparison to the low IQ enemies, being much, much harder to dispatch. This doesn't matter too much though, because the game does have enough pull to draw you back in again, even when you get killed for the tenth time (!)

Mazin Wars' graphics are a treat and are similar to the colourful style of the time. The orchestral soundtrack is really just background filler and for me is the game's weakest point.

This is a worthy addition to any gamers collection and a quick trawl round the more popular online auction sites, you should be able to pick this gem up for pennies.

A must if you like these types of games.





Reviewed By Chris W

Manufacturer: Centuri
Year: 1980
Format: Arcade / Mame

For my 11th birthday my parents allowed me to go to the local cinema for the first time by myself. The film I wanted to see was called 'Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger'.

They dropped me off at cinema entrance and in I went passing by photographic stills of all the up and coming attractions. I saw the ticket box in front of me and headed toward it. As I did, I checked my pocket to make sure my two one pound notes were safe.

I looked around the grand foyer of the cinema complex. It was a one screen affair with one entrance and one exit to the seating area that was on 2-levels.

In one corner of the lobby a lady was selling traditional cinema snacks. In the opposite corner a group of young lads had gathered around an arcade machine. Curiosity instantly got the better of me and, even before I bought my ticket, I found myself heading in that direction for a closer look.

The game they were playing was called Phoenix. I mingled with the on-looking group and watched a teenage lad take on wave upon wave of swooping alien birds. I was transfixed; I would join Sinbad on an adventure another time!

The Phoenix cabinet itself came in two types. There was the traditional upright design with a left and right button, a fire button, a shield button and a 1 and 2-player button. The graphic on the cabinet sides was a huge blue and yellow Phoenix resting on a space themed background encompassing suns, stars and planets. The marquee and control panel adopted the same space themed graphics. This was the cabinet that adorned the cinema lobby.

The second type of cabinet was of cocktail design. The cabinet was simply a wooden box with chrome legs and a glass top. The cabinet housed a 12" monitor and game board and allowed 2 players to play face-to-face, each player looking down at a screen that flipped 180 degrees (i.e. vertically) when it was their turn to play.

The upright cabinet could be found in arcades, cafeterias, cinemas etc whilst the cocktail cabinet was more popular in social clubs, public houses etc.

The game itself when in standby mode flicked through a number of screens advertising the gameplay ahead. One of the screens introduced you to the aliens you were required to kill and the points you would receive for doing so, another would present you with the highest scores of the day.

The main objective of the game is to get your name on the high score table (as most games of this ilk are). The game comprises of 4 different stages to complete before you are confronted with an end of game spaceship to destroy. Once the ship is destroyed, the game starts again at stage 1, the enemies now even more intent on killing you.

Stage 1 sees you and your spaceship against hordes of yellow and purple Phoenix. Initially the birds line up reminiscent of the formation of the aliens in Galaxian but soon some of the Phoenix break off and dive towards you in erratic fashion firing missiles at you as they do. If you feel that an impact between

your space ship and the enemy is going to occur then you can press the shield button that gives respite from death for a few seconds. Your shield then needs 7 seconds to re-charge before it can be used again!

Once complete, Stage 2 provides more of the same in the form of purple and green Phoenix. The difference between Stage 2 and Stage 1 is that your firing rate is increased. So the tactic here was to now move your spaceship left and right, avoiding the Phoenix and their missiles whilst continually pressing the fire button as many times as you can, hopefully killing all the enemies as you did so.

Stage 3 introduces a new scenario. Initially you are faced with many Phoenix curled up into balls moving swiftly back and fore across the screen. Soon their wings unfold and down they come, swooping towards you, firing missiles as they do. Get through this stage and stage 4 offers more of the same with a pink variety of Phoenix trying to claim one of your 3 lives.

Onto the final enemy ship. Here your objective is to kill the alien at the ship's centre. To do this you will need to shoot away the orange base of the ship, then shoot gaps into the ship's protective purple shield exposing the now vulnerable alien.

Sound easy! Well as you do this you are continually bombarded with missiles from the ship, that descends slowly downwards towards you, plus missiles from the ever erratic swooping purple/green Phoenix.

Phew! On killing the alien, the spaceship is destroyed, a bonus score is given and off you go to start stage 1 again.

You are rewarded for your troubles with an extra life as you progress through the game and your running score hits the required total.

So is this game any good? Hell yes! Sometimes not hailed to have the classic status it should have attained, however this game is always crying out for you to have one more go! The game can sometimes be unforgiving with a life lost by an alien Phoenix hitting you from below, but this should not detract from an ultimately brilliant playing experience.

This game plays flawlessly in MAME both on an upright and cocktail type cabinet. MAME can be set to cocktail mode via the game DIP switches (Press Tab on MAME for menu) so 1 and 2 players can sit opposite each other, the screen flipping to the correct orientation when required for each player.

Go and play it now!





HINTS & TIPS

GYNOUG (MEGADRIVE)



- **Easy Mode**
Go to the **Options** screen and highlight Game Level. Now hold down **A + B + C** and press **Start**.
- **Level Select**
Go to the Options screen and highlight Control. Press **A** for around 10 - 15 seconds to reveal a level select screen.
- **Unlimited Credits**
When the Game Over message appears hold **Left + A + C** until the continue screen appears. This will allow you to continue without losing any credits :-)

IMOGEN (BBC)



- **Multiple Cheats**
Select the Question Mark icon then enter the password **DEBUG-MODE**. The control panel will turn purple and you can now access the extra passwords.

GIMMIE will give you all 16 parts of the spell
EPILOGUE will show you the games end sequence.
NORMAL-MODE will return the game to normal.
- **POKES**
Type this in before loading the game for infinite lives:

***LOAD G
?&2DCA=&AD
CALL &3C06**

LEANDER (AMIGA)



- **Extended Cheat Mode**
Enter **LTUS** on the password screen to enable the cheat mode where you are automatically granted infinite lives.

To skip a level press **F8** to pause the game, then press **F6**, and finally the **Fire** button to advance to the next level.

To select any of the super weapons, press any of the **F2** to **F7** keys.
- **Deactivate Cheat Mode**
Input **ESPR** on the password screen to reset the game to normal.
- **Level Passwords**
Level 2 Password is **ZXSP**
Level 3 Password is **LVFT**

MAZIN WARS (MEGADRIVE)



- **Start at Boss Stage**
Go to the **Options** and locate the **Sound Test** feature.

Select **18** for the **Sound Test**

Select **72** for the **S E Test**

Exit the **Options** menu and press **Start**. You will start the game ready to fight Garada-K7, the first boss.



HANDS ON

SNES PAD TO PC

PLEASE NOTE

The author of this column, nor Retro Revival, take any responsibility for any loss or damage that occurs from the following of this HOW TO.

YOU FOLLOW THIS GUIDE ENTIRELY AT YOUR OWN RISK.

So you've got your Snes9x emulator loaded, (thanks to the feature in Issue 2) selected which game you want to play and you've also set aside a few hours for retro heaven.

But hang on a second. Have you ever tried to do a Dragon Punch using a keyboard? I think you can see where we are going here!

What's missing? The controller, that's what, but not any old controller. What we are going to explain here is how to connect your original SNES pad to your computer for the sole purpose of using it with a SNES emulator.

Not only is it possible to connect a SNES pad your PC to play games with but it is relatively easy as well, as long as you are running Windows 98, ME, 2000 or XP.

REQUIRED TOOLS

Have a look at the far side of this page, it's your ingredient list.

It will all be available from a local electronics store like Maplin and even if you have to buy a SNES pad from Ebay the maximum you will be paying for this mod will be no more than £15 and you will be able to use the soldering iron, tape and Stanley knife for other HOW TO's we will cover in the future.

There are also two other things you will need, but the good thing is that they will cost you nothing.

The first is common sense, which is absolutely necessary, and goes without saying really. Asbestos fingers would be nice as well, as if you are like me you may have a knack for trying to solder your digits together!

Before we start make sure that you have enough to complete this is one go. An hour should be sufficient.

On with the show...

SNES PAD PREPARATION

Ok, get your ingredients ready, clear a space so you are free from clutter, turn on your soldering iron and wait for it to heat up.

What we are going to do here is to take off the SNES connector and replace it with a parallel port connector. This pad will connect directly up to the parallel port on your PC and will mean that it can only be used on the PC when it is complete.

With this in mind, if you still want to go ahead, the first thing to do is to use the Stanley knife and cut the connector off the end of the pad's lead and strip the wires back a few inches so you can see them clearly.

You be able to see that the original pad has the following coloured wires: (It may be different in third party pads)

White, Blue, Yellow, Black & Brown.

You may have noticed at this point that there are in fact seven pins in the SNES controller plug although there is only 5 wires. It's ok though as two of them are not used at all by the pad.

Now onto the DB25 connector.

DB25

The DB25 has a total of 25 pins which we can solder to, however for this project we are only going to use 10 of them.



This is the view of the rear of the connector (with the pins numbered). The rear pins are raised (as apposed to the front of the connector which has pins sunken in to a metal shield).

With me so far? If you are still not sure, look at printer lead (the end that plugs into your PC) Rotate the DB25 so it looks the same.

WE NEED TO USE THE OTHER SIDE SO FLIP IT OVER :-)

Assuming that we are all clear on this, then let us proceed.

THE DIODES

This bit is important, so pay attention you lot at the back...

A DIODE WILL ONLY ALLOW CURRENT TO FLOW IN ONE DIRECTION.

Pick up one of the diodes for a second and we will take a look at it.

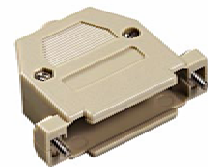
INGREDIENTS



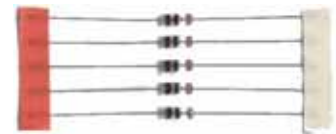
SNES Pad - Original Preferred



DB25 Male Connector (Parallel Port)



Cover For DB25 Male Connector



5 x 1N914, 1N34A Or Equivalent Diodes



4 x Shielded Wire (around 2 inches in length)



Soldering Iron (30W Is Fine)



Electrical Tape



Stanley Knife Or Sharp Cutting Tool

Of course you will also need the usual soldering equipment such as solder, flux, an iron stand, helping hands and whatever else you deem necessary to complete the job safely.

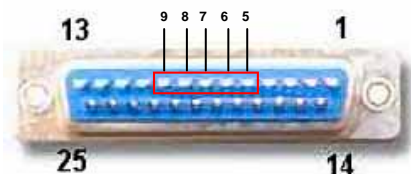
You should be looking at something similar to this:



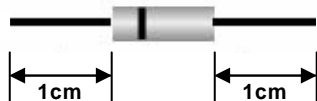
What you are looking at is a Small Signal diode. As on every diode a small black line is present at one end of the central barrel, and this tells us that the current can only run towards that end.

For the purposes of this mod we must make sure that the end of the barrel that has the black line is farthest away from the DB25 plug when we solder it on to the pins.

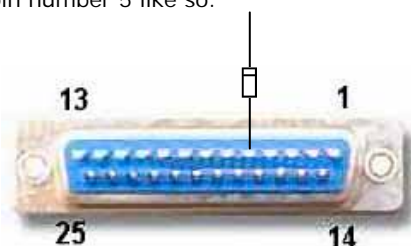
Taking hints from the picture below locate pins 5, 6, 7, 8 & 9 on the DB25 plug (they are circled in red).



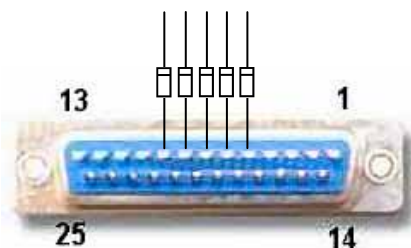
Get your diodes and shorten the legs down to around 1/2 an inch or around 1cm in length, like this:



Now, with the black line away from the DB25 plug, solder one of the diodes to pin number 5 like so:



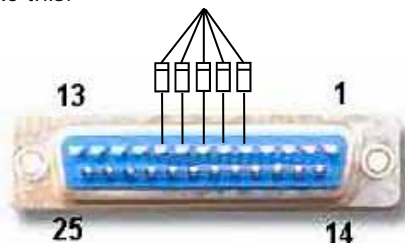
Repeat the process for the remaining 4 diodes. Eventually you should have all 5 diodes soldered onto pins 5, 6, 7, 8 & 9 like this:



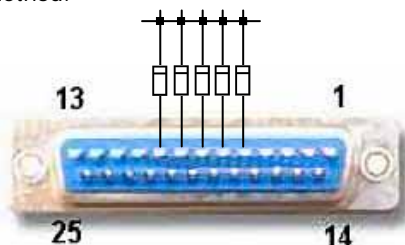
Ok, the next stage is to solder the ends of the diodes together. You can either carefully bring the legs together and use solder to hold them together, or you can use a piece of wire to solder to each leg.

Either way is acceptable, however if you are using the wire method, make sure that all 5 diode legs are touching the bare wire, else there will be trouble down the line.

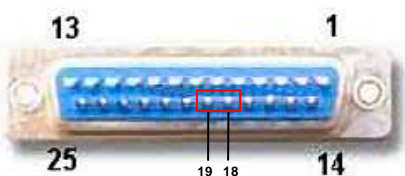
Your DB25 should now look something like this:



Or like this if you are using the wire method:



The next step is to locate pins 18 and 19 as shown here:

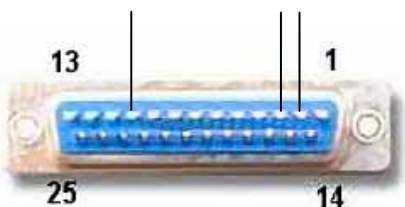


and bridge them with some wire like so:

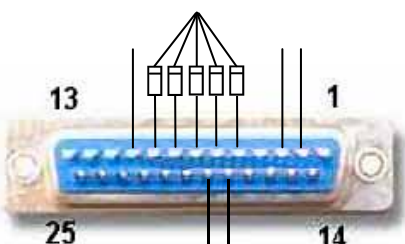


making sure that the wire is soldered to both pins securely. We will be soldering this wire to one of the joypads wires in a second.

Lastly in this section, solder wires to pins 2, 3 and 10 like so:



So you should be left with a DB25 hopefully looking something like this:



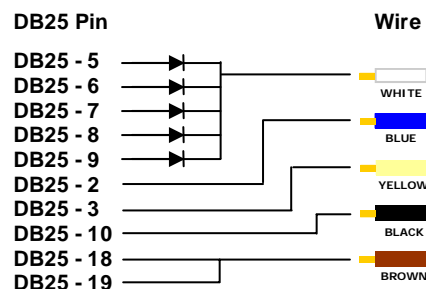
SNES PAD

Now the bit you have all been waiting for. Here we will attach the DB25 to the wires of the controller.

If you were good little boys and girls you would have used an official pad for this mod and therefore the following connections are correct. If you are using a third party joystick, you will have to work out what colour is what before you precede.

- SOLDER THE WHITE WIRE TO THE END OF THE DIODES
- SOLDER THE BLUE WIRE TO THE END OF THE WIRE COMING FROM PIN 2
- SOLDER THE YELLOW WIRE TO THE END OF THE WIRE COMING FROM PIN 3
- SOLDER THE BLACK WIRE TO THE END OF THE WIRE COMING FROM PIN 10
- SOLDER THE BROWN WIRE TO THE END OF THE WIRE BRIDGING PINS 18 & 19

Or for the diagramatics (is that even a word?) out there, here is a image depicting this:



TESTING

Don't attach the shield to the DB25 just yet, you will want to test it first. Make sure that the wires aren't shorting out on each other before you do any testing though, a small strip of electricians tape around each join should make it safe for testing.

You will also need a driver for Windows to recognise the pad. The file in question is PPJoy and can be downloaded from the Retro Revival website, from the Downloads Section.

When you have downloaded the file and extracted the contents of the archive, locate the PPJoy folder and double click on the Setup.exe file that resides in it.

Depending on the operating system you have, there are two ways of installing the files properly.

We will go through each of them here...

Remember...you do not have to follow both ways here, just the one that corresponds with your operating system.

WINDOWS 2000 / XP USERS

- Click **OK** on all the default options.
- Accept all **Unsigned Driver Warning** messages.
- Click **Close** at the end of the process.
- You have finished :-)

WINDOWS 98 / ME USERS

- Click **OK** on all the default options and click close when finished.
- Click on **Start > Settings > Control Panel**.
- Double click on **Add New Hardware** then click on **Next** on the next two screens.
- When you are asked if you want Windows to search for your hardware, select **No, I want** and click **Next**.
- Select **Sound, Video and Game Controllers** and click **Next**.
- Scroll down the Manufacturers list and select **Deon vd Westhuysen**, then in the Models list select **Windows 98 Parallel Port Joystick Support for LTP1**
- Select the driver and then click **Next**.
- Click **Finish**.

Ok now we need to provide the correct drivers. You find them in the install directory located here:

C:\Program Files\Parallel Port Joystick

assuming the default installation paths were used of course.

- Once you have located them and selected them click **OK** then **Finish**.

Congratulations. You have just installed the Parallel Port Support Driver!

Now you need to install the main PPJoy driver. Yes there is more!

- Click on **Start > Settings > Control Panel**.
- Double click on **Add New Hardware** then click on **Next** on the next two screens.

- Select **Sound, Video and Game Controllers** and click **Next**.
- Scroll down the Manufacturers list and select **Deon vd Westhuysen**, then in the Models list select **Parallel Port Joystick Bus**, then click **Next**.
- Finally click **Finish**.

You will have to restart your PC to finish installation as the older versions of Windows cannot register drivers on the fly like 2000 and XP can.

ADDING THE PAD TO WINDOWS

Ok, so all Windows users (XP, 2000, ME & 98) should have the drivers installed for your new SNES PAD to PC mod.

The next stage is to add the joystick to Windows so our games know it is there.

- Click on **Start > Settings > Control Panel**.

Double click on **Parallel Port Joysticks**, and when the new window appears click on **Add**.

A new dialog box will open, the settings you will need for the SNES pad are:-

Parallel Port: **LPT1**
Controller Type: **SNES or NES pad**
Interface Type: **DirectPad Pro/SNESkey**
Controller Number: **Controller 1**
Controller Sub Type: **SNES or Virtual Gameboy**

- Now click **Add**.

You will now get a driver installation dialog box

Click **Next** or (whatever you have on your screen to advance!)

Once this has finished you will be taken to the **Joypad Configuration Screen**.

This time there should be a **Configured Joystick** called **LPT1: DirectPad Pro/SNESKey SNES or NES pad 1....** in the list.

Utilise the configuration feature to fully test that the directional pad and all buttons work as they should do. If they don't then you may well have a problem with your soldering or even a wire or two touching.

Good job you didn't fit the DB25 cover now isn't it! Makes it easier to correct any problems if you have them.

When you are happy that all is well, proceed in fitting the cover to the DB25 plug.

All that is left to do is to load up SNES9x (or any other emulator) set the joypad up and play to your hearts content :-)

ALTERNATIVES?

Now you are probably thinking "why would I bother with all this malarkey?"

Well, there is nothing like the sense of achievement you get when getting a small mod like this to actually work, however if you do not want to cut up your pads or simply cannot be bothered to get your soldering iron out you may want to look at something like this:



This little beauty is the Super SmartJoy and it will allow you to utilise your SNES pad on your PC via a USB port.

It is quite a solid unit and comes with a three foot lead, as well as rubber feet on the underside so that it does not slide around when you have it sitting on your desk.

It only has one port, so you can only use one SNES pad with it, however being USB there is nothing stopping you buying another for multiplayer SNES gaming.

It is completely compatible with Windows 98, ME, 2000 and XP as well as Mac OS X and works with both NTSC as well as PAL controllers and maps every button flawlessly.

The SNES controller plugs in well, and there seems to be very little if no movement, and certainly does not feel like it will fall out mid bout on Street Fighter 2, which is a good thing.

Working effortlessly and as expected in Snes9x, ZSNES and countless other non SNES emulators, this adaptor is a must have if you are a PC emulator enthusiast.

The cost? Well you you it will be around £17 delivered from ConsolePlus here:

www.consoleplus.co.uk/product_info.php?pName=super-smartjoy-snes-to-pc-usb-adapter

(make sure you type that in as one line!)

So there you have it. Emulation on a PC can be a rewarding experience, especially as you do not need to have the computer or console connected to your TV each time you want to play, and it also means that you can keep your games safe on the shelf. However there is no better way to play them than actually having the original controller, and hopefully this article has allowed you to do just that.

This issue we will look at the process of cleaning retro computers, consoles and cartridges, and attempt to try and bring them back to their former glories...

Leave something in the loft for long enough and it is sure to get covered in filth. Likewise the chances of finding a completely pristine computer or console from a car boot sale for example, are next to none.

That is because retro machines were designed to be played with. Years, of greasy fingers, dirt and other sticky substances manage to find their way into the smallest of cracks and crevices, taking that 'new' appearance (and smell) away from your collection.

Cartridges, tapes and CD's are no different, accumulating finger prints, words written with permanent marker, and the worst of all, shop stickers which seem to be impossible to remove without tearing or removing something else.

What we have compiled here is a guide to cleaning. It is not meant to be an exhaustive guide by any means, however it is a starting block for those who have a system or game and want to try and get it looking somewhere near new.

To make it easier for you, we have broken the hints and tips on offer here into sections, but before we introduce you to them, let us dispel an urban myth.

DISCOLOURATION

Over time, the plastic that computer and consoles are made of will usually discolour, with the most pronounced change being the SNES, Commodore Amiga and the early Apple machines.

They suffer from 'yellowing' of the plastic and this I usually regarded as them being affected by the smoke from a cigarette or other substance.

This is not entirely true, if true at all.

How do we know this? Well take a look on the inside of a SNES that has suffered yellowing.



From this...

Yes that's right, it is yellow too. Smoking is ruled out completely. In fact it has been known for machines that have been kept in boxes in the attic to turn yellow too.

Not only does the plastic turn yellow, but it also makes it more brittle and prone to chipping and hairline cracks.

So what is it that makes these machines look like someone has pee'd all over them?

The answer is to do with the type of plastic used for the casings, combined with the chemical effects of UV light.

Lets take the SNES as an example (however the principles are basically the same for all machines that yellow).

Nintendo first introduced the SNES to Japan in 1990, and in its design phase the emphasis was to make it as cheap as possible, thus creating maximum profits.

The materials the plastic was made from was indeed sturdy and durable, but it also held a little known secret that would rear its ugly head a few years down the line.

When countless SNES units started to turn a garish yellow, Nintendo decided to look at ways of making sure that their flagship product stayed its original colour.

They soon realised that UV light was reacting with something that the plastic was made from so they promptly set to work trying to sourced new materials that would not have this effect.

As the original material was already moulded into SNES outer casings and stockpiled in warehouses, instead of throwing it all away, Nintendo decided to continue to use it until it had all depleted (lucky us!).

It got to the stage where casings made from both newer and older materials were mixed together, and inevitably machines were sent out like this too.

This can be clearly seen in units where either the top or bottom part of the console is a yellow colour, and the other is as grey as it was when it came off the production line.

Unfortunately, there is no way of knowing if the older consoles will yellow over time, as it seems to happen at random (some do, some don't).

However it is evident that in consoles produced near the end of production (circa 1999 for UK production or 2003 for US & Japan production) the yellowing effect happens less, if at all.

The fact of the matter is that as the yellowing is apparent throughout the thickness of the plastic, no amount of scrubbing or cleaning will remove it

completely.

What you are trying to do when scrubbing it away is to remove the effects of a chemical reaction between the material used for the plastic, UV light and oxygen.

You cannot stop it from happening, nor can you repair the damage it does. The only thing you can do is to paint the case a different colour (so long as you get the correct paint of course), or buy another SNES.

Believe it or not, painting the casing does work (with the right preparation to the plastic) and looks good too (well better than the yellow anyway!)



...to this

IN THE REMAINDER OF THIS ARTICLE WE TALK ABOUT USING POTENTIALLY HARMFUL PRODUCTS THAT CAN BE USED TO CLEAN YOUR EQUIPMENT

WE MUST MAKE IT CLEAR THAT NO MEMBER OF RETRO REVIVAL WILL BE LIABLE FOR ANY DAMAGE WHATSOEVER CAUSED BY FOLLOWING ANYTHING IN THE NEXT FEW PAGES. DO SO AT YOUR OWN RISK.

Now where were we...

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Grab a pen and a piece of paper, for we are going to give you a shopping list...

- Cotton Buds - Precision cleaning!
- Rubbing Alcohol (70% Isopropanol Alcohol available from the chemist) - A must for cleaning electrical contacts.
- WindowLene (or simple vinegar) - Universal cleaning agent.
- A brand new soft tipped tooth brush - For cleaning hard to reach places and small crevices.
- Paper Towels - self explanatory.
- Baby wipes - A great general purpose cleaner.



Lighter Fluid - Any kind will do!

- Paper Towels—self explanatory
- Goo Gone - or any organic citrus based cleaner
- Lighter fluid - A good sticker and ink remover.
- A can of compressed air - for removing dust and other particles.
- A can of WD40
- Rubber gloves (if you are into that kind of thing of course!)

Get a supply of the above and you will be able to clean pretty much anything, not just dirty equipment!

GENERAL CLEANING TIPS

If you are trying to remove normal dirt and grime, the first thing you should do is to fill the sink with good old warm soapy water.

The best way of cleaning large surfaces (like cases of consoles, or computer shells) is to soak them in the water, however before you do this you need to make sure that you have completely disassembled the unit and **ALL** electronic components are removed.

You may need specific tools to open the units (especially cartridges) and these can usually be found from good hardware stores or even Ebay.

Once you have the plastics you want to clean, spray the cracks and crevices with compressed air, which will remove the surface dust, and then you can either drop them into the sink and let them soak, or you can use a non scratching lint free cloth to work the dirt and grime off.

Another good tool to use is a toothbrush.

Now it is said that an old toothbrush will hold chemicals from the toothpaste, and these may damage the plastic, so to avoid any of that happening, get a new toothbrush (soft tipped) and use it to work in the small holes and grooves that are normally hard to reach with a cloth.

When you are done, make sure that the unit is completely dry before attempting to reassemble your controller.

A good way to do this is to dry it with a hair dryer, however make sure that you keep the hot air at a reasonable distance as computer and console plastics have been known to melt under hair dryer heat.

Soap and water will get the majority of the grime off, however there are some things that your bottle of Fairy simply will not shift.

We will look at these in more detail in the sections that follow.

CLEANING CARTRIDGES

With cartridge based games, the connectors on the cartridge itself, as well as the slot on the computer or console, will eventually attract dirt and grime.

Most of the cartridges that will not play are usually fixed by cleaning either the cartridge connects themselves or the connector they plug into.

To clean the cartridge connects take an ear bud and dip it into a 50/50 solution mix of Isopropanol alcohol (available from your chemist).

Squeeze the end of the ear bud so that you only have the minimal amount liquid on the bud and proceed to clean the connector, starting at one end and finishing at the other in one movement. Repeat this a few times, and then change buds.

Continue to do this until the bud is completely clean when you pass it over the connector, and then repeat the process on the other side.

Isopropanol alcohol is strong in its natural state, so start off with a diluted mix and increase the alcohol content if needed, but be careful!

Do not use **WATER** under any circumstances on the contacts. It has a knack of soaking into tiny holes in the PCB and over time crystallises, and this in turn starts to corrode the metal. Also, a minute and un-noticeable amount left behind in your cleaning spree could blow your computer or console when you plug it in many hours later.

Isopropanol alcohol evaporates very quickly, has none of the problems that water does, and cleans metal contacts a lot better than most things, however you should leave the cleaned cartridge for at least an hour or two before using it so it can dry out completely.

Another method for hard to shift dirt and grime is to use some WD40 on an ear bud first, then use the rubbing alcohol to remove the WD40, and of course a dry ear bud to soak up any excess liquid.

Cleaning cartridge slots on the other

hand is a harder task.

The only real way of cleaning them is to use a plastic card (credit card or similar) and wrap a paper towel which has a little rubbing alcohol on it, around it.

Insert and remove the card until you can physically see that there is nothing left to clean, and then do the same with a dry sheet of paper towel, just to dry off whatever excess liquid that may have been left behind. Leave the machine for an hour or two before you power it up again.

As a last resort (and we really do not recommend this at all), if you have grime that is hard to shift on the cartridge contacts you can take the cartridge apart and use a pencil eraser to remove the offending material.

Be warned though, using an eraser will generate static, which as you probably all know does not mix very well with electricity.

As with all the methods explained here, do it at your own risk.

CLEANING JOYPADS / JOYSTICKS

Sweat and dirt are the two common elements that usually get trapped in the seam between the two pieces of plastic that make up your average joypad or joystick.

Not a nice thing at the best of times, but even more of a stomach churner if you have bought it second user (ergh! someone else's grime).

It is generally accepted that you can take apart any joypad or joystick without doing any damage, which is good as you will need to take them apart to clean them properly.

The art in all of it though is putting them back together again!

There are a few things to remember however when taking any controller apart.

- Make sure that it is unplugged.
- Take your time and remember not



Great for getting into hard to reach places.

to lose any parts! (it would be best to clear an area when you are doing this, just so you have space to place the bits you remove)

- It may also be a good idea to draw the joyypad or joystick and mark out where each part goes (this is especially good when dealing with lots of small parts).
- If the controller needs to be forced apart, it's telling you that you have missed a screw or other securing component. If you have to force it open, then the chances are that it will not go back together again.

When you have the controller apart you can clean the plastics with warm soapy water and a soft tipped toothbrush, but it's not just the plastics that can be cleaned, as the controller PCB itself can be cleaned too.

Once again, use an ear bud dipped in rubbing alcohol and clean the contacts. Take a dry bud to pick up any residue left behind by the alcohol and while you are there it may also be worth cleaning the rubber contacts that sit in between the actual button and the PCB.

These pieces of rubber can be cleaned with warm soapy water, but make sure everything is fully dry before reseating it all in the controller.

REMOVING STICKERS

This is a tricky one, and should be approached with caution.

If the sticker is on plastic then it is a straight forward task of soaking the plastic in warm water until the sticker peels off.

If there is any glue left on the plastic then a product such as Goo Gone is the

answer. Put a small amount on a cloth and with a bit of gentle rubbing the residue will lift off.

If the sticker is covering a paper, card or even cartridge label, extra care is needed.

The problem with this type of sticker placement is that it is very hard not to damage the backing material in some way whilst in the process of removing the sticker itself.

If the sticker is on a box, you may want to try a hair dryer, moving it from side to side (and not too close) until the adhesive is warm enough that you can peel the sticker off.

Make sure that the adhesive is back to some kind of semi-liquid state otherwise you will be pulling parts of the box away with the sticker, something you do not want to do.

If the sticker is covering a label use your finger nail to scratch away at it, bit by bit and slowly, until it is removed.

NEVER lift the edge of the sticker and try and pull it off as you will damage the label either by ripping it or tearing it. If you have any residue left, then a slight rubbing down with Goo Gone is the answer.

Be careful not to get any substance that you use around the edge of the game label as it can creep underneath it and eventually it will start to peel away.

If in any doubt of course, it is probably better to leave the sticker where it is, rather than ruin a box or label.

REMOVING INK.

Dirt, oil and grime is one thing, but there is nothing worse than ink, either pen or marker made, however in most cases it can be removed, albeit with some undesirable side effects sometimes.

If the ink is located on plastic then the best thing to use is Goo Gone, or even rubbing alcohol, however excessive rubbing may dull the plastic itself, so go gently.

When removing ink from a box or game label, remember that anything you use to remove it will also remove some of the underlying picture, leaving a patch which will usually be noticeable.

Rubbing gently is the key, and not over a wider area than is necessary.

Lighter fluid is actually a good chemical to use, as although it still damages whatever is underneath the ink, it takes longer to do so than anything else, giving you more time to spot the situation turning ugly and therefore allowing you to make an informed decision as to whether you should carry on or not.

Things to probably avoid when removing ink from a box or label are Goo Gone, rubbing alcohol, and nail polish remover, as they will remove the backing image at alarming speed.

Also, nail polish remover can scuff plastics when removing such things as ink and glue residue from them, so it is best to only use it as a last resort.

Hopefully this article has given you some insight into the cleaning of your retro equipment, and may well help you bring your collection up to somewhere near its original glory.

Just remember to try out any of these methods first on things that are not that important to you, just so you can preserve the more valuable stuff if you do it wrong first time.

Take your time, have respect for the chemicals you are using, and remember to keep safe at all times.

Happy cleaning!

COMING SOON TO ISSUE 4 OF RETRO REVIVAL...



We are going to push the boundaries in Issue 4, giving you the opportunity to be the first to experience a new way to read retro gaming content.

Exclusive articles and features, combined with an audio and visual extravaganza will mean that Issue 4 will be the best to date.

Unfortunately, we cannot divulge the contents as yet, but rest assured that if you like this issue, we can tell you that you have not seen anything yet!

**Issue 4, scheduled for 1st June 2005
(if not before!)**