SPACE

NEWSLETTER for March, 2005

President's Corner
by Michael Current
March, 2005

Do you remember this from last month's Newsletter:

I was contacted out of the blue by a Larry B. of Murphy, Oregon, who asks, "I noticed your page here: http://home.earthlink.net/~spaceclub/news9607.html. With mention of "Steve Bergland" which I'm wondering if it's the same Bergland I knew in the mid 70's in Southern California?" I told him, Steve Bergland was way before my time with SPACE, but that perhaps others remember. If anyone remembers Steve Bergland and could say whether or not he lived in Southern California in the 70's, please get in touch with me so that I can pass along the information to Larry B. Thanks.

Well, you won't believe the email I received, reproduced here with permission:

Hello Michael,

My name is Steve Berglund. I was reading your newsletter this month and saw my name mentioned, however it is misspelled in the newsletter. I was the Vice-President of SPACE way back in 1982. In regards to the question from Larry in Oregon, sorry I have never lived in California.

I am impressed to see that the club is still going after all these years. I am still heavily into computers, however, my Atari 400 died years ago when my kids took it over. I still play some of the old Atari games now that they have been ported over to other formats. I may try and stop by a meeting if I can get it on my schedule, just to see how things are going these days.

Talk to you later,
Steve Berglund

So there you have it, the power of the Internet to connect and re-connect us all!

Hopefully we'll even see Steve at a SPACE meeting soon!

The SPACE Online Forum, at http://www.ilmarinen.us/forum/ continues to see quite a bit of activity. Be sure to check it out if you haven't yet.

"Attending" the February meeting by way of Nolan's phone last month was kind of bizarre; we'll have to work on that technology. I wish I could just make the trip in person more often. Speaking of which, thanks to a procedure I have scheduled for Monday March 7, it is now questionable whether I'll be able to make it this month as I had planned. If I don't show up, I'll be more determined to make it next month!

SPACE home page counter update: as of 2/25/05, 8:45pm: 3,167 page views since June 7, 2003.

Thanks, keep using that Atari, and come to your next SPACE Meeting, Friday March 11, 2005.

Treasurer's Report
by Greg Leitner
For February, 2005

My faith in the Club has been restored. Six members attended the February 2005 SPACE meeting, and Michael, our Club President, joined us in a teleconference with Nolan. He stayed on the line for the whole meeting and then some and indicated he may be able to make the March meeting weather permitting. If Michael and Nolan can get together every meeting with a teleconference, the ones Michael can't attend in person it would be awesome. Nolan is trying to find a better way to set up the microphone so that Michael can hear everyone more clearly.

This could be a real telling year for SPACE. We are down to twelve paid up members and at $15.00 per member that will only bring in $180.00 for the year. Our Doms sell at about an average of four per month at $3.00 per Dom. That will bring in another $144.00 for the year for a grand total of $324.00. Since the room rental for a year is $300.00 and the BBS is $120.00 and our newsletter is about $105.00 for a grand total of $525.00. This means we need to garner another $200.00 some other way if this Club is going to survive. Our auctions which really was a life saver for us in the past are very few and far between so we need some help from other sources. Let's talk about this at the March meeting.

Here is the breakdown for the month ended Feb 28, 2005:

Bank balance for the month beginning Feb 1, 2005: 638.73

Receipts for the February meeting:

Memberships	30.00
Doms	24.00
Total receipts	54.00
Expenses for the February meeting:	
Newsletter-for all of 2004	104.00
BBS-for January & February	20.00
Total expenses	124.00

Bank Balance for the month ended Feb 2005:   568.73

As you can see we lost another $70.00 to our balance but the good news is that we shouldn't have any big bills the next couple of months other than the $10.00 BBS. This gives us a chance to increase our balance even if only by a small amount. Hey, anything more is better.

We had a great meeting in February and I hope it is topped by our forthcoming March meeting. If Michael can make it and we get at least the numbers we had in February then we can call it our March Madness meeting.

Let's get everybody there and renew those memberships and please buy those Doms. Let Glen know that you really appreciate all the time and effort he puts into making those fantastic Doms. See you all in March.

Secretary's Report
By Nolan Friedland
For February, 2005

The February meeting began at 7:34 p.m.

Greg welcomed all those attending. Then I went over the minutes from December 2004. There weren't any minutes for last month since the meeting was called off early due to only 2 people attending.

Michael Current, SPACE President, joined us in a teleconference for this meeting.

For the Treasurer's report there were no receipts for last month. The room rental bill for $150 was received and paid. We also received a bill for $104 from our Newsletter Editor, Michael Schmidt, for a whole year's worth of newsletter expenses. After the room rental and newsletter expenses were paid, our bank balance stood at $638.73.

As of the start of the February meeting there were a total of 11 paid up members. In addition, there are 4 recently past due members. After tonight's meeting is over we should have one more membership being paid up.

There is yet another great DOM for February. Side A contains several BASIC games; Side B contains a slideshow of images from the Star Trek TV shows.

In BBS news.

There are a lot of new developments with the BBS and its companion website. To start off here are the hit statistics as of the February meeting: BBS Website - 1783, Telnet Listing Counter - 1775, Dialup Listing Counter - 865.

There have been quite a few visitor calls to the BBS itself. Other than that there hasn't been that much new activity.

Activity on the SPACE Forum has really taken off. As of the February meeting there are a total of 12 registered users. Even with only 12 users, there have been several new postings in the last few weeks.

Mentioned a few months ago, a version of the SPACE site was created for mobile phones; a new URL has been created for the "mobilized" SPACE website at http://spacemobile.atari.org/. Also, a version of the SPACE website has been made for viewing on a PDA device, which is available at http://spacepda.atari.org/.

In Old Business.

Nolan Friedland, our SPACE Forum Administrator, requested that a current membership list be emailed to him whenever there are changes. This is so that a decision can be easily made to allow or disallow access to the newly created SPACE / SCAT / IMAGE area on the Forum.

In New Business.

It was mentioned that there was a lot of news and information submitted to the newsletter. SPACE thanks all those that submit items for inclusion in the newsletter.

There are several old back-issues of SCAT and IMAGE newsletters available.

Lance mentioned that an upgrade is available for the Falcon. It's called the CT60 and will read and write at over 100 million megabytes a second for the 100 MHz model. The 66 MHz model will do over 67 million megabytes a second. This upgrade will make the Falcon almost equivalent to Macintosh G3.

The meeting adjourned at 8:14 p.m.

BBS Corner
By Nolan Friedland
For February, 2005

```
*****************************
* Welcome to the BBS Corner! *
*****************************
```

Welcome to another edition of the BBS Corner!

BREAKING NEWS!!

Michael Current, SPACE President, joined us in the first ever SPACE meeting teleconference! We hope to include Michael in each and every meeting from now on.

```
*****************************
*      SPACE BBS News      *
*****************************
```

There have been quite a few visitor calls to the BBS, but other than that not too much new with the BBS itself. Most of the activity occurs on the SPACE Forum and the BBS Website.

```
*****************************
 *  SPACE BBS Connectivity  *
*****************************
```

Over the last several months there have been emails asking how the SPACE BBS is actually hooked up to the Internet. Here is how it is being done:

The BBS itself is run on a real Atari 8-bit computer, running BBS Express Professional. The Atari is connected via a null-modem cable to a serial port on a PC which makes the BBS accessible from the Internet. On the PC, there is a program running that takes all incoming Telnet requests and forwards them to the serial port.

```
*****************************
 *  SPACE BBS Website News  *
*****************************
```

There have been several new developments with the BBS' companion website over the last several months.

The current web counters as of the February meeting are as follows: BBS Website - 1,783 (last month was 1,651) ~ Telnet Listing - 1,775 (last month was 1,690) ~ Dialup Listing ~ 865 (last month was 809.

I'm still contemplating whether or not to set up an anonymous FTP area for all the Atari 8-bit files that have been collected over the years. The issue is not with having enough space for the files, but with organizing it all. As of right now I have 704 files. I could make a link to each file on one page, but that would be a LONG page and not organized whatsoever. So it's still possible, but it will take some time to sort everything into proper categories - Not to mention making an organized page for each category. I'll keep everyone updated on its progress :)

Two new SPACE website versions have been put together - http://spacemobile.atari.org/ and http://spacepda.atari.org/. The spacemobile site is for mobile phones, and the spacepda site are for PDA devices. Both sites try to mirror the real SPACE site as much as possible. However, there are differences between them all - These differences are required to make the viewing the best on each device.

```
*****************************
 *     SPACE Forum News     *
*****************************
```

The SPACE Forum has really started to get busy! Even with only 14 registered users, there have been 127 messages posted. A large portion of these postings have occurred only in the last 3 or 4 weeks.

Several new minor changes have been made to the Forum as well as some additional features for Forum users.

There is now a clock at the bottom of the main forum page. Not sure of its usefulness, but it's there :)

On the main page, the "View posts since last visit" link has been modified to include the number of posts that have been made since the last visit. Quick and easy to see how many postings there have been since you last logged in.

I have added a welcome message in the main page below the SPACE logo. For those logged in it welcomes you back and links to your profile, for others it says Guest and links to the registration form.

A "SPACE/SCAT/IMAGE" forum area has been added, which is strictly for those verified members. New or current forum members may request access by clicking on the "Usergroups" link at the top of the page, then selecting the "SPACE/SCAT/IMAGE" group, "View Information", and then finally "Join Group". Once approved for the group, you will then see it appear on the main forum page.

```
*****************************
 *   The MS Portrait Story  *
*****************************
```

Originally when I had discussed doing a teleconference to include Michael in the meeting, I had the "great" idea of broadcasting the meeting to him over the Internet.

After Michael downloaded the program I was going to use to do the broadcast, I gave him a call on the telephone. We must have talked to 2 or 3 hours trying to figure out the best set-up.

Then after contemplating whether or not it would even be feasible to do, Michael said something to the effect of "Well, why don't we do it over the phone instead?"

We did have a good laugh about it :) Needless to say we decided that I'd call him via my mobile phone instead. It worked out pretty good for the most part. He was able to hear most of what was being said. All that needs to be done now is perhaps find a good quality microphone set-up so that he can hear even better. Hopefully, this won't take as long to figure out :)

```
*****************************
 *        Next Month        *
*****************************
```

There will be more info on the anonymous FTP area and more developments with the BBS itself.

Also, as I write this, an idea has come to mind of a possible daily or weekly broadcast via the Internet - With the focus being SPACE and Atari related.

Stay tuned next month for more information on these and other exciting developments!

```
**************************************************
```

If anyone has any comments, suggestions, ideas, or submissions for the BBS Corner column or the SPACE BBS web site, you may email them to me, Nolan Friedland, at the address shown on the back of this newsletter under the "CLUB OFFICIALS" section.

****
A-T-A-R-I
Answers, Tips, And Relevant Information
by Paul Alhart
1989.8

Terminal Programs for the 8-bit

It was recently brought to my attention that the club library didn't have a copy of 1050 Express. This is my personal favorite program for use with my XM- 301 modem. This month I have added 1050 Express to the library along with, BobTerm, a new terminal program I just discovered. Having just acquired a second modem that was RS-232, I needed a terminal program that I could use with it. BobTerm filled the gap. A lot like Express, BobTerm is easy to use, but has many added features. Baud rate can be set anywhere from 300 to 19200 baud. There are more macros available than you will probably ever use, and best of all. Your Atari can be directly connected with any other RS-232 device without the need of a modem. With just a cable, your 8-bit Atari can talk to an ST, another 8-bit machine, or whatever you like. BobTerm does require an 850 interface or P.R.Connection at this time, but drivers for direct connect modems like the XM-301 are being worked on at this time. Both Express and BobTerm are shareware programs. Which is best for you? That depends on you and your system configuration. Both programs and their documentation are on the same disk so check em out. If you fall in love with one or the other let the author know you appreciate his work. Also let the Federation membership know. A demo or a product review is always welcome.

****
WINTER HAVEN, FL - The editor of The Atari Times (www.ataritimes.com) has announced the completion and availability of the annual paper-based book titled the 2005 Compendium. Copies are now available for sale at www.cafepress.com/ataritimes.

The book is 102 pages of news, features, reviews, and previews for all Atari home systems that have appeared on the website over the 2004 year. These include articles for the Jaguar, Lynx, 7800, 5200, 2600, home computers, and even the arcade systems. In addition, the 2005 Compendium includes 45 pages of previously unreleased material and a beautiful full-color cover.

Gregory D. George, editor and writer for The Atari Times commented, "The theme for this year is, 'Where it all Started.' Certainly, Atari is the reason we are all enjoying video games today. This is a book that celebrates the introduction of Atari and video games to the world."

"This was a fun book to put together, even more so than previous books, because there is a huge amount of new

content. Some of the best new material includes a chat with famed Jaguar playtester Lance Lewis (who reveals the secrets inside of Tramiel controlled Atari), TAT's Top 10 Consoles of All-Time, Atari at the Ballpark (covering Atari baseball games), a reminiscing of Atari titled 'Antique Electric Dreams,' an exclusive review and play test of the Atari 7800 Cuttle Cart 2 (which is thankfully back in production), pages and pages of new 2600, 7800, Lynx, Jaguar, 8-bit, Atari ST, and arcade game reviews, and much more."

"The quality of 2005 Compendium is better than ever because it is printed through CafePress.com instead of at my local print shop. I'm very pleased with the high quality job CafePress.com offers," said Mr. George. "We also have some great sponsors of the book this year and I'd like to thank Songbird Productions, Good Deal Games, Orphan Video Games, Video Game Connection, and Packrat Video Games for making it possible."

From January 31, 2005 to February 7, the price of the 2005 Compendium is $13.95. After February 7, 2005, the price will be $14.95. Shipping charges also apply.

More information about The Atari Times Compendiums can be found at http://www.ataritimes.com/store/books.html. To purchase any Atari Times book, go to http://www.cafepress.com/ataritimes

The Atari Times is a web-based publication devoted to all Atari game systems. Updates to the site are on a weekly basis. Visit http://www.ataritimes.com/ for Atari related news, previews, reviews, and feature articles.

****
--From: "Marius Diepenhorst"
--Date: Thu, 3 Feb 2005 23:51:19 +0100

Hi Folks,

I am proud to tell you:

My BBS is officially online.

Running on real Atari equipment, 2 lines:

telnet://atari-inside.kicks-ass.net:8888
telnet://atari-inside.kicks-ass.net:8889

I'm running the brand-new TCP/IP Express version 7.0b
The BEST BBS software ever written for Atari 8bit computers.

You are all invited to visit the BBS.
If the hostname fails, here are the backup addresses:

telnet://213.10.217.144:8888
telnet://213.10.217.144:8889

Have fun!
Marius

****
GIM v0.3 Released!

Hello everyone,

I really tried to get this done by Xmas but I failed. Oh well. Anyway, now you have a little bit of after xmas fun! Gim version 0.3 has been released. This is still alpha quality but is approaching beta quality. It shouldn't destroy your machine or anything. This software is licensed under the GNU GPL and the source code is available. For those that don't know, GIM is short for GEM Instant Messenger. It is an increasingly full featured AOL Instant Messenger client for Atari compatible machines. It currently and for the foreseeable future only works under MiNT on XaAES or N.Aes but assuming someone wants to do the work, Magic support is possible.

It also requires MiNTNet networking rather than STiK.

For those who haven't used a CVS edition of GIM since version 0.2, there are quite a few surprises in this release. GIM is much more stable, staying online for days and days subject to the stability of aim servers and your network connection.

Now, here's a list of all of the changes since version 0.2. This list may be missing some things that were actually done.

* Bugfix in the preferences dialog
* Disclaimer removed. It looked awful anyway.
  The logon dialog was changed.
* Killed all the debug messages in the release version.
* Click on a buddy in your list to start a new conversation!
* Full configuration system stores buddy list modifications inside acct1.blt, and stores full font and window configuration in gim.cnf. Your window size and position is remembered! I wish all programs did this :)
* XaAES fixes (some menubar bug yet to be addressed)
* Wordwrapped scrollable buddy info.
* Set your own Buddy info.
* Beginnings of Away message implementation.
* Proportional fonts in conversations, user configurable mono-spaced fonts everywhere else.
* Several key stability improvements

Upgrading? Copy the new gim.prg and gim.rsc into your current gim directory. Keep your current acct1.blt or use the included one (xevaporated and nsxwolf are me.. Say hi :)), DELETE your current gim.cnf. It won't work and this new version will create a config file for you.

The config file is user editable if you don't change ANY line or word spacing. The GIM config parser is VERY dumb :) It's intended only to be adequate.

If users would like MagiC support, some nice person with some time and expertise must convert libfaim to be working under MagiC. This means depending on mintlib and the other dependent libs to not require the mint kernel. This could be some work! After GIM works in MagiC with MagiCNet, I would be willing to do the work to make GIM work with STiK.

Download at http://gim.atari-source.com under the downloads section. Good luck!

Thanks,
Mark
http://www.atari-source.org

****

--Date: Mon, 21 Feb 2005 12:24:08 -0800
--From: Kevin Savetz

Have trouble keeping up with the web¹s numerous classic video game and classic computing news sites? Retro Roundup (http://www.retroroundup.com) is a new site that serves as a one-stop source for classic computing and retro video game news. Retro Roundup collects headlines from more than a dozen sites, newsgroups, and other news sources into a single page.

You can customize the site: click Set as Favorite to move any site to the top of the page, or Remove to hide a site¹s headlines from view.

Retro Roundup was created by Kevin Savetz, curator of the Classic Computer Magazine Archive (www.atarimagazines.com) and AtariArchives.org.

http://www.retroroundup.com

--
Kevin Savetz
Curator of Classic Computer Magazine Archive - http://www.atarimagazines.com
& Atariarchives.org   - http://www.atariarchives.org
Moderator of news: comp.sys.atari.announce   - Atari computer news

****
--Date: Thu, 10 Feb 2005 15:38:23 -0800

Gerhard Stoll has announced:

Version 0.35.1 of the ST-Guide clone HypView has been released.

Latest changes:
- Save up to 10 favorite files using marker
- Support for Pure C Help protocol / AC_HELP message
- CTRL+SHIFT+V displays clipboard in a new window
- Bug fixed: loading of skins should work again
- Global window-cycling is configurable
- File errors are displayed in an alert box

http://www.xn--donz-epa.ch/atari/software/hypview.php

****
--Date: Fri, 25 Feb 2005 08:27:40 -0800

Adam Klobukowski has announced:

I've just released port of REminiscence 0.1.2. It is a "Flashback" game engine.

You need original game to play it.

It needs fast machine, accelerated Falcon (CT2b) should do.

http://atari.gabo.pl/html/ports.html

[This news item courtesy of Atari.org - http://www.atari.org]

****

SainT 1.99b

* Upper border line counting in NTSC fixed
  ("Best Part Of The Creation" by Delta Force)
* Medium resolution detection fixed for screenshot
  ("Best Part Of The Creation" by Delta Force)
* Screenshot file name is derived from the floppy disk name
* BUS Error stack frame improved
  (Many original protections are working such as PYM,
  SyntaxTerror, DarkSide)
* Crash recover
  (sometimes when SainT crash, you can't run it again.
  Should be fixed now)
* Another upper border "60hz" fixed
  (multicolor music display by Level16 in Syntax Terror)

Web:
http://leonard.oxg.free.fr/SainT/saint.html

Download:
http://leonard.oxg.free.fr/SainT/SainT199bSelfExtract.exe

--
Best regards,
  Paul

****
From: David Sherwin [davidcalgary29@hotmail.com]
I'm Lovin' It

Last April 1, rumors began to circulate amongst Atari fans that a long-lost prototype of the 1982 arcade smash "Burgertime" had surfaced for the Atari 5200. Many dismissed these comments out-of-hand, noting the date of this particular "discovery", but were forced to reevaluate their initial position when they discovered the "gag" to be a fully playable game demo. Ultimately, Ken Sniders was unmasked as the coding prankster, and he has kept 5200 enthusiasts buzzing for months with regular updates that has tweaked this port even closer to the original game. Christened "Beef Drop" to avoid legal tangles and pitfalls associated with its playalike predecessor, "Beef Drop" has now also been converted to the 8-bit computer line.

"Beef Drop" is, simply, an excellent port of an excellent arcade game made more impressive by the fact that Sniders coded this one completely from scratch. It's equal in quality to commercial conversions that were produced for many platformers in the early- to mid-'80s, and an absolute blast to play. I spent hours of quality time with Chef Pete and his gang the day my copy arrived on cartridge for the 8-bit computers (with many thanks to Steve Tucker), and can assert that it truly ranks with some of Atari's classic arcade conversions of the early '80s. "Beef Drop" is, without question, a game to which players will return -- and enjoy -- for years to come.

Gameplay

For all of its novel theme, "Burgertime" was a standard platformer and didn't seek to improve or greatly modify this particular gaming genre. The goal of "Beef Drop", like its famous predecessor, is to "build" sandwiches by running over each of their component parts while avoiding enemy characters (here Mr. Dill, Mr. Yolk, and Frank the hot dog). Pepper pots enable players to neutralize enemies for short periods of time, and you'll start out with five of them. Pepper can be increased by capturing the screen's bonus items, and you'll also get one additional pot for every screen that you clear. Game level is indicated by a small food-oriented graphic on the bottom right hand of the screen.

Although "Beef Drop" is uniform in its gameplay through all levels, some new elements are gradually added to provide additional incentive for continued play. Hot dog sandwiches appear in the higher levels, and I note that Mr. Dill does not make his appearance until the game's third level.

"Beef Drop's" difficulty ramping is excellent. I hadn't played "Burgertime" since my cousins broke their ColecoVision in 1985, and I utilized the game's "child" mode until I re-familiarized myself with the game's unique environment. Most gamers will be content with "Beef Drop's" "normal" mode, but platform fanatics can try their hand at the "expert" level too. I lasted all of three levels of the "expert" level before suffering an untimely death at the hands of Mr. Yolk and his compadres.

Gaming controls are very sensitive and responsive, but I was still very thankful for my Wico joystick when the action became fast and furious at the higher levels of play. I suspect that "Beef Drop" will challenge most 5200 enthusiasts who decide to play this game with their fragile Atari-issued joysticks, and recommend the purchase of, at the very least, a reconditioned joystick to those who do not own a superior third-party controller.

Graphics

BD's graphics aren't quite arcade-perfect, but they're close enough to satisfy all but the most finicky fans of the arcade original. All of the condiment characters of the original game show up here, and they look and act much like the sprites that so delighted gamers in other console versions of the game. Sniders has done an excellent job imparting Frank with his trademark wiggle, and it's hard not to smile at the antics of Mr. Dill and Mr. Yolk as they wobble around the screen. I was also delighted to see that all of the whimsical bonuses here match those found in the arcade.

BD's title screen is worth mentioning as one of the better examples to be seen on the 5200 or in older 8-bit games, and the "character introduction" is a nice touch and reminiscent of the title screens of such classic arcade ports as "Pac-Man" and "Millipede".

BD does suffer from some in-game flicker in the higher difficulty modes when large numbers of enemies are present on the screen at one time. This is, however, understandable given hardware limitations, as the game was coded to fit the minimal specifications of the 5200. Any present flicker is more of an annoyance than an actual gaming obstacle, and should not affect gameplay in any substantial way.

Sound and Music

Sound effects are clear and distinct and fairly close in tone to the arcade originals. Individual tones indicate upcoming enemies and bonuses, and are therefore of some use to gameplay.

In-game music is limited to a simple, catchy tune that is repeated through gameplay. Players will either be delighted or extremely annoyed by it, but those few in the latter group are well advised to use the "volume" control on their monitors.

A simple tune also heralds the completion of each gaming level, but it was strangely off-key and garbled in the demo version that I played. I am sure that this glitch will be corrected in upcoming versions of BD.

Summary

BD is pretty much a note-perfect port of a particularly amusing arcade game, and will find favor with most classic gaming enthusiasts. Kudos to Ken Snider, who spent months of his life assembling all of the right gaming ingredients to produce an instant classic and fill a very large hole in the 8-bit library. Like the recently-released "Castle Crisis", "Beef "Drop" is an excellent illustration that few older consoles could truly best Atari's 8-bit computer line in producing matchless conversions of the most exciting and challenging arcade classics of the '80s.

(Available from the AtariAge store for the 5200; also available as an image for use with the AtariMax flashcart; 16K and joystick controllers required.)

****
From: David Sherwin [davidcalgary29@hotmail.com]

In the mid- '80s, First Star Software produced some of the most memorable characters for the era's home computer systems with its addictive series of games: there was Rockford, the star of the enduring "Boulderdash" series; Flip and Flop; the spies of the "Spy vs. Spy" trilogy; and then, of course, there was Peter the Painter, the hero of the maddeningly difficult game "Bristles". Peter and his friends may have faded into obscurity after the company's heydey ended, but First Star quietly endured as a smallish software house, churning out its classic titles for a new generation of systems.

Interestingly, First Star has announced plans to release a number of its most popular titles for the Atari 5200 in association with independent software house Mean Hamster Software ("Haunted House II"), ("Klax"). It seems that First

Star planned to port a number of its most popular games to Atari's 5200 system, but aborted its efforts in the wake of the infamous '83 video game crash. It may be 20 years late, but First Star is now making good on its earlier promise to deliver quality games to Atari's SuperSystem. With its first release, "Bristles", First Star and Mean Hamster Software have done a beautiful job in re-introducing a lost gaming classic to a new era of gamers.

Gameplay

"Bristles" has always been marvelously simple in concept, and the game hasn't become any more complex since the '80s. What's left to explain?

For the uninitiated, "Bristles" 5200 is a precise port of the game released for Atari's 8-bit computers. Players will choose one of four "painters", who negotiate an increasing number of hazards in order to "paint" all the rooms of a series of houses. Houses can be painted quickly on the game's easiest levels; by house number five, though, you'll be acquainted with such characters as Brenda the Brat and the dreaded Bucket-Chucker -- if you live that long. "Bristles" quickly ramps of the difficulty, and the game quickly becomes a frantic race to beat the clock

I played "Bristles" with my recently-acquired Wico 5200 controller, and found feedback to be crisp and excellent. I was not able to repeat this happy experience with my stock 5200 joysticks, and would suggest that, if you're stuck with one, you're probably not going to last too many rounds.

Bonus: a complete phrase is revealed, word-by-word, as screens are completed. In 1984, First Star ran a contest challenging players to be the first to send in that phrase. What's a little delay? I say there's no time like the present to try to claim that long-defunct prize. Even if you don't get an official response, I'm sure that, at the very least, First Star will appreciate the fact that 5200 fans are continuing to enjoy their systems.

Sound and Music

"Bristles" in-game music score is probably the game's definitive feature, and is distinct in 2005 as it was in 1984. Heck, I hadn't played the game for about ten years before receiving my copy for the 5200, but I could still whistle the game's audio gags (from Tchaikovsky's "Nutcracker Suite", by the way) in my sleep. Like it or hate it, "Bristles" music has now achieved of celebrity in classic gaming circles that places it above criticism.

Summary

"Bristles" attained "classic" status long ago, and any useful criticism of the game is, as a result, somewhat moot. I can only say that I spent many happy weeks in 1985 besting Brenda the Brat, and that duplicating the experience on a 5200 is a truly wondrous experience. Let's hope that First Star and Mean Hamster follow up on their wonderful first effort with their promises to release some of the true gems in their

software library for the 5200. I've already booked off two weeks to spend with Rockford.

($39.95, joystick controller required; available from atari2600.com)

****
From: David Sherwin [davidcalgary29@hotmail.com]
All Bets Are Off For Some Good, Clean, Fun

Psst! (heh, heh)

Y'wanna good time? Wanna win some cash? Meet a coupla girls? C'mere with me. Lemme take you to this cool place.

Whazzat? It's called "Lynx Casino", I think. Hey, don't look at me! I didn't pick the name. It pretty much gives what it says, anyway.

We're here. Whaddaya think? Yeah, I've seen better places too, and that carpet looks like it hasn't been washed since the Rat Pack was hot, but it looks like the booze is free. I'm gonna go off to have me a little chat with that babe by the roulette table.

Hey, I'm back! So, didja play any games? No?

Yeah, I guess that that "video poker" game kinda does suck. You say you lost five hundred bucks in the first five minutes? You liked it enough to play that long?

Last time I was here I spent a couple of hundred on the slots. I didn't seem to win any money, and the bets sure are small. I wonder why they put a five dollar limit on each game? I heard some guy won three hundred one time, but he lost it the same night.

You broke already? Listen, you can get some extra cash from that sweet cashier over there. She'll front you a couple of thousand, but I wouldn't push it.

Hey -- I got a better tip for you. Start out every trip here with the blackjack table, and you'll walk away a winner! I swear that dealer doesn't know what he's doing, and odds are pretty good that you'll score somethin' big. It's the best action here, bro!

Craps? Never play it, but they got a table over there. Looks okay, but kinda dirty, like everything else in this joint. Yeah, I like potted plants too, but somethin' else would be nice. And that Elvis impersonator? Sheesh!

Listen, let's blow this dump. Sure looks like it's got more run down since the last time I was here, and I don't wanna spend my free time talking to a bunch of drunks. Hey, lemme take you to this new place down the street...

****

Pictures from the December Meeting.

Pictures from the December Meeting.