

SPACE

NEWSLETTER for March 2014



President's Corner by Michael Current

At this writing, it's early March, and it's another evening below zero out there. Ugh!!

So yes, since last month I replaced my 19" Panasonic CRT TV with something a wee bit newer, a 50" Vizio LED/LCD. And I've been fiddling with all the settings of both the new TV and especially the new Yamaha audio/video receiver ever since. The Atari portion of the story goes like this. The Atari computer (well, the 800, a few late 800XL units, and the 130XE) puts out three different video signals:

RF channel 2 or 3, composite video on the monitor port, and separate chrominance and luminance video signals on the monitor port. RF is the lowest quality, composite is pretty good, but s-video is the highest quality. The monitor port is obviously not plug-compatible with an s-video cable (they hadn't been invented yet when the Atari was produced), but the signals can be converted into an s-video connector via a simple adapter.

My plan was to utilize the [A8 A/V BOB](#) from More Than Games, which I've owned for years, to convert the native "s-video" from my 130XE into a standard s-video plus, then run a standard s-video cable from there into a new TV, or into my new receiver which would then pass the video along to the new TV. When it became clear that new TVs no longer have s-video inputs, all hope fell to the receiver. I know that Atari "s-video" isn't quite in spec with "standard" s-video, so there was a chance this might not work, depending on my receiver.

The result. It works!! This is my first time ever seeing the Atari's best video output, and I'm seeing it on a giant (to me) 50" screen. And it is GORGEOUS!! Combine this with a 10-foot joystick extender cable, and I can comfortably play from across the living room!

The other important factor is to do everything possible to eliminate any video delay caused by the receiver or the TV. With Atari gaming, this is vital! I think any modern TV will have a gaming mode. Mine does, and indeed it makes a huge difference. My receiver is also capable of "video processing" and this too must be disabled in order for proper Atari gaming. I decided I never want my receiver's video processing enabled anyway, but I do have to remember to switch video modes on the TV whenever I use the Atari. Not difficult, and oh so worth it!!

Are you using your Atari with a modern HDTV?

Thanks, keep using that Atari, and come to your next SPACE meeting, Friday March 14, 2014.



**MEETING
MARCH 14th 2014**



Treasurer's Report by Greg Leitner

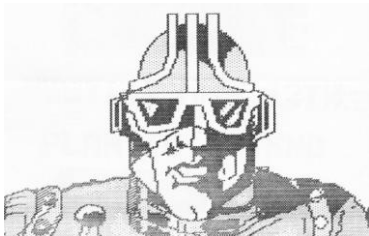
We only had four members for the February SPACE meeting, but at least the weather was about as good as it has been all winter. Not much to talk about Atari wise except I have one question about Lance's S-video hook-up for the 8-bit XL/XE machines. Since the new HD TV's do not have the S-video input anymore is there a way to hook it up by using the HDMI input/output? I found a unit that will let you input HDMI, Component, RCA jacks, and S-video inputs and then output them all to HDMI. Does anyone think this would work? This would not only benefit me but I would think that it would open up a huge market for Lance's S-video hook-up. I hope to get some thoughts from you guys!

Not much time this month or next for writing my report with all the sports going on so I am going to make this short.

Our beginning balance was \$437.48 on February 1, 2014 and the only change is the \$38.00 I deposited for the February meeting. We had Rich Mier renew his membership and he donated an extra \$5.00 with his payment, and we sold six 8-bit doms for another \$18.00. So with the \$20.00 membership payment and the dom sales (total \$38.00) and no payouts for the month we now have a balance of \$475.48.

I called the Falcon Heights Center and we will be getting the \$300.00 yearly bill for the room rental for 2013. She has been extremely busy and didn't forget about us, but I think I pushed her a little bit to get the bill out to us. Her daily duties take priority over the annual ones.

Take care in this stupid weather. It has been a week since the last snowfall and the streets are worse in some spots than the day it snowed? Can't even see around the corners and trying to stop quickly well, don't even think about it. I hope the weather next month in March is at least as nice as it was for the February meeting. Looking back on that night: boy were we lucky!! See you.



Secretary's Report by Steve Peck for February 2014

Hi, fellow Atarians! Well, since the January 2014 meeting was cancelled, I will just go into February and do my report.

The meeting commenced at 7:30 PM on Valentine's Day 2014. There were four members present. We have nine members that are paid-up with their memberships. There was really nothing to report concerning old business.

For new business, we talked about off-topic things like the Olympics, BitCoin, compact fluorescent and LED light bulbs, and power cells being developed by the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory in California.

Well, with four people there, we did not get much to talk about concerning things Atari. I heard that SPACE President Mike Current might come to the March meeting. He could have more news about the Atari world, so we will see. I am curious about the Atari bankruptcy hearing.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 PM.

Well, guys, that concludes the Secretary's Report. So I close in the words of my friendly neighborhood Spider-Man creator, EXCELSIOR!

GET INVOLVED!



**WE WANT
YOUR
ARTICLES!**



8-Bit DOM Review

by Steve Peck

for February 2014

Hi, fellow Atarians! It is time for another DOM review. I will have a thumbs-up and/or thumbs-down review of the DOM for February 2014. So, away we go with it!



SIDE A:

We will start off with the first six files of this DOM (all of which are pretty solid programs by the way, as always).

Silly Venture 2k13 (music *demo* by "Intro"): This demo could have had graphics but there was only a flash on the screen and then the music played. It was a really kicking chip-tune, but I think that there was a PAL problem with the graphics end of it. My 800XL cannot handle PAL programs anyway, of course, so I will overlook it in this issue.

Graphics: No rating (it does not apply at present)

Sound: Two thumbs up

Attack of the Mutant Pigeons (a *game* by J. Croudy): This game was programmed in 1984 and might have fallen into the public domain despite the copyright on it. It is quite addicting. It plays very much like the classic shooter "Demon Attack," from Imagic. You defend yourself by shooting pigeons that perform dive-bomb attacks on your ship. In later levels, the berserk birds lay eggs that hatch into deadly chicks that cannot be destroyed!

There is a bluebird that can help restore your power, but you must find a way to touch it to get you energy back, however the evil pigeons can get in the way and you only have a limited amount of time to do it before the precious bird flies away again. Despite the fact that this

is an older game, I personally loved the gameplay and would definitely play it again, and again, and again... I think you understand where I am going here. Cool game. Very challenging!

Graphics: One thumb up (could have been better, but the game is from 1984)

Sound: One thumb up (ditto)

Gameplay: Two thumbs up (gameplay was almost flawless because the difficulty was spot on)

Jan Ken Pon (a *game* by Sikor and Micker) This is a rock-paper-scissors game and it looks pretty cool. Basically an advertisement for the Atari Jaguar system, you play the classic game against the computer. There are six Jaguar logo placards on the screen. The object is simple: remove the placards by beating the computer at the classic game. If the computer wins, there are no second chances and you will have to start a new game.

The graphics, gameplay, and music were all nicely executed. However, the gameplay seemed a little easy to me and possibly not random enough. That was just me, I guess, so that might be too critical. But, it was solid, nonetheless.

Graphics: Two thumbs up (the anti-aliasing was excellent for an 8-bit machine)

Sound: Two thumbs up (the music match the fast-paced environment of the game)

Gameplay: Two thumbs up (I will back off on my previous criticism)

Block Rocker (a *music demo* by Squoquo): Although I found the music in this demo extremely unbecoming and totally weird, the graphics were spot on and had awesome scaling effects. It really shows the graphics capability of the 8-bitter. The graphics were cool, but the music needs work.

Graphics: Two thumbs up (the visuals were totally mind-blowing and fantastic and obviously Squoquo is a fantastic programmer)

Sound: One thumb down (the music could have been MUCH better)

Chip Chop (a *music demo* by AceMan): Peppy, airy and full of life, this music is pretty nice. It really puts the POKEY processor to work! It is fun and enjoyable.

Sound: Two thumbs up (smashing tune)

Beyond the Unfinished Evil (a picture rendered by Koz): This is a rendering of a demon. I liked the execution of this rendering. It shows real talent. It even looks smooth and polished. Quite detailed.

Graphics: Two thumbs up (it looks quite menacing, but it's extremely creative at the same time; I will give the creator of it kudos)

SIDE B:

Amaurote 128 (a game by Zero): This game is challenging and BIG! It is such a large file I could not load it onto my 800XL because I did not have enough memory in my system. I have seen it before at the SPACE club. It looks and plays beautifully. It is like 1950s science fiction. The splash screen at the start of the game is like a B&W television screen, even with the on-screen static. You have to fight bugs, GIANT bugs! I notice it is extremely difficult to play it.

It looks like a role-playing game, but it is set up like a game board not unlike Battletech. It took a lot of time to render this game and a lot of trouble. But, it pays off in the end. Kudos!

Graphics: Two thumbs up (AWESOME)

Sound: Two thumbs up (the music during the game play is really eerie. It's suspenseful and sets the tone beautifully)

Gameplay: Two thumbs up (it is challenging; my kind of game)

Meta Balls 1K (a graphics demo by an anonymous programmer): It shows three balls moving on the screen, like floodlights. The animation is excellent and, although the balls are pixelated, it looks great.

Graphics: Two thumbs up

Animation: Two thumbs up (it is fluid and accurate)

Fastfunk (a music demo by mch/g*p): It could be better, but it does exemplify the nuances of the Atari 800XL's POKEY chip. I like it myself.

Sound: Two thumbs up

Czarna na urlopie (a picture rendering by an anonymous programmer): This rendering shows a young lady at the beach, strangely enough, holding an Atari Jaguar game console up in the picture for the viewer to see. This looks extremely amateurish in execution. I like the premise of it, but didn't agree with the picture's slipshod visage. It looked like a child did it.

Graphics: Two thumbs down

Well, that is it for the 8-bit DOM report! As always, in the words of the great comic book maestro...

EXCELSIOR!



From: Michael Current <michael@mcurrent.name>
Sent: Monday, February 24, 2014 @ 9:25 PM
Subject: Atari++ 1.73

Hi folks,

a new version of the portable Atari emulator, Atari++, is out for download at <http://www.x1-project.com/>.

What's new this time?

Not much changed in the emulator core, actually. I fixed a couple of quirks of the serial protocol, and native support for CAS files and tape emulation. Prior versions supported CAS files through an implicit conversion to disk boot files, which - obviously - did not work so well if the tape boot tried to play some dirty tricks. Drawback of the native tape support is of course that it takes as long as the original to load...

For X11 users, Atari++ provides a new X11 output driver using the Xvideo extension of X11. Depending on your hardware, this may improve the smoothness of the play a lot. Specifically, I would highly recommend this output driver for older systems with intel chipset graphics. Modern chipsets or chipsets with less performing xvideo extension (radeon or nvidia) do not profit very much from this.

The biggest advantage of the new release is that it comes with an upgraded and completed Os ROM, Os++, in its latest version. This release adds a complete toolchain for Os++, not only the command line driven DOS from previous versions, but also a user customizable DUP menu, a FMS overlay manager that reduces the memory footprint of the DOS to 256 bytes (yes, really), a customized version of DISKIO - a BASIC extension - a RS232 handler, and a disk-based tape handler adding the missing tape support for Os++. The tape handler also profits from the overlay manager and uses no extra RAM if the overlay manager is active. It also provides a "turbo mode" that improves speed a bit.

A full manual of Os++, including a memory map, explaining the FMS, the DOS, the DUP menu, Diskio, the tape handler and the improved mathpack is available for download on the same page as well.

As usual, sources for all of that are available on the same page, they are part of the Os++ sources. The Os++ system disk providing the tool chain is available there as

well if you want to check how all the magic works. You need ca65 and GNU make to build it.

In the next days, I will upload the cas2wav and wav2cas files, a pretty robust and less naive implementation of similar tools you find on the internet. Took some signal processing theory to build them - they emulate the analog circuits in the tape driver and do not follow the naive "hands on" approach taken by many other implementations.

Have fun,

Thomas

From: Michael Current <michael@mcurrent.name>
Sent: Sunday, March 2, 2014 @ 3:57 PM
Subject: dir2atr

Posted Thu Feb 27, 2014 9:21 AM

I just uploaded an updated version of dir2atr to my website <http://www.horus.com/~hias/atari/>.

Windows users please download the Atari Tools for Win32 package; Linux users please download the atarisio-140227 tarball.

Here's a list of what's new:

- Peter Dell noticed that the allowed filename character filter wasn't correct in MyDOS mode. This is now fixed.
- Added '-a' option to enable MyPicoDos autorun mode: if it's enabled and a single file is present on the ATR it will be autostarted (the MyPicoDos menu pops up for a short time, though)
- Added '-B boot-sector-file' option to load user-defined boot sectors from a file. This can be used to init an ATR with xBIOS boot sectors, for example.

So long,

Hias

CLUB OFFICIALS

President:	
Michael Current	(608) 787-8548 michael@mcurrent.name

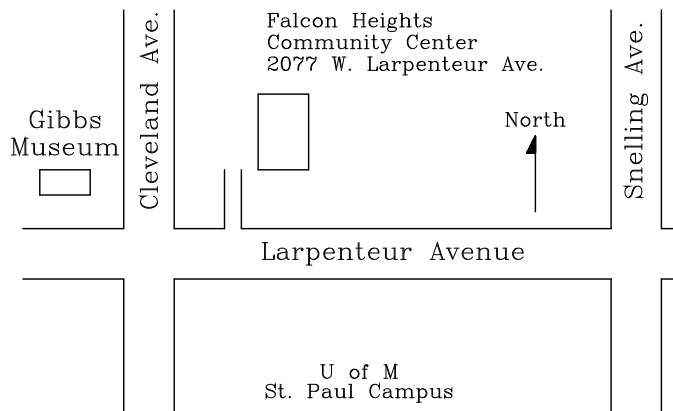
Vice President / Webmaster / Newsletter Editor	
Nolan Friedland	(763) 689-5340 ilmarinen1976@hotmail.com

Secretary:	
Steve Peck	(651) 408-1096 artisan213574@gmail.com

DOM Librarian / Membership Chairman:	
Glen Kirschenmann	(763) 786-4790 kirsch@netzero.net

Treasurer:	
Greg Leitner	(651) 455-6550 reglites@hotmail.com

Saint Paul Atari Computer Enthusiasts (SPACE) meets on the second Friday of each month at 7:30 PM in the Falcon Heights Community Center at 2077 West Larpenteur Ave. Doors open at 7:00 PM.



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Visit our website at: <http://space.atari.org/>

The SPACE BBS is currently offline. We apologize for this inconvenience and hope to have it back online in the near future.

Articles for Publication must be received by the Newsletter Editor two weeks prior to the Club's next Scheduled meeting.

S.P.A.C.E.

c/o Gregory Leitner
3407 78th St E
Inver Grove Heights, MN 55076-3037