September 2016 Edition

Message from Captain Irata:

"Spring has sprung, Fall has fell. Atari games are cool, but harder than… harder than… Whatever! Hoo-rah!"

The President's Corner
By Michael Current

Recently I stumbled upon a whole area of recent Atari history I had completely overlooked.

There have been several companies involved with producing arcade cabinets, or simulated arcade cabinets designed for the home consumer, legally containing dozens of classic arcade games, usually including classic Atari arcade games.

This has clearly been another source of income for the modern Atari (though I doubt a large one!).

The history of these operations and the companies involved has been complex, so that even though it's all within modern times it's still a major project to sort things out to my own satisfaction.

Companies have included Hyper-Ware, UltraCade Technologies, Global VR, and Chicago Gaming Company. Arcade products have included UltraCade for coin-operated environments, and Arcade Legends cabinets for home consumers, all in several versions, each with upgrade packs available containing more games. Still a lot of work to do, but I'm working on it.

Thanks, keep using that Atari, and come to your next SPACE meeting, Friday September 9, 2016.

Treasurer's Report
By Gregory Leitner

Being that summer is coming to an end I could understand the low turnout for the August SPACE meeting.
We managed with just three of us: myself, Glen, and Steve Peck.

Since we knew it was going to be a short meeting, we spent more time than usual going through the monthly DOM. The meeting started around 7:40 and was done ten minutes later. Not much going on this time of the year.

I haven't seen as much as one Atari item come in for a future auction as it seems those out there who have anything Atari are going to hang on to them forever.

I can't blame them for that as I

have 8-bit items that have not been touched for over twenty years, but I will not part with them. My son Tony has already said he wants to inherit them.

As for what little there is to say about the treasury for August this is what transpired. Three DOMs were sold for a gain of $9.00 with no money paid out, so our treasury went from a balance of $405.54 to $414.54.

No contact with Nolan yet on the web-site so we haven't paid anything out for that since August of 2015. So we have an accrued expense of $120.00 as of today.

Please see Steve Peck's review of the August DOM, as it has a couple of games I am waiting to see how he measures them. Both games look rather difficult, but most Atari games seem that way to me who I will admit I am not much of a gamer.

Anyway, that's all I have for now. Hope to see more members in September.

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Secretary's Report

By Steven Peck

HELLO WORLD!

Hard to believe it's three-quarters into the year of 2016, isn't it?

Well, I believe it. Nothing surprises me anymore. I just don't let it. :D

Anyway, here is the Report…

Aside from the DOM presentation before the actual meeting lasting about thirty minutes, the meeting started at 7:40 PM.

There was no Website Report, but Nolan put up a like on a SPACE Facebook page that we must have forgot about, or never seen, which is a cool thing. I will check it out.

The Membership Count stands at ten. I am due myself in October, so I will pay then. but, those that are due, I encourage you to do the fun thing and pay the membership. It is only $15.00 a year and it can come with a lot of perks.

No old news was submitted, but we had new news: the CX-30 Evolved Paddle Controllers are being developed and are getting ready to be shipped by Video 61.

These controllers are compatible with the A2600 and A7800 game systems. Pretty cool deal.

The meeting lasted about ten minutes, ending about 7:50 PM.

This also ends the Secretary's Report. So I close with Stan Lee's famous salutation…

EXCELSIOR!

Atari 8-bit DOM Review
By Steven Peck

Well, we are back with yet another DOM Review for the 8-bit computers. I am a little pressed for time, so we are going to get started.

SIDE A:

Never Drink and Defend 8-bit is a funny little demo that shows a dancing stickman doing a "drunken" dance.

The graphics could be better, but the animation is cool and fun. I see that it is a silly attempt to promote the 8-bit, and I acknowledge it. Pretty good.

Graphics: 5
Animation: 7
Sound: 2

Total: 14/30

Wolf Walk is a a TIP animation that is self-explanatory. that graphics and animation are solid. But, I think that TIP animation files always are.

You could think of it as a primitive GIF. It is actually that good. The only thing is, since it is 8-bit, it is linited by the resolution and colors. But, it still shines.

Graphics: 10
Animation: 10

Total: 20/20 (perfect score)

Pentagram is a fantasy arcade action RPG where you play a little wizard that has to fight ghosts, witches, goblins, and other demonic beasties.

The game is fun, but hard to play. It kind of moves like Airball, and it is similar in layout to it. The graphics are great and I think that if you want a real challenge, try this.

Graphics: 8
Gameplay: 9
Animation: 8
Sound: 9

Total: 34/40

Wytyczne rybne (Build a Fish) is an Eastern European game of Concentration where you have to match parts of a fish correctly to build it perfectly.

It has goofy, but OK, graphics. it is somewhat challenging. The sound suffers, though. It isn't the greatest game I have seen, but it passes in my book.

Graphics: 6
Gameplay: 7
Animation: 7
Sound: 5

Total: 25/40

Future is a soundtrack and it is pretty good. It reminds me of the soundtrack from the game "Gyruss", as you are fighting aliens trying to reach Earth.

This is a real peach of a track. It is polished and reminiscent of the 1980s space games.

Total: 7/10

Pokey Balboa is a gritty sounding techno track. It sounds foreboding, like it is emulating the Rocky Balboa movies. I think it does utilize

the POKEY chip, hence the name.
Total: 9/10

Desire is a cool demo with a real-time text ticker and animated blobs on the screen. It kind of reminds me of some digital version of a lava lamp display.

I like the animation in this demo and the graphics, and the fact that it can handle the fast text ticker all at the same time. Seriously and deviously good programming there!

Graphics: 9
Sound: 9
Animation: 10

Total: 28/30

Revised is a music track that is peppy, uplifting, and fast all at the same time. It is very good, and I am giving it high marks because it is good.

I consider this one of the better tracks on this DOM.

Total: 8/10

Lotus 3 - Spaceninja Crazy Cover, v. 01 is another music track and the last file on Side A of the August DOM. I thought it was weird, spacey, and peppy.

It had all the elements of a weird science fiction movie. I must say, it did show that type of genre in the music. I thought that it could have been better, though. It was OK.

Total: 7/10

SIDE B:

Cyctriks is an interesting game. Call it 3D cylindrical Tetris. Because, that is what it is. It is a great game and it is very difficult because of the setup of the playfield.

This is a knockout of a game. Play it and you will be amazed.

Graphics: 10
Gameplay: 10
Animation: 10
Sound: 10

Total: 40/40 (perfect score)

Sarepska: The Game, is a game where two players play simultaneously and grab canisters of "sarepska" (mustard) and try to get the most on their sides.

The player with the most sarepska canisters wins the round. You can play the Atari Party side, or the Commodore 64 side.

The game is fast and not very difficult once you get the hang of it. Your players move fast, but once you understand when to time how to stop the players before hitting obstacles, you can become more adept at grabbing the sarepska.

It is a nice game, the music is funny, and it has a funny splash screen.

Graphics: 7
Gameplay: 7
Animation: 7
Sound: 7

Total: 28/40

Bad Apple '16 is a music track and it is a strange sounding one. It's gritty. It is bad in a way, almost out of tune. I think it is suppposed to be. I liked it, though.

Total: 7/10

Biala Flaga is yet another track and it is menacing and foreboding. It reminds me of going into a dark castle alone, like in Dragon's Lair as Dirk the Daring, which is great.

Total: 7/10

Cannon Fodder is a track that is exposive, triumphant, and desperate all at the same time. Sounds like a wartime situation, does it not? That is what it reminds me of.

It is not a bad soundtrack, really. It could be better, but it still stands out. I really enjoyed it.

Total: 7/10

Prince Igor/Uleitai na Krylach wietra is a soundtrack like other soundtracks. It is nice and mellow this time. Overall, I thought it was OK and it is still a nice DOM track.

Total: 7/10

This concludes the 8-bit DOM Review. Next is a Review of the upcoming ST DOM for October (we tried for September, but it did not work out; for this our apologies.)

Atari ST DOM Review

By Mike Allard

"We are going Berzerk because our Ataris have Bugs while Mrs. Munchie is playing FlappyBird."

Hello, fellow Atarians! In case you didn't catch the quote above maybe reading the reviews on this month's DOM for the ST computers might shed some light as to what is on the disk. You will need a joystick connected to the joystick port and 512K of RAM on your ST computer to play most of these games. The games should work fine on any ST/TT/Falcon computer. Here we go!

First up is…

BERZERK

When I first seen this Title Screen I started to wonder just how well was this game made. Once I started to play I was immediately zapped back into the arcades of 1980s.

Those familiar with the arcade and 8-bit Berzerk will feel right at home. But they might also notice a few differences. The player character moves significantly faster in this clone than any other port of this game, including the arcade. The quick movement can make the player accidentally run into walls a bit easier from time to time. At least it seems to be that way for me.

Evil Otto is ever present in this game as well as his voice. Yep, all the synthesized speech from the arcade and 8-bit ports are here as well. This should make for some good memory flashbacks, eh?

Based on the arcade, this GFA BASIC-made game brings everything the arcade is known for to the Atari ST. And it's a good game. Not 100% perfect but enough that it gets the job done.

Second game is…

Bugs is Millipede/Centipede on steroids. Seriously. Bring what you know on those games but be prepared to be re-schooled on this twist to the classic bug-shootin' arcade game.

The game is controlled with a joystick controller and, at first glance, seems like a clone of Millipede. But after a while the player realizes that things are not what they seem or should be. And then it happens… the player is suddenly face-to-face with bug bosses shooting things at them, dive-bombing them, and doing everything else you could pos-

The graphics are good, the sounds are good but it is the concept that made this game interesting and a challenge for me. I have always liked Centipede and Millipede but thought more could have been done. Bugs does what those didn't do.
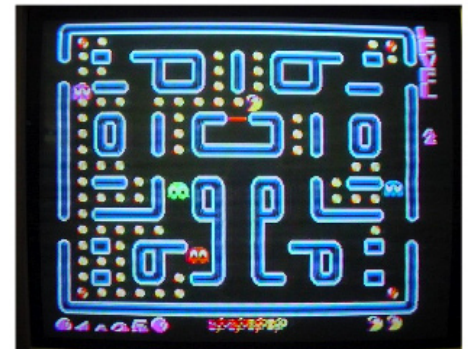
Game number 3 is …

MRS. MUNCHIE

Don't let the name fool you. While it sounds and appears to be a Ms. Pac-Man clone it takes that game


At first the game might seem like a disappointment. I recommend giving this game a fair chance to show its stuff. If you know you are about to get killed by ghosts hit the fire button and watch what happens. Did you see it?!?

And its not just four ghosts you have to worry about as the game can place five and six ghosts in any one maze at the same time. Then there's bugs to watch out for, you can get stung by a bee which slows you down, and a few other mishaps.

But Mrs. Munchie has some items on her side. There's fruits per the norm but these don't move around like those found in Mrs. Pac-Man... these almost tease the player. I've seen these come out of a tunnel and then go right back. Strange stuff. Keep an eye out for things to pop up under the ghosts' home. These do some weird things, some good, some not so good.

To add insult to injury while I was testing out this game I stumbled
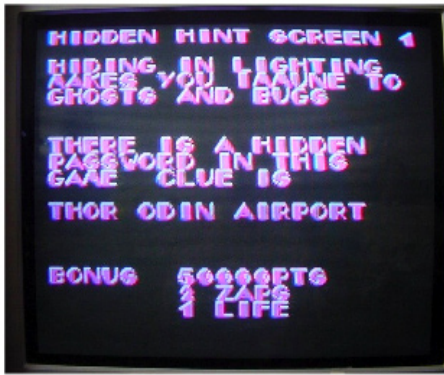
I have no clue what I did to get this message nor how to answer it. Apparently Mrs. Munchie has some secrets to discover.

Mrs. Munchie offers up a taste of Mrs. Pac-Man with tons of extras that should keep a player entertained for hours.

And our last game …

FlappyBird

FlappyBird is a game that has recently appeared on various app stores for modern hardware. I was surprised to find this game for the Atari ST home computers.

The object of the game is to fly through gaps in Mario-style pipes without crashing. You only get once chance to fly as far as you can without hitting anything. Hit something and the game is over.

The controls are real simple with this one...and you can use either the joystick fire button, the space bar on the computer keyboard, or the left button on the mouse. Which ever you chose to use it will be used to keep your bird flapping its wings. The more you flap the higher in the sky the bird gets. See how far you can go!

Overall I found FlappyBird to be a nice game. The graphics remind me of Mario style games. This ST port of a game that was originally for more modern hardware gets a really nice appearance on our beloved Atari computers. I believe kids will like this game as well.

Well, that's it. Four games to keep your controllers in tip-top shape until next month's DOM. Keep those Atari computers alive and well. Have fun!!

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR: As previously stated, due to minor issues with production, the ST DOM will not be released until October. Sorry for the inconvenience.

But, once the DOM is released, we should have no problems with future releases. Thanks for your patience and understanding.

Latest Atari News

As Told by Mike Current from Other Sources

Version 2.80 of my emulator, Altirra, is now out:

http://www.virtualdub.org/altirra.html

Thanks to everyone who provided feedback, suggestions, and bug reports over the past nine months. Would you believe it's now been over seven years since version 1.0? And for anyone else not as interested... thank you for putting up with the 32-page megathread!

2.80 final is functionally the same as 2.80-test51 except for the versioning change. The full change log is accessible from the Help menu or the website, but here are the highlights of the release:

• Profiles: Keep different sets of settings for different usage modes and quickly switch between them.

• UI: Setup wizard for easier first-time start, more flexible .zip support, better D3D9 windowed vsync performance under Vista+, and ability to set file associations as user-local without requiring admin elevation.

• 5200 mode: Now easier to use. The setup wizard asks whether you want to start in 5200 mode, and 5200 mode is now a separate default profile with partitioned settings and input maps, so it's easier to switch between 5200 and computer mode without mixing up the settings. Fixed a number of issues with 5200 controller support and added a controller test on the boot cartridge screen so you can tell if your controllers are set up correctly.

•Input: Improved mouse support, driving/keyboard controller support.

• Accuracy: Serial bus noise, fast pot

scan mode, flash toggle bits, 65C02/65C816 flag and cycle timing fixes, and 5200 power-up DRAM pattern is now more correct.

• Devices: Corvus Disk Interface, Pocket Modem, joystick dongles, IDE+2 fixes and improvements, MyIDE-II and SIDE 2 hot swap fixes, secondary IDE drive support, DragonCart fixes, 256K RAMBO mode.

• Disk drives: Improved Indus GT emulation, improved emulation of 810/1050 disk drive differences, DOS 1.x and improved SDFS filesystem support, configurable default mount mode, and new "VR-WSafe" mount mode.

• Firmware: Additional fixes to built-in OS and BASIC.

• Debugger: Automatic focus switching, uninitialized memory access checking, emulated network tracing, stepping fixes, improved 65C02 and 65C816 support, and coprocessor (Veronica) execution stepping.

...And, as usual, time to start the next set of test releases:

http://www.virtualdu...-2.90-test1.zip

http://www.virtualdu...0-test1-src.zip

Changes in 2.90 test-1:

• Switched compiler from Visual Studio 2013 to Visual Studio 2015 for improved C++ support. 2.90 will still support Windows XP but will be the last major release to do so; the next major version after that will require either Vista or Windows 7.
• HLE kernel removed. It had fallen behind the LLE kernels and there wasn't enough of a reason to keep

it.
• Bicubic filter mode removed for graphics cards that only support pixel shader 1.x; also not enough reason to keep it.

• History window now shows a preview of the next instruction.

• Devices dialog improved -- now resizable, shows where child devices can be added, and shows a small settings blurb after select devices.

• Disk Drives dialog now supports drag and drop and is resizable.

• VFS (virtual file system) support extended to more places; Disk Explorer can now mount images within .zip files.

• Added "borderless windowed" or "windowed fullscreen" mode in Options, under Display. This is slightly more expensive on the graphics card but permits easier and faster switching to other programs. (Note that there appears to be a bug in Windows 10 Anniversary Update that prevents the taskbar from auto-hiding as documented if there are top-most windows overlapping a fullscreen window; no workaround for this yet.)

• Added an option for 16-bit display surfaces that should help on low-end graphics cards.

• Rewrote some critical emulation routines to avoid use of the MASKMOVDQU instruction, which is horribly slow on AMD APUs.

• Added CTIA emulation support.

• Fast boot now accelerates AltirraOS and kernels running under Ultimate1MB.

• KMK/JZ IDE v1 PBI bus ID is now configurable.

• Added new "hold keys" feature to allow keys to pre-queued for the next reset when the PC keyboard doesn't allow all the equivalent keys to be held down.

• SIO burst transfer algorithm rewritten to better respond to timing hiccups on the 6502 side, improving reliability at higher base transfer rates.

• Fixed saving of window size when exiting in full screen mode; the full screen size is no longer saved as the normal window size.

• Fixed a crash in the H: device when doing a wildcard rename of a file whose name conflicted with a reserved device name in Windows.

• Changed the way that H: and PCLink handle automatic reserved device name renaming. Both now use ! as the prefix, but accept either $ or !.

• Removed DSKINV hook to fix acceleration issues with QMEG's non-standard DSKINV behavior; no easy workaround and not worth it.

• Fixed UI focus behavior when undocking the active pane.

• Started support for a compatibility database. This is still pretty rough but allows the emulator to detect problematic images when the Boot Image command is used and to auto-suggest fixes. The built-in database currently has entries for two images for testing (Mr. Do! and Jenny of the Prairie). The compat DB is signature based and will match images regardless of the filename. There is a built-in editor and support for a custom external compatibility database as well; note that the format may be subject to change, though, as I haven't decided if I like the current hashing scheme yet.

The runtime engine format is binary for speed, but the source format is JSON and designed to be easy to handle.

Final Thoughts
By Steven Peck

Well, here we are again at the end of the Newsletter. I had to shorten it because I was pressed for time. I am going to concentrate more on the Newsletter in future issues.

I cannot wait for the new ST DOM that is coming soon. I would like to expand my ST collection of games, demos, and applications. So, at least it is on the way.

Well, soon it will be SPACE Election Night. But that is in November. Keep thinking about that as well.

So, I am going to close. I will see you at the next meeting, at least I hope to. Cape diem, guys. Thanks.

The next SPACE meeting is on Friday, September 8, 2016, at 7:30 PM.

We hope to see you there!

THANKS!

S.P.A.C.E.

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