January 2018 Edition

The President's Corner
By Michael Current

Welcome to 2018, Atari and SPACE club style!

Two of the recent print Atari 8-bit oriented publications, Excel and Pro(c)Atari, have produced new issues recently after delays. I am looking forward to seeing them both!

My recent Atari research has uncovered several names among Atari executives that were pretty much overlooked (even by me) for many years due to their very short stays.

This includes Walt Wilson, who was hired in mid 1987 as general manager of Atari "U.S." Corp. to take over after the departure of Jerry "J.J." Brown. I now believe this was also the moment that Atari split off entertainment electronics from Atari "U.S." Corp., and Mike Katz became president of the new Entertainment Electronics division that he had been promised since he joined Atari.

Atari and most media started calling Atari "U.S." Corp. the "Atari Computer" division in spring 1988 with the arrival of Charles Babbitt as its president, but Atari had actually made that reorganizational move the previous summer when Walt Wilson arrived. Only Wilson left after just a couple months, so quickly that few knew he had ever been there, and the new "Atari Computer" division's full launch was delayed for half a year or so.

Thanks, keep using that Atari, and come to your next SPACE meeting: Friday, January 12, 2018.

Message from Captain Irata:

"2018 Already?
Well, color me red and call me a shamrock!
Happy New Year, SPACE Cadets!"

TRIVIA TIME!

Although some people think the Atari Jaguar is 16-bit because of the 68000 chip, this is actually a misnomer. The main purpose of the 68000 is to offer joypad controller support. The Atari Jaguar is truly a 64-bit game platform.

Treasurer's Report
By Gregory Leitner

With the snow falling at just the wrong time for our December Christmas party/meeting we ended up with just five members and two spouses in attendance. Plenty of tacos were consumed along with wieners and beans.

My favorite was the three root beer floats which I happily pigged out on. All in all thanks to Brian providing the Xmas music a good time was had.

For our meeting in December we took in another $45.00 to boost our SPACE balance to $678.54. We started the month with $633.54 and added $30.00 for two membership renewals and $15.00 for the sale of five 8-bit DOMs.

We actually took in a total of $204.00 for the last three months compared to $225.00 for the previous nine months.

We are now at the point of being able to pay for two years of our room rental. So consider the Club paid up through 2019. Thank you members!
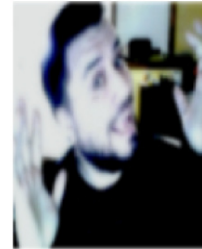
Jackie and I want to wish all our members along with their families a very Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year. Let's hope 2018 is just as successful as it was for us in 2017. See you all in the new year!

GET INVOLVED!

WE WANT YOUR ARTICLES!

Secretary's Report
By Steven Peck

HELLO WORLD!

Happy 2018! Here we are with another Secretary's Report. I will just cut to the chase and get started with the Report.

The meeting started at 7:35 PM. We are currently at nine members in the Membership Count, and the website and Facebook pages are running smoothly. In the Old Business, it was mentioned that the 8-bit video games created by V61 will be also ported to the Atari 5200 platform.

This is welcome news for the Atari 5200 afficionados out there. Stay tuned to the SPACE Newsletter for further details. Furthermore, in the New Business, it was also mentioned that V61 will port the games to the 7800 platform as well.

So, we got a double-whammy of great video gaming news from Lance. We will keep you covered if there are developments with this story in the future.

Also, the new Flashbacks have been out. So, if you are into nostalgia and cannot afford a lot, get one of those Flashbacks to bring you bck to the old days. Unfortunately, the sound is emulated inaccurately. So, there will be pros and cons to playing them.

But, there is enough there to jar some old Atari memories. Also, it has been mentioned on Atari fourms that there will be reproductions of the Atari Jaguar Pro Controller. These will run about $60.00, once ready to be sold.

In comparison, the real ones sell on auction sites for as much as $200.00. In further comparison, that was much more than what I paid for my first 520ST computer. Astonishing, is it not?

Speaking of the Jaguar, there is still talk on the SD cartridge coming soon for it. This Sd cartridge can even hold CD images, which can meake the Jaguar CD player a thing of the past. Personally, I would like to have both. After all, I do have two CD units. But, it would be fun to test it out.

Who could forget the Party we had? I had a lot of fun there. There was a lot of food and frolic. It was enjoyable being at another Christmas Party.

This concludes the Report. Thanks for reading and in the words of the great Stan Lee…

EXCELSIOR!

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Recent Atari News

Version 3.00 of my emulator Altirra is now out:

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

As usual, thanks to everyone providing feedback on its development. 3.00 is the same as 2.99-test25 except for version and date fixups. Here are the highlights since 2.90:

Accuracy: Illegal 6502 opcode and 65C816 fixes, VBXE fixes and timing improvements, POKEY serial and keyboard fixes, MIDI parsing fixes.

Cassette: Turbo decoding support, improved FSK decoding, improved OSD, analysis mode for diagnosing raw tape decoding problems, export tapes back to raw audio.

Debugger: Faster history engine with more powerful loop/call detector, fixes and enhancements to 65C816 and coprocessor debugging.

Performance Analyzer: New tracing engine enables visualization of CPU, display, serial bus, disk, and tape activity simultaneously.

Capture multi-minute traces and easily match glitched frames with CPU activity without trying to catch the bug as it occurs, or trace an entire disk load to diagnose SIO errors.

Automatic thread detection identifies idle and interrupt times within a frame to guide optimization.

Devices: Browser (B:) device, XEL-CF and Rapidus emulation, VBXE core behavior selection.

Disk: ATX MFM support, IDE identify command improvements, SCSI timing selection support, filesystem parsing fixes.

UI: Enhanced high DPI support on Windows 10 version 1703 and up (per-monitor V2) so that dialogs now dynamically scale, full-screen fixes and workarounds.

Tile Smashers is my latest Retro Video Game release for the Atari 8-bit computer. This is a combination of Breakout, Pinball, and even a little Pong thrown in there. Have to smash all the tiles on both the upper and lower sections to open up the top to get to the next level. 16 Different Tables, Power Ups, Obstacles, and fast action to challenge you.

Paddles are the default controller, but can be played with joystick, trackball, and 2600 driving controller.

Available on Cartridge from Video61 www.atari-sales.com

http://members.tcq.net/video61/whatsnew.html

I created this thread to answer any questions you may have for the game. The game runs on any Atari 8-bit computer, works with either the 400/800 OS to XL/XE. Does not use the RAM under OS or extended RAM. There is no known issues with other hardware modifications, however as usual modifying the Atari is always at the end users risk.

I know there is demand for games to support different controllers, but since Tile Smashers is a paddle game, that is the recommended controller for this game. Joystick and other controllers can be chosen, but you need to be more careful following the ball.

By Michael Allard

ST DOM NEWS & REVIEWS
(Image credits: Bill Bertram/Wikipedia)

NOTE: I have to apologize for this, everybody. In the last issue, I forgot to put a game to be reviewed in the Newsletter, here is that game from last month. Sorry for the inconvenience

Steve Peck,
Newsletter Editor

RZONE

This game should keep you on your feet. RZONE is an arcade-style maze game where you have to collect items in a specific order to advance to the next level. As you move the floor of the maze disappears behind you meaning you can't backtrack.

Also, you have a radiation meter at the bottom right of the screen. Stopping for two seconds will cost you a life.

(Now, back to the new Review!)

Well, another Christmas and New Year's season has come and gone. I hope that 2017 was a good year for everyone and here is hoping that 2018 will just as good if not better.

I, personally, hope that 2018 doesn't go as fast as 2017 did. That year seemed to really fly for me.

So, since it is a new year why not start things off with a bang...and really huge one at that! This month's ST DOM has a single game on it. Seriously, the game was so large it took up a whole disk by itself.

I could not find anything else to fit in the very little bit of space left on the disk. Without any more delays let's take a peek at the game.

ASTRODIA

Imagine, if you will, Asteroids on steroids with a map that scrolls in all directions, 16-bit arcade-style graphics and sounds, and you pretty much sum up what Astrodia is.

Some of the rules from Asteroids apply in Astrodia. The player has control of a spaceship that can turn 360 degrees, firing in all directions, can fly around space, and has a shield that automatically engages if anything gets too close.

The strength of your shield is indicated by the bar at the top-left of the screen, your current score is in

the middle, and the number of lives left is on the right indicated by the smaller ships.

Astrodia is controlled with a joystick controller including the Title Screen Menu. Move the joystick up or down to move the ship sprite next to the menu item you wish and then press the Trigger button.

The Options screen contains features of the game you can change including ST computer type (ST/STE), sounds, and other features. If your ST model has a Blitter chip installed this game takes advantage of it.

Astrodia is the most detailed Asteroids- clone game that I've come across yet. The only aspect of the game that bugs me was running the game on a 520 STFM showed that the computer didn't seem to be powerful enough. The game play was sluggish even when trying to change in-game settings to try to make the game's frame rate increase even if just a little. So I would recommend a more powerful ST model as I am not sure if a memory upgrade alone would help.

CLOSING STATEMENTS
Well, that wraps up this month's ST DOM. I hope that everyone finds it enjoyable even if it is only one game. After playing it for a while it makes sense why it takes up a whole disk. It has a lot to offer.

KEEP PLAYING THOSE ATARI COMPUTERS!!

Kamakazi's Korner

Michael Allard
Age: 43

Favorite Hobbies:
Collecting and Playing
Video Games

Favorite Music:
Rock

Since I've been voted in as ST DOM Librarian (thank you!) I thought it would only be fair to tell you all a bit about me and what all got me started in video games and computers.

My first video game experience happened on one Christmas morning when I woke up to a 4-port 5200 on the family coffee table. I had tripped over its cord on the way to the bathroom about 5 in the morning.

After I used the bathroom I spent the next couple of hours getting acquainted with the Atari console that had landed in my living room. I fell asleep in the floor next to it until Mom came in and woke me up. To say I loved my new Atari would be an understatement.

(Kamakazi's Korner: Continued Next Page.)

My first computer experience is a bit more complicated. The public school I attended in 2nd grade picked up about a dozen Commodore PETs, and about the only thing you could do with them was program in BASIC.

This is where my road down BASIC programming started. I wrote my first program which was nothing more than a guessing game.

Christmas that same year (a year after the Atari 5200) my Mom got me my own computer...a Timex Sinclair 1000 with 16K RAM expansion and three program cassettes. While I tried it wasn't that great of a computer.

Graphics were all in black and white, there were no joystick ports, the keyboard was similar to the Atari 400 but too small even for a 7 year old, and the programs most of the time would not load for one reason or another. However, I continued to learn BASIC programming on it every now and then.

After that Mom and I ran into lots of garage sale finds that included numerous 2600 consoles with at least 20 games each, a few computers from various manufacturers except Atari unfortunately, and a few then-modern game consoles mostly of Nintendo and Sega flavors.

The computers we found were another Timex Sinclair, Tandy Color Computer 3, and by 1990 Mom got me my own IBM 386 clone.

January 1998 would be a very difficult time for me. The loss of my mother was completely unexpected. Everything I tried to do to get out of my slump didn't work except for one item. This item would introduce me to one of the best friends I've ever had.

I had decided to pay a visit to the local consignment shop because I remembered how much random "junk" he had. I thought I might find something there to help me take my mind off my mother, even if for just a little bit.

While browsing the store I tripped over a box. Sound familiar? When I got up the owner of the store came to check on me. Concrete floor hurts but I was OK.

Out of curiosity I looked at the box. Inside the box was a bunch of paperwork, books, a couple of disk drives, a tape player, a small black color printer, and some kind of console that said "Atari" on it. The shop owner said for $40 I could take it all home. I couldn't turn it down. It was an Atari.

Once I got home I quickly hooked up the system, connected all the drives, found a modem and connected it, and began going through the game carts and various disk programs that I found under the console.

What I had bought I would later learn was called the Atari XEGS. It had two 551's, a program recorder (can't remember if it was of the 1010 or later model), light gun, matching CX40 style controller, Okidata color printer (very small black one that used thermal technology), and came with Bughunt, Flight Simulator, Racing Destruction Set complete in box, various manuals, programming books, and advertisements.

After messing around with the computer for a while (Racing Destruction became an instant favorite), I went through the advertisements. All of them were catalogs of the printed and stapled style but all listed Atari programs for sale.

Since I thought Atari was dead by this time with Nintendo, Sega, and a few others present, I didn't know if any of these places still existed. I got brave and started calling each one.

The first few were dead. The third one actually answered, "Video 61, this is Lance." I was like WOW.

I asked if he still sold Atari products and he answered with a definite yes. So I ordered some more programs. Oils Well, Zaxxon, and one other I can't remember.

I learned a lot with that little XEGS setup. I programmed in Atari BASIC, ran up a phone bill with Bobterm, read about the inner workings of the system (GTIA, ANTIC, POKEY, 6502, RIOT)... and because of the XEGS I was able to get out of my slump and discovered a world of Atari I never knew existed.

I also discovered people who became some of my best friends. These same friends would introduce me to things only the kid in me dreamed about.

Because of them I discovered about, and became a part of, a historical computer club that still holds the same values that Atari was based on. That XEGS couldn't have come along at a better time in my life.

Today, I'm happily married to my second wife while collecting and playing video games on various computer and gaming consoles. Atari still holds top-dog in my collecting as their consoles and computers, even under Jack's ownership, were innovative, one-of-a-kind, and ahead for their time.

What are my favorites in my collection? Well, that all depends. As for consoles I have two. While the 2600 has worked its way into my heart the 5200 remains my number one gaming console.

Once I got that console the 2600 just seemed way out of style with games that didn't look as good as they did on the 5200. However, I discovered lots of 2600 games that are good and tell what the real heart of the 2600 is ... the game play itself.

My second favorite game console is the 64-bit Atari Jaguar. A mix of mediocre games for sure but there were a few titles that really stood out including Tempest 2000, Iron Soldier, Cybermorph, and the best Raiden port ever seen.

My favorite computers are the Atari 8- bit line. A lot more has been done with those machines than any other including Atari's own ST line. It has been amazing to discover what all Atari and other developers have pulled off with a computer system that is almost 40 years old at least. I like all A8 models but prefer the original 800 because of its styling.

My favorite hand-held console is the Atari Lynx II. With 16-bit graphics, 32-bit sounds, and the first system with a color screen, it was far more advanced than the competition. I do like the fact that it kept the games in a more arcade favor but it wouldn't have hurt to bring more original games to the system.

Today, I concentrate on developing programs for the A8 line. And, as you all know, I am responsible for making the ST DOM disks which allow me to learn the ST in the process. A nice computer but I sometimes feel Atari missed the mark in small spots here and there.

Well, that's pretty much me in a nutshell. I look forward to being your ST DOM librarian for a very long time to come. Hopefully someday I can make the trip to attend the club in person. I would really like to meet my friends and the club members in person. Keep using those Ataris!!

I frequently visit Atari I/O under my nickname Kamakazi20012. I also have a YouTube channel.

Atari 8-bit DOM Review
By Steven Peck

Welcome to the first 8-bit DOM Review of 2018, and again, Happy New Year to all the members of the SPACE Club. I recently got a letter from Mr. Pawel Sikorski, who goes by the username Sikor.

Mr. Sikorski lives in Poland and wrote Kobieta Zmienną Jest, where you spot differences between pictures of bikini-clad women. We were have trouble figuring out how to play his game, as I recall.

Well, Sikor read this Review and decided to give us the English instructions to this game, which was written in Turbo BASIC XL. He had to hastily create the game for SillyVenture. So, production had to be sped up on it. Here is what he said:

Hi! I'm co-author of "Kobieta Zmienną Jest". In your bulletin I read:

"The whole B side of this DOM is one game, and I am not so sure this is the title of it: Kobieta Zmienna jest. It is another puzzle game where the player has to spot the differences between two bikini-clad women, however it is not clear how to do it.

"For one, the cursor moves slow and there is a time limit. We could not finish the game in time. Ever. Plus, it is again in Polish. It could not be comprehended. It is also written in Turbo-BASIC, complicating the speed, which we surmise here.

"It is great looking, but needs work with the speed. Unless we were playing it the wrong way, we just did not understand the premise of doing it in time."

So, some instruction (sorry for my English):

- you must show difference between left and right picture by clicking on place, where difference is.
- BABA - number of pictures.
- ile - haw many differences is yet.
- czas - time.
- szans - # of tries.

Yes, it is slowly - unfortunately game was written in fast time to Ironia Atari Party and Turbo Basic XL hasn't procedure to move PM gfx vertically ;(

Best regards,
Pawel Sikorski

Thanks, Sikor, for the English explanation on the game play. As I had promised, I put that in the Review. Best wishes, and happy programming to you.

We also understand the inherent issues with using Turbo BASIC XL to program this game. Thanks again for your response.

Now, on with the Review for this month.

December 2017 DOM, Side A:

The first file on this DOM, Happy Days, shows an invitation to one of the Atari gatherings in Europe. It has animated water and flamingos flying into the sky on a sunny day with blue sky and clouds scrolling across the sky.

I found this demo to be quite astounding. It is one of the better files that I had seen in the DOMs I have reviewed as yet. The parallax scrolling in the clouds is top-notch and I like the rendition of the somg "Feelin' Hot, Hot, Hot!" by Buster Poindexter. This demo is tops and will receive high marks.

Graphics:	10
Animation:	10
Sound:	10
TOTAL:	30/30 (perfect score)

The next file is called War Room, and it is a game betwen two soldiers in a shootout to the death. It is one to two players. You have limited ammo, so if you run out you must collect more. It is fast and difficult to play this game.

One false move too many and you will be killed. You have a life meter, so you can withstand several injuries before dying. the first player who dies three times loses the match.

I think that the graphics and sound could have been better, but the animation and gameplay were top-notch. It is difficult, but not impossible. Personally, I like the challenge. This is definitely a challenging video game. Here is my score:

Graphics: 7
Animation: 10
Sound: 8
Gameplay: 10

TOTAL: 35/40

Citron 3kg is a game where you have to collect green balls while piloting a spaceship. The rules are simple: Avoid anything that is not green. Everything else will destroy your ship. You also have to contend with another ship that divebombs on you.

This is a great game, too. It is easier than War Room, but still fun and has great graphics. This game is extremely well done. My only complaint is the flicker in the game. It can cause som difficulty in seeing what you have to avoid that can kill you.

I forgot that you can jump ove obstacles that can smash your ship. This makes things a little easier.

Graphics: 9
Animation: 10
Sound: 8
Gameplay: 10

TOTAL: 37/40

Superfly XL (Lite) is a game where you pilot a submarine using only the fire button. If you hit anything, you will get smashed. I found this game extremely hard to play. I could not control it well. I wonder if this is due to PAL issues.

I am not so sure of this. But, I think that is the problem. Here is the score:

Graphics: 9
Animation: 9
Sound: 9
Gameplay: 7

TOTAL: 34/40

Makov is a picture and the file on this DOM. It is a cutesy pic showing a girl in a dress and a guy with butterfly wings. This is some Polish writing on it, but I could not discern what it said, since I do not speak Polish. Great pic, though. It is fun.

TOTAL: 8/10

Midhust is another picture showing some old building in the European countryside next to a body of water. It almost looks like it has been digitized by a photo scanner. There is a lot of detail in it. It is an excellent job, actually. Great work.

TOTAL: 9/10

The next picture, Wielk, shows a white rabbit playing in the snow next to a snowman and a pine tree. I like the cartoony graphics in thi picture. It is well-executed and has great detail for a cartoon. This is another sharp picture. Kudos.

TOTAL: 9/10

SIDE B:

Shamus+ is a rehash of the classic game Shamus. You must shoot at robots and tanks while collecting keys to unlock parts of the level to advance. What it lacks in graphics it makes up in great gameplay and animation. it has tons of fast action and it is loads of fun to play. Very good game. Kudos!

Graphics: 7
Gameplay: 9
Animation: 9
Sound: 8

TOTAL: 33/40

The Way of the Exploding Fist is a Commodore 16 port. It is a karate tournament where you score points to advance to the next match. You must kick and punch your way to victory. It reminds me of the game Karate Champ, an arcade classic.

Although the graphics need work, the music is amazing and it is challenging enough. Very good game with lots of challenge to it.

Graphics: 7
Gameplay: 9
Sound: 10
Animation: 8

TOTAL: 34/40

There is only one music track on the entire DOM: Chips Atari. It has high pitch music with a fast tempo and a great beat. It definitely rocks. Great music. Kudos.

TOTAL: 8/10

New Atari Game is the name of this game, a skate-boarding title where you have to skate down a ramp and collect stars to advance to the next race. I love this game and it really stands out. I think that the graphics could have been better, but it still shines.

Graphics: 8
Gameplay: 8
Animation: 10
Sound: 10

TOTAL: 36/40

In Load Error, a picture, a little boy is shown crying because his computer ate his game cassette. So, he is a little upset. I would be if I were in his shoes. I think that the graphics need a little sprucing up. But, at least it makes a point.

Here's my score:

TOTAL: 7/10

Boulder Dash Mugen 11 is yet another take on the classic arcade title, Boulder Dash. Looks like Rockford is at it again. You know the rest, as we have talked about this classic puzzler game before. Great job. Kudos!

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

TOTAL: 40/40 (perfect score)

The final file on this DOM is called Diabelek. It show a funny little demon in a flaming pit with a pitchfork that has the Atari Fuji logo on the tip. I like the way the flames look, but the graphics need just a little more to them. Otherwise, funny.

TOTAL: 7/10

This concludes my DOM Review. Keep straight, guys, and Carpe Diem! Thanks.

The next SPACE meeting will be held on Friday, January 12, 2017, at 7:30 PM.

We look forward to seeing you there!

Thank you!

From ALL of the Merry Atarians at SPACE...

HAPPY NEW YEAR 2018!

BE PROSPEROUS!

CLUB OFFICIALS:

President/ Web Page Manager/
BBS Operator:

Michael Current
Ph: (608) 787-8548
E-Mail: michael@mcurrent.name

Vice-President:

Brian Little:
E-Mail: demomantna@gmail.com

Secretary/Newsletter Editor:

Steven Peck
Ph: (651) 462-5600
E-Mail: artisan213574@gmail.com

8-bit DOM Librarian/
Membership Chairman:

Glen Kirschenmann
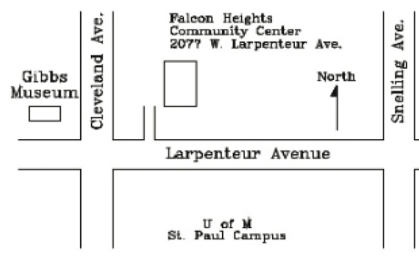Ph: (763) 786-4790
E-mail: kirschg@netzero.net

Treasurer:

Gregory Leitner
Ph: (651) 455-6550
E-Mail: greglites@hotmail.com

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

S.P.A.C.E.

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

DISCLAIMER:

This newsletter is published by the Saint Paiul Atari Computer Enthusiasts (SPACE) special interest group, an independent organization with no business affiliation with ATARI, Inc.

Permission is granted to any similar organization with which SPACE exchanges newsletters to reprint material from this newsletter.

We do, however, ask that credit be given to the authors and to SPACE. Opinion expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of SPACE, the club officers, the club members, or ATARI, Inc.

Please feel free to visit our website at this URL:

http://space.atari.org

We now have a Facebook page.
Please feel free to visit it at this URL:

https;//www.facebook.com/AtariMinnesota

SPACE BBS NOTICE:

The SPACE bulletin board service (BBS) is currently offline. We apologize for the inconvenience and hope to have it back online in the future.

NOTICE FOR AUTHORS
OF SPACE NEWSLETTER
ARTICLES:

Articles meant for newsletter publication must be receive by the SPACE Newsletter Editor by two weeks prior to the start of the next scheduled SPACE Meeting. Thank you for your understanding on this.