

ORPHANED COMPUTERS & GAME SYSTEMS

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wELCOME TO ANOTHER FUN-FILLED ISSUE OF ORPHANED COMPUTERS AND GAME SYSTEMS. oOPS. IET ME HIT MY CAPS-LOCK KEY AND WE'LL GET STARTED.

Much better. Sorry about that. It happens. It's one of the side-effects of this new age in which most every activity is computer-driven, including writing anything at all: an editorial, of course, but also a letter to a friend, a mail-order request or a resume. We have all learned to deal with trivialities like accidental caps-lock, slow Net servers, system lock-up and other things that have become newly accepted minor hindrances in life, right along with the old usuals: burnt-out light bulbs, missing laundry socks and freezers that need defrosting. In fact, that's the topic of an article in this issue - how computers have finally fulfilled all of the old predictions and worked their way into life's usual routines, and how we should be careful to discriminate between relevance and novelty.

There are plenty of other neat things, of course (even besides slick writing tricks like making it look like my caps-lock key was hit on purpose by paralleling it with the topic of an article inside), including an examination of Jeff Minter's creations for the Atari Jaguar and an incredible article Adam's written regarding his extensive work as he endeavors to learn how to program the Atari VCS. Sorry it's a little late, but we think you'll find this super-sized issue worth the wait! -- CF

Is it the simplistic game-play that keeps many people interested in the classics? Though several

classic games hold the original play value today, many do not. However, I collect the dud games too. Now why would I do that? I do it because even the worst games must surpass enormous technical boundaries on the consoles of yesteryear to even work. This doesn't excuse the dud games, but it does allow me to appreciate what the programmer was trying to achieve. In this sense, the games that I do not find fun are like historic pieces of art that no one sees; I try to look past the rough edges of unfinished work to see the jewels that lay within. So, to me, even the bad games have a right to stand alongside the quality games. This doesn't seem to be an opinion that too many people share.

It is a common belief that some 2600 games are bad because of hardware limits. It is also a common belief that some 2600 games are good because programmers had to learn to work within these limitations. But what limitations? The answer lurks deep behind the scenes -- in the power of the VCS itself. I have challenged myself to learn what makes the 2600 tick. I believe that this will give me a better perspective of the games available for it. I don't expect to learn the machine quickly: I'm rather happy to move along at a slow pace toward an undefined goal.

The first step that I took in the direction of understanding VCS games was to change the graphics. Excellent PD programs available for MS-DOS machines turned this into a very easy task. This issue includes an article called "Changing Atari VCS Graphics -- The Easy Way" that takes the reader through the steps needed to change a graphic in

Space Invaders. The article can be used as a springboard to change graphics in other games, and hopefully to give would-be programmers the seed to go on to create new VCS games.

This issue is packed with other great articles as well. Don't miss the sociological comments made by Chris in "When Does Efficiency Become Irrelevant?" In a world that people are claiming has grown small because of mass communication, Chris looks toward our future with an eye that questions the true distance between us all.

Chris looks at programming as *fun* -- imagine that! Read his insights into the subject in "Chris's Top Five Programming Tips." Not only that, but he'll discuss two of his favorite games for the Atari Jaguar in "Y2K: Yak 2000." If you are a dedicated Bally Professional Arcade fan, then you will be interested in "The Software CD Project For the Bally Professional Arcade."

Lastly, don't overlook the fixation that Chris has with gas...
-- AJT

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