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Internet Gaming - From the MUD to the Arcade

By Chris Hoffman

Twenty years ago, I sat in my brother-in-law's den watching five year old Philip soundly trounce his grandmother at his favorite game - Pac Man. After his third successive win, Phil gave his grandmother a puzzled look and asked, "Geeze, Grammy, didn't you play Pac Man when you were a kid?"

I know that I didn't play Pac Man as a kid. I'm from the Pong generation. I did get my chance to brush up on my ghost-eating skills for a quarter a game in the Student Union in my freshman year at college. By the time little Phil was cheating his grandmother (sly little runt had set her on Advanced while he played Easy - and forgot to mention to her that you had to EAT the power pills in order to eat the ghosts), the world of gaming was on a roll that simply gathers more momentum with each passing month. Companies like Nintendo and Sony started off by translating the arcade games to console - but soon took off in their own directions. In just ten years, the gaming industry has become one of the fastest growing and most profitable sectors of the technology industry. Interconnectivity took gaming to new heights - connecting to the Internet expands your base of competition from your neighborhood arcade to the entire world.

But connectivity didn't necessarily mean the World Wide Web. One of the problems with playing console games written for the Playstation, the GameCube or the Xbox is that you have to OWN a console in order to play. Enter Macromedia Flash and Sun Java, the two most popular plug-ins for web browsers. Java was created to be a cross-platform programming language designed to run in your browser no matter what operating system you're using. Macromedia's Flash animation program is possibly the most universally supported and installed browser plug-in in the world. In just a few short years, both platforms have come a long long long way from flat bouncy ball type graphics to absolutely stunning 3-D graphics.

Not surprisingly, the first wave of web browser games powered by Flash and Java have been rewrites of some of the old favorites - from standards to retro - and some engaging if silly games like Swat the Clown. They include those that captivated many of us during those golden years of the late 70s and early 80s, and feed the current appetite for all things retro, but they're not the only games to play online.

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In fact, you'll find everything from classic board games like Stratego to casino games to puzzles and shoot'em-ups. Some are multiplayer - many more are designed for one player against the computer - just like PC games and console games. What are the most played games online these days?

Casino Games top the ranks, with online interactive poker being one of the most popular activities on the web. It's hard to resist the chance to gamble, and online casinos are cashing in - in spades. Still, there are plenty of places to test your skills in poker, blackjack and other casino games without spending a cent.

Retro Arcade Games are a close second. Following the trend for all things retro, a whole new generation is discovering the fun of trying to maneuver falling blocks into place before they stack to the top of the screen, and shooting up Asteroids as they get close to your space ship. If that doesn't float your boat, there's still Prince of Persia, Frogger, Donkey Kong and dozens of other games that once graced arcades and barrooms everywhere.

Puzzle Games overlap the classic arcade games, with such classics as Tetris, Connect 4 and Stratego straddling the line between classic board games and the best of the arcade games. They run from the fun of lining up marbles in a row to flipping over coins to wipe out an entire board of your opponent's coins with one move in Reversi.

Sports Games never stop being fun. While fantasy football and baseball leagues keep the tycoons busy, some of us can still spend hours playing Mini Putt Golf and Pong. You can step into a batter's cage and hit a few out of the ballpark with one of the baseball games, or go for the gold in racing, skateboarding or tennis. If you're in a silly mood, you can play drafts with penguins as sliders, or whack-a-mole with your mouse.

No matter what your taste or pleasure, chances are that you'll find a game to suit it online. Just fire up your browser and point it to

<http://www.excessively.net>

, and enjoy a trip back - and forth, and

sideways and round and round the mazes.

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promote all the online gaming needs you could possibly want at:

<http://www.excessively.net>

Excessively Free Games is a comprehensive online game collection.

The Good Old Arcade Game: History And Development

By Rudolph Jones

Gaming is already a part of our lifestyle. Starting in childhood, once we see moving images of gaming characters, we have the curiosity to try controlling it. It lasts until our teenage and adult years; we consider gaming as one of the entertainment alternatives when we are feeling bored.

Different genres of games are starting to pop up such as online strategy and role-playing games. But do you still remember the good old arcade games? That Pac-man eating yellow dots and Mario and Luigi consuming mushrooms and flowers to rescue the princess from King Koopa? These games are considered to be the ancestors of the games that you play today on your computer or videogame station.

History Reminisced

Old arcade games started after World War II, after Ralph Bauer invented the perception of creating an electronic game system to the television screen during the early 1950's. When he presented his ideas to Magnavox, a television company during that time, it was approved and resulted in the release of a refined version of Bauer's Brown Box prototype, which is known as the Magnavox Odyssey in 1972.

It displays only spots of light on the computer screen and it requires the use of translucent plastic overlays to reproduce the appearance of the game. In other words, this gaming version is prehistoric compared to present gaming standards.

The first gaming console system that was invented is known as the Atari 2600, which was released in 1977. It used plug-in cartridges in order to play different games.

After the release of Atari 2600, old arcade games started their Golden Age in the gaming industry. This is considered to be the era when the popularity of such games increased drastically. It began in the late 1979 when the first colored arcade game appeared.

Old arcade games started to gain their momentum in the gaming industry during the release of the following:

· Gee Bee and Space Invaders in 1978 · Galaxian in 1979 · Pac-man, King and Balloon, Tank Battalion, and others in 1980

During this era, arcade game developers began experimenting with new hardware, developing games, which used the lines of vector displays as opposed to the standard raster displays. Few arcade games derived from these principle, which became a hit including the Battlezone (1980) and the Star Wars (1983), which are all from Atari.

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After the vector displays, arcade game developers were experimenting with the laser-disc players for delivering animations like in the movies. The first attempt is the Dragon Lair (1983) by Cinematronics. It became a sensation when it was released (there are instances that the laser-disc players in many machines malfunctioned due to overuse).

New controls were also cropped up in few games, although joysticks and buttons are still the arcade game standard controls. Atari released the Football in 1978 which used the trackball. The Spy Hunter introduced a steering wheel with resemblance to an actual one, and the Hogan's alley made use of tethered light guns.

Other specialty controls like the pedals in racing games and a crossbow-shaped gun in Crossbow were also developed in this era.

Now, with the enthusiasm of modern game developers, they tried to revive this old arcade games by means of enhancing its graphics and producing newer versions. This manifestation only shows that good old arcade games are still a great alternative to modern computer games.

Rudolph Jones is the owner of Pc Game Station, A meeting place for gameing enthusiasts.

<http://www.pcgamesstation.info>



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