



All Good Things...

THE PAST

I decided to borrow from Star Trek for APE's final headline. Yep, we've come to the end of our long strange journey and we're finishing with a special double-issue.

The Atari Portable Entertainment newsletter began back in the summer of 1990. I had gotten my start in the world of Atari journalism years before working on the on-line magazine Z-Mag. Nowadays on-line publications are quite common but back then it was something of an oddity. The Internet hadn't yet embraced the commercial world so distribution was limited to BBS' and the various on-line services. I had dabbled with a print version of Z-Mag but trying to sell something that you're already giving away for free is not an easy task. It was in one of those rare issues that I reported on something I saw at the 1989 Summer Consumer Electronics show. Back then, the CES(which strangely enough are also my initials)was the BIG place for games. That particular CES saw the launches of Gameboy, Sega Genesis. and something else...

"Atari had a big suprise for everyone in the form of a portable color LCD game system. Originally developed by Epyx,the Portable Color Entertainment System is going to be released by Atari in September for \$150. The Portable Color Entertainment System weighs 1 pound,has a 3.5 Inch LCD color monitor that has 16 colors onscreen from a palette of 4096. It has 64k ram,runs at 16mhz,and will run with batteries or an included AC adaptor.

The Portable Color Entertainment System graphics have to be seen to be believed.They're colorful and very sharp. The system will come packaged with California Games and there will be a number of other titles available. I saw three of these titles at the show.

TimeQuest:A Gauntlet-style game that has some nice scrolling graphics. Blue Lightning:A jet fighter game that looks tremendous. I didn't get the name of the 3rd game but it featured a Godzilla-like monster that you move through a horizontally scrolling

playfield,destroying buildings.As with the other Portable Color Entertainment System titles,it's graphics were great.

One of Portable Color Entertainment System's neatest features is that (like Game Boy)you can play multi-player games by hooking 2 Portable Color Entertainment System' together.A difference is that you can hook up to 8 Portable Color Entertainment System' together. They come with the necessary cable so you don't have to buy something extra. One of the Portable Color Entertainment System games they are developing is a racing game that really cooks when you have multiple players.A nice feature is that only one of the systems has to have the game cartridge. It will dump the program to the other slave machines that it is hooked up to."

The Portable Color Entertainment System became the Lynx(actually it was originally the Handy but we'll discuss that elsewhere in the issue), it showed up after September(and only in limited quantities), the price went up by \$30, TimeQuest became Gauntlet 3, the giant monster game was scrapped and replaced with a perfect conversion of Rampage, the multiplayer racing game eventually came out as Checkered Flag, and the multiple systems/one cart concept disappeared.

It showed up in Chicago in April of 1990. I got my Lynx and Blue Lightning at Toys R Us. Not long after I also picked up Electrocop. I had to go to Montgomery Wards to get my copy of Gates of Zendocon. Yes, Atari stuff at Toys R Us and Montgomery Wards, we are talking about a long time ago. In May of that year, a video game show called the "Tournament of Power" was held at a nearby college(the Tournament of Power dissolved not long after). One of the big sponsors of the show was Atari and they had a ton of Lynx units on display with playable versions of games such as Ms. Pac-man, Gauntlet, and a really cool multi-player game

called Slime World.

Summer CES rolled around again and this time Atari had an impressive display with many Lynx units and early versions of games such as Klax(there were versions on most of the various game systems but the Lynx one was the most impressive), Zarlol Mercenary, Warbirds, etc.

I saw a lot of potential at that show, and I decided to take the things I had learned from my work on Z-Mag (on-line and print) and come out with a newsletter that would cover this cool new system. I had always loved Z-Mag but I had inherited it from someone else, it wasn't something I had created. This was my chance to make something of my own.

I put together my first issue and then came my first obstacle... how do I let people know about this new publication? I had seen new products mentioned in magazines like START and Atari Explorer so I wrote up a press release and sent along a copy of the issue. Much to my suprise they both mentioned APE in issues and subscriptions began to trickle in.

After the first couple of issues, the first Chicago Atarifest was held. I bought some table space(it was only \$30) to promote the newsletter. I had brought my Lynx and all my games and let people get some hands-on experience with it. One of my local area subscribers, Jason Kimes, dropped by the table with his Lynx. He ended up spending the whole day there and helping out. We even had a chance to let people preview some upcoming games when Steve Ryno from Atari dropped by with some eeproms. I even asked Steve about the upcoming console Atari was working on but he wouldn't say anything. APE was THE Lynx presence at the show and it felt amazing.

It was a great time. Lynx games began to come out in good quantities. I even made some connections at Atari itself. Imagine my shock when a box came from Atari's PR firm (whichever one was handling it at that time) with a copy of every Lynx title currently available (about 15). It probably would've been even better if I didn't already own all those games (grin) but it still blew me away. News about new Lynx games began to pour in and then something really magical happened. Atari moved their entertainment division to Lombard, IL. They had come into my neck of the woods. Atari hired a new PR firm which was based in downtown Chicago. The guys handling the account called me and took me out to lunch and asked me about games, etc. They gave me more Lynx games (yet again ones I already had) and let me try out Lynx games that were coming out. When the next CES rolled around, Atari was showing their stuff at a downtown hotel and I got to check it out a day before the show began. I was even invited to a party they threw at their suite.

Things in life have a tendency to change, so it was with Atari. The 64-bit Jaguar became Atari's focus and the Lynx slipped to the background. As Atari changed so did APE. To cover both systems the "P" changed from Portable to Power. The Jaguar brought with it much hope, more news than ever before, and some fantastic games. I'd have to say the pinnacle came at the 94 Summer CES (the final one held in Chicago and the show lost most of its influence after that year). Atari had an incredible area with attention getters like Alien Vs. Predator, Tempest 2000, Iron Soldier, and the Jaguar CD. People were excited and they had good reason to be. I didn't attend the E3 show in 95 but I did get to check things out via Atari Explorer Online's video tape. Atari had some cool stuff (Virtual reality helmet) but the barbarians (Sony) were at the gate. Not long after, the house of cards fell and that brings us to now. I had originally planned to end APE last year but there was word that Atari would keep coming out with games for at least one more year...yeah, right.

I am happy to report that there are still some games in the pipeline but I've grown weary and it's time to move on. But before I go, we've got this one (okay the equivalent of two) last issue to finish. I'm going to let you in on a final bit of Jag news and we're also going to be taking some more looks at the past, an analysis of the present, and a look toward the future of gaming (and how some former Atari folks might be help shaping it).

It's been a lot of fun and thanks for joining me. Farewell my friends.

P.S. As you may have noticed up in the upper right of the page, I'm no longer at Genie. The end of another era. At one time, Genie was Atari's official online presence. They had really good prices and was my first access to a commercial on-line service. Strangely enough time caught up with it just like Atari. General Electric sold it, prices went to pot

(\$22 a month for 9 hours with limited speeds and no-frills internet access) and most people left. I stayed for quite awhile (probably longer than I should've). Then their Internet access went down for about a week and I decided to finally try out one of the many America On-Line free trial disks a shot and I was hooked. No more going to WebTV store displays to see flashy graphics on the web. I did have to upgrade to a 56K modem (I was still using a 14.4) but I found a good one marked down to \$70. So feel free to drop me a line if you want to chat (although probably not about Atari anymore okay?).

Memorable Letter

One of the things that really blew my mind as APE progressed through the years was the variety of places I heard from. There was a point where I had subscribers in about 2/3 of the United States and through the history of the newsletter I had at least one subscriber from all 50 states. I was most stunned though when I got mail from other parts of the world. Mostly England but I got letters from as far away as Africa and the Middle East. The one piece of correspondence that stands out for me though was something I received during a time of crisis...

Feb 8, 91 Operation Desert Storm

Dear Mr. Smith,

I've been stuck (with thousands more) in this giant sandbox for a while now. In spite of the war having started three weeks ago, we still find a lot of free time. Yes, it is Boring over here.

As you may have guessed, many people have Nintendo (Boo, Hiss) "Gameboys". I think that's nice. What I'm interested in doing, though, is showing off a REAL game system, with color graphics, true "Hi-fi" sound and real head-to-head or multiple player abilities. Yep, you guessed it, the Lynx.

Got some Lynx News or Info you want to pass on? SEND IT TO:

APE

2104 NORTH KOSTNER

CHICAGO, IL 60639

Or contact me via AOL, my mail address

Csmith7282

I can also be reached via INTERNET at

Csmith7282@aol.com

How to do this? Well, I'm planning the purchase of a Lynx unit but in the meantime I'd like to sample your newsletter. If possible, please send me a couple of old issues. I will do my best to "spread the word" and the newsletters to prospective customers

Obviously, I'm personally interested in subscribing if I do purchase a Lynx. If there's a handling or per-issue charge, please let me know ASAP, since mail doesn't move very quickly through these parts!

Thank you very much for your time and help in this matter.

I remain, defending from the air, our way of life, Saudi Arabia & the return of Kuwait's freedom

Thankfully yours,

Alex G. Santa-Pinter, CPT, USAF

I never did get any subscribers from there but this letter made me feel connected to what was happening there and that's a pretty amazing feeling.

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Favorite APE-related Lynx Memory

Being invited down to the Public Relation firm's offices to try out some upcoming Lynx games and then they took me out to lunch(their treat) to get my opinions of the videogame industry. That made me feel SOOOO important and my newsletter felt like Time Magazine.

Also, showing off the Lynx at my table at the first Chicago Atarifest. The second show was very professional and polished but the first one had this excellent "let's put on a show" feel to it. It felt more personal.

Favorite Lynx Memory

Playing Klax for nine straight hours and defeating the game. It was like climbing a seemingly impenetrable mountain and finally reaching the top and planting a flag.

Favorite Lynx Game

ElectroCop. Hands down. It's a real shame no sequel ever came out.

GAME MAGAZINES

Throughout the Lynx/Jag years, Atari did not have a spectacular time with game magazines. Occasionally they gave Atari their due but most of the time it wasn't pleasant. Even really good games would get the shaft. Now that Atari is fundamentally dead, it's interesting to see how things have or haven't changed.

Gamepro

When a person recently asked about buying a Jaguar, they were given a sarcastic childish response. What do you expect from a magazine whose rating system is based on smiley and frowny faces?

Next Generation

I always ran kind of hot/cold with these guys but they've been especially nice to the Jag's memory. When confronted by a similar Jag purchase question, they suggested that the person should buy it and rattled off a list of the better Jag games. They've also recommended the Jag CD many times if just for it's VLM.

EGM

What can I say about Electronic Gaming Monthly? The only publication to pan Alien vs Predator and who actually liked the tinkertoy 32X version of Doom better than the Jaguar version. EGM bites. They always have, and they always will. In their recent year end special, they covered dead systems. They

got one last shot in at the Jaguar and the writer said that the only good Jaguar game(Tempest 2000) wasn't very good. I could've sworn that EGM gave Tempest 2000 their game of the month award and when the Playstation version came out many of the reviewers expressed the feeling that the Jag version was superior. I wish they'd find a story and stick with it...or at least stick something.

Gamefan

They were one of the Jaguar's biggest supporters and then they did a 180 on a dime and jumped on every other new system's bandwagon(even the Virtual Boy). I was pleasantly suprised to see them review the new Jaguar release Zero 5 in a recent issue. They gave it decent scores and praised the music as being better than most of the Nintendo 64 game music that they've heard recently. They said they may review future Jag releases as well. Thanks guys.

Clint's Gripes

For those of you who've read APE over the years, you've probably noticed that I'm an easy going positive guy. I usually don't say negative things. Since this is the last issue, I think it's time to let off a little of the long building pent up steam.

The Tramiels-Thanks for letting a pioneering company go down the toilet. Also, thanks for the "we intend to keep supporting the Jaguar with games for one more year" statement which convinced me to keep doing APE for one more year with little or nothing to write about. What the heck, thanks for the leaking the info about the company's demise right about the time that my 100 free year's subscribers subscriptions were coming due.

A certain english game magazine-In order to drum up some English business, I sent some copies of my newsletter to the Lynx column of an english game magazine in the hopes they might mention APE to their readers. Instead they "borrowed" some news stories and Lynx tips verbatim and gave no credit that they got them from APE. The only thing that makes me feel better is that they went out of business many years ago.

Atari mags that went out of business oweing writers money-I don't hold any personal animosity for these publications or the people who ran them but not getting paid for over \$400

worth of work certainly leaves a really bad taste in your mouth.

Some APE readers-Okay, drop those nooses and hear me out before the gallows go up. There have been a number of times in the past where people have ordered a whole bunch of issues on good faith and then never bothered to pay me for them after I had sent them. There have also been people who would tell me they were going to be sending me a large check for a subscription, back issues, the works. Needless to say, it kind of gets your hopes up and then when it doesn't happen, it really blows. Neither of these really apply to any of you so relax. However there is one thing that has kind of chafed me. Some readers actually give me flack when a game that I reported about never came out. They blame me because it didn't come out. I'm not the programmer on these games. I had no control over them not seeing the light of day. I felt just as bad as you guys did when a title fell through. As for people who went out and bought an Atari system based on all the games that were supposed to be coming out and then didn't, I do feel bad but I also made a similar huge investment in Atari games and systems. I had the same high hopes that you did and I fell just as hard as you did.

PR Letdown-I mentioned earlier some kind words for Atari's PR firms. There were however 2 times when things weren't so hot....

1. After trying out the Lynx version of Ninja Gaiden, I mentioned how accurate a conversion of the arcade game(of which I was a big fan) it was. They asked if they could quote me in their upcoming press release. I was thrilled. The press release came out and they had quotes from several people about the game. Guess who's quote was cut?

2. A PR firm was going to be sending out a Lynx information packet to stores across the country. They told me that they wanted to include a copy of my newsletter along with info on it. My mind reeled. APE could finally get some serious exposure. They needed a lot of issues(more than I could reasonably run off)but they said that they would handle it. I made up some masters so they could run off as many as they would need. A few weeks later they called me and said that they had decided not to include APE in the info packet. Ouch, what an evil tease that was.

WANTED!

Chris Purviance of Avant-Garde Gaming(see ad on page 16) is looking for the following items...

1. Atari Explorer Magazine: Looking for issues after June 1992
2. Gamemaster/Gamemaster News: Want all issues of this Atari Lynx publication. It started hitting a limited amount of newsstands between October 1991 and January 1992. It was also available by subscription.
3. Lynx User: This Atari Lynx publication from the United Kingdom(Europe) saw only 2 or 3 issues before it stopped. Want all the issues. It was only available by subscription.
4. The Lynx/Wild Cat!: This was done by Phil Patton in Santa Cruz, California. it was available only by subscription starting in October/November 1990 through December 1992 for the "The Lynx". Then "Wild Cat!" took over from January 1993 through January 1995. The last issue was shipped on January 7th 1995. Want all issues of "The Lynx" and January 1993 through April 1994 of "Wild Cat!"
5. On Target: This Atari Lynx Publication was done by Matt Szewczyk in Cumberland, Rhode Island. It started in October 1991 and ended in December 1992 or possibly a little later. Looking for entire series that was published.
6. Color Hands: Another Atari Lynx publication that was started in October of 1991. This one was done by Mark Nelson of Brooklyn, New York. It stopped in July or August 1992(later?). Want entire series that was printed.
7. Also wanted!! Lynx prototypes, Lynx Alpha and Beta game cards, other system prototype games, Atari press kits, Lynx Promotional literature. Anything you may not want anymore. Even used Lynx and Jaguar games. Also Lynx accessories. Classic hand-helds too!!
8. I need a pair of SegaScope 3-d LCD shutter glasses for 3-d games(Sega Master System). Either "New in Box" complete or very good used and complete with docs.

LYNX WRITE-IN CAMPAIGN

One of my readers, Chris Purviance(who is a die-hard Lynx fan)has started a write-in campaign called the Lynx Coalition...

"The following individuals at the following companies need to hear from Lynx users. They want to hear

from you. They have stated that no new Lynx games will be released **unless**, the Lynx owners and users **say** they want to see more on the market. **Tell** them the games that you want to buy and play. Be it 1 game or 24 of them, at least this many are completed and waiting to go into production at Atari and Hand Made Software alone. This isn't including several that Telegames and Beyond Games have to release for the Lynx. Let them hear from you, show them your support and tell them what you want now. The games are waiting for you.

Beyond Games
c/o Kris Johnson
P.O. Box 2754 Salt Lake City, UT 84110

Telegames
c/o Terry Grantham
1001 E.Pleasant Run
DeSoto, TX 75115

Jagfest 97 Report

Last summer the first JaguarFest was held here in the Chicago area. I wasn't able to go(my brother was in from out of town) but supposedly around 40 people attended.

Battlesphere was being shown complete with working networkable gameplay and was a big hit(Alas as I write this the game still hasn't been released, possibly late February).

ICD was also going to be releasing the much maligned Air Cars which nobody really seemed very excited about.

Lynx programmer Carl Forhan was showing off demos of **Ponx**(a comlynxable Pong-style game) and an overhead space shooter called **Planar Wars**(also Comlynxable).

A new developer, Visual Dimensions 3D, announced several new Lynx and Jag titles.

Lynx

GP-Zeta: A driving game
(4 player comlynxable)

Ruin Hunter: A tomb raider/Electrocop-ish type adventure game (2 player comlynxable)

Lean Machines: An overhead driving game (6 player comlynxable)

Jaguar

Defcon 1: A sci-fi style tomb raider game. A PC version was slated first with a "watered down" Jag version to appear after.

AutoManiacs: An unofficial sequel to Club Drive.

POSTSCRIPT: I wouldn't expect to see any of these any time soon. VD3D was working in conjunction with a developer called Dark Knight Games. They came out with a Jaguar joystick(a modified PC Gravis Blackhawk stick) for \$75. The following is up on the Dark Knight web page at

<http://www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/Vista/6859/dng.html>

"The company that Dark Knight Games contracted to build the Jaguar EXTREME Flight Joysticks, Visual Dimensions 3D, defaulted on their contracts, and ran off with a large chunk of Dark Knight Games cash. Because of this, all orders will be refunded within the month, if anyone who ordered the joystick, and has not yet recieved one wishes to use their money to buy another Dark Knight Games product, please call us at the number on the contact page and let us know what you wish to use your money for. Defcon 1 is on hold until litigation can be filed against Visual Dimensions 3D for fraud, and theft of proprietary property."

A 2nd Annual JagFest is in the works. For more info visit their web page at:

<http://www.geocities.com/Broadway/4062/>

Favorite APE-related Jag Memory

The 1994 Summer CES. The last Summer CES(Consumer Electronics Show) held in

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Chicago (actually it turned out to be the last Summer CES period since most game people went to the E3 show the next year). Atari had a big display with all kinds of games and it was really well traveled. I spent all my time at the show there and the future seemed so promising.

Favorite Jag Memory

2 days after Christmas. The chances of getting a Jaguar seemed slim but the call finally came in from Captron (who are now out of business I believe) that they had gotten some in and I was next on their list. I had to travel way out to the suburbs but I finally got my brand spanking new 64-bit Multi-media Entertainment system.. Cybermorph was a real hoot and even Crescent Galaxy seemed pretty cool back then.

Favorite Jag Games

I tried to narrow it down to only 1 but 3 titles stand out for me.

Tempest 2000: One of the early games and (despite what EGM says) still a blast. Incredible music for a cartridge and the gameplay was pure sweet adrenaline.

Alien Vs Predator: Incredible atmosphere, stunning visuals, creepy sounds and a great scare factor. Plus it felt great when I figured out the "acid in the airducts" problem that the boneheads at EGM couldn't.

Doom: It was a great conversion and tons of violent fun. I also got a kick out of my final level strategy appearing in "The Atari Jaguar Official Gamers' Guide" the only Jag book that came out.

Wonderful World of Emulators

Since the dawn of game systems the eternal question has always been asked...

Can I run system A's games on system B?

The usual response was no. As a matter of fact, this question used to drive video game magazines crazy. Some hardware did pop up that let Colecovision, Intellivision, and Atari 5200 owners play Atari 2600 games. Not the most incredible feat but it was something. Cross platform PC emulators appeared over the years but they were more interested in running business applications not games. The most notable recent attempts of hardware game emulators were the 3DO add-on for PCs (which bombed) and the never materialized Jaguar-PC add-on from Sigma.

That was then, this is now. Name an old system.

There's a good chance there's a program that will let you run that system's programs on your PC or Mac. Old arcade games, the aforementioned Colecovision, Intellivision, Atari 5200 (7800 is currently lacking but one is supposedly in development by someone), NES, Sega Master System, TurboGrafix 16, computers like the Vic-20, Commodore 64, Atari 8-bits, STs, etc. Not surprisingly, the Atari 2600 (which was a simple machine compared to today's technologies) has been emulated numerous times and they all do an excellent job in software. Emulators of more sophisticated systems like the Genesis, SNES have also shown up and they're improving with each revision. People are even working on emulators of Playstation (these run actual Playstation game discs) and Nintendo 64 but emulating these in software is proving challenging.

One of the more interesting facets of all this is that most if not all of the programmers who have written these emulators are doing it for absolutely free. Since these hardware systems' technologies still belong to companies, they can't charge for these programs. They're writing them just to show people that they can pull off the challenging task of getting one machine to act like another.

There is one unfortunate shady aspect to all this. PCs aren't equipped with cartridge ports. So how do you get the game into the emulator? People take the game cartridges, arcade rom chips, whatever and dump the information into a computer datafile which you can get off the net. Cool, now you can get a bunch of free games, right?

Companies still own the rights to many of these games and if you acquire these games without already owning a legal copy which you purchased, you're technically committing a crime. Now I know some people won't have an ethical problem with this, but I've never condoned piracy. There is a gray area within all this. Companies have said that you can download a game you don't own so you can try it for 48 hours.

When I was checking out the subject on the web, I came across a really good Gameboy emulator (another system whose simple technology allows for easier emulation). My nephew (who owns a Gameboy) was very impressed by the job it does. It's called GB97, it's a DOS program (but it runs beautifully under Win95), and it's written by Paul Robson. You can get the program at

<http://users.aol.com/autismuk>

I know what you're thinking. Is this the Gameboy newsletter? After seeing GB97 in action, I started to wonder about our favorite systems. Alas, I haven't seen anything of a Jaguar emulator yet but give it time and I'm sure someone will do one. The Lynx does have some promising contenders but they still need some work.

Handy: This Win95 title bears the Lynx's original name and it also does a pretty good job at making a PC think that it's a 16-bit color handheld. It's a C program so that does hamper it's speed especially at this early stage of it's development (the current version is 0.40). To try it out, I did a little net searching and downloaded a rom image of Blue Lightning (a game which I already own). If you have dreams of full-screen Lynx games, you'll have to keep dreaming. Selecting any size larger than the Lynx standard of 160 by 120 (which looks about the size of an actual Lynx screen on a 640 by 480 desktop) slows it down to a crawl. Emulating the sound is also pretty draining but if your cpu is fast enough it should be manageable. On my 166mhz Pentium, Blue Lightning ran about 75 to 90 percent of the speed of a real Lynx. As this program improves it should become even more impressive.

The author of Handy is Keith Wilkins and you can get the latest version off his homepage at <http://www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/Heights/1148>

The other well-known Lynx emulator is a DOS based program called **Meta-Lynx**. This program is being written in Assembly language so it has the potential for really good speed. The currently available version doesn't support sound and only works with some homebrew Lynx games (I couldn't get Blue Lightning to run on it) but a newer version is supposedly almost ready for release which will run more stuff. MetaLynx is being written by Ben Haynor and you can get the latest version along with some homebrew Lynx titles like Loderunner and Ponx at <http://www.personal.psu.edu/users/b/c/bch132/lynx.html>

If you'd like to keep up to date on developments in the world of emulators, an excellent site is Emulator News located at <http://members.aol.com/emunews>

THE PRESENT

Lynx Programming Kit

"Ever want to make your own own video games? How about arcade games you always wanted to see ported over to your favorite console or hand-held system? There were a few most probably too (more than a few maybe). Ever heard about or thought about getting a "Development kit" for your system of choice only to see that the offering was going was going to cost as much as \$1,000,000 per unit to own? A bit out of reach of most gamers' out there isn't it?"

Once in while, Less expensive offerings have managed to come out or "trickle down" to reach us real game players. The Playstation "PSX" is one such example that has managed this within the last year. One can get a development kit for now -with a bit of trying and putting money together- and ordering direct from Sony or trying "high-line" electronic stores for it. The rub is that it still costs gamers \$700 plus hidden charges too. What about hand-held systems? These kits don't usually become available to gamers and usually cost thousands of dollars too (The latest one was \$5000)add to that cost of shipping, EPROM cards... still high.

Now a kit has come along for the "little guy" to use at his or her leisure. This kit is for the Atari Lynx; the "BLL Lynx development kit" is available to you now from Avant-Garde Gaming to help support the Lynx cause. This is an item every Lynx owner should consider owning. Stop dreaming and make games you want to see and play!!"

For more information contact:

Avant-Garde Gaming

206 E Conron Ave.

Danville, IL 61832-1806

Phone #: 1-217-446-4176

THANKS

While we're on the subject of the past, I was just doing a little random searching on the net when I came across a rather interesting site at www.Atari-magazines.com. With the permission of the original publisher, they're putting up electronic versions of issues of the Atari 8-bit magazine, Antic. They also plan to do the same with the ST-based sister publication STart. If you're a fan of the old Atari computers, check it out.

As we close out the Past portion of the issue, I wanted to take the opportunity to thank some of the many people who've helped out APE throughout the years...

Atari-I realize that I said some nasty things about the Tramiels earlier but the employees at Atari(in it's various incarnations) were always a really major help. I still recall when APE was going to have a Holiday giveaway and I made a request in an issue for prizes I could give out. They sent me 6 copies of Chip's Challenge(they were worth around \$240 at the time). I'd also like to thank one of the people who was involved with the Jaguar game,Hoverstrike. The problem is I can't remember his name. He e-mailed some Hoverstrike cheats as an exclusive(on the condition I didn't say where I got them from). Thanks Hoverstrike guy!

Realm-A fellow Atari small businessman, Joey Sherman was kind of enough to send me one of his custom Lynx cases and game wallets. I really appreciated it and I showed off the case whenever I had the opportunity. The venture didn't succeed but I still have that case and it's an excellent product.

Beyond Games-Only one time in all of APE's years did a company ever send a pre-release EPROM of their game to try out and that was Beyond Games. I did have to return that copy of Battlewheels but it was still a great gesture. I will gladly purchase a copy of their upcoming PC sequel,Redline(more on that in the PRESENT portion of the issue).

Star-Linx BBS,Todd Ellering, Jeff

Kovach-These guys provided me with a lot of info back in the early days of APE. They used to call me long distance from Arizona on a fairly regular basis to let me know what was up and were especially helpful with Winter CES coverage.

Ryan Foerster-This young man(although he's probably not that young anymore) provided several issues with some hand-drawn illustrations including some neat comic strips(which took swipes at competing portables like Gameboy and GameGear)and some cartoon depictions of the APE.

Mark Brooks-I always appreciated it when people would send in their questions(always good to fill up space)but not many people did... except for Mark. Many of the early issues contain regular queries from APE's most prolific questioner.

Frank Kweder-This gentleman from Florida was one of my earliest subscribers and sent me several letters. The nice thing is they weren't full of questions. He just wanted to shoot the breeze.

He also wrote one of my favorite articles to appear in APE. Back in issue 6 he told us how to generate some neat stuff with the hidden Mandelbrot generator in Chip's Challenge.

The readers-I'd especially like to thank you folks. You've always been very supportive(the greatest joy in doing APE has always been when somebody writes in or sends me an e-mail saying how much they enjoyed an issue)and REAL patient. Thanks, and to borrow from Dorothy, "I'll miss you most of all."

New Lynx Games

There are still developers out there working on Lynx titles. One of these companies, Digital Thunder, recently announced several upcoming titles.

Iron Reign for Atari Lynx A 5 player comlynxed war game set in the European Theatre of the 1930s.

The Furies for Atari Lynx The Lynx answer 1 Battlesphere, a high energy cockpit shooter set on the front lines of an interstellar war.

Bleaker for Atari Lynx Lynx RPG fans will have a lot to look forward to with this RPG action and adventure title set the shadow-lands of a shattered planet.

BlueEarth for Atari Lynx In a time between the beginning of science and the end of sorcery, join Kirin Teal in the epic saga to uncover the mystery of BlueEarth.

Activision/Atari Rumor

One rumor that has been circulating recently is that Activision is interested in buying what's left of Atari from the Tramiels. We do know that Activision did pick up the rights to 2 classic Atari games, Battlezone and Asteroids and are updating them for today's technologies.

Could the first third party Atari developer(started by some of Atari's top 2600 programmers in the late 70's/early 80's) go full circle and buy Atari itself? Some random thoughts...

1. Before Lynx and Jag enthusiasts get too excited, I doubt they would bring these systems back or release new games for them. However, it's not too far fetched that they could develop emulator software and release

collections of Lynx and Jag games for the PC(like they did with their old 2600 games).

2. The Atari name still carries nostalgic weight and it would be nice to see it get the respect it so rightfully deserves with plenty of marketing know how and money behind it.

3. There is an upcoming hardware platform (which has a lot of Atari roots) that's going to see models released from many different hardware companies(see Future section). IF Activision bought the Atari name and IF they decided to release their own model, we could conceivably see a new game console bearing the beloved fuji. It's nice to think about even if the odds are slim.

Power Remakes

In the world of movies, it's not uncommon to take a classic movie and do a new version of it. Okay, they usually blow but the concept does seem to translate pretty well in the world of video/computer games. Four classic Atari titles are being redone and hopefully they'll be more than just blasts from the past.

Battlezone

Games with 3-d graphics are pretty commonplace now but it wasn't always like this. In the early days, 2-d was the rule. Atari changed this with the arcade game Battlezone. Using the vector graphics technology which originated with Asteroids, they were able to create a tank game which you played from inside the tank. The graphics only consisted of green lines on a black background but for the time they were revolutionary. Something that wasn't revolutionary was the gameplay. It was incredibly simplistic. You vs. one enemy tank and all it would take was one hit to lose a life. If you'd still like to check it out, I suggest you hunt down a copy of the original Microsoft Arcade.

When Activision picked up the rights to some classic arcade games(with the thought of updating them)they realized that simply slapping on state of the art audio and visuals to Battlezone wouldn't do the trick. The gameplay needed to be brought into the 90s as well. They decided to take the very popular concept of real-time strategy(a la Command and Conquer,Warcraft) and let you command forces from inside your attack tank. This time you truly are in a battlezone. A la Interstate 76 this game also takes place in an alternate version of the past. US and Soviet forces are at war on the moon back in the 60s. You can play either side but an interesting twist later on puts you both on the same side. The game's graphics look good even without 3d hardware but if you do have a good 3d

card(3dFX,Rendition,...etc.)the game supports them via Direct3D. As usual these days, Battlezone has multi-player gameplay via networks and the Internet. The war on the moon is slated to begin in February or March. They're also working on a new version of Asteroids.

Redline(BattleWheels)

Driving combat games have become very hot in the last couple of years but Lynx fans got to experience the genre long before anyone else. Beyond Games was a small developer but they made a big name for themselves with their revolutionary title, Battlewheels. Players battled it out in arenas with armed vehicles. If your car was destroyed, you still had a fighting chance(albeit very difficult). You could go on foot and keep fighting(one of BattleWheels unique fatures was that you could only pick up powerups by exiting your vehicle). If you were lucky enough you'd get the opportunity to acquire someone else's car(while they were grabbing for a bag of money or some other useful device) and battle on equal footing. If you weren't so lucky, you'd end up on the recieving end of someone's fender. BattleWheels also featured great multi-player action back long before multi-player gaming began to take off.

When the Jaguar came along, the game seemed like an excellent choice for technological updating. Alas, after Beyond finished up their work on the best Jaguar fighting game there is, Ultra Vortek, the Jaguar market started to slip and a new version of BattleWheels went right along with it.

Around that time though, the PC gaming market had really started to make itself known. Good quality 3-D accelerator cards started to come out and Beyond began work on a mega-souped up version of their Lynx classic. This new game is Redline.

Set in a post-apocalyptic future(we'll forgive Beyond for that cliché game environment if the game is as good as it sounds), you can join a gang and try to rise in rank to become it's leader. You'll have to play through 15 missions to achieve your goal. Think Battlewheels with role playing and adventure elements. Once more you can get out of your car and that will become a necessity since you can only get to some areas by foot.

The game uses Beyond's proprietary 3-D engine called Dadaelus and provides the game with a fully destructible environment. Naturally, the

game will also have strong multi-player gameplay including 16 player games over the Internet. Word is that you'll have to have a 3-D accelerator card(preferably one of the better ones) and the game will also support force-feedback controllers. Redline was supposed to be out late last year but they wanted to make sure that it was properly done so look for it in a couple of months published by Accolade.

Alien Vs Predator

Good games based on movie licenses are few and far between. Look at most of the Batman and Jurassic Park titles, yuck. That was one of the factors that helped make Alien Vs Predator stand out. For once, you finally felt like you were running around in the environments you've seen on screen. Plus, as a bonus, you got to step into the shoes (or talons or whatever those things technically have)of the alien creatures and hunt down the pesky humans(or the other breed of creature). Alien Vs Predator did have a few annoying shortcomings...

- 1.Slightly cheesy voice acting(one of the marine's utterings came precariously close to Homer Simpson's DOHHH).
- 2.The graphics got rather pixelly when something got close enough to you.

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- 3.The ship's layout was more along the 2-d lines of Wolfenstein 3-D as opposed to the more 3-d environs of Doom. No ramps or second levels.
- 4.Your map would reset whenever you left a level or entered/exited airducts You're hundreds of years in the future and your PDA can't store a couple crummy maps?
- 5.The rumored multi-player networking options weren't there. No hunting down your friends or working together against a group of computer controlled aliens(I get to be Hudson,"We're all

dead meat man!" A CD follow up was talked about for the Jaguar CD but like most other Jaguar projects it went kaput when Atari went under.

Rebellion(the folks who did Alien Vs Predator on the Jaguar are now working on an updated version for Fox Interactive. The basic stuff is still there(you can play as marine, Alien, or Predator)but look for level designs more akin to Quake-style games. The game will also support 3-D accelerators(Alien Vs Predator at 640 by 480 resolution...YES!)and should feature multi-player options to beat the band. Look for it later this year.

Cheap Jaguar and Games

If you suffer from any kind of heart ailment and was one of the people who paid \$250 for a Jag when they first came out, you don't want to read this article. Skip ahead.

It's always a sad thing when a game system goes to the great beyond. As Atarians we've had to go through it time and time again. There is of course an upside...**BARGAINS, BARGAINS, BARGAINS.**

It does make you feel a little like a vulture picking the bones of a freshly killed carcass clean but your wallet will thank you greatly. The past few months have seen a horde of recent contenders in the video wars pass on and now the values can be passed on...to you.

3DO- Trip Hawkin's baby which launched at the hideously high price of \$700.(It's hard to believe that they actually thought they were going to get people to buy one at that price) They'll run you about \$89 now. 3DO software has seen an especially good dive lately with many of their titles available in the \$5 to \$10 range.

32X- I've reported on this before but now you can snag the mushroomed add-on for around \$20 to \$30 and they even throw in 2 games. 32X carts are in the \$10 to \$20 range.

Virtual Boy- Nintendo bounced back solidly with the 3D but this stereoscopic red and black albatross was their first major bomb in years. They debuted at \$189 but can now be had for only \$25 to \$30(I spotted them at a nearby Target for only \$16.50). Games seem to be in the \$10 to \$15 range. I'm well known for my love of bargains but I've passed on this one. It's an incredible price but I still remember the weird sensation I had in my eyes whenever I played with a store demo model. (P.S. In the time between this and my last issue, the creator of the Virtual Boy and the vastly more successful GameBoy was killed in a car accident. I've never seen a big GameBoy fan but you can't help but

admire the incredible success of this man's work. Farewell sir, you will be missed.)

Seeing all these great bargains on the Jaguar's peers had me a little down. Hey, for all intense purposes the Jaguar is just as dead as those other guys. Electronic Boutique has some okay deals but I wouldn't really call them fabulous. Then one day I happened to be in a nearby Kay-Bee Toys. I was on my way out when a batch of Tickle-me Elmos caught my eye. I wasn't interested in buying one or anything but it was like , "Hey, they've got Tickle-Me Elmos." It was what was next to the Elmos that stopped me dead in my tracks. A stack of Jaguars and games to boot.

I looked over behind the counter and they had some more games and even some accessories. I checked at several Kay-Bees around Chicago but they only have the Jag stuff at the one store so you may have to check around the Kay-Bees in your area. What kind of deals are we talking here...

A Jaguar with Cybermorph \$50

Jag Controller \$13

Jag S-Video Cable \$2

Jag Composite Video Cable \$5

They have 14 games. Before I talk about their prices theres a good news/bad news item. Good News: Kay-Bee is selling a lot of Jaguars. Bad News: Because of this success, they've jacked up the price on the games. Initially the bulk of the games were only \$8 with 2 of them going for only \$5. Now the prices are \$12 and \$10 respectively. Places are still gouging us even in death.

\$10

Zoop

Zool 2

\$12

I-War

Motocross 3-D

Pitfall

Iron Soldier

Bubsy

Ultra Vortek

White Men Can't Jump(with Team Tap)

Flip Out

Tempest 2000

Trevor McFur in the Crescent Galaxy

Checkered Flag

Val D'sere Skiing and Snowboarding

In the time since I wrote this, Kay-Bee's Jaguar software selection has dwindled to nothing. A lot of people took advantage of those great deals and are playing with Jaguars. They also got in some of the Telegames titles such as Double Dragon 5 and Troy Aikman Football. They still have Jags and they recently had them on sale for only \$25. OUCH!!! If you want some more Jags for when Battlesphere eventually comes out, check at your local Kay-Bee.

(PS You can add one more name to the list on the big ol gaming tombstone. The Sega Saturn. It's official, most 3rd party companies have ceased development on Sega versions of their titles and Sega is looking to get rid of their overstock. Word is that Electronic Boutiques will be selling them for around \$80. And to think, I almost forked over \$400 for one of those things when they first came out. Whew! Lucky.)

Dead Stores

Hmmm, this is getting kind of gloomy. First dead systems and now the death of small video game/computer software specialty stores.

Back in the Lynx and Jaguar days, it wasn't uncommon that you'd have to frequent places like Babbages or Electronics Boutique if you wanted to buy your games from a store. Electronics Boutique is still thriving but that's about it.

The Captron stores went under a couple years back and Babbages(a software store that was present in many malls) went bye-bye last year I believe taking it's sister store, Software Etc. with it. Although they don't deal specifically with just games, Egghead Software is closing up it's retail locations and they're going to be doing business strictly via the Internet. Even a big department store like Montgomery Wards isn't immune(their computer department got closed out late last year). What the heck is happening?

In simple terms, it has to do with size. The bigger a store chain is, they buy more copies of something for a lower price, and they can

pass the savings on to you. It wasn't an uncommon occurrence that a Babbage's store would only get in one copy of a Lynx title. Many times I ended up snagging the only one they had. Good for the person who got that one copy, bad for the other gamers and ultimately for the company who made that game. Plus it never helped when Babbages had a price \$10 to \$15 higher than another store.

After hearing about Egghead (and the fact that they were going to start offering some good discounts at their retail locations) I headed to one of their few remaining Chicago locations. I'm in the market for a video editing program so I thought I'd see what they had. They were offering 20 percent off everything in the store for the next 3 days. I found the title I was looking for...and it was priced \$20 to \$30 higher than what I could get it for at CompUSA or Computer City. Even after you'd take the 20 percent off, it would still be a couple bucks more expensive than I could buy it elsewhere.

Big mainstream stores like BestBuy and CompUSA have definitely taken over. Will EB survive? Probably. They're the only player left and that carries an advantage (plus they always had better prices than those other guys)

Oooooops, no sooner did I finish writing this piece when I discovered that Babbages and Software Etc. are still in existence but not in the numbers that they used to. All of their Chicago-area stores closed, so naturally I thought they all went under when the bankruptcy was declared awhile back.. Still doesn't help me any.

Kick Butt Gaming Sound

Let's lighten the mood shall we. In the world of gaming, visuals have always taken precedent over audio. Even to this day, you'll still see the occasional game come out with killer graphics and blech sound and music. Thankfully that is becoming more the exception than the rule. Games sound better than ever. However if you're listening to them on a mono tv or have really crummy computer speakers, you're not really getting the full effect.

TV Games(Jaguar,N64, Playstation, heck anything you've got hooked up to a TV)

If you play a lot of games or even watch a lot of movies, a surround sound setup can really make a difference. Reasonably priced systems can now be had for under \$200. If you can get one with a decent subwoofer, even better.

Computer Games and Lynx

You might be wondering what the Lynx and

Computer games are doing under the same heading? The fact is that most computer sound cards feature stereo sound via a headphone jack, same as the Lynx. So any speakers you hook up to a PC can also be used to give Lynx games a good boost. If your system came with crummy sounding speakers, get some better ones. I don't advocate mega-expensive speakers (\$300 for a high-end computer speaker setup, yikes), you can find plenty of good ones in the \$100 and under price range. If you already have decent speakers, a good subwoofer should be your next move. Labtec has a nice one that plugs into your sound card and then you plug your speakers into it. It's only \$60(I picked up mine at Ward's when they closed out their PC stuff for only \$15)and it sounds pretty good. Lynx games sound significantly better with some rumble. If you have a surround sound setup without a subwoofer, a computer one can do double duty with the right cable.

Jaguar and Lynx-esque games on the PC

Back in issue 23, I suggested some titles that had a similar flavor to many of our Jag and Lynx favorites. It's been awhile, so it's time for an update...

Iron Soldier

Mech games are still quite popular and with the addition of 3-d accelerator support they're even better looking. Unfortunately, there still hasn't been a good arcade oriented one a la Iron Soldier. There were rumors of Iron Soldier 2 coming out for the PC but nothing has happened.

Mechwarrior 2:Mercenaries by Activision

I mentioned this one last time but I figured that it was worth mentioning again since you can now pick the game up for only \$20. Their latest update patch which is available via the Activision website, significantly improves it's gameplay and adds Direct 3D support for 3-D accelerators. I hope that you have a speedy modem since it's quite a healthy sized download(around 17 megabytes).

Heavy Gear by Activision

After Mercs, Activision lost the Mechwarrior license to Microprose. Undaunted, they hooked up with rival mech role playing game, Heavy Gear and have now brought that universe to the PC.

Mechwarrior 3 by Microprose

The next Mechwarrior game is coming from Microprose. They were originally having FASA(the BattleTech people)port over their arcade simulation but it wasn't working out so now another company is re-doing it with a different engine. Look for it to come out later this year.

Earthsiege 3:Future Wars by Sierra

Sierra has been competing against the Mechwarrior titles for years with their Earthsiege series. The latest one naturally has 3-d accelerator support and looks fantastic. It's due in the next few months.

Alien Vs. Predator

Alien Trilogy by Acclaim didn't live anywhere near up to it's long promised hype(they had all those articles about fancy motion capture animation and the thing looked like barely warmed over Doom). Things should be much better with the upcoming update of Alien Vs Predator coming from Rebellion and Fox Interactive.

Highlander

The Alone-In-The-Dark genre is now owned by one game series...

Resident Evil by Capcom

The PC conversion looks and plays great. The weapons handling(in terms of aiming and such) is about 1000 times better than the Alone in the Dark games. The only weak spot is the cheesy B-movie dialogue. I know some people actually found it rather endearing but it took a game that could've been truly frightening and made it less so. When will companies learn you can take some liberties when you're translating a Japanese game's dialogue?

Resident Evil 2 by Capcom

This is currently available only for the Playstation so if you want some more of this kind of game, you'll need to buy yourself a Playstation.(A PC version is also rumored to be coming out later this year.)

Club Drive

I decided to go with some unusual driving titles. They don't necessarily look like Club Drive but they share it's different look at driving.

Carnageddon by Interplay

This is a demented driving game that features great car wrecking action and also features the death race-style elimination of pedestrians. No, I don't advocate running down people in real life. This is just a goofy fun game that you can get your anti-social frustrations out on. I got such a kick when I found the football stadium in the city.

Grand Theft Auto by ASC

This game has an overhead view so it looks nothing like Club Drive. But it is different. Go around the city, stealing cars, and other far more violent evil things that I probably shouldn't mention. It's from DMA Design, the same developers who did Lemmings. It lets you walk on the dark side and it is fun in it's own way.

Battlewheels

The PC update is coming(see earlier article)but if you want some Car War action while you're waiting...

Interstate 76 Arsenal by Activision

If you haven't already picked up this game of auto combat in an alternate reality version of 1976 then you should probably wait just a little bit longer before buying it. Activision is releasing a new version with 3-d card support(via Direct 3D and native 3-D versions for 3DFX, Rendition, and Power VR based boards) and a mission pack. If you already have I-76, you'll have to buy the mission pack from Activision on-line(it'll only be available in stores via the Arsenal pack)or just buy the Arsenal Pack(they'll have a rebate for people who already own the original game). If you don't want the mission pack but do want the new enhanced 3-D support, Activision is going to have an upgrade patch via their website.

CyberMorph/Battlemorph**Subculture by UBISoft/Criterion**

This company was also responsible for the Morphish style game Scorched Planet. This time around you're a member of a miniature race who lives underwater and you pilot a sub through various missions. It supports most major 3-D cards for some fantastic graphics.

Forsaken by Acclaim

An absolutely gorgeous explore and shoot game. Single player is fun and 16 player deathmatching should be a definite blast. A must have if you have a 3-D card(the explosion and shot effects look amazing).

Slime World

Side-scrolling action games have become kind of scarce in recent years but I did pick up something from a bargain bin last year that brought back that slimy feeling.

Hunter/Hunted by Sierra

This side-scrolling throwback has you running around, jumping and shooting as a human or an alien beast. There's the usual complicated "aliens enslaved the Earth" plot but it does feature some fun action and two player(competitive or cooperative) via a split-screen. Plus you can find it for around \$10.

Fight For Life

This was a long awaited title that didn't quite live up to it's Virtua Fighter lineage(the programmer used to work for Sega).

Virtua Fighter by Sega

Heck, if you want Virtua Fighter, why not just get Virtua Fighter. The PC version doesn't support 3-D acceleration but it still looks and plays great and it's now in the \$15 to \$20 range.

Virtua Fighter 2 by Sega

I generally consider this more of the same but it does have 3-D acceleration via a patch and it has 2 more fighters.

Die byt the Sword by Interplay

Any of you folks old enough to remember the ST classic, Death Sword(aka Barbarian in Europe)? It was a great 2-d fighter where you could lop off your opponent's head. Imagine it in 3D and legs and arms are now also fair game. In Monty Python Holy Grail-ish action you can keep fighting even after a leg and arm are gone(of course you can't continue headless). It's great fun.

Super Burnout

This was one of my favorite Jaguar games and I'm happy to say there's a great PC game in this category.

Moto-Racer GP by EA

This terrific motorcycle game was developed by the same folks who did Flashback(who knew they could do a killer 3-d racing game?). Not only does it have great track racing a la Super Burnout but it also features some fantastic motocross racing as well. It also has good 3-D support. If you already have this game, you'll be pleased to hear that a sequel has been

announced and it's due out by the middle of the year.

Redline Racer by UBISoft/Criterion

Hmmm, Redline seems to be a popular name for driving games. This motorcycle game is going to try to one-up Moto-Racer when it's released in the coming months.

Doom

Well, you can't shake a stick without hitting a Quake-style game on the PC these days. Even more interesting is that many of these games utilize the Quake engine licensed from ID. If you like these kind of games you should be in gaming heaven.

Quake 2 by Activision

ID's follow-up is out now and despite a series of bug patches and updates(mostly related to multi-player games) it's a really great looking and playing sequel especially for people looking for single-player gaming. It has a better storyline and that whole "brown" motif is gone. Especially recommended for 3-d cards that have OpenGL drivers.

Jedi Knight by Lucasarts Games

I mentioned this last time and it's finally out and it's fantastic. Hi-res 3-d accelerated graphics, jedi force powers(I especially enjoy pulling the weapons out of the bad guy's hands), and most importantly, lightsaber combat. Highly recommended for the Jedi in all of us.

The Jedi Knight mission pack, Mysteries of the Sith, is due out next month and should provide even more thrills.

Half Life by Sierra

This upcoming Quake-engine game is getting a real strong buzz because of it's strong single-player game and it's creatures are supposed to have some terrific artificial intelligence(they'll run away if you have better firepower and go get some friends, and then come back to get you). It's due out in a couple of months.

Duke Nukem Forever by 3D Realms

Duke 3D didn't look quite as good as Quake but it had some fantastic gameplay and was hilarious. So this time around, Duke is using the Quake engine. This looks to kick some serious butt. Come get some.

We've looked at the past and the present and now it's time to close out the issue by looking to the **FUTURE!**

THE INTERNET

If you're not already on the internet, start thinking about getting on it. Unlike some people I can't see the Internet replacing Television anytime in the near future(it has to become much faster and get much higher video quality). Interactivity is great but there are sometimes when you just want to sit back and watch something. There are quite a few worldwide web sites I visit but I can generally hit them all and read any new information in about thirty minutes.

I do feel though that if you want to know about things (I've always been an information junkie), the Internet is a must. If you want to find out about a product, or information on your favorite television show, or what's going on with the gaming market (computer or consoles)there simply is no better source and you can do it from the comfort of your home.

An excellent example...my mother had caught the second half of a radio talk show but she really wanted to know what was said in the first part of the program. The show had an internet site, so I went up there and they have rebroadcasts of their shows via real audio. Bingo, my mom got to hear the first part of the show. I can't wait for the day when you can do that when you miss a television show.

Plus, you'll need the Internet to find out what's happening with the Jaguar and Lynx now that APE is heading off into the sunset. Don't ever expect to find an APE web page in the future though. Creating and maintaining a website looks to be a daunting task and there are already plenty of fine web-sites covering what little is still going on in the Atari gaming world.

The Internet is a viable medium for gaming currently but there are still a lot of issues(speed,etc) that need to be worked out before on-line gaming becomes a must have activity.

ATARI

It may seem a little odd to be bringing up Atari if we're talking about the future since it's pretty much a dead issue here in the present. But things can always change. The Atari name and many of the classic games in it's software library are still very viable properties and it's not a complete impossibility that the Tramiel family might part with it if the right amount of cash came along.

There has been that rumor about Activision but I haven't heard anything more concerning it recently. You know what I believe would be really terrific? What if Nolan Bushnell came back and bought the company that he founded way back in the 1970s. Although he hasn't exactly been setting the gaming market on fire in his last couple of returns to the field. Still it would be an awful lot better than Atarit's current status as an unused subsidiary of a computer hard drive company.

Jaguar

There are supposedly still some games being worked on for the system by small developers but the console market is well known for casting off it's old systems. Look at the Genesis and Super Nintendo. These machines were massive successes and new titles have dwindled down to almost nothing. The Jaguar does still have one major title still to come, of course I'm talking about Battlesphere. Considering how long it's taken, it should be an almost perfect game(at least it darn well better be.)

Lynx

Unlike it's big brother, the Lynx does have the advantage of being unique. There has yet to be a hugely successful color portable system and there hasn't been any new developments in that field for years. Many gamers consider the Lynx to be the best color portable that ever came out. The Lynx could have an especially bright future in emulation. Aspiring programmers could work out their game designs with Lynx emulators on a personal computer and eventually their programs could make it to cartridge form.

PCs

1997 was the year when personal computers grabbed a sizeable piece of the mairistream gaming pie. Windows 95 was a factor in making it easier to install and run games but the biggest factor had to be the onset of powerful affordable 3-D accelerator cards and finally some software to show them off in the forms of GLQuake and Tomb Raider.

People are always quick to point out the vast price differences between the game consoles(which go for \$150) and decent game playing computers which run from \$1,000 to \$2,000.

Of course, you can use a PC for so many more things (desktop publishing, desktop video, graphics, audio,Internet access, and the ability to

program your own games if you can get the hang of programming) and their upgradeability lets you make it even more powerful as you need to.

Right Now

If you've never bought a computer before, now is a pretty good time to take the plunge. Thanks to the recent releases of faster more powerful processors, systems based on 166mhz and 200mhz MMX Pentiums have fallen into the \$1,000 and under price range. Hewlett Packard has just released a new 200 MHZ Pentium system that retails for only \$800! These once top of the line processors may seem slow when you compare them to newer 266 and 333 MMX Pentium 2 based systems but the vast majority of games out there will run just fine on them especially when paired with a good 3-d accelerator card.

If one of your primary interests is gaming you'll probably want to steer clear of laptop computers. Don't get me wrong. There are some powerful laptop systems that can more than hold their own now when it comes to computer gaming(3-d acceleration, etc..) but it's not what they were designed with in mind. Plus, most laptops aren't designed for a lot of expandability so if you want to add a specific type of 3D accelerator card you're most likely going to be out of luck.

One thing you're going to have to relegate yourself to is this simple fact of computing life...you can buy the fastest top-of-the-line processor there is and within a couple of months something more powerful is going to come out. Even as I write this article, 500mhz processors are rumored to be on the way and IBM has already announced a 1,000mhz processor(but it isn't going to be out for at least another 2 years). You're also not limited to Intel processors anymore thanks to companies such as AMD with their K6 processor or Cyrix with their Media GX but I'm still a little hesitant to go with anything but an Intel processor chip since most software is still designed with Intel chips in mind(high end games like Quake 2 suffer from significant performance hits due to different handlings of floating point mathematics on non-Intel based processors.)

Most systems come with 32 megabytes of RAM(which is currently plenty for gaming needs)but if requirements go up, RAM has become very reasonably priced and you can

easily add more. Off the shelf systems probably won't come with an official Creative Labs Soundblaster sound card but Windows 95 has pretty much negated that need. If the computer has a sound card, your Windows 95 games can use it (plus most cards still feature some form of Soundblaster compatibility so you can still use older DOS based titles and those few titles that are still coming out in DOS format).

Most systems will come with everything you need ...except the single most important component of a modern personal computing gaming system, a decent 3D video accelerator card. Most off the shelf computers do come with 3D accelerator cards built in now but with a few rare exceptions they're usually a low cost, low power card.

If you want the widest range of 3-D support, a 3DFX card is pretty much a must. They are 3D only cards so you can pair them with an existing 2d/3d card. The current Voodoo(3DFX) cards go for around \$180 and should come down in price with the upcoming release of the Voodoo 2 cards which are much more powerful but will be carrying a rather hefty \$250 to \$300 price tag.

If your budget is slim but you still want good 3D the Diamond Stealth 2 is a great deal at \$100. It's based on Rendition's latest Verite chip (they're widely considered to be the number 2 3D card behind Voodoo based cards). It's not quite as fast as a Voodoo but it's close and if you don't already have a good 2d card, this can also fill that need as well. If you do get a Rendition based card, I strongly suggest you frequent Bjorn's 3D world at www.bjorn3d.com, it's a great spot to find out about upcoming 3d games that support verite, and they also keep you up to date on new video drivers and 3d game patches.

I'm a big supporter of computers for gaming but I guess it's about time for a pretty big caveat. If you just want to play games with a minimum of fuss you're probably better off with a game console. PCs require a lot of tweaking and messing around with and even if you have the most popular components, you'll still occasionally run into problems running games. On the upside, when everything does work, it's one of the best gaming experiences you can get.

In the next few years

On the operating system front, Windows 98 is slated to be released later this year. It has some interesting new features but it's not as much of a leap as it was from Windows 3.1 to Windows 95. As far as gaming is concerned, you probably

wouldn't have to run right out and upgrade. The majority of developers will keep releasing their titles in Windows 95 format for the foreseeable future.

Look for processor speeds to become faster and faster. Games will support these speed demons but don't expect developers to abandon the vast majority of people who still have slower (ie 166,200mhz) systems.

3D cards will also see quantum leaps in speed and capabilities. The upcoming Voodoo 2 cards will allow you to hook two of them together for some serious acceleration speed (but it'll cost you around \$500 and you'll need two free internal slots to put them in). I also expect that you'll start to see more affordable yet powerful 3-d cards (a la the Stealth 2). Off the shelf systems will also hopefully start coming with decent 3D built in.

Advances in programming interfaces such as Direct 3d should also lessen the stranglehold that 3DFX native versions of games currently hold and enable you to get 3-d acceleration in a game no matter what brand of video card you own (much along the same line that has occurred with sound cards).

Systems have begun to ship with DVD drives built-in but at this point they're only really useful for playing movies (computer software on DVD is few and far between). It's probably going to be quite awhile before you see any games that absolutely require a DVD drive. If you can get a system with a DVD, fine but don't freak out if it doesn't have one (you could always add one later anyway). Buyer beware, you may see some excellent low cost deals on DVD drives now but these are the first generation models that were released. They're not as fast as the new second generation DVD drives and they have problems running CDs that were created on CD recordable drives. You're really better off waiting for prices to come down on the newer models (and if the CD-Rom market is anything to go by, it won't be long before really good DVD drives are also very affordable).

While we're on the subject, look for CD-recordable and CD-rewritable drives to become more prevalent. In recent years, their prices have fallen to the range of affordability and the media they use (CD-R discs) has also become far less pricey. I also wouldn't be surprised if CD-R or CD-RWs begin to replace standard CD-Rom drives in low end systems. Of course, they'll be short-lived once affordable

DVD recordable drives make their appearance. If you've ever had your VCR eat one of your prized video tapes you're probably looking forward to recordable DVD as much as I am.

With the vastly faster speeds, better video cards, and the ability to support video output to several different monitors at once, look for the ability to play multi-player networked games using a single computer in the near future.

SEGA

When the second coming of videogames occurred in the mid-80's Nintendo dominated the market. Sega bravely tried to compete with their Master System (which some people considered to be superior to the Nintendo Entertainment System) but things did not go their way. Nintendo became complacent however and Sega finally got their opening back in 1989 when they introduced their 16-bit game system, the Genesis.

3rd party support was slow in coming (Nintendo had a stranglehold on third party development in those days) but they eventually established themselves (while holding off competition from the US version of the popular PC Engine (TurboGrafix16)). By the time Nintendo countered with their 16-bit system, Sega had managed to grab a solid chunk of the gaming market and they managed to hold their own against the Super Nintendo.

Sega wanted to push the envelope and keep the Genesis on the cutting edge of technology so they came up with the SegaCD. Like so many other pieces of gaming hardware, the SegaCD didn't come out when it was supposed to. When it did come out, software support was limited and the titles that did come out didn't seem much better than cartridge games (aside from CD music and ugly chunky full motion video sequences) or they were lame FMV games (who could forget the goofy Night Trap which silly politicians actually got upset over). Many of the games they promised were either never released or came out late (and when they did come out they were disappointing). Game magazines tore the SegaCD apart and many gamers (who had forked over \$300 for the thing) felt ripped off by Sega.

When new 32-bit (3DO) and 64-bit (Jaguar)

systems pushed the bar higher, Sega felt like they once again had to try to keep up until their new 32-bit system, Saturn, was ready. Thus came their second add-on, the 32X. They promised that it would bring the Genesis up to the level of the 32/64 bit systems(they even had a commercial claiming that the 32X was up to 6 times more powerful than 3DO)but the games they came out with didn't bear those statements out. Software support was once again limited and sales were sluggish.

They decided to bring out Saturn early hoping to get a jump on the upcoming Sony Playstation. This ticked off Genesis people who had bought 32X add-ons, they had trouble coming out with Saturn software (Saturn's dual processor architecture hindered developers instead of helping them) and it had a higher price than the Playstation. Once again, Sega finds itself in the role of underdog with the Saturn taking the place of the Master System. Can they again pull off a Genesis miracle?

Katana

Sega's next generation system has been given the name of a sword. Was that a "sharp" thing to do? It is a pretty cool sounding name and from early reports it sounds that Sega did learn from some of their past mistakes(however it also looks like Sega can still make some potential tactical boo-boos).

One of the more interesting things that Sega has done is that they've paired up with Microsoft. The Katana is slated to have a subset of Microsoft's operating system. The major advantage to this is that it will be much easier for developers to come to grips with programming the Katana than they had with the more complicated Saturn. Feasibly, a company should be able to easily port the PC version of a game straight to the Katana. This will allow companies to support both platforms with ease.

This does bring up an interesting question though. Will PC gamers have any interest in buying a Katana if they can already get the game on their computers? The Katana is rumored to be more powerful than a top of the line PC. Will developers take advantage of that extra power or will they just develop a game with the lower powered PC's capabilities in mind? Whatever the case, many top developers are already showing interest in bringing their games to the platform.

Now we come to that tactical boo-boo I mentioned earlier. Originally, Sega was going to use the Voodoo(3DFX)chipset for it's 3-D capabilities.

Word is that the US branch of Sega wanted the Voodoo but the Japanese branch wanted to go with Nec's PowerVR chipset. PowerVR is powerful but it's also harder to work with than Voodoo and PC developers favor the Voodoo overwhelmingly at this point. Japan won out and the Katana will be PowerVR based. This could make things a little tougher on developers. It's also made things a little tough on Sega since 3DFX has sued them for breach of contract and also for potentially leaking their technical secrets to a competitor.

Can Sega come back yet again? 3rd party developers do seem interested and that is a real key to success these days. Sega evidently has learned from past pricing mistakes(the Saturn was a whopping \$400 at release)as the Katana is rumored to be aimed at an under \$200 price tag. Don't look for it soon however as Sega has said it won't be out until next year.

SONY

What can you say about Sony? They took their extensive consumer electronics' knowledge, came into the video game console market and have dominated it.

Every major developer supports the Playstation and many major marquee titles such as Final Fantasy 7 and Resident Evil 2 make their debut(and are usually exclusive) on the platform. The big question in the gaming industry after you reach the top of the mountain is can you manage to stay there? No company has managed to dominate the market with a system and then maintain that lead with their followup unit (Nintendo has come closest but the SNES never reached the level they had with the NES).

The Playstation has been a monstrous success but technology moves rapidly in the gaming market. The Playstation's limited memory and cd-rom speed(double speed) do put a limit on it's capabilities. Competitors are waiting in the wings who now have access to more affordable memory (allowing them to have much larger amounts of ram onboard) and high-speed cd-rom units that will allow them to introduce their systems under the \$200 range.

Of course, Sony is most likely working on their own next generation system. There have been occasional rumors but there's still no official word on the whens, wheres, and hows of their next unit. Best guess is that it will be backwards

compatible allowing the vast library of current Playstation games to run on it.

Sony has an excellent shot at holding it's "king of the hill" title but there are still several potential hurdles that Sony may face...

1. The Playstation's incredible success- You're probably wondering why that would be a problem. Will everyone who already owns a Playstation want to fork over more cash for another Sony system? Will developers develop two different versions of a game(a standard Playstation version and a Playstation 2 version)? Would they be able to put both versions on a single CD or sell them seperately?

2. Software- The Playstation has many good titles but most of them come from third party developers. Sony has had some in-house success(such as Parappa the Rapper) but the bulk of Playstation hits don't come from Sony themselves. They do manage to wrangle many exclusives thanks to their position in the market and the fact that their only competitor at this point(Nintendo 64) is a cartridge-based system. I other cd-based consoles come on strong, their leverage in getting 3rd party exclusives might start to slip.

Despite these potential potholes it still looks like Sony has a good shot at maintaining a strong foothold in the lucrative gaming market.

Nintendo

There was a time(over a decade ago) when Nintendo owned the home console market. Unlike their competitor, Sega, they have managed to hang on to a big slice of the market. It's an even more impressive feat when you notice that they've let competitors get a headstart on them in the 16-bit and 32/64 bit market.and they've managed to come back and still be competitive.

This is one of the easiest looks at the future there is because the Nintendo 64 is their baby for the foreseeable future. Nintendo tends to stick with their current system and let's other companies dive in to the next level. The only thing happening on the hardware side is their upcoming 64DD(I believe it stands for data drive add-on that will let them come out with 64 megabyte games with writeable capabilities.

There is good news on the price front as Nintendo is talking about an \$89 price tag for the DD unit. There's also some speculation that the DD may come with modern capabilities built-in

allowing for multi-player 64 gaming between friends or even over the Internet. Nintendo looks like they're angling to give 64 owners some of the image manipulation fun computer users have been enjoying for many years. Several paint programs are in the works for the DD and Nintendo has already shown an image capture cartridge that would allow you to bring in your own video images into those paint programs and save them on to the disc.

The 64DD does look to have some interesting potential but it's storage capacity pales in comparison to CD-Roms. Nintendo's argument of several years ago concerning the speed of CD-Roms(double speeds were the norm back then) is a moot point now. High speed CD drives are very affordable at this point. Nintendo should really rethink their position and consider a CD-Rom add-on for the 64 if they want to stay truly competitive for the years to come.

On the software side of things Nintendo has had several big successes of late especially with their James Bond based shooter GoldenEye. It did so well that a sequel is in the works...but their Bond license is no more so the sequel won't have a 007 hook. Will people still be interested? One really good development lately for the 64 is that cartridge prices have fallen. Nintendo recently dropped the price on several hit titles down to \$40. This seems to be a trend now since one of the bigger third party developers, Midway, has also now dropped the price on many of their titles(which were obscenely pricey at \$80) down to the much more palatable \$40.

As far as the near future goes, Nintendo has a big,giant superweapon in the wings that should give them a very happy 98. Zelda 64 has received a lot of press coverage and it looks to do for the Zelda series what Mario 64 did for Nintendo's other big property. Originally slated for the 64DD, it's now going to debut as a whopping 32 megabyte cartridge. There are supposedly plans for an add-on to be released via the DD.

Look for Nintendo to remain competitive over the coming years thanks to their many flagship titles.

Project X

It all started with an image...a large X sitting atop a squished plumber's cap. A very familiar plumber's cap. Then the secretive names began to leak out. Project X. Project Merlin. Project X stuck though.

This is a big mysterious question mark hanging over the future of gaming. What is it and who's behind it? Interestingly enough many of the names are very familiar to Atarians.

John Mathieson-Father of the Jaguar hardware is also behind the hardware in this new system.

Jeff Minter-He has quite a following thanks to his many classic computer titles and his great updates of arcade games especially his

stunning Tempest 2000. Jeff is working on titles for the system and also had a hand in much of the development software.

Bill Rehbock-Bill is well known for his work in trying to round up third party support for Atari's systems. Not suprisingly that's the role that Bill is filling as Vice President of Third Party development for VM Labs, the company behind Project X. Even more interesting is the fact that Bill left a position at Sony to take this job. Evidently what VM Labs had to show him was more than a little interesting.

It may not have the Atari name on it but it's definately the spiritual ancestor of our favorite systems. Plus, it isn't going to be hampered by Tramiel influences.

Poeple who've seen the hardware in action have been impressed by the system's power and potential. I wish I could tell you exactly what kind of power it's supposed to have but as of yet, nothing has been officially said. Everything should become clear at the E3 show when they're slated to reveal all.

What is known about X? VM Labs isn't going to be selling the hardware themselves. The consoles will come from several manufacturers(a la 3DO). Some big consumer names are rumored to be their partners. Software development has begun here in the US and in Europe with Asian development supposedly right around the corner. Development systems go for a third of the cost of competitor's systems and the programming suite was designed by game programmers for game programmers.

So far there's only one definately known game for Project X. With Minter's heavy involvement it comes as no surprise that it's a high powered wicked version of his Jaguar smash, Tempest 2000(which they got the rights from Atari for).

Keep your eyes on the gaming press when they cover the upcoming E3 for the detailed info on Project X. They sound like they have a great deal of potential and they plan to have systems available by the end of this year.

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