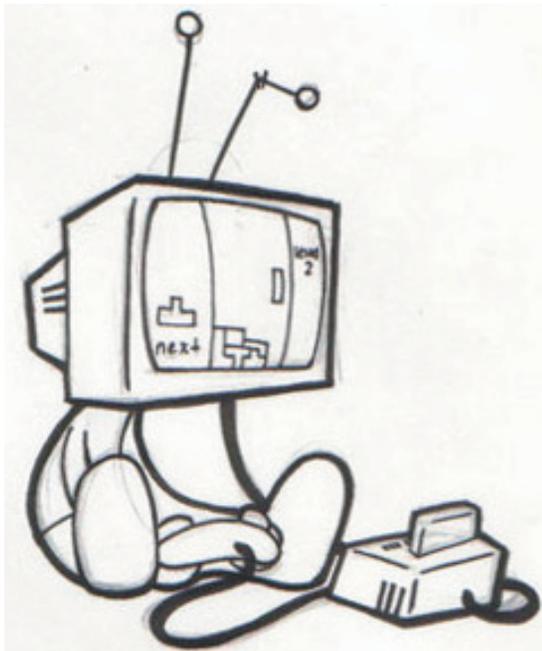


That cover is from Mo Starkey, who is a wonderful addition of the Drink Tank family. That kid is all sorts of creepy.

The games issue has been in the works for a while. I've been a big game player for ages, especially when we eat lunch together at work. This issue is all about gaming, video, board, et cetera. I've got an article about Computers and Games and why the attempts to mix the two have been so strange. There's also another article from me that explains how I had to compact the idea of computer games into a small and digestible exhibit area. There's also great stuff from Daniel Spector, Barbara Haddad-Johnson, Howeird, and more! I'm totally into this issue and I can't wait for y'all to get into it.



THE SPIEL OF A NEW MACHINE: COMPUTER CHESS BY CHRIS GARCIA

Let's face it: computers were built by white guys in the 1950s. Yes, there were women who played very significant roles, and a few Hispanics and a couple of Japanese, Chinese, Black and Hispanics, but for the most part, they were white dudes in skinny ties. And when it came time to figure out when computers were smarter than us, they did what all white dudes do: they tried to figure out which was a better chess player.

That's the measure of a computer in theory. If a computer could play chess as well as a Grand Master then computers were smarter than people. Not Shogi, which is as complex a game as chess, nor Go, which is actually more complex, and a computer has never managed to rise anywhere close to a Grand Master status in serious competition. Chess was the Gold Standard, and even before computers were programmed to play chess, people were thinking about ways for machines to play chess.

There were mechanical attempts to create a chess playing machine. The problem is, to make it possible you basically had two choices: a huge machine that has basic responses to certain moves

built into the mechanics, or it has to be a very limited system, like for end game problems. El Ajedrecista was a King vs. King and Castle end game player. It still exists, having been built in 1912, but it hasn't been played in several years. The builder, Leonardo Torres y Quevedo, did a lot of things with automata.

This wasn't the first attempt, though the first not to be a cheat. The first was The Turk, a mechanical device that had a midget chess master inside it. It was all a piece of trickery, but it was also very impressive for the time.

The first time people started to think about the idea of the basic techniques that would become central to computer chess was in 1950 when a wicked smart dude named Claude Shannon published a paper about the two basic forms of computer chess. One, called Type A would go on to become known as Brute Force, where a computer would look at every possible move and evaluate each of them to a certain depth and then make a single move. This requires serious computer power. The second version was called Type B. That would only look at certain better positions to a greater depth. That would allow for faster examination and that would make the power needed far lower.

Dozens of different pro-



ristics is the system that most smart folks were banking on in the old days and it proved to be a sub-optimal program.

It was Brute Force that won. In the early days, working with various systems allowed them to make some great strides, but that turned out to be a dead-end after power increased. The one area where it did work out was in the area of End Game investigation. In the

grammes were built using both techniques. It wasn't until computers got really fast that one thing became obvious: Type B doesn't work. Why? Because there's no such thing as a universal evaluation that allows a computer to find the best moves at all times. In one of the early versions of Chess X.X, they used some of the better chess books of the time to find guidelines, and the problem became that a talented player had not only all of the rules that the books showed, but knew when to fold the books away and make moves that didn't seem to make sense. There were many points in competition that making a move of no consequence can turn a match from being an aggressive battle to a slow brawl across the squares. That's how some of the best games are played. Heu-

1950s, a dude named Dietrich Prinz developed a system to play out chess problems. It was a specific set and had a set of rules that it could use. It wasn't good for full games, but for End Game theory, it was perfect. Now, almost every computer system uses an End Game database that ends up coming into play once it recognises a series of positions.

There were two paths: Man vs. Machine and Machine vs. Machine. The Machine on Machine action was where a lot of the real funky work happened. In 1966 there was one of the first big machine vs. machine matches when Alex Bernstein took on a Russian system that ran on a BESM Computer. That was played over telegraph, so it wasn't a huge thing, but that started the idea of playing large-scale computer vs.

computer tournaments.

In 1970, the Association of Computing Machinists, or the ACM, sponsored the first North American Computer Chess Championship. Not too long after, the World Computer Chess Championship started and Kaissa was the winner. That was one of the follow-on programmes to the one that beat Bernstein's programme. A lot of tournaments were started for computers to play computers. Sometimes, Ucomputer program would play a newer version of itself. Sometimes, the older version would win, though that was rare. The World Microcomputer Chess Championship started in 1980, and was a big deal until it was cancelled because it was replaced by the World Computer Chess Championship since almost all of the computers in the World Computer Chess Championship were micros. Since almost all the ones based on mainframes or other specialized hardware were being used with the people who were taking on the problem against human players.

The Machine vs. Human idea was super-special when you think about it. Humans invented computers and were the ones who developed the systems they were playing. And in a weird way, they were hoping that they could beat us. It's a weird thing, building something

that you hope is better than you. At worst, it's disloyalty to your species. The first computer system to win a major title against humans was Cray Blitz which won the Mississippi Chess Championships without losing a game. That's incredible if you think about it. There were many US Grandmasters in the tourney and that's significant because the various GMs that were beaten saw this as the future. That was 1981, and things started to get stickier from there.

The system Belle designed by Ken Thompson was awarded the Master title in 1982 and that was a big deal. That was the first computer to win that title. On the other hand, the first program to beat a World Grandmaster was HiTech, designed by Hans Berliner and Carl Ebeling. They beat him 3.5-to-.5. Not only a beating, but a big time beating. The Grandmaster was Arnold Denker. Way to go, Denker. Way to lose the

honor of our entire species.

The next big thing was Deep Thought. It was one of the systems that would eventually morph into Deep Blue. The Deep Thought program was very powerful, and was even more successful at proving that the real way to success was Brute Force. The first superhuge deal was the Software Toolworks Championship which featured a number of World Grandmasters, one of which was defeated by Deep Thought. That was a really big deal because it was the first time that a computer chess-playing system beat a Grandmaster in a tourney setting. Bent Larsen was the one who dropped the ball. The stage was set for Deep Thought vs. the Greatest Chess Player of All-Time: Gary Kasparov.

Both times, the Russian beat the machine.

That led to IBM taking up the torch and putting together the team that built Deep Blue. They took to building some specialized hardware and created a brilliant chip specifically to play chess. The main chip designer was Feng-hsiung Hsu, a really nice guy who I've talked with a few times, and he was the one who managed to come up with the right format for a chess engine.

Take thousands of them and gang them to process millions of positions a second and you've got the right formula. In 1997, Deep Blue vs. Gary Kasparov took place, leading to Gary losing after drawing the first couple and then just blowing it when the Computer seemed like it was playing like a person. He folded like an envelope and that led to the defeat. He probably could have pulled a draw if he hadn't messed himself when it started seeming to play intelligently. That led to a classic blunder, where he offered a rook and the computer passed it up, put itself in a better position for an attack. That blyw his mind. He lost 3.5 to 2.5. That's a huge deal.

The brilliant thing that the IBM boys did was retiring Deep Blue. That way, no rematch. There had been a promised rematch, and since there wasn't going to be one, that meant that Computers would forever be the World Champion. They gave Deep Blue to us at the Computer History Museum and that was that.

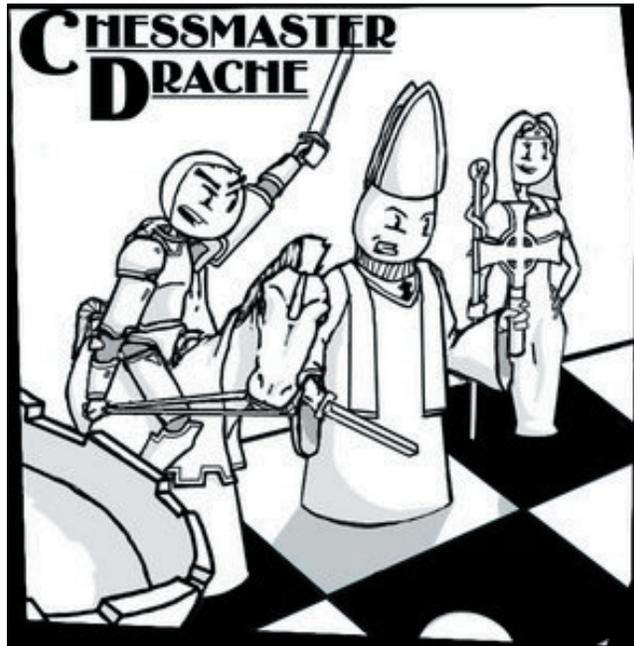
Of course, many other computer systems have played against Humans. Kasparov drew two very significant systems, X3D Fritz and Deep Junior, both of which had won the World Computer Chess Championship. That was the last significant loss by a major player. Hydra, another



er powerful system that is affordable to the average person these days, beat Michael Adams, who I think was the biggest US Tournament name at the time. A team of Grandmasters (all within the top 50 players in the world) lost to a team of computers. Vladimir Kramnik lost to Deep Fritz. He was the Undisputed World Champion at the time. About the only player who is considered better than the best Chess programs is Anand, one of the few Grandmasters who can take on most of the machines.

Of course, every high level player uses computers to train.

The way I love to play against machines, I choose one of those nifty chess-playing boards. Fidelity, a litigious company if there ever was one, put out the first called the Fidelity Chess Challenger. The boards got smarter than the average player within 5 years, when the good people at Milton-Bradley released the Grandmaster, easily the best-selling electronic chessboard of all-time. It was an excellent game and when we opened the Chess Exhibit, we had a working Grandmaster that people could play. One time, I walked up and found that someone had actually managed to beat the Grandmaster, US Chess Federation rating of 2300. I didn't see who beat 'em, but that means that we'd had a World Class player at the exhibit.



FLUXX BY DANIEL SPECTOR

I'm not actually a gamer.

Oh, sure, I played D&D in the dark ages of the mid-1970's and that was after having learned the weird, extended world of Avalon Hill games like Kriegspiel and right in the middle of my backgammon phase- I have only ever lost two games with money on the line- but- really since the early 1980's- I have been a game free zone.

Unless you count video games. Those engaged me for years longer. I didn't get bored and wander off from those until I mastered Tempest – no, Crystal Castles- in, uh.... 1986.

So, really, call it twenty years that I was on the sidelines of gaming. Maybe the rare, occasional dungeon foray or

game of gin, but really, nothing of note, of regularity and certainly nothing that could be considered spiel suchen behavior.

Then the corruption entered my life.

Fluxx.

While I have not been a gamer to speak of lo these past two decades, I have been an artist. OK, OK, I have been a business geek and a vintage car geek and a lot of other things which were interesting and engaging and really kept me busy enough that games were not missed, not desired and perfectly welcome to stay in my past.

Fluxx.

We were on our "victory lap" of the US in our pimped out Buick, staying for a couple of nights in the comfortable guest-room of a dear friend's house in Harvard (The town, not the University) Massachusetts. While living in a pop-up trailer going from campsite-to-campsite around the US is- in fact- a blast and a great time, there is a certain joy in getting to sleep in a real house, see beloved friends, socialize until all hours and, of course, not having to get dressed and walk a few hundred feet to the nearest public restroom.

It was while staying at this friend's house that, as we lounged in the evening after some fabulous-though-forgotten repast, that she suggested we play a card game.

"A card game? What sort of card game?"

“Fluxx. It is hard to explain. The rules are determined by playing the game. They change during the game. So does the goal of the game.”

So we played.

I was hooked.

As advertised, Fluxx is a card game. Further, the rules really are determined by the game play.

Upon starting the game, players draw with seven cards. The first person to play is whoever calls “First”. The only rule upon the start of play is that during a turn, a player draws one card and then plays one card and there is no goal, no end point to the game.

Any or all of these things might change as soon as that first card is played.

The number of cards drawn might increase to three. Or five. Or the number of cards to be played in a hand might change, too. It might wind up being the case that players are to draw seven cards and play one, harvesting too many cards to track. Gameplay might reverse. A goal might be set of the person who gets ten cards wins the game, with a prevailing rule that no one can have more than three cards in their hand.

Chaos! Beloved chaos!

You see, if I had to hang my proverbial hat on a so-called “school” which most influenced my artistic thinking, I am flying over/under/ cheese danish the undulating, electric-neon-fish coloured ground that lives between the surrealists

and the dadas. Thus, the idea, the very concept of a game with dynamic, evolving, conflicting and dischordant rules where the point of the game changed randomly, changed because of the game play- even at times made the game impossible to win, much less ever end- these were game qualities the appealed- perhaps dangerously- to my artistic side.

I now own a Fluxx deck. I keep it in the car. You know... just in case.



BLACKJACK AS PLAYED BY CHRIS GARCIA

At Westercon, I put a few Black-jack tips in the daily newszine. Linda Bushyeager was none too happy because they didn't mesh with the ideas that are put into the various books on the theory of blackjack. But they work for me and now I'm giving them to you.

First, I recommend playing at a single deck table. They're around and there are a couple of different types. One plays 2-to-1 for Blackjack. That kind is hard to find, but it's out there. 6-to-5 is the typical for a single deck table. It's sad, but it's not that bad.

Now, at a single deck table, you can count into a deck and that'll help you know when to hit on 16, when to split because there are a bunch of tens left, or aces, and when to increase your bet. I don't like doing that. I like keeping my bets even and just keep on going until I've made a lot of money. Somehow, it works.

Of course, let's say you sit at a 6-deck shoe table. These are much different. Most of the books give you different versions, saying that all blackjack is really the same, but they're wrong. or at least they don't work as well as mine does.

First, never try to count. It's a fool errand. A six deck shoe leaves too much in the backfield for you to make good use of a count anyhow. Second, play conservatively. Never hit a fifteen, no matter what a dealer is showing as his up-card. Split every chance you get, including 10s and Faces. It's a powerful technique. Dealers hate it when you split 20, but it's an excellent way to eat up cards in a shoe. Also, double-down on 11 if you're up, no matter what the dealer has.

And always play with what you can afford to lose.

POLITICS 2008 IN GAMER SPEAK - DEATH-MATCH IN THE ARENA FROM BARBARA JOHNSON-HADDAD

[OBAMA] Newb player is leet
Newb player uses gem dice and
arranges his skills for maximum bonuses.

Newb player has dreams and ideals.

Newb player maxes out CHAR and
arranges stats so they all give bonuses.

Newb player chooses a 3rd edition D&D
elf ranger-bard-sorcerer triple class.

Newb player equips with chain shirt
so he can dual weild, takes shortswords,
bow and spear and can do, roughly,
4-16 damage per melee round.

[MCCAIN] Pro player is old
Pro player uses loaded dice
... and cheats.

Pro player has bribed the judges and Dungeon Master.

Pro player maxes out DEX & INT & STR
by tanking CHAR & CON.

Pro player chooses a Rifts glitter boy with psionics
using the Rifts Fantasy Conversion optional rules.

Pro player equips with glitter boy armor,
can do 2,000-12,000 damage per attack and
gets 4 attacks per melee round.

**BOTH PLAYERS FACE EACH OTHER IN THE ARENA & NEWB PLAYER
IS A CARBON SMEAR HALFWAY THROUGH MELEE ROUND 1.**

OUR NINTENDO BY M LLOYD

A woman with cancer and two breast-feeding children is forced to discover new forms of entertainment. In the old days, downtime meant drink, smokes, long conversation following deep thrust telescopic probes. With young children and bad flesh, you're forced to find new sources of fighting back Oh.My.Fuck.I'm.Bored.

And Chris gave us his Nintendo.

As a teenager, growing up screwed and stoned, I never had the desire to sit in

front of the tv and play with pixels. I wanted to play with minds and bodies. Bodies more than minds. Chris sent me a Nintendo when I moved back to Santa Barbara.

The man knows more than he lets on.

There were five games; Super Mario Brothers, Adventure Island, The Legend of Zelda, Pro Wrestling, Kung Fu. I was not aware of any of them, none of those icons were in my cultural vocabulary. Now, I've played them all to the finish, staying up at night with a pair of children in my lap, the rectangle of plastic

digging stopped-up stigmata into my hands. SaBean would snake around me, kiss my neck and whisper slut into my ears and I would only think of Starman's dive out of the ring until I beat King Tiger. Then I'd be pushed to bed, to SaBean and Jay, to create my old games with my old players at my mouth, my lap, my breasts.

And I hear the 8-bit announcement of the Dungeon levels of Mario Brothers as SaBean pushes her mouth to mine, the leaping sound of a Kung Fu kick when Jay puts it to me.



IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF WINKY DINK BY ERIC MAYER

It feels perfectly natural now for me to see the letters I'm typing appear on my computer monitor but I remember when a television screen was something you watched passively. What happened behind the glass was beyond the viewer's control. I couldn't toss a vine to Johnny Weismuller during the latest episode of Jungle Theater. To actually affect what was happening on a television set -- beyond changing the channel or the contrast -- was so unimaginable I never even dreamed about it, though I dreamed often enough that my parents' old black & white suddenly showed colors.

I first interacted with television during the Winky Dink & You cartoons. I remember sitting on the floor, my six-year-old nose practically against the screen. You had to sit close during the show because you needed to whip out your crayon at the critical moment to draw Winky Dink a rope, a ladder, or whatever it was he needed right then to get out of a jam. Preferably, you drew on the special plastic sheet that covered the screen and not straight onto the screen itself.

I was amazed to watch the simply drawn cartoon character scamper to safety across a crude bridge of my own making, to see my own world intersect with the heretofore separate world within the box. The miraculous bridge was nothing more than a line drawn between two

indicated points, although I liked to add some railings, just in case.

Sometimes I wished the show had called for more complicated drawings. Not just lines or loops. Winky Dink's living room based sidekicks were never asked to sketch a nuclear-tipped missile to obliterate the baddies or to draw Lassie so she could go for help.

And in the end, the interactivity was only an illusion. A deceit really. Sad to say, Winky would race across an empty space to escape the island even if the crayon bridge wasn't there. I admit it, I once pulled the plastic down and peeked.

Still, he was the first to introduce me to the possibilities of electronic games. And more than twenty years later, Winky Dink stepped aside for Arnie Katz. It was during the late seventies, in the Brooklyn living room of Joyce and Arnie who had, in the best Winky Dink tradition, drawn me a line to run across from Manhattan to Brooklyn when I landed in New York and found myself in the Chelsea Hotel where I probably would not have survived the night.

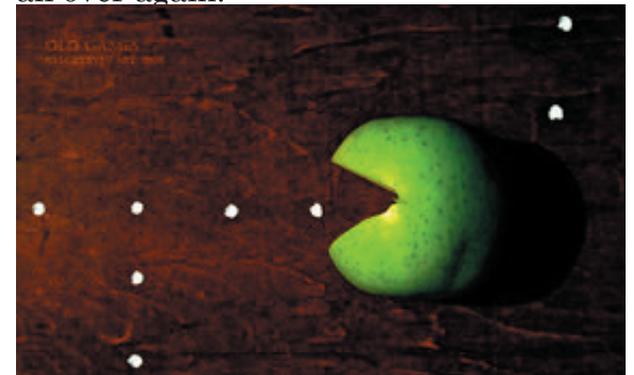
It was at the Katzes that I first took hold of a control stick and wonder of wonder, made something move on the other side of the screen.

It was Pong! I had never seen the game before. True, the actual visual effects -- the blips and "paddle" dashes -- were less spectacular than those you could get by turning the vertical hold, but they showed /something happening/.

Things began to move faster then. Not as fast as a blip kicked off the end of Pong paddle maybe, but fast. Only a few years passed before I had an Atari 2600 hooked up to my own television. And just as Arnie Katz had replaced Winky Dink, so now Arnie's place was assumed by a chicken.

It was badly pixilated chicken, but a chicken, nevertheless. More than a blip. A conglomeration of pixels. Obviously a chicken because it was yellow, and according to the game it was chicken and if you looked hard enough in fact the shape was vaguely poultry-like.

The chicken, naturally, lived to cross the road. Or more precisely, to name the game -- the Freeway. At the touch of the controller the bird darted into the racing rectangles that represented cars and tractor-trailers. Misjudge an opening in the traffic and the plucky pedestrian would be knocked clear back to the side of the freeway while filling the air with electronic clucks of pure fury. Judge correctly and the chicken would reach the other side safely and get to try all over again.

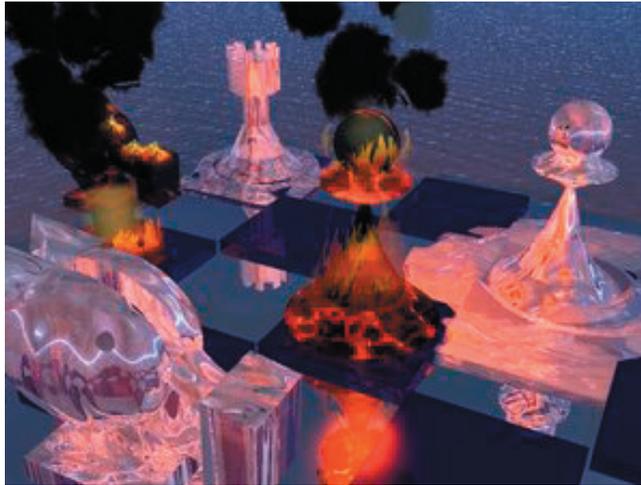


And why did the electronic chicken cross the freeway? Again and again and again? Why, to win me a jacket patch from Activision, of course..

Unlike the ungrateful Winky Dink, the fine folks at the Activision game company sent an award to players who provided them with a photograph of a television screen proving, in this case, that they had helped the chicken to achieve its goal of crossing the freeway twenty-one times within the game's time limit. Earning that patch -- not to mention patches for Barnstorming and Dragster -- is still something I can't help boasting about even to this day, pathetically enough.

But my journey across the freeway was not the end of my journey into electronic gaming. That had to wait another decade and a half. If I had owned a computer during the mid-eighties I might have discovered electronic text adventures during the Golden Age of companies like Infocom and Magnetic Scrolls. Rather than just yanking my stick this way and that I could have typed in sensible commands -- north -- get wand -- attack -- to explore caverns, collect treasures and fight off grues, with all the action presented not in crude pixel pictures but in words, as interactive stories.

By the time I got my first Apple, text adventures were already being replaced by graphical games which, after I had spent a few years playing Atari, never interested me much. The pictures of the new computer games were far superior to the old Atari-type I was used to



but the basic actions possible didn't seem much different.

So it was 1999 before I ran across text adventures like Zork in the vast attic of the Internet and found that not only had many old games been preserved but devotees were busily writing new ones. In fact, there were even special programming languages designed for writing such games.

How could I resist? Of course there was the niggling little detail that I had never so much as seen a computer program, let alone written one.

The most popular languages were Inform, which produced z-Code games of the Infocom variety, Tads, and Hugo. However, there was a less powerful but supposedly easier to learn language called Alan. I immediately downloaded the Alan manual and compiler, whatever the heck a compiler was.

My struggles with Alan consumed most of the my evenings for a full summer. Let's just say I am not born to

program. An "If-Else-Then" statement? Never heard of it. A semi-colon at the end of this but a period after that -- how peculiar. And curly brackets....? I never knew they existed on my keyboard. Cool!

What was even better -- sheer magic -- was that by simply typing out everyday letters, words and punctuation in an arcane code, I could not only interact with what I saw on my computer monitor, but instruct the computer how to respond to someone else.

Anyone who played "The HeBGB Horror!" could go north from Bleecker Street into the Land of 10,000 Disks and buy a record album, or sneak one out under his T-shirt. He could try talking to the cadaverous stranger in black lingering outside the shop, or head off to the HeBGB club, in search of the mysterious lost chord for Cthullu Rocks.

It wasn't a great game, or even -- to be honest -- an average game. It was badly structured and full of bugs, obviously the work of an author unfamiliar with games and inept at programming. (And my games since then have gone steadily downhill as I have failed to improve my rudimentary programming skills even while my available time has dwindled) But I was just thrilled that it worked at all, like the dog proud to be walking, however poorly, on its hind legs.

I guess, we've all come a long way from sitting passively in the face of technology, helplessly shouting at the television screen. "Look out, Tarzan! The tiger's behind you!"

EARLY RPGS BY HOWEIRD

Back before there were dungeons, and before there were dragons, in fact before there were dungeons and dragons, games were played using bread-stuff. Bialystok, cinnamon, crescent, sourdough, brown-and-serve, hard, sweet, wheat and more - these were the warm heart of roll-playing games. Some aficionados would have you believe that RPGs were named because players would roll the dice, but I submit to you that polyhedral dice don't really roll, they kind of jump around. So much for that theory, may it rest in peace beside cold fusion, weapons of mass destruction and Babbage engines.

Roll-playing games were introduced early in human history, evidence of them has been found in the cave drawings of southern France, deep in the jungles of Kenya (see L. Leakey's seminal paper *Gorillas in the Myth*) and in the wardrobe leading to Narnia. The latter being in the form of a trail of crumbs.

The rise in popularity of these games paralleled the discovery of yeast and the invention of baking powder. Northern Europe saw a huge surge with the invention of the Dutch Oven. As with modern RPGs, these ancient games gave rise to their own

jargon. When a character suffered major damage, he was "burned". A roll which failed to achieve its full potential was "flat" or "half-baked". A soon-to-be-dead character was referred to as "toast". A series of successes was known as "being on a roll".

Traces of an offshoot of roll-playing games have been found in the Middle East and Eastern Europe, where instead of hard-to-find rolls, bagels were used instead. This trend did not last very long, as GMs easily saw through it. Ancient Japan also had their unique take on these games, using maki-sushi, a practice which continues to be popular to this day among hard-core players, especially those on this side of the Pacific who play with the ever-popular California Roll.

One perk of roll-playing is instant bread crumbs, helping characters find their way during the game. But the main advantage of roll-playing is also its downfall. During a long day of active roll-playing, most players will be unable to resist the temptation to consume their rolls, thus ending their play prematurely. It is widely believed among RPG scholars that this attribute of roll-playing is what drove it to extinction, while fostering such gamer activities as eating at Denny's and snacking at Starbucks.



THE HANDS I LOVE TO PLAY BY CHRISTOPHER J. GARCIA

When I'm not working on fanzines or watching wrestling, or playing old video games or cuddling with my *The Lovely and Talented Linda*, I think about poker. I'm pretty good. I've won a small tourney, came in second in a couple of more, a third and over the years, my house game winnings are significant. I'm a stud man. Texas Hold-'Em, the game of the last decade, is fun, but Stud rewards the mavericks, punishes the timid, forces the Brave and the Bold to make themselves known. Hold-'Em rewards the steady. I have a way of playing that really annoys most

hard core players. It spits in the face of Doyle Brunson and his SuperSystem.

My most impressive play was actually at 7-Card Stud against TJ Cloutier in the card room in Downey. I held my own, and that's impressive for a guy who is an amateur playing against a guy with a few bracelets (but who will never win the Main Event).

Here now are my favourite 10 hands to get in Texas Hold-'Em and what I do with them.

10) A-2 off-suit

There is seldom a flop I won't pay to see, but if you give me A-2, there's little question that I'll raise into it. Connecting cards are very useful, though you don't have as many options when it comes to A-2, but it does manage to also give you a shot at top pair. Europeans seem to think that American's over-play Aces. I tend to agree,



but Europeans underplay connecting cards. That's why Devilfish Ulliott has never won the Big One.

9) 7-8 Unsuitied

OK, so here's the thing: I don't believe in math. There's no inherent mathematical advantage to hoping for the pair of Face cards instead of a pair of Unders. That's why 7-8 are so powerful. No one bothers to think that a player will call with less than faces underneath. Connectors are powerful, especially those in the middle of the run.

I've taken so many pots against guys with K-K or A-K underneath with a flop of 7-8-* or 9-6-5. You wouldn't believe how often that pairing has made me money.

8) 4-4

OK, there's a maxim: littles can hurt ya, if you're dumb enough to play them. There's some truth to that, but I've scooped many pots playing a pair of 4s like they were Bullets. You can ride a pair of littles to the bank if you get the right flop, but I love pulling people

out of the pot by playing a decent hand like it were meteoric.

7) 5-10, Suited

This is a creepy hand because I've played it against everything from A-A to 2-7 and I tend to split pots. It's a fun one because every straight has either a 5 or a 10 in it. Suited is a key to this one. If you have hearts, you'll end up with a decent, though not perfect flush if it shows on the board. This is really a hand for the patient.

6) K-10, suited

Play this one and you're a fool for love. K-10 sets you up for only 2 straights (9-K, 10-A) and that's plenty. You're up for the #2 Flush (and if the Ace pulls itself out of the board, you're Johnny Ace. I can't stop playing this one, even more than Q-10.

5) 10-10

The playing of 10s is a matter of concentration. Most will play it, but the first sign of a face on the board will send them running. I tend to take it to the Turn and then see what folks are pushing at me. If they seem timid, I typically play along. If they're timid after the River, I play them like a low pair. If there are faces on the board, I kick it into gear, hard. I've scared some very strong card players by throwing heavy clay with 10s in my pocket.

4) A-K Suited.

Well, this is the only hand that smart players play that I go along with. Big Slick is a tough hand to beat. If you Flop a pair, it's likely Top Pair, you're up for a straight, and the top straight. You've got top Flush if they come up on the board. I am a big fan.

3) 5-6, Suited

Again, you've either got a 5 or a 10 in your straight, suited little's are fun, and this one has the benefit of being low enough that no one would expect you to play it. I won the tourney with 5-6 Suited by representing that I was ready to throw A-K with a board that was A-4-7-8 with the River coming and the other player sitting on A-8. She went all-in and I just pushed in everything and shewed my straight. The River came up with another 4 and I totally won. I'm awesome, I know.

2) 2-7, Off-suit

True story. Mike was holding A-A and I was on the small blind. He put in a big bet, something like 1/4 of my stack, but less than 10% of his. I called and he was smiling. The Flop came up 2-2-7 and I simply called him. Mike pushed in about 50% of what I had. I called. Turn and river were both 7s. That was a fun one.

1) 2-7, Only suited this time.



A CARD GAME FOR EVERYONE

Not too long ago, I was introduced to a new game that was similar to any number of other games, such as Egyptian Rat-Screw or the like, but it was slightly different, with a series of rules that added strategy to every play. I then thought of a couple of switches, largely inspired by Uno and a dice game whose name I've forgotten. And here it is...a game without a name!

First off there is one rule: get rid

of all your cards before anyone else. That's a classic with card games as different as The Great Dalmuti to Uno, but there's a slight difference.

The game is played best with three, four or five players. With 3 or 5 players, deal out 45 of the cards and set the other ones aside. Everytime someone can't play an Ace, give them a card from the seven you've set aside, plus any in the pile if you've been in a reset. With four players, deal out all the cards and just treat Ace passes as passes when there are no cards.

You have to play the number of the round. If you're the first person to play, you have to play an ace, which is always one. The next person is two and must play two, either as the card two or as two Aces. Third plays three, an ace and a two or three aces. It goes on until it's 21. At 21, it stays there and everyone has to play 21 until someone can't or there's a reset. If you can't play, you have to pick up the pile of played cards and then you start the next set with an Ace.

Ace is equal to one, two is two, three is three and so on until Jack. A Jack skips your turn and the next player in the order has to play that number. If you're supposed to play 11, play a Jack and the next player plays eleven. The Queen is Reassign. You play the queen and you call a name and that person has to play the number. You're

supposed to play the nine, instead you play the Queen and call "Alana" and Alana has to play the nine. A very fun card. King's reset and start things over at one again with the person next to them.

There's another variation where you can play the Jack, Queen or King at any time, not only when it's your turn. That's a fun one because you can reset it right before someone who you know doesn't have an Ace and that can be fun.

If you wanna play with Jokers,

here's a fun little switch you can make. Joker's can cancel any other play. If someone plays a Queen on you, you play a joker and it goes back to them to fulfill the original number. If someone resets, a joker makes them have to play. If they fulfill the number, play the Joker, even out of turn, and they have to do it again! That's a good way to screw with a friend who thinks they're gonna win.

Nothing better than being able to screw a friend when they're on the verge of victory!



The Inherent Problem in the World of Video and Computer Games **by Matthew Appleton**

Since the dawning of the age of home video game system and home computers,

something interesting has happened in regards to games: a large percentage of the games we play are no longer necessarily permanent in your ability to play them. For the past 30+ years it has been possible to purchase a game but literally be unable to play it less than 10 years later. Think about it... the Stratomatic Baseball set you or a family member purchased back in 1958 is still playable (assuming you still have all the pieces). But that copy of Battle Chess you bought for your PC back in 1988... well, it's still possible to run it. However, you either need the system it was originally programmed for (along with a version of the operating system that it actually conforms to), and have a certain

amount of the appropriate know-how to find online the emulators you would need to download, install and configure to run the software. Of course, this assumes that the installation software is still readable on that 15-year-old HD diskette – hardly the epitome of stable archiving materials.

If you're lucky, you might also find online a source file that you can download and use with the emulator – assuming that the company that still owns the copyright on the game hasn't issued a cease-and-desist order and demanded the removal of the file.



Most of us lack the wherewithal to find the ways (or create them) to make our favorite old video and computer games run. Even if you manage to find the right emulator, you still might have difficulty (in the case of console games) finding a way to faithfully recreate the experience of using the original controllers and by necessity resort to programming a newer controller to work the game, or (worse still) use your computer keyboard in place of the original controller. As a result, an important link between familial generations has been greatly degraded when it comes to playing certain types of games. True, plenty of games are updated to be played on newer operating systems and game consoles, and in some cases (such as the wonderful plug-and-play Atari joysticks – in particular the Atari Flashback 2 – that came out a few years ago) it is still possible to perfectly recreate the experience of playing these older games.

However, for a significant percentage of these games, it is impossible.

This issue has been on my mind a lot lately as my son, Brandon, as gotten older. There are aspects of my childhood that I've enjoyed so much that I have gone out of my way to introduce to my son in the hopes he will enjoy them as much. Over the years, I've purchased various toys, books, DVDs of favorite television shows

and movies (you should have seen how excited I was when I first discovered that complete seasons of *The Muppet Show* were finally being released on DVD), and, yes, games with the explicit purpose of sharing them with them in the hopes he will enjoy them as much as I did. Now, it just so happens that I didn't have my first video game system (an Atari) until I was about nine, so this sort of thing



isn't truly an issue yet. Besides, I own a before-mentioned Atari Flashback 2, which has received relatively light wear thus far, mostly because I am saving it for when Brandon gets a little older and starts demanding one of whatever console systems are available at that time.

Of course, it isn't just about the generational issue. This is an issue that like many in my generation, I've been aware of for many, many years. Heck, it's the very reason why plug-and-plays, websites dedicated to emulation and porting of old computer and console games and a market for working vintage consoles and game cartridges exists. In fact, I still own a nearly seven-year-old Apple iBook that runs on OS 9 because it's the only way I can play a few particular games that I cannot play on my MacBook because once Apple transitioned to the Intel microprocessors backwards compatibility ceased for anything designed to run a pre-OS X variant of the Apple operating system. Mind you, it comes out maybe once or twice a year for this purpose, but the fact is that if I want to play either of these games (specifically, Heroes of Might & Magic III and Master of Orion – more on these two games anon) then I need to keep



this particular laptop up and running

It's a shame that large numbers of games fall into obscurity thanks to the relentless march of improving hardware and software and the need to jettison backward compatibility at some point during the endless cycles of improvements. Many of these games, despite comparatively clunky graphics and simplistic game play (at least in comparison to current games), maintain their ability to mesmerize for hours at a time. However, for most of us – those without the means to procure or maintain older hardware – who wish to return to these older pieces of software, there

will come a day when, for whatever reason, we will lose the ability to play these games in the manner they were originally designed to be played. Almost as disconcerting is the idea that you just can't store a computer games in the back of the attic or a closet, leave it to gather dust for decades until some lucky sole uncovers it when cleaning out the area, and

have that lucky recipient just open the box and give the game a try. Even if you leave the needed hardware with the game, there's no guarantee it will work properly when you plug it in and start it up.

There is some consolation to be found, however. If maintaining/procuring the original hardware and/or doing the all the necessary legwork to install an emulator on your PC isn't for you, at least some classic computer games continue to live on in spirit. One of my favorite examples of this is Heroes of Might & Magic V (HoMM V). As I previously mentioned, I loved Heroes of Might & Magic III so much that I'm maintaining an iBook

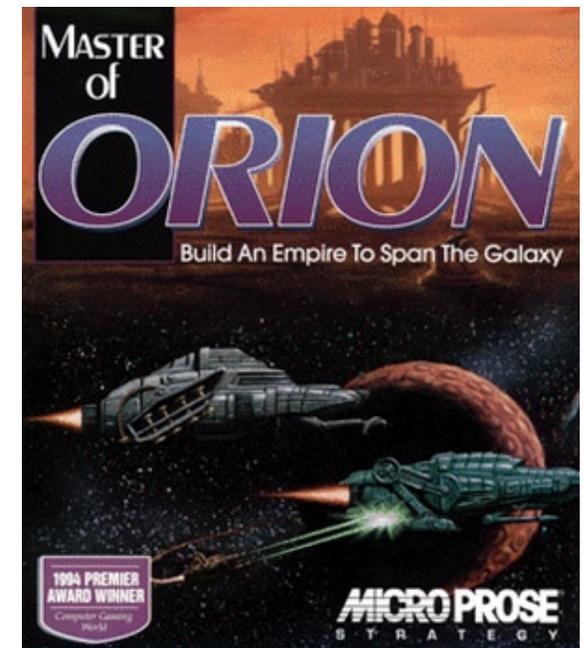
specific for the game. However, the series actually predates its current name. It can be traced back to a game called King's Bounty – a game I played originally played on a Mac SE/30 back in the summer of 1991 – and the amazing thing is underneath the massive upgrades in graphics and complexity of play, the basic way you play the game remains the same. In fact, I would argue that someone who played King's Bounty back when it came out could skip the first four installments in the Heroes of Might & Magic series, load HoMM V onto their PC and be able to figure out how to play the game in less than 10 minutes (learning all the added nuances might take a bit longer). In fact, take a look at the screenshots of the two games in battle mode – get past the advances in the graphics, and it's essentially the same basic setup.

Unfortunately, game developers haven't been as kind to Master of Orion (if you will recall, the other game for which I continue maintaining that iBook). According to Wikipedia, Master of Orion (MoO) is a member of GameSpy's Hall of Fame and GameSpot's Greatest Games of All Time. Sadly, the third installment in the series, Master of Orion 3, killed the

franchise in 2003 when, unlike HoMM, the developers changed the game play so thoroughly (and poorly) that it bore little resemblance to its predecessors. However, a Stardock Systems has managed to create Galactic Civilizations II (GC II), a game I would call a spiritual heir to the MoO series. The game play is similar enough to MoO (I suspect that if it was anymore similar that Stardock would be facing a potential lawsuit from those who still own the rights to MoO) that it *feels* like it belongs in the MoO series, and playing GC II provides much of the same enjoyment that MoO originally did for me. In fact, much like when I first played MoO back in the summer of 1995, I've found myself on many occasions this year playing GC II and its expansion packs when

But as wonderfully as HoMM V and GC II recreate and maintain the experience of playing their digital predecessors, part of the reason they exist is that those ancestors were wildly successful games. While I've never been much of a gamer (most of the games I play are turn-based strategy games, which in of themselves are a slowly disappearing bread, being replaced by real-time strategy games), I'm sure that over the past 30 years there are

plenty of wonderful games that haven't received the same treatment as King's Bounty or MoO. It makes me wonder just how many computer and video games will become classics in the same vein as Snakes and Ladders, Backgammon, Chess and Checkers – or even, if you don't mind my becoming more modern, Risk, Monopoly, Scrabble and Stratego. In many ways, the computer age is a wonderful thing in the way it has expanded the way we play games, but the very nature of the beast makes it seem unlikely that the medium will create few, if any, games that generations will enjoy.



Letter Graded Mail
sent to garcia@computerhistory.org
by my loyal readers

Of course, no special issue would be complete without the magnificent Leigh Ann Hildebrand!

Dear Mr. Garcia,

I'm terribly sorry I haven't been able to provide anything for the Game issue of your little thing. As you know, I've been very busy knitting my fingers to the bone on behalf of TAFF. Thankfully, this evening's work means I will definitely be ready for Denvention. Alas, as you've mentioned elsewhere, there won't be a TAFF auction there, but we'll have the lovely replica Season 12 Doctor Who scarf in the Fanzine Lounge, so folks can try it on for size. Perhaps we can get people of note to pose for photos wearing it, to further build excitement?

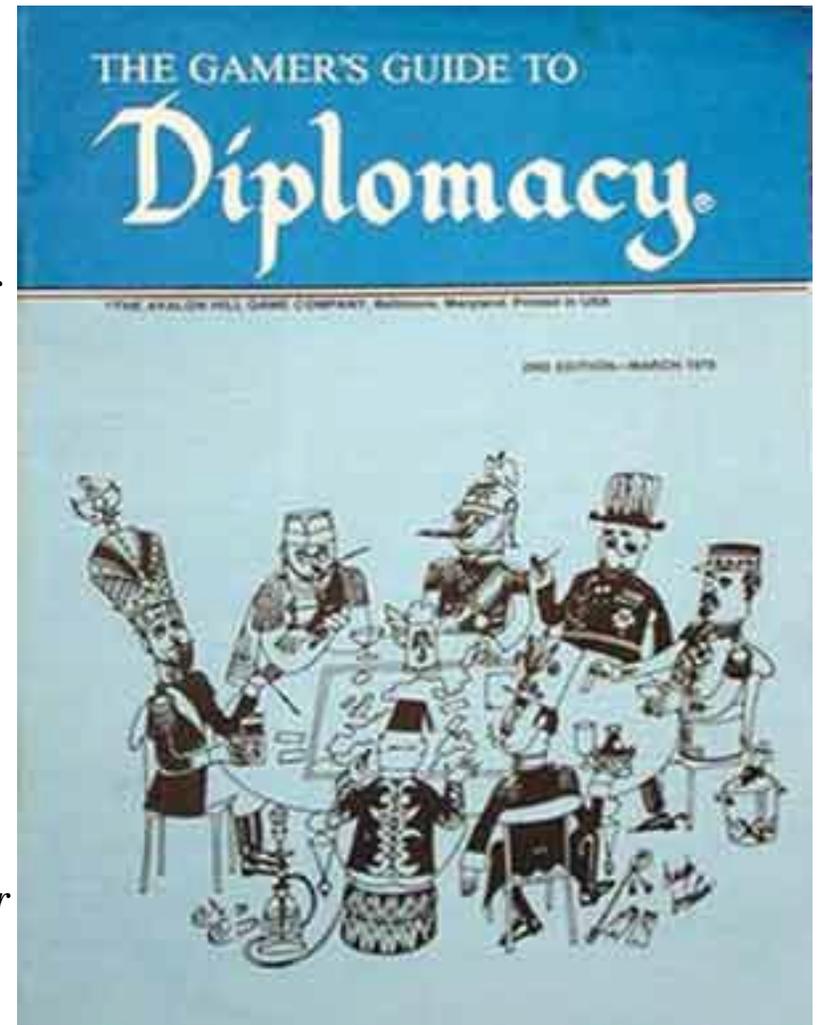
That was one of the many evil schemes I had for fetching huge sums for that scarf. Another is I wanna recreate that shot that every research team that's ever got a huge snake does where they have a team of people holding it up. And, let it be known that you are TAFF's number one supporter this year, without question!

If I were writing about gaming, it would be the usual things. Among other things, I'd probably be going on about

how I absolutely *must* play France in Diplomacy, or I get sulky, and how I always write my orders in French, and how in my youth I would withhold my favors from my beau (and frequent English player) when he would make the grave error of moving into the English Channel after convincing me that I absolutely could trust him and did not need to support Brest (har, har) but could devote my energies to that age-old struggle against the Germans. These retaliatory periods without the benefit of my affections could last as long as two weeks, if the game had been particularly critical.

I have to admit, I prefer playing France if I can. Without your affections over a game of Diplomacy is a harsh penalty. Now if it was Acquire...

I'd also be writing about those White Wolf boys, who started a 'zine that they sold in the mall bookstore we all worked at, and gamed around the marble coffee table in my parlor when we were, again, all quite young. They grew up and founded a multi-million dollar gaming company, but that whole thing started with a stapled photocopied 'zine we sold for \$1 an issue. Or how I did not



play D&D with the small books, but did so with the red and blue covers, long before second edition was with us -- the small books being very like the light of the two trees, Tolkien-style, if you know what I mean. (And knowing you and the unpopularity of the Silmarillion, you probably *don't* know what I mean. Sigh.)

Never read a word of Tolkien. I do

love his cookies though. I also had no idea that White Wolf started around a zine.

And finally, I'd probably write about one of my greatest vices: being as competitive as I am, I cheat. I have been cheating since oh, probably the first game of Candyland I ever played. As a child, I was one of those Monopoly bankers who was curiously always wealthier than the other players. I also count cards, and I use just about every impolite trick you

can think of to win -- which is why I almost never play competitive games in polite company any more. While I am still received by polite society, I am banned from many a card table, and only a fool would leave me alone during a board game.

Oh, the battles we could have! As a master of all cheating techniques known to man, which of us could conjure up the best victory technique in, oh let's say, Poker?

But of course, I don't have time to write about those things, because I'm very busy with the last minute knitting and preparations for Denvention. I hope to see you there, along with the other Lounge regulars. Until then,

Leigh Ann Hildebrand
and as always, I can't wait to take our seats in Match Game!

Tales of the DORK KNIGHT



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THAT'S THE GAMES ISSUE OF THE DRINK TANK. I WANT TO THANK ERIC, MATT, LEIGH ANN, DANIEL, HOWEIRD AND BARBARA FOR ALL THEIR WRITING, AS WELL AS ANNTENSITY, MO, DANN, CARLA LOWEN, STEVE PREGITZ, SAMANTHA BYERS, COLORFORM, AND BREAKNECK FOR THE ART. NEXT ISSUE? WELL, IT'LL BE AFTER WORLDCON, THAT'S FOR SURE!

