

THE BLUE SCREEN

Three is the magic number...

by Nathan Kozlowski



THIS JUST IN...

Send your news items to:

ColecoNation@yahoo.com



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Call me close-minded, uninformed, out-dated, or just plain crazy, but I think that the ColecoVision is the champ. I realize that it wasn't the first, the most popular, or the most powerful. I'm aware that it pales in comparison to the technological marvels of today. However, all of this doesn't matter, because the CV is the best. What's my proof? Well, I really don't have any, because my conviction comes more from a psychological than a logical source. You must understand. I've been diagnosed as a Coleco-centric.

This condition of mine, it was a gift from my father. Who knows what possessed him to go to the local Montgomery Wards in the winter of 1983 and buy a ColecoVision for \$128.39 (he kept all of his receipts). What made him pass by the Atari and Intellivision displays that fateful night? The reason has been lost in the sands of time but my future was forever changed by that solitary act. I grew up, matured (relatively speaking) but the ColecoVision was always there, plugged into my television. While my friends and classmates followed the latest video game consoles, I remained faithful to the CV.

I'm not ashamed of my condition, because I know I'm not alone. Currently, eight new games are for sale, over ten are currently in development, and talk of new hardware and accessories is popping up on the forums. This third-wave system continues to surprise the competition and yet it is given little media attention. My hope is that this column will be a place where people can go for reviews, news, and interviews regarding the ColecoVision. It will honor its past, but more importantly celebrate its present and future. It's an ambitious goal, but I'm up for the challenge as long as I have your help. Send us an email and let the ColecoNation be heard!

Spectar demo makes appearance at OVGE!

Scott Huggins and Atari Age showed off a near complete version of the 1980 Exidy coin-op, Spectar at the Oklahoma Video Game Expo. The game will include a port of Spectar's predecessor, Targ, which also was an Exidy coin-op from 1980. Spectar was a title that Coleco advertised back in 1982, but never got around to making, and it's exciting to hear that it will finally come to the ColecoVision. The game is expected to make its debut at the America's VideoGame Expo in Dallas, Texas on August 20th.

http://www.atariage.com/features/shows/ovge2005_preview/demos.html

Astro Invader to come to the ColecoVision!

Astro Invader made its ColecoVision debut on June 18th at the Oklahoma Video Game Expo. Programmed by Scott Huggins, this home version is reportedly a flawless port of the Stern's 1980 coin-op. Huggins studied the original arcade version and then programmed the ColecoVision version to act accordingly, very similar to how the early Coleco games were ported to the system. If you weren't able to travel to Tulsa to get this newly recovered classic never fear! You can get one directly from the publisher, Atari Age. For \$30 (+ship), you'll get the cartridge, manual, and plastic storage case, all designed by Joe Kollar.

http://www.atariage.com/store/product_info.php?products_id=310

Double Breakout returns to AtariAge incognito!

The 1999 ColecoVision game, Double Breakout by Daniel Bienvenu, has been re-released by AtariAge under the title, Deflektor Kollection. The name change, due to trademark issues with Atari, was necessary in order for AtariAge to continue to sell the game. The collection features the three games that were on Double Breakout and is the first homebrew to support the steering wheel and roller controller. Deflektor Kollection includes a cartridge and plastic case designed by Francis Meunier. The item was featured at the Oklahoma Video Game Expo and can be found at AtariAge for \$30 (+ship). [2]

http://www.atariage.com/features/shows/ovge2005_preview/new_games.html

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IN PLAY

Sky Jaguar

by Nathan Kozlowski



programmer: Eduardo Mello
 publisher: Opcode
 developer: Konami
 packaging: Dale Crum
 text: Jess Ragan
 release: 03.2004
 rom size: 32k
 players: 1
 controller: Joystick



Sky Jaguar [Opcode]

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Sky Jaguar, a top-down shooter, was brought to the ColecoVision by Eduardo Mello and Opcode Games and was released in March 2004 at the PhillyClassic 5. Originally released as an arcade coin-op in 1984 by Konami, Sky Jaguar was the little brother of Xevious that no one ever talked about. It was ported to the MSX computer in 1984, whose version was then ported to the ColecoVision.

While the inner-workings of the MSX are very similar to the Adam computer, the difficulty in bringing its games to the ColecoVision is an issue of rom size more than anything. A major factor that allowed this game to be ported was due to it being an early release of the MSX (a system's initial games are historically smaller in size than its later ones). Lucky for us, this made it relatively easy to bring this unknown classic to a larger audience.

Sky Jaguar is set in a future where Earth, part of a unified solar system, is clean out of resources and looking for a new planet that has low mortgage rates and good schools. Unfortunately, the Zephrians have showed up from out-of-galaxy and want the Earth for free. To show that they mean business these punks destroyed Miranda, a colonized satellite on the edge of the solar system (not the girl with pony tails that sat next to you in first grade), and parked their flying fortresses on your property. So what do you do? You jump in to your Sky Jaguar and fight back, of course.

Sharing a similar concept with games like Xevious and 1942, you navigate a ship over a slowly moving landscape while attempting to shoot everything that comes at you. The game consists of eight scenes, with "bosses" appearing at the ends of scenes three and eight. Once you've completed all the scenes, you start again from the beginning but face increased levels of difficulty. It would've been nice to have a congratulatory screen to mark your accomplishment (like with Gorf), but your only prize is another wave of ships, meaner than before.

Many have stated that Sky Jaguar is too difficult to play and enjoy. I once felt this way, but now I realize that it's not so much difficult as it is intense. Your ship can only shoot as fast as you can press the button and, with no rapid fire, pause features, or a "Player 2" to give you a break, this can quickly wear you down. The waves of enemies are unrelenting, attacking faster and with more fire power the farther you advance through the scenes. This intensity can become frustrating if you let it overcome you, but once you start to understand the gameplay it becomes a very enjoyable challenge. There appears to be a conscious effort to stagger the waves of enemy ships, often alternating difficult challenges with easier adversaries, and the vital "power-ups" are also spaced out well throughout the scenes. Games that plateau at a certain level (as in Coleco's Donkey Kong) become stale over time, but ones like Sky Jaguar that continually test your abilities with increasing tasks will always remain entertaining.

The graphics are only hurt by the rough scrolling of the landscape (which is a necessary evil of the ColecoVision's hardware), but only really shows where there is dominant horizontal elements. The ocean and forest scenes run relatively smoothly and the red canyon landscape is simply amazing. Minimal sound and music may have been a result of size restrictions, but I think having music only at the start and after the destruction of the "bosses" was well done. With each ship having a different sound, as well as your unique laser fire, the addition of music during this would have been distracting in an already overwhelming game. The attention to detail with the packaging of the game is also noteworthy. The customized "Opcode" cartridges and detailed written material all add to the professionalism of the product.

Sky Jaguar is a great addition to the ColecoVision library of games. The fluid and challenging gameplay is rivaled by few and the graphics and sound give us a good idea of the true capabilities of this game system. The game is highly recommended for any ColecoVision enthusiast and everyone should give it a try. Just be sure to read this issue's CV Tactics for strategy tips and use a controller that allows for quick and accurate CV movements in order to keep up with the game's frenzied pace.

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CV TACTICS

Sky Jaguar



Canyon Scene [Opcode]



Flying Fortress Scene [Opcode]

MISCELLANY

Retrozone



IN PRINT

Digital Press Collector's Guide by Nathan Kozlowski

editor: Joe Santulli



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What makes this game interesting is that you need to be aggressive in order to succeed, because having mostly defensive strategies will often get you trapped and killed. You need to use the entire field to attack the enemy ships. The enemies' bullets flow across the screen and stay around longer than most of the ships. If you stay at the bottom of the screen you'll eventually be overwhelmed by the ships and their bullets. This is a recurring threat the farther you go in the game and you must learn the technique of shooting a group of ships and then weaving up and over the cloud of bullets that always follows. You must use your ship's maneuverability to your benefit, always moving up and down, back and forth.

There are many different adversaries in Sky Jaguar and most have unique strategies to defeat them. The Drinkas attack in two formations, swooping and diving. Stay in the middle and let the swooping Drinkas fly into your fire. Move back and forth against the diving Drinkas so that they'll engage you sooner (the longer they spin down, the more bullets and ships will collect on the screen at once). Always attack the Balas first, the longer they stay around the more bullets they'll pump out. The best way to clear out the Hammer [dumbbell] and Remaz [bottle with wings] ships is to attack them right when they appear from the corners, shooting the ones that reach the middle of the screen as you're alternating sides. With the Trania [cat head] ships, stay in the middle and keep firing even after they turn invisible only moving to the side to dodge the bullets. The Twinbal [double missile] ships are the most difficult and, while not very noble, the best way to get past this adversary is to stay in the top left of corner of the screen as they attack. There you'll be able to quickly destroy the ones that appear in front of you and dodge the bullets of the ships that can't reach you from behind. Finally, the flying fortresses are fairly easy to defeat if you destroy their control towers quickly, before it lets out its bullets and ships.

The folks at Retrozone ("new school tech for old school gamers") have created USB adapters that allow you to use any ColecoVision-compatible controller, including the Super Action controller, on your computer, freeing you from the tyranny of the keyboard. The steering wheel and roller controller are not supported by the adapter, but future projects may address these accessories.

The products fully support WinXP, Win2k, MacOS9, and MacOSX. Unix/Linux, Win98 and WinME may work, but are not officially supported. While a warranty is not offered, all products are tested before delivery and anything broken will be replaced. For more, go to: <http://www.sealiecomputing.com/retrozone/colecovision.html>

The Digital Press Collector's Guide is an extensive database of information pertaining to a number of classic video game consoles from the Odyssey to the NES. The ColecoVision section is 18 pages long with sections covering domestic and international releases, homebrew games, prototypes, non-cartridge items, and rumored products. There are also 6 pages in the appendix devoted to images of ColecoVision cartridges, boxes, and screen shots. The knowledge and research that Digital Press has put into documenting the ColecoVision definitely shows.

All listed products show a dollar value, rarity level, and publisher and many have information on release year, programmer, easter eggs, and the overall rating of game. The pictures are fairly useless (being small in size, in black and white, and at a poor resolution) and would probably not be missed if removed from later editions. If you're a diehard classic videogamer, then this book is a must. If you're Coleco-centric then this book might be a bust for you. The majority of the guide's information on the ColecoVision can be found for free on the internet. You'd probably only find it useful if you're interested in learning more about the other classic video game systems that are out there. For more info, head over to: <http://www.digitpress.com>