

June 16, 2002

HELLO INTELLIFANS!

In this issue of our newsletter: the upcoming **Classic Gaming Expo**, an **Intellivision** developer comes to the big screen, three musical notes, a last-minute warning on upgrading **INTELLIVISION LIVES!**, memories of **Intellivision** job titles, and our monthly trivia contest!



Keith Robinson, David Warhol, Joe King, David Rolfe, Stephen Roney and Mike Minkoff at a previous CGE.

GET READY FOR LAS VEGAS!

The annual **Classic Gaming Expo** is fast approaching! This always-fun event, now in its fifth year, brings together classic videogame fans, collectors, and the pioneers who designed the early games.

This year, the Expo will take place the weekend of **August 10 and 11**, in **downtown Las Vegas**.

You can buy rare video game consoles and cartridges, sit in on Q & A seminars with the developers of your favorite games, stroll through the world's most complete collection of 1970s and 1980s video game systems, play classic arcade games (free!), and compete in high score contests.

Each year, **Intellivision Productions** has a booth where you can stop by, get autographs from the **Blue Sky Rangers**, play unreleased **Intellivision**, **Atari** and **ColecoVision** titles, and preview our latest releases. This year, try out the classic **Intellivision** games on **cellular phones!**

Past years attendees have been able to meet Blue Sky Rangers **John Sohl** (*Astrosmash*), **Don Daglow** (*Utopia*), **David Rolfe** (*Major League Baseball*), **Bill Fisher & Stephen Roney** (*B-17 Bomber*), **Mike Minkoff** (*Snafu*) and many more. Come meet these pioneers before they start dying off from old age!

Word has it that a theme this year will be **Atari's 30th Anniversary**, so we could really use the support of all you **Intellivision** fans out there! Please come on out and let everyone know that the best videogame system of the 1980s is the best retrogame system of today!



The organizers have arranged special room rates at the **Plaza Hotel** in

downtown Las Vegas, site of the Expo, and discounted airfares on several major airlines, making this a fun, inexpensive weekend getaway! Bring the family, visit the show one day, hit the strip the next! Or leave the family home and spend **both** days at the show! Whatever. See you there!

[Make reservations for the Classic Gaming Expo NOW >](#)

[Find links to photos and stories from the Intellivision booth at past Expos >](#)



David Stifel

BLUE SKY RANGER ON SILVER SCREEN

Watch for Intellivision's own **David Stifel** in the new **Steven Spielberg** sci-fi thriller *Minority Report*, opening June 21. What's a video game programmer doing in one of the hottest films of the summer? It's not such a stretch--when **Mattel Electronics** was hiring game designers, creative credentials were as important as technical experience. When he joined Mattel, Shakespearean-trained actor David was already a member of the Screen Actors Guild. He was also an educator, having spent a year in Iran teaching English to the Shah's air

force.

At Mattel, David's first project was putting together the 1983 Intellivision demo cartridge for use in stores. He then designed and programmed the revolutionary *Game Factory* for the **Intellivision Entertainment Computer System (ECS)**. Unfortunately, Mattel sold the rights to Intellivision before *Game Factory* could be released. The new owner, **INTV Corp.**, chose not to support the **ECS**. Game Factory remained on the shelf until it finally debuted on [INTELLIVISION ROCKS](#) in 2001.

In recent years, David has pursued his acting career more aggressively, appearing in many plays throughout the Los Angeles area and guesting on such TV shows as *ER*, *Six Feet Under*, *Family Law*, and *Once and Again*.

Last year, a casting director auditioned David for a role in *Minority Report*. Seeing the videotape of the audition, director **Steven Spielberg** instead wanted David for a different role: a two-person scene with star **Tom Cruise**. David was brought in to play the part without seeing a script; he was given his pages when he arrived for filming. The script turned out to be just a starting point, as Spielberg encouraged David and Cruise to improvise most of the scene.



So what is his role? Well, he can't say--he had to sign a non-disclosure agreement to work on the top-secret film shoot. He will only say that his part is "brief, but memorable." We note, however, that the [International Movie Database](#) lists his credit in the movie as "**Lycon - seller of Black Inhalers.**" Cool.

But David is more than videogames and acting--he's also a musician! His electronic interpretations of classical music--available on three CDs: *Classical Gasses*, *Classical Magic*, and *Classical Wonders*--are popular downloads on the **MP3.com** web site, where they can be heard in their entirety.

[Hear David's classical music performances on MP3.com >](#)

THREE MUSICAL NOTES



NOTE ONE: First, *Astrosmash* was an **Intellivision** game, then an **Atari 2600** game (*Astroblast*), then an **Aquarius** game. More recently, you've been able to play it on **PC, Mac, PlayStation**, and on **cell phones**. So what's next for *Astrosmash*? How about: **Astrosmash--the Band**?

Astrosmash started in 2001 after the breakup of the Los Angeles-based heavy metal band **Tenitus**. Musicians **Dan Parrott** and **Nino Rebelle** had a hard time finding a name for their new band. Explains Dan: "So I started thinking of 80's memorabilia, and it hit me in a flash: '**Intellivision....ASTROSMASH!**' We loved Inty since it's release, so it was perfect to be the world's first **Intellivision** tribute band."

They describe their music as progressive rock with elements of styles from the 60's to the present. They say they are "still in the developmental stages," but you can preview their sound on their web site. Several songs are available for downloading, including "**Astrosmash**," an instrumental composed entirely of sound effects from the original game!

The band hopes to play some LA-area shows by the end of the year. We'll keep you posted.

[Hear Astrosmash \(the band\) on their official web site >](#)



NOTE TWO: Intellivision-fan **Bohus Blahut** wrote to report an **Intellivision** sighting: while thumbing through the records in his local electronics superstore, Bohus came across the album *Designing a Nervous Breakdown* by **The Anniversary**. He had never heard of the band, but the cover sure looked familiar: it's a screenshot from the **Intellivision** game *Microsurgeon*.

We contacted the Lawrence, Kansas-based band. Founding member **Josh Berwanger** explained that "We are all big video game fans (mostly old-school systems) and **Intellivision** was, and in my opinion is still, the best ever. I actually just bought the **Intellivoice** off eBay. So, yeah, we got the cover from possibly one of the hardest games to ever play and/or figure out, *Microsurgeon*. The artwork for that game is amazing--it really reminded us of **Devo** at first, so we automatically fell in love."

Designing a Nervous Breakdown is available for \$14.99 (a buck off retail) on **Amazon.com**, where you can hear samples of all 10 tracks on the CD.

[Order Designing a Nervous Breakdown by The Anniversary from`](#)

[Amazon.com >](#)

[Play *Microsurgeon* on the collection *INTELLIVISION ROCKS* >](#)



Confusium

NOTE THREE: Some news about our latest project: *INTELLIVISION IN HI-FI*. In the **Intellivision booth** at the 2000 **Classic Gaming Expo**, we had a fifteen minute music loop playing entitled "**The Closest Thing to the Real Thing.**" This original piece by electronica artist **Confusium** contained samples from **Intellivoice** games and **Intellivision** commercials. Many show attendees asked if they could get a copy of it.

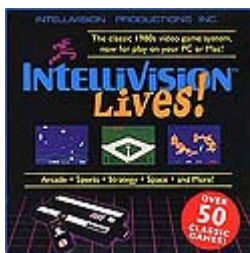
We had the idea of including "**The Closest Thing to the Real Thing**" as an audio track on the CD-ROM collection *INTELLIVISION ROCKS*, which was then in development. That expanded into the idea of adding five audio tracks: 30 minutes of music inspired by **Intellivision**. Unfortunately, as the amount of video clips grew on *INTELLIVISION ROCKS*, the space left over for music dwindled to 10 minutes. Only three music tracks could be included. "**The Closest Thing to the Real Thing**" didn't fit at all.

Everyone was so excited about the music, though, that we decided to produce an all-music CD: *INTELLIVISION IN HI-FI*. The album includes three types of tracks: original music inspired by Intellivision, new arrangements of Intellivision game themes, and actual Intellivision music--including several never-heard themes from unreleased and unfinished games.

The CD is nearing completion--just a couple more artists need to go into the recording studio. We hope that in next month's newsletter we'll have the final play list and the release date. In the meantime, check out "**Compare This!**" and "**Surfing on Thin Ice,**" two tracks on *INTELLIVISION ROCKS* that will also be on *INTELLIVISION IN HI-FI*.

[Hear "Compare This!" and "Surfing on Thin Ice" on MP3.com >](#)

HURRY! TIME IS RUNNING OUT!



Back in March we released *INTELLIVISION LIVES! Version 1.1*. For those of you who already had **Version 1.0**, we offered a **low-cost upgrade for only \$9.99, including shipping and handling**. We warned you that the low-cost upgrade would only be available for a limited time--just over three months.

Well, we know many of you figured three months is forever. No rush. Well surprise! **The offer expires June 30--just two weeks away!** So for those of you who've been putting it off, time to get moving!

Do you need to upgrade? The main difference with **Version 1.1** is that the games run on **Windows 2000** and **XP**, as well as **Windows 95** and **98**. The games on **Version 1.0** only ran on **Windows 95** and **98**. So even if you haven't moved to **Windows XP** yet, if you think someday you might, you should upgrade your version of *INTELLIVISION LIVES!* now while you can save over \$25!

Another plus: **Version 1.1** works with standard DirectX-compatible hand

controllers.

The upgrade is the **Version 1.1** CD-ROM with jewel case--same as if you paid full price!

Don't need the upgrade? Now is still the best time to place an order for other merchandise! The U.S. Postal Service is raising rates on June 30. We use **Priority Mail with Delivery Confirmation** for most domestic orders. The base rate for this class is going up about 10%--so unfortunately we'll be having to raise our shipping & handling rates. **Get your orders in before June 30 to save on postage!**

[Order the upgrade and other merchandise from Retrotopia.com >](#)

INTELLIVISION LORE FROM THE FILES OF THE BLUE SKY RANGERS:



WE CARD HERE

At videogame companies today, you'll find a wide variety of titles: AI Engineer, 3-D Character Animator, Senior Engine Programmer, 2-D Graphic Artist, Level Designer, Worldbuilder, and all sorts of Producers.

But at **Mattel Toys** in 1981, if you were designing **Intellivision** videogames, your title was

Programmer, Applications Software. The programmers back then designed the games, did the artwork, developed the sound effects, and, of course, wrote the assembly-language game code.

Late in 1981, Mattel spun off the handheld and video game division into its own separate company: **Mattel Electronics**. Spinning off a company involves all sorts of paperwork and bureaucracy, but to the programmers it meant one thing above all others: new business cards. Many thought this was a chance to reinvent their job title. At the time, designing videogames was one of the coolest and most mysterious jobs in the country. The programmers wanted a sexy, creative title to match. Passing out business cards that read "Programmer, Applications Software," just didn't cut it.

A number of titles were proposed: **Designer, Intellivision Videogames; Designer/Programmer, Intellivision Game Software; Designer, Videogame Software;** and seemingly endless other permutations on the same few words. Some programmers started spinning out of control, asking to be **Game Design Czar** or **IntelliPope**.



Don Daglow

It was **Manager Don Daglow** who brought people back to reality. No one was more of an optimist about the future of Mattel Electronics than Don, but he warned that this was a brand-new industry and the whole thing could collapse in six months. And if that happened, he pointed out, it would be a lot easier to get a new job in the local aerospace industry as a former "Programmer, Applications Software" than as a former "Designer, Intellivision Videogames."

(While most grudgingly accepted Don's logic, the argument was most likely moot; Mattel never would have changed the programmers' title. The

company wanted the people working on Intellivision low profile, fearing they'd be stolen by **Atari** or **Activision**.)

So the new **Mattel Electronics** business cards were ordered. The title "Programmer, Applications Software" remained. No one really asked the question: why did programmers need business cards in the first place? About the only people the programmers gave them to were their proud parents, to prove they really had a job. The cards were mostly a white-collar perk, shiny objects to distract programmers from the fact they weren't being paid overtime for working a 60-hour week.

As seniority developed over the next couple of years, the advanced titles **Senior Programmer** and **Member of the Technical Staff** were added. When a programmer was promoted, his first act was usually to go to **Executive Secretary Theresa Young** and ask her to order him new business cards. Within a week, a box of 250 cards would arrive. The programmer would then throw out the 235 or so leftover cards from the old box. Trees were sacrificed so that **Mattel Electronics** could keep programmers in cards. Ironically, aside from family members, the biggest recipient of these cards were probably headhunters from **Atari** and **Activision**.



Eventually, Don's warning came to pass. The videogame industry collapsed like a house of you-know-whats, and in a series of layoffs from mid-1983 through January 1984, all of the Mattel Electronics videogame designers lost their jobs. But most had no trouble at all finding new work, thanks to their previous experience: Programmer, Applications Software.

THE INTELLIVISION TRIVIA CONTEST!

A record 170 of you entered last month's trivia contest. The question:

In the early 1980s, **George Plimpton** was celebrity spokesman for **Intellivision**, while M*A*S*H star **Alan Alda** was celebrity spokesman for **Atari**. Twenty years later, they both played characters on the TV show **ER**. What OTHER unique connection links George Plimpton with Alan Alda?

Some people responded that both Plimpton and Alda are native New Yorkers or that both have been on **Conan O'Brien** or a number of other casual connections, but we asked for a **unique** connection. 132 of you gave the correct answer: **Alan Alda portrayed George Plimpton in the 1968 movie Paper Lion, based on Plimpton's book.**

From the 132 correct answers, the random number generator at <http://www.random.org/> selected **Tony Kirmser** of Wilton, Connecticut as the winner of an **Intellivision coffee mug**.

Congratulations, Tony! And thanks to all of you for playing!

Now try **this** question:



In 1983, Mattel Electronics created a new programming job title and

classification just for one person. Who was the programmer, what was the new job title, and why was it created?

[Submit your answer >](#)

We'll pick a random winner from all complete, correct entries received before NOON PDT, FRIDAY, JUNE 21. The winner will receive an official **Intellivision Coffee Mug**--just like we use here in the office for serving up steamin' hot java!

GOOD LUCK!

THE BLUE SKY RANGERS

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