

May 2003

THE BLUE SKY RANGERS STILL HAVE A FEW TRICKS

The major trade show of the video game industry, **The Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3)**, took place May 14 through 16 in Los Angeles. While the **Blue Sky Rangers** are associated with the classic **Intellivision** system, the Expo showed that many of the Rangers are still on the cutting edge of the industry.



Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers

One of the hits of the show was **Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers**. This title from **Electronic Arts** for PlayStation 2, Xbox, Game Cube, and PC, was created by **Stormfront Studios**, the development house founded and headed by **Don Daglow (Utopia)**.

Don was also on the panel of the conference session "**Grow Your Career in the Game Industry.**"

In the **Namco** booth, **David Akers**, who did the **Atari 2600** version of **Star Strike**, was showing off the game he's been working on: **kill.switch. kill.switch** will be out for PlayStation 2 and Xbox later this year.

Also attending the Expo were **Bill Fisher** and **Stephen Roney** from **Quicksilver Software**. **Quicksilver's Master of Orion III** came out earlier this year from **Infogrames**. Just before E3, Infogrames announced it was changing its name to **Atari**. This means that Bill and Steve, who got their video game start with **Intellivision (Space Spartans and B-17 Bomber)**, twenty years later have a game being released by **Atari!**

Other Blue Sky Rangers seen at the Expo: **David Warhol (Thunder Castle, Mind Strike)**, **Eric Del Sesto (Apple II BurgerTime)**, **Brian Dougherty (Swords & Serpents)**, **Keith Robinson (TRON Solar Sailer)**, **Traci Roux (Quality Assurance)**, and **Ray Roux (Systems)**.

The classic work of the Blue Sky Rangers was also on display: the **Intellivision** games

Astrosmash and **Skiing** were available for play on cell phones in the **Boost Mobile** booth.



Traci Roux and David Akers

Even with over 20 years experience each, many of the Blue Sky Rangers feel they are just hitting their stride and plan to be contributing to the video game industry for years to come!

"LOST" ATARI 2600 GAME CARTRIDGES AVAILABLE AGAIN!

At the **Classic Gaming Expo** in 2000, **Intellivision Productions** introduced two "lost" **Atari 2600** cartridges: **Sea Battle** and **Swordfight**. These games had been developed at **Mattel Electronics** in the early 1980s but had never been released. Collectors quickly snapped them up.



Swordfight

Now **AtariAge**, under license from **Intellivision Productions**, has done a new production run of these two cartridges and is selling them exclusively on their web site!



While best known for **Intellivision**, **Mattel Electronics** also released a number of **Atari 2600** cartridges under the **M Network** brand from 1982 until 1984. Most of these were conversions of Intellivision games.

Sea Battle is a conversion of the Intellivision cartridge of the same name. (The Atari 2600 version was also announced in some **M Network** catalogs with the name **High Seas**.) The conversion was done by **Larry Zwick** and **Bruce Pederson**.

Swordfight is of particular interest to collectors since it is a rare **original** game developed at Mattel for the 2600. It was designed and programmed by **Steve Tatsumi**.

While both games were completed, tested, and de-bugged, Mattel didn't release them apparently because each requires two players. By the time the games were ready, the video game market was demanding cartridges that were for one player only or that had a one-player mode.

Still, both games are a lot of fun and belong in the collection of every **Atari 2600** fan. Says **Alex Bilstein** of **AtariAge**:

"We're pleased to partner with **Intellivision Productions** in getting these unreleased titles into the hands of gamers and collectors. It's an honor to play a small part in preserving video game history, but it's even better when you can share it with the public!"



AtariAge uses the same artwork for the cartridges that we used in 2000, but they've improved on the instructions, printing them in color in a layout matching the instructions of the original **M Network** games. Each cartridge with instructions is priced at \$25.00.

If you missed getting these cartridges in 2000, don't let this second chance pass you by!

[Order Sea Battle for the Atari 2600 from AtariAge >](#)

[Order Swordfight for the Atari 2600 from AtariAge >](#)

INTELLIVISION LORE FROM THE FILES OF THE BLUE SKY RANGERS:



SNAKE AHOY!

In the fall of 1983, Blue Sky Ranger **Tom Priestley** (*Number Jumble*) was walking through a shopping mall when he spotted an unusual item in the **Kay-Bee Toy Store**: a fifteen-foot plush green snake clearance-priced at \$29.99. Without a second thought, he snapped it up and brought it back to his cubicle at **Mattel Electronics**.

As Tom walked in with the snake coiled around him, a fellow programmer wondered what on earth had possessed him to buy such a thing.

"Are you kidding?" Tom cried. "A fifteen-foot snake for thirty dollars? That's just two dollars a foot!"

The Intellivision programmers were housed on the second floor of a converted windowless warehouse, the roof supported by a latticework of exposed metal struts. Tom climbed up on his desk and wound the snake through the struts above him.

Since the building was mostly an open sea of cubicles, the snake could be seen from almost anywhere in the programming department.

After the initial surprise, the snake quickly became an Intellivision landmark; a source of pride for the programmers, of curiosity for visitors. But a month or so later, people started wondering: was the snake moving? After a couple of weeks it became obvious - yes, the snake was slowly heading east through the roofing struts.

Everyone suspected Tom of moving the snake forward a little bit each night, but he denied it and no one ever caught him doing it.

At some point, the snake took a right turn and started moving south through the building. Speculation grew rampant. Where was the snake going?

One morning in late November, Vice President **Gabriel Baum** was standing outside his office with a couple of programmers. He suddenly squinted up over the programmers' heads.

"I think that snake is heading toward **me!**" Gabriel exclaimed.

Indeed, day by day, the snake slithered closer to Gabriel's office. Finally, on December 2nd (not-so-coincidentally Gabriel's birthday), the snake arrived, hanging down, its head blocking the door. Tom also showed up at Gabriel's



Tom Priestley (left)
and Gabriel Baum

office that day, axe in hand, offering to help battle the creature.

Tom and Gabriel wrestled the snake down from the roofing struts, then proudly posed for pictures with the vanquished serpent.

Afterward, Tom retired the snake to the playroom of the children's ward at nearby **Torrance Memorial Hospital**. Driving back from the hospital, Tom laughed to a friend, "That's the best value I ever got out of 30 bucks!"

[Play Tom's Number Jumble on Intellivision Lives! or Intellivision Rocks >](#)

ASK THE BLUE SKY RANGERS!

Allen Hauser writes:



I was wondering if there are any recorded documents of high scores from personal or gaming events of any **Intellivision** games? I miss the "old school" stuff really bad. I once scored 345 points against the computer in a **Slam Dunk Basketball** game. Being the geek that I was at the time, I kept the scoring stats, and they are fun to look back on. I know that Kyle Stevens really poured in the 3's, but as we all know the only way to get that many points was by forcing the Technical Fouls. As they say, it all comes down to free throws at this point.

Anyways, just curious if you guys know of any other records?

Steve Ettinger, programmer of **Slam Dunk: Super Pro Basketball**, replies:



Steve Ettinger

*The **Twin Galaxies** web site (<http://www.twingalaxies.com/>) records top scores for thousands of arcade and video games, including most **Intellivision** titles.*

*Top score for **Astrosmash**? 4,201,875. **Night Stalker**: 95,200. **BurgerTime**: 332,900.*

*Currently, though, it appears that they don't have any scores listed for **Slam Dunk: Super Pro Basketball**. Check it out; maybe you could submit **your** score!*

[Play Slam Dunk: Super Pro Basketball on Intellivision Lives! >](#)

[Visit the Twin Galaxies web site >](#)

[Got a question for the Blue Sky Rangers? Write us here >](#)

THE INTELLIVISION TRIVIA CONTEST!

Sixty-eight of you entered last month's trivia contest. The question:

In 1982, an internal Mattel Electronics memo to all programmers instructed them to delete a particular Intellivision game from their



computer systems because too much time was being wasted playing it. What was the game AND what was the date of the memo?



Fifty-two of you had the correct answer: the game was **Biplanes** from the **Triple Action** cartridge and the date of the memo was April 1st. **Biplanes**-addict **Steve Montero** (*Night Stalker*) sheepishly deleted the file before discovering that the memo was an **April Fool's Day** joke. (This information could be found on our web site and on the **Intellivision Lives!** CD-ROM in the **Triple Action** "Fun Facts." By the way, we accepted either "**Biplanes**" or "**Triple Action**" for the answer.)

From the 52 correct answers, the random number generator at <http://www.random.org/> selected **Paul Nurminen** of El Segundo, California as the winner of an **Intellivision coffee mug**.

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

Now try **this** question:



What is the only case where the **Intellivision** cartridge and the **M Network Atari 2600** cartridge with the **same title** are entirely different games?

[Submit your answer >](#)

(If you have trouble following the above link, or if submitting your answer fails, type the URL <http://www.intellivisionlives.com/contest.shtml> into your browser and try again.)

We'll pick a random winner from all complete, correct entries received before NOON PDT, MONDAY, JUNE 9. 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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