THE VIDEO GAME GENERATIONS NEWSLETTER

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Issue #30 – November 29, 2025

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Loading Screen

There was a time when my whole identity was built around being an indie game developer. It was my passion; my obsession, even. Almost every moment of my spare time was spent making games.

This made it tough to have relationships, and mine were often short-lived. When I met and married my wife (now ex-wife) and had kids, that all changed. Well, that and my career (as a programmer, but not in the games industry) just altered my priorities and, perhaps, sapped me of game-making motivation.

In respect to solo game developers like I used to be, this issue features just a few of the people who go it alone – programming, art, music, writing, and of course design – and the games they're known for.

More Than I Can Chew

As I write this, it's the Thanksgiving holiday in the United States. I'm off work all this week. My lofty goal for the VGGN was to research and write about several solo indie developers.

Then, two things happened. First, I started getting drawn into *Silent Hill f* more than I was at first. I got to a good part last night, although based on other people's total play times (which I'm already past), I wonder if I'm nearly at the end of that game. I hear it invites (and even needs) a second play-through, so we'll see how I feel when that happens.

Second, my Analogue 3D arrived. This is the HDMI-equipped Nintendo 64 console that's been in the works for quite a while. I hooked it up and tried out several games from my small library of N64 titles that I never played or at least never finished. Right away, I got addicted to *Shadowgate 64* (finished it and posted my mini-review here), then *Shadows of the Empire* (with my mini-review here), and then I started playing *40 Winks*.

It's a game I already owned for PS1, but the N64 version was done as a Kickstarter I backed a few years ago. I have the standard and limited editions both (plus a bunch of backer goodies), so I decided to open up the standard edition and try it out.

I might try the PS1 version to compare, but this N64 port seems very well done so far. It controls well, although the character seems to slide a bit when stopping, which makes platforming tricky. It's structured from a hub area that leads to a small number of "worlds" that each have their own doors leading to specific "levels". Main areas start out locked.

I found out the hard way that if you lose all your lives inside a level, you have to start the whole level over. I'm not a fan of that aspect.

Anyway, all of this to say I've been doing what I *usually* do when I have extended time off work, which is to waste away the hours with gaming. I miss it. But, I'm also not yet ready to give up on the newsletter, despite the growing realization that there just isn't an audience.

I considered reaching out to some of the developers I wanted to feature this week to see if they'd answer a few question, like a mini-interview. Then I realized it wouldn't be worth their time.

I also worried that it might put some of them in an awkward position, since there's a loud, almost militant dislike for anything (and anybody) using AI in any way, as I do with the weekly logos and intro picture. That leads to a whole explanation and the possibility that they'd not want to willingly take part anyway.

For all those reasons and more, this week's main feature isn't as in-depth or complete as I originally planned. Instead, I'm just going to write briefly about a few solo indie developers that stand out for the games they made, and a little about those games.

In some cases, I may be stretching what it means to be a "solo" developer. Often, there are credits for additional artwork or QA/testing in games, or voice acting, or some other external assistance. My main requirement is just that a single person did the bulk of the work on a game – some combination of the design, artwork, writing, programming, music, and so forth.

While some games get attributed to a single person's vision – Hideo Kojima, David Cage, Josef Fares, Yoko Taro, Sam Lake, Sid Meier, Shigeru Miyamoto – they're more the creative and directorial force, not the "do it all myself" solo developer that I'm focusing on this week.

Going It Alone – Solo Game Developers

From my own experiences, I know there's just something special and exciting about building a new game from the ground up, releasing it to the world, and then seeing what happens.

Sure, my biggest successes weren't all *that* successful, but even today there are people who still register (aka "buy") and play the BBS version of *Lunatix*, or check out my interactive fiction, or stumble on my CoCo games.

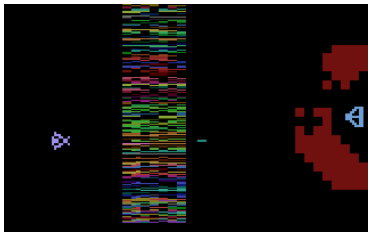
This week, I'm putting a (very small) spotlight on a few solo indie developers who made games that stand out to me, although some of them, I haven't played.

For the purpose of this list, I'm not excluding developers with known problematic views. One of them, for instance, apparently has controversial opinions about gun rights and "stand your ground" laws, while another became a purveyor of conspiracy theories, racist and transphobic rhetoric, and became a bit of a culture warrior after selling his popular sandbox survival crafting game to Microsoft.

These are in no particular order.

Howard Scott Warshaw

When video games were just getting started, it didn't take a team of hundreds to make one. The Atari 2600 games *Yars' Revenge*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, and *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* were made (mostly) but just this one guy.



Fun fact: Although she didn't make it past the first season, Tasha Yar from *Star Trek: The Next Generation* is always who comes to mind whenever *Yars' Revenge* comes up; never mind the apostrophe placement.

Allan Alcorn

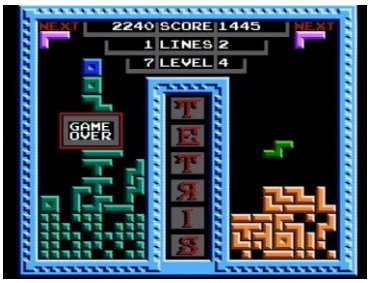
Going even further back to a time when I was just one year old, Atari programmer Allan Alcorn made *Pong*. It wasn't the first video game, but it was still very influential.

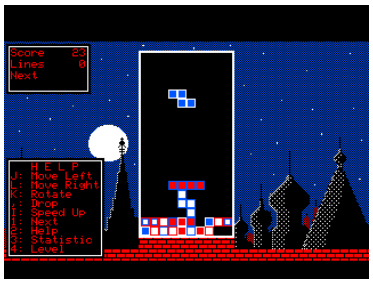
Alexey Pajitnou

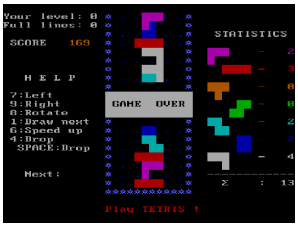
For being so influential and enduring, few solo-developed games surpass *Tetris*. The original version was created by Alexey Pajitnov in Russia in 1984-85. Since then, it's been ported and published on almost every platform ever, both officially and in knock-off form (which The Tetris Company frowns on).

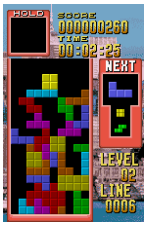
I even made my own versions of it – *Fourtris* (for DOS) and *Fourtris 2* (for Windows 3.1).

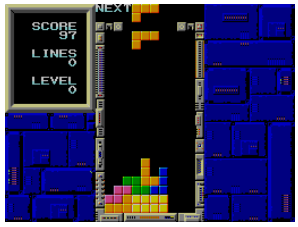
The game also inspired countless derivative puzzle games where you're matching blocks or lining up falling pieces. Below are some screenshots of *Tetris*, although I don't think these can be credited to Pajitnov himself.





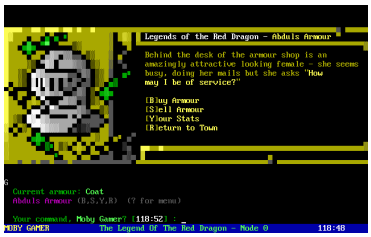






Seth A. Robinson

An innovator you may not be familiar with is Seth Robinson. In the early '90s, he made what might be the most popular BBS door game ever, *Legend of the Red Dragon* (*LORD*). He also released great follow-ups *LORD 2* and *Planets: The Exploration of Space*, but it was that original *LORD* that really took off.



In fact, the turn-based gameplay resonated with me so much that I decided to completely rip it off for my own BBS game, *Lunatix*.

After that, he released a few other games like *Funeral Quest* and *Teenage Lawnmower*. The one that really caught my attention, though, was *Dink Smallwood*, a comedic isometric fantasy RPG.

Amazingly, the game continued to get support over the years, first with an HD version, then with ports for iPhone and Android. It's even available to play for free in a web browser.

I never finished the game, because I was too busy digging into the included creator tools. In fact, I might have been the first person other than Seth himself to release a D-Mod (Dink Add-On Module). I was big into the Dink scene for a while, releasing several new adventures for the wisecracking slacker, including one that I had hoped to release commercially, *Dink's Doppelganger*. I ended up cutting it short and putting it out there for free.

One of the most interesting Dink-related things I ever did was *Dinkanoid*, in which I used the engine to create an *Arkanoid*-like.

Not only is *Dink Smallwood* playable online here (like I mentioned), it also has an option for Add-on Quests that lets you browse, install, and play a huge number of D-Mods, mine included. It works amazingly well. Even as a programmer myself, I marvel at how older games can be made to work in a browser.

Seth also created *Growtopia*, which is now owned and operated by Ubisoft. It's described as a "free-to-play sandbox MMO with almost endless possibilities for world creation, customization, and having fun with your friends." I haven't played it myself (those kinds of games aren't generally for me), but it seems to be a pretty big deal, with the main site reporting there are 71,227 players online even as I write this.

Cosmic Void

I've never played any of his point-and-click adventure games, but I desperately want to. I just need to make time. They look great. I bought *Neon Hearts City* at launch when it was on sale on Steam, and I just sent my $20 to be a backer for *Midnight Saturn*.

His portfolio of games is impressive. I'm going to try to make a real effort in 2026 to play through and report back on some of these.

Vedinad

His game *Megabonk* was nominated for Best Debut Indie Game in the 2025 TGAs, before he withdrew because he had already released other games. Since the name was new, people assumed (justifiably) that *Megabonk* was the debut game for this dev. I think he just wanted to put something out to stand on its own merit, without any attachments to his established work. Been there, done that.

Popular opinion is that he's Dani Dev, which is evidenced by certain similarities and because Vedinad is Dani Dev spelled backwards.

The game got a lot of attention at release as a well-done 3D version of the popular *Vampire Survivors* (although not from the same developer). I haven't played it or any of his other games, but I thought this was an interesting story.

Luca Galante (Poncle)

Speaking of *Vampire Survivors*, this game made waves in 2022 when it was released for a variety of platforms. It looked cheap and goofy to me, yet people on some gaming sites and podcasts kept praising it, so I decided to try it on Xbox GamePass in January 2023.

I certainly wasn't in the "it's a Game of the Year contender" camp, but it *was* fun and really addictive. It's a testament to what one dev can do given the right scope and idea.

LocalThunk

In the same vein, *Balatro* was nominated for Game of the Year in the TGAs of 2024. I never got around to trying it, but my son enjoyed it.

Not much is known about the developer, who prefers to remain anonymous. Wikipedia says he's Candian, and that's about all.

Matthew Green (The Voices Games)

I only recently became acquainted with a few of his games while putting together an article about shovelware for issue #27. Many of them have shown up in the PlayStation digital store for a long time, typically for under a dollar, which is why I assumed it was all shovelware.

Surprisingly, it isn't. Sure, they're quirky and janky, and sure, they're not the kind of hidden gem indies that garner large fanbases and get discussed in the same breath as games with bigger budgets and teams, but they're from somebody who seems to be doing his best to create new and unique gaming experiences.

Eric Barone (ConcernedApe)

I never played this farming life simulator that was inspired by the *Harvest Moon* series, but almost everybody who does seems to love it. The game is called *Stardew Valley*.

According to Wikipedia, it has sold at least 41 million copies as of December last year, making it not just one of the biggest success stories for a solo indie developer, but one of the biggest gaming success stories period.

He's working on a new game called *Haunted Chocolatier*, which seems hotly anticipated by *Stardew Valley* fans. It's tough to follow up on that kind of success, even with a better game, because sometimes the proverbial lightning in a bottle can't be replicated.

Chris Sawyer

Before now, I didn't know Rollercoaster Tycoon was made by one guy. It's not a game I've played, as I'm not normally drawn to sims and management-style games.

Technically, this may be a cheat, since Simon Foster is credited with art and Allister Brimble is credited with music, but as a programmer myself, I put a lot of weight in that aspect of game development (along with design work), which was all Chris.

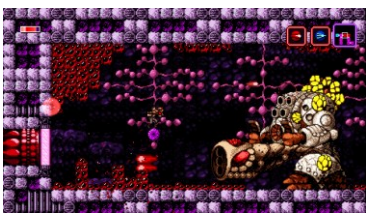
Markus "Notch" Persson

The juggernaut sandbox survival crafting game known as *Minecraft* was originally created by one guy, Markus Persson. Now it's a huge Microsoft-owned money-maker, spawning spin-offs and a movie where apparently kids liked to throw popcorn around (I don't quite get it and haven't seen the movie yet myself).

Tom Happ

Although I haven't played the sequel yet, I really enjoyed *Axiom Verge*, a cool pixel art *Metroid*-inspired game from several years ago.

This was truly a one-man effort, with Tom doing all the art, programming, design, and music for the game. It's incredibly impressive.



Jacob Jazz

He has quite a few games to his credit, but it's the *Baobabs Mausoleum* trilogy that caught my attention (see my mini-reviews back in issue #14). His games all seem to be bizarre and wacky and, in some ways, experimental.

He's based in Madrid, Spain, and his real name (if my research hasn't misled me) is Jacobo Estévez Arias. He publishes his games under the Celery Emblem brand (or studio name, or something). To be honest, I'm not 100% sure he *is* a solo developer, but that's the impression I get from what I've found.

Mattis Folkestad (MachineBoy)

His latest game, *Cascadou*, looks to be in the same vein as *Balatro*; a roguelike deck building card game. It's not the kind of game that typically interests me, but I did enjoy his two prior adventure games.

Milkmaid of the Milky Way is a pixel art point and click adventure where everything rhymes. *Embracelet* is a 3D adventure game where you inherit a magic bracelet that lets you control objects in the environment.

Zeng Xiancheng

He's the one-man Chinese developer behind FYQD-Studio, the maker of the slick first-person action/shooter *Bright Memory Infinite*.

The game packs a lot into its short total play time of two to three hours. The developer took some heat for his apparent unauthorized use of existing art assets, but from what I've seen (and my own experience with the game), that might be a little overblown.

I've included my mini-review of *Bright Memory Infinite* later in this issue.

Daisuke "Pixel" Amaya

I only played a little of *Cave Story*, which made a big splash way back in 2004 near the start of what might be considered the modern age of indie games. Well, that was 21 years ago, so maybe it's the pre-modern era? I guess it garnered the most attention a few years later, when it was ported to other platforms besides just PC.

I should have stuck with it, but it didn't grab me at the start, so I moved on to other games.

Toby Fox

Even though I'm not the world's biggest fan of *Undertale*, it's impossible to deny its cultural impact and the rabid fandom it has. His follow-up episodic game *Deltarune* (which is an anagram of *Undertale*) has also been well-received by those who played it.

This is another possible cheat, given that a few others are credited with playtesting, some illustrations, and some character art, but it's otherwise entirely a game by Toby Fox. He even did all the music for the game, which is widely regarded as fantastic.

Mike Bithell

My understanding is that Bithell Games has grown to a point now where Mike serves as the director and creative lead, but with a talented team of artists and developers doing most of the proverbial heavy lifting.

Aside from the music, though, he was the sole developer of indie hit *Thomas Was Alone*, a puzzle platformer featuring a variety of sentient colorful blocks of different sizes, each with their own personality.

Jason Rohrer

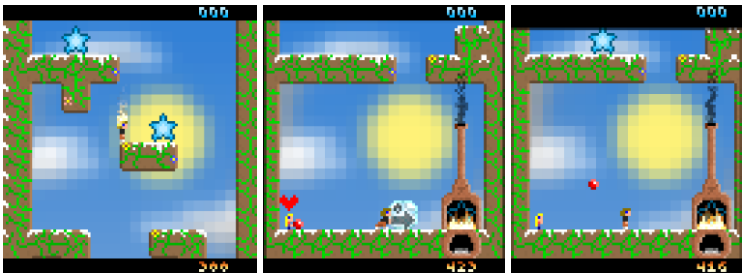
I haven't kept up with his later games, but my first introduction to his work was a very short game called *Gravitation*. I'm going to spoil it, although this might just be my interpretation.

I should also preface this by saying it might be the most emotionally impactful game I've ever played, in part because of how I interpreted its themes and symbolism.

In the game, you can do two things. You can play ball with a kid (which I interpreted as his daughter, with my own oldest still young at the time I played this), or you can venture up into the level to push stars (that become blocks) down into the fireplace to score points.

Put another way, you can spend time with your kid, or you can work. You can't do both at the same time. The screen shrinks as you spend too much time higher up, and it expands again when playing ball with the kid.

The game always ends after a few minutes (which I didn't realize at the time), and eventually the girl is gone and only the ball remains. This hit me like a brick, making me reflect on the balance between family and work. Kids won't be kids forever, and they'll eventually grow up and leave. Someday, without even realizing it's about to happen, that time will be over.



I don't know if all his games have some deeper meaning or symbolism, but I know *Passage* is a metaphor for the timeline of a person's life, played out as a very short game. I'm not sure where to find these games today. I played them both on the Nintendo DSi.

Lucas Pope

He's probably best known for *Papers, Please*, which puts players in the role of an immigration inspector at a border checkpoint. I didn't play it, but I think my oldest daughter did, and I think she enjoyed it.

What I know [him] for is a first-person detective puzzle game with a unique dot matrix art style, called *Return of the Obra Dinn*. Although it's a bit hard to follow at first, it pays off when you realize just how phenomenal a game it is.

Your job is to figure out what happened to the crew and passengers of the ill-fated Obra Dinn, which returns to port with everybody either missing or dead. You explore the ship and use a special pocket watch that lets you hear audio leading up to a person's death, along with a still image of the fateful moment.

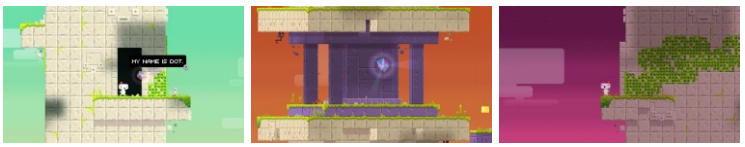
The central puzzle mechanic is incredibly clever, with some solutions being a deduction or process of elimination. This helps pace out a really fascinating story. I can't recommend *Return of the Obra Dinn* highly enough.

Three More Developers

The main reason these developers didn't make the main list is because they seemingly had enough help with their games that it's tough to categorize them as *solo* developers. I could be mistaken, though. At the very least, they each deserve a mention, being the primary creative force behind their games.

Phil Fish

He was featured in *Indie Game: The Movie*, which is a pretty interesting documentary. I quite enjoyed *Fez* when I played it. The whole experience seems to have had a negative impact on him, and from what I gather, he's no longer making games.



Jonathan Blow

Also featured in *Indie Game: The Movie* was the creator of the indie hit with a twist ending, *Braid*, which I first played when it came to Xbox Live Arcade. I think he did most of the work, but with artwork from David Hellman.

He also made *The Witness* (one of the best first-person puzzle games ever), but that for sure wasn't a solo-developed project.

Tonda Ros

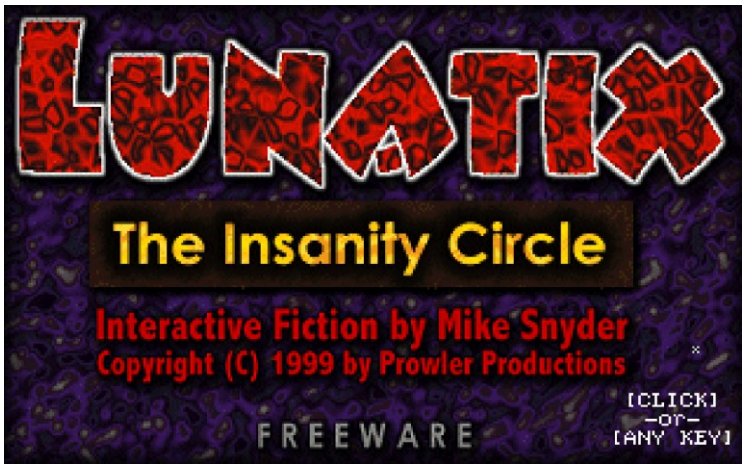
Last but not least is the developer of the inventive first-person puzzle game *Blue Prince*, which came out earlier this year. He had some help, but he worked mostly as a solo developer for around eight years. My mini-review was included back in VGGN [issue #4].

Mike Snyder

It's me! At first, I was just going to mention a few of my old DOS shareware games when wrapping up in *The Final Stage*, but I figured out how to get JS-DOS working to run them in a web browser. So, here's a bonus segment.

Lunatix: The Insanity Circle

https://prowler-pro.com/dosgames/lunatix.html



I wrote this text adventure game back in 1999 for that year's Interactive Fiction competition. It came in 12th place out of 37 entries. It was a time before I started using a platform made specifically for these kinds of games (Hugo), and was instead written using QuickBASIC, which was my specialty back then.

This may be the last game I ever made using QuickBASIC. I was able to include additional libraries to handle mouse support and some simple music other than just bips and boops, which wasn't normally possible out-of-the-box with QB. I built a multi-panel GUI that allowed keyboard tabbing and arrow keys to scroll, or the mouse to select and scroll. The main drawback to mouse control is that you can't click and drag the scrollbars, but you can use the up/down scroll arrows or click in the empty scrollbar space to jump a page.

I even coded it to run all output through a conditional router, which is a fancy way to say there's an option to play it entirely in text mode without any of the graphics or GUI.

Here's a link to play it in text-only mode:
https://prowler-pro.com/dosgames/lunatext.html

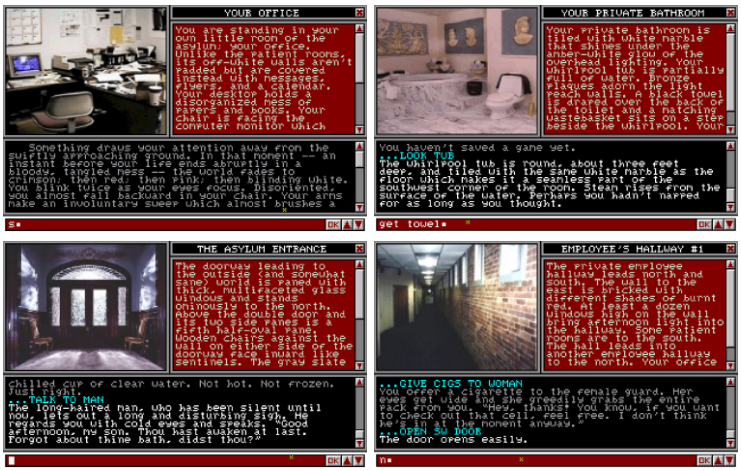
Here's the README text file (instructions):
https://prowler-pro.com/dosgames/lunatix.txt

Here's a ZIP of the game, for playing it offline without a web browser (requires DOSBox):
https://prowler-pro.com/n-e-ware/gamezips/luntic11.zip

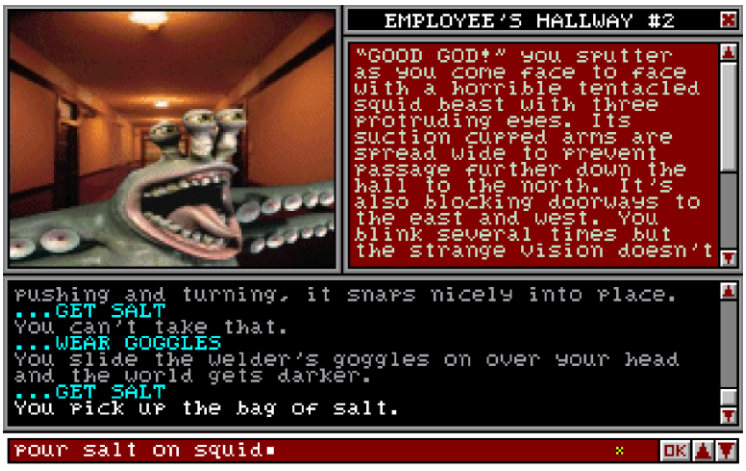
Here's a complete walkthrough for the game:
https://www.sidneymerk.com/lunatix.txt

And again, here's the game in its full graphical UI glory, playable right in your web browser:
https://prowler-pro.com/dosgames/lunatix.html

When launching it, it takes a few seconds for the game to load and begin. It has an option to SAVE your progress, but I think that only works for the current session. It would work while playing it offline (as a download), though.



This was a stand-alone single-player text adventure set in the same "world" as my *Lunatix* BBS and *Lunatix Online*, which were text-based multiplayer RPGs.



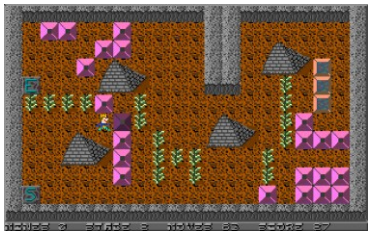
Lexter

https://prowler-pro.com/dosgames/lexter1.html

This is a puzzle game, which, for some reason, I dubbed a "VGA Video/Challenge" game. VGA is the type of graphics mode I used. Maybe we just weren't using the term "puzzle game" back then. Who knows.

Press any key at each loading screen. Press ENTER on the password prompt, since you won't have one the first time. To play, move Lexter around with the four arrow keys. Press SPACE to use a tool in the direction you're facing, such as grappling to the purple titles at the beginning of the first stage. The pink blocks can be moved (when facing one) by pressing SPACE and then an arrow key in the direction (forward or to one side).

Stepping on a hidden mine means Game Over. The total mines adjacent to Lexter are shown as a number in the bottom left, although it all ends up being a bit of trial and error to figure out how to reach the exit before running out of moves. There's even a trick right at the start of the first level to save one move, which is necessary to reach the exit in time.



Here's an instructional text file for the game:
https://prowler-pro.com/dosgames/lexter1.txt

Here's a ZIP file for playing the game offline, which requires the use of DOSBox (separate):
https://prowler-pro.com/n-e-ware/gamezips/lexter1.zip

One of these days, maybe I'll try solving it and create a full walkthrough. As my old DOS games go, this one is still pretty playable.

Lexter II

https://prowler-pro.com/dosgames/lexter2.html

With the sequel to *Lexter*, I was going for more of a quest/adventure feel. There's a little intro cut-scene showing Lexter get abducted by aliens, and a UI that shows images on a PDA once you collect each disk, with the play area itself being in a smaller window.

According to the instructions and the game itself, this is the shareware version. It's possible I recompiled it as the full version, but I haven't tried getting far enough to see if I hit the shareware wall. If it *isn't* the full version, it might be lost to time since I can't find the source code for it.

My starter tip for this one is that you don't start out with the tools from the first game, so if you find and enter a disk to play a puzzle level, you won't be able to do anything (press ESC to exit). Start by walking one screen left (west), two screens down (south), and one screen left again (west). Enter the door of the purple house to collect the power mitt, giving you the ability to grab and move blocks in the puzzle levels.

Here's an instructional text file for the game:
https://prowler-pro.com/dosgames/lexter2.txt

Here's a ZIP file for playing the game offline, which requires the use of DOSBox (separate):
https://prowler-pro.com/n-e-ware/gamezips/lexter2.zip

And again, this game can be played online in a web browser simply by using this link:
https://prowler-pro.com/dosgames/lexter2.html

Fourtris

https://prowler-pro.com/dosgames/fourtris.html

This was my first *Tetris* clone. I made a second one for Windows 3.1 which I could probably get working online, but maybe another time.

I couldn't lower the cycles (game speed) any more than this in JS-DOS, but the game has a built-in delay mode. From the main menu, arrow down to SET SPEED, press ENTER, and then type a number up to 50 and press ENTER. I find that 25 seems to work well.

It doesn't have an instant-drop key, but if you hold CTRL or ALT, blocks fall faster. I also didn't add a reverse rotation key, which would have helped at faster speeds or higher levels.

Here's an instructional text file for the game:
https://prowler-pro.com/dosgames/fourtris.txt

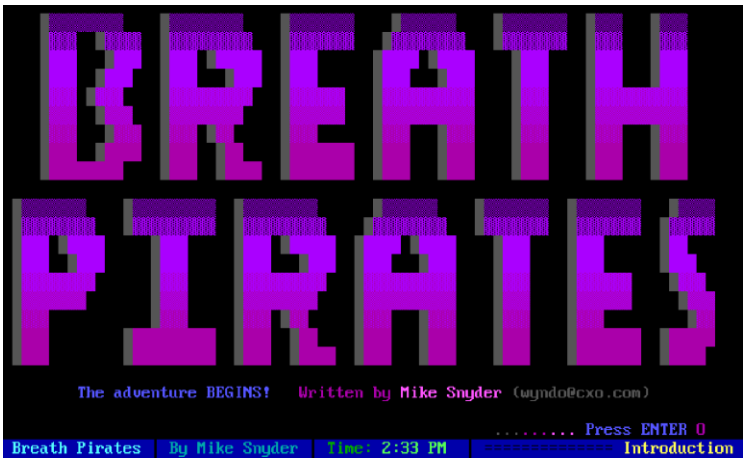
Here's the DOS game in a ZIP file:
https://prowler-pro.com/n-e-ware/gamezips/fourtris.zip

Reading back through those instructions, I got a kick out of this silly sentence from the end of the ADVICE section. Yes, I actually said this:

> "The best advice I can give is not to get frustrated if FourTris plays a little different from your traditional Tetris at first -- when you master it, FourTris will seem superior."

Breath Pirates

https://prowler-pro.com/dosgames/breath.html



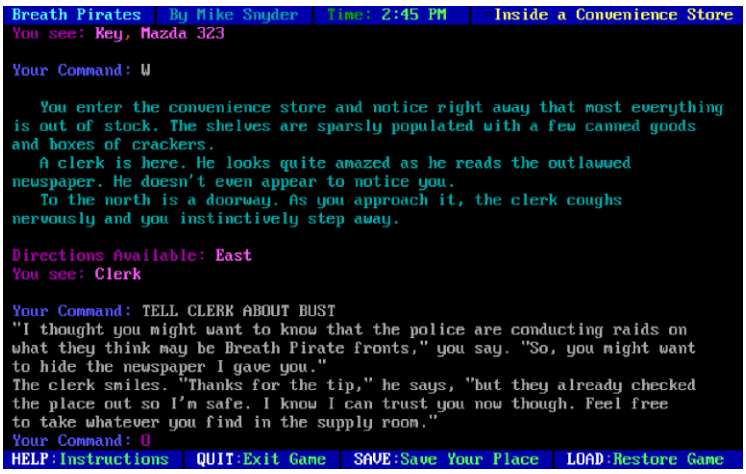
I had planned for this to be an intro to a text adventure trilogy called *The Oxygen Wars*, which didn't happen.

Here's an instructional text file for the game:
https://prowler-pro.com/dosgames/breath.txt

Here's a ZIP file for playing the game offline, which requires the use of DOSBox (separate):
https://prowler-pro.com/n-e-ware/gamezips/breath12.zip

Here's the solution/walkthrough for the game:
https://mirror.ifarchive.org/if-archive/solutions/breath12.sol

And again, this game can be played online in a web browser simply by using this link:
https://prowler-pro.com/dosgames/breath.html

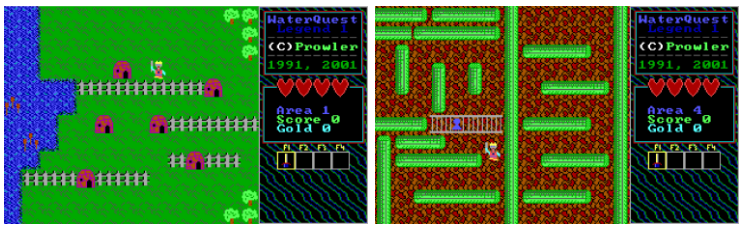


The parser is custom and crude, so it's a bit tougher than more modern text adventures.

WaterQuest Legend 1 – Journey to LifeLake

https://prowler-pro.com/dosgames/water.html

It was possible to write a QuickBASIC program that was too big to compile as an executable. That's what happened with *WaterQuest*, and so the only way I could get it to work is by including the QB development executable itself, and then loading the game into it.



I don't think I ever marketed this one, for that reason. If I remember right, it's a pretty big game with a lot to explore. It's slow to load when first launching, and screen transitions are a bit slow, but speeding it up in JS-DOS means the enemies move faster and it's hard to control/stop the little guy, so it's not really ideal to speed it up.

Press an arrow key to start moving, and again to stop moving. SPACE bar shoots a fireball.

For some reason, I included two different instructional files with the game, with the first being updated info ten years after I made the game, and the second being the original info:
https://prowler-pro.com/dosgames/water1a.txt
https://prowler-pro.com/dosgames/water1b.txt

Here's a ZIP file for playing the game offline, which requires the use of DOSBox and QB (or QBASIC) which are not included in the zip file:
https://prowler-pro.com/n-e-ware/gamezips/water1.zip

Notes

https://prowler-pro.com/dosgames/notes.html

I don't know if I ever mentioned it in this newsletter, but I was a musician in high school and college. Well, more accurately, I played an instrument – originally the baritone, but later the tuba (and the sousaphone in marching band). My oldest daughter takes after me. She's a music major in her third year of college, specializing in trumpet performance. She's really great at it, too.

Because of my background in music, I was able to "compose" (to an extent) for my games. In the case of *Notes*, I envisioned a puzzle game all about filling up measures of different time signatures with music notes. It's a unique concept for a game, although I don't know that it's actually *fun*.

It doesn't do anything with rhythm or pitch or any actual melody construction. Rather, it's just a matter of knowing the beats for each note and fitting them into a measure where they fit. It's just simple math.

The presentation is cool, though. A pipe on the left animates to spit out a note, which floats across the screen before colliding with a spike, in which case you lose a note (life). You can cheese it, sometimes, by just spamming arrows keys and the SPACE bar to move the highlight around until you find a spot it fits.

Here's an instructional text file for the game:
https://prowler-pro.com/dosgames/notes.txt

Here's a ZIP file for playing the game offline:
https://prowler-pro.com/n-e-ware/gamezips/notes.zip

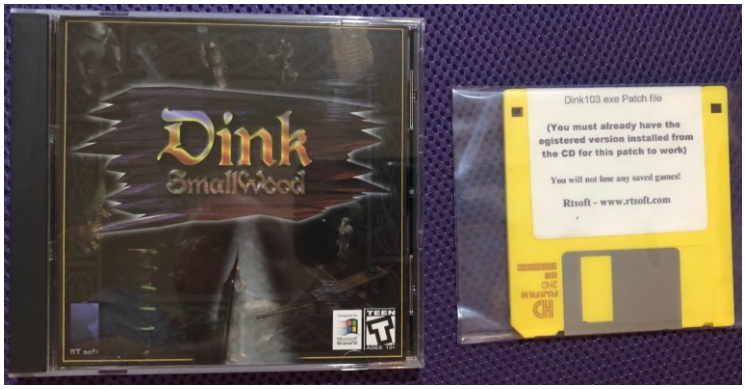
Collection Inspection – Solo Developers

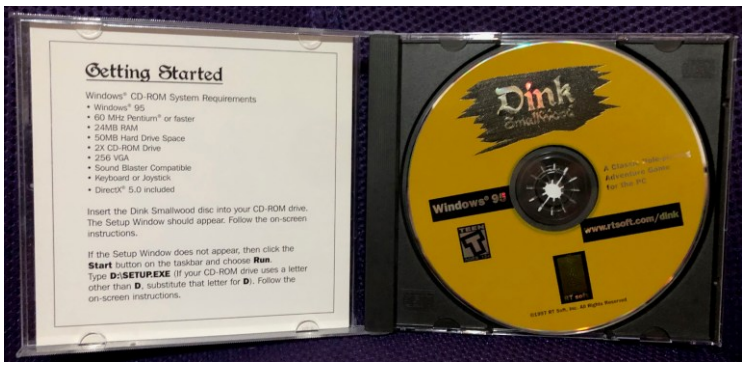
This may not be the most exciting edition of *Collection Inspection*, because everything I'm showing is still factory sealed (except for *Dink*), and I intend to keep them that way.

A few other games in my collection are from solo developers too, but I'm keeping it to just one page this week. I couldn't find very many, actually. They're usually released digital-only.

Dink Smallwood

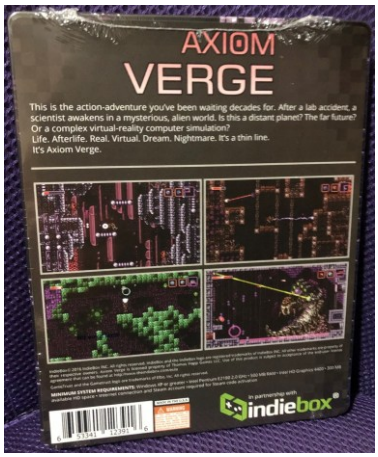
Platform: Windows PC / **Edition:** Standard
Comments: There isn't much reason to own the disc, given that the later HD version is freely available, but it's just *cool* to have this piece of history in my collection. I even have the version 1.03 patch disk.





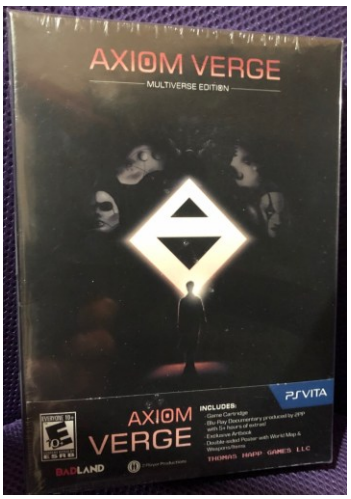
Axiom Verge

Platform: Windows PC / **Edition:** Steelbook
Comments: This was from a short-lived collaboration between GameStop and IndieBox. I have all 10 games in the series, which also includes *Thomas Was Alone*, the solo-developed Mike Bithell game.



Axiom Verge + Undertale

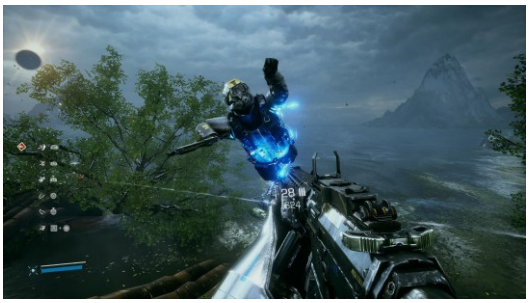
Platform: Vita + PS4 / **Edition:** Collector's Edition
Comments: Two different games – the Vita Multiverse Edition of *Axiom Verge*, and a big box of *Undertale*.

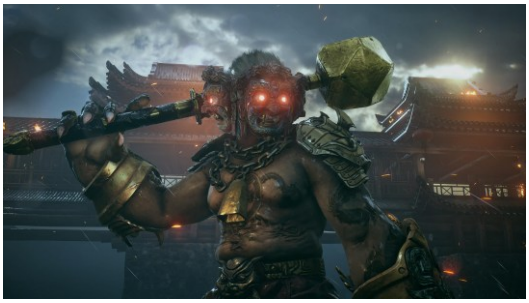


Cave Story 3D

Platform: Nintendo 3DS / **Edition:** Standard
Comments: That cover art is a 3D hologram too.

Mini-Review: Bright Memory Infinite





Despite the word "infinite" in the title, it took me a little under three hours to complete on Normal mode; and that's not even rushing.

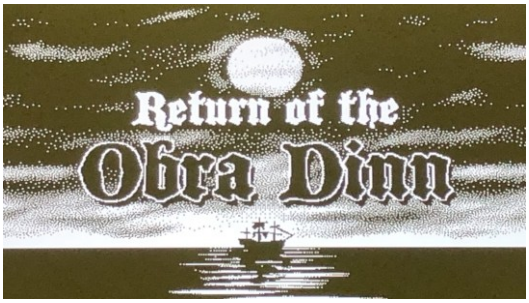
In a way, that's sort of a selling point though. You get almost everything you'd expect from this kind of first-person shooter: fast, smooth gameplay, variety in the levels (mostly shooting, but one with stealth, one with driving, one with grappling, one with a big cool set piece), an interesting story (even if I didn't entirely follow it), several weapons, a fast melee attack, blocking and countering, some wall-running, a telekinetic force power, and lots of ability and gun upgrades to unlock.

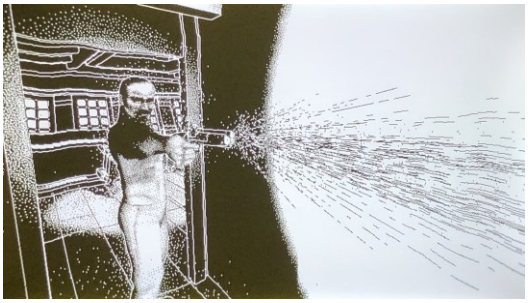
Also, it was made by JUST ONE GUY. It's super impressive, especially in that context.

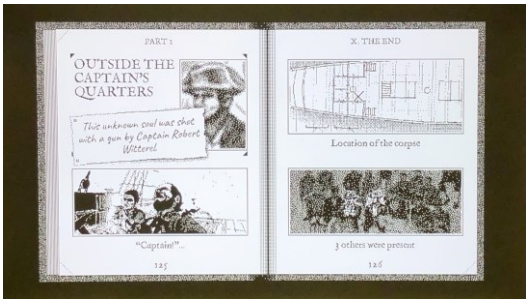
Very short, but very re-playable. Great fun in a small package.

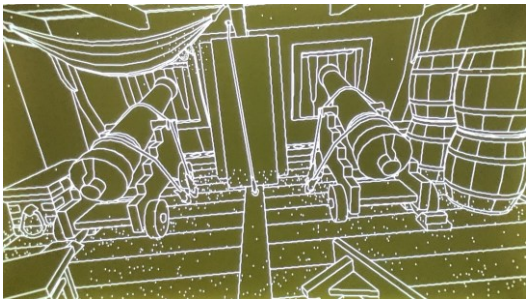
Played on console: PS5.
Originally posted: 05/25/2023.

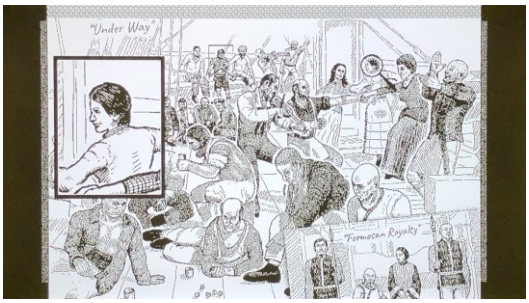
Mini-Review: Return of the Obra Dinn

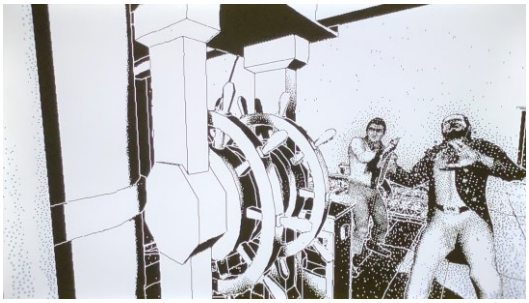


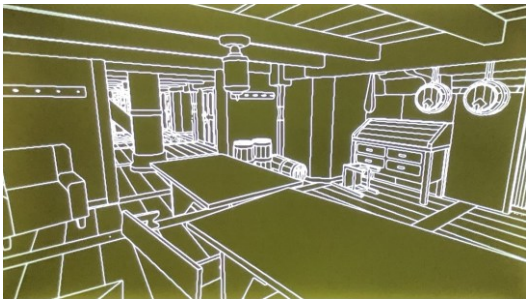


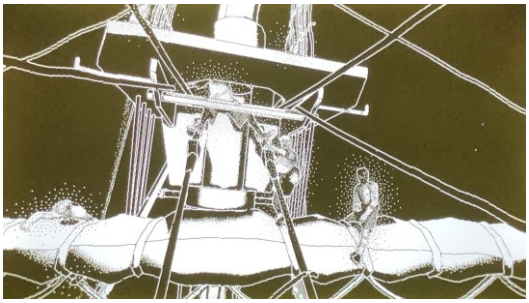


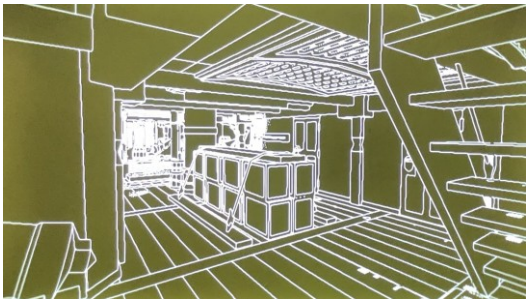


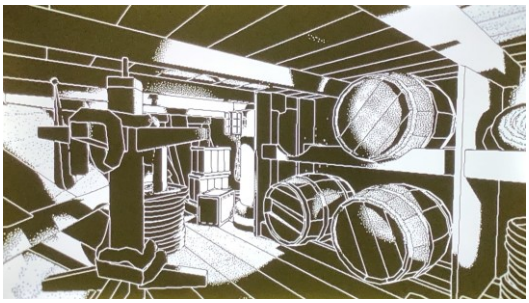












I stayed up entirely too late this weekend to finish playing this game. I've heard only great things about it (maybe even too much – you don't want this game spoiled for you).

Even with all the hype, I was shocked at how great it is. It's a bit confusing at first, even with tutorials.

Once I got over the initial hump and understood the mechanics, I couldn't stop. It's a first-person adventure puzzle mystery game with monochrome graphics. You know those novelty modes in games like *Uncharted 4*? It's like that. It works, though.

The game offers plenty of surprises story-wise as you piece together events from the ill-fated ship the Obra Dinn in non-linear flashbacks.

Clues can be fragmented across multiple scenes and require logic and deduction.

It's sooooo good.

Don't sleep on this one.

Played on console: Switch.
Originally posted: 10/26/2020.

The Final Stage

Oops, I Did It Again

Somehow, I overlooked the fact that I had already included my mini-review of *Tiny Tina's Assault on Dragon Keep* in issue #9 when I included it again in last week's issue #29.

I've tried to avoid that, in part because I sometimes make small changes to fix minor mistakes, expand on abbreviated thoughts I used at the time to fit into Twitter-sized posts, or to add additional context. Also, I'd rather not just re-use content, because I want each issue to be entirely new.

At some point, that may need to change, or else I'll need to scale back my mini-reviews to just the new games I've played. I will have exhausted every one from my back catalog. In fact, several of the games I mention in this week's main feature about solo developers would have been perfect for this issue, if I hadn't already used them in prior issues.

==========

That Isn't Even All of Them

I didn't include two of my DOS-based games when writing about mine in this issue.

The first is *Spore*, which is a very simplistic text adventure mixed with the brick-busting arcade gameplay of *Breakout*. It's an unlikely combination, and it's not a very good game.

The second is *Mystic Force*, another text adventure (with simple ANSI illustrations that lack detail). I think it has a game-breaking bug that prevents obtaining some necessary inventory item. I'm not sure where the source code is, so I couldn't fix it even if I wanted to.

Then, there are three games for Windows 3.1 and one for newer Windows I didn't include. I guess that gives me something to write about in a future issue. They can all be found here.

Recent Events

For anybody who noticed, yes, I skipped the news again this week. I haven't been making much of a *news*letter lately, have I? There just wasn't anything that interested me enough to include, and I decided not to revisit the rest of that Xbox Partner Showcase from last week.

==========

Next Week

Since my Analogue 3D arrived this week, I've been on a Nintendo 64 game spree. I don't plan to add to my collection (although I may), but there are several games I always wanted to play or go back to. This is probably a mood that will burn out soon as I get the urge to get back to my newer backlog games, but while it lasts, I should probably write about it.

For next week, I may feature my thoughts and opinions about the new Analogue 3D and the N64 in general. I could include at least two recent N64 game mini-reviews, some of mine in *Collection Inspection* (all are in their boxes and complete), and write about a few other of the N64 games I played a long, long time ago.

End Credits

The VGGN controller logo with multiple "X" buttons and some occasional other artwork was made using https://openart.ai.

The title font *Closet Dwellers* and the section header font *Shake Your Plums* are licensed from https://chequered.ink/.

Screenshots in this week's main feature about solo indie game developers come from various places on the internet. Rather than link them out of context here or add captions, I've simply added source links directly to each one, making them clickable.

Images sourced from elsewhere on the internet are sometimes credited and/or linked in captions that appear on or below them.

Images of the physical games in the "Collection Inspection" feature are photos I took of games in my own collection and weren't sourced from the internet.

Screenshots used in my video game mini-reviews and some screenshots used in other articles or features that weren't already attributed to a different source were captured by me in-game and are used here in what I believe is "fair use".

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