

# *Inventing An Industry: The Atari Games Legacy*

On June 27, 1972, two former Ampex Corp. engineers filed papers with the State of California to incorporate a new computer game design company. Their existing name, "Syzygy", was already taken by another corporation. So the partners picked a word used in the Japanese game of *Go* they liked the sound of.

The word was (and is) "Atari". The company, Atari, Inc., not only went on to popularize a new class of amusement device within the coin-op industry...they ultimately gave the world a whole new way to have fun outside the house, and even inside, on games played across the "canvas" of a television screen.

One of Atari's two founders, Ted Dabney, left the company early on. But the remaining one, Nolan Bushnell, stayed to sow and water seeds that would take the company rather quickly from a Santa Clara "garage" to the leadership position of a multi-billion dollar entertainment industry. As Steven L. Kent writes in *Electronic Nation*, in its first decade, Atari was "the fastest growing company in the history of the United States."

Nolan Bushnell is routinely called the "father of the video game" for "video games" were what the industry, the players and the press called these machines that Atari pioneered. But Bushnell did not "invent" computer games (some students, like Steve Russell at MIT, had been fooling with the concept ten years before Atari even opened for business).

Neither was *Pong*, Atari's inaugural machine that put video amusement on the map forever, the first device to play ping pong or tennis on a TV tube (that was introduced on a Magnavox home game called *Odyssey*, developed under the guidance of engineer Ralph Baer).

What Bushnell and his original teammates like Al Alcorn actually did was "invent" an industry...first by designing and manufacturing affordable coin-op "computer games" using video monitors as playfields and then by bringing a less exotic version of it to the homeowner via attachments to sets in living rooms. Bushnell's single biggest technical achievement, in the view of some, was in taking the totally implausible idea of marketing games played on bulky, costly, lab computers and making it practical by use of components that were far less expensive by comparison. He made video practical to build, buy and play and thereby, he made it universal.

One of Bushnell's earliest questions about this video game "toy" he held was "what else can we do on it besides ping pong or hockey?" In the quarter century since he asked that, thousands of games (ranging from the mundane to the brilliant) have answered it... all the while pushing technical standards higher and higher.

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*Nolan Bushnell (left) was a visionary back in the early 70's, and he's still one today. While many incorrectly credit him with "inventing" Pong, it is safe to say, however, that he actually invented an entire industry.*



*Paddle Battle* (some believe they actually built more than Atari did itself).

It's important to state that a "copy" in those days didn't have the sinister ring of the counterfeit in the more mature video game business in years to come. A sure mark of a hit was when another factory did the same thing (Valley's *Bumper Pool* table was copied by over a half dozen competitors back in the mid-1950s, for example).

The old Chicago Dynamic Industries (ChiCoin) got into the act in April of 1973 with *TV Ping Pong*, as did a small Cherry Hill, NJ company called Amutronics with a game of that same name. Williams (the owner of Atari today) came along with *Paddle Ball* in May, PMC (Philadelphia) with *TV Table Tennis* in July and eventually Nutting itself with a color "Pong" called *Wimbledon*.

Others that made a TV paddle game included Brunswick, U.S. Billiards and Mirco (of Phoenix). It was absolutely open season. Bushnell, the visible "father of it all," was interviewed by *Business Week* that July, quoting some impressive trade statistics. When the smoke cleared, something approaching 100,000 "Pong-styled" games had been built and sold.

Most curiously, Magnavox got hot with Atari for "copying" its *Odyssey*. But rather than go into costly litigation, Atari settled and a "workable" figure was paid to Magnavox (wrote Kent).

Atari finally got its patent on Feb. 19, 1974 when Patent No. 3793483 was granted "on the circuitry that covers an efficient method of generating motion of an object on video display."

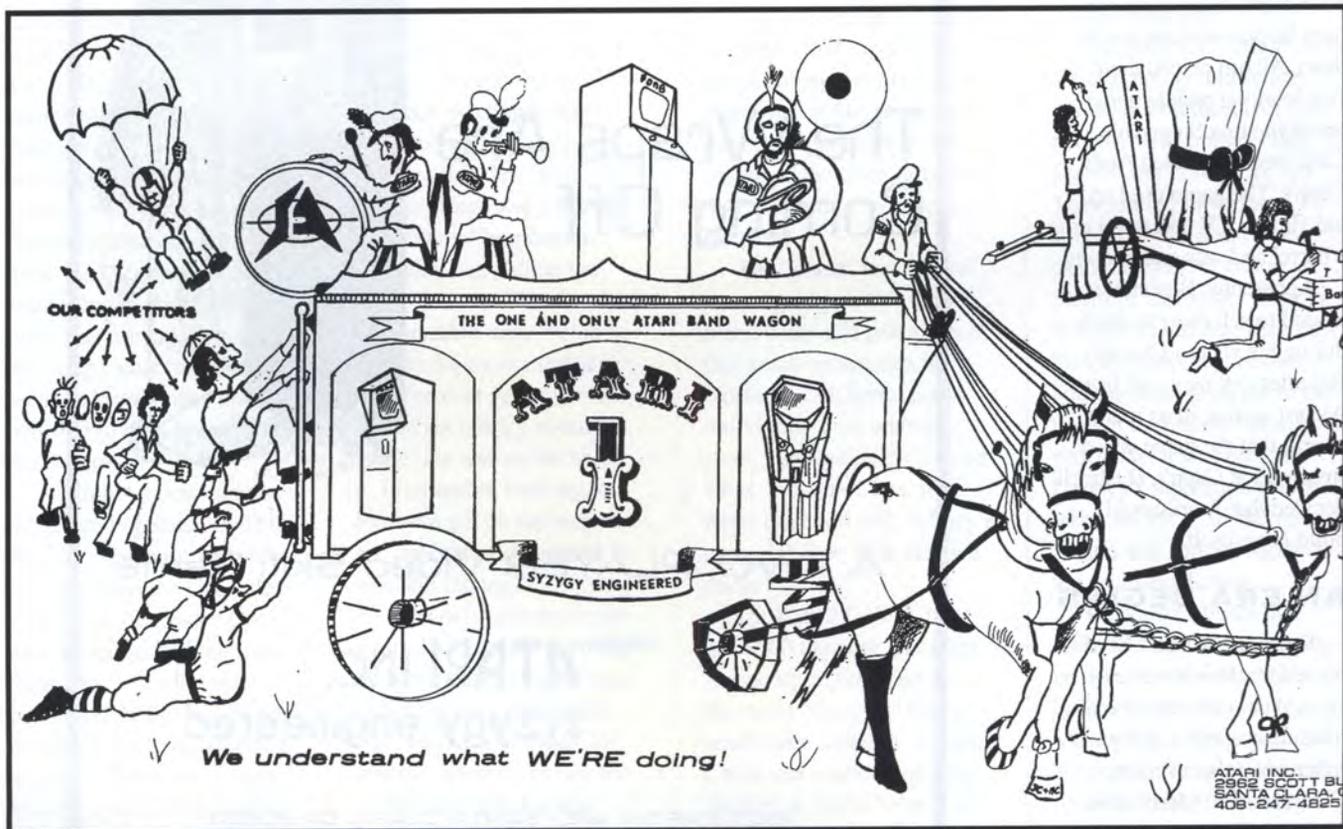
Throughout 1973, the



One of Atari's earliest distributors was C.A. Robinson & Co. of Los Angeles. Shown outside their old showroom on W. Pico Blvd. (from left): Nolan Bushnell, his original sales manager Pat Karns and C.A.'s legendary chief Al (Mr. B) Bettelman. Snappy dressers, one and all.

company grew. Dabney left, taking the route operation, while a fellow from the electronic components business

named Pat Karns came aboard as Atari's colorful national sales manager. He interfaced with distributors in



This primitive but eye-catching ad ran in the May 19, 1973 *Cash Box* and got Atari's message out that they were the originators of TV paddle games, while inferring that the copiers didn't know what they were doing. The weird artwork on the drum on the top/left of the bandwagon shows one of Atari's earlier logotypes. Also in those days, the horse's expression would be called an "ipana smile!"

the field and played sidekick to Bushnell at trade functions (both stood well over six feet in height).

Karns and Bushnell would eventually suffer a falling out and he'd be replaced by Gene Lipkin who joined Atari in 1974 after a sales stint at Allied Leisure. (Lipkin originally was hired to run Atari's remaining arcade operation.)

Atari's second game, not surprisingly, was themed on a subject Bushnell was familiar with. Called *Space Race*, it bowed in July 1973 and was a 2-player. Their first 4-player called *Pong Doubles* came in September and another Alcorn-designed (maze) game called *Gotcha* was released in October.

As Atari blossomed, Bushnell surrounded himself with qualified people he sometimes knew on a personal level. Ron Gordon came aboard early on to set up international sales (and serve very briefly as president). Others stayed lots longer, like engineer Steve Bristow, financial officer Bill White, manufacturing chief



Atari very briefly maintained a manufacturing plant in Japan in the mid-1970's but eventually sold it to Namco founder Masaya Nakamura. Shown there in Oct. 1975 (from left) Bushnell, designer Al Alcorn, export sales chief Ron Gordon, Nakamura and his friend and employee Hideyuki Nakajima (who would one day become Atari's president).

Gil Williams and Bushnell neighbor (and former IBM'er) Joe Keenan.

For while Atari was moving its principle manufacturing that June to a "real" factory at 14600 Winchester Blvd. in Los Gatos, Keenan was cooking up "his own" video game company in Santa Clara. He'd brought Kee Games' first piece called *Elimination* to market later

in 1973 (Bushnell and Keenan originally pretended to be competitive rivals until it was finally admitted that Kee Games had been owned by Atari).

*Cash Box* magazine ran an operator poll at the end of 1973 showing "TV ping pong games" out-earning pool tables on location. Of course, there was more than ping pong being played by

then, however. Apart from Atari's different games, competitors were putting hockey and soccer on their screens.

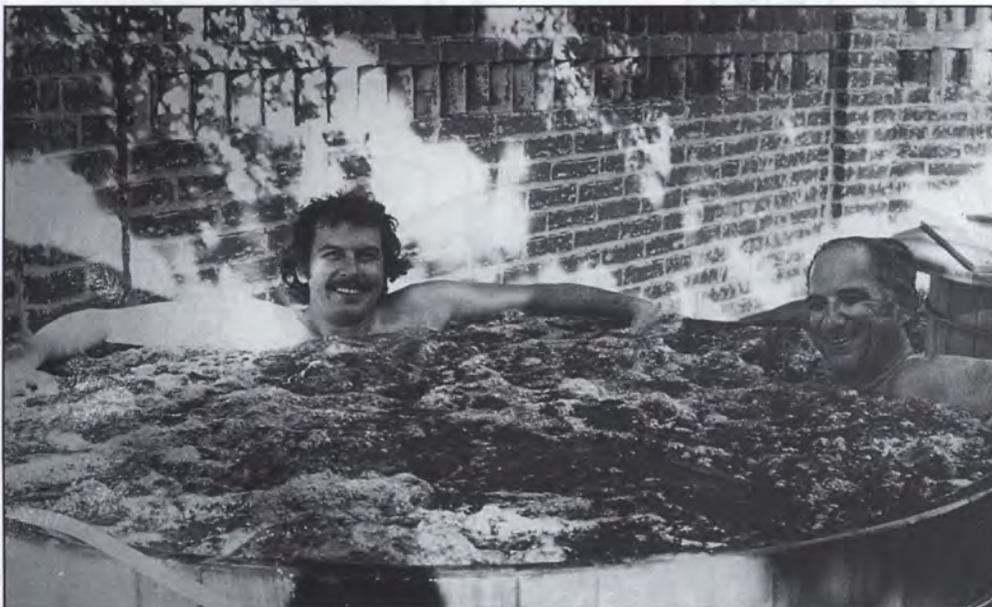
Atari itself charged into 1974 with *Super Pong*, *Rebound*, *Spike* (volleyball) and *Quadrapong* and bowed their very first of many video driving games that March. Called *Gran Track 10*, it had a shift handle, a gas pedal on the bottom of the cabinet and nifty driving sounds.

Joe Ash of Active Distributing, one of Atari's early dealers out of Philadelphia, reported that the game could do between \$60 and \$80 in a single day at the right location. Apparently one of the "rightest" locations were out at Funland in Ontario, Calif. which supposedly did \$100 a day with this video driver!

By mid-1974, Atari was in business just about two years and was operating a couple of arcades, a new route, had designed and built a dozen games, ran a nice factory in Los Gatos (where the famed barefoot hippies who smoked weird cigarettes roamed), did around a third of their sales to foreign buyers, licensed some Europeans to build their products and even opened a game plant in Japan.

They also started ventures in Canada and out of Honolulu in the operating arena. They seemed to have released a game a month, on average, in 1974, closing the year with *Tank*. Bushnell (chairman) brought in a new president named Dr. John Wakefield for a short time, finally picking a more lasting president (Joe Keenan) that December.

Bushnell sold his Japanese plant to Masaya Nakamura in 1975. This man Nakamura, founder of a game maker called Namco, would go on to play a huge



Joe Robbins, then Empire Distributing's president out of Chicago, once tried out the laid-back California scene with Nolan in the hot tub where the Atari founder dreamed up some of his business ideas. Joe, who became one of Atari's presidents years later, looked like he was dreaming of hopping out and drying off.

role in the future of Bushnell's company.

Atari put out a dozen game titles in 1975, most notably the *Indy 800* 8-station driver that sported a canopy and could be played from all four sides. The company moved its principle manufacturing once again, this time to a 65,000 sq. ft. facility at 2175 Martin Ave. back in Santa Clara (headquarters were now set up in Los Gatos).

They also maintained a "think tank" out at the California/ Nevada border town of Grass Valley (where a bunch of Atari videos were conceived in a "hot tub" environment). They held service seminars on their machines at dealerships to teach operators how to fix the game they'd dreamed up. Fred McCord, Bill Arkush, Bruce Bennett, Bernie Barranger and Don Smith were early factory techs industry old-timers may remember working with.

## HOME VIDEO BOWS

One of the concepts mulled over at Grass Valley and elsewhere in the now spread-out Atari, Inc. was a way to play *Pong* on home TV sets. The task was once again put to Al Alcorn to design and the company was

barely three years old when the home version was brought to market...courtesy of the Sears chain. *Home Pong* was successful...more successful than the old *Odyssey*.

The tale of Atari and Sears' first formal business meeting has been told to death. But for those who've never heard or read about it, it's worth telling again. Remember that Atari was laid-back in the California mode and hardly "buttoned down" like businessmen elsewhere in the country. Simply put, Atarians worked hard and played hard too.

The Sears people reportedly showed up at Atari for their meeting all decked out in suits and ties, while the Atarians (as they sometimes called themselves) greeted them in t-shirts and jeans. Both sides were uncomfortable. After doing their business, they agreed to meet for dinner that evening. The Sears group came in jeans, the Atari boys in suits and ties they either took out of mothballs or had to go out and buy.

The windup was that home video was launched. So in 1976, armed with the multi-million dollar success of their coin-op line and the additional money coming in from *Home Pong* and the



With the WCI buyout pending, Atari executives (plus mascot Chuck E. Cheese) broke ground at the site of their new Moffett Park (Sunnyvale) HQ in the spring of '76. From left: Bushnell, Gil Williams (manufacturing), Bill White (finance), Gene Lipkin (sales), Joe Keenan (prexy) and Steve Bristow (engineering). Note the home game cartons on display along with the *Stunt Cycle* upright motorcycle video.

bright future looming there, Atari decided to move yet again, only this time into a whole "campus" of new buildings in Sunnyvale's Moffett (industrial) Park. All of this had caught the attention of another entertainment company called Warner Communications. More on this further along.

Atari brought another dozen videos to the coin-op market in the bicentennial year of 1976, as well as its very first wide-body pinball machine which they named *Atarians* after themselves. This was the first of four flipper games, plus the giant *Hercules*, they'd build before exiting an arm of the amusement machine business many felt was better left to the lads and ladies in Chicago.

## A HOT YEAR

Video games posed a different story, for the "spirit of '76" was definitely upon Atari's designers. Among the winners popped that banner year were *Night Driver*, *Le-*

*Mans*, *Sprint 2* and the killer called *Breakout* (the latter principally designed by Steve Wozniak and Steve Jobs of Apple Computer fame).

*RePlay Magazine* wasn't publishing popularity charts at that time, but one of its periodic arcade operator polls had Atari's *Tank* in the top slot (that same "chart" had Midway's hit *Gun Fight* at No. 3; indeed, Midway would be Atari's chief rival throughout much of its career).

## THE WARNER BUYOUT

The price for Atari, Inc. was reportedly settled at \$28 million when Warner Communications, Inc. (WCI) satisfactorily concluded the purchase of the four-year-old video game company in the summer of 1976. Come October, their new "Cinderella subsidiary" threw a gala grand opening party at the new Moffett Park headquarters. One of the more visible figures at that affair was

## Thanks Atari

Remembering ...

...great pranks, practical jokes, spectacular events and a lot of fun!

Unorthodox methods that bore the best results!

Wonderful lasting friendships and a successful and creative organization.... 25 years later.

Thanks for being a significant part of my success as well...

*Carol Kantor*



WCI's executive VP Manny Gerard...the Warner kingpin chiefly responsible for the acquisition. He said both coin and consumer divisions were important factors in his decision.

"We didn't buy Atari for its home products nor strictly for its coin games. We bought the totality," he stated at the time. "We acquired a company that is a leader in an industry which itself has only scratched the surface of its ultimate potential," he added prophetically. Considering that Atari's selectable home system, the *Model 2600* was coming in a year, Gerard was certainly "buying futures."

Besides Bushnell, several other Atari "oldtimers" who owned company stock benefitted nicely from the sale, including Keenan, Alcorn, Bristow, White and Lipkin. Bushnell bought the old Fol-

ger Mansion in Woodside as a "personal reward," a place to bring up his children (he'd marry his present wife Nancy in 1977) and as a venue for some future distributor gatherings.

**PINBALL BOOM**

The solid-state technical revolution which began with trivia games and videos now made a dramatic impact on the industry's pinball segment...specifically, the 1976-1977-1978 market window. An enormous rush of operator cash came into the national distributor network to buy the new electronic flipper games (mostly Bally's) because, for several real and imagined reasons, the nation's players liked them lots better than the old electromechanical games and said so very loudly with the coins they dumped into the cash box.



Three beards at AMOA. Atari's Frank Ballouz (1) and Gene Lipkin flank the late grand old man of the New York City distributing business Al Simon at a Chicago show. Lipkin had brought Ballouz into the business after they'd become personal friends down in Florida.

Gene Lipkin, now assisted in Atari sales by his old Florida buddy Frank Ballouz, tried real hard to carve off a generous slice of the electronic pinball pie for the California company. For example, they set up a then-unusual regional sales team to score dealer orders for both pins and videos (13 video titles came out in 1977, by the way, including the big 2-piece *Triple Hunt*). See this

section's Atari Videography for a more complete run-down on the company's yearly game releases.

The regional team counted Don Osborne in the west, Howie Rubin in the east and Lenore Sayers (yes, a girl!) out there on the "flying squad". New England distributing veteran Marshall Caras took an executive sales position briefly in 1977 before leaving for another of



Twenty years ago (1977, to be exact), Atari founder Bushnell treated his distributors to a party at the mansion he'd purchased after selling his company to Warner. The beautiful, old Woodside, Calif. house was once owned by Abigale Folger of the coffee family and provided a glamorous venue for an afternoon's delight during that year's distributor conference (formal meetings took place down by Monterey). If you have good eyes, and this comes out okay, you'll recognize many old faces in the crowd, some of whom have either retired or passed on. Good hunting!



The fabled video boom was on when this publicity shot was taken toward the end of 1980. Atari games were among the bigger reasons both location and arcade players took to video so strongly. That's engineering VP Lyle Rains on *Sprint 2* upper-left, Mary Fujihara (then Takatsuno) of market research at *Breakout* and their smiling sales topper Don Osborne at the controls of *Asteroids*.



A rather fanciful photo staged in 1981 by Atari for promo purposes showed supermarket customers the way game operators picture them when they dream. That's *Centipede* and *Red Baron* videos on show.

provides us with outstanding management leadership in a highly competitive business.”

This unusual co-presidency wouldn't last long. Lipkin resigned before 1980 was out. Al Alcorn himself resigned in 1981; he told *RePlay* “I was the last of the oldtimers like Gene to leave.” Alcorn was most recently chief technical officer for Silicon Gaming in Palo Alto.

Joe Robbins was now Atari coin-op's sole president (he'd been replaced at Empire by Jerry Marcus). In 1981, Robbins presided over a half-dozen titles, including *Centipede* and *Asteroids Deluxe* (with Atari's “QuadraScan” graphics). Not as many titles as in past times, but several nice ones.

And so were some games brought out by the competition, helping to keep the video boom roaring. For example, Williams launched *Defender* and Midway bowed Namco's *Pac-Man* (they were already cooking with *Galaxian*). *Donkey Kong* came from Nintendo later in the year.

While president, Robbins made some significant appointments. Ballouz and Osborne were named VP's of marketing and sales. Bob Harvey joined up as western regional sales rep and Jeanne Angelo (Tom Petit's sister and today's Fabtek and Data East USA chief) came aboard as sales administrator.

Then in mid-1981, Robbins himself resigned from the company (he remained president of the new ADMA manufacturer association he'd recently formed with Gary Stern).

## BOOMTOWN TROUBLE

The video game boom came to an end for the consumer side before it did for

coin-op. Game titles previously mentioned, along with some lesser but still profitable games brought along by Atari and its competitors kept the furnace stoked.

Unfortunately for veteran operators, the boom attracted many outsiders (“newcomers”, they were called), but the better game sites belonged mostly to the guy who used to be called the “jukebox man.” Now, many called him the “game guy” and the “penny arcade” became the “video arcade” (a phrase still used by many).

Home video, as mentioned, had fallen off its feet first. Maybe it was too much of a good thing, no longer a novelty, or because other forms of entertainment like records and movies that had been hurt by video games fought back. For whatever reasons, home video went into a slide and coin-op wasn't lagging too far behind.

Atari released eight video titles in 1982, including *Millipede* and the fantastic *Pole Position*. The latter was licensed from Namco and was the precursor to a far more intimate involvement to come between these two factories.

*Pole Position* was one of the hottest driving attractions of its day. Atari built them in both sitdown and upright cabinets. Videos and pinballs were being charted in *RePlay* by this time, and *Pole Position* placed in the Top Ten for over three solid years!

Anti-video sentiment, personified by Long Island housewife Ronnie Lamm (who took her “lunch money” argument all the way to the Donahue TV show) was answered by Atari with a \$100,000 17-minute video tape program that covered all sides of the business and was distributed to interested parties through Atari's coin-op

# Atari Videography

Machines produced by Atari with approximate release dates

## 1972

**Pong** - Nov. '72



Competitive video ping pong upright played by two on a single quarter vend.

## 1973

**Space Race** - July '73

2-player upright space strategy game.

**Pong Doubles** - Sept. '73

4-player competitive team upright of core game.

**Gotcha** - Oct. '73



Cat and mouse maze game; offered both color and b/w models.

**Elimination** - Oct. '73

4-player strategy cocktail table made by their Kee Games sister company.

## 1974

**Super Pong** - Feb. '74

Souped-up 2-player upright.

**Rebound** - Feb. '74

Another 2-player upright application of the bouncing cursor.

**Spike** - Mar. '74

Lowboy cabinet with 2-player competitive volleyball.

**Quadrpong** - Mar. '74

Four could play from all sides of this cocktail table.

**Gran Track 10** - Mar. '74



Atari's first driver; a 1-player with shift, pedal & sound.

**Formula K** - Apr. '74

Upright 1-player driver from Kee.

**World Cup** - Apr. '74

Competitive 2-player soccer upright (game also came out in a cocktail).

**Pong Cocktail** - May '74

Each of 2-players got a wheel on this driver.

**Twin Racer** - July '74

Smaller woodgrain upright of *Gran racer*.

**Trak 10** - July '74

Smaller woodgrain upright of *Gran racer*.

**Gran Trak 20** - Sept. '74

2-player upright driver with 2 tracks; smaller *Trak 20* also produced.

**Touch Me** - Oct. '74

Atari's first non-video, it challenged you to remember sound & light sequences.

**Pin Pong** - Oct. '74

The cursor bounced off video targets to effect pinball play.

**Tank** - Nov. '74

2-handle upright battle game was also produced in a cocktail.

**Qwak** - Nov. '74

1-player target rifle in a lowboy cabinet.

## 1975

**Dodgeball** - Jan. '75

Limited number of yet another game using the bouncing cursor.

**Pursuit** - Jan. '75

1-player upright air battle game with fire button in joystick.

**Indy 800** - Apr. '75



Deluxe 8-station driving console with color monitor.

**Hiway** - Apr. '75

**Crossfire** - May '75

**Tank II** - May '75

2-player tank combat.

**Anti Aircraft** - June '75

Air target shooting upright.

**Goal 4** - July '75

4-player hockey in a cocktail cabinet.

**Shark Jaws** - Sept. '75

Atari's answer to the then-megahit movie.

**Steeplechase** - Oct. '75

Up to 6 could play this video horserace upright.

**Crash N' Score** - Oct. '75

2-players mow down pylons with points on them to run up scores on this driver.

**Jet Fighter** - Oct. '75

2-player aerial dogfighter; also came out in a cocktail cabinet in December.

## 1976

**Stunt Cycle** - Jan. '76



Complete with motorcycle handlebars, this single-player biker had you jumping over buses.

**Outlaw** - Mar. '76

Fastdraw 1-player video with pistol attached to cable.

**Tank 8** - Apr. '76

Big console like the *Indy 8* sporting 8 new tanks and a new battlefield; optional bill acceptor.

**Quiz Show** - Apr. '76

Lowboy cabinet trivia 2-player.

**Breakout** - Apr. '76



An authentic video hit, this 1 or 2-player asked you to bust thru the 8 rows of blocks and go

"ah!" Cocktail came in July.

**Indy 4** - May '76

Driving console with 2 wheels one side, 2 on the other for 4-player competition.

**Cops N' Robbers** - July '76

Huge 4-player upright shooter (4 could play at same time).

# Atari Videography

Machines produced by Atari with approximate release dates

## Fly Ball - July '76

2-player upright baseball video.

## LeMans - Aug. '76

Single-player driver featuring 10 different tracks & extended play.

## Night Driver - Oct. '76

Single-player driver on black tracks marked by white road lines; sitdown version bowed early 1977.

## Sprint 2 - Nov. '76



This 2-player competitive car racer had shifting, pedals & sounds and stood as one of Atari/Kee's best drivers.

## F-1 - Nov. '76

Deluxe sitdown driver.

## Atarians - Nov. '76

Atari's first pinball ushered in wider body flipper action during their brief stint in the pingame business. It was among the first solid state pins.

## 1977

### Dominos - Jan. '77

This 2-player upright, available shortly after in a cocktail, asked players to knock their opponents out by destroying a wall of dominoes.

### Triple Hunt - Apr. '77

This 2-piece authentic rifle game had the gun on a control console and targets on separate video upright. Offered *Hit the Bear*, *Raccoon Hunt* and *Witch Hunt* game choices. Game could also be purchased as *Triple Hunt Single* to save bucks.

## Night Driver Sitdown -

Apr. '77

Cockpit version of the black-tracks car driver.

## Sprint 8 - May '77



Big 8-player console of the Atari/Kee track racer.

## Pool Shark - Jun. '77

2-player upright pool shooting game.

## Drag Race - June '77

2-player upright driver.

## Starship - July '77



1-player outer-space driving video.

## Time 2000 - Aug. '77

Atari's second all-electronic pinball machine.

## Super Bug - Jan. '77

Single-driver races yellow Volks bug thru city streets.

## Airborne Avenger -

Sept. '77

Their third electronic pin.

## Destroyer - Oct. '77

Single-player submarine shooter.

## Canyon Bomber -

Nov. '77

One or two dropped their bomb loads on enemy terrain.



## Sprint 4 - Dec. '77

4-player driving console.

## 1978

### Sprint 1 - Jan. '78

1-player version of popular line in more compact cabinet.

### Ultra Tank - Feb. '78

One or two blasted the battleground, avoided land mines, and made a mess of things on Atari's newest tank game.

### Sky Raider - Mar. '78

Single-player upright airplane shooter.

### Tournament Table -

Mar. '78

Inventive 4-player cocktail with 12 game selectability including *Breakout*.

### Avalanche - Apr. '78

2-player strategy upright.

### Middle Earth - Apr. '78



Their fourth pin, had double-field layout.

## Fire Truck - June '78

A 1-or-2-player cooperative driving sitdown.

## Sky Diver - June '78

2-player upright target game.

## Smokey Joe - July '78

The solo-player version of *Fire Truck* in an upright.

## Super Breakout -

Sept. '78

2-player upright with selectable *Doubles*, *Progressive* and *Cavity* games available.

## Space Riders - Sept. '78

their fifth pin had 3 or 5-ball-play and also carryover memory feature.

## Atari Football - Oct. '78



One of their megahits, this 2-player cocktail featured trackball controls; the game was football; 4-player version (above) was released the following spring.

## Orbit - Nov. '78

2-player outer space upright game introduced add-a-coin continue play feature.

## 1979

### Video Pinball - Feb. '79

Four played this TV version of the pingame, taking turns just as on the real thing.

# Atari Videography

Machines produced by Atari with approximate release dates

## Superman - Mar. '79



Atari's most successful pinball was the last of their wide-body line

to be produced. A great translation from the comic book to the pintable, the game made some wonder why Atari got out of pinball.

## Hercules - Apr. '79



Atari's very last pinball was the giant-sized *Hercules* that offered 18 sq. ft. of playfield action and a white cueball instead of a silver pin ball.

## Atari Football 4-Pl. - Apr. '79

## Basketball - May '79



2-player upright using trackball controls.

## Subs - May '79

Unusual upright offering two monitors for 2-player competitive warfare.

## Baseball - June '79



2-player cocktail table using trackball controls.

## Lunar Lander - Aug. '79

Single-player moon mission game with unique-looking joystick control.

## Asteroids - Nov. '79



One of Atari's all-time greatest hits, this black/white 2-player upright space game was one of

the ten most important early video games ever produced. *Asteroids* was already a hot earner when *RePlay* started charting video in April 1980, so we don't have the full scope of this hit's history. It did, however, debut at #1, stayed there eight more times and almost two years in all before it faded off the chart and into a legend.

## 1980

## Asteroids Cocktail - Apr. '80

## Soccer - Apr. '80

4-player trackball field soccer in a cocktail table.

## Monte Carlo - Apr. '80

Single player upright driver with both wheel and trackball.

## Asteroids Cabaret - June '80

Compact upright version of the megahit.

## Missle Command -



June '80

2-player upright shooter was first on 50¢ play for a match.

Cocktail version shipped in August; compact Cabaret upright shipped in December.

## Battle Zone - Nov. '80



Unusual cabinet sporting periscope viewer for 1-player combat; Cabaret

upright shipped in December. *Battlezone* graced the charts nine months; it played the #2 position to the #1 *Asteroids* its first two times on.

## Warlords - Apr. '80

Single-player upright battles knights with trackball. Cocktail version released same month.

## Asteroids Deluxe - May '80

Worldwide hit gets suped up in sequel; features new Shield Control, QuadraScan graphics and other goodies. Cabaret and cocktail versions also released. *Deluxe* was nowhere close to the original's success track. It occupied top 10 positions only three time before drifting down and off the charts.

## 1981

## Red Baron - May '81

Sitdown single-player bi-plane shooting game displayed top 7 scores and player initials. Standard 1-player upright shipped following month.

## Centipede - June '81



Another of Atari's signature machines, this cute upright solo-player used trackball control

to move the bug parts. Female players loved it. Atari began shipping Cabaret and cocktail versions the following month. *Centipede* spent over three years on the chart but never made it higher than #3. It did, however, place in the top 10 a total of 20 times.

## Battle Zone OF - June '81

The original combat game in a normal upright.

## Tempest - Oct. '81



Another Atari winner, this single-player space battle game also shipped in cocktail

and Cabaret formats in December. *Tempest* stirred up the charts for a year, but the highest it reached was #3.

# Atari Videography

Machines produced by Atari with approximate release dates

## 1982

### Space Duel - Feb. '82

One or 2-player co-op battle against outer space enemies, their ships and weapons; cocktail version shipped in April.

### Dig Dug - Apr. '82

Cute single-player upright licensed from Namco; cocktail & Cabaret versions in June.

### Kangaroo - June '82

2-player strategy upright licensed from Sun; Atari kitted the game in 1984.

### Gravitar - Aug. '82

Interplanetary game fighting in 3 different solar systems.

### Millepede - Nov. '82

Update picks up the *Centipede* action on a 1-player upright; game was kitted in 1984. *Millepede* debuted on the charts the same month as *Pole Position*. The highest it ever reached was #9, but it rode the chart for two years.

### Liberator - Nov. '82

Single-player space battle upright with trackball control.

### Quantum - Nov. '82

Single-player strategy upright where the sub-atomic world is the playfield.

### Pole Position - Nov. '82

One of the hottest driving attractions of its day, this challenged the driver to make the course in specified time. Licensed from



Namco, Atari built the game in both sitdown and upright configurations. *Pole Position* debuted at #1 on the March 1983 chart, repeated it another five straight times, and, all together, spent 27 months in the top 5 before drifting down.

## 1983

### Xevious - Feb. '83

Single-player upright space battle game.

### Black Widow - Feb. '83

This 1-player upright was also put out as a conversion kit for *Gravitar*.

### Food Fight - Mar. '83

Single-player cute strategy game in upright cabinet; came out as a cocktail that May.

### Arabian - May '83

Cute 1-player combat game; came in an upright, was kitted in 1984.

### Star Wars - May '83



First of Atari's "trilogy" matching the Lucas films, the space battle game came in both sitdown and upright 1-player formats. *Star Wars* debuted on the Sept. chart at #2 and took two years to drift down and off.

### Crystal Castles - July '83

Single-player cute strategy upright with trackball; cocktail came in November.

### Major Havoc - Nov. '83

Single-player in unusually designed upright cabinet; this space-maze game was kitted in 1984.

### Pole Position II -

### Nov. '83

Enhancement for original Namco-licensed blockbuster was a hit itself. *Pole II*, as incredible as it appears, was on the chart for over five years! Eight months of those were spent at #1!

## 1984

### Firefox - Jan. '84



Atari's laserdisc air fighter, named for the Clint Eastwood movie of the time. This single-player came out in both upright and sitdown formats.

### Cloak & Dagger -

### Mar. '84

A 2-player kit only for some Williams videos like *Defender*.

### TX-1SD - Mar. '84

This curious driving game sat one player before three monitors for motion and depth effect.

### I, Robot - June '84

Single-player upright character fighting game.

### Return of the Jedi -

### Sept. '84

This 1-player upright space battler was the second release in Atari's *Star Wars* "trilogy".

### Marble Madness -

### Dec. '84

A 2-player strategy game that introduced Atari's System 1.

## 1985

### Empire Strikes Back -

### Mar. '85

Last in the "trilogy", this came as a kit to convert *Star Wars*.

### Paperboy - Apr. '85

Single-player upright offered cute adventure; introduced Atari's system 2. Spending 3 1/2 years on the charts, *Paperboy* was a dependable earner.

### Pack Rat - July '85

An adventure strategy game in 1-player upright and for System 1 games.

### Temple of Doom -

### July '85

Indiana Jones adventure in a solo-player upright on the System 1



hardware; simultaneous kit. *Indiana Jones* rode the charts 16 months but never got higher than #3.