



By Doug Trueman

The world was created in six days. On the seventh day there was Pac-Man.

OK, so it's not that extreme. But it does feel that way. Pac-Man goes back further than almost any other game in history. If you've never played Pac-Man (or one of its clones), you'll be hard-pressed to call yourself a "real" gamer. Now that I've insulted scores of video-game addicts around the world, I can sit back, relax, and wait for the flames to pour in. But seriously, there are those of us who remembered when the bow in Ms. Pac-Man's hair represented a stunning graphical advancement, when having a power pellet suddenly wear off was scarier than a T-rex crashing through a window, and when getting an extra life actually meant something. In honor of the world's first omnivorous pizza, we've created this special feature devoted to the history of Pac-Man.

Very special thanks to Marshall Stowe, Reverend Shoebox, Chuck Gill, Jeff Morris, Keita Iida, Walter Day, and last but still first, Billy Mitchell. Be sure to check out their Pac-Man sites in our Related Links section.

## **Pac-Facts**

We've compiled a list of facts you probably never knew about Pac-Man. Some of these are also included later in this feature, but we thought it would be best if we assembled them into a list of small, bite-sized pieces.

- Pac-Man is the best-selling coin-operated game in history. Forget Street Fighter 2 and Tetris. In the game's debut year alone, over 100,000 Pac-Man machines were made and sold around the world.
- Namco estimates that the original Pac-Man arcade title has been played more than ten *billion* times in its 20-year history. Namco's total Pac-Man revenues have reached \$100 million... one quarter at a time.
- Pac-Man was inspired by a pizza with a slice missing. Namco designer Tohru Iwatani went out for the evening with some friends and then dove for dinner. The rest is history.
- 1982 saw the debut of ABC's animated cartoon, The Pac-Man Show. It ran for two years as Pac-Man tried to save his friends and Pac-Land from the evil Mezmaron.
- Jerry Buckner and Gary Garcia spoofed Ted Nugent's song Cat Scratch Fever and turned it into Pac-Man Fever. The song hit number nine.
- Dozens of hacked versions of Pac-Man and Ms. Pac-Man exist. These games give the Pac character a speed bonus with the push of a button or more challenging mazes with complex series of turns.
- It took eight people 15 months to complete the original Pac-Man arcade title. Four worked on the hardware, four worked on the software.
- Pac-Man and his fellow Pacs travel 20 percent faster through mazes that have been cleared of dots than when they're eating. If you've got a ghost on your tail, head for open ground.
- Pac-Man has been licensed to more than 250 companies for over 400 products. There are Pac-Man air fresheners, cereal boxes, flip phones, costumes, record books, and even a hot rod.
- The business world has co-opted Pac-Man's name as a technique to protect against a hostile takeover. The defending company would instead swallow the larger company in a move known as the Pac-Man defense.
- In July of 1999, Florida resident and die-hard Pac-Man fan Billy Mitchell achieved the first perfect score in Pac-Man (3,333,360) after playing for six hours straight. He beat all 256 screens eating every dot, fruit, and ghost (all four ghosts were eaten with each power pellet) - using only one Pac-Man!
- The author of this article has a huge Pac-Man pillow on his sofa. He also inexplicably gained 50 pounds over the course of writing this feature.

## 1980-1981: The Birth of a Legend

System: Arcade

Developer: Namco of Japan

Publisher: Namco of Japan



1980. The Cold War was starting to thaw. Long-haired musicians were everywhere. Materialism swept North America. Coke was huge (and I don't mean Pepsi's rival). Arcade games were starting to get off the ground. But small blips of dots and bleeping sounds weren't enough to kick-start what would become a multibillion dollar industry. Mario, Link, Sonic, Cloud, Lara Croft, and Duke Nukem were all years away. Vids needed a mascot, a face - someone who could stand for the entire quarter-sucking industry....

One evening a young Namco game designer named Tohru Iwatani went out for pizza with some friends. After the usual chatting and sipping of drinks, their large pizza arrived. Tohru removed the first slice and brought it to his watering mouth. He causally glanced at the shape of the pizza that was left. Cells in his brain fired. His mind raced. What if?

Believe it or not, it's true. Pac-Man is based on a pizza with a slice missing.

Namco of Japan originally called him Puck-Man but wisely decided to change his name before release - the American penchant for graffiti wouldn't have helped the company's advertising any. Before long, Pac-Man was as ubiquitous as the swastika in Nazi Germany. You couldn't enter a shopping mall without seeing Pac-Man games, T-shirts, bedspreads, and lunch boxes - or an arcade, either.

The attached pictures come from the first Pac-Man title created (Namco's Puck-Man, not the one licensed by Midway) - naturally, the characters' names are different from the US version. Pac's mortal enemies were called Akabei, Pinky, Aosuke, and Guzuta (the American ones were Blinky, Pinky, Inky, and Clyde). The gameplay was so basic even a five-year-old could master it: Eat dots until you die. The power pellets allowed the hunted to become the hunter, letting kids of all sizes go on murderous rampages, temporarily vanquishing their foes.

Namco and Midway quickly realized they had a hit on their hands and began a string of sequels that even the Friday the 13th series couldn't compete with.

### 1981: Pac-Man

System: Atari 2600/Intellivision

Developer: Atari

Publisher: Atari



The Atari 2600 version of Pac-Man was, simply put, awful. The music was bad, the graphics were horrible, and the levels were beyond repetitive. Little charms like the Pac-Man death melody and the cute cherries were replaced with garish counterparts. In a nutshell, the brilliance that was arcade Pac-Man was lost and never to be found. Some game historians have compared this bomb of a title to the monstrosity that was E.T: The Game. Though there are gamers out there who love nostalgia and would love to play old 2600 games just for the fun of it, they would probably not play this title.

On the popular culture side of things, though, Pac-Man's (almost) round disc never shined brighter. Pac-Man was licensed to several food companies and starred in General Mills' Pac-Man cereal as well as Chef Boyardee's Pac-Man Pasta. In the fall of 1981, musicians Jerry Buckner and Gary Garcia spoofed Ted Nugent's song Cat Scratch Fever with a song of their own: Pac-Man Fever. Despite the bizarre lyrics, Pac-Man Fever climbed to number nine in the US.

## 1982: Pac-Man Gnaws at Popular Culture

### 1982: Pac-Man Plus

System: Arcade

Developer: Namco

Publisher: Namco



In dimly lit arcades around the world, Pac-Man Plus was introduced. The gameplay remained pretty much the same - run, eat, flee, power up, hunt, etc. - except for a few random effects thrown in by Namco to break up the use of patterns to defeat the game. Among other differences, this time around, power pellets didn't guarantee a temporary reprieve from attacking ghosts. While sometimes the ghosts would turn blue and run away, sometimes the ghoulish attackers would remain in their original form. Consuming bonus fruits was now a risky undertaking: There was no telling what would happen when they were eaten - often the ghosts would turn blue but then turn invisible so they couldn't be chased, or the maze itself would become invisible.

Pac-Man Plus's random feature made it much harder than its predecessor, and the game never really caught on because of this. But Namco had learned its lesson.

Out of arcades, Pac-Man was enjoying worldwide fame. Hanna-Barbera made a Saturday-morning kids cartoon based on Mr. Chomp, simply entitled, The Pac-Man Show. The cartoon was an instant success and ran for two seasons.

### 1982: Ms. Pac-Man

Systems: Arcade

Developer: Midway

Publisher: Midway



Game developers faced the same problems back in the 1980s that they do today: How do we get women to play our games? After all, if only males are playing, then 50 percent of the entire population isn't spending quarters on arcade titles. This must be stopped. Drastic times call for drastic measures.

Enter the world's first digital interactive feminist, Ms. Pac-Man. Ms. Pac-Man was moderately successful at luring fresh blood into dark arcades, but where it really succeeded was in its increased humanness. The lipstick, bow tie, and mole made Ms. Pac-Man resemble a human face much more than her husband did, and players flocked to her because of it. The off-yellow ghost Clyde was renamed Sue, giving Ms. Pac-Man an enemy of her own gender to fear and then destroy. Aside from a few minor musical changes, the game was essentially the same. Fruit was much harder to eat this time around, being constantly on the run with a satisfying "bum bum bum..." Many players prefer

Ms. Pac-Man to the original, and it's much more commonly found in arcades or convenience stores than the inceptive Pac-Man.

### 1982: Ms. Pac-Man

Platform: Atari 2600

Developer: Atari

Publisher: Atari

With double the amount of memory in this cartridge than in the original Atari title (a whopping 8K), Ms. Pac-Man's 2600 conversion was much closer to the arcade title than the Pac-Man conversion. Sadly, this title still didn't come within ten miles of truly resembling the arcade game. Though the sound effects were better, the musical themes were recognizable, and the fruit actually resembled what it was supposed to be instead of generic yellow-brown squares, Ms. Pac-Man for the 2600 was still a far cry from what gamers fell in love with. But it did represent a substantial improvement, and graphics on the whole were cleaner. Ms. Pac-Man for the 2600 was much more enjoyable than the original arcade-to-home-console disaster. But, like the original Atari 2600 Pac-Man, players still became bored rather quickly with the lackluster sound and visuals.

### 1982: Pac-Man

Platform: Atari 5200

Developer: Atari

Publisher: Atari

A year after Pac-Man hit homes on the Atari 2600, the Atari 5200 machine came out with its own improved version of Pac-Man. The graphics were cleaner, the sounds were clearer, and gamers all over North America wanted it. Unfortunately, the 5200 "super system" was also arguably the first console to date a previous one, and many parents refused to buy it for their children, having just purchased the 2600 the year before. Our parents didn't understand how much we salivated at the better version, so most of us older gamers were just forced to watch as our previously Atari-less friends leapfrogged us with the new version. Life just wasn't fair.

### 1982: Super Pac-Man

Platform: Arcade

Developer: Midway

Publisher: Midway

Super Pac-Man represented a radical departure from the classic Pac-Man gameplay. Sure, the traditional "eat things while running for your life" style was still there, but it had been severely changed. Instead of eating bland yellow pellets, Pac-Man had to eat different types of food for his basic sustenance, like apples, bananas, and donuts. Power pellets still turned the tables on his attacking ghosts, but there was an additional power-up as well. The "super" pellets made Pac-Man triple his size and gain a tremendous boost of speed. While gigantic, Pac-Man could run right through the ghosts in the maze, but neither he nor the ghosts would take damage. The second major change was the inclusion of doors that had to be unlocked by eating certain keys. When a key was consumed, more parts of the maze could be traveled through, though it was easy to forget to eat a key and be trapped against a door with a ghost blocking the only way out. When Pac-Man ingested a super pellet, he could eat the doors themselves, forever opening them and no longer having any need for the keys. It could be argued that the super pellets made Pac-Man too powerful, because he could race around the maze wherever he wanted, impervious to any and all damage. But the game was still fun to play, much more so than Pac-Man Plus.

## 1982: *Pac-Man Eats Into Pinball Profits* 1982:

### 1982: Mr. and Mrs. Pac-Man Pinball

Platform: Arcade Pinball

Developer: Bally Midway

Publisher: Bally



Yes, it wasn't long into the Pac-Man craze before Namco and its various licenses realized there was an entire group of arcade-going junkies who had no intention of ever dropping a single quarter into a Pac-Man arcade game. But a Pac-Man pinball game? That's a whole different story.

Mr. and Mrs. Pac-Man Pinball was released by Bally in May of 1982, and over 10,000 of the machines were produced. The pinball was standard fare that we all know and love, but it had a Pac-Man theme: You could enter a Pac-Maze and earn extra balls by spelling out P-A-C-M-A-N in true traditional pinball style. Other than that, it was typical pinball: You got three balls and had to get as many points as possible. If a ball fell between the two lowest flippers at the bottom of the machine, you lost a turn. Although this Pac-Man pinball game nowhere near achieved the success of the original game, it was still an enjoyable title.

### 1982: Baby Pac-Man Pinball

Platform: Arcade Pinball/Coin-Op

Developer: Bally Midway

Publisher: Bally



A hybrid of an arcade game and a pinball game, Baby Pac-Man was probably one of the more ingenious creations that Pac-Man inspired. You controlled Baby Pac-Man on a small dot matrix-type screen in traditional fashion. You ran around munching on dots and escaping from the usual invasion of ghosts. But unlike Baby's parents (Baby Pac-Man's sex was indeterminate), Baby Pac had no power pellets to assist him (or her). Instead, Baby Pac could flee down one of two tunnels that led to... the pinball field. From there, you would assume control of the pinball machine's flippers and bounce the new steel Baby Pac around. Various power-ups could be accumulated for the return to the digital playing field, such as fruits, speed boosts, and temporary energizers. Death (and the loss of either a Baby Pac or a steel Pac) would result from ramming a ghost or watching as a steel Pac slipped between flippers into the endless void of the pinball machine.

Baby Pac-Man was a moderate success for its time, mainly due to the hybrid nature of its gameplay. Pac-Man wizards had a new challenge, and pinball junkies had to learn the intricacies of running through a 2D maze with death at almost every turn.

## 1983: *Friends of Pac-Man Invade*

### 1983: Pac and Pal

System: Arcade

Developer: Namco

Publisher: Namco



Pac and Pal took Pac-Man gameplay the furthest away from the classic that Tohru Iwatani had created, and the game's popularity suffered as a result. Pac and Pal featured Pac-Man running around with a green ghost he had befriended. The "assistant" ghost would pick up some of the scarce items that Pac-Man had to eat to finish the level and hand-deliver them to him. Like in Super Pac-Man, keys were needed to unlock certain doors, but in this case, doors were generally unlocked by "consuming" a card with a random fruit on the opposite side. The locks surrounding the carded fruit would then vanish, giving Pac-Man and his helper access to them. Even more bizarre was the inclusion of a button for you to press: Pac-Man's power pellets didn't turn the ghosts blue; rather, Pac-Man himself would become blue, and pressing the button would release a short-range attack (music notes, smoke screen, etc.) that would temporarily stun any ghosts who walked into it.

While Pac and Pal could have been a success if it had been a new title with no history behind it, the fact that it came from the famous line of previous Pac-Man games disappointed gamers greatly.

### 1983: Professor Pac-Man

Platform: Arcade

Developer: Bally Midway

Publisher: Bally Midway

Because the Pac-Man craze had dominated popular culture the previous year, Bally Midway thought it could do almost no harm with its Namco Pac-Man license. It thought almost any game it attached the Pac-Man label to would be a surefire success. Bally Midway was wrong. Boy, was it wrong.



Professor Pac-Man was a quiz-type game, the kind that is now popular in bars. There were three types of questions the arcade operator could select from: family (for parents and kids), adults (for bars), and prizes (for casinos). The only real connection this game had to the Pac-Man license was that "lives" were measured in terms of fruit (lose all your cherries and you're dead), Professor Pac-Man tallied your score, and points were awarded by a Pac-Man that chomped on dots from left to right. The sooner you buzzed in with your answer, the sooner Pac-Man stopped eating. The number of dots that were left represented your score. Players who answered a string of questions correctly on the first try could go for a "bonus question" where they could earn extra fruits and thus extend their play time. But even this didn't save the game. This was one of the worst and most bizarre Pac-Man video games ever created. This game was a total disaster, and only 400 were ever produced. If you've managed to see a copy of this title in your lifetime, consider yourself truly blessed: Even the hardest of the hard-core gamers have never set eyes on this title ... though that's probably a good thing.

### 1983: Junior Pac-Man

Platform: Arcade

Developer: Bally Midway

Publisher: Bally Midway

Another spin-off to hit arcades in 1983, Junior Pac-Man added a new level of depth to gameplay, while sticking to basics. Power pellets turned all ghosts blue, and there were no keys, no spinning cards, and no super pellets. On the other hand, the bouncing bonus items (like a tricycle) would turn every regular pellet they came in touch with into a larger pellet that was worth 50 points instead of 10. The downside was that Jr. Pac-Man couldn't gobble these as quickly as he could the normal pellets, so they had to be avoided if ghosts were closing in. The bonus items would also destroy any power pellets they came in contact with, often leaving Pac-Man Junior high and dry. Junior Pac-Man even got a ghost of his own named Tim. Blinky, Pinky, Inky, and Tim. Go figure.

The best feature of all, though, was the mazes, which were much larger than the ones in the previous titles. Generally about twice the width of a monitor, the playing field would scroll horizontally or vertically to keep up with Junior Pac-Man. More pellets (and more power pellets, naturally) were added, and rounds lasted significantly longer and were more intense than in any of the other Pac-Man titles. This was the best maze-style spin-off the series would see, other than Ms. Pac-Man.

### 1983: Ms. Pac-Man

System: Atari 5200

Developer: Atari

Publisher: Atari

Ms. Pac-Man hit the Atari 5200 in 1983, and it was an improvement over the original 5200 Pac-Man. The graphics were tighter, and the sounds were much closer to the arcade originals. It just goes to show that every good Pac-Man has a Ms. Pac-Man behind him.

The only downside to all the Atari 5200 versions was that the joysticks that came with the super system didn't automatically recenter. This led to more than a few untimely and heartbreaking deaths as Pac-Man or Ms. Pac-Man turned the wrong corner or flipped a 180 right into the sheets of the oncoming ghosts. Sad, but true. But Ms. Pac-Man was a success nevertheless (third-party auto-recentering joysticks were available eventually) .

## 1984-1989: Pac-Popularity Declines

### 1984: Jr. Pac-Man



Platform: Atari 2600

Developer: Atari

Publisher: Atari

Despite the nearly perfect translation of Jr. Pac-Man to the Atari 2600 (it was translated for the 5200 but never released), this title marked the beginning of the decline in Pac-Popularity. Though it was one of the best home translations the series had seen up to this point, Pac-Man was entering a slow downward spiral. Jr. Pac-Man for the 2600 had all the features that made the arcade version popular: the larger scrolling mazes, the bouncing toys that increased the value of the pellets they came in contact with, and the larger

number of power pellets to wreak havoc on Blinky, Inky, Pinky, and Tim. Unfortunately, this was the last Pac title that would actually feature the classic maze style of play, and the series' popularity took a dive accordingly.

### 1984: Pac-Land

Platform: Arcade

Developer: Namco

Publisher: Namco

It would be easy to denounce Pac-Land as a cheap Super Mario Bros. rip-off, but the fact of the matter is that Pac-Land came out a full year before Mario and Luigi burst onto the North American scene and changed gaming forever. But it is fair to say that Pac-Land is utter crap and should never have been created.



A side-scrolling quasi-platformer, Pac-Land had you fill the giant shoes (and mouth) of a cartoon-style Pac-Man, complete with red boots and a fedora. As a moving orifice that could never be satiated, Pac-Man had to jump over cacti, ride on the roofs of cars, use springboards to jump over vast pools of water, and avoid delightfully cute ghosts who were out to kill him. Handicapping Pac-Man was a constantly dwindling energy meter that had to be refilled by eating - what else? - power pellets. If you reached the end of the game's five levels, you rescued Princess Buttercup and saved the day.

Unlike Mario, Pac-Land didn't set the gaming world on fire, because there wasn't enough to do. The enemies were mindless, the graphics dull, and the entire theme was sickly sweet. This coin-op was such a bomb that it took Namco four years to get up the courage to release another game with "Pac" in the title.

### 1988: Pac-Mania

Platform: Arcade, Genesis, Sega Master System

Developer: Various

Publisher: Namco



The sad thing about the four-year delay between Pac-Land and Pac-Mania was that it wasn't long enough. This multiplatformed game appeared on several different systems, but it was equally atrocious on all of them. Pac-Mania was an isometrically viewed game (meaning that the camera is up and off in a corner). The goal was the same: Run around collecting pellets, avoiding ghosts, and munching on power pellets when the going gets rough. The gimmicks in this title were the quasi-3D camera angle and the fact that Pac-Man could jump over ghosts at will. The mazes were much too big for a single screen, so the camera scrolled appropriately. Unfortunately, it was often very difficult to know which directions had been cleared of their pellets and which were still

fertile. Ghosts outnumbered Pac-Man by way more than four to one, though more than four were never on the screen at once. Pac's new jumping ability was only useful on the first few levels; later on, the ghosts could jump as well as he could, easily crashing into him in midair for the kill. This title should be avoided like Pinky in a bad mood.

## 1990-1995: Pac-Man Reborn

### 1990: Pac-Man

Platform: Nintendo Entertainment System

Developer: Tengen

Publisher: Tengen

The NES version of Pac-Man was pretty straightforward: It was as much a clone of the arcade game as was possible for home technology at the time. Pac-Man and his buddies raced around the 8-bit maze doing what they loved best: eating and running in fear. The game played well, but Tengen didn't realize that Pac-Man was more of a time passer in arcades than something that gaming fans would like for a home system. Despite the fact that this was the best home version of Pac-Man to date, it still didn't fare all that well and fell well short of Pac-Man's prestige.

### 1990-1991: Ms. Pac-Man, Pac-Land

Platform: Atari Lynx

Developer: Namco

Publisher: Atari

It seems the ill-fated Atari Lynx faded into obscurity almost immediately, but it did survive long enough for two Pac-Man games to be released for it. Both Ms. Pac-Man and the horrible Pac-Land were available for this funky handheld at the beginning

of the 1990s. Though Pac-Land remained essentially a perfect port of the arcade title (no one really cared), the far superior Ms. Pac-Man lost many graphical details because of the small size of the handheld unit. Blinky, Pinky, Inky, and Sue were all blind: Their eyes had been removed. This didn't stop them from being savage Pac-Killers, however. Sadly, the Lynx version didn't have an adjustable view, so Ms. Pac-Man and her ghosts were forever small eyeless blips. The arcade cutscenes were perfect, however.

### 1993: Pac-Man

Platform: Sega Game Gear

Developer: Namco

Publisher: Namco

Yes, Pac-Man even hit the Sega Game Gear for a short while in the early 1990s. This portable Pac was a success, because by this time, Namco had recognized that Pac-Man was best used to fill time - people generally didn't specifically set aside time for Pac-Man (a few exceptions aside - you know who you are). Pac-Man gave Tetris a run for its money as the perfect portable

game. It had infinite replay value, and players generally didn't mind quitting the game at the drop of a hat. Like several of the other versions, the mazes were too large for the small Game Gear screen, so the mazes would scroll according to Pac-Man's location. Some players complained this was sacrilegious because they couldn't see the entire maze and the positions of the enemy ghosts all at a glance. Nevertheless, the Game Gear version of Pac-Man found its way onto school buses, into car pools, and into churches around the world.

### 1993: Pac-Attack

Platform: Super Nintendo, Genesis, Game Gear, Game Boy

Developer: Various

Publisher: Namco

Pac-Attack was a Tetris-style game that featured dropping blocks, ghosts, and Pac-Men. Like most of the gem/block puzzlers on the market, the gameplay was simple: You had to match certain patterns of falling objects together to make them disappear. When a certain group was completed, the rest of the blocks on the screen lowered to take their place. When the screen was full and no more blocks could be dropped, the game was over.

In this title, the falling gold blocks were eliminated when a horizontal row was completed, just like in Tetris. But the ghosts were a different story. The ghosts would pile up on top of each other (or beside one another) until a block containing a Pac-Man fell into the pile. The ghosts would then turn blue, and any ghosts Pac-Man came across as he fell level-by-level were eaten. Pac-Attack also featured a puzzle mode with over one hundred levels. The challenge of the puzzle mode was to eliminate all the ghosts with only a certain number of Pac-Men per level. Avoiding vertical groups of blocks was not nearly as much of a concern as orienting all the ghosts so that a single Pac-Man could eat them on a trip to the bottom of the pile. Pac-Attack was an interesting variation on Tetris-style gameplay. While it was more interesting than many of its predecessors, it fell well short of some of the best puzzlers, like Super Puzzle Fighter II: Turbo.

This title appeared under the name Pac-Panic on the Game Boy.

### 1994: Pac-Man 2: The New Adventures

Platforms: Super Nintendo, Sega Genesis

Developer: Namco

Publisher: Namco



Pac-Man 2 was pretty much a failure by all accounts. Having almost nothing to do with the Pac-Man maze classics, this title featured a side-scrolling Pac-Man who walked from left to right dealing with everyday encounters until he met up with the Ghost Witch of Nentor who stole chewing gum from the children of Pac-Man (the most bizarre plot we've seen). You had no control over Pac-Man himself. Instead, in what could be called an almost completely new style of gameplay, you controlled a slingshot that was constantly pointed at the 2D scene where Pac-Man walked. As an omniscient voyeur, you interacted with Pac-Man's environment by shooting at it with pellets. For example, if a snake was in Pac-Man's path, you could shoot an apple that was in a tree; the apple would fall, hit the

snake, and Pac-Man would walk past it unscathed. If things were really bad, you could shoot one of three power pellets directly into Pac-Man's mouth, turning him into a flying super-Pac-Man. He could then temporarily escape any danger and return to face it again once the pellet wore off.

Despite the novel gameplay, Pac-Man 2 bombed like a rancid power pellet. Players just weren't accepting of a luscious, vibrant world where the only interaction they had was sniping at it from afar with little yellow circles.

### 1995: Pac-in-Time

Platforms: Super Nintendo, Genesis, Game Boy

Developer: Mindscape

Publisher: Namco

The Ghost Witch of Nentor was back for more Pac-inspired action. This time around she had no intention of letting Pac-Man off easy. Instead of making his life difficult, she wanted to eliminate him completely, so she cast a spell and sent Pac-Man back to 1975, several years before Pac-Man was even "born" and before his fame was universal. The time-bending spell had an unfortunate side effect: Pac-Man grew younger as he traveled, resulting in him appearing as a small Pac-Boy.

As Pac-Boy, you controlled a bouncing yellow circle with a huge mouth. The object of the game was to make your way into the witch's castle and into the time portal. Along the way, though, Pac-Boy had to acquire a certain number of pellets for each level so he could open the enchanted door that would lead him closer to the castle. The pellets were all in hard-to-reach areas, so various power-ups had to be obtained and used. Pac-Man could shoot fireballs at any non-ghost foe (power pellets were the only way to defeat the various ghosts), use a giant hammer to destroy obstacles, and swing from overhead beams with a grappling hook like some form of Spider-Pac.

Pac-in-Time was one of the more creative uses of the Pac-Man license. Though this type of side-scrolling 2D platformer had been done countless times before, there was something in Pac-Boy's charm that just made it work. The music was upbeat, the control was dead-on, and there was something inexplicably magical in the gameplay. Though it in no way resembled the arcade maze classics, Pac-in-Time was a worthy successor.

## 1995 -Present: *Pac-Man Goes Hi-Tech*

### 1995: **Pac-Man VR**

Platform: Virtuality Solo, Duo, and Quattro Series 2000 SU Systems.

Developer: Virtuality

Publisher: Virtuality



Created in the late 1990s, Pac-Man VR was a proprietary title developed by the Virtuality Virtual Reality corporation to show off what the company's technology could do. The game never hit arcades in any concerted effort, mainly due to its being little more than a demonstration of cutting-edge technology. Pac-Man VR literally put you in Pac-Man's eyes. The 3D viewpoint was slightly claustrophobic, though the fact that the maze walls weren't completely encompassing did much to alleviate the tension. Still, a great sense of dread was created when ghosts appeared directly in front of you, as screenshot three shows all too well. If you've managed to play Pac-Man VR, then you can proudly say you know what it feels like to play the arcade classic from the inside.

### 1999: **Pac-Man/Ms. Pac-Man**

Platforms: Nintendo Game Boy Color, PlayStation, Nintendo 64

Developer: Namco

Publisher: Namco

Just when you thought 2D mazes everywhere were free of ghosts, another group comes along to put you back to work. In addition to the PlayStation anniversary title, Namco is releasing versions of Pac-Man and Ms. Pac-Man for both the Game Boy Color and the N64 within the Namco Museum 64 compilation (they arrived for the PlayStation in the Namco Museum series, along with Super Pac-Man and Pac-Land). These versions are carbon copies of the originals that started the craze 20 years ago (though the screen will have to scroll on the Game Boy versions). Both versions for both systems will include secrets to be unlocked, like a complete working version of Super Pac-Man. The portable versions will be compatible with the Game Boy Pocket, the original Game Boy, and the Game Boy Color.

### 1999: **Neo Geo Pac-Man**

Platform: Neo Geo Pocket Color

Developer: SNK

Publisher: Namco

Not surprisingly, Pac-Man is one of the first titles available for the new Neo Geo Pocket Color handheld. Though the new handheld

is extremely hard to find these days, our sources tell us its powerful but small 16-bit CPU handles Pac-Man without any problems. You control the original Pac-Man and have a choice of two views: one where the screen is blown up and the maze has to scroll or one with smaller graphics but a complete maze at a glance. Switching views on the fly is possible, giving you the best of both worlds. Take a look at the accompanying screenshot to see the crystal-clear view of Pac-Man on the Neo Geo Pocket Color.

### **Pac-Man World: 20th Anniversary**

Platform: PlayStation

Developer: Namco

Publisher: Namco



There's still one more Pac-Game on our list, and it's Namco's 20th Anniversary celebratory title. Pac-Man World: 20th Anniversary is the latest and greatest collection of Pac-Games for all those hard-core munchers out there. It features the original Pac-Man (down to each individual line of code), 36 new 3D mazes, a Mario Bros.-type quest mode, and a hidden art gallery. The quest mode puts Pac on the trail of the evil Toc-Man, Pac-Man's metallic alter ego, who has kidnapped Pac's buddies. You can unlock secret mazes in the quest mode to be played later, or you can choose to forgo looking for extra mazes and instead focus on your rescue mission. The music to this title includes revamped, jazzed-up versions of the original introduction and cutscene music, which alone makes it worth the price of admission. Though the quest mode has been done before in other,

challenging games (it's almost impossible to die), hard-core Pac-Fans will want to find every hidden maze so they can unlock the hidden gallery of Pac-Art.



## ***An Interview With Billy Mitchell***



The world's first perfect Pac-Man player.

On July 1, 1999, Billy Mitchell of Florida scored the world's first (and only) perfect game of Pac-Man. This means he cleared all 256 boards, ate all the bonus fruit and four ghosts with each power pellet, and didn't die. His final score was 3,333,360 points. The game lasted over six hours and landed Billy in the Twin Galaxies Videogame Hall of Fame. Videogames.com caught up with Mr. Mitchell recently to ask him a few questions about Pac-Man, his accomplishment, and life in general.

Twin Galaxies referee Walter Day looks on as Billy Mitchell scores the world's first perfect Pac-Man game.

GS: Why Pac-Man?

Billy: Because Pac-Man is the Cadillac of games. The most distinguished game. The most legendary game. In fact, the Twin Galaxies Intergalactic Scoreboard and the Classic Gaming Expo '99 proclaimed Pac-Man the "Game of the Century" at the recent CGE '99 in Las Vegas and at the Tokyo Game Show, where Walter Day [a Twin Galaxies referee] presented a framed, ornate certificate to Mr. Masaya Nakamura [President of Namco] attesting to this fact. In other words, Pac-Man is the game to beat. And whoever beats it is the Heavy-Weight Champion of the Video Game World. Also, beating Pac-Man was a challenge that was irresistible. Out of the ten billion times that Pac-Man was played during the last 20 years, no one had beaten the game. I decided that I had to be the first.

GS: You mentioned you're planning on beating your record, timewise, in just over three hours.

Billy: There are two categories of Pac-Man score recognized by the Twin Galaxies Intergalactic Scoreboard. I have already won my place in video-game history by being the first player to achieve a perfect Pac-Man game. This means that the Twin Galaxies record book will permanently recognize me as the Pac-Man champ. However, the other category of score is for the fastest perfect Pac-Man score. Being a serious competitor, I plan to hold that record too, and I believe that I can lower the time to just under 3:45 hours. The person who knows the game best is also the person who can finish a perfect game the fastest. It is possible that in time others will also achieve a perfect game. However, history will honor the fastest time as the best performance.

GS: How do you prepare for this?

Billy: Practice, practice, practice. Mental preparation and lots of hot sauce. I get mentally psyched and will not accept anything less than victory. I'm just too damn stubborn.

GS: You've stated that you didn't use any patterns while beating the game. How is this possible?

Billy: I understand the behavior of the ghosts and am able to manipulate the ghosts into any corner of the board I choose. This allows me to clear the screen with no patterns. This was a more difficult method for the initial 18 screens. I chose to do it this way because I wanted to demonstrate the depths of my abilities. I wanted to raise the bar higher - to a level that no one else could match.

GS: Were there any moments when you were afraid you'd had it? Getting crowded in by ghosts, racing for a power pellet?

Billy: There were numerous times that I had difficulties. On the 16th board I thought they had me pinned. However, I managed to get out of my problems. However, from the 21st board onward (345,000 points) I never made another bad turn until 1.9 million. I entered a rough period where my psychology was overshadowed as I realized I had over 100 more boards to go. I cheated death again and again. At approximately 2.1 million I mentally and verbally coached myself in order to continue onward. After 2.1 million and onward I was free from mistakes.

GS: How did you feel when you realized you had finally done it?

Billy: I was relieved. I could now quit playing Pac-Man. There was nothing further I could accomplish. The 17-year journey had finally come to a close. However, now I am resolved to continue on competing, dominating any new Pac-Man titles that come out.

GS: How has your life changed since you scored the first perfect game?

Billy: People recognize me on the streets. The media calls nearly every day. Some of the media invitations are very interesting, but, at this time, I have to keep them secret. Many big companies have shown interest in doing promotions with me, and I was crowned the Player of the Century by the Classic Gaming Expo '99 and the Twin Galaxies Intergalactic Scoreboard during the recent convention in Las Vegas. This award was given for my accomplishments over the last 17 years, which included more world records on more prominent games than any other player in history. This award was also presented to me by Mr. Masaya Nakamura onstage at the Tokyo Game Show in front of a crowd of thousands.

GS: Do you have any plans to take on other Pac-Man games, like Ms. Pac-Man? Billy: I am already only a razor's edge behind the Ms. Pac-Man world record holder, Chris Ayra of Miami, Florida, who also is my best friend. I will challenge his supremacy soon. Meanwhile, Pac-Man World 2000 is my next conquest, and I plan on spending a lot of time learning the game.

GS: What do you think of the new Pac-Man titles?

Billy I think that Pac-Man World is awesome. It offers the original, classic Pac-Man as well as modern versions. This new edition is a very challenging version and will become a very successful member of the Pac-Man family.

GS: Do you own a Pac-Man machine?

Billy: Yes, I have one in my home and one at each of my offices.

GS: Do you have any problems with a particular ghost, or are they all the same in your eyes?

Billy: I don't have any problem with any of the ghosts. Remember, I'm perfect.

GS: Any other thoughts or comments you'd like to share with us?

Billy: All my life I wanted to do something unequivocal... and I haven't done it yet.

Special Bonus Question: What happened to that quarter?

Billy: It was a token.