

review: **Eightball Deluxe Pinball**

Reviewed by Jon A. Blum

Type: Electronic Pinball Simulation.

Publisher: Amtex Software.

Retail Price: \$69.95

Mail Order:

\$42.00

Requires: 68020 or greater Mac with color QuickDraw and 256 colors on 12" or larger monitor, 4 MB free RAM, 4MB free HD space, and 6.07 or greater.

Protection: One time valid serial number.

IMG Rating: [√√√ 1/2](#)

Eightball Deluxe Pinball (Hereafter 8 Ball), is the latest release from Amtex software, makers of Tristan Pinball. Eightball, the electronic version of the classic arcade release from Bally, features digitized sound and graphics combined with highly realistic ball motion physics which Amtex has dubbed "Virtual Engineering." According to Amtex, Eightball is the first in their new "Pinball Classics™" series which will also include such favorites such as Fun House and Royal Flush.

[Chalk Up](#). Eightball Deluxe (the actual Pinball game under the Bally label) was actually the successor to "Eightball". Released in 1977, Eightball's theme was based on the popular TV series "Happy Days." Not only was Eightball extremely popular, it was also one of the first pinball machines to incorporate solid-state technology. One of the benefits of solid-state machines was that in multi-player games, each player could continue exactly where he/she left off with all the targets in the same state they were after their last turn.

Four years later, inspired by the record breaking success of the Eightball, Bally had the original designer, George Christian, attempt to re-create that success with an updated version including more features, target shots, and strategies. The design challenge came in trying to include more features without confusing the player. Moreover it had to be easy to play for the beginner, yet challenging enough for the hardcore pinball veteran.

The decided theme for the new game was that of Pool hall in a Country/Western flavor. Go

face to face with a Pool shark and win. (Just don't forget to pick that chaw out from between your front two teeth before you ask for another Lone Star.) So with the help of Margaret Hudson, one of Bally's conceptual artists, Christian was able to deliver the perfect mix of modern micro-processor technology, fabulous artwork, playability, and of course that "feel" that came to be known as "Eightball Deluxe."

Amtex has faithfully recreated every bumper, target, bell, whistle, popping solenoid, and light which adorned the analog classic. 8 Ball's digital sound, scanned images and animated lighting truly mimic the action of a real machine. My only problem was that I kept getting quarters stuck in my disk drive!

[ack 'em Up](#). 8 Ball is installed from three 800K floppies and requires approximately 4 megabytes of free hard disk space to accommodate the expansion of its compressed files. The entire process is quite simple leaving little margin for error. After the installation process is complete and you've run the game for the first time, you'll be prompted for a valid serial number. The copy protection is quite painless, but if you want to copy the game from your desktop Mac to your PowerBook (so you can get something productive accomplished on that

flight to MacWorld), you'll have to re-install from the original disks. When Eightball is launched, it checks to see if it is still residing on the same Mac it was originally installed on.

The box comes with — get this — a genuine pinball and flipper. Why you ask? Who knows. I have enough junk in my garbage compactor every Sunday as it is. It's a cute idea, but not what some would call ecologically sound.

The manual gives general pinball tips as well as Eightball tips from a Pro (yea, people actually do this for a living)! All the information you need to get started is in the manual, the rest of the learning curve is based on experience.

8 Ball, Corner Pocket. 8 Ball sports three paddles; the third paddle is located to the left of the play field about half way up. It's controlled on the same "circuit" as the left paddle, so one key activates both. Among other things, the third paddle can be used to slam the ball into the bank of "Side Pocket" targets located on the opposite(right) side of the playfield.

As with Tristan pinball, shooting the ball is accomplished by pressing and holding down the return key. The longer you hold it down, the further the "plunger" retracts. Letting go will release the ball. By careful observation and practice you should be able to make a "skill-shot" by placing the ball through either of the two top rollovers at will.

The main attraction in 8 Ball is the Corner Pocket; by knocking down all the Drop Targets in the "rack" of pool balls to the right of the play field, you light the 8 Ball target. Sinking the 8 ball will then advance scores and activate the Deluxe Target Spots located directly behind the drop targets. Knock out all the D-E-L-U-X-E targets and take home 50,000 points.

The "Bank Shot" is a lane of four in-line targets which has to be cleared to get to the main Bank Shot target. Hit the Bank Shot and it scores 50,000. Hit it again and you get a free game.

To collect new balls you need to trip the rollover button on the left of the playfield. Trip it eight times and walk away with 70,000 points and a free ball. By carefully balancing points and specials, minimizing risks and anticipating the action, even you can be a pinball pool shark!

One nice feature is that registered players can save their high scores to an encoded file and have it entered into a contest to win a free game. Some of 8 Ball's other features include on-line help and support for up to four separate players.

Stop Talk'n & Start Chalk'n. When I first sat down to play this game for the review, I figured I'd play for about 45 minutes, write the review for an hour, and then crash — YA. I never got passed the game testing stage. The next time I looked at a clock it was a full five hours later and I'd already heard the Sunday paper land on my doorstep. Needless to say I was enthralled with 8 Ball.

The original design for the arcade machine might have been for easy beginner play, but this game is tough. Much more of a challenge than Amtex's Tristan Pinball. If I were in an arcade, actually pumping quarters into this game, I would have given up and walked over to the video game section before my allowance was gone. It's so difficult, you're liable to think somebody slipped magnets between the paddles. Don't be intimidated; as your skill increases and the points start adding up, your ball seems to last a little longer. It may be harder than Tristan, but it's also a much better game both graphically and in terms of playfield features. Performance should not be an issue with 8 Ball. Although I have a Quadra,

this game should perform equally well on just about any platform.

I really have only three complaints, but you (and I suspect Amtex) will be happy to know they're all more or less trivial. First off, 8 Ball doesn't blow up to fill larger monitors. It's compatible with them, but it doesn't take advantage of them with larger artwork. While this would be inexcusable for a flight simulator, its effects are less noticeable in a game like 8 Ball. Next, there are no conventions for re-mapping keystrokes. There are only three keys however, and they do seem to be well placed. And finally, to enter names for high scores you need to use the paddle flipper keys to tediously run through each letter of the alphabet sequentially for each letter of your name. C'mon folks, true-to-form is one thing, but we are using computers here!

Pros:

- 256 colors
- Realistic digitized sounds
- Incredible simulated ball physics
- Very challenging (to the point of invoking rage)
- Painless copy protection
- Lasting playability
- No bugs encountered

Cons:

- No large screen advantages
- No keystroke mapping
- Tedious name entry for high scores