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ction Pack 2 is Activision's second attempt to cash in on whatever nostalgia can still be drummed up for the early 1980's. A time when MTV showed only music videos, Michael Jackson still had most of his original face and I sat with my eyes glued to the TV. My mind and body were mere extensions of the Atari 2600 system, the ruler of the home video game universe! Missile Command, Space Invaders, Defender... those games enslaved me with addictive play. Didn't Atari make all those games? Tearing open the package, I scan the 15 tiny icons of the Action Pack 2 and draw a total blank. I've never played any of these games before. This could be fun, though. Let's take a look...

[The Good](#)

The following games have what it takes to justify repeated play.

Ice Hockey

Goalie and forward, mano a mano vs the computer. Kicking computer butt is actually a challenge as the AI seems to get more adept at stealing the puck as the seconds wind down. Slap your enemy in the "head" with the stick to disable him. Just like the real thing!

Tennis

Nothing could be more basic than this. Move your player around the court and try to angle your shots. The only time you swing your racket is on serves. Still this game is challenging

and addictive.

Enduro

I don't know what is so addictive about this extremely repetitive driving game. You maneuver what looks like a digitized louse past hundreds of its brethren through night, snow and fog. Creative use of four colors makes for some intense sunrises and sunsets. The challenge of passing such sheer numbers of cars had me playing this game for hours even though I was bored and didn't even like the game...really.

River Raid II

This game was designed in 1988. Watch your plane from an overhead view as you avoid crashing into flack and helicopters on your river mission. Includes a primitive radar viewer.

Laser Blast

In this game, you're the aliens. Use your lasers to blast the enemy on the ground.

[The Semi-Good](#)

These games could just as easily have been classified semi-bad.

Stampede

Hop on your trusty orange steed, grab your lasso and save the world from mad cow disease. Frustratingly low horsepower makes this game a challenge.

kiing

Race downhill against the clock between the flags while jumping over the gray spots and avoiding all green or yellow blobs that might cause a nasty spill. Lack of other competitors soon turn the slopes into a lonely, icy, wasteland.

Keystone Kapers

"Attention K-Mart shoppers." Here's a Super Mario Brothers-like game that has you moving

up and down platforms, jumping shopping karts and ducking bi-planes in pursuit of the fleeing Harry Hooligan. Kool!

The Bad

The more I played these games the more I wished I hadn't.

Dragster

Tap the space bar and watch your bitchin' dragster blow-up time and time again as it rolls down the track. Or reach the end intact for a score!

Plaque Attack

"Grab the toothpaste and destroy the enemy!" What?

Barnstorming

Fly your plane in and out of barns. Avoid geese and pesky wind towers.

Atlantis

A lame Missile Command wanna-be that has you defending your city against alien "Gorgon" vessels.

Oink!

If you've always wanted to play the role of the three little pigs, raise your hand now. Here's your chance to defend your home against Mr. Wolf.

Dolphin

As George C. Scott ("Day of the Dolphin"?) you maneuver your dolphin beyond the clutches of deep sea creatures.

Megamania

Ross Perot tries to...oh wait, that was Megalomania...Megamania is a lame shooter that tries to be Galaxian. Shoot diving burgers, dice and bow ties.

The Ugly

Judged by today's standards, none of these games will win any beauty contests. This is not surprising considering their average age is around 14, which is about 140 billion in computer years. But that's OK because with these games, game-play is all that matters. Who cares if the cows in Stampede look like escaped biological specimens from your 8th grade science class. At least there's no down and out Hollywood actor looking for a quick buck in the role of Harry Hooligan in Keystone Kapers. These games live or die on the merits of playability alone.

The "2" in Action Pack 2 means that this is a sequel. Apart from the new games, little has changed. For an in-depth look at the shortcomings of Action Pack 1 see the review in IMG's September '95 issue. The 15 games come on a CD ROM or two floppies. After installation, a folder appears on your hard drive containing 15 separate icons with the original box art representing the 15 separate Activision applications. Click on an icon and a 306 X 210 game window opens. This was the only option in Pack 1. But if this microscopic Game-Boy sized action isn't your style then a quick click to the title bar zoom box now gives you full-screen action without any noticeable speed or graphics degradation. A Settings file allows you to speed up animation. Choose from three different keyboard sets and control the nag factor (see below). The Help file includes How to Play, Scoring, Hints and Game History.

Action Pack 2 includes some nice features. The ability to read about the history of the

designers is a nice touch. Hints straight from the designers are really useful in beating the games. The nagging Mom feature is an eerie voice from the past that succeeded in breaking my concentration several times. "What are you gonna do, play video games for a living?". Uh... yes. The games ran fast, clean and crash free on my PowerMac 6100, but don't try to run them on anything less than a 68040.

Still, there are some glaring weaknesses from the first Action Pack that could have been addressed in this addition but appear to have been ignored. All high scores still have to be entered by hand on the Scoring list. I find it somewhat difficult to believe that the technology is not there to automate this feature. Although several keyboard configurations are included, there is no joystick option. If you want to use a joystick, you have to configure each game yourself. Perhaps it's just a deficiency of my stick, a MacAlly, but all of the controls seemed sluggish. Keyboard controls worked fine, but in the old days, all I ever used was a joystick.

A Fistful Of Dollars

What price for nostalgia? Well, it lists for \$49.95. If you pay this you will feel very sad. The street price of 30 dollars is less painful and if you can pay less, you'll avoid feeling ripped off and be able to truly enjoy the simple fun of some of these games.

Last Rites

These games show their age and anyone who is surprised by that hasn't been living on this planet for the past 15 years. Sure, there are a lot of games, many of them Shareware, that do it better and cost less. Sure, many of the games in Action Pack 2 lack any redeeming qualities. Yet, despite their chunky graphics and beepy-boopy sounds, some of these games will still provide hours of game play and a head trip for anyone who played them when they first came out. If you like arcade games, have ever enjoyed playing the Atari 2600, or just want to open a little virtual window into the early 1980's, this is your chance. My advice? For maximum enjoyment of your Activision Action Pack 2 think low: low expectations and low price.

Pros

- Fun nostalgia trip
- Some challenging gameplay
- Crash free

Cons

- Games show their age
- Pricey
- Overabundance of weak games
- Some implementation problems from previous version not addressed

Publisher Info

<http://www.activision.com>