

GameRoom Magazine's

GameRoom of THE MONTH

by Jeremy Wagner





The Vintage Vault Arcade and Game Room

I had the privilege of growing up during the golden age of videogames. The sights, the sounds and the freedom of being dropped off at a local arcade with \$10 was sheer bliss. There was a certain ambience about those early arcades. There was the low lighting, the sound of 30 games playing at once, and no matter what game you were playing you always had an audience. Nothing like showing off your skills. Although I eventually got an Atari 2600, it didn't compare to the visuals and sounds of a true arcade game. This obsession with games led to many other systems. Among those early systems were the Commodore 64, Sega Genesis, and Nintendo 8-bit.

Flash forward to right after I graduated from college in 1995. I found two arcade games to purchase—a *Contra* and *Mr. Do's Wild Ride*. Due to space limitations, my collection stopped there. These two games followed me to another state and back again, then finally ended up in a church game room for a few years. I eventually moved back into





another house and the two games ended up back in my possession. During all those years one of my good friends started going into a collecting frenzy, and had created a nice game room for himself. One evening over at his house, my wife fell in love with his Megatouch touchscreen game. We decided to buy one of these games for ourselves for Christmas, and this is when the bug bit me.

I figured since I bought a Megatouch game for the wife that maybe I could pick up another game for myself. Well these games are like 300 pound potato chips—you can't have just one! Next thing I know I'm scanning eBay, watching Craigslist and going to arcade auctions. The collection started to grow quite rapidly, so at the time most of my games were ending up in the garage in nice long rows. The shock on the neighbor's faces when I opened my garage door was priceless. Because of the collection, the car was quickly kicked out of the garage. In the beginning of the hunt for games, I was buying just about everything I could get my hands on as long as it was the right price. The right price, cheap, always came with some needed repair or

cosmetic work. Of course half the fun of being a collector was fixing these games up. As space became a premium, I started selling less popular games and began the hunt for games on my most wanted list. Luckily, as time went on I picked up all my favorite games from my youth, with the exception of a *Star Wars*. I'm still looking for one of those to add to the collection.

I was able to talk the wife into several road trips to pick up new games, and managed to turn one of those trips to Chicago into a mini vacation. That one was for a Simpsons game. We even took the game to the beach while we took a swim in Lake Michigan.

Probably the best road trip story was when I drove 3 hours to pick up a *Mario Bros*. On the way home, the transmission went out in the van about 1.5 hours from the house. We called a tow truck to take us back to our home town. The tow truck driver was going to drop the van off at a repair shop. All I could think about was how I was going to get the game from the repair shop back to my house. I then asked the tow truck driver





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if he could swing over to my house to drop off my payload. He was shocked and excited that I was bringing home a large standup video game. He towed the van over to my house, lowered the bed of the tow truck, and even helped me unload my game. Now that's service!

At the time my "garagecade" was busting at the seams. My wife, who was initially supportive of my hobby between 5 to 10 games, was not so thrilled about topping out at 27 games. Luckily, with the birth of a new baby we were in the market for a new house. It was actually quite amusing that a major factor in the purchase of my new home was basement space for a game room and a walkout basement.

I finally found the perfect home with 4000 square feet between the main floor and basement. In this house was 44 feet by 25 feet of unfinished basement. That would give me an 1100 square foot game room, and would be the perfect blank canvas to work with.

I actually had two moving days to the new house. The first moving day was for games only. The second moving day was the rest of the house and the family possessions. Thanks to three very good friends of mine, we moved over 20 arcade machines that first day using just one pickup truck and one van. The new house was only 10 minutes away, so multiple round trips was not a problem. I fed them lunch that day, but I still owe them big for that one.

Immediately after moving in I had the game room under construction. Of course power requirements was an issue to address, so I ran wiring for five separate 20 amp circuit breakers. Everything else just came together.

The focal point of the game room is a custom-built island bar. This was made from all oak wood, with my father-in-law doing most of the handiwork. That's what happens when you marry the right woman. I installed 4 Belkin Conserve power strips to turn on 4 separate banks of games using the included remote.

Now that the game room is finished, we have been entertaining with friends and family. My wife has warmed up to the game room as the wow factor sets in every time someone comes over to the house. For me, I like entertaining and I just wanted to recapture a bit of my youth. Many of us who grew up during that era have always wanted to own their own arcade. Thanks to the TV comedy *Silver Spoons*, we thought that was something only millionaires could afford. Fortunately for me, my dream has now become a reality! **GR**