

# Confessions of a Coin-Op Addict

Subject Name:  
Chris Alcott

[www.zfcamaro.com](http://www.zfcamaro.com)

1st Vid Owned:  
Aliens

My passion for Arcade games started early in life. I grew up in a small town; a *really* small town in Maine called Jefferson. It was your typical one horse town with a local convenience store and a video rental place called Video Ventures, long gone now... About once a month my parents would take me to Augusta, the capitol of Maine, to the only movie theatre for 50 miles to watch the latest Disney movie. Jungle King was a favorite. It was at this movie theatre that I first experienced an "Arcade." I remember seeing a room off to the right as you first walked in the door. There was a magnificent glow emanating from within and various sounds could be heard echoing within these magical walls. When first walking up the ramp into the Arcade you were greeted with a bright blue neon sign that proudly displayed *Augusta State Street Cinema 6 Arcade*. The first time I walked into the room I stood there amazed.

My video game experience up to this point had been an Atari 2600, and that was briefly at a friend's house. As I glanced about the room I couldn't believe how many games there were. I can't remember the specific amount but it was at least 50 or 60. I do remember the first wall, as this is where I always went first. It started off with *Zaxxon*, the beautiful 3D graphics were state of the art at the time and I had never seen anything like it. Next was *Out Run*, which everyone knows was *the* driving game at the time. The first time I played it I crashed and was pleasantly surprised by the jolt I received from the steering wheel as it shook my tiny hands about. Next was *Joust*, which was great for the 2 player games, then Centipede, and then of course *Tron*. Tron was amazing to me at the time because the whole cabinet seemed to glow in a world of its own.

I would save my allowance all month, which was \$1.00 a week. Well at \$.25 a game that didn't last long. I would be excited all month long and then the day would finally come when we headed off to the movies and I would run to the arcade. There were

times when I was late to the movie or my Mom would have to drag me from the room. I was also in the habit of taking a break in the middle of the movie—after all no one was in the arcade at the time! As time past the games came and went, but my loyalty remained true.

I hunted down arcade games as often as I could and barely noticed they were dying off. There was a Laverdiere's drug store my mom would go to that had one and I was always glad to tag along. It was here that I saw *Dragon's Lair*. I thought I was seeing things. It looked just like a cartoon on TV. This was the first \$.50 game I had ever played but I had to give it a try. I was dead in 2 minutes. But it was worth it; I successfully completed 3 moves and was awarded with several cut scenes. It was like watching a Sunday morning cartoon. This was also where I first encountered the Environmental Discs of Tron. This was the first game I had ever seen where you actually step *inside* a cabinet that encloses you. When I stepped inside the cabinet it was like being in another world. It was the first game I played that has speech and the taunts of the evil Sark always provoked me to beat my last high score. I became *very* good at the game, or so I thought. My high scores never left the top 10. I wasn't always number one when I would arrive at the arcade, but I always was after 1 play.

My Mother would also rent movies in town and there was a Shinobi game at Video Ventures there that I fell in love with. She was a very willing participant in my addiction and I thank her dearly for that. Without her support I never would have played the games there. The quarters I burned through must have cost her a bunch. "Come on Mom, just one more game!" I was also fortunate enough to visit Las Vegas with my parents and you can imagine the arcades that were set up there. We stayed at the Excalibur Hotel and the game room in the basement below the Casinos was just amazing. There were about 100 games. Depending on how my

parents had done on the slots determined how many quarters I got. I was just as excited as they were when they would win!

In later years as I grew older a new Hoyt's movie theatre opened up and I took a job there working at the concession stand. The arcade there was nothing like State Street—5 or 6 new games, you know the drill... There was a fighting game, a couple of drivers, a Crane, but no classics. I forgot about State Street for a few years and then one day it was closed. It couldn't keep up with the new and flashy movie theatre and the doors were shut forever. Well, the Arcade went with it. The doors were sealed and so were all my fond memories. State Street: thank you, and may you rest in peace.

Time passed and I became interested in other things, such as fast cars and girls, but I always remembered those magical days I had playing in the State Street Arcade. I joined the Air Force at 19, served 8 proud years, and recently separated and bought my first house with...a *basement*. I soon found the arcade collecting community of today and the rest is history. With the help of fellow collectors, The Coin-Op Warehouse, TNT Amusements, Quarter Arcade, and Ebay, I hunted down the games I loved most, First was *Aliens*, then *Shinobi*, *Rush N Attack*, *Out Run*, *Zaxxon*, *Black Widow*, *Moon Patrol*, And my personal Holy Grails, an Environmental Discs of Tron, a *Journey* (complete with the Tape Player that plays Separate Ways), *Turbo Out Run* Cockpit and of course, *Punch Out*. And I recently took the *Ms. Pac-Man* plunge, as it has been the most requested game by my friends since I started collecting so I finally picked one up. I'm up to about 20 games now, and there are still many more to come! (I think my "want" list is under 100) I have built a dedicated game room with Black light Carpet, over 40 Black Lights, and had the ceiling painted with glowing stars. I hope it will someday find its way on to the cover of GameRoom Magazine, as this would be a dream come true.



As a lot of collectors well know that half of the fun in this hobby is the chase and discovery of that long lost game you have been looking for. One particularly special game to me is *Rush N Attack*. Now I realize it isn't sought after by many collectors, but it is a very important game to me. When I first played *Rush N Attack* on the NES in 1985 I thought it was one of the coolest games I had ever seen. I played it for hours it seemed and never grew tired of it. You see, my Dad had been in the Marines and the Army and I could pretend I was he as I battled against enemy forces. One day on a shopping trip with my folks I stumbled into the *By The Bay*

Arcade in Boothbay Harbor, ME. I glanced about the room and saw a *Rush N Attack* Arcade Game! I put in all 8 quarters that I had and played away. My Dad eventually dragged me from the machine so we could go home. I did not see the game again for 20 years.

I had heard about the Coin Op Warehouse and how it was a great place to get a good deal on anything coin-op related. I made the trip up there, and sifted among the dusty arcade games as though I was searching for long lost treasure. Then I saw it, A *Rush N Attack* arcade game. When I pulled the game out I could see that the side art was in real good shape as well as was the cabinet.



It didn't power up when I plugged it in, so I took a look inside to see what was up. It was complete and had all the original parts, so I knew it could be fixed. For some reason I didn't buy it on the spot. I had already picked up *Shinobi* and wasn't really interested in *Rush N Attack*, or so I thought. Well, the whole ride home (3 Hours) I thought about it. I kept saying, "Why didn't I buy it?" It was a fantastic game and Lloyd was selling it *cheap*. By the time I got home I was in a frenzy—I called him up right away and told him I would buy it. (I picked it up the next weekend) A complete electronic overhaul took place, as well as new paint and a new Control Panel Overlay. It now takes its rightful place in my arcade, which I named *Riddler's Realm*. There won't be anyone dragging me away from *this* machine (Except maybe the wife...) I also was able to finally track down a *Krull* with the help of Anthony at Quarter Arcade and did a ground up restoration on it, which turned out better than I had hoped. It's the projects and the overall community that make this hobby worthwhile.

My youth and fond memories of growing up and spending time with my family are forever preserved in time and all I have to do is walk down stairs. I hope my daughter Alexis and any other children we have will find as much joy as I have in them. I must thank my loving wife Christina for putting up with the weekend trips to auctions and other various places to find the games. She is very supportive and without her I would not be able to have as much fun with this hobby as I do. She is truly my inspiration and I love her more each day.

I recently was home in Maine and drove by the old State Street Cinema location. Since it closed in 1996 the Billboard sign that always so proudly displayed the words State Street Cinema and "ARCADE" in big silver letters was never taken down. On this trip however I discovered that someone has finally removed it. As I stood in the parking lot and looked at the building that holds so many fond memories of my youth I couldn't help but feel a great wave of nostalgia hit me. It's like Eddie Money said in one of his songs, "I wanna go back, and do it all over but I can't go back, I know". Well, this is true but one thing is for sure—I have fantastic childhood memories, and I hope that by building my arcade that my kids and future generations can share in the arcade experience if only just for a moment. That alone makes this all worthwhile. Thanks for letting me share my story and until next time, happy gaming.—Chris (AKA, the *Riddler*). GR