

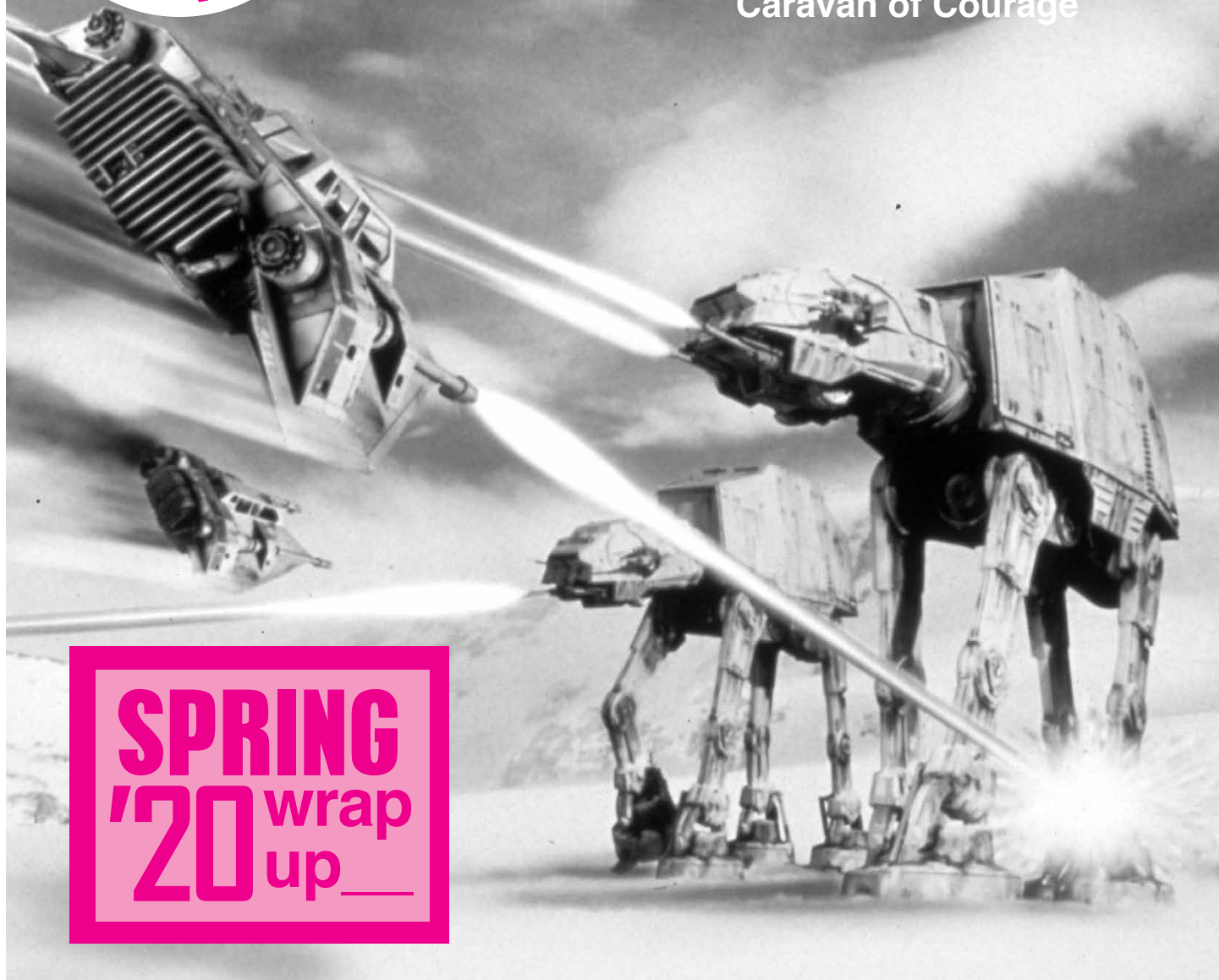
LIMITED RUN

CLUB O' FUN NEWS

Vol. 7
1
March / April
2020

Price: Free as heck

- A New Bonus Publication
- *Star Wars* Strikes Back
- The Return of the NES
PLUS
- The Game Master's Caravan of Courage



SPRING
'20 wrap
20 up__

PREZ SEZ



Welcome to the first issue of the *Limited Run Club O' Fun Newsletter*! This newsletter may have arrived bent or folded, but don't be alarmed. We want you to consume and enjoy this free newsletter! We're offering this awesome thing for free so we can better connect with you, our fans. If you're itching for a pristine copy, please note that we'll have a

collected book of newsletters available for purchase at the end of the year. For now, sit back and enjoy (and recycle it when you're done).

I've wanted to offer a physical Limited Run Games newsletter for years now, and we're thrilled to finally be able to do it! In each issue, we'll feature interviews with our partners, profiles on the people who work at Limited Run, and highlights of past releases. I think you'll really enjoy what we have in store for you! In the coming months, we'll even start showcasing fan collections and answering letters. It's going to be a lot of fun!

That said, I'll let you jump in. Don't forget: *Physical is forever!* LR

CLUB LIMITED RUN O' FUN

In this premiere issue of *The Limited Run Club O' Fun Newsletter*, we hurtle into the future of Limited Run Games by looking back into the past—specifically, the 8-bit days of the Nintendo Entertainment System. Our recent lineup has included many NES games, both classic and brand new, from *GALF* to *Star Wars*... all of which, of course, are manufactured to exacting specs to ensure they work on vintage hardware and repro consoles alike. And there are plenty more to come! "Old" is the new "new"!

Text/layout: Jeremy Parish **Printed by:** Millennium Print Group
Thanks: Howard Philips, Retro-Bit Entertainment, Tomas Guinan

Turning Your NES Memories Upside Down with Mech Masterpiece Metal Storm

The upgraded, Japan-only version of an NES cult favorite finally makes its way to the U.S. nearly three decades later.

Metal Storm! An NES classic, now frustratingly rare. The cartridge alone commands three figures, but Limited Run and Retro-Bit's reissue of the game should help change that. *Metal Storm CE* kicked off 2020 with a new version of the NES favorite, as well as tons of bonuses—including an amiibo-style figure of the playable M-308 Gunner robot—for less than \$70.

"We're looking for titles that have gone up in price so much that anyone who actually wants to experience the game can't, because it's out of reach," says Retro-Bit's Ron Pang. "We want to bring them back at a reasonable price so people can own and play them."

Metal Storm is a notoriously tough game, but Pang says his biggest challenge was talking the game's owners into allowing a reissue. "Irem wasn't really sure what we were doing at first. They're more into the pachinko thing, but here we are saying, 'Hey, we want these video games!'"

Metal Storm CE complements rather than replaces the original 1991 cart. The new version is based on the Japanese Famicom release, with text newly localized by Gideon Zhi. "We wanted to put a fresh spin on things for people who owned the U.S. version—to give them a reason to look at this release, too," says Pang. "It feels like a more complete game."

In short, says Pang, *Metal Storm* embodies his team's passion not only for classic games but for the experience surrounding them. "We wanted it to feel true to the feeling you got when you opened an NES game for the first time, from the foam brick inside the box to the clear bag around the cartridge." Pang says *Metal Storm CE* was created around a "gut check" of the things he likes to see in games, and he hopes others share his enthusiasm. "The more support we get—especially for the more obscure titles—the more we can do with these games." LR



Inside *Metal Storm*:

A new version of the 8-bit classic in a traditional NES-style box (complete with manual, poster, and even a styrofoam block); a metal pin; art cards; a certificate of authenticity; and a window-boxed M-308 Gunner figure—all in a sturdy outer box with slipcase.



Douglas Bogart
Co-Founder

Twitter:
@LimitedRunDoug

Profiles in Limited Greatness

What's your role at Limited Run?

I handle developer relations, signing new games, and the support and marketing teams.

How did you get your start here?

I worked for Josh at Mighty Rabbit Studios and he asked me to start Limited Run with him.

Any non-gaming hobbies?

Playing/writing music helps me disconnect and be creative. I also like to build LEGO!

What's your all-time favorite game?

My all-time favorite is *Phantasy Star Online*. I'm a big fan of Dreamcast-era games.

What's your dream Limited Run release?

I would absolutely love to do a game with Square Enix or SEGA. Any game from them would suffice right now to scratch that itch!

Six Star Wars Classics from a Long Time Ago Make Their Return in 2020

And you can play them now, provided you didn't leave your vintage consoles in a galaxy far, far away.

Those of us of, shall we say, *a certain age* remember the dark times: The grim days of the late '80s and early '90s when *Star Wars* had been reduced to a faint, receding memory. *The Return of the Jedi* had long since wrapped up the saga once and for all (or so we thought). The Saturday morning *Droids* and *Ewoks* cartoons were done for. There weren't even anymore of those strange made-for-TV Wilford Brimley/Wicket W. Warrick adventures flicks. No, back in that grim and dreadful era, young *Star Wars* fans only had one recourse to get their Force fix: *Star Wars* video games.

Fast-forward to 2020. With *The Rise of Skywalker* ending the classic *Star Wars* trilogy of trilogies once and for all (or so we think), and with the next theatrical ventures into a galaxy far, far away slated for 2022 at the earliest, we're reliving those dark days right now. Even precious Baby Yoda can only do so much to soothe the silver-screen-shaped void in our lives.

Limited Run Games is doing its part to keep the spirit of the Force alive in the present day by reissuing classic *Star Wars* video games for collectors... and for anyone who wants to own a legitimate cartridge version of these games that isn't worn and filthy with age. Fittingly, we're kicking things off with the games that helped keep forlorn fans going during the desolate days when the franchise appeared forgotten: The NES and Game Boy versions of *Star Wars* and *The Empire Strikes Back*. We also have some latter-day titles in there as well, from when *Star Wars* was making its mid-'90s comeback: *Shadows of the Empire* (the Nintendo 64 tentpole for 1996's multimedia prelude to the *Special Editions*) and *Episode I Racer*, an N64 classic based on the podracing sequence from *The Phantom Menace*.

As is the Limited Run way, each of these games shipped in two different versions: A standard and a collector's edition. The CEs come in

a glossy, rigid cardboard case containing the usual niceties: The game, a pin, a collector coin or art print, a poster, and of course a Certificate of Authenticity. Each game has been reprinted as a new, working cartridge for its original platform using high-quality components—so not only will *The Empire Strikes Back* work on your NES, it won't fry the system's motherboard in the process. Because we care.

But for fans of *a certain age*, the real star of these 'Wars will be the inner packaging we've crafted for each game. They've been devised to generate a powerful dopamine hit of nostalgic, capable of immediately transporting an entire generation of fans back to their childhood. Looking at these games will remind veteran *Star Wars* fans of eagerly tearing open the wrapping on a birthday gift that was clearly an action figure, desperately hoping it was something cool, like "Darth Vader" or "Luke Skywalker (X-Wing Pilot)" and not, say, "Ugnaught" or "Power Droid". (Or, for the younger crowd, hoping for a "Darth Maul" instead of a "Sio Bibble".)

Every Limited Run *Star Wars* cart, whether standard or collector's edition, ships in a blister pack attached to a card designed in the style of vintage *Star Wars* action figures. And of course, on the back you'll find a call to collect 'em all—cue flashback to long hours spent gazing in covetous rapture at "COLLECT ALL 92" on a salvaged "Lando Calrissian (Skiff Guard Disguise)" cardback—because, after all, longing is half the fun of collecting.

And since our *Star Wars* reissues are sold out, the longing lives on. If you missed out, you'll have to do like you did as a kid and find someone to trade with. Either that, or you can simply wait until our next batch of *Star Wars* games—which will include *Dark Forces*, *Rebel Assault*, and the absolutely timeless *X-Wing* games—goes up for preorder. **LR**



From left: The Empire Strike Back Collector's Edition contents; CE boxes; transparent NES cart and pin; nostalgia-loaded Star Wars standard edition packaging.

Making the N-E-S Feel N-E-W

Tomas Guinan shares the secrets of creating modern-day 8-bit masterworks like *Golf* and *Jay & Silent Bob's Mall Brawl*.

Limited Run Games is going retro in a big way in 2020—not bad considering our first retro release debuted just two years ago. That first foray into publishing for classic systems, 2018's *Golf*, began as a tie-in to Sidebar Games's *Golf Story* for Switch. *Golf* appeared in *Golf Story* as an NES-style minigame, but it took on a life of its own to become an actual physical NES cartridge with a little help (OK, a *lot* of help) from Tomas Guinan of Spooky Bard Productions. Guinan has been programming for NES since high school, when he first began to explore the internet. "The first thing you do online is start looking up things you're interested in," he says. "I discovered there were *Final Fantasy* games that had never been released in English. I thought, 'There's got to be a way for me to play these.'"

When it turned out there wasn't, Guinan became involved in the NES fan translation and ROM-hacking scene, determined to make his dream of playing the real, 8-bit *Final Fantasy II* come true. Eventually, the concerns of adult life—work and college—imposed themselves on his free time, and his NES work waned. It was only a few years ago that his enthusiasm was rekindled by RetroUSB's high-definition NES clone, the AVS, which launched just as Guinan was completing his degree in computer science. "I started revisiting games I loved as a kid," he says. "At some point, I realized, 'These were just games, made by people—I can do that.'"

His first NES project, *Eskimo Bob*, caught the attention of Limited Run Games co-founder Josh Fairhurst, who recruited him to convert *Golf Story*'s retro mini-game *Golf* into a legitimate NES cartridge. *Golf* may have looked like an NES game, but getting it to run on real hardware required a



Left: An NES-accurate version of *Golf*; Right: Brawling in a mall with *Jay & Silent Bob*.

complete overhaul. Guinan managed to pull it off in a few weeks.

"It's a small game," he says, "about on the level of the NES 'black box' games. I rebuilt Sidebar Games's assets from scratch. I took the bit-maps they gave me, then crunched them down to fit the NES's constraints.

I broke everything into 8x8-pixel tiles: The basic pieces of a golf course—sand pits, water hazards, that sort of thing."

The NES's constraints have been an even greater consideration for Guinan's latest Limited Run venture: An original production called *Jay and Silent Bob's Mall Brawl*, based on Kevin Smith's *View Askew* universe (think *Mallrats*). While *Mall Brawl* has primarily been designed by Interrobang Games, it's fallen to

Guinan to sort out coding and technical logistics. As a two-player simultaneous brawler, it's proven more complex than his previous projects.

"The whole thing in a lot of ways has been about figuring out design challenges," he says. "We know what we want to do; it's just a matter of figuring out how to make it work. The NES has lots of constraints that I have to work around, and a lot of the design challenges are based around that." Most notably, he says, the NES's sprite display limitations have greatly shaped *Mall Brawl*'s design, determining the number of characters and weapons that can appear on-screen, especially in multiplayer.

Guinan is happy with the outcome of his work, but also with the newfound insight he's gained into the games he grew up with. "With this style of game, sprite flicker is pretty much unavoidable," he acknowledges. "When you understand how these constraints are enforced, you start to appreciate how design decisions were made with games at the time." LR

Limited Run, Unlimited Rumors

Bespoke scuttlebutt, handcrafted for you at the Rumor Mill.

Rumors! You love 'em, we love 'em. But can they be believed? When it comes to these spicy fruits plucked straight from the Limited Run grapevine, we're afraid we'll have to leave that judgment up to you.

- Sometimes counting backward from the modern day to 8 bits results in some totally muddled numbers. Like Zero-2. Zero means "nothing," so how can there be a Zero-2!? Two of nothing? Sounds like nonsense.
- We're big fans of games inspired by classics, of course. Always have our sights set on them, looking to *transform* great digital releases into physical editions. But what flavor jellybean would you need for that?
- We've heard your demands for a physical release of *Scott Pilgrim Vs. The World: The Game*! We've heard *so* many of them, in fact, that we have traveled into the past to retroactively prevent the game from ever existing so we can have some peace and quiet. Thanks, Skynet.
- We're definitely aiming to take our retro efforts beyond the NES. Be patient! To license the true greats can take... *ages*. LR

From Game Master to History Master

Howard Philips on keeping the NES saga straight.

Howard Philips made his name in the '80s as Nintendo of America's Game Master, refining the NES library by helping to select the best games for U.S. release. Those days are long behind him, but he's still committed to the NES cause—only now he works as a steward of Nintendo history.

"I've noticed that the stories being told about those days were marketing stories, or personal ego *I-saved-the-world* stories, or just flat-out wrong," he says. "My objective is to bring to the fore as much accurate history as possible, with data-based and personal recollections that have little to do with with me as a doer or causer but rather as a front-row observer."

That's especially valuable as the modern retro revival has made the console relevant again. Philips says he's not surprised by the NES's longevity. "The one common thread I find among NES fans is that it was a lot of fun for all of us. The wide-eyed innocence of youth, that we could share with all of our friends. Really, I think it's the positive emotions tied up with our own personal Nintendo memories that's driving the current resurgence." LR