

Mark Birsching takes a look BACK at the 2008

CALIFORNIA



CALIFORNIA EXTREME held its twelfth annual show on July 19-20, 2008 at Parkside Hall in San Jose, California. This was our ninth show in the same location and was bigger than ever. Here are some highlights:

There were over 420 playable games at the show, about 150 of which were pinballs. There were old woodrails such as Sally and Bank-A-Ball all the way up to the newest games just being released from Stern (such as Shrek and the New Indiana Jones). There was a Black Spiderman there as well as both Indiana Jones machines (one from Williams and one from Stern) side-by-side. Plenty of 1980 and 1990s machines showed up as well as a few Pinball 2000s. Several rare machines such as Kingpin, Big Bang Bar (the original Capcom version) and Superman were also there. One Centaur had a brand new playfield and looked really neat (nice and white with no fading or yellowing!). There were also plenty of EMs there too such as Paul Bunyan, Wizard, Cover Girl, and Bow and Arrow. A great lineup with something to play for everyone!

Other machines included several mechanical wonders like Penny Pitch, Zeke's Peak and the Main Event. A bowler, a shuffleboard and an interesting game called Billy Ball fascinated the crowd. There were also 250+ video games for everyone to enjoy along with the pins.

Some people brought their modified pinballs for all to enjoy. One was called Hellacopters which is a modified EM put together

by Wade Krause and Dirty Donny. Another was Back Woods Winner. The Whirlwind with the industrial fan and the Addams Family that you have to pedal in order for the flippers to work were back for another year of fun. It was a great line-up of games and people certainly looked like they were enjoying themselves.

Think back to the days when you wandered into an arcade and were mesmerized by all the sounds that emanated from the place. Remember when you wandered around in the dark atmosphere and couldn't wait to play your favorite game. Now, just expand that same feeling to 18,000 square feet with 420+ games. The sound is the same (except maybe louder) and all your favorites were waiting for you to play. At 10pm on Saturday, the lights are lowered even more and the 80's music is cranked up to really remind you of those arcade days, a feature which is a favorite part of the show for many people. It brings back the good old days for people like me who spent a lot of time in arcades. (I still remember the first California Extreme before I was involved with the show -- I spent 11 hours in one day just playing all my favorite pinball machines. Even though at the end of the day I was sore and tired, it was worth every minute of it!)

Besides all the games, there were other things going on. There were several pinball tournaments going on. Three pinball tournaments are based on the eras of the games: modern (1990 to present), solid state (roughly 1975 to 1990), and electro-mechanical (roughly 1960 to 1975).





Dan Fontes gave a presentation on "The Story Behind the Majorettes Canvas" which chronicles Dan's creation of the Majorettes canvas. Dan was responsible for the floor art in the For Amusement Only shop when it was located in Berkeley. Chris Kuntz reprised his talk on Pinball Maintenance 101 giving lots of tips on how to maintain your pinball machine.

A **FOURTH TOURNAMENT** is reserved for casual players only, players who have never won a prize in any previous pinball competitions. A lot of people participated and were seen intent on trying to qualify with the best scores.

Several seminars were held on various topics. One was Pinball Design 102 with Ted Estes and Steve Ritchie. This was most interesting as they spent a lot of time talking about how machines were designed. Ted brought along a lot of pictures, many of which showed the various stages of development on certain machines and what changed for production. Steve added his two cents worth to all the pictures and stories. Ted brought along sample toys that did not necessarily make it to production or were testing prototypes (like all the different materials for Powerballs for Twilight Zone). Ted and Steve have a lot of experience with pinball design and gave a lot of insight to the ins and outs of bringing a pinball machine to life.



On Sunday the grand prize was raffled off (a choice of a Star Trek Next Generation or an Arcade Legends Arcade machine). There were also some other prizes such as a Wheel of Fortune playfield. Everyone here was waiting for drawing hoping to have the winning ticket!

Steve Ritchie was kind enough to sign a Terminator 3 translight for Chris Parks. He is quite amenable to autographing backlasses, games and translights.

Wade Krause and Dirty Donny gave a presentation on the creation of the Hellcopters machine. A modified EM with new artwork on both the backglass and playfield, Wade and Donny gave insights into what it takes to modify a machine. The result was quite amazing and was on display during the show.

Michael Schiess of Lucky Ju-Ju Pinball gave a presentation on the Visible Pinball Project, an EM built with plexiglass. The parts are attached to the plexiglass and you can see how everything works as the game is played (it's based on a Gottlieb Surf Champ). An example of the first prototype was at the show on Saturday.

Jack Gordean gave a talk on Major Pinball and Arcade machine customizations. His latest project was Back Woods Winner which was on display at the show. Other talks included an Arcade Trivia Contest, the creation of Donkey Kong II and Bringing the Old School Experience to Modern Platforms. All the talks were well received and attended as a lot of people soaked up the information presented.

All in all, it was a great show! Over 1,500 people attended and it looked like the attendees were having a great time. We couldn't do the show without all the people who volunteer to help and those who bring games to the show (a huge "Thank You!" to you!). It's a lot of work to put on the show, but it's worth it when so many people have a great time.

The 2009 edition should be happening soon or even as you read this, depending on the PGJ publication schedule and our friends at the USPS. You can check for updates at www.caextreme.org and I hope to see you there. Happy flipping! **PGJ**

California Extreme, July 11-12, 2009



Marco Specialties was there on Saturday to talk to people and show off his PinScore displays. A lot of people were able to ask him questions and talk to him about parts for pinballs. The Time Machine was showing off the latest Data East version of the PinScore display for all to see.



The winners of the tournaments were:

Solid State:

- 1st. Keith Elwin
- 2nd. Andrei Massenkoff
- 3rd. Jim Belsito

Modern:

- 1st. Keith Elwin
- 2nd. Trent Augenstein
- 3rd. Andrei Massenkoff

EM:

- 1st. Neil Shatz
- 2nd. Andrei Massenkoff
- 3rd. Gene Lewin

Casual Division:

- 1st. Ron Rezendes
- 2nd. Neil Inn
- 3rd. Mike Hafner