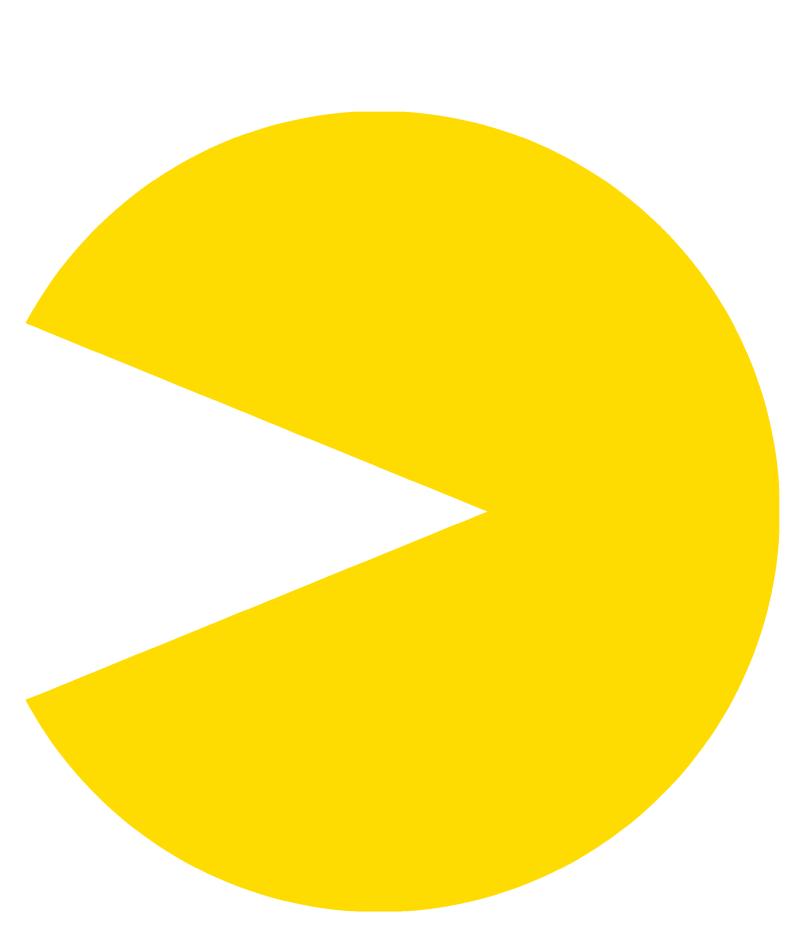


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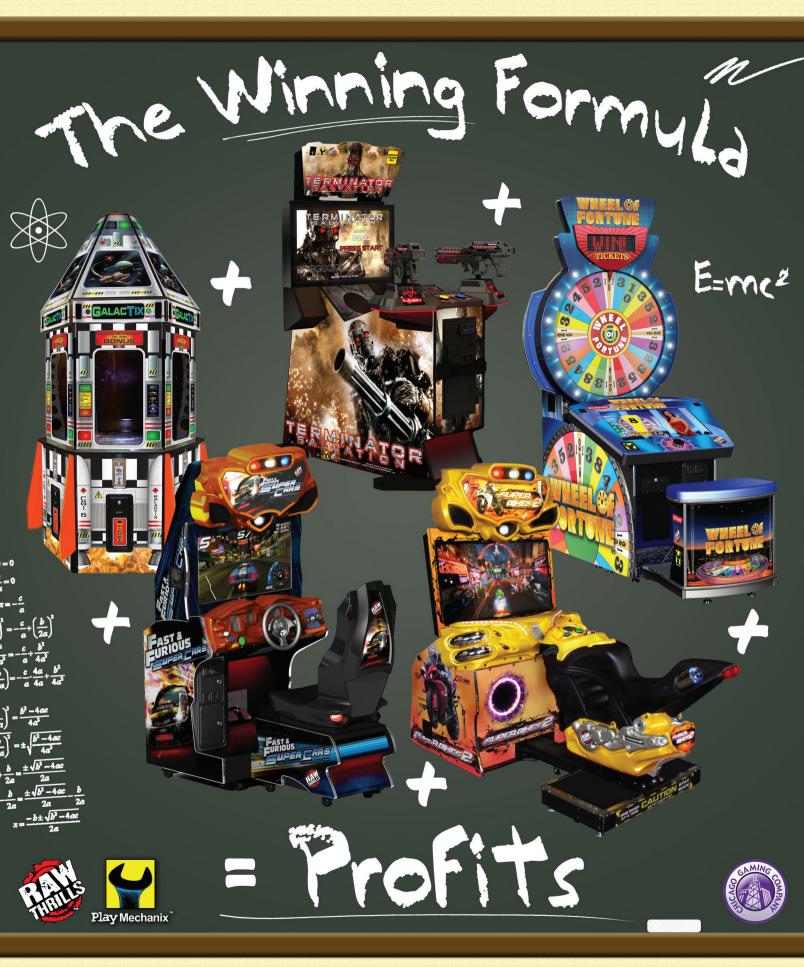
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BONNIE THEARD

We want to hear from you about any of the articles in this issue or topics you'd like to see.

E-mail:

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he New Year may seem like eons away, but it's right around the corner. If you are searching for inspiration or a new approach to take in your business in 2011, don't miss the opportunity to recharge your batteries at the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA) Expo in Orlando this month. Education sessions begin on Nov. 14, and continue through Nov. 19. The exhibit floor is open four days, Nov. 16-19.

If you want to get a better handle on social media and how you can use it to your advantage, Nov. 19 includes six informative sessions. Every topic imaginable can be found in the education program, from "Best Practices in Loss Prevention" to "Saving Time and Money with Smart Project Planning," plus round table discussions for family entertainment centers (FECs), legal issues, financial management, and much more.

IAAPA has made a commitment to host this truly amazing show in sunny Florida for 10 years. Organizers expect 1,200 exhibits spread out over nine miles of aisles (no kidding) and 30 hours of exhibit time. There will truly be something for everyone.

For years I have heard street operators say they don't attend this show because it's not truly a coin-op show, that it won't have games and support services relevant to their part of the entertainment industry. Yet every year more new product introductions from coin-op manufacturers and supply companies make their debut at this show because it is truly an international event and posts staggering attendance figures (24,000 in 2009).

One comment often heard from attendees of the IAAPA Expo is, "It's an excellent idea show." And who among us could not use a few fresh ideas as we scramble to make ends meet and unlock the secret to what forms of entertainment will draw more players into locations.

Operators have told me that the show opened their eyes to the potential of rental equipment beyond the games already on their routes. Exposure to new and different equipment and services is always refreshing. In addition, the show is just plain fun, with impressive rides and food samples that keep you fortified. From pizza to lemonade, and from ice cream to crispy chicken nuggets, you won't want for refreshments.

That fun quotient is a reminder of what our industry is all about: providing a reasonably priced fun experience for players. If you can get your "fun adrenaline" going at the show, it may well spark enthusiasm for change when you return home.

You will get a taste of the IAAPA Expo in the News Bulletin of our December issue, with full coverage in the January 2011 issue. *Play Meter* dedicated 14 pages to the 2009 IAAPA Expo, providing facts, figures, comments, awards, and details of new products from 61 coin-op companies.

At IAAPA Expo 2009, Larry Treankler, President of Bay Tek Games, summed up the value of the show when he said, "There was a lot of energy at the show, and we are hopeful it will carry through into next year. It is always great to launch new products at the trade shows. As manufacturers, it is important that we continue to provide our customers with new and exciting products to better their businesses."

As the providers of those products to the end users—players—operators will benefit from a visit to Orlando for a fun and learning experience.







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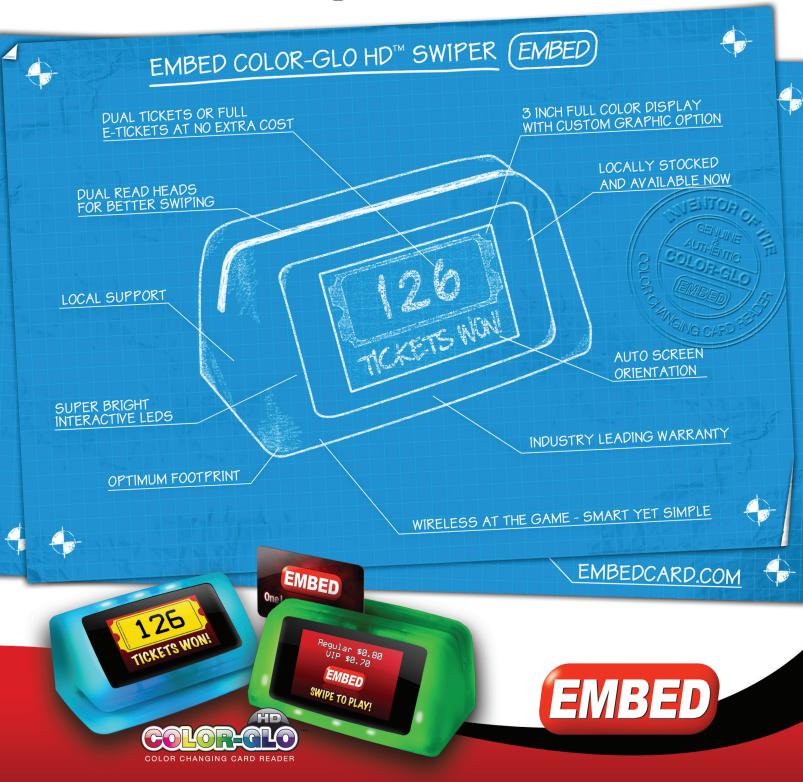
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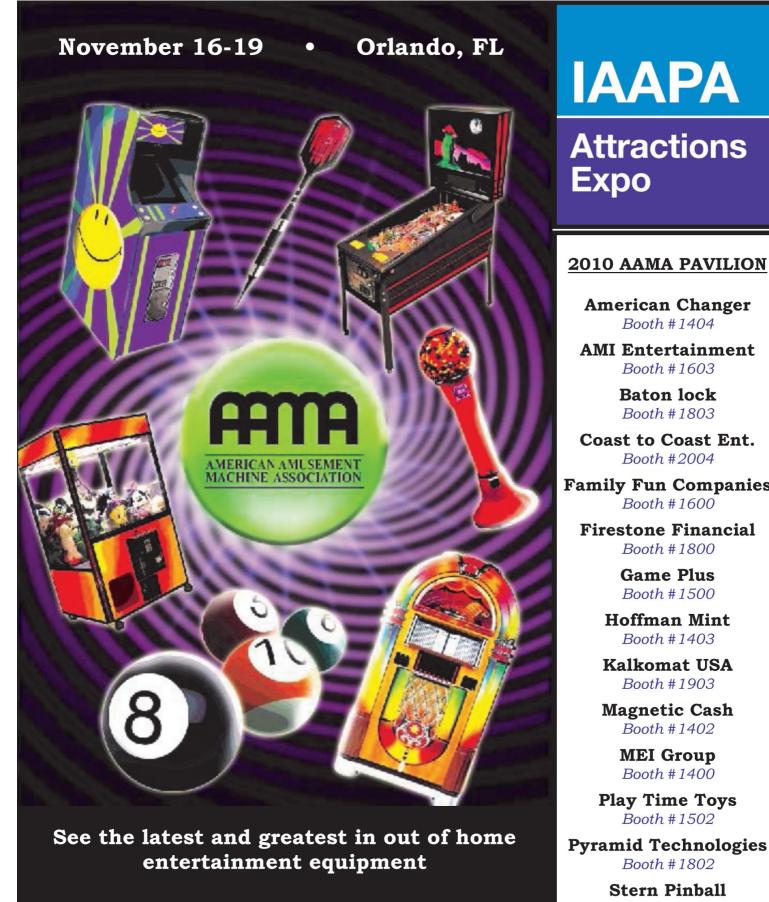


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On the redemption side the company has made its mark with games such as Flamin' Finger, Jumpin' Jackpot, Crazy Typhoon, and the popular Bar-BerCut Lite that is still going strong two years after its introduction.

More recent titles in the video category include Deadstorm Pirates, Razing Storm, Tank! Tank! Tank!, and the new Dead Heat Street Racing that caused a buzz at the American Amusement Machine Association (AAMA) Distributor Gala in July in its near-complete form. The finalized game began shipping in October.

On the 30th anniversary of legendary PAC-MAN, and the eve of the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA) Expo, *Play Meter* spoke with Namco America's Frank Cosentino, Senior Vice President of Product Strategy, to find out more about Dead Heat and Namco's plans for the near future.

DEAD HEAT

Namco has always excelled in the driving game category. All of its past experience came into play with Dead Heat, combined with a recognition of what's required to capture the attention

PAC-MAN's Arcade Party Cocktail Cabinet

of today's social-media engaged audience. Dead Heat will make its formal trade show debut at the IAAPA Expo this month.

Cosentino said, "The cat's out of the bag. We're starting to get collections back from the field. In our original testing it was far and away the number one driver in the location where it tested, and that location had every driver on the market. Its closest competitor took in 25-30 percent less in revenue. Dead Heat did outrageously well."

A number of unique features are found in Dead Heat. First, the player's face is displayed on the screen, as well as the competitors.

Cosentino explained, "What sets this game apart is not only the fact that it takes and displays player photos (the NamCam takes your photo on Mario Kart and Tank! Tank! Tank!), but the game studies the style of driving for each player and retains that information."

Players register their PIN and the game will save it in the machine in that location, along with the player profile. When the player returns, his car will continue to evolve with upgrades.

If two people race against each other, the next time either one goes to that location, the game will remember each player and their friends who are players. If either player goes back and races with different friends, they all get saved in a "friend pool" so to speak. That way players race against friends, not anonymous computer cars. Not only are friends' faces displayed on the screen, but also the cars drive the way each person drives.

These intelligent ghosts drive just like the real player. The more the player



I's Arcade Party Cabaret Cabinet

plays the more the ghost drives like the player. Eight cars race simultaneously on screen. Up to four live players get combined with up to four additional "friends" to get the eight competitors.

Cosentino commented, "This feature provides a far more personal experience. The player can see friends and race against them even if they are not present. The game was designed from the ground up specifically for the U.S. market. We are extremely competitive people, particularly with other people we know. Social competition brings out the best in all of us."

While the field of driving games on the market is large, Cosentino said Namco's R&D investigated what U.S. players want in a driving game. "They nailed it," he said, "in terms of what makes them come the first time and what makes them want to come back and play the game over and over again."

Dead Heat has been in development for two years, with testing and research in the U.S. throughout the course of the project. Even at the end of the development cycle, a final focus group takes place to assure a full understanding of why people like to play the game, so that message can be delivered to operators and locations.

"It's been a long time since anyone has introduced something new and different in the driving game category," said Cosentino. "By the time we get to the IAAPA Expo we will have more collection reports and the buzz that started at the AAMA Distributor Gala will turn into a roar."

Also slated for the IAAPA Expo: PAC-MAN's Arcade Party, a classic compilation of games similar to the reunion game



or the 25th anniversary model. PAC-MAN's Arcade Party features 12 games, original classics in a nostalgic cabinet updated with an LCD screen. All of the Namco classics are now in one place: PAC-MAN, Galaga, Dig Dug, Mappy, Rally-X, just to name a few.

MERCHANDISERS

The merchandiser category is an important part of Namco's portfolio. What are the keys to a successful game of this type? You wouldn't think that the classic video PAC-MAN and the direct merchandiser BarBerCut Lite have anything in common. Think again. The common tread is simplicity.

Cosentino attributes the success of BarBerCut Lite to the fact that it is so simple. "With a direct merchandiser, players don't have to learn to play and hopefully enjoy playing a light game or a spin the wheel game in order to win a prize. The prizes are hanging there directly in front of the players in a brightly lit cabinet," said Cosentino.

"Players never get bored because the prizes are the game. It's definitely a product that is timeless. We will be selling BarBerCut Lite forever. It's the evolution of the crane, with a different twist on how to win a prize. The key is to constantly change the merchandise."

According to Cosentino, Namco will debut at least one game in the merchandiser category at the IAAPA Expo. The product is ClenaFlex, which has been available in Japan and the U.K. and is now coming to the U.S.

ClenaFlex is a 100 percent programmable skill game; it features a dual playfield that can be configured in countless different ways, hence the flex name. Every month an operator could change out the sides of the machine, apply a new kit, and offer players new challenges.

The machine is similar to a crane with two player stations and a playfield that can be configured in different ways mechanically and with the appropriate software. Each kit comes with instructions on installation. One side could feature a giant candy bar as the prize while the other could involve kicking a soccer ball into a hole. Market research is currently under way in the U.S. and the product



should debut sometime in 2011.

Cosentino commented, "ClenaFlex is new and different and fits our philosophy of finding products that really separate us from the pack. This is a brand new style of skill play merchandiser for the U.S. market. Players need new and interesting games to keep them wanting to seek out entertainment outside of the home. As an industry, it's these new games that will help keep us as a viable part of the out-of-home entertainment sector. At Namco America, we look for games that help define us as the cutting edge of out-of-home entertainment providers."

A perfect example is Go Go Grand Prix, a slot car arcade race game that was shown at the Amusement Expo in March.

"This game is ideal for the IAAPA Expo," said Cosentino. "It's a group game with mechanical as well as video elements. Go Go Grand Prix gives players a reason to go to a location and participate in something they cannot recreate at home."

The game is adaptable to ticket redemption if required in a family entertainment center (FEC) or family fun center (FFC) environment. Go Go Grand Prix is currently shipping.

MARKET CONDITIONS

With all that's new and attractive from Namco, the coin-op market is still making a slow recovery from the country's economic woes. Many operators are hesitant to re-invest in new equipment.

Cosentino commented, "Most operators realize they must invest in their businesses in order to be viable. They are competing with every other form of entertainment available. At the end of the day we are in the entertainment business. If we don't continually provide customers with new entertainment, it will become a self-fulfilling prophecy that leads to a downward spiral."

He added, "Operators these days won't buy a driving game just because it's a sequel to a successful game. They want something new that will make a difference in their locations." In addition, Cosentino observed, "Right now the industry is trending on the merchandising side. There are all kinds of ticket dispensing games earning well and attracting a lot of attention."

Cosentino offered this advice: "If operators understand what players want, stay current with trends, and put the latest merchandise in their machines, they will attract players and keep them playing the games."

GAME DEVELOPMENT

Re-investment from the manufacturing side is vital. Game development is not for the faint of heart.

Cosentino said that today it takes \$2 million to \$3 million or more to develop a video game because of complex hardware systems and the teams of people dedicated to the project, from designers and programmers to graphic artists. The playing public expects gorgeous graphics, state of the art game play, and a flashy cabinet. This all takes time and lots of money.

Cosentino admitted, "One of the problems today is a shrinking market-place. We have to find a way to maximize a game across as many markets as possible." Fortunately, with offices all over the world, Namco has the ability to capitalize on these markets with products specifically tailored for each.

When asked about the reductions in numbers of old stand-alone arcades, he replied, "There are plenty of free-standing arcades, but they happen to be within other facilities today. Old bowling centers have evolved into impressive locations with a bar and restaurant and redemption arcade. Waterparks have provided additional arcade locations. There are plenty of good out-of-home locations that have sprung up to replace the old stand-alone arcade."

Namco continues to re-invest and re-invent, with the goal of producing a continual flow of new equipment that will attract players. For more information on Namco America and its products, call (847)264-5610; Web (www.namcoamerica.com). ▲

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Sales, (I-r): Anita Friedl, Tom Siemieniec, and Emilio Cabrera (seated). Not pictured: Mehdi Eghbal.



Shipping/Logistics, (I-r): Pierre Bermudez, Pat O'Brien, and Mario Cruz.



Inside Team Namco

Namco America (NAI) currently operates out of a facility in Elk Grove Village. Ill., which houses all facets of NAI's business. The Product Strategy, Manufacturing, Engineering, Parts, Service, Sales, and Accounting groups all work together in a team-focused atmosphere.

John McKenzie, President and CEO, shares his time between Namco America and Namco Europe. Fortunately, John has mastered the art of being in three places at once utilizing high tech electronics and the ability to function on very little sleep.

Frank Cosentino, Senior Vice President, runs the Product Strategy group. Along with Sam Ven and Jeff Evangelista they take care of product development, localization, testing, market research, advertising, trade shows, promotions, product training, and anything else that no one else will do.

Mehdi Eghbal, Senior Vice President of Sales; Tom Siemieniec; Emilio Cabrera; and Anita Friedl are the force that drives the sales for the company. Without their tireless travels, Namco's great products would not be jumping off the assembly line and into locations all over North and South America.

Ray Tanzer, Technical Director, leads the group that provides engineering of new products oversees, the manufacturing of them, and ultimately provides the aftermarket parts sales and service.

Additional staff includes Jim Roycroft, Purchasing; Fernando Hurtado, Production; Steve Ignarski, Parts Sales; Wayne Steffl, Phone Service; and Oleg Korepanov, Design Engineering. Pat Obrien, Operations, along with Mario Cruz and Pierre Bermudez, run the warehouse. Last but certainly not least, Katrina Dato is the glue that holds them all together.

Rich Wisniewski, Financial Officer, runs the accounting group. Emily Sanchez, Bonnie Buszkiewicz, Robin Perez, Mike Lewandowski, and Joan Garfield make sure bills are paid, invoices are sent, receivables roll in, monthly reports are turned in, human resources get resourced, and the sales team gets hassled about their expenses monthly.

The newest member of the group, Yoshi Sakamaki, Vice President Merchandising, recently joined NAI after eight years with Namco Cybertainment. He had previously worked with Namco Japan since 1995. Yoshi is the main communication portal between Namco America and Bandai Namco Games, Japan. He also a critical piece of the puzzle as the company starts to localize Japan styled merchandising games like ClenaFlex.

Cosentino commented, "Communication is on the top of the list for all of the members of Team Namco. We are a close-knit small group of people that manage to do a great body of work by doing it together. As our business has grown over the past couple years so has our team. Check back often, there are great things on the horizon!"

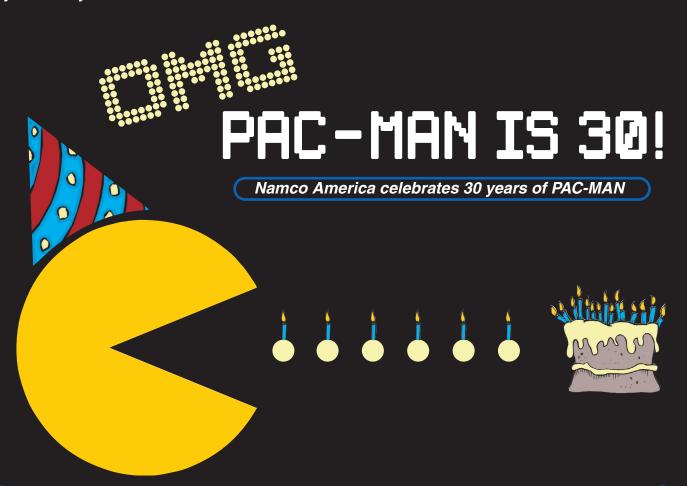


Manufacturing/Customer Service, (I-r): Hisao Kimura, Wayne Steffl, Ray Tanzer, Fernando Hurtado, Jim Roycroft, Steve Ignarski, Oleg Korepanov, and Katrina Dato.



Product Strategy, (I-r): Jeff Evangelista, Frank Cosentino, and Sam Ven.





GOOGLE SEARCH OR INSERT COIN?

Google users are used to pulling up the popular search engine's homepage and finding that the traditional logo has been changed or decorated to reflect a holiday or special event. However, on May 21-23, 2010, users were greeted by a Google logo that had been converted into a PAC-MAN video game.

The doodle (Google's term for its event and holiday-specific logos) was accessible on their homepage and is still available for play as a full 255-level game, complete with a 256th level "kill screen," just like the original coin-op game.

We all know that PAC-MAN is recognizable, arguably one of the most recognizable video games of all time. But what some of us didn't know is that PAC-MAN is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year! And Google's playable logo is just one of many celebratory events that have surrounded this iconic video game's birthday.

Since its release in 1980, this popular video game has captivated men, women, and children alike with its cute, colorful characters, bubbly music, simple rules, and distinctive sound effects. Besides PAC-MAN, who could forget ghosts Blinky, Pinky, Inky, and Clyde?

Google brought news of PAC-MAN's 30th anniversary to seekers of information all across

the world, but the inspiration came from Senior User Experience Designer, Marcin Wichary. Wichary was first exposed to PAC-MAN in his native Poland while traveling with his father who was an arcade-game repair technician.

NAMCO AMERICA CELEBRATES

On July 28, Namco America celebrated PAC-MAN's 30th birthday with a party at its head-quarters in Elk Grove Village, Ill. The party featured great food and an exhibition of Namco America's newest games. Sweet Baby Ray's Barbeque catered the party.

Festivities weren't limited to Illinois, however, PAC-MAN parties happened all across the U.S. this year. The Mall of America in Bloomington, Minn., held a birthday party featuring giveaways, video games, and cup cakes. The party also featured multiple free-to-play retro PAC-MAN arcade cabinets and multiple iPhones, iPads, and mobile devices to play PAC-MAN on.

PAC-MAN PARTY FOR WII

Another celebratory aspect of PAC-MAN's 30th birthday is the game PAC-MAN Party, which Namco America developed exclusively for Wii. The game features four different modes of play, including "classic mode" which is the original arcade version.



REFLECTIONS

Chris Warren of Century Gaming recalls the early PAC-MAN days, "The game was simple to operate, it had one joystick and that was it. It didn't have three joysticks and 10 buttons." He added, "It appealed to every age, I still have some on my routes. Each new generation sees it and they get a feel for what the industry was like in the 1980s and 90s."

Frank Cosentino, Senior Vice President of Product Strategy at Namco America, commented on the phenomenon of PAC-MAN: "For the coin-op side, there is no other game that has withstood the test of time other than PAC-MAN. It's been huge on the consumer side as well. All of the other coin-op game characters came and went, and yet PAC-MAN continues to appear."

"Each new generation sees it and they get a feel for what the industry was like in the 1980s and 90s."

He continued, "On the 30th anniversary of the game, PAC-MAN was inaugurated into the Video Game Hall of Fame in Ottumwa, Iowa, where there is also a PAC-MAN Square."

Cosentino added, "It's been great to be a part of PAC-MAN which started as a craze that exploded at the time that Ms. PAC-MAN came out. Ms. PAC-MAN was an extension of the original game."

It's been 10 years since Namco America did its 20-year reunion game, Ms. PAC-MAN/Galaga/PAC-MAN 20th Anniversary Class of 1981, which combined three classics in one cabinet. Cosentino said, "We've sold well over 30,000 of those games over the last decade."

Next came a 25th anniversary model in a 19-inch cabaret cabinet and countertop, and today we have the new PAC-MAN's Arcade Party that includes 12 original classic games in a cabinet reminiscent of the original PAC-MAN. The cabinet is upright and updated with an LCD screen.

For more information, call (630)238-2248; Web (www.namcoamerica.com). ▲



Mehdi Eghbal (I) of Namco and Terry Moss of Moss Distributing.



Pac-Man 30th anniversary cake



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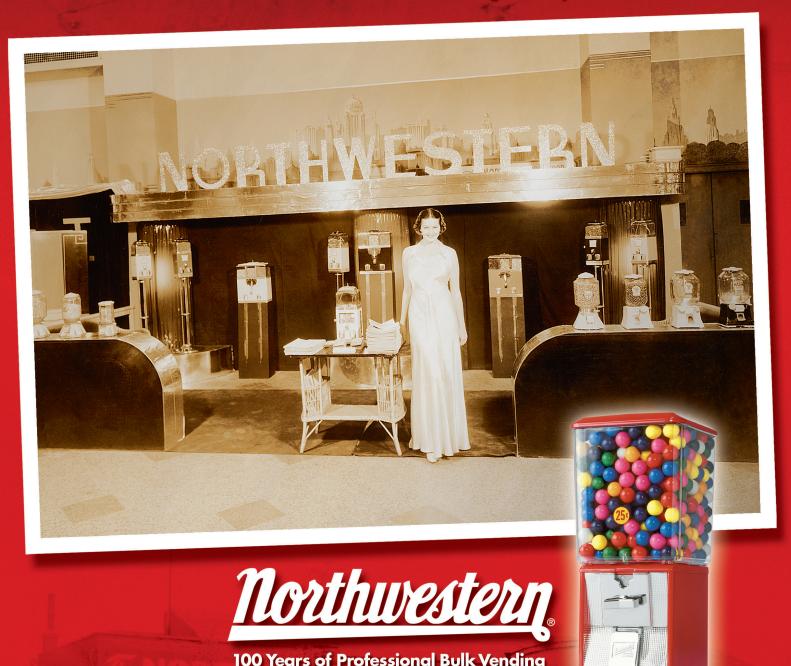


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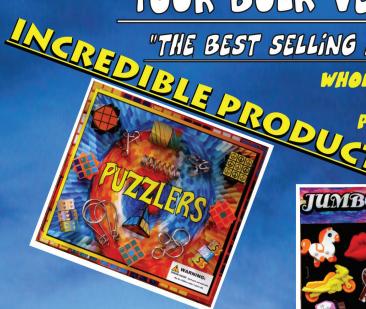
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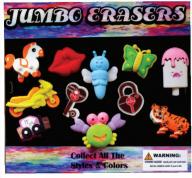


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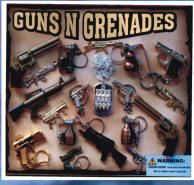
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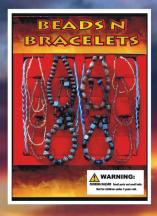








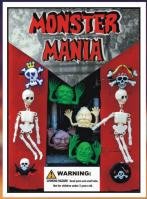
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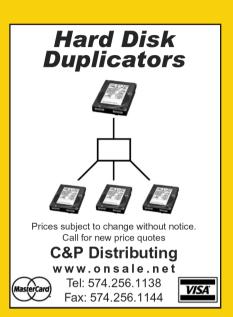
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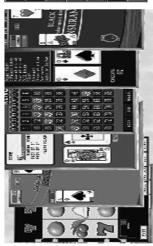
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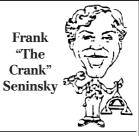
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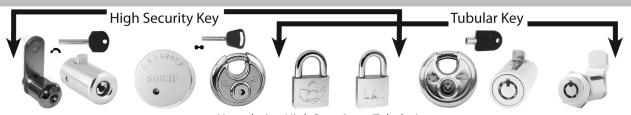


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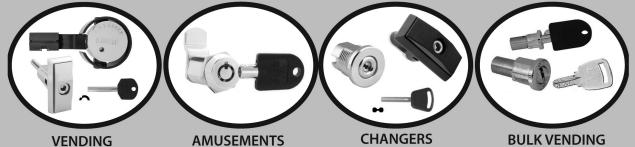
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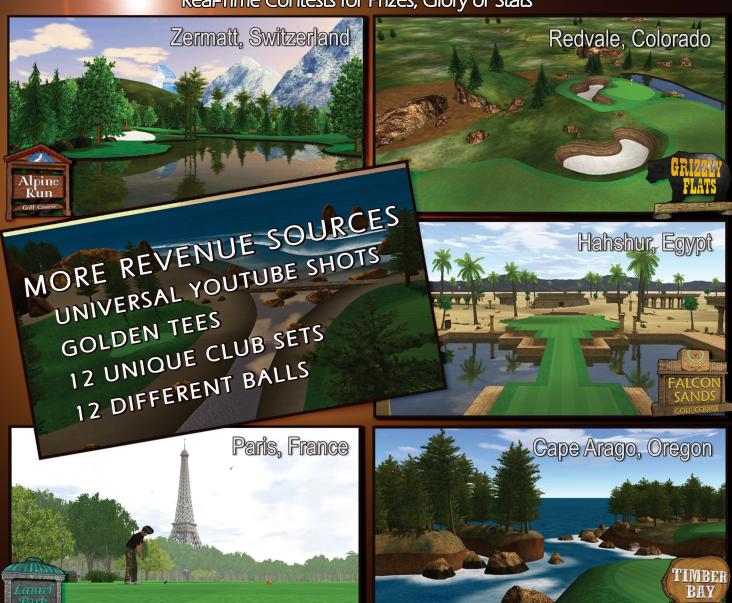
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