

overhead slams, punches, kicks, atomic drops, and more. Fancier moves reward players with higher scores, but simple button-mashing seems to work pretty well. The game looks okay, but lacks the outrageous personality and raucous nature of “real” pro wrestling. Also, gameplay seems like fighting the same guy again and again, unlike in the aforementioned arcade games, which featured distinctive wrestlers with such names as Insane Warrior, Hurricane Joe, and Golden Hulk.

Mean 18 Ultimate Golf

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: Accolade. Sports/Golf, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1989.

This hard-to-find golf game gives players a solid (if unspectacular) video rendition of the popular sport. To hit the ball, players follow the standard three-tap system, which controls the power of the shot and determines whether the ball hooks, slices, or goes straight. Trees, sand traps, water, and other obstacles dot the 18-hole Pebble Beach course, which features a nice variety of layouts. When putting, the game switches from a behind-the-golfer perspective to an overhead view, and players must take into account which way the greens break. *Mean 18 Ultimate Golf* is based on Accolade’s *Mean 18* computer game, which boasted multiple courses and a course editor (elements lacking in the 7800 version).

Meltdown

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: Atari. Light Gun Shooter, 1 player. 1990.

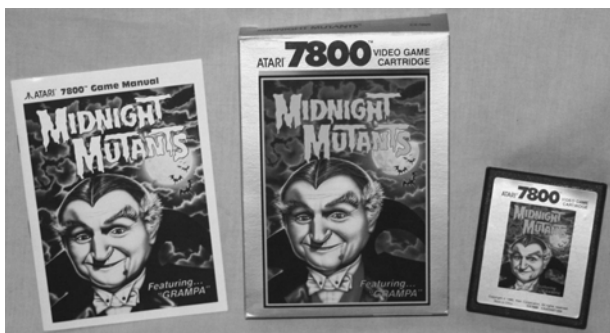
In *Meltdown*, players must protect the reactor cores of 20 different nuclear power plants that have been sabotaged by terrorists. This is done by aiming the light gun at the screen and shooting five different types of “sparkx” that bounce off the walls and off the reactor core in the middle of the playfield. There are also power crystals to shoot, which can repair control rods, double the size of the shots, give the gun continual

fire, and more. *Meltdown* has some nice features (including a password system) and inventive ideas (missed shots create temporary barriers), but the screen annoyingly blinks with every shot fired, and the gun isn’t very accurate. Players willing to overlook these shortcomings will find something to enjoy, as will fans of *Reactor* (a somewhat similar Atari 2600 game, sans the light gun).

Midnight Mutants

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: Radioactive Software. Action/Adventure, 1 player. 1990.

The closest thing the Atari 7800 has to a *Legend of Zelda*-type adventure game, *Midnight Mutants* consists of 10 atmospheric, highly detailed areas to explore, including a mansion, a church, a graveyard, and a pumpkin patch. Each area is teeming with zombies, vampires, bats, mutant bosses (including Dr. Evil), and other killable monsters. The goal is to save Grampa Munster (yep, the one from the television show), who is being held at “Plasmic Prison.” Fortunately, Jimmy, the character players control, can pick up a number of helpful items, including a knife, a cross, an axe, a blaster, a key (for entering the crypt), diamonds (to increase Jimmy’s health), and more. Regrettably, there is no password feature for saving progress, and control is a bit awkward, thanks to the isometric perspective and Jimmy’s inability to walk diagonally. However, awesome graphics and sounds, non-



Midnight Mutants for the Atari 7800, complete with manual, box, and cartridge. The artwork depicts none other than Al “Grampa Munster” Lewis.

linear gameplay, and a fairly unusual concept make the game a worthwhile entry in the 7800 library.

MotorPsycho

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: BlueSky Software. Motorcycle Racing, 1 player. 1990

MotorPsycho has been called a motorcycle version of *Pole Position II*, and that's a pretty good description of the game. There are four different tracks comprised of winding roads, vehicles to pass, and roadside signs to crash into. Also, the vehicle has two speeds (high and low), and the object is to get through each course as fast as possible. Sound familiar? One thing that separates *MotorPsycho* from *Pole Position II* is the fact that the motorcycles can jump over enemy bikes, arrow signs, cones, and ramps for extra points. Also, the roadways in *MotorPsycho* are hilly at times. The game's title is misleading, however, as there is nothing really psychotic about the game, other than the following bit of information found in the instruction manual: "To save wear and tear on your thumb, strap a rubber band around the joystick button that controls acceleration for long play sessions."

Ms. Pac-Man

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: General Computer Corp. Maze, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1986.

The lipstick on Ms. Pac-Man's famous mug is about all that's missing in this near-perfect port of Midway's 1981 arcade classic. The character's round edges have been leveled off just a bit, but this is a small complaint. Unlike the coin-op classic, the 7800 version lets players select the starting level, meaning anyone can jump straight to the banana screen. This is one of the most faithfully reproduced arcade ports of the era and one of the two or three best Atari 7800 games.

Ninja Golf

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: BlueSky Software. Sports/Golf/Side-Scrolling Combat/

First-Person Shooter, 1 or 2 players (alternating). 1989.

A highly original creation, *Ninja Golf* combines three different genres to come up with one very good game. The golfing aspect is simplistic, since all players really do is aim, judge the distance, and hit the ball. The fighting action is basic as well, consisting primarily of running, jumping, and kicking. After the ball is hit, the ninja runs to the ball, encountering gophers, frogs, ninja guards, water hazards (which include sharks), sand traps (which include snakes), and other obstacles along the way. Items to pick up include throwing stars, magic shields, warps, and more. When the ball gets to the green, there is no putting. Rather, players hurl ninja stars at a dragon. This graphically impressive, first-person scene is reminiscent of the shuriken-throwing bonus rounds in *Shinobi*.

One-on-One Basketball

PUBLISHER: Atari. DEVELOPER: Man Development. Sports/Basketball, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1987.

This is a complete, finely programmed port of the popular computer game starring NBA superstars Dr. J. and Larry Bird. The controls take a little getting used to (thanks to the stiff 7800 joysticks), but the game has smooth animation, a nicely rendered hardwood floor, and some entertaining one-on-one hoops action. Players can steal, rebound, shoot three-pointers (Bird is a better outside shooter, naturally), charge, travel, get fatigued, dunk the ball (Dr. J is the superior dunker, of course), and more. On a particularly vicious dunk, the backboard will shatter, prompting an angry ref to come out and sweep up the broken glass. Excellent sound effects accompany this amusing scene.

Pete Rose Baseball

PUBLISHER: Absolute Entertainment. DEVELOPER: Absolute Entertainment. Sports/Baseball, 1 or 2 players (simultaneous). 1989.

Despite slightly sharper graphics and a better color scheme, *Pete Rose Baseball* for the