

CONNECT EMULATION

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Interview with "MADrigal"

14th October, 2002

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Q - What does the name Madrigal stand for?

A - Well it's an odd story... Madrigal is the name of my main Player Character in a Dungeons & Dragons campaign. He's an neutral/evil warrior/mage elf who I role-play since 1993 - he's a sort of "alter-ego/opposite" for me.

I'm a huge fan of real role-playing games - by "real" I mean the ones you play with paper, pencil, rubber and dice. I take the chance to greet my long time friend Giovanni Ortu, my game master, and mate in the CreatiVEmu project (look at <http://creativemu.emuhq.com/> for more information).

Q - How long have you been in the Emulation/Simulation Scene?

A - I'm into emulation since 1997. I've been nothing but a player for over two years, then I discovered the Game & Watch simulation in October 1999 and I decided it was time for me to try to contribute to the emu community.

Since I was a bit skilled with Turbo Pascal and Delphi, I decided to try making my own videogame.

Most people think I'm the inventor of Game & Watch simulation, but that's not true at all! I discovered a few odd simulators around the net, and at first I didn't even realize what they were... I have to thank my friends Pheeraphat Sawangphian (the REAL simulation inventor), Luke Skywalker, author of five G&W simulators, and Mike Green, author of the Speak & Spell Simulator and EmuDX: I discovered simulation thanks to their products.

Then I built up my website in January 2000, and met a lot of friends all around the net. PeterD at EmuHQ revealed himself as a nice guy and offered me hosting for the CreatiVEmu project, which I started with a couple of college mates plus Roberto Ventura - formerly author of a few of the best emulators available for DOS: Ghosts'n Goblins, Vastar, System-8 and Just For Fun.

Then I entered the Emuita staff (<http://www.emuita.it>) as newser/reviewer/interviewer... the partnership at Emuita recently become really strong, since I programmed a news client and built a few hosted sites there.

The most recent one is totally devoted to Nintendo consoles (N64, GBA, Gamecube and Game & Watches obviously) featuring reviews, interviews, emulators, message boards etc etc... a complete "unofficial Italian Nintendo network!". The site is called N!Zone and its url is <http://www.nzone.it>.

Q - Since you just released Mario Bros (Nintendo, Multi Screen Series), do you plan on releasing any other Mario games in the future? Super Mario Bros?

A - Almost all Mario and Kong games have been simulated yet. I'm currently working on a simulator for the wonderful Donkey Kong table-top made by Coleco/Nintendo in 1981. I love that videogame: I received it as a Christmas gift from my Canadian friend Luc Miron (who I greet).

I will NOT simulate Super Mario Bros since it would require me too long to do it - and I don't have that much time as it was in the past. I won't even simulate Donkey Kong Jr. (Wide Screen) since the simulator made by Luke Skywalker is quite accurate. Mario's Cement Factory has been perfectly simulated by Nokrum (my best favourite simulator ever). And oh... yes, Mario The Juggler... well I never played that handheld so I can't even think of programming it.

Q - Have you ever considered Simulating the following games? Q-bert, Zaxxon, Pac-man, Ms Pac-Man, Frogger, Popeye Tabletops.

A - You see, I can just programme handhelds/tabletop I actually have in my own hands... How can I make an accurate simulation if I don't have the game handy? I need it to record sound samples, measure timings, record any odd behaviours etc... It's a long procedure.

Q - How long does it take to make a simulation? What are the steps involved?

A - It purely depends on one fact: the more complex a game is, the more time it requires for me to programme all data structures. Examples: it took me two full days to produce the complete Lifeboat simulator, which is quite a simple game; but it took me more than a month to programme Tron, in which three mini-games are featured, plus a few AI routines were necessary.

Making a simulator is surely a long job: you have to make clean scans from the game, spend MANY hours in retouching those images, placing all sprites on a clear "Form" object (I use Delphi), playing the actual videogame, recording sound samples... and then programming all simulation routines - buttons management, clock, scoring, sprites movements, bonus and game over routines... It's really really long most of the times!

Luckily enough, many simulators share the same routines, so let's say that around a 20% of the job is already done each time I start a new simulator.

Q - Is it possible for other individuals to send you files to help you simulate games you don't have?

A - Sure! Unfortunately I've been offered scans and asked to make a full simulation just by starting from those images and a brief description of the game - but that's not enough!

On the contrary I often need scans from the instructions manuals. I'm still looking for the ones from Banana, Hippo Teeth and Heathcliff (all VTech's), Grabman (Texet/Inno-hit), Las Vegas (Bandai), Donkey Kong (Coleco tabletop), Egg (Nintendo Wide-Screen).

If anyone has them please contact me soon!

Q - What are your views on Nintendo and the IDSA when they asked you to remove the games from your American site hosted by Retrogames?

A - IDSA does its job, and I have my hobby: everybody's happy this way. No more comments.

Q - Do you have any Background writing Emulators?

A - No. I don't think I'd be capable to code an emulator. I have little knowledge of 6502 and Z80 ASM, and that's really too little to write an emulator.

I prefer doing what I can do best: simulations and websites. There are plenty of wonderful emulators programmers around... so let's let them do it!

Q - What are your future goals with your Handheld Simulators?

A - Well I don't have much time for programming at this moment... I have to complete my studies and graduate in Architectural Engineering and I want to learn more about computer graphics.

By the way I will not leave simulation programming for sure! At this moment I'm involved in this great Donkey Kong Coleco tabletop simulation project - the game is very complex, so I believe I won't release it before mid September... Then... who knows! I usually decide my next videogame when I'm about to complete the previous one, hehe!

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