



KEVIN O'NEILL / STAFF ARTIST

Game Time

Website gives free access to classic videogames of '80s and '90s

In these uncertain economic times, as people worry about whether their jobs will still be there tomorrow, the website I'm going to recommend might seem an odd choice. I say that because if you go to this site while at work, you're going to waste a lot of time there. But, if you're going to lose your job anyway, you might as well have fun while you're at it.

The site, nintendo8.com, has hundreds of classic Nintendo games that you can play online — *for free*.



KEVIN O'NEILL
InSites

That's right, "Super Mario Brothers," "Tetris," "The Legend of Zelda" and all the rest are as close as your keyboard.

As I was "researching" this column, the classic "Mario" music even got my co-workers to forsake their

work, as they were drawn like moths to the flame by the familiar tune. It was like we were magically transported back to the '80s, when these primitive games represented the height of technology.

To be honest, I was never a big video game aficionado. I did waste a bit of time on "Super Mario Brothers" during its reign. It had just the right hypnotic and addictive formula to keep you trying just one more time to save the princess. "Tetris" was another game I've played, but it didn't hold my interest like "Mario."

I'm a bad barometer for popular culture though. These games were hugely popular in the '80s and '90s, and hundreds of titles were sold. They run the gamut from action games, like "Contra," to puzzles, like "Anticipation," and shoot-'em-up games, such as "Gunsmoke," to

Top 10 games

1. Super Mario Brothers
2. Super Mario Brothers 3
3. Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2
4. Tetris
5. Legend of Zelda
6. 1942
7. Double Dragon
8. Super Mario Brothers 2
9. Bubble Bobble
10. Bomberman

sports, like "Magic Johnson's Fast Break." There are fighting and flying games, television show and movie-themed games, and games featuring movie stars and star athletes.

Some of the games are thinly disguised repackagings of earlier games, much the way Tom Carvel used to sell "Fudgie the Whale" and "Santa" ice cream cakes as if they were two completely different products. "Double Dragon" the street-fighting game spawned many clones with suspiciously similar backgrounds, music and action. Of course, some games, like "Mario," are original and entertaining.

Video revolution

The whole concept of being able to play games that were once available only in arcades on your TV, while sitting on your couch, was a big reason for the video game revolution. No more waiting in line for a machine to be available, no more pumping quarter after quarter in as you tried to master the game. Now you could play as much as you wanted, whenever you wanted, without ever having to go out and socialize with live people.

Video games have gotten much more sophisticated as technology has

advanced at a dizzying pace. Many of these older games would have a tough time holding a modern gamer's interest. The 3D graphics, online communities and highly interactive controllers have taken gaming to a remarkable level. According to the Newzoo Games Market Report on GamesIndustry.com, Americans spent \$25.3 billion on video games in 2009.

Easy to use

The site itself is pretty straightforward. There are links to various categories of games across the top. Clicking on a link brings you to a page with images of the various games in that category. Click on the image and it launches the game. There's a legend at the bottom of the screen to tell you which keys correspond to the buttons on the original game controllers. You can play for as long as you want.

There's a disclaimer at the bottom of the home page stating the website is merely a link site and all games are assumed to be abandonware or copyleft. It further states that the site is not affiliated with Nintendo, and it encourages you to buy a Nintendo Wii that will allow you to play all the classic games on a real console.

So, if you think that pink slip is on the way, or the company is going under, you might as well log on and waste away the hours slaying badguys and repelling aliens on the company's dime. If your job is secure and your company is doing well, then don't you think you deserve a reward for all that good work? Eat some mushrooms and save the princess. You earned it.

KEVIN O'NEILL is a graphic artist for The Times-Tribune. Contact him at koneill@timeshamrock.com with links to your favorite websites.