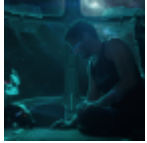


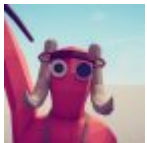


Podcasts ▾ / Let's Plays ▾ / Movies ▾ / Toys ▾ / Comics ▾ / Video Games ▾ / Cartoons ▾ / Archive

## Recent Posts



First trailer for *Avengers: Endgame* is here! Be sure to stay until the end. I can't



Totally Accurate Battle Simulator (Early Access) | [BACKLOG.TXT](#)  
Today on Backlog Quest, we tap into Totally Accurate



Rapture Rejects – Early Access Strangles A Promising Game? | [BACKLOG.TXT](#)

RAPTURE REJECTS! Today's BACKLOG.TXT zeroes in on an early-access



BACKLOG.TXT: Noctropolis, a Forgotten Gothic Adventure

[caption id="attachment\_711 align="aligncenter" width="768"]  
Noctropolis - a

# The 10 Greatest Pinball Machines of All Time

By Witney Seibold May 27, 2015 [Daily Lists, Gaming, Tech, Video Games](#) [0](#) Comment



Throughout my youth, I played video games rather voraciously. I was, as a friend dubbed me, a Nintend-whore. If it was released by Nintendo between the years of 1985 and 1995, I either begged my parents for it, worked my butt off mowing lawns to afford it, or merely coveted it with every shred of my soul. To this day, there are over a dozen NES games I can defeat through sense memory alone. Despite that, however, I cannot describe myself as a "gamer." This is because, sometime around 1997 (about the time side-scrolling video games gave way to the more elaborate 3-D type), I checked out of video games altogether. To this day, I have been baffled and overwhelmed by newer video games, finding them far too elaborate, too involved, and too expensive to get into. I don't have 100 hours to devote to a *Halo* game. My patience wears thin if a game is more complicated than, say, *Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past*.

My video game enthusiasm has not diminished in one capacity, however: Video arcades. A friend once told me that I am not a gamer, but I can be described as an "arcader." And I certainly accept the moniker. If it's old, coin-operated, and can only be found in dubiously savory venues, then I'm all about it. My more vivid and cherished video





Podcasts ▾ / Let's Plays ▾ / Movies ▾ / Toys ▾ / Comics ▾ / Video Games ▾ / Cartoons ▾  
/ Archive

delved through the rumpled card catalogue that is my memory, and come up with the following list of the ten best pinball machines of all time.

#### 10. *Dr. Dude and his Excellent Ray* (1990)

### Dr Dude Pinball Gameplay




Dr. Dude represents a strangely pure version of what every child of the 1980s wanted to be: Preternaturally cool, equipped with cool shades, big hair, busty nurses, and a hip-talking *patois* that only the elite (and kids from Capri-Sun commercials) could understand. Indeed, Dr. Dude even had his own backstory, as seen on the comic strip backglass of the machine pictured above.

*Dr. Dude and His Excellent Ray* is a weird peek into the mindset of 1980s and early 1990s cool. He's like the logical conclusion of a journey that begins with Bill & Ted. Oh yes, and the game is also plenty





[Podcasts](#) ▾ / [Let's Plays](#) ▾ / [Movies](#) ▾ / [Toys](#) ▾ / [Comics](#) ▾ / [Video Games](#) ▾ / [Cartoons](#) ▾  
[/ Archive](#)



Williams' *Funhouse* was a mainstay in most arcades, and was always in high demand. Pinball machines started going electronic as far back as 1978, but *Funhouse* seemed like a bizarre watershed moment in pinball tech. It was the first, at least in my hazy recollection, that had voices and sound effects. It was the first to have such an elaborate ramp system. After *Funhouse*, pinball machines only exploded in complexity and enjoyment.

What most people remember from *Funhouse*, however, is that creepy, creepy ventriloquist doll head prominently displayed in the play area. It was about the size of, well, a child's head, complete with swiveling opening eyeballs, and a creepy mouth that would open and swallow up your ball, were you a skilled enough player. To this day, *Funhouse* is one of the more coveted machines. Who would have thought a creepy doll head would take you so far?

#### 8. *The Twilight Zone* (1993)





Podcasts ▾ / Let's Plays ▾ / Movies ▾ / Toys ▾ / Comics ▾ / Video Games ▾ / Cartoons ▾  
/ Archive



In the video game world, licensing is largely seen as a negative. It is very *very* rare that a video game that was hastily designed to tie into a movie will be all that fun. During the pinball boom of the 1990s, however, licensing led to an overwhelming amount of bizarre and enjoyable tie-ins that came to spearhead the pinball movement (one of the more bizarre: *Apollo 13: The Pinball Game*). As such, some of the best pinball machines of the best pinball era will be themed machines. Case in point, Midway's *The Twilight Zone*.


*The Twilight Zone* was one of many retro-TV pinball machines, and handily the best. By this point, having giant rotating dolls, and scads of exciting ramps were standard in the pinball world, but this time, it was all narrated by Rod Serling, and peppered with sound cues taken straight from the TV show. Nothing is more terrifying than when you're in the middle of a pinball frenzy, and Talky Tina tells you she doesn't like you.

#### 7. *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (1993)





[Podcasts](#) / [Let's Plays](#) / [Movies](#) / [Toys](#) / [Comics](#) / [Video Games](#) / [Cartoons](#) / [Archive](#)



*Star Trek: The Next Generation* remains – and will likely remain – one of my favorite television shows. But there is more than the tie-in elements that draw me toward Williams' 1993 machine. It outdoes much of its competition by including not one, but three separate spacecraft within its playing area. It also includes a long, elaborate spiral ramp.

And, yes, hearing the *NextGen* theme playing incessantly, paired with voice-over from Patrick Stewart, *et al*, only enhances things for this old Trekkie. Pulling the ball trigger and hearing the theme song swell, and then watch the flashing lights while phasers fire... well, let's just say some nostalgia cannot ever, ever be overcome. You should be lucky I didn't select the lackluster KISS pinball machine for this list. Which I loved when I was 8, and will never stop loving.

6. *Elvis* (2004)





[Podcasts](#) / [Let's Plays](#) / [Movies](#) / [Toys](#) / [Comics](#) / [Video Games](#) / [Cartoons](#) / [Archive](#)



The rock 'n' roll pinball machine is no new idea, and numerous rock bands and musicians have their own pinball machines. Guns N' Roses, KISS, Dolly Parton, and Metallica all have their own machines. So it's only logical that Stern should eventually get around to making a pinball machine devoted entirely to the King himself, Elvis.

Drop a coin in the slot, and hear the strains of classic 1950s rock grace your very lucky ears as you bounce a little metal ball around a miniature doll of Elvis himself. Elvis is also one of those awesome machines that has what they call a second-level playing field; if you're skilled, you can knock your ball onto a secondary, smaller pinball area. This is a game that encourages you to keep playing by offering more and more Elvis music. Which is a fine incentive for me.

#### 5. *Challenger* (1971)

### Gottlieb Challenger Pinball #1





Podcasts ▾ / Let's Plays ▾ / Movies ▾ / Toys ▾ / Comics ▾ / Video Games ▾ / Cartoons ▾  
/ Archive

Maybe it was the game's bulk that kept it from taking off. Maybe it was the unfair advantage it gave to the more skilled players (players would have to be evenly matched, otherwise one would handily dominate). Whatever the reason, the head-to-head pinball model never took off in any significant way. A few followed, but it's rare that you'll see one. Too bad. It's kind of like crossing the skills of pinball with the arcade camaraderie of air hockey.

#### 4. *The Addams Family* (1993)

### Addams Family Pinball Tutorial!



Although I said that *Funhouse* was a watershed moment for the pinball boom of the 1990s, I still see Midway's *The Addams Family* as the pinnacle. This was the first time I recalled seeing a small video screen on a pinball machine, the first time I heard voice commands from recognizable actors. The first time pinball went from being





Podcasts ▾ / Let's Plays ▾ / Movies ▾ / Toys ▾ / Comics ▾ / Video Games ▾ / Cartoons ▾  
/ Archive

### 3. *Fireball* (1971)

#### Fireball Pinball Gameplay



Bally's *Fireball* is perhaps the greatest of the all-mechanical era of pinball machines. Back when things clicked, bells rang, and the machine felt, well, more machine-like. It also came from that bizarre time in sci-fi history when an intriguing cover, theme, or character didn't need to have backstory or explanation. Manufacturers could just make up some character like Fireball and assume that you would somehow innately understand what he was all about.


The great game innovation on *Fireball* that really sets it apart from its peers is, of course, the spinning turntable in the middle of the playing field. From time to time this turntable would fire up, and send your ball spinning off in a random direction. You had to be quick to catch it. This was not the first machine to have the turntable (its an innovation







Podcasts ▾ / Let's Plays ▾ / Movies ▾ / Toys ▾ / Comics ▾ / Video Games ▾ / Cartoons ▾  
/ Archive



And speaking of characters given no explanation, *PIN?BOT* was one for the ages. PIN?BOT was, as far as I could tell, a malevolent robot intelligence that has taken over the world (Your mind? Your room? Your arcade?), and you must use your pinball skills to give him eyes and a soul to talk him down from his automated destruction. Or maybe that was just the narrative I constructed in my mind while playing. Whatever the reason, *PIN?BOT* was way fun.


PIN?BOT also had a robot voice that would, once you gave him eyes, declare creepily "NOW. I. SEE. YOU." When you're eight years old, and you're playing pinball at your local Yellow Balloon waiting to get your hair cut, and a pinball machine declares that it can see you... Well, let's just say that your haircut will not be the more memorable part of that halcyon 1980s afternoon.

### 1. *The Pinball Circus* (1994)





Podcasts ▾ / Let's Plays ▾ / Movies ▾ / Toys ▾ / Comics ▾ / Video Games ▾ / Cartoons ▾  
/ Archive



Let's hope you live in Las Vegas, because the greatest pinball machine of all time – Bally's *Pinball Circus* – is perhaps the rarest pinball machine of all time, and is only available to the public at the [Las Vegas Pinball Hall of Fame Museum](#). I, dear readers, have been lucky enough to play *The Pinball Circus* and I can say that it is perhaps the most innovative and exciting pinball machine I have encountered. Its rarity only makes it more exotic.

A legend on the machine (which takes a full dollar to play) explains to museum visitors that Bally created only two such machines back in 1994, one of which is perhaps currently in the hands of a wealthy German pinball collector. It's a pinball machine that stands taller than it does long, and features ramps, pulleys and elevators that pull the ball up and up into higher and high paying fields. If you can make it to the top field and knock out the clown's teeth, you have achieved a weird sort of Nirvana.

Why did the machine never make it into mainstream production? Evidently it cost a lot to make, and when a test run at a local arcade warranted no more quarters than a usual pinball machine, the entire project was scrapped. Too bad. This game is so much damn fun. If you find yourself in Vegas, make a trip to the museum, and set aside a dollar or twelve. You cannot possibly regret it.





[Podcasts](#) / [Let's Plays](#) / [Movies](#) / [Toys](#) / [Comics](#) / [Video Games](#) / [Cartoons](#) / [Archive](#)

## Related Posts

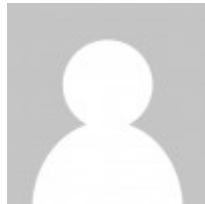
10 Crucial Observations Made After Watching Netflix's New *Daredevil* Series

Netflix/Marvel Studios This weekend I spent about thirteen hours streaming the new by [David N. Scott](#)

It's Your Doc Brown, Marty, Something Has Got to Be Done About Your Doc!

Finally we get a trailer for Telltale by [Rob Bricken](#)

## About The Author



Witney Seibold was born in the United States.

[Submit a Tip!](#) | [Problems with the Site?](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Cookies Policy](#) | [Terms of Use](#) | [RSS](#)

