

Herb Silvers' Fabulous Fantasies

GAME ROOM OF THE MONTH

by Ken Kemp





*This month we travel “deep in the heart of Texas” to visit the Kemp family’s gameroom. Ken is the creator of the popular “Pinball Rebel” web site, and is a dedicated pin-a-holic and music aficionado. His love of pinball and music certainly shows in his collection of top-tier pinball machines and classic jukeboxes (I mean, who has **five** jukeboxes in their gameroom?) Take a look around Ken’s gameroom and see for yourself why everything’s bigger and better in Texas! — Herb*

It all began at a garage sale in 1992 with the purchase of a *Seeburg HF100G* jukebox for \$20. I had always wanted a jukebox to play my growing collection of 45’s on and it seemed like the perfect match. The jukebox was a basket case but after lots of work it became one of my prized possessions.

Next my wife April made the comment that she always enjoyed playing *Tempest*. So I put an ad in the paper and found one for \$75.00. It was always

causing trouble thanks to the flaws of the XY color vector monitor. Nevertheless we had it for years before we finally let it go.

Later I picked up a *Tron* for \$20 that just needed to be put back together. It seems a kid had got inside of the game and decided to take it all apart to see how it worked. His dad, who was pretty jovial about the whole affair, handed me a box of boards and chips in exchange for an extra crispy Andrew Jackson. After a few hours work it was back up and mocking me to complete the USER level.

A few months roll by and one of my students at the school where I used to teach said his mother had a Coca-Cola machine for sale. I didn’t really need one but thought that it would be neat to go in the room with the games.





Since I was fresh out of college and had just gotten married money was pretty tight, so the owner let me pay it out over several months. The end result was that a great looking *Vendo 81A* came to live with us that fall. We still keep it stocked with plenty of Dublin Dr. Pepper and other flavors in glass bottles.

Sometime later while attending a show at a local fairground I spied a *USC1 Seeburg Bandshell*. I bought it and traded it a week later for a *Seeburg 148 "Trashcan"* jukebox. We still have the trashcan and it is a big conversation piece. It's big, it's unusual, and you just can't help but love it.

As I sat and looked about the room I realized I needed a phone. Not only that but I wanted a phone booth to go with it. The problem is that since phone booths are not wheelchair accessible and since they are made of aluminum most have been scrapped. I managed to buy one of the last phone booths owned by Southwestern Bell Telephone for what

its weight was worth in aluminum. I also picked up a rotary dial pay phone from them at the same time.

It wasn't long before I got a call from a guy wanting to sell some games. I had to take them all and he wanted \$1000.00 for the lot. When I went to look there was a storage barn full of games. He had about 50 cocktails, which were games like *Asteroids*, *Missile Command*, *Pac-Man*, *Centipede*, and *Donkey Kong*. The room also had six pinball machines including two *Black Knights*. Finally, there was one sit down *Pole Position*.

The problem was my wife and I were renting a small home and the little game room in it was almost full. I had nowhere to put all of these games. I told the man I really appreciated the call but I simply could not take all of them.

For the next several weeks he began to call each time lowering the price until he was down to \$300.00 for all of it. I knew I had to do something.





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I made a call to a friend in the amusement business and told him what I had and that all I wanted for all of it was one of the *Black Knight* pinballs restored so I could have it for my small game room. He took the other games and I got the *Black Knight*. I was now officially addicted. Pinball became the obsession.

My mother and I would play pinball at the mall in the Gold Mine Arcade across the street from the drive-in theater. We played pinball games like *Space Invaders*, *Black Hole*, and other early solid state games. But like many, when the video revolution hit I was hooked on arcade games until the *Black Knight* moved into my tiny little game room.

We moved out of our small rental and into my great grandparent's old home a few years later. I hated to see the old homestead sell outside the family so I took it on as a project. It had a little bigger room I could use for a game room but as time went on more and more of my games had to be stored at friend's homes until it came time to build the Rebel Yell.

The name for the game room was decided on after a large number of suggestions were thrown my way on the rec.games.pinball newsgroup. Because of the website I host (www.pinballrebel.com, a site that has been featured in the *Treasured Sites* column of this fine magazine) the name seemed a perfect fit. It also made a theme song available in the form of Billy Idol's Rebel Yell.

I sold off a few jukeboxes and my *HUO Revenge from Mars* and began building in the summer of 2005. Now, as summer 2006 approaches, the Rebel Yell is complete. The building, which is not attached to my existing home, is 60 feet long and 20 feet wide for a total of 1200 square feet. Part of that is garage, so only 35x20 is game room space, which is still 700 square feet of space. I had to set a new electrical meter just to run to the games and the other items. The room has over 100 electrical outlets and 250 Amps of service. In fact, a long time family friend who helped hang the sheet rock almost passed out when he saw the sheer number of electrical boxes that had to be cut out of the sheet rock!





The current pinball lineup in the game room today is as follows; *Circus Voltaire*, *White Water*, *Indiana Jones*, *Creature From The Black Lagoon*, *Twilight Zone*, *Scared Stiff*, *Monster Bash*, *Funhouse*, *Star Trek The Next Generation*, *High Speed II The Getaway*, *No Good Gophers*, *Addams Family*, and *Medieval Madness*.

Other items in the game room include my jukeboxes: a *Rowe CD100A*, *Wurlitzer 1650A*, *Seeburg HF100G* and *148*, and a *Rock-ola Bubbler*. I have two restored digger cranes courtesy of James Roller. One is an Erie and the other a Tonka but both really raise eyebrows. My Grandmother Fortune Teller is always ready to predict your future and various other items stand out as well. The largest being a 1971 *United Shuffle Alley* which my four year old son Austin plays like a pro.

In all it has been a great march from our little game room in our old home

to the new more spacious layout of the Rebel Yell. The best thing about this hobby is the people. I have made so many friends and heard so many wonderful stories. Every step of the

way there was always another issue of GameRoom magazine to keep me thinking "what if?" —keep up the good work GameRoom, and inspire others the way that you inspired me. **GR**



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