Arcade Tales
IT SURVIVED THE 80S AND WE HAVE SPARE PARTS
Hello and welcome to Arcade Tales issue 2.

"It survived the 80s and we have spare parts"

I've had a great response about the first comic, and there are a few new issues being produced, but we're always looking for more tales from the arcades...

I'm starting to recognise how much time it takes to produce each comic... and that there are lots of brilliant illustrators out there who can bring this to life!

I'm absolutely thrilled to introduce our first guest illustrator - Becky Glendining.

Portfolio - www.lgions.com
Behance - www.behance.net/lgions
Instagram - @lgions

Born in Canterbury, United Kingdom, Becky Glendining has been creating art inspired by the world around her before she could even walk, a passion that continues to this day. At 21, Becky currently studies graphic design at Canterbury Christ Church University, while running two graphic design and illustration blogs in her spare time, both of which have a strong following.

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I'm dr alan meades from Canterbury Christ Church University.

Arcade Tales is my research project trying to capture a history of British arcade culture.
it survived the 80s and we have spare parts tells the story of arcade club...

Arcade Club is perhaps the most famous retro arcade in the UK. It’s already the largest retro arcade in Europe, with over 200 classic arcade machines and pinballs in an old mill building in Bury, just outside Manchester.

It’s a thoroughly brilliant place to visit.
IF THE ARCADE TALES PROJECT IS A CELEBRATION OF AMUSEMENT ARCades AND THEIR LONG AND VARIED HISTORY, THEN ARCADE CLUB IS ALMOST A PERFECT EXAMPLE OF WHAT AN ARCADE USED TO BE LIKE. THE ONLY THINGS MISSING ARE FRUIT MACHINES AND THE ROUGHNESS!

IF YOU'RE INTERESTED IN ARCADE VIDEGAMES AND THE SOUNDS AND FEEL OF AN ARCADE THEN GET UP TO BURY, PAY YOUR ENTRANCE FEE AND PLAY ARCADE GAMES ON FREE-PLAY TO YOUR HEART'S CONTENT.

I SEE ARCADE CLUB AS A REAL MUSEUM OF BRITISH ARCADES, EVEN IF ANDY PALMER, ONE OF THE ARCADE CLUB OWNERS, WOULD NEVER USE THE TERM MUSEUM!

DON'T CALL IT THAT, IT'S NOT A MUSEUM!

IT'S ABOUT THE GAMES, AND THE PLAY, AND THE FUN!
What we're trying to do is make Arcade Club lifelike, it's for playing games, it's not for reading 'oh when did this get made?'

That's taking away from the emphasis of it being an arcade... ...it has got to be fun. That's the whole point.

When we heard about Arcade Club I really wanted to know the history behind it - what makes someone buy 200 old video games and pinballs when so many arcades have closed?. So Shaun (my research intern) and I travelled up to Bury to meet Andy, his wife Gaynor, and Mum Linda, who together set up Arcade Club.

This comic is based upon their story, it is their Arcade Tale!
The idea for Arcade Club came about a few years back when we realised that there were no arcades like we remember left.

We went to Blackpool, a load of other seaside towns, and checked out the ones in Manchester town centre...

All the arcades were full of grabbers and redemption machines where you're rewarded with tickets for prizes.

The experience of those machines was basically...

"You've had your two or three minutes, now go away...

...or give me another pound".

This was infuriating, especially from my generation, where arcades were abundant. We realised at that point that arcades had changed...

And this was when the seed of Arcade Club was planted.
When I was a kid growing up in Bury there were two or three arcades in most towns.

For us there was an arcade on the top floor of a place called Cosmos Café...

Another arcade at the snooker hall, which was the rougher of the two,

Sometimes we'd go to the bigger arcades like the ones in Manchester Piccadilly, or...

...and another one near Bury baths.

For a real treat...

We'd visit the big seaside arcades in Blackpool that were massive and had all the latest games.
Anyway, Cosmos Cafe Arcade was where me and my mates would hang about in when we were about 14, 15. Even though it wasn’t huge you’d still have some big games. An Out Run Deluxe, a Galaxy Force 2 Deluxe, big moving cabinets, very, very rare now.
You've got to understand that the arcade wasn't just for games though, it was more a social space, for meeting people there.

You'd hang around the arcade for a bit...

Go get some chips...

Go to the Virgin megastore and all that sort of thing...

You didn't necessarily know where some kid lived but you met up in the arcades.

But the arcade was where you started and ended up.

So you'd use the arcade as a way of getting to know people, and it became a bit like a 1980s youth club if you like.
AND IT WAS GREAT...

IN THE BURY ARCADES BACK IN THE 1980s YOU’D GENERALLY HAVE ABOUT EIGHT OR TEN MACHINES MAYBE, THE REST WOULD BE GAMBLERS...

BUT THE BIG SEASIDE OR CITY ARCADES WOULD HAVE LOADS OF THE SAME ARCADE CABS IN ROWS...

BUT AS SOON AS WE FOUND THE ARCADES AND THE GAMES THEY ALL SEEMED TO DISAPPEAR, YOU WOKE UP ONE DAY AND THEY’D ALL SLIPPED AWAY.

IT WAS A SHAME IT WAS ALL GONE.

THE GOLIATH CABS, THEY WERE A BRITISH ARCADE CABINET MADE BY ELECTROCOIN IN LONDON. THOSE WERE THE ONES THAT YOU SAW IN ARCADES.

SO WHEN YOU SEE THE BIG ROWS OF ELECTROCOINS YOU’RE LIKE “I REMEMBER THESE CABS!”
I can picture it so clearly...

You’d have Wonder Boy on them...

Salamander...

And all the other games that you’d expect to be there...

The golden era stuff like...

Pac Man

Galaxian

Now, in America they would have been in lovely original cabinets, with the pictures of the game...

But in the UK we had these generic Goliath cabinets often running dodgy copied bootleg boards from Japan, because the operators over here were happy to do so.
AND THAT GAVE A UK ARCADE A VERY DISTINCTIVE LOOK...

YOU'VE GOT THESE ELECTROCOIN GOLIATHS THAT ARE TALL, TALLER THAN YOU, LOOKING DOWN ON YOU, THEY'RE QUITE IMPOSING REALLY...

AND THEY'RE EMPHASISING THE POINT OF THE GAMES THAT THEY CONTAIN - THEY'RE GOING TO BEAT YOU!
AND THAT'S WHY WONDER BOY IS ON THE FRONT CORNER HERE AT ARCADE CLUB...

WE GET A LOT OF PEOPLE COME TO THE ARCADE WHO GO "AHH-WOAH, WONDER BOY" AND THEY'RE FIXED...

THEY DON'T MOVE FOR HALF-HOUR BECAUSE THAT'S THE GAME THAT THEY USED TO PLAY.

NEXT YOU'VE GOT FINAL FIGHT, SALAMANDER, AND ALL THE GOOD BUDDY GAMES THAT YOU USED TO PLAY WITH A MATE.

AND WE WATCH PEOPLE SLOWLY WORK THEIR WAY THROUGH THE ARCADE...

IT'S A GRADUAL PROCESS.
That's brilliant, but lots of people must feel pretty much the same way as you, but the difference is that you've built this. There are plenty of us who have MAME on their PC or a 'grail cab' in their garage. What made you do this instead?

Well, I was already kind of collecting arcade machines anyway...
The Megadrive had just come out in Japan, but wasn’t available here for another year...

And there were places that imported Megadrives and other games into the country.

I kind of started working for this guy called Ringo in one of these places...

Ringo was a bit dodgy like all these guys were, but he was alright.

I loved that job.

The place was in the Corn Exchange right in Manchester City Centre, by the Arndale Centre.
The Corn Exchange got damaged in the blast from the bomb the IRA set off outside the Arndale Centre in 1996.

Ringo's business went under.
One of the other things Ringo sold was a supergun, a console that let you play real arcade boards on your TV at home.

At the back of magazines, like Edge, at the time people were selling superguns and game boards...

And it didn’t take long before you thought...

“Wait a minute, where does everyone get these game boards from?...

Hang about, there’s an amusement place down the road.”

And so you go there and...

“Alright mate, have you got any game boards for sale?”

“PCBS? Oh yeah, we’ve got a couple.”
Anyway I picked up one of those Japanese Megadrives.

The big deal at the time was that you could get Strider for it and it was very, very close to the arcade version.

Megadrive carts were 40 pounds each at the time...

But I realised that if you were lucky you could get the proper PCB for £40 as well...

And that was for the actual original arcade game.

I bought them round the corner from here, Leisuretime Amusements, I used to go down there when I was about 19 and pester Alan who was running the place to see if he had anything for sale.
So, I had a supergun and over time I ended up building a collection of arcade boards...

And even pinball machines at home through buying them from different places.

So you’d end up with loads of random arcade boards, some without any markings or instructions how to hook them up.

You’d just buy them though and try to figure things out afterwards, but some weren’t Jamma, and I couldn’t do anything with them.

3 arcade boards for sale £55 each completely working!!! Donkey Kong Jr. Galaxian. Star Wars.

Call - xxxxx xxxxxx

*Jamma - The standardised Japanese arcade board specification
So you'd end up with all these arcade boards...

Old Atari stuff, and things like old Defender boards. But there were no internet sites about arcades or board repairs at that point in time...

And it was a very, very closed shop in terms of technical knowledge.

Operators weren't interested in talking to a kid about 'how do I get this board to work?', they weren't interested one bit.

Hello... hello... are you still there?

So I figured out how the boards worked myself.
So, let's take a Ghosts and Goblins board as a good example. Yeah, it looks like a JAMMA connector but it's not...

There's your ground you can tell it's the large track running all the way round the board...

Then these chips have a 5V feed and a ground so you can identify them...

That's a 6809 chip there...

It's not the world's greatest way of doing it, but it's the only one I have.

You know what that the pinouts are for a 68000, because the Amiga has one, and it's in the Amiga book...

You put power to the board...

You know it's live even though it doesn't look live...

Then you get your red or green or blue from your scart...

And you touch all the pins in turn until a picture shows and you've found the video signals.

I did that for about twenty to thirty boards, quite a lot.
WE SOLD COMPUTER PARTS, GAVE SUPPORT...

AND DID REPAIRS...

TIME PASSED AND I SET UP MY OWN SHOP...

IT WAS GOOD, BUSINESS TICKED OVER...

AND I'D STILL BUY THE ODD PINBALL....

AND ARCADE CAB WHEN ONE TURNED UP FOR SALE.
WE HAD EIGHT PINBALL MACHINES AT HOME AND SOME IN STORAGE AS WELL.

BUT THEY WEREN'T BEING USED AT ALL, THEY WERE SUCH A SHAME SO WE SAID...

"WE'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING WITH THESE..."

HOW CAN WE MAKE IT SO THAT WE CAN ACTUALLY GET THESE MACHINES OUT THERE AND MAKE IT SO THAT PEOPLE CAN PLAY THEM?

BUT MAKE SURE WE CAN HAVE ENOUGH MONEY TO KEEP THEM GOING, PAYING FOR REPAIRS ETC?

AND THAT'S HOW WE STARTED ARCADE CLUB.

BUT DIDN'T YOU EVER WORRY ABOUT PEOPLE ACCIDENTALLY BREAKING A MACHINE?

ERR... IT'S 30 YEARS OLD, IT'S STILL ALIVE. IT SURVIVED THE 80S. NOBODY GAVE THE MACHINES ANY LOVE THEN. YOU WERE A KID, JUST AS KIDS ARE TODAY....

LOOK... IT SURVIVED THE 80S... AND WE HAVE SPARE PARTS... WE'RE OK.
So we moved the arcade machines into the back of my computer shop in Haslingdon...

20 video games and 10 pinball machines...

And opened it up to the public every Saturday night...

All the machines on free play, four hours access, for £10...

With a free cup of tea and a snack, thrown in as well.

So, we tested the water...

Everyone told me it wouldn’t work.

You’re crazy mate, you’re going to have an expensive flop on your hands.
But it did work. People loved it...

So we moved the arcade from the back of the shop to the unit where we stored a lot of machines.

Now that’s 100 machines we can do there...

What are we going to charge?

We’ve doubled our electricity costs, but we can get more people in...

So we decide to keep it at £10.
IT WAS THIS TIME WHEN THE BBC GOT IN TOUCH AND DID AN EPISODE OF COLLECTAHOLICS THAT FEATURED US.

IT SEEMED TO STRIKE A CHORD WITH LOTS OF PEOPLE, PEOPLE WHO ALSO REMEMBER AND MISS THE OLD ARCADES...

FROM THEN ON IT WAS SO BUSY, ONE IN, ONE OUT, EVERY SATURDAY NIGHT...

SO WE STARTED TO OPEN SUNDAYS TOO.

WEDNESDAY

9.00
Collectaholics

10.00
Rhod Gilbert's Work Experience

10.30
Newsnight

OPEN HOURS

Saturday: 7:00pm - 11:00pm
Sunday: 7:00pm - 11:00pm

No Smoking
WE THOUGHT LET’S DO IT, LET’S DO ARCADE CLUB PROPERLY...

LET’S FIND A PLACE LARGE ENOUGH TO EXPAND, AND PRETTY SOON WE FOUND A PLACE IN BURY CALLED ELA MILL. IT’S AN OLD COTTON MILL, AND WE’VE TAKEN OVER TWO FLOORS...

NOW HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE COME HERE EVERY WEEKEND, AND THE PLACE IS ALIVE AGAIN. THERE’S PROBABLY AS MANY PEOPLE COMING THROUGH THIS MILL AT THE WEEKEND NOW AS DID DURING THE HEIGHT OF THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION.
But we have to make sure that the money is there to continue this project...

We have to look at it as a business, but a sustainable one that can look after itself and any money that's left over we can live off so to speak...

It's a full-time job now, and we can reinvest some money into making things better...

There's my mum, there's Gaynor...

Everyone helps out but I've kind of been pushed to the front because of...

Probably because I'm gabbling...

You know... "He's good at talking, chuck him at the front!"

But I know what we're trying to achieve here, and I believe in it and we're 100% behind it, which is brilliant.
I think arcades are important to my generation because they don't exist any more...

at least not like they did...

and everybody wants to go back.

I want when life was easy...

I want when I could meet my mates in the arcades, play some games, go home...

Say I've done my homework when I hadn't and life was easy. Yeah, that's what everyone wants...

You probably want that too don't you?

You'd love to go back!
There's loads to do here, absolutely loads, we're only getting started!

Oops, sorry, it's for me...

Hello... downstairs... do you want me? OK love, what's happening? Chase HQ's not turning corners? ...ok that'll be a potentiometer, no problem... Addams Family? turn it off, count to five, turn it on again, or? ...yeah, that's fine... no? ...I can't do anything about Chase HQ right now, if it's only moving to the right then there's either a spring snapped... or... hang on...

And with that, Shaun and I left Andy to get on with his repairs, and we went and played some games.
ARE YOU READY TO SHARE YOUR ARCADE TALES?

WWW.ARCADE TALES.COM