ATTACK OF THE PETSCII ROBOTS

THE 8-Bit Guy

AtariAge

DEMO RELEASE NOTES

Welcome to the demo release of Attack of the PETSCII Robots for the Atari 7800!

This demo features two game maps to explore, to give you a taste of the full game experience.

The physical, retail release of Attack of the PETSCII Robots features fifteen game maps, a full complement of chiptune music, and comes bundled with an SNES2Atari adapter. The SNES2Atari adapter allows you to control PETSCII Robots with an SNES controller, putting every interaction at your fingertips. It's the ideal way to play the game.

We hope that you enjoy our humble offering, and that you'll choose to support the programmers and artists by treating yourself to the full game experience. You may purchase the game from the AtariAge Store at https://atariage.com/store/ or The 8-bit Guy Store at https://www.the8bitguy.com/shop/

TABLE OF CONTENTS

WELCOME

The original Attack of the PETSCII Robots game was conceived around April of 2020 after I was gifted a Mini PET by The Future was 8-Bit, which I did an extensive review of on my channel. I was excited about the home-built computer and thought I should design a game for the Commodore PET.

I've created two successful games already, Planet X2 for the Commodore 64, and the follow up, Planet X3 for MS-DOS. In both cases, I wanted a game that had the most important feature: FUN! I don't care how fancy a game's graphics and animation are, or what kind of music it has. If it isn't fun, then it isn't worth playing. I also wanted a game that would allow people to immerse themselves into a world for 30 minutes or so. I didn't want to create an arcade-style game that somebody would play for five minutes and say "Well, that was cool, but I'm done now." I also didn't want to create a game that takes months to win, like Ultima. In this day and age nobody has time for that.

Since the original release on the Commodore PET, C64 and Vic-20, Attack of the PETSCII Robots has now been ported to around 20 other vintage platforms and consoles, now including the Atari 7800. This version brings many firsts to the 7800, including a new cartridge format for expanded graphics support, enhanced high-colour graphics and SNES controller support. It also includes a fantastic POKEY soundtrack by Noelle Aman.

Overall it may very well be the most advanced game ever to be released on the Atari 7800. I hope you enjoy playing it!

David Murray

HOW TO PLAY

Sometime in the future, robots attempt to take over human settlements on various planets. Your goal is to infiltrate these settlements and destroy all of the robots. To do this, you'll need to locate weapons and other tools.

◆ When can you exit the map?

There is a transporter room in every settlement. However, to prevent unauthorized robots from leaving the area, the transporter systems have been remotely programmed not to activate until all robots have been destroyed. Once you have destroyed all robots, you will see the transporter pad activate, then you can step onto it to complete the map.

◆ Brains or Brawns?

At first glance, Attack of the PETSCII Robots might look like an action shooter game. However, it's really not. Think of it more of a strategy and exploration game. While you are given weapons to fight with, you will never win if you try to fight the robots head on in battle.

◆ The Inquisitive mind

The way to victory is by examining each robot situation as a strategy. In most cases there will be a way to defeat every robot without engaging with them in a head on battle. The trick is learning to find all of the right tools, and learning how to use them. By following this manual, you will be properly prepared.

SEARCHING FOR ITEMS

One of the first things you'll need to do once when you start playing is to search for items. This is accomplished by walking up to the item you wish to search and activating the SEARCH feature with your controller. When you do this, a chasing cursor will appear over your character. At this point, the game is waiting for you to select a direction (up, down, left, or right) to search.
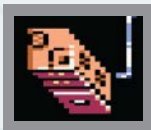
Some items are not searchable. If you attempt to search a wall or the floor, for example, the message "nothing found here" will be displayed immediately. If you search an item that is considered searchable, you will see a delay and a progress indicator in the information box showing that a search is in progress, followed by a message stating what, if anything, was found there.

These are the types of things you can search. Most items are hidden inside of crates, therefore crates should always be searched. Once a crate is searched, it will appear with the lid off, thus indicating to you that you've already searched it.
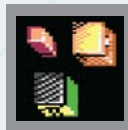
Some items are more than one tile in size, such as beds, desks, and air conditioners. It is not necessary to search every tile. If you search one tile of that item, the hidden item will be found, regardless of which part of it you search first.
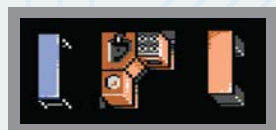
Power Transformer   Server   Crates   Air Conditioner

Cabinets   Bed   Desks and Benches

WEAPONS AND ITEMS

Once you've started finding weapons and items, it is probably a good idea to learn what each one does.

PISTOL

One of two weapons available. This is the most abundant one you will find around the maps, with the most ammo. It does exactly 1 point of damage to anything you shoot. Thus, it takes 10 shots to kill a Hoverbot, the weakest of robots. When using this weapon, it is best to seek cover and fire behind an item that will separate you from the robot. For example, shooting over a desk, or through a window. The pistol will also set off canisters if you shoot one, thus making a powerful explosion with a single shot.

PLASMA GUN

This is the more powerful of your two available weapons. It creates 11 points of damage and a blast five tiles wide. Thus, it will damage your target and anything near it as well. Be careful with this weapon, as it is easy to kill yourself if you are too close to what you are shooting. It's probably best to conserve your ammo with this weapon for the Rollerbots and Evilbots.

EMP

The Electro-Magnetic-Pulse generator will force any robots within your viewable area to reboot, thus causing them to freeze for several seconds. During this time, you can make your escape, or attack. Use these sparingly and save them for the hard to kill robots. Also, if you use an EMP while a Hoverbot is hovering over water, it will fall into the water and short circuit. Thus, the EMP can be used to kill a Hoverbot by itself when used correctly.
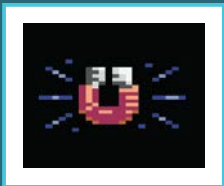
TIME BOMB

When you "use" the time bomb, a cursor will appear over your character indicating it is waiting for a direction to be selected. Once you pick a direction, you will see the bomb next to you. It is best to run at this point. Within a few seconds, the bomb will explode and create a blast five tiles wide. The blast will inflict 11 points of damage on anything it contacts. This can be used on robots that are generally staying in one place, or it can be used in cases where you need to blow up something blocking your path, or even set off a chain reaction of canisters.

Pro tip: You may use more than one time bomb at a time. You can place them on different tiles, or on top of each other. It is possible to deploy up to four at once, but you'd better be quick!
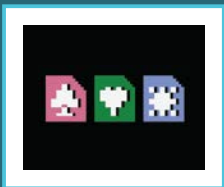
MAGNET

The magnet is deployed much like the time bomb. However, you need to position it somewhere you expect a robot to roll over it. If you are in direct contact with a robot, you can also place it directly on the robot. Once attached, it causes their brain to go haywire. They will move in random directions for about 15 seconds. During this time, they are vulnerable to attack, although they can be unpredictable and thus hard to know where to shoot.

If you placed the magnet in the wrong place, you can simply walk over it to pick it up again. If you leave the magnet on the ground for too long, it will disappear. You can only deploy one magnet at a time, as in, there can only be one magnet on the floor at a time. But several can be "in use" at the same time. The magnet is probably the most powerful tool available to you, when used correctly. However, there aren't very many located on each map.

Pro tip: A robot will shake off the magnet in about 15 seconds. But if you get them with another magnet while they are already incapacitated, they will never recover and thus remain haywire indefinitely.

KEY CARDS

You will notice some doors are locked, and a symbol will be displayed next to the door such as a heart, spade, or star. You will need to find the appropriate key card to open these doors. If you have a keycard, it will appear on the right side of the screen under "KEYS".

MEDKIT

The Medical Kit (medkit) can be used to heal your injuries. When you "use" the medkit, it will heal all 12 health points, assuming you have that much available in your medkit supplies. If not, it will heal as much as you have available. If you have more than enough, the remainder of the medkit will remain in inventory for future use.
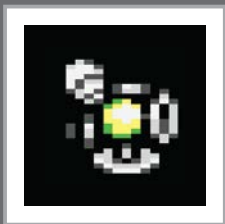
CANISTER

These chemical canisters are located all around the map. You can move them around, as they are safe to touch. But, they will explode if you shoot them. They will also explode if they are nearby another exploding item, or if they are shot by the Rollerbot. These can be strategically placed where you need them, and thus used like a weapon. Once a canister explodes, it will leave a mangled, exploded canister on the map. You can't do anything with it, but you can move it around and use it to block pathways.

ENEMY ROBOTS

Obviously one of the main goals is to destroy all of the robots. But first it probably helps to learn a little bit about them.

HOVERBOT

This is the most docile of the robots, as it will generally not attack you unless you attack it first. Well, this is at least the case when playing in easy and normal modes. Thus, it is usually best to leave them alone until you are ready to attack them. And when you are ready, you should have a strategy formed as to how to do so without them attacking you back (when playing in hard mode, Hoverbots attack automatically).

Hoverbots can only attack at close range. They attack with an electric shock that will cause one point of damage every time you are shocked. However, this can add up quickly, especially if there are multiple Hoverbots attacking you.

Hoverbot has a health of 10 points, thus it takes 10 shots from the pistol, or one large explosion to kill it.
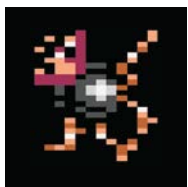
ROLLERBOT

This is a bit more powerful robot, which rolls around on a single large ball. Unlike a Hoverbot, it cannot float over water or other items. However, the Rollerbot doesn't need to, as it carries a projectile weapon, which causes 1 point of damage. It will not shoot at you unless is is aligned with you on the X or Y axis where it can take a direct shot. So, keep this in mind when battling a Rollerbot. Also keep in mind how you might use canisters to your advantage by placing them in the path of his weapon's fire.

Rollerbot has a health of 20 points, and thus will take 20 shots from the pistol or two large explosions to kill.

EVILBOT

This is the most powerful robot you will encounter. The Evilbot shreds you apart with his spinning arms. He may seem disadvantaged compared to the other robots, because he cannot hover and he has no projectile weapon. However, what makes him so dangerous is his attack, which causes 6 points of damage on contact. So, taking two hits from Evilbot will kill you. This can happen very quickly. An Evilbot will chase you the moment you release him from whatever room he is hiding in. He's fast, too.
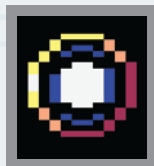
Evilbot also has very thick armor. He has 75 health points and thus could take over seven explosions to kill him.
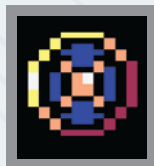
HOW TO GET AROUND

Besides walking, there are four other ways to get around the map.

◆ Transporter

It's easy enough to use, you just step onto it and wait a second or two. However, not all transporters work the same. Some are always active, and you will see this because they will have a flashing circle in the middle. If they are inactive, they will have a red X displayed in the middle.

Active transporter

Some transporters will just transport you somewhere else on the map. Usually, there will be a pad nearby to transport you back. However, the final transporter will only activate when all robots have been destroyed. Stepping on this will transport you away from the map, thus meaning you have finished the map.
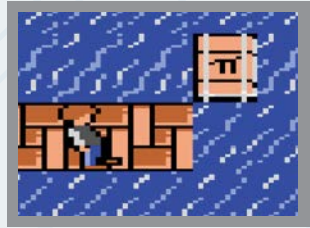
Inactive transporter

◆ Elevator

Some maps will have an elevator that takes you to another floor of a building. Buildings with elevators typically have between two and five floors. When you walk into the elevator, wait for the door to close. Then a panel will appear in your information screen showing the number of levels. You can press left or right to move between levels, then press down to open the elevator door. If you stand there long enough, the door will close again. The current floor is usually marked on the wall next to the elevator.

◆ Automated Raft

You will sometimes find a dock at the edge of the water and wonder how you are supposed to leave the island. If you wait there long enough, an automated raft will show up. You can walk onto it, then it will transport you to another island.

◆ Bridge

Using the bridge is fairly obvious, as in, you just walk across it. However, one important thing to consider is that it is that wooden bridges are easily damaged. If you set off an explosion on or near the bridge, you may destroy parts of it, making your path inaccessible, thus forfeiting the map. Concrete bridges are safe to use any weapons on.

MOVING ITEMS AROUND

These are the objects that can be moved around. This is accomplished by activating the **MOVE** feature with your controller, after which a flashing cursor will appear over your character waiting for a direction. This allows you to select which object to move. If the object is movable, it will be highlighted, waiting for you to then select a direction to move the object. You can move it any direction except towards you. There is no way to pull an object.
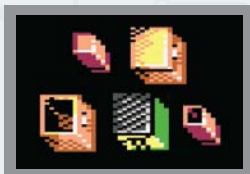
Moving items can play an important role in solving problems in the game. There are many reasons you might want to move an item:

◆ Moving a canister to a place where the explosion would work in your favor.

◆ Blocking a robot from leaving some place when you intend to attack him, with a time-bomb for example.

◆ Moving an item to gain access to something that needs to be searched for weapons.

◆ Using items to alter the path of a robot, for example, into a trash compactor.

Typically, most items can only be moved around inside buildings. You cannot move items around outside of a building.

Chairs

Crates

Canisters

Blown Canisters

Scientific Equipment

THE TITLE SCREEN

When the game first starts up, you'll be greeted by the title screen. From here, you can use your controller up + down directions or the console select switch to choose between menu items. You can use the controller button or the console reset switch to select the currently highlighted menu item.

◆ Start Game

This menu item unsurprisingly starts the game.

◆ Select Map

This menu item allows you to cycle through all of the maps in the game. The name of the currently chosen map is below the menu.

◆ Difficulty

This menu item allows you to choose the game's difficulty level. This will affect the number of health points each enemy robot has. The hard difficulty level will also make the Hoverbots immediately aggressive toward you.

Be sure to check out how the giant robot's eyebrows on the title screen change as you choose the difficulty!

◆ Controls

This menu item allows you to pick from the various game control schemes.

◆ **Standard:** Choose this if you want to use a Proline joystick or SNES game pad (via the included SNES2Atari adapter).

◆ **Twin Proline:** Use this if you have two Proline joysticks and a holder for them. This scheme allows you to move with one joystick and shoot with the other.

◆ **Proline + Keyboard:** Use this if you have a Proline joystick and an Atari 2600 Keyboard Controller. This scheme allows you to move with the joystick and shoot with the keyboard.

CONTROLLING THE GAME

◆ CONSOLE SWITCHES

◆ **Pause:**
Brings up the current map, where you can view all the robots moving around. The elapsed time counter will continue to increase while you are viewing the map.

◆ **Select:**
Brings up an on-screen menu that allows you to

pick an alternate hero (Mike, David or Bruce), adjust the music volume, or adjust the sound effects volume. Any volume changes are remembered for the entire play session.

◆ **Reset:**
This quits the current map, allowing you to return to the title screen.

◆ GAME CONTROLLERS

Standard (Proline):

• Moving the joystick, without pressing any buttons, allows the player to move around the map screen.

• Holding the **Left** fire button and pushing the joystick in a direction fires the active weapon in the chosen direction.

• Pressing the **Right** fire button once activates the **MOVE** feature (flashing cursor). At that point, you can use the joystick to position the cursor over a nearby movable object, and then use the joystick again to move the object.

• Pressing the **Right** fire button twice activates the **SEARCH** feature (chasing cursor). At this point, you can use the joystick to position the cursor over a nearby searchable object.

• Pressing the **Right** fire button three times activates the **ITEM/WEAPON** change feature. Joystick up + down changes the menu cursor between weapon and item, left and right changes the active weapon or item.

Standard (SNES):

• Pressing on the direction pad will move your player.

• Pressing the **A/B/X/Y** buttons will shoot the active weapon in the cardinal direction represented by the button.

• Pressing the **L1 shoulder** button will activate the **SEARCH** feature (chasing cursor). Pressing the direction pad will then search the object in that direction.

- Pressing the **R1 shoulder** button activates the **MOVE** feature (flashing cursor) . Pressing the direction pad will then choose the object to be moved. Pressing the direction pad again will move the object in the selected direction.

- Pressing **Start** will use the active item in your inventory.

- Holding **Select** and pressing the **L1 shoulder** button will cycle through the items in your inventory.

- Holding **Select** and pressing the **R1 shoulder** button will cycle through the weapons in your inventory.

- Holding **Select** and pressing **Start** will bring up the map.

Proline + Keyboard

- The Proline control is identical to the Standard (Proline) control.

- The keyboard controller allows for shooting and quick selection of some critical functions:

1	Use Medkit		2	Shoot Up		3	Use Bomb
4	Shoot Left		5	Map		6	Shoot Right
7	Use Magnet		8	Shoot Down		9	Use Emp
*	Change Weapon		0	Change Item		#	Use Item

Twin Proline

- The left Proline in the Twin Proline control scheme is identical to the Standard (Proline) control.

- Moving the right Proline joystick in any of the cardinal directions will shoot your currently active weapon in that direction. Pressing the **Left** fire button will cycle through the weapons in your inventory. Pressing the **Right** fire button will cycle through the items in your inventory. Holding the **Right** fire button will use the currently active item.

USEFUL HINTS

- ◆ Hoverbots over water are susceptible to an EMP blast, which will cause them to fall into the water and short out.

- ◆ You can shoot through windows. This often gives you additional safety if attacking a robot on the other side of the window. You may even be able to shoot canisters through the window.

- ◆ The trash compactor will kill anything that walks inside of it, including the player. However, there are various ways to manipulate items in order to trick robots into walking into the trash compactor to their death. Also, if you use a magnet on a robot near the trash compactor, you may be able to herd the crazed robot into the compactor.

  You should try to avoid direct confrontation with the robots. In every situation, there is an alternative to a shootout. Try to find these ways. Also, don't forget to use your EMP, magnets, and time-bombs where appropriate.

ATARI 7800
DEVELOPER NOTES

After developing the original Attack of the PETSCII Robot versions on the Commodore platform and receiving many request for source code, David put out a call to anyone who might wish to port the game to other compatible platforms. I was following the PETSCII Robots development with keen interest, so I reached out to Mike Saarna with the idea we could both bring the game to the 7800. Mike was keen, so I answered David's call.

After receiving the source, I began porting over the game in its original character-based incarnation, to try and get it running. Using the 7800basic framework as a back-end library, each day I ported over more and more of the game's assembly code. Seeing the game come to life on the 7800 was magical, from that first day of getting the title screen displaying. Each day brought in a steady stream of improvements, and over a period of a few weeks, I finally had a PETSCII version of the game which could be played on the 7800.

In the meantime, Mike began looking at how the game graphics might be enhanced to take advantage of the 7800's abilities. After a week of analysis, trial and error, and false starts, Mike had some inspiration; a full-color version based on the C128 graphics seemed to be just within the 7800's abilities, but not with the conventional 7800 cartridge formats. So, Mike reached out to Fred Quimby, the genius behind the 2600 and 7800 Harmony and Concerto flash carts, and a lot more. Fred took on the challenge and developed a brand new cartridge mapper for the game. Before long, the full-color game was running beautifully on real hardware.

Over time, Mike added features such as SNES controller support via the SNES2Atari adapter, inclusion of the RMT POKEY engine for Noelle's magical soundtrack, and various other in-game enhancements, such as the live on-screen map with current level summary, and multiple hero sprites.

Of course, all credit goes to David Murray for his original PETSCII engine and the ability to use it on various platforms. Including additional maps and other platform specific changes has been very easy to add into the final source code.
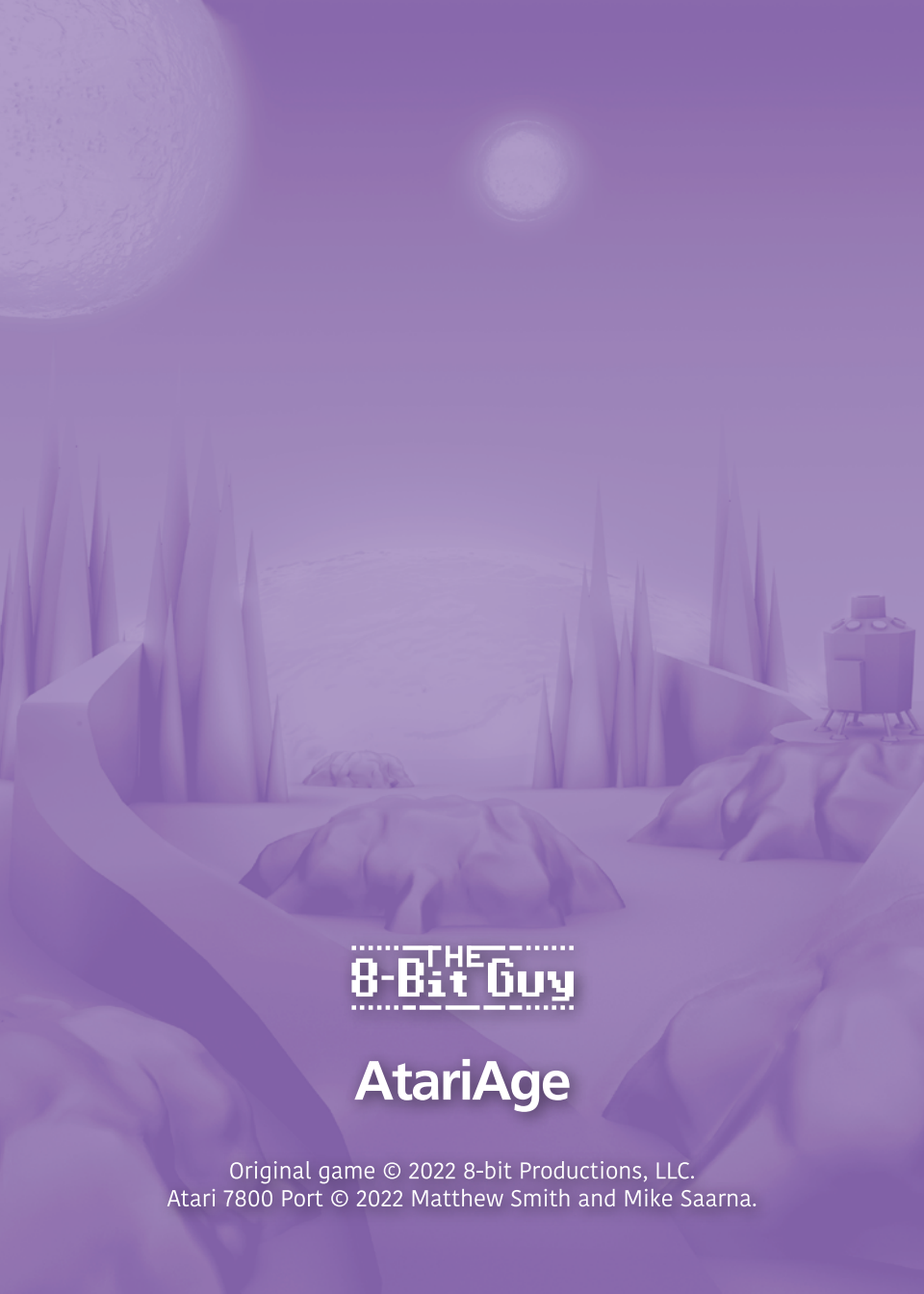
I also need to thank all those involved in getting this game released, especially Albert Yarusso here at AtariAge. As developers, we are amazingly grateful for all you provide us through your support in releasing games to the Atari community - creating art-work, boxes, manuals and carts in a way we all enjoy through our nostalgia for the old days.

Matthew Smith

CREDITS

David Murray	Original game design, assembly coding
Mike Saarna	Atari 7800 coding
Matthew Smith	Atari 7800 coding
Fred Quimby	Hardware design
Robert Tuccitto	Quality Assurance testing
Noelle Aman	POKEY music
Piotr Radecki	C128 pixel art
Jim Wright	C128 screen art
Brendan Carmody	Original box art
Marco Sabbetta	Additional pixel art
Mike Saarna	Additional pixel art
TiX	Additional pixel art
Anders Enger Jensen	C128 box and manual design
Grazi Mello	Atari 7800 box, manual, and labels

THE 8-Bit Guy

AtariAge